

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Disillusionment in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*

Bakalářská práce

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Anglická filologie

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Olomouc 2016

Podklad pro zadání BAKALÁŘSKÉ práce studenta

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TÉMA ČESKY:

Deziluze v románu Middlemarch od George Eliot

NÁZEV ANGLICKY:

Disillusionment in George Eliot's Middlemarch

VEDOUcí PRÁCE:

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ZÁSADY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:

The concept of Victorian England's moral principles, elements of disillusion in the novel.
The perception of the feeling of guilt of the main characters in the novel, self-doubt, premonitions, omens, symbols.
Analysis of the roles of the characters with regard to the Victorian society, especially the psychological consequences of the bitter reality of life and subsequent disillusionment.

SEZNAM DOPORUČENÉ LITERATURY:

Altick, Richard. Victorian People and Ideas. New York & London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1973.
Carroll, David. George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretations: A Reading of the Novels. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.
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Williams, Dorice. The Angel Out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2002.

Podpis studenta:


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Datum:

12.5.2015
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Podpis vedoucího práce:


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Datum:

12.5.2015
.....

Prohlašuji, že jsem svou bakalářskou práci na téma „Disillusionment in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*“ vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucí práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne Podpis

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to my supervisor Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D. who patiently shared her knowledge, resources and advice with me, and who provided me with her kind encouragement and support.

Table of Contents

Introduction	6
1 Introducing George Eliot	7
1.1 Victorian England.....	7
1.2 Victorian Literature	7
1.3 George Eliot's Life Reflected in Her Work.....	9
1.4 George Eliot's Life Reflected in <i>Middlemarch</i>	11
2 The Theme of Disillusionment.....	13
2.1 Defining the Theme.....	13
2.2 Finding the Theme	14
3 Model Characters of <i>Middlemarch</i>	16
3.1 Dorothea Brooke.....	16
3.2 Rosamond Vincy	19
3.3 Tertius Lydgate	23
3.4 Fred Vincy and Mary Garth	25
3.5 Mrs. Bulstrode, Mr. Brooke, Mr. Farebrother.....	26
Conclusion	31
Resumé.....	34
Bibliography	37
Annotation.....	41
Anotace.....	42

Introduction

George Eliot's perceptiveness and sensitivity to the social problems of Victorian period are what makes her works so alluring. Her essays, novels and novellas are a kept account of the period-related issues, hopes and believes. Most of all, the vast scope of her novel *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* (1872) provides the readers with a rich record of varied themes that range from politics, religion, economics, science and industrialization to the smaller yet not any less important personal issues of family, love and relationships. One recurring theme, however, is the disillusionment that surfaces in every aspect of the story.

Eliot set her novel *Middlemarch* in the midst of social reforms and political changes in England but managed to keep the story a record of youth, love and lost ideals in which a possible parallels to the temporary society are to be found. In a way, this makes *Middlemarch* a timeless novel.

This thesis is concerned with finding and analyzing the individual elements that establish the theme of disillusionment in George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch*, while providing a link between the novel and the social morals of Victorian period George Eliot experienced.

The first part of this thesis introduces the author in the context of her contemporaries and explores the most prominent moral principles and values of the Victorian period that are employed in *Middlemarch*.

The chapters that follow are focused on the analysis of the main characters of the novel that best illustrate the progress of the disillusionment. The main characters that best represent given social classes are put in comparison that depicts the similarity of both their hopes and the folly of their actions.

The last part of the thesis concludes the analysis from the previous chapters and summarizes the findings.

1 Introducing George Eliot

1.1 Victorian England

The period that falls under the rule of Queen Victoria (1819-1901) is now known as the Victorian era. It is characterized by its specific sets of moral values, concepts of morality, social prudence and prejudice, as well as progress, industrialization, stability and economical growth. With the Victorian era came the Victorian literature and also the eventual end of Romanticism. Victorian literature became an umbrella term for all the literature that was written by the authors such as Gaskell, Disraeli, Thackeray or Dickens, although the latter mentioned still used the themes connected with Romanticism.

Even though George Eliot lived in the Victorian era and wrote about it, her focus on capturing an essence of a realistic life is what would make her works an example of Realism. According to M. H. Abrahams, the Victorian literature can be divided into 'early Victorian' and 'late Victorian' literature, with the milestone being the year 1870.¹ The writings were marked with the 'sexual priggishness, narrow-mindedness, complacency, the stress on respectability' and they first raised 'the woman question'.² While it is true that Eliot paid a lot of attention to the detail so that *Middlemarch* became a very thorough depiction of 'a study of provincial life', as the subheading promises, it is not to be overlooked that her novel bears several features typical for Victorian literature. The focus of Eliot's works is characteristic for the given period since the writings 'dealt with or reflected contemporary social, economic, religious and intellectual issues and problems'.³

1.2 Victorian Literature

Focusing on the literature, the period of Victorian England was specified by several concepts that reoccur in the works of the period-typical authors. One of these features is the existence of an omniscient, ever present narrator that does not hesitate to intervene into the course of the story and disrupt the narrative with the story teller's own perceptions, views and similar inputs.

¹ M.H. Abrahams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1969), 153.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

To list a couple of examples, there is an intervening narrator in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Mary Barton*, or a patronizing narrator in William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is no exclusion. Eliot provides her readers with a guide who has the tendency to fall into moralizing and philosophical rants that slow down the pace of the story. The omniscient narrator comments on 'the events of the story, and character's behaviour and speech'⁴ so the role of the narrator remains prominent throughout the course of the whole novel. Eliot's narrator is one of the means the theme of disillusionment is established. This is best illustrated in the final chapter in which Eliot implies that the world would not come to witness another heroic deed like the ones that are known from the ancient past, simply because the society and other circumstances are not in favour of allowing any more heroism. The measuring scale of the past epic deeds has to be demoted to suit the modern, Victorian era. As Garrett Stewart puts it:

'Eliot thus acknowledges a world entirely post-epic in both its social setting and its mimetic imaginary: absent the pertinent "media" in either sense. Into this vacuum, the novel asserts its own mediation as the carrying force of Victorian cultural ideas.'⁵

This scepticism of the possibility of any future noble stories and deeds occurring that Eliot weaved into her novel is the embodiment of disillusionment itself. Moreover, Eliot's narrator muses on the final pages of the novel that there will be no 'new Theresa'⁶ or 'a new Antigone'⁷. This statement is followed by the narrator addressing all of the readers and claiming that 'we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas.'⁸ Thus the parting message of the novel condemns all to mundane mediocrity.

Other features that were commonly in use by the Victorian writers and that are to be found in Eliot's novel are the clash between science and religion,

⁴ Terry Lovell, *Feminism and Form in the Literary Adaptation: The French Lieutenant's Woman* in *Criticism and Critical Theory*, ed. J. Hawthorn (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 115.

⁵ Garrett Stewart, *Novel Violence: A Narratology of Victorian Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 170.

