

William thackeray and george eliot english literature essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



For Victorian writers and especially for William Thackeray and George Eliot, Victorianism meant giving the reader the raw image of society and the character of their characters. From the image of the pure Dorothea Brooke and the innocent Amelia Sedley to that of the scheming Rebecca Sharp or the image of the imperfect husbands George Osborne, Rawdon Crawley or Edward Casaubon, the image of the Victorian society is well defined through its characters, through their behavior, manners and betrayals. As family was pretty much glorified and coming from a family with a solid background meant a social status, the novels discussed break the line in the image of the Victorian family. Marriage meant for some a means of obtaining his/her role in high society. For others marriage meant searching his/her meaning in life. Sadly though, *Vanity Fair* and *Middlemarch* portray marriages that fail, this failure coming from the character's wrong choices and from their hope for a better life. But as Thackeray stated in his novel, we shouldn't blame entirely the characters for their behavior, as he did not put blame on Becky for trying to climb the social ladder, excusing her due to her lack of parent models: " If Miss Rebecca Sharp had determined in her heart upon making the conquest of this big beau, I don't think, ladies, we have any right to blame her; for though the task of husband-hunting is generally, and with becoming modesty, entrusted by young persons to their mammas, recollect that Miss Sharp had no kind parent to arrange these delicate matters for her, and that if she did not get a husband for herself, there was no one else in the wide world who would take the trouble off her hands"[1]. Marriage was clearly influenced by society and it meant a change in its meaning. Of course, those who were from the start soul-mates were to stand off all against them but

both our novels do not quite present a couple who stood off those elements against them. 2. 1 Victorian Novel: A Vast Panorama of The Society Literature and implicitly fiction portrays elements of the reality concerning the period in which the writer was born. As expected, the Victorian novel gives the readers the image of the Victorian Period, mainly the period dominated by the reign of Queen Victoria. However, depending on the writers, they give the image influenced by their point of view; some were close to the Romantic period and thus present a more idealized society in romantic terms while others began writing when the Victorian period reached its end, thus having perhaps a more modern approach; some wrote novels of manners while others wrote novels about morals. Nonetheless, they are called Victorian Writers because influenced or not, they presented in their novels parts of the life from those times. As Victorian writers had the tendency to insert in their novels aspects from reality, it became a trend through writers to illustrate in their novels the reality of the times in which they lived; some illustrated the pure image of reality, such as George Eliot, and others chose to portray only the reality they knew or the reality in which they lived, such as William Thackeray. Discussing the view of society, in terms of the novel *Middlemarch*, the main issue presented in the novel is certainly the political reform. Because the action of the novel takes place between 1829 and 1832, political changes clearly mark the action in the novel, and although *Middlemarch*, the province, was not as developed as England was, politics was a way of making a statement for some and a way of keeping busy for others. However, Eliot's intention was not one in which she wanted to present history as it happened or reconstruct it but rendering the influence

of change towards the characters of the novel. The Reform Bill of 1832 came after 50 years of proposals of reforming Parliament's system and puts its print on Middlemarch; one of the main characters concerning politics is Mr. Brooke, campaigning for the liberal side and Will Ladislaw, who gets hired by Brooke to his newspaper, but also doctor Lydgate who brought, at the same time with his arrival in Middlemarch, a new reform in medicine. Although the political action from Middlemarch has its confined setting, the description of the Reform as a whole enlarges also in England and The Houses of Parliament, trying to portray that the context in which Middlemarch is placed is a much wider one. George IV dies, Parliament was dissolved and a conflict between the Pioneer and the Trumpet began, because of an article wrote in the Pioneer "emanated" Mr. Brooke, who has secretly bought the newspaper for quite some time:" It was a time, according to a noticeable article in the 'Pioneer,' when the crying needs of the country might well counteract a reluctance to public action on the part of men whose minds had from long experience acquired breadth as well as concentration, decision of judgment as well as tolerance, dispassionateness as well as energy— in fact, all those qualities which in the melancholy experience of mankind have been the least disposed to share lodgings"[2]. Thus the conflict between Mr. Brooke and his opposition developed, although it had nothing to do with politics but with the one who was more acclaimed as a strong leader." He's a damned bad landlord. What business has an old county man to come currying favor with a low set of dark-blue freemen? As to his paper, I only hope he may do the writing himself. It would be worth our paying for"[3]– as the others had no good opinion about Mr. Brooke who was considered an old man good at

