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THE PROBLEM OF OTHERNESS IN GEORGE ELIOT'S *THE MILL ON THE FLOSS*, *SILAS MARNER*, AND *MIDDLEMARCH*

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**GEORGE ELIOT'IN *THE MILL ON THE FLOSS*, *SILAS
MARNER*, VE *MIDDLEMARCH* ESERLERİNDE ÖTEKİLİK
SORUNU**

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ETHICS DECLARATION

I hereby confirm that I am the sole author of this MA thesis entitled “**The Problem of Otherness in George Eliot's *The Mill On The Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch***”, which I have prepared in accordance with Dicle University Institute of Social Sciences Thesis Writing Directive, and I have diligently cited all sources to which I have referred in my thesis. I hereby acknowledge that my thesis and its electronic copies will be stored in the archives of Dicle University Institute of Social Sciences.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how societal contradictions shape identity and otherness in the Victorian era, focusing on George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's feminist theoretical framework, especially her concepts of abjection and melancholia, the study explores the profound impact of the Industrial Revolution and urbanization on identity construction. Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of heteroglossia, dialogism, and the carnivalesque provide a complementary social and linguistic perspective to Kristeva's psychoanalytic approach, offering insights into identity and marginalization. In *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie Tulliver's family dynamics, gender dilemmas, and societal expectations are analyzed through Kristeva's semiotic and symbolic theories, Bakhtin's dialogism, and the carnivalesque. In *Silas Marner*, strangeness is explored through the application of Kristeva's theory of abjection to Silas's alienation and identity transformation, framed by Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia. Finally, Dorothea Brooke's identity formation, desires, and rebellion are explored in *Middlemarch*, within the social constraints of her time, highlighting Kristeva's melancholia, abjection, and strangeness theories. Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and heteroglossia are employed to examine Dorothea's struggle with established gender roles. This thesis underscores how Eliot's narratives mirror societal conflicts, providing a critical framework for analyzing identity, gender, and otherness. By integrating Kristevan psychoanalysis with Bakhtinian dialogism, it offers insight into Eliot's contributions to the discourse on societal change and individual formation.

Keywords

Abjection, dialogism, George Eliot, identity, Julia Kristeva, melancholia, Mikhail Bakhtin, otherness.

ÖZET

Bu tez, Viktorya dönemi toplumundaki çelişkilerin kimlik ve öteki olma üzerindeki şekillendirici etkisini incelemektedir. Çalışma, özellikle George Eliot'ın *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner* ve *Middlemarch* adlı eserlerine odaklanmaktadır. Julia Kristeva'nın feminist kuramı çerçevesinde, özellikle iğrençlik ve melankoli kavramlarından yararlanılarak, Sanayi Devrimi ve kentleşmenin kimlik inşası üzerindeki derin etkileri incelenmektedir. Ayrıca, Mikhail Bakhtin'in çokseslilik, diyaloji ve karnavalesk gibi kavramları, Kristeva'nın psikoanalitik yaklaşımına paralel bir sosyal ve dilbilimsel perspektif sunarak kimlik ve ötekiliği anlamaya yardımcı olmaktadır. *The Mill on the Floss*'ta, Maggie Tulliver'ın aile ilişkileri, cinsiyet sorunları ve toplumsal beklentileri, Kristeva'nın semiyotik ve sembolik kuramları ile birlikte Bakhtin'in diyaloji ve karnavalesk kavramları aracılığıyla incelenmektedir. *Silas Marner*'da, yabancılık kavramına odaklanılarak, Kristeva'nın iğrençlik teorisi ve dilin semiyotik ve sembolik kuramları ile Silas'ın yabancılaştırılması ve kimlik dönüşümü, Bakhtin'in diyaloji ve çokseslilik kavramları çerçevesinde analiz edilmektedir. Son olarak, *Middlemarch*'ta, Dorothea Brooke'un kimlik oluşumu, arzuları ve toplumsal kısıtlamalar içindeki isyanı, Kristeva'nın melankoli, ötekilik ve yabancılık kuramları üzerinden incelenmektedir. Bakhtin'in diyaloji ve çokseslilik kavramları, Dorothea'nın belirli cinsiyet rollerine karşı verdiği mücadeleyi anlamak için kullanılmaktadır. Bu tez, Eliot'ın anlatılarının toplumsal çelişkileri nasıl yansıttığını vurgulayarak kimlik, cinsiyet ve öteki olma konularına dair eleştirel bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Kristeva'nın psikoanalizini ve Bakhtin'in diyalojisini birleştirerek Eliot'ın toplumsal değişim ve bireysel oluşum üzerindeki katkılarına ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Diyaloji, George Eliot, iğrençlik, Julia Kristeva, kimlik, melankoli, Mikhail Bakhtin, ötekilik.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to apply Julia Kristeva's theories and terminology to the analysis of George Eliot's novels *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*, demonstrating the construction of identity and gender issues within the structures and customs of Victorian society. Apart from Kristeva's theories, Bakhtin's heteroglossia, dialogism, and carnivalesque concepts are employed as a supportive framework. In other words, this research aims to shed light on representations of otherness in *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch* by employing a multidisciplinary perspective that draws on literary analysis, sociocultural examination, and contextual understanding of the Victorian era. This thesis grounds its theoretical stance on Julia Kristeva's ideas, specifically focusing on themes such as alienation, rejection, sadness, and the expression of semiotic and symbolic elements in language. Moreover, Bakhtin's notions of heteroglossia, dialogism, and carnivalesque are integrated into the thesis. The integration of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque with Kristeva's psychoanalytic framework to study themes such as strangeness, revolt, melancholy, and abjection in Victorian literature is an attempt to offer a novel theoretical framework. Therefore, this study bridges Kristeva's and Bakhtin's theories by addressing the interplay of linguistic and psychological dynamics. To analyze those relations regarding otherness, this thesis examines the inner conflicts and conversations between the characters in *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch* to determine how such issues are conveyed.

The question of otherness has gained importance across various academic fields. Literature heavily emphasizes it, especially in novels where social and political shifts draw attention to the differences between multiple groups of people who consider themselves part of coherent groups while marginalizing certain individuals as others. In addition, the Victorian period underwent profound social, cultural, political, and economic transformations. During the Victorian era, rapid urbanization and technological development led to a dramatic transformation in society. These events consistently exposed society to changes that impacted the formation of identity and gender issues. In such an environment, the concept of otherness gained importance as individuals navigated through a rapidly transforming world. In this respect,

Victorian literature reflects the unstable conditions of the era and casts a mirror on the social, cultural, economic, and political concerns of the period. Even though there were different genres, such as drama and poetry, it was novels that had great significance within Victorian society.

Literary critics recognize the Victorian era for its prominent literary culture, particularly in the domain of novel composition and consumption. Furthermore, there has been a noticeable surge in literary critics' scholarly focus on nineteenth-century psychology and its connection with the Victorian novel. George Eliot, also known as Mary Ann Evans, is a prominent writer during this period, having a huge influence as a novelist and making significant contributions to the literary world. Eliot addresses the intricate relationship between the individual self and society. John Thale (1959) asserts that she is an unparalleled achiever in the annals of women's history. Once more, despite not explicitly aligning herself with the feminist movement, she exemplifies women's accomplishments. Her works do not necessarily depict successful women who openly defy the societal conventions of their era. According to British psychologist James Sully, Eliot “effectively mirrors psychological character analysis and the intricacies of identity formation” (1881, p. 392). He emphasizes Eliot's power in illuminating the circumstances of both internal and external existence through her fictional narratives. Eliot explores the realm of human psychology through her novels, offering contributions to understanding the human psyche derived from her personal experiences and inner conflicts. According to Jan Jedrzejewski, “Eliot has a real insight into the evolution of her creative self” (2007, p.112). Similarly, American literature professor George Levine (2008) underscores Eliot's exceptional capacity to portray the otherness inherent in both objects and individuals. To him, Eliot successfully reflects on the dimensions of otherness, revealing the tensions that arise when individuals find themselves at odds with societal expectations.

Eliot employs realism and psychology as tools to illuminate the otherness. This situation enables her to comprehend others by allowing her heart to open, thereby leading her to acknowledge her own feelings. Thanks to Kristeva's theoretical framework, Eliot's early works can be interpreted through the angle of abjection, particularly focusing on how characters' struggles with societal norms and personal identity reflect the concept of abjection within their fictional context. Several studies

tackle the women's issues in *The Mill on the Floss* and *Middlemarch*, however, none address the issue of otherness in these novels. This study attempts to bring a new perspective to the criticism of those novels and fill a gap in the field. Analyzing Eliot's early novels through the theoretical viewpoint of Kristeva, particularly focusing on the concept of abjection, brings an insightful literary interpretation. In this regard, Kristeva's theory of language's semiotic foundation will be useful in understanding the core of the otherness issue. Because these novels focus on otherness, their analysis is essential to understanding oneself and others. Eliot's early novels can be reinterpreted in terms of language theory, considering semiotics, the symbolic, and the notion of abjection through their main characters and themes. Moreover, critics have pointed out that Eliot's novels fail to mirror her inner world. While some criticize Eliot's attitude, other significant literary figures, such as Kate Flint (2016), assert that she is sensitive to female and male problems. *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch* are revolutionary novels as they transcend the boundaries of the self/other, providing a fresh viewpoint on the oppressed. They address the concept of realism and inquire about the dualistic structure of self/other opposition. Additionally, Eliot and Kristeva hold similar perspectives regarding the issue of women and gender roles. Kristeva questions conventional roles and focuses on the language and body relationship. Similarly, Eliot's novels explore how societal expectations and personal identity are intertwined with the language and the body.

In her article "Women's Time" (1981), Kristeva stresses that women are generally excluded from the public sphere. This study explores how different aspects of identity, like ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or nationality, contribute to the feeling of otherness in contemporary literature. It also provides insight into how people undergo many facets of identity concerning societal norms and how this affects their sense of belonging by examining literary works. In today's diverse and interconnected world, this could help to clarify the complexities surrounding the concept of otherness.

Thus, this thesis explores the third space between subject and object while drawing on Kristeva's views on language. There is a notable gap in the scholarship regarding the issue of otherness from Kristeva's perspective. Moreover, the combined application of Kristeva's theoretical insights with Bakhtinian concepts promises to offer a more nuanced analysis of identity formation. Therefore, this study aims to

bridge this gap in academic research. The works under scrutiny are analyzed using Kristeva's concepts and terminology, which align with Bakhtin's concepts. The aim is to demonstrate how gender and identity are shaped by the norms and institutions of Victorian society.

This study consists of four chapters. In Chapter II, following the Introduction, the theoretical background of the study is examined in light of Kristeva's and subsequently Bakhtin's theories. Chapter III provides a comprehensive examination of the historical and social setting of the Victorian era. It also examines Eliot's creative accomplishments and her experiences as a female novelist within this sociological context. After the theoretical framework is established, three novels are analyzed respectively in Chapter IV. In the first section, *The Mill on the Floss* is elaborated on within the framework of Kristeva's abjection, language, and women's time theories alongside Bakhtin's dialogism and selfhood model. This section delves into Maggie's familial relationships, gender-related quandaries, identity ambivalence, and the societal pressures she faces within the confines of the Victorian period. Eliot provides a critical assessment of conventional gender roles and the status of men and women within this framework. This analysis focuses on language theory, including semiotic and symbolic aspects, subjectivity, as well as women's experiences of time, melancholia, and resistance. The same chapter analyzes *Silas Marner* from a Kristevan perspective, drawing on supporting concepts from Bakhtin. The novel highlights Silas's struggles with faith, his uncertain identity, and the societal pressures he faces in Victorian society. The differences between individual characters and societal norms in the novel are examined based on the issues of alterity, language theory, subjectivity, women's temporality, heteroglossia, and dialogism. The last section of the chapter dwells on *Middlemarch* from a Kristevan and Bakhtinian perspective, focusing on identity formation, character transformation, and patriarchal values of society. This final section analyzes the influence of societal norms and expectations on the character's decision through the employment of the concepts of abject, melancholia, and dialogism.

1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do the identity markers (race, gender, sexuality, etc.) influence the portrayal and experience of otherness in *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*, and what are their implications for notions of self and belonging?

2. To what extent do *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch* reflect the evolving dynamics of societal norms and their impact on individuals navigating multiple layers of identity, and how does this contribute to our understanding of otherness in a diverse and interconnected world?



CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. THE FOUNDATIONS OF KRISTEVAN THEORY: LANGUAGE, OTHERNESS, AND THE SELF

Since Kristeva's theories on language and subjectivity constitute the theoretical foundation of this thesis, it is necessary to provide some prior knowledge of her theories, as well as definitions for the key concepts used in this study. Kristeva, one of France's leading theorists, is a prominent semiotician and philosopher whose rich and varied body of work spans five decades in the field of literature. Her views on the body and the abjection of the maternal have greatly influenced the development of feminist theory. She undertakes significant research to challenge ideas that men dominate. Her theories on otherness have been revolutionary, offering a theoretical framework to explain types of social exclusion as well as solutions to these obstacles. Kristeva's rejection of feminism as a body of thought is widely acknowledged, primarily due to her individual experiences within a specific context. This aspect continues to perplex the literary community, as she is a well-known French feminist. Nevertheless, her acknowledgement of her sensitivity and understanding of the concept of femininity indicates her tendency to limit it to the realm of maternal function. Charles E. Bressler (2007) highlights that in her most recent writings, Kristeva continues to examine the relationship between language, culture, and the written word using psychoanalytic terminology (pp. 159–160). She also continues to investigate the connections between languages, psychology, and culture as they relate to the human psyche, language, and society. In this regard, she has brought groundbreaking perspectives to the field of literature. Kristeva's studies focus on several important topics, including the concepts of poetic language, abjection, sadness, love, and borderline situations of subjectivity. Thus, her theories have become the cornerstone of this research since they deal with the subject and identity problems.

2.1.1. Kristeva's Theory of Language: The Dynamics of Meaning and Subjectivity

Kristeva's groundbreaking perspectives have had a significant impact on contemporary literature. Her doctoral dissertation, titled *Revolution in Poetic*

Language (1984), introduced her philosophy of language. From Kristeva's perspective, language functions as a signifying system where “the speaking subject makes and unmakes himself” (1984, pp. 265-272). Unlike earlier philosophers who deny the dynamic structure of language, she perceives it as a dynamic process that generates meaning. She places a strong emphasis on speaking-grounded language, asserting that the speaking subject constructs identity in terms of language. The fundamental component of revolution is language, which creates, redefines, alters, and manipulates the subject. In other words, the dynamic process of subjectivity arises from the interaction with transformative forces such as language, culture, and history. In her thesis, Kristeva (1984, p.13) asserts: “Our doctrines of language and pictures of the idea are nothing more than the studies of analysts, archaeologists, and necrophiliacs”. In the preface, she offers a revolutionary perspective on discussing the subject, arguing that the energy of language demonstrates its active presence in generating subjectivity. The concepts of language and subjectivity are intrinsically linked, serving analogous functions. Thus, Kristeva maintains that language is constantly alive and active. Moreover, she draws extensively from psychoanalytic theories, particularly those of Jacques Lacan and Sigmund Freud, adapting their ideas to explore connections between linguistics, literature, society, and psychology.

A central concept in Kristeva's theory of language is the signifying process. From her perspective, significance is an “unlimited and unbounded generating process, the unceasing operation of the drives toward, in, and through language” (1984, p. 17). Kelly Oliver (2002) elucidates Kristeva's signifying process in the preface of *The Portable Kristeva*. According to Oliver, rather than lamenting the deficiencies, absences, or inherent insolubility of language, Kristeva directs attention to an alternative realm: bodily experience, which spreads into the language. The dynamism of language represents a vital influence that is transposed into linguistic expression. Kristeva is concerned with the subject's identity and claims that the subject gains his/her identity through language. Furthermore, the division drawn by Kristeva between the symbolic and semiotic domains is a key component of her theoretical framework. The semiotic and the symbolic were first introduced by Kristeva in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984). The difference between semiotic and symbolic meaning paradigms has been one of her most fundamental contributions to

contemporary literature. According to Kristeva, they are two different facets of language, akin to the two sides of a coin. The symbolic aspect encompasses language structures, whereas the semiotic aspect indicates elements that surpass or violate these linguistic frameworks. Kristeva aims to provide a thorough understanding of the construction of meaning and subjectivity within the limits of language by examining the relations between these two terms, acknowledging not only the structured, rule-bound nature of language but also its prelinguistic and primitive foundations.

As Kristeva outlines in her theory, the signifying process provides energy and stimulates the relationship between language and the subject. This process operates through two modalities: one shaped by language, the other by instinct and rhythm. As a system linked to language, symbolic includes structured signs, grammar, and the alphabet that organize both spoken and written forms (Kristeva, 1984, pp. 29-30). In addition, the symbolic is a rule-governed element of language that reflects grammatical and syntactic rules of language. It represents a more primal, chaotic, and disruptive force that exists alongside the symbolic. In contrast, the semiotic refers to the study of signs, particularly emphasizing how meaning emerges through interaction. It can be understood as the unconsciously habituated system of meaning transmission. For Kristeva, language and the body are intertwined, and the semiotic component enables them to be expressed in language.