⁶ George Eliot, *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 896.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

the industrialization that the novel discusses with regard to the ordinary people and especially working class, or the way each new chapter is introduced—that is by a poem or another quotation that alludes to what shall be the motif of the following chapter.

Exploring the theme of childhood was also a widespread feature among the Victorian authors and by far it was not always the innocence and sweet sentiment that drew the authors' interests. 'The recalling of a painful childhood is a common set-piece in the novels of Dickens, the Brontës, Thackeray and George Eliot,'⁹ remarks Margaret Stonyk. Stonyk calls it an 'emotional primitivism, using childhood as a symbol of pure feeling, even while sympathetically exploring adult complexity'¹⁰.

Even if Eliot follows many period typical features that erstwhile readers would have expected or even demanded, it would be best for the purpose of this thesis to treat Eliot as a Realistic writer and analyze her novel correspondingly. *Middlemarch* remains focused on contemporary issues, closely follows each action to its consequences and revolves around the fate of the individual characters who are ordinary people—often prototypes of figures found in society. Moreover, for all those characters a detailed characteristic is provided with the emphasis on psychology and reasoning. Therefore, *Middlemarch* stands on the grounds of a realistic novel rather than being an example of Romanticism.

1.3 George Eliot's Life Reflected in Her Work

The life George Eliot lead defied many conventions of Victorian era. From her unmarried status to her opinions about social reforms and her believes about education and female rights, Eliot was far from the Victorian ideal of a woman.

Nevertheless, Eliot was well-versed in bringing a model society into life in her stories. Her stories provide psychological insight into the characters so that their reasoning and actions are realistic and believable. Her readers find perfectly

⁹ Margaret Stonyk, *MacMillan History of Literature, Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Hampshire: MacMillan, 1983), 236.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

round characters endowed with both virtues and faults. On top of that, Eliot's novels often bear remarkable similarities to the events of her own life and several of her characters also resemble the people she knew in her real life.

The most prominent example of this projecting would be the portrayal of Tom Tulliver in Eliot's novel *The Mill on the Floss*; the allusion to Eliot's relationship with her own brother Isaac Evans is utmost uncanny, given the fate that befalls the fictional brother in the story. Even though Eliot's relationship with Isaac might not have been as tragic, it is clear that it was far from ideal. In one of the letters that are still preserved from Eliot's correspondence, Isaac wrote to her to congratulate her on her marriage—Eliot married two years after her partner George Henry Lewes died—and Isaac mentions the pleasure he has in breaking the silence that lasted two decades.¹¹ The stilted tone of the letter and the formal quality hint at the complicated relationship Eliot had with her brother.

The dismal sibling relationships had probably been on Eliot's mind quite often for it is a recurring theme in her works. The troubled brother-sister relationships could be found in Eliot's sonnet 'Brother and Sister', in her short story 'The Lifted Veil' or in the way Rosamond and Fred Vincy struggle to understand each other in *Middlemarch*.

Using real life people as a foundation for her characters aside, Eliot also used existing places she visited in person as an inspiration for her fictional settings. It was not uncommon for her to settle down in a place in which she set the novel she was currently working on.¹²

For her large scale projects, Eliot drew inspiration from her life, so that 'not only settings, but characters as well, reveal the literary effects of her travels in England.'¹³ For instance, James Lees-Milne states, 'Her father was partly

¹¹ A letter from Isaac P. Evans to George Eliot, 17 May, 1880. Accessed December 17, 2015, <http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/letter-from-isaac-evans-to-george-eliot-congratulating-her-on-her-marriage>.

¹² Kathleen McCormack, *George Eliot's English Travels* (Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 116.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

the model for Adam Bede; and Arbury Mill inspired *The Mill on the Floss*.¹⁴ From personal relationships, to buildings, places and other people, Eliot could turn every input in her life into a beneficial aspect for her creative writing.

1.4 George Eliot's Life Reflected in *Middlemarch*

Upon the first inspection it may seem that the life Eliot lead had but a little in common with the model of social life Eliot created in *Middlemarch*. The unconventional life she lead is definitely not the example of the life she depicts in *Middlemarch* but the similarities and influences are certainly to be found.

For instance, the relationship Eliot had with her father appears to be close to the idyllic relationship between Mary Garth and her father Caleb Garth. It was Eliot's father who was mostly responsible for Eliot's good education and who became the model for the noble and kind Caleb Garth.

As Eliot observed with a sharp critical eye the shallow façade of the Victorian society, she became interested in capturing the real essence of their lives in an uncompromisingly realistic depiction of *Middlemarch*. Perhaps it was the reveal of the pretence that made Eliot wary about acknowledging her inspiration by the real life people. In some cases Eliot denied the link between her relatives or her friends and the characters—but her relatives often recognized themselves in her works as is clear from the correspondence between the members of her extended family.¹⁵

Marghanita Laski reports that George Eliot admitted that her poem 'Brother and Sister' is biographical,¹⁶ however, such an open admission is more of an exception from Eliot. The readers must read between the lines to realize that Eliot could not create such complex and varied characters only by projecting herself into the characters. Eliot did not share her Rosamond's

¹⁴ James Lees-Milne, 'Introduction' to *Writers at Home*, ed. Gervase Jackson-Stops (London: Trefoil Books, 1985), 26.

¹⁵ Marghanita Laski, *George Eliot and Her World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 14.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

'social conformity'¹⁷ nor was she an 'idealistic young doctor-scientist'¹⁸ like her Lydgate, yet she was fully capable of forming her characters so that their deeds are justified and her readers understand the characters even when they do not agree with their actions. Perhaps Eliot did not approve of their actions either but she was able to think outside of her own insight and draw from the general experience with the society of Victorian era. Such perception is undeniably one of the qualities that make *Middlemarch* so approachable for a whole variety of readers. It is not merely a story in which readers may recognize themselves but also a story in which the readers may recognize other characters they know from their everyday life.

In short, Eliot did not only rely on her own unique experience when writing *Middlemarch* but she also incorporated her observations of the world around her and showed a great deal of empathizing. Eliot seems to have had a thorough knowledge of her characters to the point where she could realistically capture their hopeful expectations for the future as well as their development, maturing and subsequent disillusionment.

¹⁷ Terry Lovell, 'Feminism and Form in the Literary Adaptation: The French Lieutenant's Woman' in *Criticism and Critical Theory*, ed. Jeremy Hawthorn (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 116.

¹⁸ Ibid.

2 The Theme of Disillusionment

2.1 Defining the Theme

If one is to experience the feeling of disillusionment, one is to realize that their expectations and anticipations were not met with the reality that is presented to them. Such moments of clarity are not infrequently accompanied by a radical change of one's core beliefs, ideals and set of values.

The understandable disappointment could lead to many different results. Most commonly, either one resigns to one's lost ideals and grows bitter, or the change becomes a catalyst that helps developing new, more reasonable sets of expectations for the future. Many different outcomes of experiencing the disillusionment are closely explored in Eliot's book.

