“A Solid Mutual Happiness”

The Portrayal of Marriage in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*

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Introduction

Thesis statement

George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch* exists at an interesting point in time. Set in the period between 1828 and 1831, it was first published as a series of eight books between December 1871 and December 1872. This was a period that saw some important developments in women's rights in England: the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 gave women control of their own property; the Infant Custody Acts of 1873 and 1886 gave mothers the right to appeal for custody of minor children in certain cases (Shanley, 14). The suffrage movement was struggling, but it was moving forward. Women like Harriet Taylor and Barbara Leigh were trying to exemplify the partnership they viewed as necessary in their own marriages (Shanley, 18). George Eliot, or Mary Ann Evans which was her real name, also broke with the marriage standard. Even though she considered herself as a married woman, her first 'husband' George Lewes was already married and had forsaken his opportunity for a divorce when he pronounced his wife's illegitimate children as his own (Calder, 123). Jenni Calder describes in her book *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction* the liaison between George Eliot and George Lewes as successful because "Lewes gave her the support and encouragement she needed in her writing. They lived together in a union of trust, loyalty and devotion, through many trials, not the least being George Eliot's outcast state from society" (123).

The novel *Middlemarch* is inviting its contemporary readers to look back at what the situation used to be, in a time of change. This thesis demonstrates how the period's deep concern with the status of married women and of marriage as an institution feeds into George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Through this thesis, I will prove that there is a struggle for power in all of the marriages portrayed, and that the representation of these struggles follows a clear pattern: where the power balance is portrayed to be set, the marriages are portrayed as happy and successful, and where the power balance is not set, the marriages are portrayed as unhappy and unsuccessful. In this context I define power in terms of financial, emotional and intellectual authority.

This aspect of the novel, which will become clear from my systematic analysis of each of these marriages, has not yet received due attention. Indeed, the natures of these other

marriages - between Celia Brook and Sir James Chettam, the Cadwalladers, the Vincys - constitute a blank space in the existing criticism. Also the Bulstrodes and the Garths are often left out of it. This is exemplified through the thesis as the critics' arguments become a patchwork.

I agree with Jenni Calder when she writes that we must take into consideration that to George Eliot, and her contemporaries, marriage was "a function of society" (128). Marriage was a pillar of society and to ignore this important aspect of the Victorian period would be ignoring one of the main themes. This thesis corrects the image of the novel in the existing criticism as being mainly focused on the character of Dorothea. It should matter to the criticism of the novel to gain a fuller picture of how all of the marriages are represented. In order to understand the narrator's judgment on one marriage, we must look at every marriage portrayed, not just a selective choice. When the marriages have been commented on in earlier criticism, the tradition has been to focus on just a few couples, mainly Dorothea and Casaubon, Rosamund and Lydgate and Dorothea and Ladislaw. Some have also included Fred Vincy and Mary Garth. I do not primarily aim to correct the previous feminist criticism of the novel, or to participate in the debate about whether or not the author herself counts as a "feminist", nor do I plan to employ feminist theory or to discuss the representation of marriage exclusively from a feminist perspective. My approach is more historicist than feminist and I hope to create a better understanding of how George Eliot treats a question that was of great importance to her contemporary readership, thereby also increasing our understanding of the world of *Middlemarch* and better the way we read *Middlemarch* today.

Karen Chase puts it so well in *George Eliot: Middlemarch*: "The current critical desire to uncover the subtle interplay between text and context is anticipated by a novel that is so profoundly *about* the powers of context" ("George Eliot", 95). Indeed the novel does show how society affects its members. Because of the context of the novel: the fact that it is set before the major reforms in women's rights, and was published in a period, as mentioned, when the major reforms were formed, it is particularly necessary to define what I mean by power balance. As it is a historical and realist novel we need to take into consideration that women had very few legal rights, and that she was under the protection of her husband. We also have to consider the Victorian attitudes, as represented by the narrator, towards marriage.

Marriage is an important topic to address in Victorian literature as the family was central to Victorian life, and marriage was a highly esteemed institution. And in this

institution the married woman is perhaps more important to consider than the married man. Penny Kane writes in *Victorian Families in Fact and Fiction* that "For every 100 women aged 25-29 there were, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, only about 90 men"(96). The married woman had a higher status than the unmarried, and marriage was therefore a topic close to every woman's heart.

A successful marriage in the Victorian period was one where the spouses functioned as partners with his and her responsibilities: the husband was responsible for the economy, the wife for the house and children, and these responsibilities were assigned by nature (Shanley, 5-6). Marital closeness meant that the wife was able to take an interest in her husband's interests (Kane, 103). As the family was at the core of society, and education became more widespread and more important, raising and educating children became a job: raising children became the woman's contribution to the marriage (Kane, 51).

Even though husband and wife were partners in the family, they were counted as one unit in society, and the man was the head of the household, and therefore had power, both financially and the legally. Women had very little power, and could not even sign a legal document without a man, and if she married, her property would become legally his (Shanley, 8). This is the problem facing the character Mr. Rigg Featherstone in the fictional town of Middlemarch, as he cannot give his mother money because her husband could take it: " 'Nothing would make her comfortable while you live,' returned Rigg, in his cool high voice. 'What I give her, you'll take.' " (Eliot, 257). The married female characters have no rights over their own money or property and are by this at the mercy of their husbands. According to Jenni Calder the contemporary readers were mainly women (129), and at the time the novel was published women were in the process of attaining rights to their own property and money. Here there is already an unbalance to modern readers, but in 1828 this was the reality. I consider, therefore, that it is when power is abused, or when there is a struggle for power, that unbalance is created, as when Edward Casaubon through his will threatens to remove Dorothea Casaubon's property if she does not do what he orders from the grave (Eliot, 304). Money was primarily the husband's responsibility, and a failure at managing the finances would also be a failure as a man. When Lydgate's economy is nearing bankruptcy, it also shifts the power balance as he has failed his responsibility.

Middlemarch is described by Karen Chase, amongst others, as being in many ways "the standard metre stick of the realist movement in fiction" ("George Eliot", 22). Like

Dostoevsky and Dickens, George Eliot believed that morality must be the foundation of fiction: “Realism is not just an aesthetic method for her; it is an act of lofty moral engagement” (Chase, “George Eliot”, 27, 31). In her notes George Eliot reflects on the profession of authorship, writing that a “man or woman who publishes writings inevitably assumes the office of teacher or influencer of the public mind” (“Leaves from”, 440). She continues to write that this influence writing has on readers is unavoidable (ibid). The views of the real author are not necessarily the same as those represented in the novel itself (Rimmon-Kenan, 88). Yet, I agree with critics like Kane and Liddell that *Middlemarch* may well have been sketching a moral purpose. In this case the novel is showing the readers virtues of a happy and balanced marriage.

The narration technique is also unique for this time period. Robert B. Heilman argues this point in his article “ ‘Stealthy Convergence’ in Middlemarch” (620). He writes that “Eliot was using a cinematic technique” that he has not observed in any other Victorian novelists (620). Heilman goes on to argue that *Middlemarch* achieves “a fuller convergence of fictional modes than any other work of the century” (621). The novel contains both the modes from “the novel of manners and the Gothic novel” through, for example “the wit of the author and of Mrs Cadwallader”, and “the mystery and ominousness of the Raffels episode” (Heilman, 622). Heilman maintains that “The convergence of modal and stylistic opposites in Eliot’s technique is comparable to what happens in the marriages she portrays” (622). I agree that there are many opposites, and that the marriages should be compared to achieve further understanding and insight of the novel.

The novel is realistic not only through the story, but also in its narration; Jakob Lothe argues in “Narrative Vision in Middlemarch: The Novel Compared with the BBC Television Adaptation” that it is not only the characters that are limited, but also the narrator: “Part of Eliot’s achievement in *Middlemarch* is to demonstrate, in convincing detail, both the necessity of seeing and the unavoidable limitations of seeing” (178). I agree that the narrator is successful in giving the reader insight, but at the same time signalling that insight is limited. The narrator indicates that things can be seen from different angles, as when the narrator protests against using only Dorothea as focalizer, and shifting the focus to Edward Casaubon (Lothe, 191; Eliot, 175). Lothe argues that the narrator is compassionate to her characters (197). Chase writes something similar, viewing sympathy as a main point and argues that the sympathy created by the narrator is there to make the reader “grow beyond moral stupidity

and to discover an active sympathetic relationship to even the most unattractive characters" ("George Eliot", 44). I will discuss this narrative technique of creating sympathy as I study the marriages and the characters.

Theory

As narration is a key aspect of this thesis I will be using narrative theory by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's second edition of *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. Narration is a significant part of *Middlemarch*. The narrator is a third person narrator (Lothe, 177). This means it is extradiegetic: outside and superior to the story (Rimmon-Kenan, 95). In the novel the narrator is maximally overt, as there is description of setting, identification of characters, temporal summary, definition of character, reports of what characters did not think or say, and most important in this case: commentary (Rimmon-Kenan, 98-101). The narrator is very much visible to us as readers. The narrator comments by interpretation, like "Perhaps if he had been strong enough to persist in his determination to be the more because she was less, that evening might have had a better issue" (Eliot, 468), by judgement, as when the narrator writes "Because Miss Brooke was hasty in her trust, it is not therefore clear that Mr Casaubon was unworthy of it" (17), and by generalizations, like "We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves" (135).

Where there is a narrator there is to Rimmon-Kenan also a narratee (104-105). The narratee of *Middlemarch* can be said to be extradiegetic, as it is " 'above' or superior to the story" (Rimmon-Kenan, 95). Rimmon-Kenan continues to write that an extradiegetic narratee is "parallel to or identical with the implied reader" (105). The actual reader is in this way addressed as the implied reader or narratee in the story. In the case of *Middlemarch* it is difficult to pinpoint a narratee without it becoming a very abstract exercise. Jane S. Smith writes in her article "The Reader as a Part of the Fiction: Middlemarch" that the actual reader is transformed into a fictive reader by the opinions given to the reader by the narrator (190). Smith writes that when such a role is given to the actual reader one should let oneself be incorporated in the tale and follow the path created by the narrator (201). Smith is here creating an abstract narratee to be a part of the narrator's *we*, suggesting that to read the story correctly means taking on a role as a narratee or a fictive reader. I am more inclined to agree with Karen Chase's argument in the introduction to *Middlemarch in the Twenty-First Century*: that critics need to read *Middlemarch* both "with and against the grain that George

Eliot has etched" ("Introduction", 9). To investigate the novel and the communication between narrator and reader we need to take a step back and be acutely aware of the narrator's manipulation of the reader at the same time as we see where the narrator is leading us. Because of the abstract exercise of creating a narratee, I will, for the purposes of this particular thesis, let the narratee be, and assume that the narrator is speaking to the reader. Throughout the thesis there will be an analysis of the narrator and judgements made by the narrator, which will be referred to by using the feminine pronoun.

Method and outline

I have chosen to analyse power balance in the terms of economical, emotional and intellectual factors. In the category of economic power I place not only material wealth in terms of money, estate and such, but I will also add class and station. I do this because social standing in many ways is considered more important than wealth, as Mrs Cadwallader believes, but I will come back to that. Power balance is also represented emotionally through devotedness and love. Eliot does not place the most weight on passionate, romantic love, as the earlier female novelists like Jane Austen and Charlotte Brönte, but a mix of devotedness and compatibility is necessary to make a marriage work. The balance of intellect is also a struggle, because intellect is used as a leverage to suppress the spouse in some of the marriages. Where the one is more intellectually capable than the other, there may be inequality. Nevertheless, the relationship's inequality may become balanced through the spouses' mutual agreement or acceptance. Under the umbrella intellect I will also place moral values, as this plays a major part in the novel, and is an intellectual value, rather than anything else.