According to Kristeva (1984, p. 27), “the realm of law, rules, and order provides a structured system of communication”. The use of words, grammar, and syntax in symbolic language serves to convey meaning according to cultural conventions. The symbolic order establishes boundaries and structures, allowing for the formation of identity, social order, and shared meaning. It is the realm of conscious thought and societal norms. On the other hand, semiotics is a method that facilitates the revelation of physical energy, and it is an unconscious way of conveying meaning. It helps the subject reveal inner impulses and drives. These drives emerge in the characters' rhythmical sentences or even in the images they use to convey their expressions. It is a more fluid and rhythmic aspect of language that does not adhere to grammatical rules or fixed signifiers. The semiotic frequently relates to the maternal and pre-Oedipal phases, where communication is based on rhythms, tones, and bodily experiences (Kristeva, 1984, p. 26). While the symbolic is “an expression of clear and

orderly meaning, the semiotic can be seen as an evocation of feeling, or, more pointedly, a discharge of the subject's energy and drives" (McAfee, 2004, p. 16). Although the semiotic and symbolic reflect opposite aspects of language, they are both indispensable parts of a subject and language. Kristeva correlates semiotics with bodily drives and *chora*. Chora is a term she borrows from Plato's *Timaeus*. It represents the semiotic modality and the mode of significance. Chora is positioned within an objective order influenced by factors like biological differences and traditional family systems. Kristeva focuses on the phase of early childhood. In this way, she challenges the conventional wisdom, which maintains that language and body are two distinct orders.

Kristeva argues that, in early development, children's minds are full of misconceptions about themselves until language becomes a means to convey their ideas. At this stage, children begin to recognize and develop awareness of everything that changes in their environment. From a phenomenological perspective, Edmund Husserl (2014) proposes a threshold known as thetic phase. Admittedly, Noelle McAfee (2004, pp. 20-21) calls this a "thetic break where babies express themselves with the help of semiotic *chora* based on babbling and cooing". Language is what helps babies separate themselves from others. As children enter the realm of the semiotic, they begin to differentiate between the self and the other more readily. For the same reason, Kristeva incorporates the notion of the thetic phase into her theoretical framework and underlines its dynamic structure. Regarding this emerging awareness in the child, it is necessary to consider psychoanalytic theories such as Freud's Oedipal stage and Lacan's mirror stage. Kristeva extends Lacan's mirror stage which includes the loss of connection between mother and child, with the child's realization of itself in a mirror by asserting that this separation begins not at the mirror stage, but at birth. For Kristeva, birth marks the initial moment of differentiation between mother and child.

Kristeva argues that the child comes to recognize symbolic structures after leaving the semiotic chora with the help of language. Oliver (2002, "Introduction", xxi) suggests that Kristeva continues to affirm that Lacan's signification holds the same meaning as the symbolic function. However, Kristeva's definition of symbolic order covers both the symbolic and the semiotic modes of language, as opposed to

Lacan's. In her explanations, Kristeva does not distinguish between the two modalities. She avoids the dual structure of Western thinking, which makes an extreme distinction between dichotomies. Contrary to the Western perspective, she does not intend to address binaries in a hierarchy. Conversely, she states that the first poles, such as the semiotic, body, and nature, manifest themselves in symbolism, culture, and mind. Therefore, in this framework, she demonstrates the intertwined structure of these dichotomies.

2.1.2. Abjection and Subjectivity in Kristeva's Theory

The other fundamental Kristevan concept employed in this thesis is 'abjection'. As this study explores the possibility of achieving equilibrium between the excesses of nature and societal norms, it emphasizes the notion of abjection, which emerges from the fundamentals of language. Concerning those fundamentals, the subject and its sublimation are the main concerns of this study, and the subject is examined as an in-between space between object and subject. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* published in 1982, Kristeva introduces the concept of abjection, considering it a necessary process for the formation of identity. She defines abject as "the in-between, the ambiguous, and the composite" (1982, p. 4). Additionally, she defines abject as a person who exhibits in-betweenness and, in contrast to most members of society, disrupts orders, boundaries, and laws (p. 4). In other words, the abject is the ambiguous space that exists between the subject and the object, and it cannot be defined. It is challenging for children to abandon their mothers and distinguish themselves and others. To acquire subjectivity, the infant must refuse to identify with the mother.

Kristeva argues that abjection is rejecting something that threatens the self's integrity, identity boundaries, and subject stability. Abjection is caused by something that violates borders, positions, or rules. It involves reacting to something considered taboo, repulsive, or socially unacceptable. It is not confined to physical or tangible entities; it extends to symbolic, cultural, and linguistic elements that challenge the established order. It marks the separation between the self and what is considered other or outside the boundaries of social norms. The abject is what disrupts the clean and clear distinctions between self and other, challenging the subject's sense of order and

stability (1982, pp. 1-5). Kristeva defines abjection as an essential phase in understanding the subject. To her, the abject is anything that intrigues desire but is neither a subject nor an object. As stated earlier, the symbolic is related to grammatical structures and syntactic aspects of language. In contrast, semiotics encompasses impulses and bodily drives that manifest themselves in language. Regarding subject and language correlation, Kristeva associates semiotics with the mother and, conversely, symbolic with the phallus. Hence, abjection is related to the mother, who challenges the symbolic order and serves as a bridge between culture and nature. She highlights that a variety of factors, such as language, culture, body, and sexuality, play important roles in the construction of identity. Through the interaction between the symbolic and the semiotic, she establishes a visible connection between language and body. She refers to the other as abject, whose rejection is essential for societal integration. However, according to the theory of subjectivity, the subject is unable to detach itself from society and achieve autonomy, as it is inherently connected to the other in its psyche. Due to this connection, one is not settled, and one cannot consider symbolic, semiotic, and abject bases of language independently. As a result, they are critical for understanding the subjectivity theory (1984, pp. 68-71).

Kristeva draws inspiration from Freud's and Lacan's identity theories. She benefits from Freud's primary narcissism stage when children realize their mother's deficiency of the phallus and separate themselves from others. However, she disagrees with Lacan's assertion that it is the mirror stage in which infants distinguish themselves from their mothers (Kristeva, 1984, p. 47). She argues that the separation between a mother and child emerges earlier, a process called abjection (2004, p. 35). Becker-Leckrone (2017) expands upon Lacan's framework of psychosexual development and asserts that he diverges notably from Kristeva, drawing attention to the significance of womanly and mothering aspects in the sexual evolution of the person (p. 27). Furthermore, she relates to the subject of Freud's primal repression. However, her interpretation of the relevance of repression, abject, and the uncanny differs from Freud's understanding of repression. According to Freud (2018), a child must differentiate himself/herself from the maternal body. Furthermore, without that, it becomes impossible for a child to construct his/her identity. Until the mother undergoes a symbolic separation, the individual cannot acquire language (pp. 25-27).

A mother cannot be discarded completely since the uncanny is defined as “what was once familiar” (Freud, 2003, p. 151). One’s fear of encountering his/her otherness gives rise to the fear engendered by the other's strangeness. In terms of subjectivity, the maternal body never fully disappears into the unconscious; rather, it impacts and awakens the symbolic. Moreover, Kristeva (1980) asserts that the abject is the resurrection that occurs with the death of the I. It is an alchemy that transforms the death and life impulse into resurrection. Henceforth, the abject is founded fundamentally on existence, desire, and language, and confronts us with the lack of what we want. The abject refers to a new system that destroys a fictional system. It is an endeavor to bring the I into existence (Kristeva, 1980, p. 28). In a similar vein, Judith Butler (2011) argues that Kristeva’s theory of abject emphasizes the other. According to Butler (2011, p. 111), with the construction of the other, the body boundaries are established, which are the first outlines of the subject. Kristeva's view of human psychology and the unconscious's involvement in identity formation demonstrates that understanding political discourse can be achieved by delving into the individual psyche. Nevertheless, she does not explicitly explain how the idea of abjection can be a solution to the nation's identity crisis. She approaches this from a wider perspective and suggests that literature is a medium for different identities. She connects literature with expressions of mental illnesses and suffering, including episodes of depression and rejection.

Additionally, Kristeva considers literature and identity to have a mutually reinforcing effect on the relationship between the signifier and the signified by identifying the hidden meaning. She clarifies the mysterious power of writing. She examines the author’s struggles by evaluating them as the subject. Such an attempt shows that productions, particularly literary texts, are significant compositions that reflect others (1984, p. 208). In one of her expressions, she states the essentiality of the literature:

This perspective, in my view, is fundamentally anchored in delicate boundaries—borderline cases—where identities such as subject/object barely exist or do not exist at all. These identities exhibit characteristics of duality, haziness, heterogeneity, animality, metamorphosis, alteration, and abjection. (Kristeva, 1984, p. 207)

As can be inferred from the quotation, Kristeva challenges us to reconsider what politics and revolution entail through reflections in literature. Similarly, Barbara Creed and Jeanette Hoorn (2016) assert that a careful examination reveals every piece of literature as a manifestation of the apocalypse.

Building on this idea, Kristeva examines contemporary revolts and explores their meaning, particularly delving into the concept of intimate revolt in her latest volumes. These volumes are *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis* (2001) and *Intimate Revolt* (2002). In each of her books, she poses the question of what revolt means and then explores it from different angles. In her works, by utilizing literature and psychology, she investigates the culture of rebellion in connection to the circumstances for the creation of psychic existence, personal experiences, and notions of freedom. Similarly, regarding how *jouissance* is necessary for the life of the psyche and, by extension, for the “faculty of representation and questioning that specifies the human being,” she asserts that revolt requires *jouissance* (2002, p. 7). Kristeva emphasizes the culture of rebellion rather than the culture of entertainment and enjoyment in these works. These pieces illustrate many ways in which she views the concept of revolt. Rather than focusing on the political dimension of revolt, she chooses to conceptualize it through both linguistic and philosophical lenses. She asserts that the term revolt originates from a Sanskrit root, connoting discoveries, opening, and turning or returning. The concept of revolution, as she explicates, does not entail attempting to overthrow the system (p. 1). From her perspective, rebellion against systems is not a valid interpretation of revolution (Kristeva, 1984). In an interview conducted by Ruben Gallo (2005, pp. 25-42), she contends that the act of rebellion invariably incorporates elements of representation. She also asserts that “revolt goes beyond mere rejection; it embodies the act of starting over” (p. 27). Since language changes also bring about changes in the subject’s status, speaking relates to a subject that is in progress instead of a static subject. She explains it as follows:

In each of us, you must not forget that the human being is speaking, a self-in-language, in constant communication, bonding. Now, invoking “language” and “bond” at once raises questions of limits, prohibition, and law, questions that are intrinsic to our condition as speaking beings and which are raised and will always be raised anew. (Gallo, 2005, pp. 25-42)

Moreover, regarding the themes of revolt, Kristeva, in her recent works, makes a distinction between psychological and societal revolts. She (2002) believes that psychological and societal revolts are equally important despite their differences. She highlights the fundamental need for psychological revolt, which she defines as a rebellion against the law, spectacle, homogenization, and identity. Without an internal district, it is impossible to maintain an inner zone.

As Kristeva deals with revolt from various perspectives, her ideas on revolt can also be explained by the phase of psychic development. She benefits from Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (2012) and asserts that the murder of a father is the foundation of the entire civilization. The genesis of this foundational act is traced back to the father's monopolization of all the girls, prompting the brothers to revolt out of jealousy, resulting in their demise. Subsequently, commemorative feasts and ceremonies are instituted to mark the father's death. The brothers then substitute an imaginary father figure for the deceased patriarch. This transition is followed by the establishment of a collective band to address guilt, thereby providing the strength and transcendental nature of the fictional paternal figure (2012, p. 208). As Jeff Edmonds (2009, p. 222) notes:

However, over time, the brothers' rituals lose their significance, and they forget the reason behind their uprising. The brothers turn against one another after losing the father figure who once brought them together. The father has been dispersed, digested, and completely consumed.

This quote captures the complete dissolution of the father figure, symbolizing not only the physical loss of the father but also the psychological and symbolic absorption of his authority by the brothers, shaping their subsequent actions and relationships. In this sense, the loss of the father figure exposes a deeper truth about identity: it cannot be fully understood without the challenge of revolt.

Melancholia is another concept that is handled in this thesis. Kristeva's scholarly focus encompasses both the constitution of the subject through language acquisition and the disintegration of the subject during a psychotic breakdown of language. In her writings, she delves into the spaces where self-identity faces threats and explores language boundaries. Therefore, from a psychoanalytic perspective, she explores the relationship between the background of melancholia and depression. Even

though depression is a less severe form of melancholia, they can be used interchangeably. In *The Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1989), she explores the subject of melancholia by drawing upon Freud's ideas. In her work, she not only rethinks Freud's formulations but also reconceptualizes the melancholia and the loss of meaning in speech. She explains melancholy and depression as being equivalent traumatic conditions (1989, p. 10). She uses these terms to describe the ongoing sadness a person has as a result of losing their mother figure (p. 10). Individuals experience various levels of melancholia, which involve both love and hate, which can be regarded as a manifestation of affection due to the enduring love for the absent mother. Conversely, melancholia elicits hate as the individual harbors resentment towards the mother, who is the root cause of sorrow. She describes this kind of depression as objectal depression. To her, melancholia is "impossible mourning for the maternal object" (1989, p. 9).

Besides, Kristeva associates melancholy with the concept of the black sun described as being "bright and black simultaneously" (1989, p. 13). As suggested by her, melancholia is an essential part of human beings. She posits that every being goes through melancholy at various levels. Hence, it is unavoidable and a curse and a blessing simultaneously. While melancholia triggers people to commit suicide when they cannot overcome maternal lack, love, on the other hand, stands for healing and fulfillment. In *Tales of Love* (1987, p. 2), she suggests that love offers a unique opportunity to view oneself through the eyes of another, thereby reducing the anxiety often triggered by the presence of a different person. By acknowledging their distinctiveness, individuals understand that their identity is not fixed but rather can be divided and explored. Kristeva argues (1987, p. 40), "objectal depression arises when an individual successfully navigates thethetic break but later in life realizes that an unidentified loss is causing them to experience sadness". Additionally, she marks another melancholia type, which is narcissistic melancholia. In contrast to objectal depression, individuals with narcissistic melancholia experience a comparable level of distress, but their feelings of grief arise before the hysteric break. When an individual in the chora stage loses their major object of affection, they may encounter this particular form of depression. Kristeva's views on ethics and politics in psychoanalysis involve love arising from positive narcissism and melancholia from negative

narcissism. As a result, intellectuals benefit from her views on melancholia in literature and even in art interpretation. For instance, in a recent study on the criticism of artworks, Elaine Miller (2014) addresses Kristeva's melancholia theory to elucidate how writers and artists combat melancholia and employ art to reflect their melancholy. Furthermore, she states that both writing and art can be useful in the restoration of sadness. Kristeva's exploration of the concept of melancholia not only highlights its remarkable ability to transform but also emphasizes its enduring appeal to the human psyche. This fascination endures as melancholia undergoes numerous transformations, consistently evolving and captivating our imagination.

2.1.3. The Dynamics of Strangeness in Kristeva's Theory

In *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991, p. 95), Kristeva asserts that “a foreigner or stranger is characterized by their lack of affiliation with the state and absence of shared nationality”. She describes a foreigner as someone who exists outside the bounds of society, distinguished by a different nationality. As posited by Kristeva (1991, p. 96), the concept of national identity entails the recognition of distinctions and the acknowledgement of a collective known as we and they. To elucidate, she categorizes foreigners into two legal systems: “the law according to soil and the law according to blood” (p. 95). Regarding this, if an individual is born into a native family, they are seen as a part of the same group. Nonetheless, if this individual is a stranger, then they are perceived as a potential threat who can disrupt the national collective. Consequently, they are “excluded as the Other, and their presence evokes a blend of fascination and aversion” (p. 96). Kristeva argues that in the modern era, despite the abolition of the slave/master hierarchy, this change is not fully embraced in our ideologies. Consequently, natives also struggle to find a sense of belonging, feeling somewhat like foreigners within their designated spaces. The metaphorical significance of the term “foreigner initially triggers a sense of unease within the citizens, encompassing various aspects of their sexual, national, political, and professional identity” (Kristeva, 1991, p. 19). Kristeva examines this broader political matter through a lens of individual psychology and endeavors to expand upon it by alluding to the concept of the uncanny and the fear of the other. She establishes a connection between the destabilization of personal boundaries caused by the presence

of an uncanny other, which elicits fear, and the outsider who disturbs the national identity of sovereign states.

In *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity*, Sara Beardsworth (2012) states that narcissism is a critical problem in contemporary society. She argues that our society is characterized by narcissism, where individuals find it difficult to express their emotional connections with their primary love object, such as their mother or someone who takes on a maternal role. This leads to a significant number of individuals exhibiting borderline characteristics (p. 55). These individuals are deeply influenced by their emotions and instincts, “disconnected from any symbolic life built upon meaningful connections with others” (Beardsworth, 2012, p. 170). The challenge of modern nihilism arises from the incapacity of individuals to establish a connection between the symbolic and semiotic realms.

Kristeva does not explicitly outline a methodology for abjection to address national identity issues. However, her analysis focuses on the inner psychological processes and subconscious influences that shape identity formation. These studies offer a unique perspective on how political discourse operates within the individual psyche.