doing nothing, and through this, which made it seem that his opposition had the right opinion about him, comes into the political scene of their debates, Will Ladislaw. He seemed well prepared for debating the political problems of the time, which made Mr. Brooke's desire for affirmation much more intense, due to his preference for politics during his young years, and although hired by Brooke, the young Ladislaw opposed his candidate for Parliament. Mr. Brooke, although an amateur, had good intentions, those of making Middlemarch better. But his approach made others believe that he is partially disinterested and does this as a hobby, not involving himself too much in terms of financial problems, being believed as a person who spends money only for his good sake and not on "fancy farming". This can be considered a first part of how the Reform influenced the characters from Middlemarch, an ironical and satirical approach for the scrambling in order to have power. Other aspects involve a more harsh approach on how the period of Reform influenced people. Just as a railroad company was beginning to build a railroad, as sign of a natural development of things, people in Middlemarch saw this as being one of the secondary effects of the time's changes and faced it with a defensive stand-off, resulting in the attack of the farmers towards the railroad agents:" In the absence of any precise idea as to what railways were, public opinion in Frick was against them; for the human mind in that grassy corner had not the proverbial tendency to admire the unknown, holding rather that it was likely to be against the poor man, and that suspicion was the only wise attitude with regard to it. Even the rumor of Reform had not yet excited any millennial expectations in Frick, there being no definite promise in it, as of gratuitous grains to fatten Hiram

Ford's pig, or of a publican at the 'Weights and Scales' who would brew beer for nothing, or of an offer on the part of the three neighboring farmers to raise wages during winter. And without distinct good of this kind in its promises, Reform seemed on a footing with the bragging of pedlers, which was a hint for distrust to every knowing person"[4]. Of course this is not the only negative effect of the changes during those times. Luddism is a term referring to the spontaneous movement of the workers concerning with breaking the machines. Through this term, we go to Rosamond Vincy and her father, discussing about her future marriage with Lydgate. Heavily affected by the industrialization and the replacing of men with machines, workers answered back by breaking the machines. Thus, financial problems hit the population of Middlemarch, as Rosamond's father denied her any material support, as a consequence to the problems he was facing. Nonetheless, financial problems reached other characters too. Doctor Tertius Lydgate began, with his arrival in Middlemarch, a different type of reform. Having studied in more than ordinary schools, in Paris, London or Edinburgh he went beyond the conventional belief and expectation of common doctors and practitioners in Middlemarch. " While Lydgate, safely married and with the Hospital under his command, felt himself struggling for Medical Reform against Middlemarch, Middlemarch was becoming more and more conscious of the national struggle for another kind of Reform"[5]. With this, began the medical reform in the province of Middlemarch, held only by doctor Lydgate as others were highly suspicious of his treatments; he began curing some, lost different clients because of the patients conception that traditional is better than modern and at times got the appreciation of people for saving

their relatives. But his "reform" took its toll on him, and because of his innovative conception and trying to treat patients better than the mediocre treatment they received from the old medics, he found himself in a dead spot concerning his financial status and recovered after many years after leaving Middlemarch and being appreciated for his efforts." Who has not remarked the readiness with which the closest of friends and honestest of men suspect and accuse each other of cheating when they fall out on money matters? Everybody does it. Everybody is right, I suppose, and the world is a rogue"[6]. Another aspect affecting the society and reality of the Victorian Age is portrayed in *Vanity Fair* and talks about the Napoleonic War. William Thackeray studied about the Napoleonic Wars when he studied at Cambridge but also on his personal account, requesting a copy of *The Story of the Battle of Waterloo* written by George Robert Gleig. Although the novel emerged in the literary scene in 1847 and the war took place around 1815, this fact is still introduced, apparently insignificant, as one of the important parts in the novel. Indeed it is important and inserting this historical period of war into the present reality of London brings a different kind of influence upon the characters' lives "Yes; Napoleon is flinging his last stake, and poor little Emmy Sedley's happiness forms, somehow, part of it"[7]. Along with the war, the narrator "touches" also another subject highly important for those ages, worshipping the "hero". Perhaps that Thackeray considered that introducing in the present, that already had its problems, parts of the past and its outcome, somehow the tension supplemented with irony will be amplified, which he realized. Financial problems emerged for some as overbearing and moreover, allegiances, national or self-interest ones, were broken because of

the intense battle for outlasting a harsh period. The war had terrible results for the characters involved in the vanity life. First of all, John Sedley lost all of his money and deals and all of the sudden bankruptcy became official for John Sedley and his family. They were forced to sell everything they had left and move into a new, poorer house, accommodating their needs and desires to what was possible. Further more, as a harder blow, besides the one of his financial state, John Sedley lost the support of his friend John Osborne, whose son was to marry Amelia, Sedley's daughter. Osborne decided that his son engagement with Amelia was no more and that he never wants to hear about Sedley family. And as war affected some financially, it affected others much harder. Although against Amelia and George, their matrimony happened few days before George went on to defend his country, with the price of his life. Later on, he was found dead and an even greater fury was unleashed from John Osborne when finding out that besides the fact that his son died, he married Amelia. For the " heroine" Becky Crawley, the war became a possible chance for a new life. Thinking that Rawdon might get caught under some French gunshot, she prepared herself for what was to come, with or without Rawdon. " The girl I left behind" turned out to be, as expected, unbreakable. When the war arrived, she summed up all her belongings and felt satisfied; at least if something were to happen to Rawdon, she had the money needed for a fresh start .: " If this is a novel without a hero, at least let us lay claim to a heroine"[8]. On the other hand, the aristocracy, as presented in the novel, was not that affected, from the financial point of view. Thus, the battle does not consist only in the precise one, meaning that of Waterloo, but also in another one, that of the battle for