I will go through the marriages one by one, with these parameters in mind, starting with the novel's first marriage, namely that between Dorothea Brooke and Casaubon, via Dorothea's second marriage to Will Ladislaw, to Rosamund Vincy and Tertius Lydgate (where I will also mention the marriage of the actress Laure), and Mary Garth and Fred Vincy. From these marriages, I will move on to the less mentioned, but equally significant, marriages: first Susan and Caleb Garth, then the marriage of Celia Brooke to Sir James Chettam, Elinor and Humphrey Cadwallader, Lucy and Walter Vincy, ending with the marriage between Harriet and Nicolas Bulstrode. I will end with a comparison and contrast of the marriages portrayed.

The Marriages

Dorothea Brooke's two marriages

Middlemarch has been a topic of heated debate among feminist critics, often about whether George Eliot was a feminist, and usually Dorothea is the character used as evidence both for and against such a view (see for example Kathleen Blake and Jenni Calder). Dorothea is a character that is either loved or hated, and it is at her that both the Prelude and Finale point, which may be part of the reason why her character has been the main focus of existing criticism.

In the Prelude and the first chapter of the novel we understand that it is Dorothea in particular who is pointed to as a "later-born [Theresa]", and the narrator contemplates the fates of various Theresas of the 1800s (3).The Saint Theresa described in *Middlemarch* has a "passionate, ideal nature [which] demanded an epic life" (3), she is a woman of much energy with a need for an outlet. Alexander Welsh writes in his article "The Later Novels" that "The brief 'Prelude' seems to promise a more feminist novel" (67) than the novel actually provides, and to some extent I agree; the New Woman has not quite yet arrived. Welsh's argument that the Prelude and the Finale give women their share, in the shape of St. Theresa, in making history (68) seems well founded. However, I am not sure that the Finale disappoints the Prelude, as the Prelude also warns the reader that not all women are "later-born Theresas" and that not all the Theresas are given the opportunity to change the world. The Prelude does, on the other hand, provide an argument in favour of women's individuality, and that women are born much more different from each other than society allows them to be. As I would like to argue, the novel exemplifies just this: women are not all the same, there are many different types of women. Karen Chase argues something similar, calling Dorothea "an early avatar of the New Woman" because of "her willingness to disregard pieties of common moral wisdom and risk moral exile" ("George Eliot", 88).

Dorothea Brooke and Edward Casaubon

The character of Dorothea has been the main focus of previous criticism of *Middlemarch*. This is understandable, given that both the Prelude and Finale centre on her, thereby inviting

the reader to consider her as perhaps the most important character in the novel. However, when the narrator says: “why always Dorothea?” (Eliot, 175) and turns her attention away from Dorothea to her husband Edward Casaubon, the reader becomes aware of how the narrator herself is admitting to overly focusing on this one character, and on this one side of their marriage.

Dorothea’s character is a complex one. Her outward looks are often described, and she is often connected to religion and beauty at the same time. The old lawyer Mr. Standish describes her as “an uncommonly fine woman, by God!”, but Mr. Chichely answers that she is not his type, and that his type is a woman who aims to please men, meaning that Dorothea Brooke does not (57). But “Her mind was theoretic” and she longed for some sort of martyrdom and “She could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life involving eternal consequences, with a keen interest in guimp and artificial protrusions of drapery” (6, 5-6). She is described as a beautiful saint-like woman and at the same time as having a “love of extremes” (6).

Mr. Edward Casaubon on the other hand is not blooming and young, but an old, pale, man with deep eye sockets reminding Dorothea Brooke of a portrait of the philosopher John Locke (11). To Dorothea these are all attractive qualities as they serve as evidence of his intense scholarly life, but at the same time we are told that her younger sister Celia “did not like the company of Mr Casaubon’s moles and sallowness” (16). However Celia does see that Casaubon takes some delight in Dorothea’s company, as “his face was often lit up by a smile like pale wintry sunshine” when looking at and talking to Dorothea (17).

The marriage between Dorothea Brooke and Edward Casaubon is described as problematic for the inhabitants of Middlemarch. Particularly Sir James Chettam, Celia Brooks and Mrs Cadwallader find the marriage a difficult one. Even Mr Brooke does not want her to marry him, but he does not want to rule over her either: “People should have their own way in marriage, and that sort of thing – up to a certain point, you know” (26). Where exactly this “certain point” is to Mr Brooke, is not so clear. To Sir James Chettam, Celia Brooke and Mrs Elinor Cadwallader what matters seems to be the age difference. “He is no better than a mummy!” Mrs Cadwallader exclaims, and Chettam says “He must be fifty, and I don’t believe he could ever have been much more than the shadow of a man. Look at his legs!” (37, 44). This agrees with the Victorian ideal described by Penny Kane, that “couples should be fairly close in age” (104) for the sake of compatibility and understanding of each other. But

then again, the narrator says that "He had done nothing exceptional in marrying – nothing but what society sanctions, and considers an occasion for wreaths and bouquets", and the Rector Cadwallader says that "Casaubon is as good as most of us" and has done nothing wrong in marrying (175, 46). While age difference was an issue in society, to marry was at the same time expected of people, as Jane Austen sarcastically maintains in the opening of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813): "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (3).

Intellectual power balance

Dorothea terminates any chance of equality in their marriage by imagining that Casaubon is a better man than she is a woman, and she is in this way suppressing herself in the marriage: "I am very ignorant – you will quite wonder at my ignorance" (Eliot, 32). She compares Casaubon to Milton and herself to Milton's daughters (41) and creates a father–daughter relationship rather than that of a husband and wife. "How can I have a husband who is so much above me without knowing that he needs me less than I need him?", she asks herself, forgetting her own "need for some manifestation of feeling", and that she used to like having the right to an opinion ("I only want not to have my feelings checked at every turn") (56, 134, 455). But when her high opinion of her husband is checked by Will Ladislaw, doubt is created, and she begins to be critical of Casaubon's coldness towards her. Here we move to a more emotional plane, which I will come back to.

Intellectually Edward Casaubon has the power, but Dorothea seems to be the one with the most moral authority. This we can see through her thoughts on Ladislaw's grandmother's fate, and the fact that she has trouble accepting her inheritance. This gives her moral superiority over Edward Casaubon, with all his suspicion and jealousy. His intellectual power is also weakened by Will Ladislaw's disclosure to Dorothea that Edward Casaubon's work might already have been written in German, and this is what instigates the emotional unbalance and the unhappiness in the marriage.

Emotional power balance

> Poor Mr Casaubon! This suffering was the harder to bear because it seemed like a betrayal: the young creature who had worshipped him with perfect trust had quickly turned into the critical wife; and early instances of criticism and resentment had made an impression which no tenderness and submission afterwards could remove. (260)

The narrator is in this quote showing sympathy for Edward Casaubon as she shows the readers what appear to be his vulnerable side. Suspicion and jealousy grow in Edward Casaubon and Dorothea feels them as a coldness which climaxes on Dorothea's side with inward rage towards her husband, nearly turning into hate on her side (265). On his side it turns into the codicil to the will, and his request for Dorothea to finish his work after his death. The narrator describes in strong words the distance between the spouses, and as Dorothea hears of the codicil, she finally finds out the "hidden thoughts" that have turned him against her, and made him judge everything she did as acts against him (305). Distrust in a marriage, Dorothea reflects to Rosamund, "murders our marriage – and then the marriage stays with us like a murder – and everything else is gone" (491).

Critics have disagreed on the character of Casaubon. Robert Liddell takes a less dim view of Casaubon than other critics, such as Ellin Ringler who, in fact, takes a rather dim view of all the male characters, claiming that "Every one of her [Eliot's] major male characters, Casaubon, Lydgate, Will Ladislaw, Fred Vincy, Nicholas Bulstrode, displays a virulent and weakening form of 'moral Stupidity' "(59). Liddell seems to defend Casaubon to a certain point. Casaubon is a true scholar, who has "left marriage and authorship too late, but George Eliot does not make this apology for him" (Liddell, 131). I am not sure the narrator does not make such an apology, because several explanations of Mr Casaubon's motives are offered, and in this way the narrator also makes an excuse for them. One example is the quote above, beginning with "Poor Mr Casaubon". The failure of the marriage seems to be due to Dorothea and Casaubon's misinterpretations of each other. Dorothea fails to see that his work is an uncomfortable subject, and Casaubon fails to see that she married him

in order to help him publish his work. Liddell tries to show Casaubon's humanity through his jealousy of Will Ladislaw, his attempts at being tender towards Dorothea, and that he does, in fact, notice, every now and then, her effort to be a good wife (132).

The ability to see other people as they really are is indeed a quality lacking in Dorothea. Compared to Dorothea "Celia, whose mind had never been thought too powerful, saw the emptiness of other people's pretentions much more readily", and because of this blindness Dorothea is "likely to tread in the wrong places" (41, 232). This seems to go both ways in the Casaubon marriage: "She was as blind to his inward troubles as he to hers" (128). On the other hand, this near-sightedness of Dorothea makes her brave in dangerous situations, the narrator explains (252).

Clifford J. Marks writes in his article " 'Middlemarch,' Obligation, and Dorothea's Duplicity" that the characters both want to be something they cannot be as their egotism gets in the way (28). To some extent I agree, because the characters' egocentric ideas of themselves and who they want to be are projected onto the other, and hinder them in communicating in an honest manner. The lack of communication of the real self makes their marriage unsuccessful, as they then become unable to be their true selves. Casaubon wants to be adored, and Dorothea wants to adore, but along the way communication breaks down and adoration disappears. The narrator reflects on Dorothea's feeling of being let down: "Dorothea had not distinctly observed but felt with a stifling depression, that the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither" (Eliot, 125). This section of the novel indeed has a dim view of marriage, as the narrator explains:

> I suppose it was that in courtship everything is regarded as provisional and preliminary, and the smallest sample of virtue or accomplishment is taken to guarantee delightful stores which the broad leisure of marriage will reveal. But the door-sill of marriage once crossed, expectation is concentrated on the present. Having once embarked on your marital voyage, it is impossible not to be aware that you make no way and that the sea is not within sight – that, in fact, you are exploring an enclosed basin. (125)

This sad view of marriage is connected to Dorothea Brooke's marriage to Edward Casaubon, and perhaps a reference to his mind. This is in fact evidence that Dorothea's energies were already in her marriage to Casaubon stifled. As we shall see, this may also account for the success of the marriage of Mary Garth and Fred Vincy. Where Dorothea and Edward only got to know each other through courtship, Mary and Fred have known each other since they were children.

There is a lack of marital closeness, and Dorothea has not been intimate with her husband on her honeymoon, as far as we can see by the narrator's hints: "She had not yet listened patiently to his heart-beats, but only felt that her own was beating violently" (128), meaning that she had not been lying with her head on his chest, a very intimate pose, but only felt her own passion and sexual frustration. Emotionally it might be Edward Casaubon who has the power, given that she adores him, and turns hysterical by his coldness. However, he could have lost this power had Dorothea in truth started to hate him. His intellectual power makes her try to be a good wife, even when she resents him. Already when he proposes to her, in the form of a letter, there are hints that she may be more devoted to him than he is to her: "How could it occur to her to examine the letter, to look at it critically as a profession of love?" (28). In the early days of their engagement he is surprised at his own lack of passion, and again her devotion seems larger than his, as he concludes that he would probably not find a better suited woman (40-41). Still, he might have some adoration for her, and is proud of his wife "who spoke better than most women, as indeed he had perceived in choosing her" (136). However, this statement tells us more about Edward Casaubon's pride and narcissism than about his love for Dorothea because he is proud his own choice of wife rather than the individual Dorothea. No matter who has the power, there is indeed an emotional unbalance which is later manifested in both the codicil and Dorothea's resistance towards the idea of continuing Edward Casaubon's work after his death.