The term disillusionment is reportedly in use since the year 1856, as noted by the *Online Etymology Dictionary*.¹⁹ Its meaning is derived from the verb disillusion that means 'to be free or be freed from illusion'²⁰.

In the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, the verb 'disillusion' is presented as 'to make someone realize that something which they thought was true or good is not really true or good'²¹. Likewise, the adjective 'disillusioned' is explained as meaning 'disappointed because you have lost your belief that someone is good, or that an idea is right'²².

For comparison, the definition of 'disillusion' found in the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* states: 'to disappoint someone by telling them the unpleasant truth about something or someone that they had a good opinion of, or respected'²³. The adjective is then listed as 'disappointed and unhappy

¹⁹ *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. 'disillusionment, (n.)', accessed April 2, 2016, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=disillusionment

²⁰ *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. 'disillusion, (v.)', accessed April 2, 2016, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=disillusion&allowed_in_frame=0

²¹ *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2009), 485.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, ed. Colin McIntosh, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 435-436.

because of discovering the truth about something or someone that you liked or respected'²⁴.

Neither of these definitions, however, fully capture the psychological aspect of undergoing a disillusionment. Such suffering is best explained in the novel itself, with a great attention to the detail of psychology of the characters that indeed are faced with a number of unpleasant discoveries.

2.2 Finding the Theme

A character does not have to be a young, naïve dreamer to experience the disappointment, although it is true that most of Eliot's characters in *Middlemarch* would fit into that category in one way or another. The fact remains that all the main characters in *Middlemarch* have the inclination to experience disillusionment up to a certain degree. That suggests that the disillusionment is a deliberate theme which the author of the book decided to extensively examine by inflicting a life-altering fate on the characters. By opening up a variety of different approaches to disillusionment, the author achieves to provide a comprehensive study of the theme. The signs of the onset of the disillusionment are varied, although most commonly the moments come in the form of ominous, pregnant silences.

Eliot was set on using the common theme of disillusionment to imprint on her characters in different ways. As Jan Jędrzejewski noted, Eliot tends to focus on 'detailed observation of the psychology of her characters and comprehensive analysis of their moral dilemmas'²⁵ which is one of the key factors that shape *Middlemarch*.

Middlemarch offers a story of ordinary people of various social statuses and roles, nevertheless, that does not make their fates and sufferings any less remarkable or noteworthy.

²⁴ *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, ed. Colin McIntosh, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 435-436.

²⁵ Jan Jędrzejewski, *Routledge Guides to Literature: George Eliot*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 67.

Laurence Lerner does not hesitate to point out that it was a 'favourite doctrine of George Eliot's'²⁶ to write about how 'tragedy does not reside in the exceptional'²⁷ but can be just as well found in the lives of everyday people.²⁸ *Middlemarch* poses as a spectrum of such fates out of which a representative sample has been selected and analyzed in the following parts of the thesis.

The novel composes of layered life stories that are intervened by the common shared space—the area of the fictional Middlemarch—and it would be rather counter-productive to focus solely on one single fate presented in the book.

²⁶ Laurence Lerner, 'George Eliot', in *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*, vol. 6. *From Dickens to Hardy*, ed. Boris Ford (Middlesex: Penguin books, 1982), 266.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

3 Model Characters of *Middlemarch*

3.1 Dorothea Brooke

The very first character the readers are introduced to is Ms. Dorothea Brooke. Initially, Dorothea is portrayed as a bright, young and determined woman, who is conscious of the state in which the society happens to be. Dorothea concerns herself about the situation of the poor, displays understanding with the struggles of the poor and aspires to change their living situations for the better. Her romantic but noble vision of better structure of the society is one of the principles that form her core.

Dorothea Brooke is not only one of the central characters, Ms. Brooke was initially considered by Eliot for a stand-alone novel. Only as she wrote Ms. Brooke had Eliot realized the potential held in encompassing Ms. Brooke into the world of her story about the Vincy family of Middlemarch and thereupon begun conducting her masterpiece.²⁹ The first ten chapters of the novel focus solely on Dorothea and the final part is likewise dedicated to the young female protagonist. In what David Carroll labels as a 'monocentric reading'³⁰ Dorothea 'and her crucial discoveries about the human condition'³¹ would even become the main message of the novel.

Seeing that Dorothea's disillusionment is constructed gradually, the moments come in forms of awakenings. At first, Dorothea is convinced she found her vocation in the marriage to Mr. Casaubon. It is not only after the marriage that she realizes the truth and sees her husband for who he is; an ordinary man who dedicated his life to a fruitless call. Her romantic notions, her dreamt-of idea of her husband, as well as her image of herself, standing beside her husband and aiding him in achieving his goal, are profoundly shattered.

²⁹ Nancy Henry, *The Cambridge Introduction to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 88.

³⁰ David Carroll, *George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretations: A Reading of the Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 235.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Dorothea's disillusionment is elaborately captured in the twentieth chapter, a chapter that is 'one of the most brilliant and powerful which George Eliot ever wrote'³² according to Laurence Lerner.

The chapter discusses the effects on both Dorothea's psychical and mental state, even combining the two in phrases such as 'mental shiver', which Lerner praises immensely.³³ Lerner traces Dorothea's first disillusionment to her honeymoon in Rome, that 'itself looms in Dorothea's thoughts as an oppressive weight'³⁴. Contrary to her husband, Dorothea is not charmed by the historical and artistic city. Thus, Dorothea represents Eliot's approach to the novel. Lerner makes a point that neither Dorothea, nor Eliot with writing *Middlemarch* were interested in arts: '*Middlemarch* is not a *Künstlerroman*'³⁵. Lerner also explains that 'George Eliot's concern with what is basically human draws her away from men and women of exceptional talents as her heroes'³⁶. As for Dorothea, she begins to doubt her own role in assisting her husband and furthermore, she starts to doubt the greatness of her husband's work.

It ought to be noted that the moments of Dorothea's disillusionment do not occur all at once. The episodes that lead the character to a growth are present throughout the story. For instance in chapter fifty, Dorothea's opinions begin to shift since:

'The living suffering man was no longer before her to awaken her pity: there remained only the retrospect of painful subjection to a husband whose thoughts had been lower than she had believed, whose exorbitant claims for himself had even blinded his scrupulous care for his own character, and made him defeat his own pride by shocking men of ordinary honour.'³⁷

Additionally, Dorothea begins to question even that she before thought of as untouchable, such as her husband:

³² Laurence Lerner, 'George Eliot', in *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*, vol. 6. *From Dickens to Hardy*, ed. Boris Ford (Middlesex: Penguin books, 1982), 265.

³³ *Ibid.*, 266.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 267.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 267.

³⁷ George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 535.