2.1.4. Language, Identity, and Feminism in Kristeva’s “Women’s Time”

“Le Temps de Femmes” is a significant essay by Kristeva, translated into English as “Women’s Time.” In this article, she tackles the topic of feminism and expresses her personal views on feminism and femininity, particularly French feminism. She later expands on the shaping of female subjectivity and identity in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), where she examines how women's subjectivity and identity are shaped within patriarchal societies. Her perspective encompasses the psychological and cultural dimensions of women's experiences, as well as women's liberation issues. She posits a distinctive approach to feminism that combines psychoanalytic and linguistic perspectives. Concerning the notion of feminism, she elucidates her perspectives on the relationship between feminism and the symbolic order. She emphasizes the importance of language and the symbolic order in the construction of gender identity. By drawing attention to European feminism, she describes three generations of European feminism. The feminist movement, which

started with the suffragettes and continued with existentialist feminists, has always aimed for the sociopolitical equality of the sexes (1982, pp. 14-15).

In pursuit of this goal, many strands of feminism have embraced the universalist view, which justifies demands for equal pay and status. However, traits traditionally associated with femininity are often seen as incompatible with dominant versions of history, which tend to focus on male experiences and values. After May 1968, feminism entered its second phase, one that became deeply entwined with the arts and psychoanalysis. In this sense, there are now indications of a third stage, which is characterized by an increasing number of women on the social and symbolic scene. So, in "Women's Time," Kristeva employs Joyce's (1999) concepts of "father's time" and "mother's species" to distinguish between two distinct domains that humans have experienced. Father's time denotes the chronological era in which males have traditionally held influence over matters connected with history, destiny, and development (1981, p.15). The concept of mother's species, as defined by Kristeva, highlights women's non-linear spatial experience, which stands in contrast to linear time perception (1981, p. 15). Unlike the first wave of European feminism, Kristeva attempts to create a parallel relationship between motherhood and femininity to subvert the opposition between the two. While the first wave of European feminism rejected motherhood as a patriarchal construct, the second wave celebrates it. The idea that women are like the mythical recollections of grandmothers from ancient times is problematic, as it reduces women's identities to archetypal roles rather than individual agency. Based on Kristeva's analysis, the second wave of European feminism tends to identify the archaic mother as having good substance because she is a fulfilled and cohesive person. The third wave of European feminism respects women's aspirations to simultaneously enter the male world and raise children. In other words, they "start producing both the species and the culture" (McAfee, 2004, p. 100). Maternity becomes a true creation when it does not negatively impact one's affective, professional, or intellectual character. Unfortunately, this is not currently possible. Kristeva contends that the social contract that views men and women as competitors is the source of the division between the sexes. Instead of avoiding this socio-symbolic structure, she opts for internalizing it. Therefore, a different sexual orientation or personal identity demonstrates the varied socio-symbolic contract structure. The other

should, therefore, be internalized rather than rejected (2004, p. 209). Consequently, Kristeva attempts to share her thoughts on the relationship between identity and gender identity as well as the variations between feminist movements among European women and women globally from today on as well. Even though her views do not align with radical and liberation feminist perspectives, she is still influential in shaping discussions on feminism.

Nowadays, Kristeva still holds a certain place in intellectual life and the field of literature as a psychoanalyst, linguist, and literary theorist. Several studies and books are being published on her theories, providing an understanding of her politics. For instance, Alice Jardine, in her latest book *At the Risk of Thinking: An Intellectual Biography of Julia Kristeva* (2020), explores her intellectual development and contributions in the twenty-first century. Similarly, Nilgün Tütal's book *Julia Kristeva: Anlamlandırılmayanla Yüzleşmek* (2023) explores Kristeva's key concepts, uniting themes such as the abjection of femininity, love, loss of meaning, and the emergence of introverted violence. In this context, this thesis will specifically examine the impact of artistic and literary creation. The approach in this study aligns with Kristeva's suggestion for comprehending concepts and the self-centered tendencies prevalent in society. The ethical and political potentials of Kristeva's ideas have been examined to incorporate them into the argument of this thesis.

2.2. THE ROLE OF BAKHTIN'S THEORIES IN UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY FORMATION, LANGUAGE, AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Kristeva's theories of language, abject, strangeness, melancholia, women's time, and revolt are central frameworks in this thesis. They provide valuable insight for understanding identity formation by intertwining language and subjectivity. Michael Bakhtin's theories, like those of Kristeva, offer nuanced perspectives on the relationship between language, identity, character development, inner conflicts, and social norms. His concepts of dialogism, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque are powerful tools for exploring how language shapes identity, reflects societal expectations, and highlights the dynamics of otherness within a text. Furthermore, Bakhtin's theories of dialogism, heteroglossia, and the carnivalesque intersect with Kristeva's ideas of the abject, revolt, strangeness, and the semiotic. Indeed, these concepts present a scheme

for the understanding of both the psychological and emotional identity struggles of the characters. Therefore, Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia, carnivalesque, and dialogism provide a supporting framework for understanding the characters' development and interactions with society and their inner conflicts. The combination of both theories creates a space for exploring how identity, language, and social structures are negotiated in literary works. While Kristeva explores the unconscious and bodily dimensions of language, Bakhtin emphasizes its dialogic nature. Moreover, Bakhtin's theories, alongside Kristeva's, illuminate the intricate relationship between individual identity, emotional expression, and social norms in *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*.

Bakhtin (1895-1975) is one of the most preeminent Russian literary critics and philosophers. His theories have played a pivotal role in advancing academic scholarship. He offers profound insights into literature, focusing on dialogue, social interactions, and identity formation. Though he became well-known in the Soviet Union, he remained unknown in the Western world until the late twentieth century. Kristeva, one of Bakhtin's students, played a significant role in introducing Bakhtin's works to Western academia. In her article "Word, Dialogue, and Novel" (1980), Kristeva elucidates Bakhtin's notions of dialogic exchange and multiple voices by correlating them with the interplay between the self and others in language. In this way, she contends that, according to Bakhtin, language is not a static system but a dynamic process influenced by interactions with other texts and voices. Later, in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980), she reinterprets Bakhtin's concept of dialogism and expands his concepts into her theory of intertextuality. This helped Bakhtin gain popularity among Western scholars and reach a wider audience. After that reinterpretation, he became a major source of inspiration for notable scholars such as Roland Barthes and Tzvetan Todorov. For instance, Todorov (1984, p. 5) describes Bakhtin as "the twentieth century's greatest theoretician of literature". By integrating Bakhtin's theories into her studies, Kristeva not only contributes to literary criticism but also expands frameworks for paradigms of psychoanalytic and literary studies. By drawing on the concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia, she adds a new layer of comprehensibility to the field.

Bakhtin places a particular focus on the dialogic nature of language. He posits that identity is never defined but rather established through an ongoing dialogue with others (1981, p. 293). According to him, the association between self and other is a key to understanding the social role of language. Kristeva, on the other hand, extends the concept of identity by examining the shaping of the self through interaction with others. She (1981) offers a psychoanalytic perspective by arguing that the other is not just an external factor but an indispensable part of the self. Furthermore, to Bakhtin (1981), every text is inherently polyphonic, containing multiple, often conflicting voices that engage in a dialogic relationship. Kristeva (1981, p. 21) expands on this idea, arguing that texts are “mosaics of quotations,” shaped by their interaction with other texts and cultural discourses.

The shared ideas of Kristeva and Bakhtin reveal the nature of confronting others, whether it is another voice or the abject. They analyze this interaction as an opportunity for transformation and renewal of the self. Both theorists emphasize that meaning is constructed through interaction with language or social structures (Moi, 1986; Holquist, 2002). This is evident in Eliot’s novels as characters experience crises of identity, “where encounters with the other or moments of abjection force them to question their place within society and engage in a transformation process” (Moi, 1986, p.4). This process ultimately leads the characters to redefine their sense of self and their relationships with others. Therefore, Kristeva’s theories align with Bakhtin’s and provide an essential ground for the examination of identity formation, societal norms, and particularly the problem of otherness in *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*.

2.2.1. Bakhtinian Notions of Selfhood, Dialogism and Heteroglossia

In *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* (1990) and “Toward a Philosophy of the Act” (1993), Bakhtin elaborates on the concept of selfhood. In his self-model, Bakhtin (1993) argues that the nature of identity is not autonomous but formed through interaction with others. He introduces three components of self: I-for-myself, I-for-the-other, and Other-for-me. The first one, I-for-myself, refers to how individuals perceive themselves (1993, p. 46). However, he states that this perspective is limited as self-awareness is insufficient to constitute an identity. On the contrary,

identity is shaped by others. This aligns with the concept of I-for-the-other, which refers to how an individual is seen from the perspective of others. As he asserts, “the self is never self-sufficient; it gains definition only through the eyes of others” (1984, p. 54). In this way, I-for-the-other resonates with Kristeva’s theory of abjection, which explores how the self is constructed through rejecting the other. The last component of self is Other-for-me, which refers to the internalization of external voices, emphasizing how identity is also shaped by the perception of by others. This perspective highlights that identity is not solely self-generated, but rather negotiated through the gaze and judgments of the external world. From this perspective, identity is characterized by Bakhtin (1993, p. 50) as “fluid and flexible rather than fixed.”

Building on the selfhood model, Bakhtin introduces ‘dialogism’, which refers to rejecting the monologic interpretations of subjectivity. This theory has had a profound influence on literary criticism. It contributes to understanding language, narrative, and social dynamics in literature. Bakhtin first explores the concept of dialogism in *Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics* (1984). He defines dialogism as an ongoing dialogue constructed through the active participation of multiple narrative voices (p. 184). Dialogism emerges through interaction between multiple participants and views. He argues that the “utterance cannot be understood except as a response to something, and its meaning is always unfolding, shaped by the context of preceding dialogues” (1981, p. 276). This dialogic interaction resists the dominance of a single perspective, fostering the coexistence of diverse worldviews and values. Thus, dialogism allows the unveiling of new meanings through interaction. He further argues that in any utterance, there are always at least two voices: “the speaker’s and the others, the response to the other’s utterance” (1981, p. 276). This illustrates that dialogue is not merely a back-and-forth exchange but a process that gives rise to new meanings. Additionally, he states that the world in which we live is multi-voiced, and this fact “shapes our understanding of reality” (1984, p. 4).

Dialogism underlines that identity continually develops and changes through interaction with others. It serves as a tool through which individuals engage with one another and within society. As Bakhtin highlights, the dialogue of each character embodies a unique belief system, “expressed through the voice of another in a foreign language” (1981, p. 315). This connection facilitates the exploration of diverse social,

historical, and cultural domains. Last but not least, dialogism offers endless dialogue that leads to the creation of an authentic self and transformation.

Today, Bakhtin's theory of dialogism continues to be a valuable concept for literary analysis, particularly in works that explore intricate social, ideological, and emotional themes. Recent studies, such as "Bakhtin's Dialogism: A Study of R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*" (2022), have demonstrated how dialogism can illuminate the development of characters in literature. Dialogism demonstrates how characters interact with one another and contributes to understanding how external dialogue shapes personal subjectivity.

The relationship between identity formation and social influence is a central theme in Bakhtin's dialogism. Therefore, dialogism is significant to analyze relationships in Eliot's novels regarding interpersonal connections and societal influences. In this context, the Bakhtinian model provides a useful framework for analyzing character development in *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*. Each of these novels presents protagonists whose identities are shaped by societal perception, external judgment, and internal struggles. The dialogues between characters reflect tension, personal desires, and societal pressure. The interplay between personal will and social influence exemplifies Bakhtin's dialogism, where individual subjectivity evolves through external dialogues. Dialogism offers a rich framework for exploring complex relationships between individuals, societies, and ideologies. Furthermore, it serves as a medium for exploring multifaceted layers of human existence and interaction, and allows for a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of various perspectives and voices within a text. By applying dialogism to Eliot's works as a supportive framework, this thesis will explore the identity formation and transformation of individuals.

Central to Bakhtin's theory of language lies the notion of heteroglossia, a term that captures the multiplicity of voices within discourse. To Bakhtin, the novel is distinctive among literary forms due to its incorporation of diverse voices, views, and social dialects. He underscores the novel's transformative power within the literary domain, arguing that it reshapes "linguistic consciousness and exhibits a self-reflexive nature" (1981, p. 104). In this sense, novels go beyond storytelling and become crucial

for exploring human life and the societal environment. Thus, in his view, the novel leads to diverse voices and languages. In this regard, he foregrounds heteroglossia to explore the multiple layers of meaning inherent in the novel. According to him, multiplicity is the key principle of a novel. He (1981) emphasizes that the presence of heteroglossia within every language underpins the novel's distinctive capacity to represent diverse voices and perspectives. Consequently, the multiplicity of perspectives within the novel facilitates the articulation of a wide range of themes and the employment of diverse speech types. Building on this understanding of heteroglossia, Bakhtin employs the term to encompass multiple linguistic and cultural traditions coexisting within a single culture or text. In *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), he emphasizes that heteroglossia is not merely a stylistic feature of the novel but an epistemological tool that reveals how language functions within society (p. 324). To him, heteroglossia is a term that reflects the multivocality and "plurality of the language, opening up various linguistic perspectives and consciousness" (1981, p. 263).

According to Ken Hirschkop (2021, p. 93), "heteroglossia facilitates dynamic and open-ended communication in literature, reflecting the intricate nature of social reality". As the novel encompasses various voices, it challenges the idea of fixed identity. Thus, texts depict identity creation as a continuous process that develops through interpersonal interactions. The coexistence of different voices allows for the exploration of complex dynamics not only in the inner world of a person but also inside society. Yet another scholar elaborating on Bakhtinian theory of dialogism, Holquist (2002) asserts that heteroglossic discourse reflects the diversity and contradictions inherent in society, allowing for a deeper exploration of identity, power, and marginalization. To him, heteroglossia enables an examination of how characters construct their identities and resist dominant ideological structures. On this basis, Todorov (1984) underscores the relevance of heteroglossia to Victorian literature, wherein class, gender, and race significantly inform the construction of characters' identities and their social interactions. Moreover, Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia has been widely applied across various domains of contemporary literary studies. Notably, heteroglossia has found its place in multiple fields, from media to theater. For instance, "The Remediated Bakhtin: Heteroglossia and the New

Media” (2016) explores how Bakhtin’s ideas can be used in digital media. This study examines how social media and online communication platforms feature different voices, showing the diverse nature of language. In addition, the correlation between heteroglossia and multilingualism has been a focus of scholarly investigation. In this regard, Hoa’s (2017) thesis demonstrates that the use of varied speech forms enhances the interpretation of meaning, as the presence of multiple voices challenges the notion of a singular, standardized language. This insight parallels how Eliot’s works depict individuals navigating their identities across diverse social and linguistic contexts. The application of heteroglossia in this study bridges the Victorian era with contemporary theoretical frameworks by examining the intersections of identity. This correlation highlights the ongoing complexity and fluidity of language and identity.

Furthermore, Kristeva’s reinterpretation of Bakhtin’s theories provides valuable insight for examining heteroglossia. Kristeva expands Bakhtin’s dialogism and highlights the importance of plurality in language. This plurality provides a frame for communication and creates a ground for expressing revolt, transformation, and identity formation. Ultimately, the interplay between Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia and Kristeva’s theory of subjectivity offers a robust framework for analyzing the multiplicity of voices in Victorian literature.

In conclusion, Bakhtin’s heteroglossia helps to understand how marginalized voices are represented in texts. It facilitates the understanding of the social and ideological features of a literary text. In addition, heteroglossia challenges the norms of dominant narratives and reveals the complexity of human nature. By applying Bakhtin’s theory to novels such as *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*, this thesis aims to demonstrate how characters engage with their identities and social positions through engagement with others. Finally, this study also delves into themes such as revolt, melancholia, and abjection that align with these theories. In the case of Eliot’s novels, heteroglossia helps to reveal the complex interplay between personal desire, societal pressure, and moral dilemmas. These tensions illustrate the dialogic nature of human experience, where every decision is informed by the voices and ideologies that shape an individual’s worldview.

2.2.2. The Carnavalesque and Subversion of Social Norms

Carnavalesque is a key concept that has been the subject of academic studies for decades. However, Bakhtin establishes the epistemological aspects of this term and applies it to literary studies. In literary studies, he employs the term carnivalesque to explore how texts subvert authority, identity, and social conventions through processes of inversion. He was influenced by ancient Greek philosophers, particularly by Socratic dialogue. Socratic dialogues consist of conversations that help to reveal the truth through dialogic interaction (Kristeva, 1980, pp. 80-81). Thus, he interprets the carnivalesque as a “form of self-expression that emerges within the constraints of authority” (Bakhtin, 1965, p. 15), based on those ancient dialogues. Initially, he discusses this term in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984). Later, in *Rabelais and His World* (1965), he further develops a detailed theoretical foundation of the carnivalesque. He defines it as a celebration of time, transformation, evolution, and renewal (1965, p. 10), an occasion marked by liberation from the ordinary constraints of daily life. Furthermore, he argues that the carnivalesque, as a “literary mode, is imbued with the spirit of carnival, a time when individuals engage in inversion and exaggeration” (1984, p. 10). This mode serves to challenge and subvert established norms, provoking a rebellious response that overturns societal values and regulations, effectively upending traditional hierarchies. Bakhtin (1965, p. 10) describes the carnivalesque as a state that suspends all established social ranks, privileges, norms, and restrictions. Consequently, the carnivalesque provides a temporary escape from rigid social structures by facilitating moments of normative suspension.