Economic power balance

Economically Dorothea and Edward Casaubon are almost equal: both come from good families, and she has an annual allowance, although relatively small (273). Still Edward Casaubon has more money than her, which gives him the upper hand in terms of economy. In

her account of Victorian society, Penny Kane writes that if the woman came into the marriage with nothing, she would be "expected to be largely decorative" and would have little or no say in financial matters (108). This was because it was expected of both parties to contribute to the marriage (108). It is only after his death that Edward Casaubon begins to use his economic power. Working as a ghost through his codicil on his own will, he attempts to hinder what he is sure will happen: that Dorothea will be charmed by Will Ladislaw and marry him (Eliot, 262). Like Featherstone, Edward Casaubon tries to affect a future he does not belong to. However, Dorothea already feels that the fortune of the Casaubon family rightly belongs to Will Ladislaw, and feels "very uneasy – [Casaubon's inheritance] coming all to me who don't want it" (472).He also tries to control her by asking her to continue his work after his death, but Casaubon dies before she is able to give him her promise.

Conclusion

On all levels here there seems to be an unbalance of power. Intellectually they do not match. Emotionally he seems to have the power as she loves him and cares for him even after his suspicion and jealousy turn him cold to her. However, morally and spiritually he seems to have misjudged her, as her wish for martyrdom is handed to her on a silver platter on two occasions by her husband; she could have dived into his work and become a martyr for his "Key to all Mythologies", or denounced him completely by becoming poor. There seems to be some truth in Mrs Cadwallader and Sir James Chettam's suspicion that he is much too old for Dorothea. Set in his ways, marrying a young woman with much energy seems a mistake. As their marriage is established as a father-daughter relationship, a pregnancy would seem incestuous, and perhaps because of this, she has no children with him. Their already unbalanced relationship in terms of energy and age only leads to further unbalance in emotion, making their marriage an unhappy one.

Dorothea Casaubon and Will Ladislaw

Both Dorothea and Will are described as handsome, and are generally well liked (ex. 3, 57, 133, 507). They are both referred to by first name. Will is described as loving children and having a particular love of lying stretched out on the drawing room rug at his friends' houses

(287). He is also a charmer of old ladies, like Miss Noble who will even go to ask Dorothea's permission for Will to see Dorothea (496).

Dorothea's family and friends are very upset by her choice to marry again, and particularly her choice to marry Will Ladislaw whose standing is very low, even though Mr. Brooke thinks him "a remarkable fellow" (502). The Rector Cadwallader points out to his very critical wife that she herself married below her own station for love, and argues that "If she likes to be poor, that is her affair" (503). Sir James Chettam in particular is worried about Dorothea's dignity when she is to be married to the man her husband marked out as a threat in his will, and who is of "bad origin" (502).

Lloyd Fernando has argued that there is a strong presence of "marital incompatibility" in *Middlemarch,* and that the story is in reality the story of Dorothea Brooke and Tertius Lydgate, and that their two characters match the myth of the ideal pair, being described as very similar (46). Dorothea's marriage to Ladislaw is a failure as she cannot live up to her full potential (49). Jenni Calder also argues that Dorothea loses her identity in her marriage to Will Ladislaw (152). Robert Liddell sees the character of Will Ladislaw as an opposite to Casaubon: "He stands for light, in opposition to Casaubon's darkness" (145) and represents fresh air and light to Dorothea (145). On the other hand Liddell also sees him as shifty, as "One cannot see that he displays much solidity of mind", and finds Dorothea's marriage to him gives readers an "end with a downgrading of Dorothea rather than with an upgrading of Ladislaw" (146, 147-148).

Karen Chase argues in her book *George Eliot: Middlemarch* that George Eliot rethinks gender in *Middlemarch* through the characters of Dorothea and Will ("George Eliot", 66). She points out that Will is given "a role that had traditionally been reserved for the heroine of fiction: the role of complement of the protagonist's virtues" (64). Chase goes on to point out that Will Ladislaw is described with female characteristics, and Dorothea with many characteristics of a man (64-65).This is an interesting idea, though I am not sure if I agree entirely. In some ways the novel does rethink gender, as there is a strong suggestion in the Prelude that there are women who are restricted from living full lives by the narrow description of womanhood. However there are also many examples women who fit into their restricted roles, staying there quite happily, like the characters of Celia Brooke, Lucy Vincy and so on. Instead of rethinking gender, I believe it is more suitable to say that *Middlemarch* challenges gender roles in many of the marriages. In arguing that Dorothea is portrayed

"unlike other women", and in masculine terms, Chase denounces any critics supposing Dorothea and Tertius Lydgate as an ideal pair (like Lloyd Fernando) (65). She argues that they are too similar and that "they are of the same kind, almost of the same sex" (66).

Economic power balance

Economically Dorothea and Will are unequal: "Even if you loved me as well as I love you – even if I were everything to you – I shall most likely always be poor" (Eliot, 499). When Dorothea met Will the first time he was supported financially by her husband, making Will dependent upon Edward Casaubon. After meeting Dorothea and being fascinated by her, he decides to give up the support in order "not to run that risk of never attaining a failure" (142), meaning to live a real, unprivileged life. However neither have an ambition to be rich or have much money. Will also has high moral standards like Dorothea, exerting them in his refusal of the money Mr. Bulstrode offers him as a settlement for his mother, because of its association to a shady business (386).

Intellectual power balance

Whereas Dorothea is a practical woman, enjoying making plans for cottages, Will becomes a political figure, and in this way they both serve a common goal: the common good of all. They are portrayed as equals by the use of different similes: "They were looking at each other like two fond children who were talking confidently of birds", "Each looked at the other as if they had been two flowers which had opened then and there", "and so they stood, with their hands clasped, like two children" (244, 226, 499).They are portrayed as very innocent and childish. But still we see in the finale that Dorothea Ladislaw has not lived up to her potential, or at least not to what the narrator or critics see as her potential. This is in part blamed on society, as the narrator writes that no one really knew what she could do, other than to support a powerful husband. And, indeed Will Ladislaw does not see her as a creative power in herself, but rather as a muse, or the essence of creativity that others have to take action on: "You *are* a poem – and that is to be the best part of a poet – what makes up the poet's consciousness in his best moods" (143). She is a sort of booster and supporter of something larger than herself.

Calder claims that Dorothea "is aware that she has lost something by her marriage" to Will, and that she has "lost her dreams of martyrdom, yet, as we have seen, has achieved it after a fashion" (153). As she is about to enter into great schemes with Lydgate about the hospital, which might have been a very successful partnership, as he is also ambitious, she recognises the extent of her love for Will, through jealousy of Rosamund Lydgate. It is at this moment that her potential ends. She admits that if she had been better she might have done better (Eliot, 505) and that she never could do what she really would have liked to do, perhaps because it existed in the domain of men: in order to be able to perform good deeds, to execute her plans, she always needs the support of men.

Emotional power balance

The love between Will and Dorothea is perhaps the one that is described with the most passion, but it is also the one that is described most innocently. She has already cast herself in the role as Casaubon's child, but as Sally Shuttleworth argues in her article "Sexuality and Knowledge in *Middlemarch*": "Dorothea is not simply cast as childlike by her suitors, Casaubon and Will; Eliot explicitly places her sexual responses within a frame of childhood innocence" (428). Dorothea's sexuality is there but is connected to spirituality. She is not in control of it, and her "womanhood would be harmed by any attempt on her part to control or possess her own energies" (435). Shuttleworth compares Dorothea to the Virgin Mary who is both sexual and innocent at the same time (435). On the other hand Dorothea is compared to Saint Theresa in the novel, and this seems in many ways as a better comparison. Saint Theresa has become, through previous writers' interpretations of her, a symbol of religious ecstasy, or "sexual rapture at the hands of her Lord", as in the seventeenth-century poet Richard Crawshaw's portrayal of her (1649) (129). Therefore Shuttleworth's description of Dorothea as an innocent Virgin Mary is not all true. While I agree that she is described as innocent in relation to Will Ladislaw, there is a link made by the narrator between Dorothea and the erotic Saint Theresa.

The marriage to Will Ladislaw is foreshadowed through Dorothea Casaubon's reflections on the life of Will's grandmother who left her rich family to marry a poor man. As they proclaim their love for one another, there is a storm outside that could be representing the emotional and passionate storm going on inside the library. On the other hand it could represent Edward Casaubon's jealousy and anger that his wishes are being ignored. Either

way, Will has adored Dorothea for a long time, and in his eyes she often acquires a spiritual or heavenly quality: “She was an angel beguiled” (Eliot, 133).

She often appears as a maiden in distress who must be rescued from the dragons, whether the dragon is Casaubon or Dorothea’s family and friends (133, 291). She is indeed worshiped by him and he has “the inclination to fall to the Saint’s feet and kiss her robe” (138), much like she used to look up to Casaubon in the beginning of the novel. And like Casaubon, she feels the pang of jealousy when she sees Will and Rosamund together. However, unlike Casaubon’s egotistic jealousy, she decides to do something “more helpful, instead of driving her back from effort” and decides to go see Rosamund (134, 486, 487).

In this sense Dorothea has the power, as she is the one adored and worshiped; Will Ladislaw is very much devoted to her. However, she is also formed into the mould that his love creates, and we get the feeling that she cannot be her own person. Liddell is apt to believe that George Eliot herself was inclined to feel that Dorothea was taking a step down in marrying Will, for even though Eliot tries to give his personality weight, he is never quite an equal to Dorothea (147-148). I do not agree with Liddell on this point. On one hand it can be argued that Eliot is making moral judgements because of her belief in a moral guideline for realist works. On the other hand, as stated by narrative theory, one should be careful not to identify the views of the narrator with the views of the real author (Rimmon-Kenan, 88).

Conclusion

Who has the most power in this relationship is indeed hard to say. Dorothea might be the powerful part because of Will’s devotion to her, but his mighty love did make her give up the prospect of good schemes, and a life in wealth. Perhaps her sacrifice of such a life grants her most power. However, by the finale we are inclined to think that his emotional power over her makes him the most powerful, and the marriage is not balanced in power, partly also because of the situation for women, and society’s restrictions of women’s roles. The reason why I am inclined to argue that even though the balance is set in this marriage, there is an unbalance because of Dorothea’s personality and energies. We can hardly say that her dreams and “love of extremes” are fulfilled in this marriage. She has rather sacrificed what we understand as her dreams for love. The narrator’s comment on her friend’s thoughts about her marriage (Eliot, 513) leaves us not entirely satisfied with the marriage as a successful, happy one.