“Why has he not done more?” said Dorothea, interested now in all who had slipped below their own intention.³⁸

Furthermore, in chapter fifty five, the omniscient narrator observes yet another peak of Dorothea’s disappointment with life and with love in particular, ‘She only felt that there was something irrevocably amiss and lost in her lot,³⁹ the narrator says, ‘and her thoughts about the future were the more readily shapen into resolve.’⁴⁰ This passage already alludes to the changes in Dorothea’s character that help her mature, grow as a person and teach her how to stand for her own beliefs and opinions. And yet, Dorothea’s tendency to strive for the better things in life remains with her and is still to be found later on in the story. For instance, when Lydgate has admitted to her the financial struggles of establishing their new hospital in the town, she promises a financial aid and confides in him:

‘How happy you must be, to know things that you feel sure will do good! I wish I could awake with that knowledge every morning. There seems to be so much trouble taken that one can hardly see the good of!’⁴¹

Or, even later into the novel, Dorothea appeals to Mr. Farebrother: ‘What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult to each other?’⁴²

To elaborate, Dorothea’s profound education together with her megalomania set her to become disappointed later on in her life, that is, once she realizes the true nature of her husband and his life-long work. It is the experience of an disillusionment that helps Dorothea move forward. One pivotal moment comes when Dorothea loses the last of her enchantment towards her late husband. His untold accusation of her potentially cheating on him with younger, more handsome and overall charming Will Ladislaw, who has yet to find his life’s direction, escalates when Mr. Casaubon’s last will is revealed to obtain a clause that Dorothea shall lose her inheritance should she get involved with Will Ladislaw. This mistrust ultimately disillusiones Dorothea and leaves a mark

³⁸ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 536.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 592.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 592.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 479.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 789.

that remains with her and further complicates her later relationships. Ironically, Mr. Casaubon's will only succeeds in kindling Dorothea's infatuation with Will Ladislaw. Despite the fact that Will Ladislaw is debonair and depicted as being close to Dorothea's age, and even though the narrator often remarks on their love, his character remains undeveloped. Walter Allen stresses, 'Both George Eliot and her heroin see qualities in him that no reader has succeeded in perceiving.'⁴³

Having mentioned Dorothea's education, a comparison to the education of the other most prominent female character of the novel suggests itself, for it is remarkable how Eliot provides two different origin stories that stand on the opposing side of the scale and yet the result is very much alike. Rosamond Vincy serves as a foil character to Dorothea. She proves to be an apparent comparison as far as the education and upbringing are concerned, and Rosamond's story also offers a parallel to Dorothea's own disillusionment.

3.2 Rosamond Vincy

Rosamond Vincy comes from the growing middle class. The middle class in the Victorian era experiences a surge of influence that came together with its expansion and resulted in an increased class tension.

Rosamond is undoubtedly the most ladylike character in the whole novel. It is partly due to her upbringing but also due to her nature that she is a very dignified young lady and a dreamer. In this aspect, she is similar to her brother, albeit Fred Vincy's foolishness is more ostentatious.

Rosamond's perturbing lack of sensible expectations, her superficial knowledge and mainly her daydreams cause her expectancy to be just as unrealistic and futile as Dorothea's. The fate of the two women becomes eerily similar, given that the two characters draw from a significantly different backgrounds and their initial positions in the novel are also quite unlike as far as their dreams and their expectations from life are concerned. Undeniably, both women grow disillusioned with their respective husbands, although for very different reasons.

⁴³ Walter Allen, *The English Novel, A short Critical History* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975), 233.

In addition, by the end of the book, both of them find themselves living with another man than the one they thought of as their perfect match. Obviously, these complicated marital relationships bear similarities to Eliot's own extra-legal marriage with George Henry Lewes, who was her life-long partner but who could not marry her for his previous marriage that could not be divorced. Lewes was a kindred spirit to Eliot, enriching her general and theoretical knowledge and supporting her writing. His imprint can be found in the first husband of Rosamond Vincy, Dr. Lydgate.⁴⁴ Both of the men are set to share their knowledge with the rest of the world, yet Dr. Lydgate's interest in modern science methods is not met with understanding from Rosamond. Barbara Hardy reflects as follows:

'George Eliot writes wonderfully individualized version of the stuff of human crisis: the ties of marriage, for instance, are seen as powerfully binding and strangling, against the background of country and family ritual and tradition and in the words of folk-saying, proverb, cliché and the Bible.'⁴⁵

For Eliot's protagonists, it is often education that forms the foundation for future expectations. Those expectations are to be changed when the characters are freed from their illusions and acquire new, sober values. This disillusionment happens both in the form of a very mundane self-introspection for the character—which would be the case of Dorothea—or due to some harsh circumstances—which would be the case of the political failure of Mr. Brook or Lydgate's professional experience.

Education certainly has a crucial role in the novel. Eliot delivered a layered story and each aspect surfaces only if the reader is keen enough to look for it. Eliot usually set to express her moral lessons in an indirect way. In *Middlemarch*, Eliot's critique of female education is executed in a very inconspicuous way throughout the characters of Dorothea Brook and Rosamond Vincy.

⁴⁴ Kathleen McCormack, *George Eliot's English Travels* (Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 3.

⁴⁵ Barbara Hardy, 'Mrs Gaskell and George Eliot' in *The Penguin History of Literature, The Victorians*, ed. Arthur Pollard (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 193.

Eliot's beliefs were progressive yet she did not rush to support the new progressive legislative and newly forming female movements.⁴⁶ Eliot acknowledged the need of providing women with good education in order to make them more self-sufficient, give them the choice to make decisions the women themselves would be able to redeem the best.⁴⁷ As Margaret Stonyk aptly remarks, 'George Eliot's Felix Holt objects to heroines whose hair weights more than their brains'⁴⁸. This attitude carries over to *Middlemarch* and is depicted in Eliot's treatment of both Rosamond's and Dorothea's characters.

In a way, Rosamond may be seen as Eliot's critique of the education available to the women of Victorian period. Rosamond receives the best education she can get—one that nurtures all the qualities best suited for her to become a good wife. Despite the education Rosamond receives, she remains naïve and superficial. Rosamond's plans for her future life are so fairy-tale like they are bound to be crushed by the reality of everyday life:

'The Lydgate with whom she had been in love had been a group of airy conditions for her, most of which had disappeared, while their place had been taken by everyday details which must be lived through slowly from hour to hour, not floated through with a rapid selection of favourable aspects.'⁴⁹

Rosamond's dismay does not reach the perceptiveness her husband displays. Eliot writes that Lydgate 'saw more keenly than Rosamond'⁵⁰ their need for economized living, and he also knew that 'a life of privation and life with Rosamond were two images which had become more and more irreconcilable ever since the threat of privation had disclosed itself'⁵¹.

While Rosamond remains a dreamer, Dorothea is her rational foil. Dorothea's education is much more thorough, scientific rather than artistic. Where Rosamond is frolicsome and improvident, Dorothea is solemn

⁴⁶ Nancy Henry, *The Cambridge Introduction to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 23.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Margaret Stonyk, *MacMillan History of Literature, Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Hampshire: MacMillan, 1983), 31.