In addition, for Bakhtin (1965), the carnivalesque represents a space where binary oppositions are dissolved, enabling individuals to express desires that are otherwise repressed by societal norms. This notion of transgressive expression intersects with Kristeva's theories of abject and revolt. Kristeva (1980, p. 5) asserts that the abject emerges from the rejected part of identity, thereby triggering the breakdown of identity and system. She further argues that Bakhtin's notion of carnivalesque inevitably employs the transgression of law on behalf of another. She draws on the notion to explore themes of abjection and the destabilization of identity, emphasizing the fundamental role of the abject in the process of identity formation. To this extent, the concepts of carnivalesque, abjection, and revolt provide a framework

for analyzing how identity is formed in relation to social norms that are considered marginal or abject. The intersection of the abject and the carnivalesque is crucial for analyzing Victorian literature. In the Victorian era, rigid social norms suppressed the expression of self. In Eliot's novels *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*, characters experience moments where their identities are deeply tied to the strict societal norms of Victorian England. These norms lead to internal conflicts and struggles against societal expectations. However, elements of the carnivalesque emerge through the characters' internal revolts and desires. Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque highlights the tension between societal constraints and inner rebellions against these roles and norms. This clash stimulates the formation of new identities. In this sense, the carnivalesque resonates with Kristeva's theory of revolt, where the subject discovers new expressions of selfhood through a confrontation with the abject (Kristeva, 1982). Furthermore, the tension between transgression and conformity is central to Bakhtin's carnivalesque. Combined with Kristeva's theories of abjection and revolt, it provides several nuanced frameworks to evaluate identity formation and social norms. Thus, applying the carnivalesque in this thesis elucidates how characters navigate and resist normative boundaries. Moreover, it contributes to exploring revolt while challenging the structures of the Victorian period. By exploring themes of otherness and identity, this study facilitates a critique of constrained social norms.

CHAPTER III: THE VICTORIAN NOVEL AND GEORGE ELIOT

3.1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This chapter seeks to clarify the characteristics of the Victorian Period while scrutinizing the literary position of George Eliot. It will explore the interconnection between the Victorian novel and Eliot's viewpoint, considering the contextual factors inherent in her literary milieu. Subsequently, an elucidation of Eliot's role as a female author during the Victorian era will be provided, with a specific focus on the prevalent circumstances of women in Victorian society.

The period of Queen Victoria's rule, which lasted from 1837 to 1901, is referred to as the Victorian Era in the history of England. The era was characterized by several social, economic, and cultural changes. Industrial developments, scientific studies, flourishing literature and art, and gender roles with huge gaps between social classes were major characteristics of this era. The Industrial Revolution, which commenced in the 18th century and spanned over a century, denotes a transformative process. During this period, Britain emerged as the foremost affluent nation globally. However, this unprecedented prosperity came at the cost of grappling with the formidable social predicaments that inevitably arose due to the rapid advancement of urban industry. The era's complexities and general dynamism led to significant societal transformations (Greenblatt & Abrams, 2006, p. 982).

Taken together, the Victorian era is separated into three stages: the early Victorian, the middle Victorian, and the late Victorian. The early Victorian Period (1830–48) witnessed significant incidents. One of them took place in 1832 when the British Parliament passed the Reform Bill to satisfy the wishes of the middle class, which had begun to seize control of the English economy. Moreover, workers suffered from terrible working conditions; consequently, the workers' organizations started movements to protect their rights. Meanwhile, the literature in this early period focused on England's divided structure between the wealthy and the poor (Robbins, 2008, p. 35).

During the mid-Victorian century, there were several issues of harassment, but the institutions were functioning effectively, and the time witnessed economic

prosperity. The queen and her spouse represented the domestic and duty-oriented attitudes of the middle class. In her book *Daily Life in Victorian England* (2024), Sally Mitchell states that during this period, England witnessed domestic stability, advancement, and increasing affluence (p.30). Throughout the 1851 London Grand Exhibition, Britain presented its supremacy in the fields of military, manufacturing, and economy. As profits and earnings increased, living standards also improved. The Second Reform Act of 1867 facilitated the progression towards enhanced democracy in Britain by extending suffrage to a broader section of the middle class, encompassing certain working-class homes. Moreover, discussions on religion arose within the same time frame. The Church of England was categorized into three distinct factions: Evangelical, Broad, and High churches. Scientific discoveries have provided novel and crucial methods for interpreting the Bible, with a particular emphasis on Darwin's works, *Origin of Species* and *Origin of Man* (Greenblatt & Abrams, 2006, p. 985).

At the same time, the aesthetic movement continued to influence the arts and the last phase of the Victorian era maintained the richness of the mid-Victorian era. Consequently, this time is sometimes referred to as the aesthetic period. Meanwhile, new buildings were equipped with electricity. The city was bustling with steam engines and railways. Major British towns were filled with the entertainment industry, offering sports events, music halls, and theater performances to entertain the middle class. However, throughout the last decades of the Victorian era, the British populace scrutinized the mechanisms of wealth accumulation. The political impact of radical theorists like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels raised concerns among political and industrial divisions in Britain (Greenblatt & Abrams, 2006, p. 987). In brief, “the decline of Victorian values” was the phrase employed to characterize the third period of Victorian history (Heffer, 2022, p. 31).

In this last period, values upheld by the Victorians posed a significant threat as they reduced human relationships and the landscapes they inhabited to mere economic worth. Consequently, this led to the alienation of individuals from one another, thus necessitating the revision of social bonds and personal identities. The huge gap between social classes, prevalent in railway carriages, reflected the broader social division. This division was also evident in places of worship, where the upper classes were allocated reserved seating towards the front, while the lower classes were

relegated to the back. Moreover, the Victorian Age served as a time wherein the wealthy members of society exploited the less fortunate. Through the establishment of the social hierarchy, they not only fostered a growing gap in wealth distribution among individuals but also further caused the differentiation between gender roles.

In terms of gender ideology, the Victorian era had several paradoxical conditions. Victorian society was a male-dominated society with a strict division of gender roles. A man's wife had little status or rights, and her only identity was tied to the man she was married to and her domestic duties. So, home became a shelter for the woman because of the lack of purpose and social opportunities to develop their personality. In the mid-century, it was unthinkable for a lady to undertake a job (Greenblatt & Abrams, 2006, p. 1584). One of the best-known feminists and activists of her time, Frances Power Cobbe (2022, p. 180), highlights housework as a distinctive activity that fostered women's sense of independence and awareness. It was a special activity for women, which men could not do.

In her book *The Victorian Home*, Calder (1977) highlights the main problems of Victorian marriages. According to her, women's rights were restricted, and the home was like a domestic prison for women. The structure of the family was particularly patriarchal, and all prosperity belonged to men; thus, both legally and economically, females did not possess any authority. As the social conventions expected them to manage household duties and not offer them any alternative for social life or activities, the woman felt oppressed in their marriages. So, except for housekeeping, the life of the woman of this period was inactive (1977, pp. 125-130). English philosopher John Stuart Mill (2015) suggests that women are responsible for the social conventions that are formed for them. He further suggests that women tend to assume these subordinate roles without raising objections (2015, p. 24). Furthermore, John Tosh (2002) depicts Victorian society as a society marked by progressively pronounced gender category differentiations in his latest article. According to his viewpoint, Victorian society was a male-dominated society with its strict definition of gender roles (2002, p. 460). Additionally, Mitchell's book (2024) discovers the details of Victorian culture and brings attention to increased women's rights and Victorian morality. She offers a wide range of information about the daily life of Victorians, from marriage to gender roles and foundations of society to education, leisure, and pleasure.

The concept of distinct realms served as the foundation for Victorian gender ideology. In other words, men and women were created differently and with separate roles in mind. Women were physically weak, and males were strong. Nevertheless, some scholars of that period criticized this inequality and the dominance of men. For instance, *The Angel of the House*, one of the most popular poems of the Victorian Period that was written by Coventry Patmore (1863), criticizes the ideology of the period by stressing women's purity. Accordingly, in the nineteenth century, most women were expected to be the angels in the house. They were supposed to be selfless and devoted, with the only purpose of soothing and comforting the world's male population. Despite social, economic, and political advances during the Victorian era, women's rights made little progress. Women were not allowed to stand for political office or vote. Employment and educational prospects for women were limited. Married women were not allowed to own property.

To put it briefly, the most noteworthy characteristic of the Victorian period was the persistence of modernity, as it was a time characterized by transformation, influenced by the rise of urbanization and the advancements in technology. Concerning the fundamental attributes of the Victorian era, Mill (1942, pp. 25-30) articulates the notion that humanity has surpassed antiquated establishments and belief systems, yet has not yet attained novel ones, and this period witnessed some dual aspects, such as construction and deconstruction. During the Victorian era, new institutions, doctrines, and orders emerged, differing from the order and circumstances of the Middle Ages, which led to observable dilemmas. Moreover, ambivalent identity and the patriarchal structure represent significant aspects of society. Concerning the societies, those circumstances, inequalities between genders, and restricted women's rights and their traditional roles in life were unveiled as a fundamental concern of the period.

3.2. ELIOT'S LITERARY IDENTITY

Victorian customs and values played a major role in shaping Victorian literature. Economic developments, social changes, and political and ideological conditions of that era shaped the characterization of the literature. Hence, Victorian genres reflect the unstable characteristics of society. Despite the existence of other genres like poetry, drama, and prose, the novel was the most insightful genre in

reflecting the conditions and changes of Victorian society. The novel's remarkable success during the Victorian era was due to its reflection on the significant social changes of the time. It resonated with the educated middle class, gaining popularity for reflecting their values. There were lots of female readers, and from circulating libraries, they frequently checked out books. Flint (2016, p. 19) emphasizes that, "due to lower production costs and improved distribution conditions, the audience for novels has expanded significantly". Moreover, the topics of the novels demonstrate variety from one phase to another. To exemplify moral issues, male and female traditional roles became the fundamental issues in the early period of Victorian novels. The middle Victorian phase of the novel, on the other hand, revealed marriage and gender roles in the rural area. On the contrary, in the last period of this era, novels tackled different concepts when compared to the first and middle phases of the Victorian era. They reflected the societal shift in the perception of women and the dynamics of marriage.

Character-rich, realistic, and lengthy novels were the most widely read works of the Victorian era, which explained entertainment and modern life to middle-class consumers. The nineteenth-century novel was frequently regarded as the peak of literary depictions of consciousness. The concepts "psychology" and "novel" were considered new in the nineteenth century, when both intellectual and artistic forms of activity appeared simultaneously. Regarding inequality between males and females in society, first, women writers preferred to publish their books or studies either under pseudonyms or anonymously. While in the first half of the period, many women novelists used, especially male names; after a time, particularly in the middle of the century, this situation altered. As more women writers began to use their names, their visibility increased. Consequently, several women writers had to write under a man's pen name to avoid society's prejudices towards them (Greenblatt & Abrams, 2006).

One of these prominent female writers was Mary Anne Evans, who wrote under the pen name George Eliot. Eliot's development as a valuable novelist can be analyzed in two different stages. The first five years of her life as a novelist covered intense productivity. In those years, she wrote novellas such as *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858), *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Lifted Veil* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Brother Jacob*, and *Silas Marner* (1861). In the second phase, she wrote *Romola* (1863), *Felix*

Holt (1866), *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), and *Middlemarch* (1871-1872). Through her works and life, she defined the identity and psychology of people and revealed the profound impact of gender roles regarding the conventions of Victorian patriarchal society. In her book, Clare Carlisle (2023, p. 6) unveils how Eliot employs desire, sacrifice, motherhood, and marriage in her novels. She argues that although the Victorian age witnessed traditional marriage regulations, Eliot did not prefer marriage legally. Following this portrait of Eliot and the frame of the Victorian period, it could be argued that this era witnessed remarkable developments and changes. By the time those shifts and improvements took place, their effects on society had been huge and influential. Despite progress in the economy, modernity, and other parts of life, inequality between men and women was obvious. The primary concern of that age was the role of women in a patriarchal society. In this respect, themes such as gender, identity, and otherness were covered by many writers. As one of those writers, Eliot's works have made it possible to identify the conditions of Victorian life and advance understanding of gender roles under the pressure of patriarchal society.

The conflict between abstract reason and observable feelings is one of Eliot's central concerns as an essayist and novelist. It is not surprising that Eliot is associated with the term psychological novel. She is an influential figure who bridges the worlds of psychology and literature. As a novelist, Eliot integrated foundational scientific ideas about consciousness, identity, and memory into her novels. During the Victorian Era, she criticized the works of other writers for their lack of realism. *Silly Novels by Lady Novelists* (2010) is a seminal work that demonstrates Eliot's sensitivity to realism and her interest in historical philosophy. She combines psychology with realism, portraying her characters' inner struggles through the influence of external factors. She is a leading figure of the Victorian era in terms of mixing human psychology and scientific aspects into her novels. In this realm, British philosopher Sully was interested in Eliot's literature. He assumed that readers of scientific journals would be familiar with her "heroes and prominent heroes," such as Maggie Tulliver from *The Mill on the Floss* (1881, p. 378).

Additionally, morality is a recurrent and important theme that Eliot uses in her fictional and non-fictional books. There are various collections and studies on her moral perspective. One of them is Thomas Albrecht's *The Ethical Vision of George*

Eliot (2020). In the book, he underlines that Eliot is a significant figure in the field of literature due to her impressive ethical insights. The book illustrates Eliot's ethical vision and further suggests that communication between humans is a milestone for people as it triggers respect and familiarity with the otherness of other people. Eliot's remarks about morality emphasize that individuals recognize their existence and similarities with others by becoming aware of their separateness. In her essay "The Morality of Wilhelm Meister" (1855), Eliot represents ethics as both inward and outward notions because they mingle with each other in terms of interactive and rational ways. Eliot's characters, such as Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* and Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch*, experience alienation similar to that of Silas in *Silas Marner*. They experience three phases, which consist of moral evolution, suffering, and a vision of sympathy.

Lastly, Eliot's successful insight into the human psyche, which is based on her life experiences, is worth addressing. Her advanced perception of the contradictions of society, the hypocrisy of the Victorian era, and social pressure provided her with an innovative perspective to evaluate people. In other words, as an author, she possessed a valuable sense of the era, and she revealed it in her writings in an influential way. She avoided the stereotypes associated with female writers and successfully entered the sphere of serious literature. Therefore, she is outstanding in British literature and feminist studies, both as a novelist and in psychological analysis. Although many writers of the time lost their fame over time, Eliot still secures her position not just as a novelist but also as an intellectual.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS OF THE NOVELS

This chapter explores Eliot's novels, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*, through the aforementioned theories of Kristeva and Bakhtin. In doing so, it aims to build on previous studies concerning the issue of alterity.

4.1. *THE MILL ON THE FLOSS*

4.1.1. Sublimating the Abject: Kristeva's Semiotic and Symbolic

This chapter aims to demonstrate how *The Mill on the Floss* offers a fresh perspective on the self/other opposition. This perspective is created through the sublimation of the abject and the dialectic connection between the semiotic and the symbolic, providing insights into Eliot's writing style as well as her ethical stance. This chapter examines Maggie, the female protagonist, and her relationships, particularly with her family and other people, utilizing Kristeva's theories of semiotic and symbolic signification and abjection. As a supporter framework, Bakhtin's theories of dialogism, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque will provide a ground for the evaluation of individual identity, social norms, and ideological tensions. First, the novel is examined with semiotic and symbolic theories of language. Subsequently, it is analyzed in light of Kristeva's concepts of melancholy, women's time, revolt, and rejection. In the final part, Bakhtin's ideas of heteroglossia, dialogism, and the carnivalesque will be explored through the novel's social critique and the characters' psychological depth. A summary of the novel can help provide contextual understanding before the analysis.