Rosamund Vincy and Tertius Lydgate

Rosamund Vincy is the mayor's daughter who marries the new physician in Middlemarch, Tertius Lydgate. Rosamund Vincy is portrayed as a beautiful young woman "Who had excellent taste in costume, with that nymph-like figure and pure blondness", a woman whom "most men in Middlemarch" consider "the best girl in the world, and some called her an angel" (Eliot, 61, 72). Indeed, this comment on her being the best is repeated by the older men of Middlemarch who describe her as "The best girl in the world!" and that whoever gets to marry her "will be a happy fellow" (107). Apparently, Rosamund also believes this to be true. To please others and get her way, she has learned to play various roles: "She was by nature an actress of parts that entered into her *physique*: she had even acted her own character, and so well, that she did not know it to be precisely her own" (75). However, she does not like to do what does not please her, so when she is given news she does not like, she will typically give "a certain turn of her graceful neck, of which only a long experience could teach you that it meant perfect obstinacy" (214). Whenever the narrator compares her to Dorothea, she is described as having more childlike looks, with her "infantine blondness" (268). Alexander Welsh writes that even though Rosamund Vincy appears just as isolated in her husband's troubles as we are made to think Dorothea was during her marriage to Edward Casaubon, Dorothea is written of warmly, and Rosamund "with an edge of scorn" (64). Indeed several critics, like W. J. Harvey have described Rosamund as "shallowly egotistic" ("Introduction", 191). However, I will argue that the narrator still shows sympathy, both to Rosamund and to Tertius Lydgate.

Lydgate is a man feeling torn and the narrator describes him as having "two selves within him" (Eliot, 98). He is an ambitious man but also a man capable of passion. However, he does not mean to fall in love (93). Nonetheless, Lydgate's polite flirtation feeds Rosamund's narcissism and she therefore imagines herself to be in love. The narrator expresses a great deal of sympathy with these characters through exclamations like "Poor Lydgate! or shall I say, Poor Rosamund! Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing" (106). Their actions may be wrong, and in Rosamund's case sometimes also cruel. However, they are explained and sometimes excused by reference to their personalities. Rosamund's behaviour is mostly blamed on her upbringing, as in this quote:

> Rosamund, in fact, was entirely occupied not exactly with Tertius Lydgate as he was in himself, but with his relation to her; and it was excusable in a girl who was accustomed to hear that all young men might, could, would be, or actually were in love with her, to believe at once that Lydgate could be no exception. (107)

Also the thoughts of love through "inward repetition of looks, words, and phrases which makes a large part in the lives of most girls" (106) is blamed on her upbringing and education. "Poor Lydgate" does not know what kind of trap he is walking into. Rosamund's vanity makes Lydgate's "good birth" his main attraction (106).

Economic power balance

As Kane has observed, Lydgate is ambitious and determined to make a name "in medical research" (95). Having spent his inheritance educating himself and buying a practice, he meant not "to marry for the next five years" (Eliot, 105). Due to various misunderstandings, pride and social convention they are nevertheless engaged and married, even though Mr. Vincy is not in agreement as he does not "believe Lydgate has got a farthing"(214). "Let'em wait, as their elders have done before 'em", is Mr Vincy's argument (214). Here one might consider what was customary in Victorian society. According to Penny Kane professionals (like Lydgate) on average in Britain did not marry "until they were above 31" (Kane, 93). Even though Kane's number is for the late 1800s, there is no reason to believe that the situation was much different in the early 1800s.The reason for the late age was that the couple had to be able to set up a household with their own resources, Kane writes (93). Yet, Tertius Lydgate marries at the age of 27 "and the expense of setting up a household, together with the extravagance of his wife Rosamund, come close to wrecking his future" (Kane, 95). I do not agree with Kane that Rosamund is the only one at fault. For example, the narrator makes a point of observing that Lydgate "believed himself to be careless about his dress, and despised a man who calculated the effects of his costume; it seemed to him only a matter of course that he had abundance of fresh garments", but also that he does not care about money as much as great ideas (Eliot, 364, 94). However, he still buys an expensive dinner set as he "hated ugly crockery" thinking that "if anything was to be done at all, they must be done properly" (220, 364). The narrator makes several excuses for Rosamund on this account: "Think no unfair evil of her, pray: she had no wicked plots, nothing sordid or mercenary; in fact, she never

thought of money except as something necessary which other people would always provide"(169). In addition we are told that she has always been indulged (368), not being used to be told what to do, or not to get her will. Rosamund is clearly affected by her upbringing and environment. By studying the way I which Rosamund is portrayed, one becomes aware that even though *Middlemarch* is commonly regarded as "the classic nineteenth-century realist novel" (Bennet and Royle, 65), the novel also points in the direction of naturalism. Naturalism is a related to realism, but with the distinction of being more deterministic, focusing on how "human lives are shaped by forces of nature, both external and internal" (Goring et. al., 397). Things like biology, environment and socio-economic influences shapes people's lives, and determine their fates (ibid).

Intellectual and emotional power balance

Lydgate is a clever man, working his way up; still he does not emerge as equally clever and resourceful as Rosamund. The narrator explains that before their marriage Tertius Lydgate is "calling himself her captive – meaning, all the while, not to be her captive"(Eliot, 168). After her marriage, Rosamund enjoys dominating men and being adored by them: "How delightful to make captives from the throne of marriage with a husband as crown-prince by your side – himself in fact a subject" (271). Lydgate begins, in chapter 58, to see that his knowledge and intelligence cannot rule over Rosamund's cleverness and independence (362). As Jenni Calder has argued, the spouses resemble one another in that they are both ambitious, even though her ambitions take a different form through her desire to rise in station by the means of marriage (138).

Where Liddell has expressed sympathy for Edward Casaubon, the same cannot be said about his opinion of Rosamund Lydgate. Some might agree with Liddell's argument that Rosamund's power seems unbelievable as she "loses the advantage of her beauty", making readers "want to wring that 'fair long neck' " (135, 135). Yet, I contend that the narrator's continual excuses for her actions makes one sympathize and disagree with Rosamund's decisions, both at the same time. "She was not in the habit of devising falsehoods" and her resistance in following her husband's orders is precisely that they are orders, or as Calder puts it: "commands" (Eliot, 169; Calder, 140). Lydgate's frustration is expressed in a violent manner: "Lydgate uttered this speech in the curt hammering way which we usually try to nail down a vague mind to imperative facts" (Eliot, 402). Whenever he orders her, and it does not

please her, the reader, who has been told of the meaning of this motion, may notice "a little turning aside of the long neck" because "What she liked to do was to her the right thing, and all her cleverness was directed to getting the means of doing it" (361). Lydgate is often frustrated and angry with his wife, wanting "to smash and grind some object on which he could at least produce an impression, or else to tell her brutally that he was master, and she must obey" (408). Chase summarizes other critics as she writes "we cannot simply point to her narcissistic withdrawal without pointing also to the way that Lydgate persistently and systematically excludes her from certain concerns vital to their life together" ("George Eliot", 62). Chase goes on to argue that the narrator "engages in moral critique that is unambiguous and uncompromising" and that the narrator rejects any defence we as readers make for her (62, 63). However, I contend that the narrator does make excuses for Rosamund, and I point to the way that Rosamund's upbringing is given much of the responsibility for her personality and her choices. This is a naturalistic feature of Rosamund's portrayal, as she is shaped by her environment.

On one hand we see Tertius Lydgate's extreme frustration over his wife's obstinacy, but we can also see how this rage may push his wife further away from him. Rosamund tells him "You hurt me very much when you look so, Tertius", meaning when he looks cross (Eliot, 290). The narrator both makes excuses for her actions and blames her for the troubles in the Lydgate marriage: he has changed and her feelings towards him have turned to disappointment (409). Then again, she does not like it when he turns his mind away from her, even for his work, sometimes wishing she had never married him (362, 368). Tertius is portrayed with the most sympathy, as he seems very devoted to his wife. As Calder writes: "He did not marry Rosamund for her reason and sympathetic understanding", and "it is when he commands that his weakness and the extent of his responsibility for the state of the marriage become most evident" (140). I agree with Calder when she writes that "There is a balance of sympathy in the Lydgate affair", even though Tertius is a better man than Rosamund is a woman (140).

Sexuality and Laure

Whereas Dorothea Brooke's sexuality has been described as innocent by Shuttleworth, the same is not true of Rosamund and Laure (the French actress) whose control of their sexuality enable them to control and manipulate men (435). It is exactly this self-awareness of their

sexuality which renders them "at the mercy of their bodies", being prone to insanity (Shuttleworth, 434, 429). Monomania was a diagnosis created in the 1830's to cater for a distortion of feelings towards one individual which might in the worst case end in murder (Shuttleworth, 433). This is the case with Laure, the French actress whom Lydgate falls in love with in Paris. Lydgate's belief in marriage is shattered by his discovery that her husband's death had indeed been a murder. It is all made worse by Lydgate's belief in Laure's innocence. He imagines her as a helpless weak woman in need of a hero, while she herself was her own hero. "I do not like husbands. I will never have another" Laure tells the shocked Lydgate after disclosing that she "*meant to do it*" (Eliot, 98). As Shuttleworth points out, it is Lydgate who connects Laure, Rosamund and Dorothea (432). Laure breaks with the "male science inspecting and controlling female nature" as "she will not be confined within the controlling frame of female insanity" (433, 434). Lydgate believed "he had found perfect womanhood" in Rosamund (220); a woman who would be the "The Angel in the House" (described in the hugely popular poem by the same title by Coventry Patmore), a much more docile woman than Rosamund seems to be. However, he has found himself another Laure, another woman who is in control of her sexuality, and will not stand for a wearisome husband who will do what is not agreeable to her (98).

Lee R. Edwards writes in her article "Women, Energy and Middlemarch" that it is not sexuality, but energy that is the problem for Dorothea, Rosamund and Laure, in that they are women without an outlet for their energies, and I am inclined to agree. I can understand Edwards' argument that none of the women in the novel have an outlet for their energies (626). In Dorothea's case the problem is that she has the "desire to be both wise and useful" (Edwards, 624). Dorothea's aspirations are not taken seriously by the author, Edwards contends, the novel condemning energy, not indorsing it (626).

Because of his experience with Laure, the thought that Rosamund might kill him if she is bored strikes Tertius Lydgate (Eliot, 366). Liddell indeed writes that the comparison of Rosamund with a mermaid in chapter 58 "would be no bad image of Rosamund, for she is the sailor's destruction" (Liddell, 158). Even after their reconciliation in chapter 81, Tertius Lydgate "once called her his basil plant; and when she asked for an explanation, said that basil was a plant which had flourished wonderfully on a murdered man's brain" (Eliot, 513). What a change from when they fall in love: "That moment of naturalness was the crystallizing feather-touch: it shook flirtation into love" (189).

Conclusion

There is a constant struggle for power in the relationship of the Lydgates. Karen Chase argues that "the weakness of the marriage of Lydgate and Rosamund is fundamentally due to their mutual willingness to play out the fate of their gender assignments" ("George Eliot", 65). I am not sure that this is the problem, as they both seem comfortable with their gender roles, but they clearly have trouble adjusting themselves to the other's headstrong personality. His failure to bring her the income that is required to keep her in the way she is accustomed to appears to have extinguished the love Rosamund might have had for Tertius. Her independence and distrust of his judgments seriously undermines his authority and he can see that "any assertion of power" will not be final, and that "she had mastered him" (Eliot, 408, 413). Rosamund as a basil plant may be just the evidence of her power, but it is also evidence of him losing the power struggle: a man without power is a dead man. He has failed in keeping her in the standard of living she is used to, and she would rather move back home than let him drag her down with him. He tried overpowering Rosamund, but in the end he has to admit defeat, and be the soil the basil plant takes advantage of.