⁴⁹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 711.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 712.

⁵¹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 712.

and inconspicuous. Still, nor Rosamond's merriment nor Dorothea's self-discipline are enough to protect them from disappointment.

Rosamond's daydreams, impracticality and obsession with perfect social image lead her to disappointment when the husband she finally chooses for herself fails to meet her expectations. Similarly, Dorothea's lack of passion for anything secular and her musings that are too virtuous and solely focused on good deeds lead her to become disillusioned with Mr. Casaubon. Dorothea is void of a simple appreciation of the nice things in life which stands in contrast with Rosamond's obsession with beauty. As Sean Purchase remarks:

'Eliot's women are especially distinctive and individualistic. Even if some are showy and superficial at first, they all tend to succumb to some form of inward-looking profundity. Such is the case, at any rate, with [...] the idealist and essentially good Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch* (1872), who eventually marries the right man and secures a reasonably romantic and happy denouement.'⁵²

The difference between Dorothea's disillusionment and that of Rosamond, is that Dorothea emotionally and psychologically matures and is, essentially, a different Dorothea than the one the readers first meet at the opening of the novel. In contrast to this, Rosamond remains unaffected, and the only thing that changes for her is that she projects her desires onto another suitor. The issue that appears to be common for both of the characters is the lack of communication with their respective partners—even though that results more from the Victorian customs than personal preferences. It was not for a woman to speak freely to a man, definitely not on any intimate issues. Many marriages were arranged by the families and even after a marriage a newlywed couple struggled to communicate. The themes of estrangement, loneliness and solitude are present in most of the relationships Eliot portrays in her book.

Rosamond's and Dorothea's characters aside, another character that is also worth mentioning for the peculiar life story, is Dr. Lydgate.

⁵² Sean Purchase, *Key Concepts In Victorian Literature* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 149.

3.3 Tertius Lydgate

As for Dr. Tertius Lydgate, with his character Eliot explores the resignation to one's fate. The character of the young physician bears traces of Eliot's interest in positivism, Darwin's theories and general science which is apparent in the opinions he voices and the actions he takes throughout the course of the novel.

Dr. Lydgate is introduced as a young, bright man full of life and ideas how to change the healthcare for people in Middlemarch for the better. Having studied new methods in France, Lydgate introduces new progressive and diagnostic methods as well as numerous treatments the ordinary people of small town Middlemarch have never heard before. Those new innovative methods are what essentially leads to his downfall. Lydgate is to experience his first traces of disillusionment soon after his arrival to the town. For Lydgate, the disillusionment does not come abruptly in one moment of clarity, for him the ordeal is represented as a long and tiresome struggle. Lydgate aspires to change people's views and opinions, nevertheless, his efforts are in vain. His new methods of curing patients and not cheating them with medical bills for ineffective medicine are not met with understanding—people are easily convinced the new doctor in town cannot be any good if he does not prescribe any medicaments or ailments. Lydgate, upon overcoming the first wave of disappointment at the small-minded ways of the people, is determined to stand for his beliefs and thinks that with time, a slow but steady progress is bound to come. His hopes are proved futile, however, when he is dragged in the political side of medical science. These two are so closely bound together that Lydgate simply cannot ignore the politics. He soon finds himself slipping the slope of politics practises, financial struggles and getting caught in the net of influential power of people with higher social status. On top of that, Lydgate marries the young yet demanding Rosamond Vincy in hopes that the bond will cement his loyalties to Middlemarch and people will finally understand that he has their best interests in mind. His new wife, however, shows little understanding for his new views of medicine and science. Not having found a kindred spirit in Rosamond soon becomes the least of Lydgate's worries; in order to remain a certain dignity that comes together with the status of a town

doctor, Lydgate spends more than he earns—or could hope to earn. The reasoned outcome of which is his and Rosamond's insolence that only proceeds to deepen the abyss between the young couple. Overall, Lydgate grows progressively more and more disillusioned with life, which substantially leads to his own demise.

The distinguished man of intellect and unique ambitions, quite unlike the immature Middlemarch youth, let himself be enchanted by Rosamond Vincy, and she by him. Neither of them find the reality of their relationship to be a fulfilment to what that they had been hoping for. In this aspect, the struggles of their marriage are not dissimilar to the strained marriage of Mr. Casaubon and Dorothea.

Walter Allen writes that 'in *Middlemarch* George Eliot is investigating human aspirations'⁵³ and that 'part of her genius, as *Middlemarch* shows more plainly than any of her novels, was a genius for analysis totally unlike [Tolstoy's]'⁵⁴. The two failed marriages are included in Eliot's study. 'The stories of Lydgate the physician and Dorothea the heiress were intimately meshed as twin studies in defeated ambitions,'⁵⁵ summarizes Margaret Stonyk.

All four of those characters, that is Dorothea, Rosamond, Lydgate and Casaubon, are the reminders that the social harmony is commonly regarded as more than the individual selfishness.⁵⁶ In other words, as Josephine M. Guy argues:

'Eliot is at one with Dickens, Gaskell and Kingsley in suggesting that social life may only be transformed by changes within the behaviours of individuals—that sociability depends upon individuals becoming more moral (that is, less selfish and less materialistic).'⁵⁷

⁵³ Walter Allen, *The English Novel, A short Critical History* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975), 230.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Margaret Stonyk, *MacMillan History of Literature, Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Hampshire: MacMillan, 1983), 168.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Josephine M. Guy, *The Victorian Social-Problem Novel: The Market, the Individual and Communal Life* (Hampshire: 1996), 201.

Under these circumstances, the beneficial scope of the disillusionment is to be broadened to the whole society of Middlemarch. Although claiming that the society of Middlemarch is, in a way, improved by the individuals becoming disenchanted would perhaps be too daring, the disillusionment of an individual indisputably affects the society as a whole and leaves a notable mark.