The Mill on the Floss, first published in 1860, is a novel that centers on the female protagonist, Maggie Tulliver. The book describes the lives of Tom and Maggie Tulliver, siblings who grow up in Lincolnshire, England's Dorlcote Mill on the River Floss. An intelligent girl, Maggie actively strives for freedom and knowledge and shows great empathy toward her environment. However, her ideas clash with traditional beliefs, leading even her brother, Tom, to ridicule her for being impractical. Maggie, in contrast to the typical little girls of her time, is impulsive. She is intelligent, talented, and creative, defying the conventional portrayal of women during the Victorian era. Tom and Maggie have a close and complicated relationship that lasts throughout the novel. Additionally, while taking their relations to the center, the novel

portrays the challenges that Maggie confronts. For instance, their fathers' attitude towards their education is completely different due to their gender. Maggie is urged to adhere to the standards of proper femininity, which are perceived as crucial for her eventual marriage prospects. Conversely, Mr. Tulliver's focus is on securing a proficient tutor for Tom to foster his ability to navigate the world of business independently. Several family problems, including bankruptcy, their father's illness, and leaving their schools, play a role in intensifying the discord between Tom and Maggie and challenging their love for each other. After their father's illness, Mr. Tulliver goes bankrupt, and Tom decides to work to pay off his father's debts, while Maggie isolates herself from her family. She spends her time reading Kempis, gaining knowledge, and walking in the Red Deep Forest. Then, during one of her walks, she meets Philip Wakem, a boy with a physical disability and the son of Mr. Wakem, who has been a longstanding adversary of Mr. Tulliver. Maggie and Philip fall in love, confess their love for each other, and meet secretly. However, their relationship is discovered by Tom, and Maggie promises not to meet with Philip anymore. Due to the untimely death of her father, she leaves school and decides to work away from St. Ogg's. After being invited by her cousin Lucy, Maggie meets Stephen Guest, a charming and affluent suitor who is also friends with Philip Wakem. Maggie and Stephen enjoy long hours of conversation and music because they are drawn to each other. The situation becomes more complicated due to the relationship between Philip Wakem, Lucy, and Stephen. Philip and Maggie are reintroduced, leading to the rekindling of Philip's affection for her. To help Maggie and Philip spend time alone and think about marriage, Lucy organizes a short rowing excursion on the Floss. However, Stephen unintentionally takes Philip's place, as Philip, having become aware of the attraction between Maggie and Stephen, feels too unwell to participate. Maggie and Stephen find themselves adrift on the river, oblivious to the distance they have travelled. But once Maggie overcomes her temptation, she remembers all the attachments and loyalty she could not let go of. She feels intense moral conflict, struggling to balance her responsibilities to Philip and Lucy with her feelings for Stephen. Upon returning to Dorlcote Mill to see Tom, Maggie is met with his refusal to accept her forgiveness. She is also rejected by society and treated as an outcast in St. Ogg. This case changes with Maggie's arrival to rescue Tom from the flood of the

River Floss. While they take the boat to rescue Lucy, Tom and Maggie are drawn together. The novel concludes with Maggie and Tom's death by drowning, locked in an embrace that will never be broken.

Eliot's significant merit as a character portrayer lies in her ability to depict the gradual evolution of character. Her characters are never static; they consistently change, either for the worse or for the better. Hence, Eliot posits the notion that character is not a fixed entity but rather a continuous progression. Important topics that Eliot covers in the book include the relationship between fiction and reality, as well as the portrayal and expression of the other. She attempts to demonstrate the inner struggle and psychological insights of the characters. In *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot reveals the duality of the characters by presenting them in pairs. For example, Tom and Maggie are a typical pair that have had a tough relationship stemming from their differences. In the same vein, Maggie and Lucy, Philip and Stephen form other significant pairs within the novel. The novel portrays Maggie's journey by focusing on her evolution from childhood to young adulthood. Throughout the novel, the focus remains on Maggie's inner world, delving into her thoughts on the ambivalence of identity, gender dilemmas, family, and societal relations. To put it another way, the novel explores heroine Maggie Tulliver's complex relationships within the constraints of the conservative principles of Victorian society. Furthermore, Eliot offers critical perspectives on conventional gender roles, the societal positioning of biological sexes, and the constructed norms surrounding them. These paradigms are illustrated by the contradictions that Maggie encounters in her life.

In this sense, Kristeva (1984) argues that the subject emerges from contrasting conditions. The semiotic stage occurs primarily in early infancy, before language acquisition. In this phase, infants perceive the world through bodily drives and sensory experiences (p. 25). These pre-oedipal modes establish the foundation for the interaction of an infant. As children grow up, they undergo a transition from the semiotic phase to the symbolic realm (p. 26). In the semiotic phase, infants express their needs mostly through crying, babbling, and facial gesture. Those reactions predominantly reflect their unconscious impulses. The semiotic is primarily linked to unconscious drives, and at this stage, infants remain unaware of the boundaries distinguishing themselves from others (p. 28). After this primal impulse period,

children enter the symbolic stage that encompasses communication and socialization. In this context, symbolism represents governed domains of the language, social norms, and the state. It is associated with the rules of the language, conventions of society, and authority of the father. The semiotic phase holds critical significance for the development of the symbolic period. In other words, semiotics creates a ground for children to enter the symbolic period. However, when semiotics encounters repression, this leads to the disruption of the symbolic. So, semiotics reveals the form of language before the mother. It is maternal, whereas the symbolic is notably linked to the phallus.

Kristeva highlights a broader framework for the symbolic phase, and regarding it, she offers insight into being a stranger and the other. Representation and understanding of the other have been Kristeva's central concerns. While semiotic and symbolic are distinct components within her theory, they play integral roles in the development of language. As mentioned earlier in this study, although they may appear distinct, they are like two sides of the same coin. It is important to state that *The Mill on the Floss* carries similarities with Eliot's life. From some points, the novel is based on Eliot's observations and life experiences. For instance, like the protagonist Maggie, Eliot grows up in a rural area. Eliot's relationship with her brother Isaac Evans influences her portrayal of Maggie and Tom's relationship within the novel. Additionally, Eliot's partnership with George Lewes causes a separation from her brother Isaac (Davis, 2006). Although the novel is not directly autobiographical, it contains representative elements from her life. It centers on the satisfactions and conflicts of familial relations, particularly between Maggie and Tom Tulliver, and Maggie's identity and gender dilemmas. Furthermore, it delves into her romantic relationships with Philip and later Stephen, along with the pressures by society. Eliot's complex relationship with her brother is reflected in Maggie and Tom's dynamic. Despite hesitation, Eliot sends Evans a message without fully revealing their connection, as exemplified in the following letter:

My dear Brother, You will be surprised, I dare say, but I hope not sorry, to learn that I have changed my name, and have someone to take care of me in the world. The event is not at all a sudden one, though it may appear sudden in its announcement to you. My husband has been known to me for several years, and I am well acquainted with his mind and character. He is occupied entirely with scientific and learned pursuits, is several years older than myself, and has

three boys, two of whom are at school in Switzerland, and one in England. (Eliot, 1899, p. 137)

Eliot combines her complex emotions towards Isaac with her insightful assessments of societal injustice. She unveils a tragic narrative in which society passes judgment on a woman who has transgressed the boundaries of gender and sexual norms. Furthermore, she illustrates a profound sensitivity to both the complications of society and the inherent challenges of language as a medium. Within this framework, the representation of characters in the novel carries semiotic notions. Eliot demonstrates these notions both with the appearance and attitudes of the characters. For example, Maggie, the protagonist, grows up in a society with strict rules and norms, where it is expected of her to be a decent girl and to marry. The acknowledgement of intelligence as a suitable attribute for girls is considered insufficient. However, Eliot portrays Maggie as talented, imaginative, and intelligent. She is always eager and looks for ways to learn new things that challenge her. Observing the environment and making descriptions are one of the best talents that she possesses. In addition, she loves reading books and music. Even as a child, Maggie can speak clearly and make utterances that show her extreme cleverness. Mr. Tulliver is aware of Maggie's intelligence, which makes him anxious as he believes that women should not possess such cleverness, fearing it may lead to trouble. Conversely, Mr. Tulliver seeks qualified teachers for Tom's education and supports his development. His education became one of the core concerns of the family. That concern highlights the way Mr. Tulliver and other family members distinguish between genders in education. Mr. Tulliver is aware that Tom is not so intelligent (p. 8). Thus, he highlights that Tom is not lacking intelligence but has difficulty with speech and reading, so he desires for Tom to be educated to develop his speaking and writing. Mr. Tulliver expresses his concerns about Tom's education as follows: "What I want, you know" said Mr. Tulliver, what I want, is to give Tom a good eddication: an eddication as'll be a bread to him" (Eliot, 2012, p. 8). He adds:

I want Tom to be such a sort o'man as Riley, you know-as can talk pretty nigh as well as if it was all wrote of him, and knows a good lot o' words as don't mean much, so you can't lay hold of 'em i' law; and a good solid knowledge o' business too. (p. 11)

What requires attention here is that the main concern of the family is the education of Tom rather than Maggie. Eliot believes that education should hold significance for women and provide improved career opportunities. She traces women's struggles in a world that severely undervalues their abilities. Furthermore, she draws attention to the inequality between boys' education compared to girls' education by providing detailed information about Tom's school life.

Maggie diverges significantly from the conventional portrayal of women of her time in terms of physical appearance. For Mrs. Tulliver, her appearance is unusual, and she is not pleased with that situation. Maggie has dark skin, black hair, and black eyes. Mrs. Tulliver associates Maggie with terms like "a wild thing" and "bedlam creature," drawing parallels to the devil due to their shared blackness, a common color attribute between the devil and her daughter (p. 7). She longs for her daughter's dark hair to curl similarly to her cousin Lucy Deane's beautiful, blonde curls. Bessy perceives Lucy through the lens of angelic purity, and even she wishes Lucy were her daughter. For this reason, Lucy depicts the ideal beauty standards of the patriarchal society. While Lucy is accepted as a lovely girl, Maggie looks weird to others. The contrast between Maggie and Lucy is described as:

It was like the contrast between a rough, dark, overgrown puppy and a white kitten. Lucy put up the neatest little rosebud mouth to be kissed; everything about her was neat-her little round neck with the row of coral beads. (p. 10)

Furthermore, Mrs. Tulliver expresses her dissatisfaction with her daughter Maggie's appearance, stating that "There is her cousin Lucy's got a row o' curls round her head, an' not a hair out o' place. It seems hard as my sister Deane should have that pretty child; I'm sure Lucy takes more after me, nor my child does" (p. 12). This comparison highlights Mrs. Tulliver's preference for conventional beauty, which Maggie seems to lack. The narrative further emphasizes this contrast, describing how "Maggie always looked twice as dark as usual when she was by the side of Lucy" (p. 66). Such descriptions not only underline the superficial beauty standards of the Victorian era but also foreshadow the emotional isolation Maggie will experience due to her non-conformity.

The intense and overwhelming comparison of Maggie with Lucy makes her feel unfamiliar to herself. This comparison between them was likened to "the contrast

between a rough, dark, overgrown puppy and a delicate, white kitten” (p. 66). Knowing that Maggie does not fit typical Victorian woman standards makes her feel powerless against society. Thus, even Maggie dreams of a queen in the form of Lucy. Eliot depicts this difference between them as follows:

Certainly, the contrast between the cousins was conspicuous, and to superficial eyes, it was very much to the disadvantage of Maggie (...) It was like the contrast between a rough, dark, overgrown puppy and a white kitten. Lucy put up the neatest little rosebud mouth to be kissed; everything about her was neat, — her little round neck, with the row of coral beads; her little straight nose, not at all snubby; her little clear eyebrows, rather darker than her curls, to match hazel eyes, which looked up with shy pleasure at Maggie, taller by the head, though scarcely a year older. (p. 58)

Maggie deviates from the Victorian feminine ideal, both in appearance and attitude. According to the Victorian values, Maggie represents a passive scenery that must have been domesticated. Her dark features and unusual hair prompt her relatives to compare her to a gypsy, implying that she stands apart from the community as an outsider. Because Maggie does not conform to conventional beauty standards, she is seen as an ugly girl and excluded from her family. In the novel, the Dodson aunts, who are Mrs. Tulliver’s sisters, perceive themselves as superior to other people. In times of illness or trouble, Dodsons support each other according to family traditions. Additionally, regarding social roles and household management, they also follow peculiar traditions. They are satisfied with Dodson’s collectivity. Henceforth, throughout the novel, Maggie faces criticism and judgment from her aunts. When her aunts criticize her hair and make disparaging remarks, she retreats upstairs and impulsively cuts it. As described in the novel, Maggie “seizes her front locks and cuts them straight across the middle of her forehead” (p. 69). From Maggie’s perspective, this behavior reflects a rejection of their criticism. She experiences unexpected pain as a result, depicted as follows:

She had thought beforehand chiefly her deliverance from her teasing hair and teasing remarks about it, and something also the triumph she should have over her mother and her aunts by this very decided course of action: she didn’t want her hair to look pretty-that was out of the question-she only wanted people to think her a clever little girl and not to find fault with her. (p. 70)

In the given context above, Maggie encounters challenges in expressing her distinct identity. Consequently, she resorts to non-verbal expressions and a tendency to

distance herself from her surroundings, particularly from her family and relatives. Maggie demonstrates a profound consciousness of her intellectual capabilities and exhibits rebellion against being evaluated solely according to her physical appearance. Her world is relatively integrated, and she is subversive within it.

Maggie finds it difficult to maintain peace with people because she is not accepted for who she is. Therefore, she wants to return to perfect oneness with the maternal body, specifically the womb. This circumstance leads her to escape her family whenever she encounters trouble or criticism. The conflict between the desire to demonstrate her identity and the repression of others causes isolation. In *Tales of Love*, Kristeva (1987) delves into childhood memories and clarifies the dilemmas in relationships. She explores the dilemmas of children when they face love, including familial or romantic ones. Thus, Maggie's endeavor to establish identity results in her utter alienation and isolation. According to Kristeva's model, the subject desires to establish a distinct identity. When this desire is obstructed by others, it leads to conflict. Maggie feels inadequate in meeting her family's expectations and refuses to meet them. Thus, as a result, Maggie experiences a sense of separation and disconnection from herself and others. Furthermore, her lack of a sense of affiliation compels her to abandon her surroundings. Her aunts compared her to a gypsy, and she seeks refuge with them during her escapes. Maggie gradually develops feelings of insecurity and even dread toward them, rather than finding a sense of belonging. Because she is frequently compared to gypsies, she decides to join them, believing they will appreciate her superior knowledge. Her family's rejection compels her to flee, and she informs them of her motivation for traveling to their location: "I'm come from home, because I'm unhappy, and I mean to be gypsy. I'll live with you if you like, and I can teach you a great many things" (p. 120).

Yet, Maggie's desire has been shattered due to her inability to find what she is seeking. Eliot invites us to consider the dilemma that Maggie faces. Estranged from her family, Maggie sets out to find a home for herself. A few paragraphs later, Maggie describes how she is unable to connect with gypsies: "The gypsies didn't seem to mind her at all, and she felt quite weak among them" (p.123). Maggie is perpetually yearning to be embraced by others; however, she is also dejected in this regard. Consequently, she discloses the rationale behind her escape to her father by asserting "O father sobbed

Maggie I ran away because I was so unhappy- Tom was so angry with me. I couldn't bear it" (p. 127).

Besides, in their meetings in Red Deeps with Philip, they generally talk about books, particularly stories. In one of their conversations, Maggie reveals her inner thoughts that lead her to feel like an outsider due to being referred to as a gypsy. "I didn't finish the book" said Maggie, and continued as :

As soon as I came to a blond-haired young lady reading in the park, I shut it up and determined to read no further. I'm determined to read no more books where the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness. I should begin to have a prejudice against them—if you could give me some story now, where the dark woman triumphs, it would restore the balance. (pp. 371-372)

The state of in-betweenness compels Maggie to exhibit the disarray between self and Other following her rejection by others. This internal conflict is vividly articulated in Maggie's own words:

But it isn't for that, that I'm jealous of the dark women- not because I'm dark myself. It is because I always care the most about the unhappy people: if the blonde girls was forsaken, I should like her best. I always take the side of the rejected lover in stories. (p. 380)

This quote suggests that the novel repeatedly displays how Maggie circles that vulnerability and develops a defense mechanism for herself.

Apart from that, Maggie's mother, Bessy Dodson, represents the ideal traditional woman figure in the novel. She is obedient to the patriarchal society. She acts according to the expectations of society by being passive and submissive. When Mr. Tulliver explains his ideas on the education of Tom, she mostly prefers to be silent and does not object to her husband's decision. She simply agrees, stating, "Well, Mr. Tulliver, you know best: I've no objections" (p. 8). Even her concerns about Tom's education are limited to domestic responsibilities, as she insists that he should attend a school where she can "wash him and mend him" and where she could occasionally send "a cake, or a pork-pie, or an apple" because "he can do with an extry bit" (p. 9). These remarks reveal Bessy Dodson's restricted agency and her internalization of conventional gender roles, which stand in stark contrast to Maggie's restless desire for freedom and knowledge.

The quotes above underline that she is responsible for the daily chores and, more importantly, the moral development and training of her children. In Victorian

times, it was crucial to provide a fundamental moral education to children. Mothers are often criticized if their children display a lack of appropriate moral behavior, leading society to blame them. Mrs. Tulliver is particularly sensitive to this issue, and she acts in an approved manner.

In Kristeva's theory, gender holds a significant place alongside language. From her perspective, language represents the domination of a patriarchal society. She suggests that patriarchy represents the symbolic. Similarly, the semiotic realm is subjected to the pressures of patriarchy. It should be noted that Kristeva uses semiotics to refer to the maternal mother as the source of the drive and symbolic of the father or patriarchy. Yet, she utilizes the father and mother figures as metaphors. While the symbolic is associated with paternity, the semiotic is linked to femininity. Within this context, Maggie is surrounded by a patriarchal environment. Tom's presence particularly symbolizes restrictions, with her identity being suppressed by others through him. Thus, Maggie is always on a quest to be recognized by others. Tom symbolizes the societal force of abjection because he warns Maggie about her relationships and decisions. He takes on the role of the guardian and tries to control Maggie's behaviors by criticizing her. For instance, when he learns about her relationship with Philip, he tells her to end it. In this regard, Tom represents paternal authority, which triggers Maggie to feel deep alienation. Estranged from Tom and unable to secure his affection, Maggie finds herself further isolated from the world around her. She cannot find a position for herself in the realm of symbolism, and she fails to adapt to internalizing the law of the symbolic order. This creates an inner conflict for Maggie, leaving her feeling isolated within herself. She goes through suffering due to a lack of understanding. She believes she can overcome this situation, but whenever there are issues with Tom, she experiences deep sadness. The effect of her argument with Tom is described as follows: "Thus, the morning had been made heavy to Maggie, and Tom's persistent coldness to her all through their walk spoiled the fresh air and sunshine for her" (p. 96).