Even though Rosamund blames Tertius for her unhappiness, the narrator explains that "Rosamund's discontent in her marriage was due to the conditions of marriage itself, to its demand for self-suppression and tolerance, and not to the nature of her husband" (465). The narrator is at the same time explaining women's role in the institution of marriage. The narrator has in the Prelude told us that women are different from each other, and perhaps Rosamund is not a woman made for marriage? Edwards suggests that her energies are restricted (629). Perhaps her marriage becomes a cage, or that her cage is a man who wants to dominate her? Perhaps it might as well be Rosamund saying that her husband did not do as she pleased, and that *she* "meant to do it", never meaning to take another husband. The marriage is then an unbalanced one. With the unbalance in economy and emotion, and perhaps with an equality of intellectual power, the marriage is all in all appears unbalanced.

Mary Garth and Fred Vincy

For all of the narrator's praise of Rosamund's beauty, Mary seems "more of a favorite with the author" as Robert Liddell has argued (156). Mary is plain and short with dark curly hair (Eliot, 72). It is interesting how the narrator chooses to describe Mary's looks. She is not

merely depicted, but is described through comparison with others: “If you want to know more particularly how Mary looked, ten to one you will see a face like hers in a crowded street to-morrow” (253). The narrator continues to describe the Plain Jane that one may encounter on any street corner: a “small plump brownish person of firm but quiet carriage” with a “broad face and square brow, with well-marked eyebrows”, who is prone to smiling (253). The narrator is here reaching outside the Middlemarch story, inviting the reader to consider the nature of Mary’s ordinary looks. It also makes Mary stand out from the other characters in the book, as she is the only character that is described in this particular way.

While the narrator does not bestow any beauty upon Mary, she is said to possess many other good qualities. She is described as “an ordinary sinner” and her alleged “shrewdness” (72) is most likely considered as a positive trait, since, for example, it makes her capable of manoeuvring the crisis arising from Fred Vincy’s inability to pay the debt made in Mr Garth’s name in a pragmatic way. Mary’s first reaction is one of sympathy with her father rather than anger with Fred, and she appears solution oriented in giving her family all of her savings (160-162). Mr Farebrother thinks her “an excellent girl” (112). Her main virtue, to the narrator, is her honesty (73). Nevertheless, she is “a little hoyden” and her “shrewdness” is said to have “a streak of satiric bitterness” (146, 72). The narrator tells us that she is not a saint (198). Liddell has pointed out that readers may not necessarily find Mary a likeable character, because of her frequent teasing and mockery of Fred Vincy, as when she asserts that “husbands are an inferior class of men, who require keeping in order” (Liddell, 148; Eliot, 509)

As to Fred Vincy: “perhaps wisdom is not his strong point, but rather affection and sincerity”, as Mr Farebrother describes him (320), and this is also how the narrator portrays him. While he is described as “unsteady” and “idle”, his mother feels that “few young men have less against them, although he couldn’t take his degree” (74, 63). At the same time he wins the reader’s sympathy through his love for Mary, and his constant devotion to her. We are told that he is a gambling man, who also likes to amuse himself with horse-riding. His inclination towards gambling is held in check in three different ways: firstly by Mary’s wish for him to be more serious and responsible, secondly when he sees his brother-in-law Lydgate gambling, and find it “unfitting”, and thirdly when Mr Farebrother warns Fred by telling him that he was tempted not to warn him about his behaviour and win Mary for himself (68, 416, 417).

While not much is said about the Middlemarch men's opinion of the marriage, much is said about the mothers' opinion. Mrs Garth is sorry that Fred Vincy asked Mr Farebrother to speak his case, as she suspects Mr Farebrother's romantic feelings towards Mary, and is provoked by Fred "making a meal of a nightingale and never knowing it" (355).We can guess at Mrs Farebrother's disappointment, as we are told that she defends Mary from Mrs Vincy's critical eye, and hopes to have her for a daughter-in-law (398).

Economic power balance

As regards economy, the spouses go through a transition. At the beginning of the story Mary is working to support her family and to save up for herself. Fred studies theology, which he finds uninteresting, as he is rather waiting for an expected inheritance. However, Fred does not inherit Stone Court. Mr Garth's business is booming, and he is a well-respected man of his standing. Mr Vincy's business on the other hand is not booming, and it is known that he will not support his son for much longer if he does not finish his exams. Mary Garth and Fred Vincy are therefore financially speaking equals, even though there may be some difference in standing. If Fred Vincy had inherited Stone Court, the couple might never have been married. Mary might have found herself in a long-term engagement to a man without morals whom Mary considers as idle and possibly even slightly ridiculous: "I could not love a man who is ridiculous" (321). Penny Kane writes that long engagements were a risk to women in the period in which George Eliot wrote, as a woman might thereby "remove herself from the marriage-marked, and then find herself abandoned by a fiancé who developed other interests and affections as he matured" (95-96). It was therefore indeed a risk to engage oneself to a man with an unsure future at that time.

Intellectual power balance

Mary Garth and Fred Vincy progress from intellectually unequal to equal. Even though we hear that Fred Vincy has been pursuing a degree, he has not really applied himself to his studies, and nothing comes of them. Because of Mrs Garth's background as a teacher we presume that Mary has been educated at home, it is not clear whether she has had any formal education. Anthony Fletcher writes that in the late eighteenth-century there was an expansion of girl's schools (373). The core curriculum looking something like that of Miss Lemon's finishing school in *Middlemarch*: namely things that would become a lady, like language, art

and dancing (ibid). Deep studies of "The classics and 'abstruce sciences', on the other hand, should be avoided at all costs" as it might threaten her role as a woman, the main goal of her education being "their future effectiveness and obedience as wives" (Fletcher, 375).

As Fred works his way up with Mr Garth he understands a new trade and is very much fascinated by it, and by the end we hear that they are both published authors, and they are both given credit for the other's work, for "they had never expected Fred Vincy to write on turnips and mangelwursel" (Eliot, 511). At the same time, Mary's children's book, based on Plutarch, is credited to Fred as "he had been to the University" (511).

Emotional power balance

What motivates the movement towards equality is Fred's devotion to Mary, and his belief that a woman's love makes a man better , but Mary believes what her father has said, namely that "an idle man ought not to exist, much less, be married" (89). Fred Vincy's conscience relies on his love for Mary (153) and his respect for her family. Fred himself asks Mary to help him become a better man (161). Mary admits to Mr Farebrother that she does have love for Fred, and cannot be happy if she knows that he is unhappy (322). This may remind one of Lydgate's speech to Rosamund of how he cannot separate his happiness from hers (412), but in the case of Fred Vincy and Mary Garth, it is requited. An engagement is out of the question, however, until Fred is "worthy of every one's respect" (322).

Conclusion

The power balance seems set, and Fred Vincy respects Mary's opinion, and strives to make himself deserving of her. They are not married until he is "respectable" and their marriage is not only portrayed as exceptionally happy, but is described in the Finale in terms of "a solid *mutual* happiness" (511, my italics). The word mutual may be used here because their happiness is said to depend on the other, a possible objection being that Mary sees herself as the rock keeping her husband in order and bringing him respect, as when she concludes that without her Fred would have been "in debt for horse-hire and cambric pocket-handkerchiefs" (512).

Susan and Caleb Garth

Caleb Garth is the manager of estates in *Middlemarch*, and a poor business man. His wife, Susan Garth, is described as a motherly type of woman, of the same "type as Mary, but handsomer, with more delicacy of feature" (154). She has a firm figure and a firm glance, making one think she will speak her mind if required. However, she is a practical woman, and when she learns that Fred Vincy has drawn them into debt, she is described as an "eccentric woman" as she does not think of how to scorn him, but what actions to take to save her family (157). It is known to Middlemarch society that she has been a great help for her husband, and Caleb trusts her and believes in her opinion (112, 162). She has some education and was a teacher before her marriage (147). The young men of Middlemarch have high regard for her: Fred is more in awe of Mrs Garth, than her husband, and Mr Farebrother sees her as "more of a lady than any matron in the town (153, 251). She herself believes in the subordination and strict role of women and the narrator finds her a little severe on her sex (341, 153).

Caleb Garth on the other hand is one of the narrator's pets: "pardon these details for once - you would have learned to love them if you had known Caleb Garth" (147). Karen Chase argues that Caleb Garth is a conservative figure with "the values of an agrarian tradition, the values of land, labor, and quiet moral dignity ("George Eliot", 53). In addition to being a conservative he is also the past accepting the future, as he accepts the need for the railway (53). He is described by Farebrother in the novel as a "fine fellow" (Eliot, 112), and by the Rector Cadwallader as "an independent fellow: and original, simple-minded fellow" (238). Caleb Garth appreciates his wife because she puts up with him, as he explains to his daughter: "a woman, let her be as good as she may, has got to put up with the life her husband makes for her. Your mother has had to put up with a good deal because of me" (163). He is grateful to her, as he feels he would be worse off without her (349). He is also a man with moral values as we see when he at the same time refuses to work for Mr Bulstrode because of his shady past, and promises not to let the entire town know what he knows. His reason is interesting: "It hurts my mind" (429) Mr Garth tells Mr Bulstrode, at the same time telling the reader, that his consciousness is not in his heart, but in his head. He is both firm and understanding as he can understand a wish to go back and change actions, and will change his mind if what he has heard is proved false. However, he cannot continue working for Mr Bulstrode. Even though Caleb Garth is not an eloquent man, his fairness and his firmness of belief make him a noble man. Anthony G. Bradley argues in his article "Family as Pastoral:

The Garths in Middlemarch" that Caleb Garth is the only one who actually makes the Middlemarch society better, as he is the executor of plans by estate owners (46).

The Garths are not just a couple, but an entire family. It is the only family where the smaller children are described in much detail. We are told that the other families also have younger children, but none are focused on as much as the Garths, creating more of a strong and distinct family unit than the others. Anthony G. Bradley describes the Garth family as pastoral. They are also strongly connected as a family, and this is important as the family was an entity important to the Victorian society. Bradley writes that the Garths are meant to be exemplary and a measuring-stick for the other relationships:

> There seems little doubt that she conceives of the Garth family as the locus for values essentially those of the Comtian-Feuerbachian religion of humanity to which she herself [Eliot] subscribes, and that their conception of love, their attitudes toward work and money are meant to be exemplary. (Bradley, 49)

Indeed, the family is often described in an idyllic manner, for example when Fred sees the family in the garden under an apple tree in chapter 57. Here all their pastoral ideals come forth: love of nature, work and little care for money. The older children are reading, the youngest are playing with the animals and enjoying the fruits of nature.

Economic power balance

The characterisation of the Garth family as pastoral seems fitting, pastoral being described by M. H. Abrams as "an urban poet's nostalgic image of the peace and simplicity of the life of shepherds and other rural folk in an idealized natural setting", a word often used synonymously with idyl (128). I would like to add that their focus on work and productivity complies with the georgic ideal (Baldick, 141). In the Garth family all who are old enough to work are working, and those who are not yet working are busy getting an education. The only exception is Christy who is studying literature, and even he finds education and having work as the more important thing (Eliot, 353). There is no talk of idleness in the Garth family. There is also little focus on money, as Mr. Garth's idea of business is work, not pay: " 'A man without a family would be glad to do it for nothing.' 'Mind you don't, though,' said his wife, lifting her finger" (251).

The house never seems to stand still. As Fred Vincy enters the kitchen to tell Mrs Garth of how he is responsible for giving them great debt, we see Mrs Garth "carrying on several occupations at once" she is baking, washing clothes and teaching the children grammar simultaneously, and neither action seems to be neglected by the presence of the other (154). The family express much love for each other as portrayed in the scene at the breakfast table in chapter 15. Alfred kisses his sister as an expression of gratitude, Susan touches Caleb as she reads over his shoulder, and rests her chin on his head, and the children dance with each other when the good news of more work is received (249, 250).