3.4 Fred Vincy and Mary Garth

The story involving Fred Vincy was the one Eliot started writing 'in the summer of 1869'⁵⁸. Nancy Henry summarizes it thusly:

'The original core of the novel was the Vincy-Featherstone plot. It tells the story of young Fred Vincy, who has expectations of inheriting his uncle Featherstone's estate, and of his sister Rosamond who aspires to rise socially through marriage to the promising new-comer to Middlemarch, Tertius Lydgate. Both the Vincy-Featherstone plot and the plot recounting the courtship, marriage and widowhood of Dorothea Brooke are stories in which the naïve optimism of the young and eager encounters the manipulative power of the old and bitter.'⁵⁹

Henry's synopsis is in accordance with what George Eliot let her narrator say at the opening of the fifty fifth chapter of the novel:

'If youth is the season of hope, it is often so only in the sense that our elders are hopeful about us; for no age is so apt as youth to think its emotions, partings, and resolves are the last of their kind. Each crisis seems final, simply because it is new.'⁶⁰

This opening indicates the attitude of frivolous Fred Vincy; he is daring, young and foolish, and his ambitions are completely unlike Dr. Lydgate's. Demonstratively, while Fred matures and settles into a peaceful life, Tertius wilts and withers away together with his ambitions. The close analysis indicated that Eliot's Fred Vincy never loses his optimism; he grows to be more sober in his plans and content with what he has. His life is firmly in order thanks to his wife, Mary Garth, who 'had never thought that any man could love her except

⁵⁸ Nancy Henry, *The Cambridge Introduction to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 88.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

for Fred, [...] that she could be of any importance to Mr. Farebrother, the cleverest man in her narrow circle'.⁶¹

Vivacious Mary Garth is a kind-hearted character. Margaret Stonyk concedes, 'George Eliot developed the Poysers of *Adam Bede* and the Garths of *Middlemarch* as intellectually satisfying versions of that family hearth which was traditionally the consolation of Victorian life.'⁶² Walter Allen even remarks in his listing of *Middlemarch's* failures in characteristics that 'the Garth family tends to suffer from the monotony of goodness.'⁶³

While Mary's monotonous amiability may displease some readers, in the mind of George Eliot she was redeemed as a good fit for Fred Vincy. Fred's disillusionment is very kind to him; he is certainly a character in which maturing is most notable. Despite minor setbacks, Fred finds his place in Middlemarch, by the side of Mary who anchors him and helps him to settle down.

3.5 Mrs. Bulstrode, Mr. Brooke, Mr. Farebrother

A very intriguing case of disillusionment lies in the character of a middle-aged Mrs. Harriet Bulstrode who despite having lost her illusions about her husband is still inclined to take his side and offer solace. Mrs. Bulstrode represents the ideal of a mild, obedient, religious, dedicated and foremost loyal wife, that blindly trusts her husband. She is his silent, unassuming and content companion. Her devotion to her husband is not the passionate love of Rosamond to Lydgate or the romantic sentiment Dorothea cherishes for Mr. Casaubon. Yet it could be considered to be the most true and non-judgemental love depicted in the whole novel.

Upon being faced with the secret she had never suspected about her husband—or had never allowed herself to suspect—Mrs. Harriet Bulstrode does not desert her beloved but calmly accepts her fate. Mrs. Bulstrode remains collected even when she loses her ideals. As Margaret Stonyk brings into attention:

⁶¹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 561.

⁶² Margaret Stonyk, *MacMillan History of Literature, Nineteenth–Century Literature*, 133.

⁶³ Walter Allen, *The English Novel, A short Critical History*, 233.

'Thackeray's best novels dramatise the humiliating failure of human resolve and human love; whereas a key point in *Middlemarch* is made when the wordsworthian George Eliot shows the wife of a ruined man supporting her husband.'⁶⁴

Mrs. Bulstrode's relationship with her husband allows Eliot to further play with the role of Mr. Nicholas Bulstrode because 'though him the author raises the question of hypocrisy'⁶⁵. Since the narrator of the story already knows the fate of the characters, this allows for moralizing lessons. 'Middlemarch's narrator,' observes Terry Lovell, 'is separated from the events narrated by about 30 years—distance enough to establish the position of narrative superiority, close enough for its 'lessons' to have contemporary relevance.'⁶⁶

For Mrs. Bulstrode the disillusionment proves to be deliberating. The disillusionment purifies her life of deceit and misunderstandings and she no longer feels like she is being left out of a conversation. A pivotal moment arises when Mrs. Bulstrode approaches Mr. Walter Vincy, who is the major of Middlemarch and also her brother. At this point, Mrs. Bulstrode already senses something amiss, yes she has not fully understood the situation yet. Upon seeing her, Vincy assumes she already knows and exclaims: 'God help you, Harriet! you know all.'⁶⁷ The ensuing effect on Mrs. Bulstrode Eliot depicts as:

'That moment was perhaps worse than any which came after. It contained that concentrated experience which in great crisis of emotion reveals the bias of a nature, and is prophetic of the ultimate act which will end an intermediate struggle.'⁶⁸

While Mrs. Bulstrode herself has no reason to feel guilty, her Eliot makes a point in the brother's answer:

⁶⁴ Margaret Stonyk, *MacMillan History of Literature, Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 103.

⁶⁵ A.O.J. Cockshut, 'Faith and Doubt in the Victorian Age' in *The Penguin History of Literature, The Victorians*, ed. Arthur Pollard. (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 32.

⁶⁶ Terry Lovell, 'Feminism and Form in the Literary Adaptation: The French Lieutenant's Woman' in *Criticism and Critical Theory*, ed. J. Hawthorn (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 115.

⁶⁷ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 805.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

‘People will talk, [...]. Even if a man has been acquitted by a jury, they’ll talk, and nod and wink—and as far as the world goes, a man might often as well be guilty as not.’⁶⁹

Having stated that, it remains a question how much of an autobiographical experience does the observance hold.

Mrs. Bulstrode, as Eliot concludes via her narrator, ‘had a loyal spirit within her’⁷⁰, even if she was an ‘imperfectly-taught woman’⁷¹. As much as Eliot put emphasis on education, she also shows—both with Mrs. Bulstrode and Mr. Garth—that the best human qualities are not to be taught, they must reside in the human’s nature. Some people—like Dorothea Brook—are condemned not to live up to their full potential due to the circumstances of life. Social status, acquired expectations from life and the attitude of the society itself are often the cause for that, Eliot illustrates in her novel.

With Mrs. Bulstrode, Eliot supplies the readers with a case of disillusionment being used as a mean to achieve maturing a character. Mrs. Bulstrode experiences disillusionment in a way that is essentially therapeutic rather than traumatic for her.

Once she takes time to ‘sob out her farewell to all the gladness and pride of her life’⁷², Mrs. Bulstrode is ready to join ‘her unhappy husband and espouse his sorrow, and say of his guilt, I will mourn and not reproach’⁷³. The reunion does not bring a verbal admittance of Mr. Bulstrode’s guilt or Mrs. Bulstrode’s disillusionment with him, rather, ‘his confession was silent, and her promise of faithfulness was silent’⁷⁴ because, as Eliot explains, ‘they could not yet speak to each other of the shame which she was bearing with him, or of the acts which had brought it down on them’. The disillusionment of them both is very solemn and sombre, albeit not unkind for their relationship.

⁶⁹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 806.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 807.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 807.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 807.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 807.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 808.

Rather different experience with losing one's ideals befalls to Mr. Brooke. Mr. Brooke, an elderly uncle who took in Dorothea with her younger sister, allows Eliot to explore the theme of politics and social reforms. He is the reason Margaret Stonyk writes about Eliot that 'her novels took up the Romantic theory that human beings must overcome their egoism by the perpetual exercise of a vivid moral sympathy'⁷⁵. Mr. Brooke is disillusioned via the 'chosen themes of the need to transcend egoism and to recognize the wholeness of the social fabric'⁷⁶ that Eliot employs. Set into the frame of political and social reforms, the story of Mr. Brooke starts with selfish yet foolish hopes and ambitions, and after the disillusionment ends with indifference and restrained behaviour. Unlike Mr. Casaubon, Mr. Brooke lives to see his life-long aspirations diminish and is forced to re-evaluate his previous attitudes. His confidence notably suffers.