money and social interest, having its begins in the war battle, this too departing from financial interest. Another aspect of the Victorian society portrayed in Middlemarch is the countryside and rural way of life. Subtling her novel *A Study of Provincial Life*, Eliot tried to describe the reality of life in the English countryside, composing a developed plot. Being a small town in England in the 19th century, Middlemarch is presented throughout the novel as a usual town, in which people love to gossip, have a deep suspicion of outsiders and are very resistant to change. Caleb Garth seems to portray the best the rural side of Middlemarch, being a farm manager. His daughter Mary is the only female in the novel that works, as a housekeeper for Peter Featherstone. Due to the love Mary had for Fred, Caleb will accept teaching Fred the necessary skills for becoming a good farmer and later on succeeds. Regarding to the countryside in its meaning there's no actual description. A small town, Middlemarch had a deep suspicion for newcomers and both Bulstrode and Lydgate had to deal with this fact. Their background and family had to be searched by the people interested in their arrival in the town. When Lydgate began his campaign of changing the medical system in Middlemarch he was faced with a strong opinion about new cures and his new ways of healing people. Gossip made the subject of many discussions among characters, both from Middlemarch and *Vanity Fair*. Being used daily and without any effort, gossip made serious and damaging offense for many characters. For example, in Middlemarch, each character was the target of gossip: Dorothea's marriage to Casaubon was a question mark for everyone since the beginning, Lydgate's financial problems where for the town's people as a expectation because of his way of treating people, Bulstrode's

past became the main focus when it was discovered that his money came from an odd marriage, Fred Vincy's libertine life was highly criticized and no one gave him any chance at Mary's heart. Because no one knew where the truth really stood, everyone presupposed and it affected most of the characters: Dorothea started questioning herself if her marriage is or not a successful one, Lydgate lost his confidence in him, Bulstrode held everything inside and almost ruined his marriage and Fred had to prove that he is worthy of calling himself a man. Vanity Fair also had its share of gossip and it mainly surrounded Becky's life. Right from the beginning of the novel she was the preoccupation of those around her as everyone was talking what she was doing and what her next move would be. Barbara Crawley became at some point her worst enemy in terms of gossip and Becky was highly criticized, mainly in front of Matilda Crawley. Although it influenced her life, becoming a different person for each person that gossiped about her, it did not affect her at all.

2. 2 Marriage of convenience

When one thinks of marriage, the romantic and idealized image is presented in his/her mind. An understanding husband, beautiful children and a comfortable household made the perfect marriage. However, the Victorian term of marriage was not that romanticized as many of the novelists of the period presented it. Some of the rules concerning marriage were to say, at least awful for most of the women, shadowing their love life and vision of a happy life. Moreover, during the Victorian period there were published magazine articles, texts or even manuals dealing with instruction concerning marriage, in the sense that marriage was far more complex than one could imagine. As education was different for men and women, women receiving what could be called a "

house education", their option was to marry someone, have children and live life as it went by. Wifehood and motherhood replaced the ideal of love, turning marriage into a union for totally different purposes. A major deal that stood at the margin of a conflict concerning marriage was that Victorians were somehow obliged to marry someone who had the same social class or at least marry a person having an upper social class but not someone who had a poorer condition than the other. Thus it can be said that not all marriages were based on love, but on friendship, companionship, support and understanding. All in all, it can be understandable that many marriages were the so-called marriages of convenience, in which the woman married a man because it was her last option, because it meant a financial deal that would serve the families, because the man took over the woman's belongings, and many other reasons." If there is a marriage plot – and of course there almost always is – it generally involves a familiar courtship, with an urgency and a passion that itself demands our attention. In the currency of the marriage plot, familiar marriage is the gold standard, the original guarantee to which more dubious forms of specie need to compare themselves. The familiar marriage plot emerges when a novel is written from the point of view of someone for whom marriage constitutes a possible, shocking, loss of identity and property and place – someone for whom marriage means a new name, a new family, a new home – and for whom that unknown future might well be terrifying"[9]. For writers, the idea of marriage related in a novel can come from all sort of emotional feelings, personal dissatisfaction or marriage seen through the eyes of others, rather than reality, but for most of the cases these two factors, reality and subjectivism

blend and compose the image of marriage given to the readers as a fact of life. Thus, we will encounter in the presentation of the two novels, *Middlemarch* and *Vanity Fair*, marriages that define love, marriages of convenience, marriages in which the woman had to nurse her husband, marriages in which the woman dominated her husband or the type of marriage destined as a means for social climbing, marriages in which the woman chooses between two men or in which the man chooses the woman. Being an important part of life and thus of a novel, there's no discussion on why did the Victorian writers presented marriage in its diverse colored way. It was, nonetheless, a means of presenting the reality within the house but also a direct reality of life.