Economically they seem to be equals, even though Caleb feels "that your belongings have never been on a level with you", and that he is not worthy of her (349). We learn that she had used to work before she was married, and we may therefore speculate on whether she might have saved some money, bringing some property into the marriage. She is, in fact, still a teacher, and has a small income (156). This means that Caleb is not the only breadwinner in the family, and as Susan is a clever woman, she is allowed to make decisions. As a consequence, they seem relatively equal partners. He is a good worker, but he is not a good business man when it comes to economics, as his wife puts it: "Some men take to drinking, and you have taken to working without pay. You must indulge yourself a little less in that" (158).

Emotional and intellectual power balance

Emotionally Susan and Caleb Garth are very much devoted to each other. Where Susan Garth feels she married the cleverest man she has ever known, Caleb Garth feels he has a woman he is not worthy of (349). Compared to what we see in the other marriages the Garths seem to work much more closely together than anyone else in the novel. When Caleb has a letter from Sir James Chettam, he asks his wife to read it (250), and she seems to be let in on most of his movements in the business world, as he trusts her judgements. On the other hand he does not tell her that he has put his name down for Fred Vincy's debt (148). Perhaps this was because of a slip of mind, but perhaps also because he knew Mrs Garth would object. This is hinted at through the narrator's comments on how there might be a conscious reason for Mr. Garth's reluctance to tell his wife, and how he blushes and looks down feeling nervous when he tells her (157). Generally, he will not make any important decisions without talking to his wife, and when it came to money he would follow her (348). Still, Susan Garth's husband might be

"the most easily manageable man in the world", but when he had made up his mind, he was firm, and she knows "she [will] have to perform the singularly difficult task of carrying out her own principle, and to make herself subordinate" (348, 349). This is the reason why she is pained when she has to tell her husband she has told Fred Vincy what she thinks of him and how he has behaved towards Mary and Mr Farebrother; by this act she has then gone against his will, even though she does not have the same belief in Fred as Caleb does.

Conclusion

It seems that Mary and Fred Vincy copy the marriage of Mary's parents and are very similar in many ways, as the power balance appears set. In the Garth marriage it is Caleb who is the superior, and Susan who is subordinate, but in the Vincy marriage it seems it is Mary who is superior, and Fred who is subordinate. However, it seems that copying the Garth marriage leads to happiness, as the Vincy's are described as very happy. We know that Caleb relies much on his wife, also in relation to his own business. They become more of a unit, and are also described as a whole family, introducing the smaller children. There is also something else: they are never wealthy, in fact the Garths are described as poor: "However, they did not mind it" (159). They are not beautiful, they are not rich. On the other hand, the readers are made to understand that they do not rely on these shallow measures of value, but rather on a moral-religious belief in the virtues of work, love and family, as Bradley has suggested (42). The Garths are in this way a part of the realist moralism, and the moral preaching of the narrator.

Lady Celia and Sir James Chettam

Where Dorothea is considered clever, "Celia had more common-sense" (Eliot, 5) and is described by her sister as "a great pet" who has never been "naughty in her life" (140). Society also favours Celia "as being so amiable and innocent-looking" (7). Celia does seem to consider herself as slightly more grounded than Dorothea. The sisters seem very different. Dorothea cannot stand the thought of marrying Sir James Chettam, as her family would want her "to be a great deal on horseback, and have the garden altered and new conservatories, to fill up my days" (227), which is how we can imagine Celia's days being like until the arrival of her primary contribution to the marriage: little baby Arthur. In motherhood, Celia feels "a new sense of her mental solidity and calm wisdom" (304). Karen Chase maintains, as I have

mentioned, that Rosamund is the only character that stays in the convention of femininity ("George Eliot"67), yet I believe that she forgot, or did not count, Celia Brooke. In every way Celia seems an amiable, feminine woman, with an addition of being a mother (which Rosamund never really was, losing her baby). She is feminine in every way but one, as Celia for a brief moment begins on a radical statement: "men know best about everything, except what women know better" (Eliot, 455). However, this statement is laughed away by Dorothea and made less radical by Celia herself as she only meant "babies and those things" (455). Bert C. Hornback argues that Celia is an opposite of Dorothea, and is "a thoroughly conventional young woman of her class, whose primary interest is in marriage, and who expects her husband to 'think' for her" (613). He compares Celia with Rosamund, pointing out that the only difference between them is that Celia is not as selfish as Rosamund (Hornback, 614). I both agree and disagree with Hornback that Celia is not selfish because there is no necessity for it (614). She is, indeed, married to a wealthy man of status and secure living. On the other hand Celia is not raised to be self-absorbed in the same way as Rosamund has been, and is not described as being aware of her sexuality in the way that Rosamund is.

Sir James Chettam is described as a Prince Charming, as a "blooming Englishman of the red whiskered type" with "sleekly-waving blond hair" (Eliot, 11, 19). The narrator likes James, and describes him as "made of excellent human dough" (14). Bert C. Hornback argues that Sir James "can be a sexist – 'a woman is bound to be cautious and listen to those who know the world better that she does' " (Hornback, 61, with ref to Eliot, 454). He also argues that Chettam is "one of the most enlightened males in the novel", as he "had the rare merit of knowing that his talents … would not set the smallest stream in the country on fire" (Hornback, 611; Eliot, 14), meaning that he is not the cleverest man. He therefore wishes for a decisive wife to whom he can apply for help. He is a kind man, willing to help his parishioners, and set Dorothea's plans into action.

Intellectual power balance

Sir James Chettam wanted a decisive wife, but whether Celia is this woman is questionable. She is described to us as a woman of "common-sense", and she is willing to speak her mind to her sister when she finds it necessary. However, in her marriage she appears as subordinated to James: "there never *was* a better judge than James" (304) and seems ready to follow him in everything: "I should not give up to James when I knew he was wrong, like you

[Dorothea] used to do to Mr Casaubon" (455). Celia is comfortable following her husband's judgements. On the other hand, she does finally speak her mind in the Finale, which I will return to in the conclusion of this thesis.

Economic power balance

James and Celia both come from good families, and even though James has a title Celia's connections are also "unquestionably 'good' " (5). Since Dorothea is given an annual allowance, we can assume that Celia most likely is too. Both Dorothea and Mrs Cadwallader advocate the marriage, Dorothea not being aware of Sir James' preference of her. Sir James' preference is easily turned when Mrs Cadwallader tells him about Dorothea's engagement to Mr Casaubon, and of Celia's preference of him.

It seems that Celia becomes more ambitious as well when she has her son. The narrator discloses a scene where Celia wishes James had been of higher nobility: "It would be very nice, though, if he [the baby] were a Viscount … He might have been, if James had been and Earl" (500). When her mother-in-law disagrees, she brushes it all away by talking of the baby's new tooth, hiding her ambition for her son (500). She admits to Mrs Cadwallader and her mother-in-law that "it was nicer to be a 'Lady' than a 'Mrs' " (500). So even though Celia is less selfish than Rosamund, she is a little vein on behalf of "little Arthur", the "infantine Bouddha" (500).

Emotional power balance

Celia and James Chettam seem to be a more physical couple. Celia feels that "where there was a baby, things were right enough" (304), meaning either that no one can be sad around a baby, or that when a couple has a baby, they have physical love and must be happy. When there is company, she seats herself so that she is physically close to her husband (501), and is in this way showing love, and physical attraction.

Conclusion

There seems to be no struggle for power in this marriage, and the balance is set. They both play their roles the way that society requires them to do: Sir James goes about his business, and Celia is the Victorian idol, "The Angel in the House", taking care of her baby, being

amiable and commonsensical and not making up her own opinions, but following and trusting her husband. He, on his part, makes sure that she is never unhappy.

Elinor and Humphrey Cadwallader

Mrs Elinor Cadwallader is married to the Rector Humphrey Cadwallader. She is a woman with "a thin but well-built figure" (34) with a high colour and dark eyes (33). She is considered as an important person who humours all of Freshitt and Tipton (33, 34). She appears very outspoken, and a lover of gossip. She is herself of noble birth, believing in birth rather than wealth, despising the "vulgar rich", and "[detesting] high prices" (39). Mrs Cadwallader "pleaded poverty, pared down prices, and cut jokes in the most companionable manner, though with a turn of the tongue that let you know who she was" (34), meaning that she let people know she had a higher station while she at the same time was companionable and was poor. As the wife of a Rector and with four children, she has learned to be economical (36).

Elinor Cadwallader is not described as a beautiful woman, but her husband is portrayed as downright ugly: "Elinor used to tell her sisters that she married me for my ugliness – it was so various and amusing that it has quite conquered her prudence" (44). Humphrey Cadwallader is "a large man, with full lips and a sweet smile; very plain and rough in his exterior", with a good and infectious humour, which is probably what Sir James Chettam is referring to when he says "it was easy enough for a woman to love you" (43, 44). There is an amusing ironical tone in the manner the Cadwalladers speak of and with each other. He teases her with having married him because he was so poor and ugly; how "all the men wondered how a woman could like me" (503-4). She, on her part teases him for his good nature, and his resistance towards speaking negatively of any one. When Elinor jokes that the only reason Humphrey will not speak ill of Casaubon is Humphrey's love of fishing, and Casaubon's ownership in a trout-stream, he answers her with irony: "It is a very good quality in a man to have a trout-stream" (45)

Economic power balance

It seems like Elinor and Humphrey were unequal economically speaking, as she is from a good family, and we are told she married Mr Cadwallader against her family's wish: "her

friends had a very poor opinion of the match she made when she married me" (44). We do not know his background, and because of Elinor's ironic way of speaking we are not sure if he is from a good family, or if she is just joking about how she would not have married him if not for his name: "As if you had not been a Cadwallader! Does any one suppose that I would have taken such a monster as you by any other name?" (504). Indeed Lady Chettam, Sir James' mother also refers to his family by saying that "Elinor cannot be said to have descended below her rank" (504), meaning that the only objection to Mr Cadwallader was his choice of profession, and not his station or birth. It might have been his income that troubled the De Bracys: "she vexed her friends by marrying me: I had hardly a thousand a-year – I was a lout" (36, 503). Either way it seems Elinor married Humphrey for love, not reason.

Emotional and intellectual power balance

Not much is said about the love between the Cadwalladers. The sarcastic tone between them seems like a form of inside joke between the two, rather than a sign of resentment, and it appears to us like they always joke in this way, since no one in their company reacts against their tone. Through their shared tone they seem to be intellectual equals, though with different interests. They seem in many ways opposites, she is thin and small, he is large, she is a gossip, he would rather not intervene, and so on. (34, 43, 39, 46)

Conclusion

The balance seems set in this marriage, albeit their sarcastic tone may be misleading as to how they really feel about each other. She is of a better family than him, but sacrificed it all for love and she seems happy in her situation, just as the Rector seems to be a happy and trustworthy husband. They live a simple life, and are not extravagant or self-indulgent in any way. The Cadwalladers are an older couple, like the Vincys, the Bulstrodes and the Garths. They live a simple country life like the Garths, and were married against her family's will like the Ladislaws. They are a religious family, in many ways like the Bulstrodes and the Casaubons. To my knowledge, no previous critics have commented on this marriage, and it seems a missed opportunity, since their marriage is described in such detail, and serves as a basis of comparison to many of the other marriages.