Additionally, Philip Wakem emerges as one of the key figures in Maggie's life. She is seventeen when she meets him, and they form a good company together. Although Maggie feels the dilemma inside herself, she does not resist meeting him. She seeks compensation for her misunderstandings with his company. Since Philip

listens and cares for her more than anyone, Maggie desires to see him while keeping their interactions discreet. Furthermore, Maggie believes Philip is a clever boy, and he could teach her everything from Greek to other things. On the other hand, acting against her father's wishes greatly troubles Maggie. Upon discovering a relationship between them, Tom gets so angry and talks to Maggie in a violent tone. Tom states his father's will and profoundly criticizes Maggie and Philip's connection as:

Now then Maggie, there are but two courses for you to take; either you vow solemnly to me with your hand on my father's Bible, that you will never hold another meeting or speak another word in private with Philip Wakem, or you refuse, and I tell my father everything, and this month, when by my exertions he might be made happy once more, you will cause him the blow of knowing that you are disobedient, deceitful daughter, who throws away her respectability by clandestine meetings with the son of a man that has helped to ruin her father. (p. 117)

This quote is a testimony to Tom's belief that Maggie's relationship brings disgrace to their family. He perceives that, as he strives for the family's respectability and works toward paying off the debts, Maggie's involvement with Philip jeopardizes the family's reputation and peace. Afterwards, Maggie promises Tom that she will terminate her involvement with Philip; however, she finds herself powerless to overcome patriarchal pressure within the symbolic realm. Thus, she gets into a complicated situation and struggles with a dilemma. She continues to feel a strong passion for Philip, as he offers her not only affection but also the intellectual knowledge she yearns for. Philip insists on deterring Maggie from her decision and tries to convince her of the futility of escaping from her desires. However, Philip is seen as an adversary by the family, and with Tom's guidance, Maggie decides to keep her distance from him.

Maggie faces challenges fitting into Victorian society due to her intelligence and unconventional behaviors. Although she is entrapped in a patriarchal ideology, she rebels against these dominant ideas with all her existence. This struggle creates a conflict between symbolic and semiotic realms. As a result, despite trying to belong somewhere, she feels alienated both within her family and among the gypsies. Even upon returning to her environment, she feels abject. Inevitably, Maggie experiences isolation and a sense of in-betweenness. Maggie is aware of her father's unfairness and Tom's dominant attitude, so she becomes unfamiliar with herself. Because she does not receive any recognition from others, the abject keeps coming back to haunt

her. From her early years to adulthood, Maggie is subjected to unjust treatment, particularly from her father, brother, and aunts. The division created by her environment between Tom and Maggie, along with Lucy and Maggie, profoundly influences her personality. Consequently, Maggie feels powerless to stand against this division. Thus, in contrast to other women who fit into their traditional roles, Maggie carries a burden of intelligence that she never fully utilizes. She encounters unique obstacles and, in her endeavor, embarks on a journey to uncover her identity. Her constant journey defies the notion of a male-dominated society and rejects established beliefs regarding one's own identity and others. This exploration of identity is echoed in Showalter's analysis, where she describes the novel as an exploration of desire, which is synonymous with the yearning for self-realization (1977, p. 15). In contrast, Bodenheimer (2001) emphasizes Eliot's unique approach to class dynamics in her novels:

She is less likely to depict the social world as divided into starkly oppositional social classes, or to join the Victorian obsession with stories of social aspiration and social oppression, than she is to create a variegated community in which the story centers on the fates of characters who disturb or violate the norms of belief or behavior in that community. (p. 21)

This perspective highlights how Eliot's portrayal of society is less about rigid class divisions and more about the interactions and conflicts within a diverse community. To put it another way, the novel indicates how men and women have different positions in terms of gender. How they perceive the world demonstrates differences according to their female and male experiences. For example, Tom does not hesitate to express his thoughts on any topic; however, Maggie experiences an inner conflict and loneliness. When she dares to talk about her own ideas, she either faces pressure from her family or is misunderstood by others. Indeed, her needs and demands are rejected by the dominant male culture. The authority put pressure on her, leading to her silence and isolation.

Maggie's life remains filled with dramatic events, and she strongly insists on portraying her character with extreme enthusiasm. Therefore, she faces many life struggles in her psyche. Even the language she uses is shaped by society's norms and is interrupted. Maggie is aware of being a victim of patriarchal society, and that is why the abject continues to haunt Maggie because it is intrinsic to her being, and eradicating

the existence of the abject is not easy. The novel vividly illustrates how the language and discourse of the patriarchal figure impact Maggie, making it difficult for her to establish her identity. Derek Attridge (2004, p. 30) argues that the concept of otherness is not inherent but is rather constructed by language, shaped by centuries of evolving discourse that excludes certain identities. This highlights Maggie's predicament: by being born into a patriarchal environment, she finds herself unable to escape the influence of society.

Contrary to Maggie, Tom internalizes this differentiation, and he states his mindset with the structured norms of society. As a result, Tom adopts a more dominant role, standing as a symbolic father figure against Maggie. He is acutely aware of his power as a male and reinforces his position with the following statement:

I've got a great deal more money than you, because I'm a boy. I always have half sovereigns and sovereigns for my Christmas boxes, because I shall be a man and you only have five-shilling pieces, because you're only a girl. (p. 37)

This phrase reinforces the idea that a man's authority is the root of the feeling of being the other. Notwithstanding Tom's attitude, Maggie still loves Tom deeply and dreams about living together. She does not reject her love for him, permanently praises him, and mentions her addiction to him. One of the most striking sayings of Maggie on that issue is, "I love Tom so dearly, Luke- better than anybody else in the world. When he grows up, I shall keep his house, and we shall always live together" (p. 42).

From Maggie's perspective, Tom is a clever person, as what he knows about fishing is superior to other knowledge that is written in the books. On the contrary, Tom considers Maggie a silly little thing; moreover, for him, all girls are silly. During the Victorian period, certain truths prevailed, so boys are allowed more freedom to misbehave compared to girls, and girls are often discouraged from pursuing education in subjects like Latin or Euclid. In light of this, different insights have widened the gap between Tom and Maggie. Furthermore, Maggie faces numerous struggles and dilemmas regarding her feelings for Tom. She deeply loves him and looks for his affection and care. However, she finds herself in a dilemma concerning Tom, facing rejection not only due to her appearance but also because of her superior knowledge as a woman. Throughout her life, Maggie has had conflicts with both Tom and Mr. Tulliver. These contradictions and the rejection of her family lead to a profound

division. Because of the divided relevance with them, it significantly affects Maggie's abjection. Despite Maggie's desire to expand her horizons, the patriarchal society creates huge pressure on her. While she endeavors to resist this dominance, her efforts fail due to the norms of a symbolic male-dominated society. Maggie's femininity is wounded, and her efforts for equality are ignored. Yet, Maggie rebels against social conventions and patriarchal language. She goes through an ongoing process to find out who she is.

In the novel, Eliot demonstrates sexual differentiation throughout several chapters. There are ample instances in the novel that exemplify the distinction between Maggie and Tom. In particular, contrast perspectives on Tom and Maggie's education, as well as different insights into their behaviors in societal settings, reveal patriarchal norms. This insight causes Maggie not to conform to society's expectations, leading her to be labeled as tamed. In the book, Eliot portrays this division by illustrating the contrasting treatment of Maggie and Tom. If Tom makes a mistake, he does not care about that. For instance, if he breaks a vase, he is not sorry for that, as this is justifiable for boys. On the contrary, if Maggie does something, it becomes impossible for her not to care about it because her family probably laughs at her or blames her for it. Maggie's behavior explicitly challenges these perspectives. As a protagonist, she maintains her attitude, and when Tom laughs at her, Maggie increases her voice.

Maggie is predominantly an introvert and remains passive due to the influence and pressure of a male-dominated society. Therefore, she exemplifies the semiotic concept of passiveness. Conversely, Tom is different from Maggie in many aspects, including the discourse he uses and the position he holds in society and his family. Maggie acknowledges this disparity, stating, "Because you are a man, Tom, and have power, and can do something in the world" (p. 389). Tom portrays an active and social character associated with business, striving to reclaim the mill and fulfil his promises to pay off the debt. Unlike Maggie, Tom represents the symbolic, which means being extroverted and active. To clarify, as Kristeva suggests in "Women's Time," the experiences of the genders shape their perceptions of the world (p. 21). Therefore, social inequalities, dilemmas, and aspirations have a significant influence on Maggie. Hence, Maggie's dilemma and uncertainty about her identity are not surprising. Indeed, Maggie rebels against others and yearns for a different and varied life. Upon

being rejected by others, she retreats into her internal world and “sets back herself from the other by returning to a self-contemplative, conservative, self-sufficient haven” (Kristeva, 1984, p. 14).

In response to rejection, Maggie retreats into her inner world. This reflects Kristeva’s distinction between the father’s and the mother’s time, which represents different dimensions of human experience. Father’s time, as Kristeva suggests, refers to a linear progression, and it is closely related to productivity. Regarding the father’s time, Kristeva underlines several key concepts that influence social life. Achievements, goals, and the authority of the male society are all included in the father’s time. Conversely, Kristeva’s concept of mother’s time is mostly associated with irrelevance and an ongoing circle. Mother’s time reflects maternal characterizations such as birth, pregnancy, and repetitive daily issues. So, within the framework of the novel, Maggie is trapped in linear time. Her separation from society and confinement within a patriarchal environment parallel isolation and loneliness.

She inwardly wishes she could be more like Tom, who fixates on one thing at a time and tunes out the world around him, or Bob, who is so ignorant and easily satisfied. In several scenes, Eliot portrays Maggie’s loneliness, often referring to her as a pitiable figure, as when she is described: “And now her lot beginning to have a still, sad monotony which threw her more than ever on her inward self ” (p. 309). In this line, Maggie’s internal struggle reflects her sense of captivity within the constraints of her father’s time and norms. She confronts various inequalities and finds little opportunity for self-expression within the patriarchal society of her day. While Tom embodies the privileges of the patriarchal authority, Maggie deals with many external obstacles. In Kristevan terms, this means Maggie stays on a “threshold between semiotic and symbolic” (1984, p. 48). She often finds herself sacrificing her desires for Tom’s benefit. Like Kristeva’s concept of the expelled other haunting the subject, Maggie is unable to extricate herself from Tom’s influence, which shapes her life. The end of the novel offers that even if Maggie attempts to stabilize her position in the symbolic realm, her journey becomes futile. She turns into a victim of a patriarchal society, and this situation demonstrates that abjection is “a ceaseless defense against nondifferentiation” (Keltner, 2011, p. 46). In Maggie’s case, she stands for a victim of the patriarchal society, illustrating how abjection serves as a constant

defense against losing one's sense of identity. In this symbolic realm, where symbols stand for individuals, Maggie seeks only to be addressed by her name, free from any designed roles. She never reaches total satisfaction or fulfillment.

In the novel's finale, she returns to St. Ogg since she refuses to attain happiness at the expense of others. Conversely, she chooses to self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. However, when she turns back to the mill, she feels the alienation that she knows from her childhood. Victorian society expels her since she embodies an undesirable archetype for young women of the era. As she does not accept Stephen's proposal to marry Stephen, the public starts to blame her for her misbehaviors that do not fit in the structure of society. Similarly, even though Maggie loves Tom with pure feelings, he does not forgive her. Their attitudes and behaviors show that he never completely accepts Maggie's presence, and he carries a deep hatred inside toward her. Tom's hatred towards Maggie is evident in this statement:

There had arisen in Tom a repulsion towards Maggie that derived its very intensity from their early childish love in the time when they had clasped tiny fingers together, and their later sense of nearness in a common duty and a sorrow; the sight of her, as he had told her, was hateful to him. (p. 564)

Those who grasp the real but remain "stuck between the imaginary and symbolic orders are, according to Lacan, considered neurotic and psychotic" (Sarup, 1992, p. 85). Likewise, McAfee (2004) points out that semiotics is a crucial stage as it unveils a person's desires. The semiotic realm generates drives and energies that are intrinsic to every individual. Semiotic drives are significant because being trapped in that flow is harmful. Keeping a balance in those desires and not being obsessed with them provides the opportunity for entry into the symbolic realm. Furthermore, if a person stays in the semiotic realm more than expected, it results in a loss of identity. So, this dilemma can even lead to a psychotic person. Within the scope of Kristeva's revolt, Maggie does not fit the expectations of the others. She is described as having a different physical appearance with distinct characterization. The world she lives in can be defined as a remote place from herself. Society dictates what she is allowed to do or become, regardless of her true essence and self. Therefore, Maggie rebels against her family and the oppressive structures of the Victorian Period. While she is trying to establish her identity and desire to reach fulfillment by encountering others, she is limited and repressed. For example, Eliot describes her revolt and mood in one of their

conversations with Tom. She is always manipulated by Tom, and due to him, she never makes decisions according to her free will. Maggie not only defies society and Tom, but through her defiance, she also affirms her overlooked potential. This current revolution is not solely an attempt to overthrow the regime. According to Oliver (2002), Kristeva contends that it is impossible to rebel against systems (p. 113). However, she believes that the potential for individual revolt still endures: "While this may seem too modest, I consider it the sole remaining possibility: individual questioning" (p. 113).

Concerning Maggie's interactions with Philip, her emotional and sexual attachment to him illustrates her journey toward reconciling with her otherness. Hence, along with being a noteworthy character in Maggie's life, Philip also embodies melancholy in terms of Kristeva's theory. In his essay "Tragic Form," Richard B. Sewall (1954, p. 345) illustrates a tragic man as someone who is "plagued by the ambiguity of his nature." In a similar vein, Kristeva (1989, p. 9) suggests that "melancholia is the impossible mourning for the maternal object". Thus, the inexplicable pain Philip feels stems from both the loss of his mother and his disabled physical appearance. In the novel, he predominantly endures spiritual and psychological distress rather than physical suffering due to his disability.

Philip is isolated from society due to brutal comments about his deformed body. Apart from that, he has no choice but to love Maggie from afar and endure the anguish of separation. Moreover, his father's bad reputation hints at developing distinct companions. In other words, in his relationship with Maggie, he assumes that he finds a deep connection with someone rather than himself. To liberate himself from his father's control and establish his personality, he seeks alternative avenues. He is confident that he can surmount his discontent in this way. One of the most effective methods he employs to alleviate sorrow is engagement with painting and music. Art serves as the best tool to find relief and balance in life. In their walks, Reed Deeps talks about his passion for art and literature with Maggie:

Perhaps, I do' said Philip rather sadly, 'but I think of too many things- sow all sorts of seeds and get no great harvest from any of them. I'm cursed with susceptibility in every direction and effective faculty in none. I care for painting and music- I care for classic literature, and medieval literature, and modern literature- I flutter all ways and fly in one. (p. 123)

Developing an identity is crucial for Philip in establishing a sense of self. However, as Philip loses his mother earlier, he remains at the semiotic *chora* and gets stuck there. Regarding that case, McAfee (2004) points out that loss in semiotic *chora* keeps a child away from entering the symbolic realm, and it becomes impossible for that child to name his loss. Hence, “it is not named as an object but occurs as an unnamable thing” (pp. 60-61).

Philip grows up in an environment devoid of warmth and security. Due to the failure of fulfillment, he perceives himself as a pitiable object. The way he sees himself indicates that he never successfully copes with the difficulty of separation from his mother. In this sphere, Kristeva (1989, p. 63) argues that “when a melancholic, confronted with a setback in separation from the womb, becomes ensnared between loss and identity”. She adds that melancholy creates an imaginary father to accomplish this separation from an unnamed thing. In this way, the person tries to find a way to name this thing. Yet Philip’s circumstances prove his unsuccessful journey. Contrary to the common Victorian man's perspectives, Philip is described as sensitive and fragile. Whenever he meets Maggie, he tends not to be offensive, and even in his insistence on maintaining their relationship, he talks carefully. Admittedly, he is portrayed as passive and silent. Consequently, this depiction shows that he neither establishes familial relationships nor has a love affair with Maggie.