2. 2. 1 Marriage and Family Matters" Why does the young man fall in love with the young woman who is most unfit for him of all the young women of his acquaintance, and why does the young woman accept the young man, or the old man, who is better adapted to making her life unendurable than any other man of her circle of acquaintances?"[10].

When reading a novel, the reader's attention will be focused for the most part of the novel on characters and their journey throughout it. And referring to characters and their implications, we clearly refer to plot, being the most important tool in creating a novel. Episodes followed by closure, added with the turn around of the characters, make the plot the center of the narrative fiction. " As Aristotle commented in the *Poetics*, a plot has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A reader can have a hunch about where a plot is headed, but not until the whole set of events is known can the plot be fully characterized. The most general accounts of plots suggest that they move from stasis, to disruption, to a restored (though altered) stasis. Tzvetan

Todorov describes plot as the movement from equilibrium, through disruption, back to a new and restored equilibrium, and he emphasizes the transformations implied by that movement. In the past, critics have drawn diagrams of what such plots look like, graphically rendering, for instance, tragic plot's rising action, complication, climax, catastrophe and denouement. Creative writing handbooks are full of terms for plot lines that call up graphic analogies (pyramids, checkmarks, spirals, snakes, etc). Whatever their imagined shape, plots rely on related events, while reading narrative fiction provokes a desire to continue turning pages. These two features may support one another closely, or they may be manipulated through techniques of disordering and digression, as I discuss below. Recalling that the reading experience (which transpires as an effect of the discourse level) may or may not mirror the development of the plot (whose causal links are finally filled in after a completed reading) helps avoid confusion"[11]. Starting with Amelia Sedley, the typical Victorian woman, critics and the author himself stated that she is not the novel's main concern: " She wasn't a heroine"[12]. She was chosen by George Osborne because of their father's partnership, at first, but later when her father went bankrupt and all odds were against them, George's friend and Amelia's protector made things happen, and quite soon Amelia became Mrs. Osborne. Meanwhile, Amelia's marriage was going the usual way, only that her head was full of thoughts of guilt for George's bad luck, after being left with no money, because of his marriage to Amelia: " It is hard when, before seven days of marriage are over, such thoughts and confessions as these force themselves on a little bride's mind"[13]. Thus, there is a clear relation

between Thackeray's character and Eliot's Dorothea. Just as Amelia, Dorothea married Edward Casaubon, wanting to accomplish her ideals and have a happy marriage. But six months later Dorothea was crying...it was supposed to be, as expected, a period in which two persons enjoy the most each other's presence, but nothing like this seemed to describe their honeymoon in Rome. During their stay in Rome, Dorothea realized Casaubon was not that much into what marriage meant. His "research" did not include Dorothea and by staying a little more in Rome, she felt she was useless. It cannot be avoided that, when talking to him, he "included" her in his research: she could stack up and sort his studies. This kind of involvement though, made Dorothea full of bitter feelings and lonely days. Before she could even think of what marriage meant to George, Amelia got trapped into a lie: that was her marriage. Even though George pretended to be at his father's home when not with Amelia and vice-versa, Amelia was blind; she had already established an image of George: the image of a loving husband and a future father, and was decided to believe in this ideal. With all this... Amelia's marriage wasn't what she expected. At times she felt unhappy and alone; she contemplated at the times when her parent's love was unconditioned, just like the time when she visited them after nine days of marriage. Deep down, Amelia feared the worst, even if she didn't want to admit it: "Did she own to herself how different the real man was from that superb young hero whom she had worshipped?"[14]. Heading towards Rebecca Sharp, her becoming Mrs. Crawley was only a means of leaving her past behind and imposing her as a lady of the society she was living in. After trying to catch Joseph Sedley and the proposal from Sir Pitt, she finally

married Rawdon Crawley, thinking he would inherit his aunt's fortune. Her marriage with Rawdon meant the escape she was waiting for all of her life: from an orphan to a governess, from a young lady to a Lady in its literal meaning, Rebecca pulled all the strings in order to achieve her goals. Marriage did not mean anything for Becky, at least from the sentimental point of view. Her poker face worked all those around her and she seemed to have her way, and finally get where she dreamt of being. In a typical provincial city from England, called Middlemarch, life was having its usual way. Dorothea was living a marriage she did not think she deserved. Also in Middlemarch, we meet the aspiring Rosamond Vincy. She married Doctor Tertius Lydgate because of her dream of marrying an outsider, a new person, far away from Middlemarch customs. He ...married her because it seemed right and because his feelings told him she was the one for him. But soon after, their marriage had not turned out as they expected, or at least as he expected. Of course at first it was all good, it was that feeling that both Amelia and Dorothea had at the time, but along the way it seemed they grew apart. Rosamond had a miscarriage, because of her being stubborn and wanting to ride a horse and Lydgate was put under pressure by the creditors. Thinking he has someone to count on, in the person of Rosamond, he related all of his worries to her. Instead of supporting him and because she was used to the way of living she had before, her only thought was to sell everything and move out. Gathering all these facts, it is only predictable that their marriage too was not the proper one. Because just like Dorothea and Amelia also, Lydgate made a mistake and took Rosamond as his "ideal wife", while she was an ordinary one, mainly interested in parties, jewelry and standing