Lucy and Walter Vincy

Lucy Vincy is forty-five, but is still without a wrinkle and, seemingly, without any grievances: she considers herself "a happy wife" (63, 220). Mrs Vincy's feelings towards Mrs Garth explain much of her opinions of women and women's role. Mrs Garth is educated to some extent, having worked as a teacher before her marriage, and is still earning money for the family. This is very foreign to Mrs Vincy who feels that "no woman who was better off needed that sort of thing" (147) meaning an education. This may account for Rosamund Vincy's limited education. She is a wife and a mother, and takes a lot of pride in her children, and loves them very much. We can see this particularly when Fred is taken sick with fever, as "Mr Vincy, who doated on his wife, was more alarmed on her account than on Fred's" (sic, 167). She changes with worry into a "sick bird with languid eye and plumage ruffled" (167). This love for her children is the reason why she softens towards Mary Garth, as she sees her children delighting in Mary's storytelling (398).

Mr Vincy likes to please people and "was not a rock", not being particularly fixed in any matter (215). Like his daughter he will not do what displeases him, and does not inquire about Lydgate's income and ability to keep Rosamund in a respectable manner (215). He is also proud that Lydgate, who is of a higher station, wants to marry Rosamund: "Mr Vincy was a little in awe of him [Lydgate], a little vain that he wanted to marry Rosamund" (215). He understands Lucy's love for her children, and likes to spoil them himself, as he does not like to do displeasing things. He even sends Lucy to tell Rosamund that he will not support her marriage financially (214). On the other hand, he will let Fred stay in his house without paying for his board, even after he has decided to work for Mr Garth, and will let Mrs Vincy "go on spoiling" Fred (352). It is easy to understand why Rosamund does what she likes: she has always done it. Her father will not deny her anything, and neither will her mother.

Economic power balance

As Mr Vincy is the mayor of Middlemarch, he has some standing, but not enough for his family to be invited to the Grange: "for Mr Brooke, always objecting to go too far, would not have chosen that his nieces should meet the daughter of a Middlemarch manufacturer, unless it were on a public occasion" (58). The Vincys are on "condescending terms" with the Garths (146). On the other hand, they are connected to the Garths through old Mr Featherstone, who

first married Mr Garth's sister, and after her death he married Mrs Vincy's sister (146). The Vincys are described as having "the readiness to enjoy, the rejection of all anxiety, and the belief in life as a marry lot" (103). They live in a happy-go-lucky manner and "the children had no standard of economy, and the elder ones retained some infantine notion that their father might pay for anything if he would" (146). At the same time as a religious Evangelical shadow is cast upon the country, there is fun and games at the Vincys (103). Robert Liddell views this as exceptional in Middlemarch as they "have a cheerful house, and are not afraid to enjoy themselves" (150). With rebellious workers breaking machines and a fear of ruin, Mr Vincy has good reason to be worried about his economy (Eliot, 220). Mr Vincy says "The times are as tight as can be; everybody is being ruined" (214). Still, the narrator tells us he has "expensive Middlemarch habits", and his wife can buy anything on "running accounts with tradespeople, which [gives] a cheerful sense of getting everything one wants without any question of payment" (146). It is no wonder that Rosamund does not understand economic trouble and the threat of bankruptcy. Like I have stated earlier, Penny Kane writes that if the woman came into the marriage with no economic values, she would be "expected to be largely decorative" and would have little or no say in financial matters (108). Because "Mr Vincy had descended a little, having taken an innkeeper's daughter" (62), Lucy Vincy might be one of these women whose main job is to be pretty and to raise children. This could very well be the reason why Lucy does not take any part in financial matters.

Intellectual and emotional power balance

Not much is said about the intellectual power balance between the Vincys. From what we understand they stay in their traditional roles, and do not try to challenge these. Lucy Vincy is described as a happy wife, and from what we hear of Walter Vincy's feelings for his wife, he is a happy husband, and they have a loving and caring relationship.

Conclusion

It seems, all in all, that Mrs Vincy is a happy wife, who loves her children, and does not intrude in her husband's business. As a shopkeeper's daughter we can imagine that she did not come into the marriage with much money, and she has therefor little right to have a say in business. On the other hand, she has given birth to several children. And still she is a vivid

woman, with no wrinkles and she wears “pink cap-strings” (63), probably signifying her youthfulness.

Nicholas and Harriet Bulstrode

Nicholas Bulstrode is the banker, and Harriet, his wife, is the sister of Walter Vincy. Harriet Bulstrode is a very devoted wife. She believes in her husband, thinking “that her husband was one of those men whose memoirs should be written when they died” (217), also finding him “an excellent man whose piety carried a particular eminence in belonging to a layman” (379-380). She is described as affectionate, and even after her husband’s disgrace is known she is described by Mrs Plymdale, her friend, as a good wife, and indeed him as a good husband: “She thinks her husband the first of men. It’s true he has never denied her anything” (324, 379, 459). Harriet appears to be a beautiful, good woman who “never consciously injured any human being” (458). Even though she is a pious woman, she is still well dressed, dressing in “very neat patterns always”, and even dying hat feathers to match her outfit (460).

Towards the end of the novel, however, we discover that Nicholas Bulstrode is the least moral figure in Middlemarch. His life before Middlemarch was covered with lies and deceit, powered by his ambition and egotism. And indeed he is responsible for the death of Mr Raffels (438-439). However the narrator softens the blow as she writes that he wants a spiritual rescue, using the last thirty years in what he believes to be God’s cause (383). At the same time the reader learns that “He was simply a man whose desires had been stronger than his theoretic beliefs, and who had gradually explained the gratification of his desires into satisfactory agreement with those believes” (383). Bulstrode adapts his beliefs to his desires. The narrator is then continuing to explain that this adaption of the truth is “a process which shows itself occasionally in us all” (383).

Emotional and intellectual power balance

Nicholas Bulstrode married his wife “out of a thorough inclination still subsisting” and does much to please her (like write the letter to Featherstone on behalf of Fred Vincy) as he is disposed to do “in things worldly and indifferent” to him (380, 187). And even though there are some in Middlemarch who feel that in the for-better-or-for-worse, this worse is enough to separate from him, she is a loyal being. Mrs Bulstrode, being a righteous woman, and a

woman of good moral values, sobs farewell to the for-better, and prepares for the for-worse to come (463). Her for-better dresses are put away as she puts on the simple black for-worse dress (463). Her sacrifice for her husband shows on her face and in her greying hair, something which makes Bulstrode desperate to comfort and please her (507).

Economic power balance

Economically they seem to be equals as he is a man working his way up, while she is a woman from an old manufacturer family, and the sister of the mayor, Mr Vincy. In Middlemarch it was felt that Bulstrode should not have married such a "handsome comfortable woman", but rather a more "ghastly and melancholy person" to suit him and his piety (458).

Conclusion

The marriage balance of the Bulstrodes seems set in the beginning. He handles business and is the religious and moral leader of the family. Mrs Bulstrode is a more typical wife, arranging dinner parties and raising her two girls. Economically they seem equals, she being from a good family and he having worked his way to a fortune. Intellectually he has been the moral leader, but she too is a woman of good moral values, and perhaps with more empathy for the people around them. Emotionally they are very much devoted to each other. They both appear affectionate, also equally appreciating their affectionate relationship. However, there is unbalance as Harriet discovers Nicholas' history and the disgrace that is brought upon him by Raffels, and the allegations towards him concerning Raffels' death. The pedestal on which Harriet had placed Nicholas has now been demolished, her loyalty now placing her on a moral high-ground, making her the martyr for their marriage. She ends up having all the power in the marriage. The Bulstrodes leave Middlemarch, and Mr Bulstrode now has no choice but to help Mrs Bulstrode's family. I agree with Alexander Welsh as he argues that "The interests of man and wife are not finally identical, yet this relation is supportive rather than destructive" (66). Nina Auerbach argues that "The truest marriage we see is a marriage of guilt" (97). I am not sure it becomes clear what Auerbach means when she argues that Harriet Bulstrode is the "worldliest character" of the novel (98). However, I do agree that Mrs Bulstrode's actions stand as "The novel's only saintly self-renunciation" (98). Alan Shelston describes Harriet

Bulstrode in a fitting way when he argues that “This most insignificant of women in a novel of very active women is the one who will show unqualified heroism” (663).

Conclusion

This study of all the marriages in the novel has shown that one cannot accept Karen Chase's arguments on the portrayal of gender in the novel. Karen Chase argues in her book *George Eliot: Middlemarch* that George Eliot "dissolved the old fixities in the typology of gender" and creates characters that blur the line between femininity and masculinity. ("George Eliot" 67). Some of the marriages do indeed imply that the roles of gender are too restrictive. To some extent I agree that the characters of Will and Dorothea challenge the femininity and masculinity of the Victorian society (64-65). Moreover, the marriage of Fred Vincy and Mary Garth turns the power structure upside-down, where she is the dominant and he the submissive (67). But in my eyes, the marriage of Tertius Lydgate and Rosamund Vincy is unhappy because of a struggle for power, and not because of "their mutual willingness to play out the fate of their gender assignments" (65). He is expecting "The Angel in the House", but Rosamund breaks with her gender role, wishing to be the Queen with no King to rule her. Because of her reluctance to succumb to a man's will, I do not agree wholly with Chase's statement that Rosamund is "the only principal character in the book who remains firmly embedded within the traditional configurations of gender" (67). By arguing this, I believe that Chase has left out many other characters from the novel. For example, neither Mrs Vincy, Mrs Garth, nor Lady Chettam can be said to be anything but feminine. Mrs Cadwallader may challenge her husband's views, but because of her station, age and marriage to a clergyman it is perfectly acceptable for her to pass judgement on both Mr Brooke's his political view, as well as on Dorothea's bad choices of husbands in the small fictional town of Middlemarch (34, 503). However this challenging of gender roles is only successful when the spouses agree to this power balance: as with the factors of economic, intellectual and emotional power, the marriages are happy when the balance is set and unhappy when it is not.

Economic power balance

In the marriages of the young Vincys, the Garths, the Chettams and the older Vincys, the power balance seems set. However, the balance is set in many different ways. In the young Vincy marriage, as well as in the senior Garth marriage, there is much equality, with both parties contributing to the family's economy. Mary Vincy writes a book that is published, which we assume she earns something from, and we know that her mother Susan Garth earns

money (511,154). Mrs Garth is let in on the financial situation of the family, and she also takes responsibility for it. Mrs Vincy is also let in on the financial situation but is neither asked to, nor does she herself take responsibility for the financial situation of the family. As regards the Chettam marriage, and also the marriage of the Bulstrodes (which is thrown off balance late in the novel), we do not hear anything of the wives taking any part in business, even though these marriages' situations are quite different. Where the Chettams are of the nobility, the Bulstrodes have worked their way to money, Mr Bulstrode being new money, and Mrs Bulstrode coming from a manufacturing family. The narrator portrays these marriages as happy and content until Mr Raffels happens upon Mr Bulstrode, and renders the Bulstrodes unhappy.

The marriages that are unstable on the other hand, are the Casaubons, the Ladislaws, the Lydgates, the Cadwalladers, and the Bulstrodes at the end of the novel. The Casaubon marriage does not have a set balance economically speaking, because Dorothea's husband uses his financial advantage to control her. This fails because of Dorothea's lack of interest in material wealth; she is more interested in spiritual wealth, which I will come back to. When Dorothea marries Ladislaw, she sacrifices her economic wealth for him. The fact that she belongs to a higher social station than him creates an unbalance.