Both Maggie and Tom drown at the end of the novel. It seems that Eliot cannot find any alternative to killing Maggie. Maggie’s death is like a rebellion against the Victorian norms and patriarchal structures of society. As there is no harmony in her life, neither inside nor outside, this case means that “having a life for a woman like Maggie is impossible” (Hirsch, 2023, p. 36). Throughout the novel, Maggie battles against the conventions of society and the patriarchal domains of her family. She deeply strives for her identity, and she puts effort into gaining her own self. Moreover, she always seeks fulfillment and yearns to acquire more knowledge. Through Maggie’s journey of self-discovery, the novel illustrates that she has become a subject undergoing experimentation or evaluation, and her development of identity is an ongoing process (Kristeva, 1984, p. 22). One of the fundamental elements of accessing the symbolic domain is to get recognition from other humans. This acknowledgment is generated by the construction of one's identity and the perception of others. The

individual requires another person to recognize their existence through mutual interaction. In Maggie's case, she seeks the approval of the others, but all others merely acknowledge her significance. However, there's an attempt to approve her position within the symbolic realm, to assign significance to her solitude through her self-awareness. In fact, the self and others are not different from each other. The other's perspective shapes how Maggie evaluates herself. In terms of the theory of subjectivity, as an individual, Maggie cannot detach herself from society to achieve autonomy; she is always interconnected with others within her psyche. She laments the position of the marginalized Victorian women in society. She refuses to confine herself to her inner world; she seeks connection with others. However, her mistake lies in believing that entering the symbolic order will replace her absence with her presence. When her efforts to integrate herself into this symbolic realm are rejected by her brother Tom, her sense of absence intensifies. Her character may be prevented from abandoning everything by Eliot, as it is impossible to establish a unique existence that is not influenced by history. Since the symbolic foundation of language cannot be completely shed, she will inevitably be shaped by the symbolic once more in a different setting. Hence, the resolution to this predicament lies not in an absence of meaning in history and language but in fully engaging with the semiotic potential of the symbolic. As readers delve into Maggie's solitude and thoughts on the other, they become part of the story, seeing the narrator as the other. Otherness is explored not just in Maggie's interactions but also in the reading process, which becomes an encounter with the unknown. Ultimately, the novel does not dismiss thetic; rather, it underscores the necessity of transcending it, as permitting the semiotic to prevail over the symbolic would lead to utter meaninglessness. This is why Maggie expresses the challenge of comprehending others and being understood by them within a discourse shaped by societal norms and regulations. However, Kristeva acknowledges the real, asserting that language does not constitute the sole barrier to its emergence. The division already exists within the individual. Therefore, she posits that "otherness should not be seen as something external (e.g., the foreigner, the other sex, another class, or race) but as an otherness within" (Keltner, 2011, p. 99). Maggie's sense of being another does not solely stem from external factors but also her identity. By isolating herself from others and returning to her inner world, Maggie discovers how

to live with her uniqueness. Maggie's profound loneliness compels her to fully embrace her identity.

Finally, the flood scene can be read as a pivotal metaphor in the novel. On the one hand, the water isolates Maggie's body from the physical world. On the other hand, the meaning is blurred; the water serves as a resurrection of life. During the novel, Maggie wanders between semiotic and symbolic realms, yet, metaphorically, the flood saves her. In mythology, water is associated with femininity and fertility. That is why, by drowning, Maggie enters a secure harbor, which represents the womb of the mother. Thus, from a Kristevan perspective, Maggie's drowning and water represent the merging of the semiotic and symbolic.

Hence, Maggie's narrative may be regarded as an embodiment of the sublimation of the abject in light of the concepts presented in the novel. The text depicts an intermediate condition, distinct from the protagonist, other characters, and the natural environment. The text demonstrates her otherness, which is constructed throughout the story. Thus, this suggests that Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* occupies a position between subject and object.

4.1.2. Dialogism, Heteroglossia, and Maggie's Struggle for Selfhood

Maggie's journey in *The Mill on the Floss* is dialogic as she navigates conflicting ideas from her family and society. Bakhtin (1993) argues that identity is formed through interaction with others. Within this framework, Maggie interacts with many individuals, such as Tom, Philip Wakem, Stephen Guest, and her aunts. Bakhtin's concept of self-construction includes I-for-others and others-for-me. What Maggie experiences throughout the novel demonstrates the existence of those components of the self. Maggie's self-recognition remains limited to her perception, and the perceptions around her constrain her desires. Even if she has different ideas and beliefs from her family and society, she struggles to persuade her environment about her opinions. To illustrate, when Tom notices her relationship with Philip and warns her to end it, he reinforces the societal constraints imposed on Maggie, emphasizing familial duty over personal desire. Maggie ultimately concedes to Tom's ultimatum despite her genuine affection for Philip. Tom presents her with two choices: "either she promises to sever ties with Philip, or he will inform their father, thus

branding her as a disobedient and deceitful daughter” (p. 383). Furthermore, he states, “I don’t wish to hear anything of your feelings; I have said exactly what I mean” (p. 384). Upon that, Maggie decides to split up, even though she likes Philip. Tom always judges her decisions and pressures her to conform to societal and familial expectations. His strict moral framework limits Maggie’s autonomy and contributes to her internal conflict. In other words, Tom represents rigid social authority with his attitude and behavior toward Maggie. Besides, Maggie’s decision to separate reinforces Bakhtin’s notion of self-for-others.

According to Bakhtin (1990, p. 54), “the self is not autonomous; it acquires meaning solely through the perceptions of others.” The concept of I-for-others aligns with Kristeva’s idea of abjection and examines the formation of the self through the repudiation of the other. Therefore, despite her desires and inner voice, Maggie is influenced by others, and her decisions are formed by the interplay between different perspectives. In addition to her relationship with Tom, her interactions with Philip and Stephen further exemplify the multiplicity of voices that shape her evolving identity. While Philip represents intellectual sensitivity and emotional depth, Stephen projects romantic rebellion. Her relationship with Tom is based on mutual understanding and shared sensibilities. However, Maggie’s loyalty to Tom and her internalized guilt prevent her from fully embracing her connection with Philip. Philip expresses his love to Maggie as “I shall be contented to live if you would let me see you sometimes” (p. 107). This statement highlights Philip’s unconditional love for Maggie, positioning it in stark contrast to Tom’s rigid expectations. Yet, Maggie is ultimately affected by external pressures and ends her relationship with Stephen, illustrating Bakhtin’s idea that selfhood is constructed through the perception of others. Stephen urges Maggie to abandon societal constraints and choose love over obligation by asserting “We should break all these mistaken ties that were made in blindness and be determined to marry each other” (p.110). This quote highlights Stephen’s influence on Maggie, encouraging her to reject social expectations. His plea reflects a desire to defy conventional expectations and embrace individual passion, positioning love as a force powerful enough to challenge social norms. However, her eventual rejection of Stephen aligns with Kristeva’s concept of abjection, as Maggie distances herself from what she perceives as a transgression against her moral and familial duties. The tension

between these contrasting ideological positions contributes to Maggie's ongoing internal conflict. Hence, Maggie's identity formation is shaped by the effects of those voices. Her internal conflict emerges as an ongoing dialogue between these voices rather than a straightforward self-realization.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot juxtaposes multiple worldviews, exposing inequities in gender roles and education while also illuminating the tensions between different social classes. Demonstrating Bakhtin's (1981) theory of heteroglossia, the text incorporates a multitude of voices and ideological standpoints. Tulliver's family stands for the mindset of the working class by valuing tradition. Conversely, Wakem represents an educated upper class with economic dominance. The Tulliver family, particularly Mr. Tulliver, holds strong traditional values, especially regarding personal pride, financial independence, and loyalty. His resistance to change is evident in his belief that education should serve practical purposes rather than intellectual refinement: He asserts, "It's plain enough what's the right thing and the wisest thing; but if folks have got any feeling, they must struggle against what's right, and they're likely to struggle long, as long as life lasts" (p. 112). This statement reflects how much Mr. Tulliver values tradition and emotion over logic and reason. Mr. Tulliver's conflict with Wakem extends beyond financial matters, encompassing a deeper clash of ideas. He sees Wakem as a symbol of the manipulative upper class, which is different from his honest, working-class ideals.

Philip's physical disability further distances him from traditional notions of masculinity in the novel, positioning him as an outsider. Despite his father's ambition and social standing, Philip values inner depth and emotional intelligence. He expresses this perspective in his conversation with Maggie as: "I should like to live and die with you, and know no other life but one made by you." (p. 374). Philip's longing for emotional fulfillment rather than societal ambition highlights his divergence from both his father's materialism and Tom's rigid moral worldview. By emphasizing personal connection over social success, Philip embodies a form of resistance against the dominant values of his environment.

This resistance can be understood through the concept of heteroglossia, which "reflects the intricate nature of social reality" (Hirschkop, 2021, p. 93). In *The Mill on*

the Floss, this concept manifests through the conflicting discourses of tradition and progress, morality and desire, and economic power and social mobility. The clash between these perspectives not only propels the novel's central conflicts but also intensifies Maggie's struggle for selfhood as she attempts to reconcile the expectations imposed by these competing voices. Consequently, Eliot uses different perspectives to generate a heteroglossic atmosphere within a text, and consequently, the novel reflects ideological debates.

4.1.3. Bakhtin's Carnavalesque and Maggie's Rebellion

Another significant notion to highlight is the carnivalesque, which represents a space where societal norms and hierarchies are temporarily suspended. In *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie's unapproved marriage with Stephen and engagement with Philip exemplify this. By engaging in such relationships, she goes beyond the prescribed rules of Victorian society. Maggie attempts to disrupt the rigid order and challenges the social norms of the Victorian period. These moments, like the carnival, are temporary suspensions of the rules, which are aligned with Bakhtin's description of the carnival as a "temporary liberty" from authority (Bakhtin, 1965, p. 10). When Maggie chooses to be with Stephen, despite the consequences, she expresses: "I am not afraid of you, Stephen. I love you, and I must follow my own heart" (p. 12). This declaration embodies Maggie's rebellion against the strict social order. By embracing her feelings for Stephen, she transgresses the boundaries of Victorian moral conventions. Her decision to be with Stephen, despite the consequences, represents a moment of rebellion against the established social order. These instances exemplify Bakhtin's notion that, within a carnivalesque space, roles and hierarchies are temporarily inverted. Maggie's refusal to conform to the rigid social constructs imposed upon her reflects this subversive dynamic. However, Bakhtin (1984) also emphasizes that while the carnival offers liberty, it is temporary. Therefore, Maggie's endeavor results in alienation and otherness rather than renewal. While this illustrates the novel's subversive tendencies, it simultaneously highlights the oppressive values that underpin the established social order. Maggie's actions result in her shame and subsequent exclusion from society, aligning with Kristeva's theory of abjection. Her rebellion, as seen through her relationship with Stephen, involves an abjection of

societal rules and expectations. Following the public revelation of her relationship with Stephen, Maggie is repudiated by those closest to her. The narrator reflects on this situation with “Maggie, you have done a thing that is beyond the power of words” (p. 140). Here, Maggie is cast out, and the abject nature of her actions is made clear. Her existence challenges the moral order, causing her to be rejected and marked as other. She is perceived as a threat to the social order, thereby becoming the embodiment of the abject. Furthermore, she is ostracized, emerging as the embodiment of what society cannot tolerate or accept. The intersection of abjection and carnivalesque reveals that Maggie’s rebellion leads to the breakdown of a stable identity. Her attempt to express herself outside the boundaries of society causes her to further alienate herself from the very community from which she seeks validation. In this realm, her story illustrates the notions of abjection and carnivalesque, underscoring the instability of identity and the constraints of rebellion. In the final chapters, Maggie’s inner turmoil is captured as she reflects: “I have been false to my nature and to the love that I believed to be true, and yet I feel a greater truth calling me to break free” (p. 582). This internal struggle illustrates the breakdown of her identity caught between the societal expectation of purity and her desires. Additionally, in Victorian society, her tragic end shows that a temporary carnival of transgression does not result in her renewal. Instead, it results in her alienation and eventual submission to the very norms she sought to transcend.

From a Bakhtinian perspective, *The Mill on the Floss* is fundamentally dialogic, replete with heteroglossic elements that reflect carnivalesque disruptions and underlying social tensions. Maggie’s quest for self covers internal struggles, conflicted voices, and social pressure. Eliot’s narrative embraces the plurality of voices in contrast to a monologic narrative, enabling one to explore various ideological complexities. Regarding these aspects, Bakhtinian analysis aligns with Kristeva’s highlights of the novel’s richness in presenting personal autonomy, societal constraints, and the changing nature of meaning.

4.2. *SILAS MARNER*

4.2.1. The Stranger Within: Kristeva’s Abjection and Women’s Time

This section will examine the issue of otherness in *Silas Marner* through Kristeva’s notions of strangeness. Using the concepts of semiotic and symbolic language, it aims to demonstrate how Kristeva’s theory of language works. Building

on the analysis from the previous chapter on *The Mill on the Floss*, it will examine the theories of abjection and women's time through an analysis of *Silas Marner*. In the first section, the notion of strangeness will be evaluated in light of Kristeva's views. Silas's physical otherness, manner of living, and occupation trigger his strangeness. The sublimation of the abjection theory will be analyzed, considering the contrast between the semiotic and symbolic aspects. In addition, the theory of language impulses and dreams in *Silas Marner* will be examined from a semiotic perspective, while the conventions and structure of society will be explored within the symbolic realm. Lastly, the notion of women's time will be studied through the gender roles during the Victorian period. Before proceeding with the analysis of the novel, offering background information on Eliot's views on gender roles, alongside relevant critical studies and a summary of the novel, will help situate this study within a broader critical context. The whole novel centers around the lonely and strange main character, Silas, who is a weaver in a village called Raveloe. The story begins with Silas being unjustly accused of theft. In fact, his friend William Dane steals the money and blames him. Therefore, Silas is exiled from Lantern Yard and the religious congregation to which he is deeply committed. Because of this unfair accusation, his fiancée leaves him, and Silas abandons his hometown and moves to the rural village of Raveloe to begin his new life. For fifteen years, Silas has led a solitary lifestyle, dedicating himself solely to his work. The unfairness that he experiences leads him to have a reclusive lifestyle. He gradually begins to isolate himself from everyone, finding solace only in the handling of his gold coins. He develops an obsession with the gold he accumulates, eventually leading him to hoard it. One day, when Silas's gold is stolen, his life is completely ruined. Dunstan Cass, the younger son of Squire Cass, steals his gold. Meanwhile, Godfrey Cass, another son of Squire Cass, falls in love with Nancy Lammeter despite being married to Molly Farren. When Molly decides to tell Squire Cass about their secret marriage, she dies on the road because of her opium addiction. Meanwhile, now having cataleptics, Silas discovers an orphaned girl near his cottage. This unexpected event in Silas's life changes his sorrow into joy. He adopts her, named her Eppie, and dedicates his life to raising her. She pulls Silas out of his self-pity and connects him to the world around him. Yet Silas's relief is endangered when Eppie's biological father, Godfrey Cass, attempts to assert his parental rights over her. As their

love for each other deepens, Eppie defies Godfrey, who is a wealthy man of the period. At the end of the novel, Silas and Eppie find happiness in their togetherness and live in a place where they are supported by the love of their friends and neighbors. Eppie's existence helps Silas explore intimacy through communication.

While taking care of Eppie, Silas learns how to make connections with the community, and his concerns about gold begin to alter. In terms of scholarly examinations, *Silas Marner* has been the subject of fewer studies compared to *The Mill on the Floss*. Ana Clara Birrento's (2021) study focuses on landscapes to investigate how different spaces shape Silas's formation of identity and his interactions with his environment. This study aims to examine the concept of a sense of belonging. It also underlines that within distinct spaces with relation to physical environments, *Silas Marner* portrays dimensions of an individual encompassing identity, emotions, and societal norms. On the other hand, Zile Liu (2022) studies how Eliot represents idealized Victorian women in *Silas Marner* by revealing gender roles. Additionally, Selvia Rosa Magdalena Purba and Mohamad Ikhwan Rosyidi (2023) examine the novel through the lens of kinship destruction, which arises due to social differentiation. These studies explore gender roles, the construction of identity, and social stratification. Although they offer valuable insights into the novel and will be useful for this thesis, they have not examined the issue of otherness from a broader perspective. Thus, by using Kristeva's viewpoint, this chapter will broaden the scope of these academic studies, focusing on the notion of abjection together with strangeness, ambivalence of identity, and social conventions of Victorian times. Eliot presents the abjected other, especially the maternal figure, as a source of healing and renewal in building the self. Kristeva's theory of abjection, alongside her exploration of the interaction between the semiotic and symbolic dimensions of language, provides a valuable framework for analysis.

First of all, Kristeva's concept of strangeness is articulated through Silas's characterization, particularly concerning his physical condition. Indeed, Silas is seen as an outsider in the eyes of society due to his unconventional appearance and passive personality. Owing to having strange eyes and pale skin, Silas is perceived as a stranger by others. The strangeness of her appearance is repeated many times in the novel:

Any one who had looked at him as the red light shone upon his pale face, strange straining eye, and meagre form, would perhaps understood the mixture of contemptuous pity, dread, and suspicion with which he was regarded by his neighbours in Raveloe. (Eliot, 1999, p. 36)

This sense of otherness is reinforced in another scene where he is described as “suddenly seen standing in the warm light, uttering no word, but looking round at the company with his strange unearthly eyes” (p. 47). Such descriptions not only highlight his physical difference but also establish him as an object of fascination and fear within the community.