The same bitter disappointment is to be found in the fate of Mr. Farebrother. Mr. Farebrother, though also influenced by the town's inner schemes and political powers, is mainly disillusioned with love. As a vicar and a confidant of Mary Garth, Eliot lets him struggle with his obligations and his heart's desires. Together with readjusting their view of the world and making sacrifices, the self-restraint many of Middlemarch's residents must undergo serves for Eliot as a character test. Involving those moments allow her to exploit the true human nature and depict the outcome that the regular life events can have on ordinary people.

Middlemarch is Eliot's most extensive work and it is considered to be 'her greatest novel'⁷⁷ according to Barbara Hardy. It approximates the age of Victorian England and provides a complex image of living in a small provincial town. The theme of disillusionment is indeed imprinted in the fates of the protagonists of Eliot's story, creates an inseparable and necessary link with the character development, and functions as a mean of setting the mood of the entire novel. In agreement with the character analysis, it transpires that

⁷⁵ Margaret Stonyk, *MacMillan History of Literature, Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 164.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁷⁷ Barbara Hardy, 'Mrs Gaskell and George Eliot' in *The Penguin History of Literature, The Victorians*, ed. Arthur Pollard (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 196.

Eliot used different approaches to the theme—she covered disillusionment both gradual and sudden, both tragic and helpful and advocated its influence on her characters in a consistent, believable and realistic manner.

Stonyk calls George Eliot ‘a formidable intellectual’⁷⁸ and she had to be in order to bring a work as intricate as *Middlemarch* into existence. *Middlemarch* aimed to ‘analyse the provincial world’⁷⁹ and a more complex study would be scarce to find among the writings of Eliot’s contemporaries.

⁷⁸ Margaret Stonyk, *MacMillan History of Literature, Nineteenth–Century Literature*, 164.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 167.

Conclusion

In order to create *Middlemarch*, Eliot compiled countless personal experiences and observations. This led to the formation of probable characters, realistic enough as far as their flaws and their virtues are concerned. *Middlemarch* is a story told in a lineal fashion, with hardly any flash forwards or flashbacks yet with enough clues and hints for an attentive reader to anticipate what is to come. A plethora of individual fates, tragedies and hopes comprise *Middlemarch*. Eliot told a story about ordinary people and crafted her characters in a great detail. The psychological aspect of disillusionment is expanded beyond its primal usage and far beyond the conventional impact. Eliot offers a new view of disillusionment. Her interpretation is more complex than that of the other Victorian writers, she uses disillusionment that proves to treat the characters kindly, matures them, helps them move on with their lives. Yet, in juxtaposition, Eliot also provides the harsher side of disillusionment as illustrated in the cases of Dr. Lydgate, Rosamond, Mr. Brook or Mr. Bulstrode.

The narrator is the medium that explains the events in different perspectives. It is the narrator that provides the reasoning and the analysis of what is happening in the story. Throughout the course of the novel, the narrative voice supplies the psychological analysis of the characters. The narrative element brings the story together and binds the varied characters and themes into a cohesive picture.

The universal truths of life that are incorporated into the story in the numerous fates of the numerous characters is what enriches the portrayal of the Middlemarch's society. The model of the society as Eliot created it excavates much of the Victorian society to the present-day readers. The author captured typical Victorian attitudes, hopes and aspirations. With each and every single one of the well-constructed details that form the episodic plot, the novel is indeed, very true to its name, a study of provincial life. Such life, as Eliot proved, cannot be captured without a disillusion. Hence, the disillusionment forms a central idea that supports the whole novel.

This thesis is concerned about said disillusionment and the way Eliot employs it in her novel. The introductory part provides the periodical context, lists individual elements typical for novels of given era and examines which elements Eliot uses in *Middlemarch*. Special attention is paid to the role of the omniscient narrator. The following part provides the link between Eliot's life and her writings, while focusing in detail on *Middlemarch*. This study draws from the original resources, Eliot's writings as well as her personal correspondence.

The theoretical part then establishes the definition of disillusionment and offers a view within the frame of the novel.

The following chapters reflect upon the elements of disillusionment in the individual characters that were selected as representative for the different approaches Eliot supplies as the consequence of losing ideals. Due to the detailed exploration of the character development, it transpired how closely are intertwined the fates of an individual and a society.

The first character analysed in detail is Dorothea Brook, a young woman that changes her opinion on her husband due to her disillusionment and who is forced to create new set of values based on more realistic principles. Despite the disillusionment, Dorothea remains true to her charitable nature. Ms. Brook, originally intended for a stand-alone work, offers gradual disillusionment achieved by self-reflection. Dorothea undergoes moral maturing; after the first unsuccessful marriage and a prolonged period of inner turmoil and self-restraint, Eliot provides her with a happy ending in the form of a second marriage to Will Ladislaw. This union, although surprising for the town of Middlemarch, brings satisfaction and requited love for Dorothea. The gradual strain of disillusionment thus constantly compels Dorothea to move forward, towards living a better life.

The two following characters, Rosamond Vincy and Tertius Lydgate, serve as foil characters to Dorothea. Rosamond as a contrast in education, aspirations and social status, Lydgate as a male parallel to Dorothea's ambitions to improve the society. Emerging from the analysis of the other characters, are the different outcomes of disillusionment.

The theme of disillusionment has been thoroughly examined by the author. The characters, perhaps with the exception of Will Ladislaw, reached notable developments. Notable changes happened to their morals (Mr. Brook) and their dreams (Dorothea, Lydgate), their illusions were lost (Rosamond), and often their lives would change for the better (Fred Vincy). It is obvious that for the different studies Eliot opted for carefully thought-out characters.

This thesis proved that Eliot employed disillusionment as a mean to set the mood of the novel and explore the numerous varied outcomes of undergoing a disillusionment. In the opening chapters it was established that Eliot used real life places, people and situation upon which she based her novels.

In the chapters that deal with individual life stories of the people of Middlemarch, different types of disillusionment were defined. The integrity of some characters and the superficiality of others emerged in stark contrast, yet their disillusionments had a comparable effect.

This thesis inspected the impact of different types of disillusionment, managed to cover divergent approaches to life ambitions, and while closely working with the primary sources, it also unravelled elements from Eliot's personal life that were involved in *Middlemarch*.