The Cadwalladers and the Ladislaws are both in the same situation. Because of Elinor's marriage to a man her family does not approve of, the Cadwallader marriage can be seen as a template for the Ladislaw marriage, showing that it is possible to have a stable power balance, economically speaking, if the emotional and intellectual power is set.

The Lydgate marriage comes off balance when the husband is unable to control his finances. Rosamund's answer to Tertius's debt "What can I do, Tertius?"(367), is very different from Susan Garth's reaction to Caleb Garth's question "What can we do, Susan? (157). We can read this as some kind of proof of naturalism portrayal of Rosamund Lydgate's character. Rosamund is a product of her upbringing, and her mother, Lucy Vincy, is never expected to take responsibility for the family finances.

Emotional power balance

Emotionally it seems it is the marriages of Ladislaw, young Vincy, Garth, Chettam, Cadwallader and Vincy that have a set power balance. One cannot entirely exclude the

Bulstrodes, as the balance of power is stable for most of the novel. In many of the marriages the love and devotion seem to be mutual, though love is not described in equal detail in all of the marriages. The love of Mary Garth and Fred Vincy stands out as it is an old and faithful love remaining from childhood. Karen Chase describes this as "an ancient love, an old, old passion dating from their earliest consciousness" ("George Eliot"80). The Ladislaw marriage is also based on love, as it is described in much detail in the novel. Dorothea does not marry Will for any other reason than love.

As regards the Casaubons, the Lydgates and also in part the Bulstrode, these marriages appear unbalanced. In the marriage between Dorothea and Edward Casaubon there seems to be less love, and more hero-worship, leaving Mr Casaubon on a pedestal so high that he may easily fall down. Mrs Bulstrode does something similar, when she holds her husband above all others, whereas it turns out he is just a man. In the Lydgate marriage we are told that Rosamund enjoys attention and that whenever attention is turned away from her, she finds a new man to flatter her through romance. Tertius on the other hand feels unfulfilled by the romance in his marriage: "The first great disappointment had been borne: the tender devotedness and docile adoration of the ideal wife must be renounced, and life must be taken up on a lower stage of expectation, as it is by men who have lost their limbs" (Eliot, 403).The Lydgate marriage can be compared to the Bulstrodes' because in both cases the husbands disappoint their wives' expectations of them. However, the women's reactions are very different. Perhaps it is because of her love for her husband that Harriet does not run away from her wifely duties, not leaving her husband's side, but rather mourning what seems to be the end of a happy marriage, as she starts dressing in simpler, more religious clothing (463).

Intellectual power balance

The young Vincys, the Garths, Chettams, Cadwallader and older Vincys have a stable balance of power when it comes to intellect. In all cases but the older Vincys' we also get the impression that there is some equality between the spouses. In the Vincy marriage we are not told whether Lucy Vincy is particularly clever or whether or not she has good morals, we are only told that she minds about shopping and her children (146, 167). Similarly Celia puts away her good sense when she is married, but we are told that she is transformed, feeling much wiser, when she becomes a mother (304).

I argue that the unset marriages are the Casaubon, Ladislaw, Lydgate, Vincy and Bulstrode marriages. In the Casaubon marriage there is an intellectual difference only where Dorothea creates one. On the one hand, Edward Casaubon is very learned, and does indeed know much more than Dorothea. On the other hand Dorothea is much younger than Edward, and because of his extensive studies he is bound to know more than her. With her creation of the father-daughter relationship there is bound to be an imbalance of power between the two. Dorothea's energy and wish to do something extraordinary disturbs the equilibrium between them, because in time she becomes more and more frustrated by her inability to apply her energy to anything worthwhile.

However, for many readers in the nineteenth-century, the intellectual inequality would be the reality in their marriage. The men would have worked, and have received a better education than the women, thereby gaining an intellectual upper hand over their poorly educated wives who would mostly stay at home. Lucy Vincy, for instance, feels that it is unnatural for a woman to seek knowledge (147). Celia Chettam shows how this works in practice, as she claims that she will not oppose her husband, even when he is wrong (455). As regards the Bulstrodes, the reader gains so little information about Harriet Bulstrode's mental capacities that it is hard to say anything about the intellectual side of this marriage.

It is interesting to look at who has the moral authority in the marriages portrayed in this novel. The connection between Tertius Lydgate and Nickolas Bulstrode creates a parallel between them and their wives. The similarity between the women makes it pertinent to keep Harriet Bulstrode in mind for the sake of comparison when critiquing Rosamund Lydgate. Nina Auerbach makes the point, that "Harriet Bulstrode is the paradigm of wifehood, an implicit reproach to her niece Rosamund" (98). They come from the same background, but still act differently in a crisis; where Rosamund pushes Tertius further away, Harriet stands loyally by her husband. Auerbach also argues that Mrs Bulstrode "even seems a retrospective reproach to Dorothea", as Mrs Bulstrode is willing to carry her husband's shame, while Mrs Casaubon is unwilling to carry Mr Casaubon's failure (98).

The marriages of the Bulstrodes and the Vincys are in many ways comparable, because they are both older couples of similar station. Like Harriet Bulstrode, her sister in law, Lucy Vincy, always looks good and dresses well, though many feel it is too well. Mrs Vincy wears pink cap strings, perhaps more fitting for a young girl, and Mrs Bulstrode dresses well for being married to such a religious man as Mr Bulstrode (Eliot, 460). Like Mr

Bulstrode, Mr Vincy is a businessman. However, where one man is pious, the other likes to enjoy life: for example, we understand that Mr Bulstrode is a thin man because of his "regimen" (100, 82), and Mr Vincy is proud of his girth, saying "Life wants padding" (82).

The "Finale"

A preface, like *Middlemarch*'s Prelude, has, according to Gerard Genette's *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, "as its chief function to ensure that the text is read properly" (197). A postface, like the Finale of *Middlemarch*, on the other hand "can hope to fulfil only a curative, or corrective function" (239). A postface is there to show what the text is about and to discuss it with the reader (237). The Finale posits marriage as a grand topic in *Middlemarch*, and indeed in literary history: "Marriage, which has been the bourne of so many narratives, is still a great beginning… It is still the beginning of the home epic" (Eliot, 510). In this way, the narrator concludes that marriage is a major topic in the novel, for the reader to investigate and reflect on further. The narrator then invites us to hear how the characters of the novel are doing later in their lives. As the Finale functions as a type of conclusion, what kind of conclusion does it offer?

The Finale attributes a happy-ever-after type of ending to the marriage of Mary and Fred Vincy, the narrator once again inciting the reader to consider Mary (and this time also Fred) as if she existed outside of the fictional world of the Middlemarch story (512). In this happily-ever-after scene Mary and Fred are seen as two lovers, and likened to when they were first engaged with an umbrella-ring (512). In this way the love of Mary and Fred is represented as the long lasting love of commitment, and in many ways also of equality. When the narrator tells the reader of Fred's pig-in-a-poke, the purchase of a viciously tempered horse, she also explains that "There was no more redress for this than for the discovery of bad temper after marriage – which of course old companions were aware of before the ceremony" (152). Fred and Mary know each other's tempers, and therefore avoid a pig-in-a-poke-marriage.

The Lydgate marriage, on the other hand, can be viewed as a pig-in-a-poke. The marriage of the Lydgates is not portrayed with such happiness and love as that of the young Vincys, but rather in terms of bitterness and power struggle. The readers are told that Tertius Lydgate considered himself a failure and that he dies young (512). The narrator writes: "As

the years went on he opposed her less and less, whence Rosamund concluded that he had learned the value of her opinion" (512). As we know, Rosamund's opinions and decisions do not give good results, and "She simply continued to be mild in her temper, inflexible in her judgement, disposed to admonish her husband, and able to frustrate him by stratagem" (512). On the other hand, one might also be inclined to sympathize with her as she, after Tertius' death, is married again and regards this second happy marriage as "a reward for her patience with Tertius, whose temper never became faultless, and to the last occasionally let slip a bitter speech which was more memorable than the signs he made of his repentance" (513). We can wonder whether this judgement is Rosamund's or the narrator's. In any case, the marriage is described as a constant struggle for power intellectually, and unbalanced emotionally. This marriage seems off balance throughout the novel.

The Chettams are also briefly described in the Finale, as Celia is allowed to see her sister after sobbing to her husband (513). James "being unused to see her in tears" and hearing her wail "such as he had never heard before" could be seen as proof of their happiness because he has never seen her unhappy. When she claims he is unkind, his reaction is shock, and a will to succumb to her wishes immediately: "I will do anything you like" (514). We can see this as a marriage where both wishes for the other to be happy, Lady Celia succumbing to Sir James' wishes until the love for her sister overpowers her. James on his side will do anything for her not to be unhappy, and the narrator explains "Where women love each other, men learn to smother their mutual dislike" (514).

The description of Dorothea's marriage to Will Ladislaw is the most troubling, as it is not easy to see whether it fits into a happy or unhappy description. Karen Chase describes the Ladislaw marriage as happy ("George Eliot", 72). However, I believe that the Finale places a seed of doubt in the reader. According to the Finale "Dorothea herself had no dreams of being praised above other women, feeling that there was always something better which she might have done, if she had only been better and known better" (Eliot, 513), and here we understand that she is still yearning for a greater meaning in life. Unlike the Lydgate marriage, there is no bitterness in the marriage of Dorothea and Will: "Still, she never repented that she had given up position and fortune to marry Will Ladislaw", and "They were bound to each other by a love stronger than any impulses which could have marred it" (513). Still, the readers are told that "Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and

mother" (513), the narrator making us feel that Dorothea's energies do not have an outlet in the marriage to Ladislaw. And with the Prelude and first chapter's associating her with Saint Theresa, we feel that she really becomes, as the Prelude warned; "a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heartbeats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centering in some long-recognisable deed" (3). The narrator indeed writes that "no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done" (513). There is no way for a "new Theresa" to change the world (514). Dorothea's sacrifice is a sad one, although the narrator claims that there exists "far sadder" sacrifices than those of Dorothea "whose story we know" (515). Even though the narrator ends by saying that "the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts", and that Dorothea's energy breaks up and has smaller outlets, like the delta of a river (in other words saying that it is not *so* bad), the narrator also writes that "Her finely touched spirit had still its fine issues, though they were not widely visible" (515). The Dorothea of chapter one is still here, but she is faded, making the power balance of the Ladislaws appear unset.

Final Conclusion

Through this study we have seen clear patterns of marriages that are both set and unset in all categories. The marriages that are clearly off-balance in terms of all the categories I have created are those of the Casaubons and Lydgates. Not ticking all the boxes, but in the end still a marriage with an unset power balance, is the Bulstrode marriage. The clearly set marriages are the young Vincys, the Garths, the Chettams and Vincy marriage. The Cadwallader marriage is stable in all categories but the economical. However their marriage is still balanced in all other ways, and is described as happy. The Ladislaw marriage is not so clear, however, because of Dorothea's sacrifice, and her yearning for a vocation gives it all an unsatisfactory taste, and even though it is described as loving, it does not seem to tick all the boxes, and I therefore argue that the power balance is unset, and that the marriage, all in all, is described as unhappy.

Middlemarch is a multi-faceted novel. As I have argued, the representation of marriage plays a dominant role, and it should therefore be recognized as a topic of great importance in this significant novel, indeed the Finale points to it as a topic of great importance. As we have seen the narrator devotes considerable attention to describing the married relationships and to determining what she considers a successful, as opposed to an

unsuccessful, marriage. Based on how the marriages are described one can see clearly that the marriages with a set power balance (and to some degree also equality) are described as happy, while the marriages where the power balance is not set are portrayed as unhappy.

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