out in the crowd, resembling very much to Becky Sharp. In the society that was full of vanity, the war had terrible results and no one felt safe. Amelia was in a state of denial, Joseph contemplated running and Rebecca...well she was once again fearless and thought at her own good: " she stitched away the major part of her trinkets, bills, and bank-notes about her person, and so prepared, was ready for any event—to fly if she thought fit, or to stay and welcome the conqueror, were he Englishman or Frenchman"[15]. As for Amelia, she " was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart"[16]. Thus, for Amelia, all hell broke loose as she now found herself in a world all by herself. Pregnant and with no support, she had to face life, only that her powers were too weak. Just like Amelia, Dorothea from Middlemarch was living the same kind of drama: " what have I done – what am I – that he should treat me so? He never knows what is in my mind – he never cares. What is the use of anything I do? He wishes he had never married me!"[17]. Thus, Dorothea reached her breaking point; and it was understandable because of her husband's behavior. There cannot be said that Casaubon was overwhelmed by this marriage – he was just being himself, and this was what Dorothea received. But is there someone else to blame but Dorothea? Hadn't she been warned about the flaws of marriage or about good and bad times, she could be excused for her thoughts. Initially, Celia and Mr. Brooke, even James Chettam advised her to take some time and balance the situation. Her answer: she ventured head first into a marriage, just because she thought she could accomplish all her ideals. In the meantime, Rebecca Crawley lived her life, here and there, everywhere she could find someone to fool and extort money from. She soon realized

that the fortune she was waiting for was not coming anymore and from there on, Rebecca's "marriage" started crumbling. Caught with Lord Steyne, she received a harsh critique from her husband and its result was one that did not touch Rebecca's heart at all. Rawdon divorced and headed to Coventry Island where he died of tropical fever. She, on the other hand, embraced her habits and once again restarted her life. Poor Amelia, after years of struggling, finally got the break she needed; she admitted to herself who George was and opened her heart to Captain Dobbin. Although a state of happiness filled her life, there is no clear evidence, knowing her past, that Amelia had a happier marriage with Dobbin. Her experience of her first marriage was left behind and she looked towards the future. On the other hand, Becky Sharp...:" She never was Lady Crawley, though she continued so to call herself...She has her enemies. Who has not? Her life is her answer to them"[18]. As for the society created in Middlemarch, the life there too, followed its course. The drama concerning Dorothea's inner soul reached its end. Casaubon died right before she could promise him not to marry Will Ladislaw. Right when her nightmare ended, instead of being happy of being released from her cage she was overwhelmed by the idea of marrying Will. Our "Saint Theresa" became Ms. Ladislaw, and although this second marriage was a happier one, she realized that her dreams and ideals could not be achieved. Poor Doctor Lydgate reached his lowest low: his marriage was crumbling and he did not seem to find a way out of his debts. Because of his debts, Rosamond changed, so it can be said that it is mainly her fault. But Lydgate should have known better and temper her appetite for having all that the upper class had. Had he done this and show Rosamond that it is not

about material goods, their marriage would have been different. They now reached a point where both of them made decisions, without caring more or less about the other: he wanted to sell the house and she thought this to be an insult towards her. All in all, it gathers around their mistakes, for their desires of reaching a higher scale, without thinking about the road they had to take. Further more, along the way, Lydgate lost himself. He died at the age of 50, but not until he achieved leaving for Rosamond and their children a healthy life. Afterwards, Rosamond married another doctor, although this time, old and wealthy. Fortunately, in both stories we find little bits of happy endings. After years of being her protector and caring for all her needs and desires, William Dobbin got the prize he wanted all his life. Finally opening her eyes, Amelia saw what was not in her eye sight many years. Thus she married Will and began a life which would offer greater joys than what she experienced with her first marriage. As for the province of Middlemarch, in which the reader was a witness of Fred Vincy's becoming a man, life kept its normal course. Underestimated by all and with the desire to become worthy of Mary Garth's feelings, Fred decided to make his life better. Thus, he balanced his life and married Mary Garth, due to their love that resisted the time until every thing was right for their beginning together. It is strange how all of the characters lives, Dorothea and Lydgate's, Rebecca and Amelia's, had such terrible turnouts. Is it their fault or can we assume that society also had a big part in their torment? Because if society would have been better, referring to the provincial one, Dorothea wouldn't have wanted to pursue all her dreams of building houses and helping her husband finish a work which would help humanity (in some way) and Lydgate, with all of his

studies and intelligence, would have made it somewhere else, not in Middlemarch, where he felt it is his duty to help those in need. If aristocratic London had different values and praised more basic things, would have Becky acted the same way, wanting a better life, at any costs, even her dignity? Or had Amelia and George gone through the same problems if their parents would not have chosen for them, to later on break their deal, thus causing tension between the families???