Resumé

Pro vytvoření *Middlemarche* využila Eliot řady osobních zkušeností a postřehů, což vedlo ke vzniku snadno uvěřitelných postav s realisticky působícími ctnostmi i nedostatky. *Middlemarch* je příběh vyprávěný lineárním způsobem, analepse či prolepse se vyskytují jen výjimečně, avšak pro pozorné čtenáře se v textu vyskytuje mnoho vodítek nastiňujících nadcházející děj knihy. Široké množství osobních osudů, tragédií a nadějí utvářejí děj *Middlemarche*. Eliot sepsala příběh o obyčejných lidech a vytvořila detailní postavy. Psychologický aspekt deziluze je rozšířen nad obvyklý rámec a přesahuje zamyšlení nad konvenčním dopadem. Eliot nabízí na deziluzi neotřelý pohled, její interpretace je komplexnější než u ostatních viktoriánských spisovatelů. Deziluze, se kterou Eliot pracuje, se dokáže k postavám chovat laskavě, napomáhá jim v osobním růstu a dozrávání. Zároveň Eliot ukazuje i odvrácenou tvář deziluze, což dokazují osudy Dr. Lydgatea, Rosamundy, pana Brooka či pana Bulstroda.

Vypravěč je médium, jež vysvětluje události v rozličných perspektivách, poskytuje odůvodnění a analýzu toho, co se v příběhu odehrává. V průběhu děje hlas vypravěče doplňuje psychologickou analýzu postav. Tento narativní prvek je pojítkem mezi jednotlivými epizodami knihy.

Všeobecně platné životní pravdy jsou včleněny do osudů celé řady postav, které obohacují vyobrazení middlemarchské společnosti. Model této společnosti tak, jak jej Eliot vytvořila, odhaluje dnešním čtenářům mnohé o životě ve viktoriánské Anglii. Autorka zachycuje typické viktoriánské postoje, naděje a ambice. Se všemi těmito dobře promyšlenými detaily, které tvoří epizodický děj, se novela stává, přesně podle svého podtitulu, studií provinčního života. A ten, jak Eliot prezentovala, nelze zachytit bez deziluze. Deziluze totiž tvoří centrální námět, o který se opírá celá novela.

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá právě deziluzí a tím, jak k ní Eliot ve svém románu přistupuje. Úvodní část práce zasazuje dílo do kontextu doby, vyjmenovává prvky příznačné pro romány daného období a rozebírá, které z nich Eliot v *Middlemarchi* uplatňuje. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována úloze vypravěče. Následná část práce dokazuje spojitost mezi životem autorky a její

tvorbou, přičemž se blíže specificky zaměřuje na *Middlemarch*. U tohoto rozboru je důraz kladen především na původní dochované prameny, ať už se jedná o autorčina díla či její osobní korespondenci.

Teoretická část pak vymezuje definici zkoumaného pojmu a nabízí na něj pohled v rámci rozebírané knihy.

Následné kapitoly reflektují prvky deziluze u jednotlivých postav, jež byly zvoleny coby zástupci různých přístupů autorky k dopadu deziluze. Podrobným zkoumáním vývoje postav v průběhu románu vyšlo najevo, jak úzce jsou spjaty osudy jednotlivce a společnosti.

První detailněji rozebranou postavou je Dorothea Brooková, mladá žena, která díky deziluzi změní názor na svého manžela a je nucena vytvořit si ve svém životě nové hodnoty založené na realističtějších principech. Navzdory deziluzi však postava zůstává věrná své dobročinné povaze. Slečna Brooková, která byla původně myšlena jako samostatné dílo, nabízí postupnou deziluzi pomocí sebereflexe. Dorothea prochází morálním zráním, po prvním neúspěšném manželství a delším období vnitřního zmatku i odříkání, jí Eliot dopřeje šťastný konec v podobě druhého manželství. Tento svazek, který, ač pro městečko Middlemarch překvapivý, Dorothee přináší spokojenost a opětovanou lásku. Postupný tlak deziluze tak Dorotheu neustále posouvá k lépe prožitému životu.

Dvě další postavy, Rosamunda Vincy a Tertius Lydgate, slouží jako porovnání s postavou Dorotheou. Zatímco Rosamunda tvoří kontrast co se týče vzdělání, aspirací a sociálního postavení, u Lydgatea je možno sledovat paralelu k tužbám Dorotheou změnit společnost k lepšímu. Z analýzy následujících postav vyplynuly další rozličné podoby deziluze.

Téma deziluze bylo autorkou románu rozebráno velice zevrubně. Postavy, snad jen s výjimkou Willa Ladislawa, došly díky deziluzi k patrným posunům. Změnila se jejich morálka (pan Brook), jejich sny (Dorothea, Lydgate), rozplynuly se jejich iluze (Rosamunda) a jejich životy se mnohdy změnily k lepšímu (Fred Vincy). Je zjevné, že pro tyto rozličné studie volila Eliot své postavy pečlivě a důmyslně.

Tato bakalářská práce prokázala, že Eliot použila deziluzi jako prvek utvářející atmosféru románu. Eliot prozkoumala řadu odlišných výsledků prožité deziluze. V úvodních částech bylo uvedeno, že Eliot používala jako základ pro svou tvorbu skutečná místa, osoby a situace.

V kapitolách, jež se zabývaly individuálními osudy obyvatel Middlemarche, byly definovány různé typy deziluzí. Morální zásadovost některých postav stanula v ostrém kontrastu s povrchností jiných, průběh jejich deziluzí však měl srovnatelný charakter.

Tato práce zmapovala dopad různých typů deziluzí, při práci s primárními zdroji odhalila prvky z autorčina osobního života, a zároveň pokryla odlišné přístupy k životním ambicím.

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Annotation

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Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title: Disillusionment in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*

Thesis supervisor: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

The number of pages: 42

Year of presentation: 2016

Key words: George Eliot, Middlemarch, Victorian England, disillusionment, Victorian literature, Victorian morals

Abstract:

This thesis proposes an analysis of the disillusionment in *Middlemarch* by George Eliot, discusses the disillusionment of the main protagonists of the novel and describes the link between George Eliot's life and her work. This thesis also establishes the theme of disillusionment as a device that aids the author to mature her characters in the novel.

Anotace

Jméno autora:	Zlámalová Šárka
Katedra:	Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky
Název práce:	Deziluze v románu <i>Middlemarch</i> od George Eliot
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.
Počet stran:	42
Rok obhajoby:	2016
Klíčová slova:	George Eliot, Middlemarch, viktoriánská Anglie, deziluze, viktoriánská literatura, viktoriánská morálka
Jazyk práce:	angličtina

Abstrakt:

Tato bakalářská práce nabízí analýzu deziluze v románu *Middlemarch* od George Eliot, rozebírá deziluzi stěžejních postav a popisuje spojitost mezi životem George Eliot a její tvorbou. Práce se zároveň zabývá použitím deziluze, jakožto prvku napomáhajícího autorce k vývoji postav v románu. Dále práce dokazuje, že psychologický aspekt deziluze je rozšířen nad obvyklý rámec a přesahuje zamyšlení nad konvenčním dopadem.