2. 2. 2 Marriage as slavery. Women as slaves?

The Victorian era is well-known for its treatment of the women and how the women were, after marriage, subjected to being as a slave and doing everything that a husband should want or demand. But as Middlemarch and Vanity Fair's plots develop, we see a breach into this rule, that was somehow imposed by men, as they had the power to do so and no women had the courage or the support to stand against it. And as from what we see in our novels, marriage was a kind of slavery but we also see a different side, in which women fight for independence and more. We thus have two different sides: on the one side we have Amelia Sedley and Dorothea Brooke, on the other we have Becky Sharp and Rosamond Vincy. These four characters present women's road towards breaking out of men's dominance but also how they were used to their power and continued their life, resigned, with nothing else to do but serve their man." I know few things more affecting than that timorous debasement and self-humiliation of a woman. How she owns that it is she and not the man who is guilty; how she takes all the faults on her side; how she courts in a manner punishment for the wrongs which she has not committed and persists in shielding the real culprit! It is those who injure women who get the most kindness from them—

they are born timid and tyrants and maltreat those who are humblest before them"[19]. This is one of Thackeray's opinions about the women in his novel. And so it was because Amelia was the kind of spouse that would never go out on her husband's word. Her early education and the respect for the man she loved stopped her from defying his supremacy on her, even after he died. She was too tolerable and thought that nonetheless this is how things were normal. Even when Amelia's blindfold came down and she finally saw the truths of life, she was kind of strapped to the image she created of her husband. Her and others' mistake was that she thought nothing better would appear in life after such an experience. Her second marriage, a happier one, with William Dobbin, perhaps changed her vision of marriage but anyhow she was a victim of what marriage turned women into. Dorothea Brooke became, through her way of being, the " Saint Theresa" of the age. No doubt about it, she found herself trapped, just as Amelia did, in some sort of commitment towards Casaubon. Their marriage was not a proper one and fortunately, Dorothea was released sooner than later from it. But she did the same mistake, and became the slave of her husband. Although not happy and with no power to confront her husband, she complained to herself, in various monologues, about the treatment she received. As Saint Theresa, that critics liked to call her, she was not able to turn around her life and be equal to her husband. What would have Dorothea's life been in the case in which Casaubon would not have died? Would she stand up and face the facts in front of her husband? or soon realize that her chances were too low in her favor, thus craving all of her life for Will Ladislaw's love? The other side presents two totally different characters from the ones we just discussed,

another category of women, as critics Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar stated in *The Norton Anthology of Literature By Women*, as a woman that functions behind the scenes. In the case of Becky Sharp and Rosamond Vincy we see the battle for dominance, the battle between sexes, for they do not want to be just the mother and the wife in the house, not even the equal of their man but more than their manhood means to them. Marrying Rawdon Crawley, Becky Sharp leaves the place of the slave to her husband. Being a servant and a kind of slave for those who hired her as a governess, after marriage, Becky will not be filled with joy by being the wife of Rawdon Crawley. She uses her marriage and enters the high society as the couple called Mrs. Crawley and her husband Rawdon instead of Rawdon Crawley and his wife Rebecca. Thus the roles changed and there can not be any discussion about whether Rebecca is a slave. As for Rosamond Vincy, George Eliot had to portray in *Middlemarch* the counter-part of men's power and gave the readers a chance to see how men can be treated as they do with women. Rosamond becomes the head of the family and manipulates her husband, presenting the sunset of male authority, highlighting the decade of man's power over the women and the start of their independence. For Becky and Rosamond it was never about male domination, it was about self preservation and their own interest, for they did not consider themselves tied up to men and their principles. And in a world dominated by men their job was to turn them around and grant their own wishes. Hypocrisy and Opportunism as Ways of Reaching Higher Status

From the start, Thackeray's intention is to create an image of the bourgeois and aristocratic England of those times. The work that defines the best his vision of the society of those

times is called *The Book of Snobs*, it being his start into mocking the society in which he lived. Thus he represents, through snobbery, the typical representation of an entire class, being also his starting point, from which his novels will develop. One important part in the character's social ascension could be the art of fake and the analysis of own feelings. This is how Rebecca Sharp's story, as we know it, started: "The happiness the superior advantages of the young women round about her, gave Rebecca inexpressible pangs of envy. 'What airs that girl gives herself, because she is an Earl's grand-daughter,' she said of one. 'How they cringe and bow to that Creole, because of her hundred thousand pounds! I am a thousand times cleverer and more charming than that creature, for all her wealth. I am as well bred as the Earl's grand-daughter, for all her fine pedigree; and yet every one passes me by here. And yet, when I was at my father's, did not the men give up their gayest balls and parties in order to pass the evening with me?' She determined at any rate to get free from the prison in which she found herself, and now began to act for herself, and for the first time to make connected plans for the future"[20]. Its end, however, was not just as she imagined it, because of circumstances that got her from one place to another. Anyhow, Becky Sharp could resemble a spider, in the sense that she placed her net and waited, a wait that seemed to pay off sooner than later. Out from Chiswick Mall and into the house of Amelia Sedley, our sharp character seemed to work her magic and got under everyone's skin. Nevertheless, her intentions were clear, as she had set her goal and was heading towards achieving it. Portrayed just like a flashback from her departure from Chiswick Mall, as Rebecca went into the carriage, crying,

right about the corner she wiped out her tears and thought of her new life. Better chances lied for her at Queen's Crawley, rather than Russell Square, so Rebecca's new life began, once again. It was a year since Rebecca arrived at Queen's Crawley and she was a totally different person than the one who entered Crawley domain. She became more than a governess and not by force, cause she made her way through those living there with tactic and skills. Now Rebecca was Crawley's right hand, helping and advising him in all he needed; further more, Crawley's sister, Matilda, was another character to complete the whole masquerade taking place at Queen's Crawley. Having the skills needed to succeed, Rebecca became Matilda's favorite and soon-to-be, Rawdon's favorite too. Her influence towards everyone became so clear, that at the time when Miss Rose died, Sir Pitt Crawley proposed to her, an offer that an ordinary governess could not have considered not accepting. But not Rebecca, because she admitted she was already married; fearing the consequences of her affair with Rawdon, she tried to figure out her new role, in telling Matilda that her husband was her beloved nephew Rawdon. While the characters had to face war's worst blows, Mrs. Crawley's fortune was still under her relative's assault. Because Barbra (Bute) Crawley had to take care of her injured husband, Pitt took over and tried his best. His engagement with Lady Jane made Matilda happy and when she received a letter from Rawdon (written by Becky), she promised the major part of her fortune to Pitt. Thus, by leaving and choosing Rawdon as her husband Rebecca lost from the start the battle for the money; all this because she broke the trust of those who trusted her. As time passed, our beloved Becky Sharp was living her life in Paris, by God knows what material support and by the time

Matilda Crawley died, Queen's Crawley became like a carcass surrounded by vultures eager to eat their prey. Becky's biggest wish of them all??? To enter high society and to be treated like royalties; and at a certain time, Lord Steyne seemed to be her entry. Once again, just like passed times, using her charm and her many personalities, she thought was facing a win-win situation. Only that this time, the unprecedented happened and she got caught: " What had happened? Was she guilty or not? She said not, but who could tell what was truth which came from those lips, or if that corrupt heart was in this case pure?"[21]. In fact it was like this, because no one could say who Becky Sharp really was, except for one person, that person being herself. Starting from nothing, Rebecca ended up having at least a glimpse of the life she had imagined for her. All of her plans ended up by bringing her nothing because struggling for survival, she lived for a few years, a life that pleased her: surrounded by all types of shady people, scrambling for her own good and walking over dead bodies – this was her story. Idealism and Self-Interest" She was regarded as an heiress [...]Nothing could hinder it but her love of extremes, and her insistence on regulating life according to notions which might cause a wary man to hesitate before he made her an offer, or even might lead her at last to refuse all offers [...]Most men thought her bewitching when she was on horseback [...]Dorothea, with all her eagerness to know the truths of life, retained very childlike ideas about marriage [...]

The really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it"[22]- this is one of the reader's first view of Dorothea. And later on, the reader will see how Dorothea's perspective of marriage and a husband will affect her entire life.

Dorothea Brooke had almost 20 years when the novel began. Her desire to built and help others was for her the ideal that she had to fulfill and because of this perspective she refused getting married with James Chettam. Perhaps because of her young age she believed that life is somehow different and she started it with a different view than usual. Thus, her idealism turned out to be her biggest mistake...she married an old scholar who cared only for his work and did not continue her plans of building; she saw the cracks in her marriage and still continued to support a work that in the end turned out to be nothing but filled pages of scientific facts:" In this way it was made clear that Middlemarch had never been deceived, and that there was no need to praise anybody for writing a book, since it was always done by somebody else"[23]" Because you always wanted things that wouldn't do. But other plans would have come"[24]-this being the sincere words of the more down-to-earth Celia, after Dorothea realized that none of her plans were fulfilled and that her life was deprived of the things she loved. Rosamond Vincy wanted all her life to marry a man outside Middlemarch, that was not a typical country boy: " Now that she and the stranger had met, reality proved much more moving than anticipation, and Rosamond could not doubt that this was the great epoch of her life [...] And here was Mr. Lydgate suddenly corresponding to her ideal..."[25]. Further on, a marriage done in a hurry, just like Dorothea's, proved to be one filled with ups and downs. The luxury in which Rosamond was used to live in turn out to be an important aspect of her life and from then on, Rosamond's marriage with Lydgate went on a wrong path. Trying to please his " ideal wife", Lydgate tried all his best but unfortunately with no results. Rosamond acted like she cared only for her,

and in fact she was the most important person in her life, because she became a self-centered person and a wife that only had complaints. The Power of Money and Property Throughout the novels, money and property make an impact upon the characters' lives, as they are influenced by material goods. In the development of the novel, the reader will see that intrigues, secrets and the struggle for money will show a different reality than the one at the surface, where at first it seems that the characters involved in problems dealing with money and properties have no secret intentions and made their fortunes on the right terms. Along the way, cracks will emerge, as characters get caught up in a battle for maintaining their belongings or getting a way of "receiving" from here and there, the amount needed to keep them in society's good image. 2. 3. 1 Wrong Used

Money Middlemarch, although a provincial city, was not at all poor and had its population, amongst which some of them had at least a great amount of money in order to have no worries about their living. Peter Featherstone, a rich old man, who was living on his own, had not direct relatives who would inherit his fortune in case he died but his sister Lucy, who was now a Vincy. Fred and Rosamond Vincy had all their faith that when the old man would die, they will be mentioned in his will, because they both had future plans, which would not be possible without some material support from their relative. Although family, the unexpected happened and Mr. Featherstone left his belongings to Joshua Rigg, his illegitimate son, of whom nobody knew he existed. Thus, the lives of Fred and Rosamond changed in an instant, as they saw their dreams shattered and knew this would affect them on the long term. However this was not the case of Fred, who began changing his

life, understanding that only through work he will see his dreams come true. Edward Casaubon uses his power and money in trying to make Dorothea not marry Will Ladislaw, his cousin. After cementing in his head the idea that Will's only interest in him is to expect his death and then marry Dorothea, Casaubon made a will in which he stated that if Dorothea were to marry Will, she would lose all of the belongings got from their marriage. Nicholas Bulstrode, the banker with an untainted reputation, a brilliant career and a beautiful family. But beneath all these lied his past, a story unknown by others, except for Mr. Raffles, Joshua Rigg's step-father. He became a successful man by marrying Mrs. Dunkirk, whose husband helped him get a job and afterwards died. Later on, before Mrs. Dunkirk died too, she searched for her runaway daughter, but did not find her, she being kept secret by Bulstrode. This secret came to haunt Bulstrode as he found out from Mr. Raffles that his former wife's daughter was Will Ladislaw's mother. In order to keep this a secret from everyone and especially from his wife Harriet, he pays money to Raffles in exchange for his silence, but fails when Raffles returns after some time. Further more, he pays a sum of money to doctor Lydgate, trying to escape from any responsibilities of Raffles death and also to Will Ladislaw, as he felt guilty for his financial problems.

2. 3. 2 Problems Created by Money

After Fred Vincy found out that he will not be inheriting Peter Featherstone's fortune, he had a reality check and understood that he had no other chance in life than hard work, thus convincing Mary Garth that he is worthy of her. He offers to help Caleb Garth and learn the skills needed to maintain a farm, this being his beginning in life as a grown adult. The couple created by Rosamond Vincy and Tertius Lydgate had a nice life at it

beginning. They were attending all of the parties in Middlemarch and were very much pleased of the life, at least Rosamond was. Not too long after their marriage came their first problems concerning the material support. Trying to cope with the situation and depending on Lydgate's monthly pay was not pleasing Rosamond, as she refused to make any sacrifices. Leaving Middlemarch, their lives change, because of their problems with money, and mostly their relationship changed. On the other hand, the "heroine" of Vanity Fair develops her character as it turned out to be, because the lack of money. Rebecca Sharp's goal in life is to gather enough money and make a life for herself. Instead of gaining money the right way, meaning through work she becomes a devious person who will do her best in obtaining a higher status in society, being capable of the most pitiful actions. She will get to a certain point and later on seeing herself in a state which reminded her of her beginning, she lives her life as what she did not want to be. Having earned from here and there different sums of money, Rebecca Sharp did not use it however, to escape her husband from prison. She stacked up her banknotes in a notebook and kept it a secret from her husband. But when he returned from prison and see the real face of his wife, Becky's money would do no good, as this lead to their divorce².

3.3 Helping others

Dorothea Brooke will use her money to help others, as her nature was a kind one and always trying to make other's lives better. She tries to involve herself in the financial activities of Middlemarch, so she helps in building a new hospital. When hearing about Lydgate's problems concerning the controversy including Bulstrode she offers him a sum of money, thus being able to pay off his debt and go on with his life. Mr. Brooke's interest in Will

Ladislaw makes him see what his assets were and hires him as an assistant, and even to write articles at his newspaper. With all these, Mr. Brooke is seen as a person who does not help the people working for him, because of his failing in becoming a politician, as he, as well as Dorothea had a dream that could not be accomplished. As for the characters from *Vanity Fair*, there are not so many that use their money in order to help others. One of the few examples is Lady Jane, in the scene where she pays Rawdon's debt, releasing him from his creditors, as his wife, Becky was in "poor physical condition" and could not get that night and set him free. Another character is William Dobbin, who all of his life took care of Amelia Sedley and her son. Even in the times when she thought she did not receive any help from him, he was there, as her shadow, protecting and caring for her well-fare.