Silas's physical condition adds to the perception of him as a stranger. Regarding the strangeness, Eliot also places the story in a somewhat remote past, yet immediately grounds it in an atmosphere of strangeness. In light of this, the narrative reveals how Silas is viewed as an outsider “who does not belong to the group, who is not ‘one of them’” (Kristeva, 1991, p. 95). Yet, Silas is treated as an outsider in society, not just due to his appearance but also his occupation. Eliot emphasizes this strangeness as follows:

In this way it came to pass that those scattered linen- weavers – emigrants from the town into the country -were to the last regarded as aliens by their rustic neighbours, and usually contracted the eccentric habits which belong to a state of loneliness. (p. 4)

Eliot deliberately selects a protagonist whose occupation merges the ordinary with the peculiar, and whose lifestyle exists at the periphery of established societal norms. When Silas’s physical appearance and unusual lifestyle are considered together, it is seen that Silas accepts himself as a stranger because of his profession, way of life, and appearance. Thus, he emerges as an unconventional figure who does not conform to the community's idealized standard. His physical distinctiveness symbolizes his inner emptiness and disconnected relationship with the community. Indeed, he bears a history of estrangement that predates his arrival in Raveloe. Eliot illustrates the transformative journey of Silas as he confronts new environments and social norms. She states that, “He must adapt to life in a completely unfamiliar region and embrace a new set of values” (1991, pp. 95-96). Silas, as a representation of the stranger, embodies this duality, functioning as both a potential asset and a threat to the community’s social fabric. His presence forces the group to confront its own values, making him subject to either assimilation or rejection, a tension that underscores the

fragile boundaries between belonging and exclusion. In light of Kristeva's clarification on strangeness, Silas is unable to integrate into society and, as a result, faces rejection. So, during his estrangement, Silas experiences profound emotional distress and isolation, accompanied by the deprivation he endures. In alignment with Kristeva's theoretical framework, Sara Ahmed (2006) underlines the role of emotions. She contends that experiences of marginalized individuals and oppression within patriarchal societies can fundamentally alter identity due to societal norms and expectations. Within this context, Silas spends his days absorbed in his loom, unaware of his surroundings and oblivious to any physical sensations not directly related to his spinning. The following quote strongly emphasizes that he has been forced into loneliness due to his strangeness:

So, year after year, Silas Marner had lived in this solitude, his guineas rising in the iron pot, and his life narrowing and hardening itself more and more into a mere pulsation of desire and satisfaction that had no relation to any other being. His life had reduced itself to the mere functions of weaving and hoarding, without any completion of an end towards which the functions tended. (p. 17)

Eliot directly presents Silas's traumatic experiences, illustrating the significant injustices he endures: his friendship is betrayed, Sarah ends their engagement, and his sense of belonging to a community is stripped away. Moreover, he is depicted as a miserly, cataleptic, and introverted man. As a result, he is stuck in the semiotic realm by struggling with his feelings, impulses, and desires. On the other hand, due to his isolation from society, his entry into the symbolic realm becomes increasingly unattainable. The discontinuity and disconnection that Silas goes through restrain him from interfacing with semiotic notions. Aligned with Kristeva's semiotic notion, it is important to note that Silas expresses his emotional struggle with "semiotic elements where bodily impulses find expression in language" (Oliver, 2002, "Introduction", xx).

Moreover, as a subject, Silas endures abjection throughout the novel. His cataleptic fit is a significant trance, which is essentially a state akin to catalepsy, indicating a lack of activity alongside internal turmoil. Owing to his state of trance, Silas feels lost and isolated from his environment. His trance represents his repressed desires. This situation aligns with the notion of the semiotic chora, which Kristeva (1984, p. 25) "describes as a nonverbal entity constituted by instincts." In the novel, even the sound of Silas's loom fails to harmonize with the familiar sounds of the

community, standing in stark contrast to the rhythm of Raveloe society. So, the sound of the loom represents semiotic signs rather than symbolic structures, which signifies conveying an interaction with people. Moreover, his catalytic fit is related to Satan by his close friend William. Dane's manipulation of catalepsy causes the weaver to withdraw from both public and private human interaction. When William links his trance to the visitation of Satan, Silas's feelings are defined as, "Silas, feeling bound to accept rebuke and admonition as a brotherly office, felt no resentment, but only pain, at his friend's doubts concerning him" (p. 9). This moment not only highlights Silas's vulnerability but also underscores the religious and social pressures that shape his sense of self.

Moreover, Silas loses Sarah to his rival, Dane, but the violation of physical otherness culminates in his profound self-alienation. He no longer perceives himself as a deserving subject of growth or advancement. The assault on his identity severs his connections, first with the religious community and later with all other communal ties. When all instances of exclusion are considered collectively, it becomes evident that, despite his need to express repressed desires, Silas gradually loses interest in engaging with others. In other words, Silas's confusion with the unfamiliar contributes to the dissolution of his symbolic order, leading to a profound sense of alienation and, ultimately, his abjection. Eliot underscores Silas's alienation by portraying his mental state when he is forcibly separated from his homeland. In Raveloe, Eliot further amplifies this sense of estrangement, highlighting the contrast between Silas's inner turmoil and the social environment around him.

In these respects, Silas's social exclusion leads to a semiotic sublimation of the abject's dilemmas, rendering Silas as "the ambiguous, the in-between, something that defies boundaries and resists unity" (Lechte, 2012, p. 160). Silas experiences a true sense of alienation due to his inability to adapt to his environment. In this regard, Thale (1959, p. 64) states that "What he has lost is not a creed, but a sense of the world." In tune with Kristeva's notion of strangeness, Ahmed (2006) also points out the significance of emotions. To her, the experiences of marginalized individuals and oppression imposed by patriarchal society fundamentally alter their identities, shaped by prevailing norms and societal expectations (p.7). Silas's reaction as someone else demonstrates total estrangement. All in all, by severing his connections to the

community and self, Silas experiences moral catalepsy. His physical distinctiveness serves as a symbol of his inner emptiness and his fractured connection with the community.

During his first fifteen years in Raveloe, Silas's development stagnates as he withdraws from others. Therefore, he replaces his strangeness with gold and other objects. He tries to displace the absence of familial relations and the loss of his mother and Sarah with objects. The disruption of his desires takes the form of displacement with objects. Henceforth, whatever Silas is unable to share in the symbolic realm manifests his obsession with the gold.

By employing the concept of fetishism, Eliot aligns Silas's desires with those of others. Yet, a deficiency of relations triggers desires and impulses in semiotic phrases. With the feeling of emptiness, Silas replaces the blank in the symbolic with his pot, gold, and subsequently Eppie. It is important to note that Eliot also portrays subjectivity as an ongoing process, where Silas's identity remains perpetually open to change. In Lantern Yard, Silas is portrayed as an introvert in an emotionally depressed mood; on the contrary, in Raveloe, by dealing with gold, he becomes utterly vivid. Consequently, Silas's desires take on a semiotic dimension, manifesting themselves through material fetishism.

To further explain, in Freudian terms, a fetish is seen as a symbolic object that represents a victory over the fear of castration and acts as a protective measure against it. Unlike Freud, Kristeva brings a wider and different view to this concept. She (1980) suggests that fetishism is not just related to the anxiety of castration, but it is mostly associated with maintaining psychological durability against abjection. Thus, when Silas's identity is threatened by society, he develops a fetish as a defence mechanism. Eliot describes Silas's obsessive relationship with his gold, emphasizing its role as a substitute for human connection, noting that, "His coins take the place of human intimacy; he comes to regard them 'as his familiars'" (p. 68). This narrative insight reveals how Silas's sense of identity becomes tied to his hoard, reflecting a form of fetishism that aligns with Kristeva's notion of abjection.

The ambivalence of Silas's identity, notably, evolves concerning Kristeva's theory of abjection, foregrounding the difficulty of responding to his rejection.

Although Silas is drawn toward the symbolic order, his attachment to gold remains insufficient. Hence, Silas enters a state of emotional blankness. Eliot writes:

Upon facing the robbery of his money, Silas falls into a blank. He filled up the blank with grief. As he sat weaving, he every now and then moaned low, like one in pain: it was the sign that his thoughts had come round again to the sudden chasm- to the empty evening. (pp. 65-66)

Following this scene, Eliot also depicts Silas's condition, stating that "formerly, his heart had been as a locked casket with its treasure inside; but now the casket was empty, and the lock was broken" (p. 69). This imagery conveys Silas's profound sense of loss and disillusionment, symbolizing the emptiness that follows his obsession with material wealth. His heart, once guarded and filled with purpose, is now hollow, reflecting the destructive impact of emotional isolation and the absence of meaningful human connection.

Silas's obsession with gold progressively shifts his attention to Eppie. While the public awareness of the weaver's enduring and uncontrollable distinctiveness results in his social isolation, it is noteworthy that the pivotal moment in the novel is the encounter between Eppie and Silas, which takes place at the weaver's hearth and is marked by the characters' mutual unawareness of each other. Eppie's arrival at Silas's cottage initially reveals his sense of disappointment. He experiences a violent acceleration of his heartbeat and, for several moments, is unable to extend his hand to grasp the restored treasure. As Eliot describes, "The heap of the gold seemed at last and stretched forth his hand; but instead of the hard coin with the familiar resisting outline, his fingers encountered soft, warm curls" (p. 96). This pivotal moment marks a shift in Silas's attachment, symbolizing the transition from his material obsession to a more human connection, as he encounters the softness of love and affection, an unexpected substitute for the cold, lifeless gold that once consumed him. Meeting Eppie is an important turning point in his life, leading him to figure out "the difference between self and other" (McAfee, 2004, p. 21). Following this explanation, the lines below illustrate the ultimate transformation of Silas's consciousness:

The gold had asked that he should sit weaving longer and longer deafened and blinded more and more to all things except the monotony of his loom and the repetition of his web; but Eppie called him away from his weaving, and made him think all its pauses a holiday, reawakening his senses with fresh life, even

to the old winter flies that came crawling forth in the early spring sunshine, and warming him into joy because she had joy. (p. 109)

As Eppie enters Silas's life, her presence catalyzes a profound shift in his consciousness. The passage below deepens this transformation, revealing the gradual expansion of Silas's soul and memory, once imprisoned by isolation:

As the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory: as her life unfolded, his soul, long stupefied in a cold narrow prison, was unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full consciousness. (pp. 109-110)

This pivotal event in Silas's life unveils the concept of gender in the novel. *Silas Marner*, much like *The Mill on the Floss*, engages with the issue of gender. Eliot's representation of the traditional gender roles and women's questions does not follow traditional conventions. Due to a communication gap with others, Silas is unable to secure a place within society. As mentioned in the Introduction, Victorian society is enclosed and constructed by signifying rules. However, Eliot's understanding of gender roles challenges the traditional duties that are related to women. Consequently, within the context of gender issues in the novel, Eliot explores a range of conflicts, including those between the self and the other, as well as between the masculine and the feminine.

In addition to encompassing three distinct strands and advocating for women's rights, feminism has evolved into a broader and more polarized field over time. It now encompasses various social, cultural, and political movements striving for gender equality. The debates surrounding the "New Woman," despite varying contexts, demands, and obstacles, demonstrate the universal nature of feminist awareness and the continuity of feminist aspirations across different eras and geographical locations. Yet, in the 21st century, despite living in a postmodern world, prejudiced and discriminatory attitudes toward women have remained largely unchanged (Jensen, 2021). Fundamental issues within feminism, including gender inequalities, sexuality, and identity traumas, have been primary themes of literature. At this juncture, Kristeva's conception of feminism and her arguments on these issues stand in opposition to certain strands of feminism. Kristeva follows a similar trajectory to Lacan, Derrida, and Barthes in her exploration of subjectivity and language. However, she diverges from these critics by rejecting essentialism and biologism within critical

feminism. Instead, she posits that femininity should be understood as referring not only to gender but also to the marginalized and oppressed. Kristeva explains the notion of time as nonlinear concerning feminism. She emphasizes the distinction between the concepts of the father's time and the mother's time. While women's time is often associated with cycles and repetition, fathers' time signifies progression and linear time. In other words, women were confined to linear time and oppressed by societal domains.

Within this frame, during the Victorian era, women are often in charge of the household chores and childcare, dedicating themselves to the well-being of their families. This role as the angel of the house and mother allows for the reinforcement of male authority. While challenging traditional gender roles, Eliot also critiques how men assert their superiority. For instance, Eliot states that the occasion is as:

It was very different -it was much worse for a man to be disappointed in that way: a woman could always be satisfied with devoting herself to her husband, but a man wanted something that would make him look forward more- and sitting by the fire was so much duller to him than a woman. (p. 135)

Furthermore, Eliot reflects on the social circumstances and sexual differences of the Victorian Period through her characters. Eliot critiques gender roles, social constructs, and the assigned roles with the help of masculine and feminine characteristics. According to the assigned Victorian gender roles, women are in charge of taking care of a child. Yet, by taking care of Eppie, Silas reverses the gender roles. In this context, Silas's tolerance toward her can be interpreted as an openness to others and a pivotal breakthrough in his life. Subsequently, Silas breaks free from his shelter, stepping into a world of transformation. Silas's conversation with Eppie demonstrates his altered perception of the world as he acknowledges the immense change she has brought to his life. Reflecting on Eppie's impact Silas says, "Eh, my precious child, the blessing was mine. If you hadn't been sent to save me, I should ha' gone to the grave in my misery" (p. 44). This recognition marks a turning point for Silas, as he shifts from emotional desolation to an appreciation of the life-affirming power of human connection. Maggie's presence not only alters his perception of the world but also restores his sense of hope and purpose.

In *Silas Marner*, unlike the conservative norms of Victorian society, domestic duty is assigned to men. Through the viewpoint of feminist theory, Silas transforms into a devoted father. By opposing the stereotypical gender roles and the domesticity that belongs to women, Eliot aims to challenge the socio-cultural and socio-political frameworks of feminism. For example, Silas's determination to care for the baby altered people's perspectives towards him. He gains maternal love and gives this sense to Eppie, which is primarily expected from a woman. As Eliot describes, "that softening of feeling towards him which dated from his misfortune, that merging of suspicion and dislike in a rather contemptuous pity for him as lone and crazy, was now accompanied by a more active sympathy, especially among women" (p. 104). This change underscores Silas's growing acceptance within the community, marking a crucial moment in his journey toward self-identity and belonging.

Silas serves as a representation of Kristeva's notion of the subject in flux (Kristeva, 1984, p. 22). The dilemmas and uncertain conditions disrupt his ability to achieve himself. Therefore, by accepting and caring for Eppie, Silas unites with others. Because of the deficiency of a mother figure, he takes the responsibility for raising a child. Eliot shows how attached biological roles are reversed. In Silas's relationship with Eppie, the struggle for her to gain independence in learning further emphasizes the transformation in his character. As Eliot describes, during Eppie's early years, Silas, who had tried to teach her to read himself, was reluctantly forced to be parted with her each day to send her to the dame school. Eliot writes, "Silas had to part with her for two hours every day, that she might learn to read at the dame school, after he had vainly tried himself to guide her in that first step to learning" (p. 127). This moment illustrates Silas's growth, as he moves from the desire to control Eppie's learning to allowing her the independence to pursue education beyond his influence. More significantly, when Godfrey and Nancy ask Eppie to leave Silas and return to a life of privilege, her firm response highlights her emotional attachment to Silas and the life they have built together. She replies as:

Thank you, ma'am- thank you, sir. But, I can't leave my father, nor own anybody nearer than him. And I don't want to be a lady- thank you all the same (here Eppie dropped another curtsy). I couldn't give up the folks I've been used to. (p. 146)

Her answer mirrors her feelings and proves her certainty about staying with Silas. That is to say, Eppie's avoidance of them is so precious. By being aware of this fact, Silas comes closer to the semiotic realm. At this point, Eppie is also aware of Silas's self-sacrifice and understanding. Eppie recognizes that true fatherhood stems from love, and she refuses to acknowledge anyone other than Silas as a father figure. Eppie's devotion to Silas is clear when she declares, "And he's took care of me and loved me from the first, and I'll cleave to him as long as he lives, and nobody shall ever come between him and me" (p. 258). This unwavering loyalty illustrates the depth of their connection. Furthermore, they develop an inseparable companion, and their mutual affection becomes more evident as Eppie expresses the joy she finds in their life together by saying, "We've been used to being happy together every day, and I can't think o' no happiness without him" (p. 149). This strong connection allows Silas to rediscover his sense of self as he strives to meet Eppie's needs, which enables him to find a purpose beyond his past isolation. Eppie's presence becomes central to his emotional development, and through her support, he gradually overcomes his fear of abandonment. Silas, who once feared being alone, is now filled with a sense of security, as Eppie tenderly reassures him, "You'll never be lone again, father," said Eppie tenderly. "I want us all to live together. O, father, said Eppie, what a pretty home ours is! I think nobody could be happier than we are" (p. 157). Through Eppie's eyes, Silas recognizes the joy of fatherhood and the transformation it has brought to his life.

In terms of gender dynamics, Eliot crafts Silas as one of her most intricate and theoretically captivating characters. However, her portrayal of the male protagonist, whose growth effectively critiques the inequality inherent in gendered norms prevalent in Victorian society, relies on the virtual relegation of Eppie to a prototype of feminine submissiveness. Through her lack of complexity, Eppie inadvertently subverts the transformation of gender norms that her presence sets in motion for Silas. By merging traditional and unconventional representations of femininity, Eliot offers a novel framework for assessing life and its complexities.

Lastly, religion is also indicated as one of the most problematic issues in the novel. As a protagonist, Silas experiences the dilemma of religion. In Lantern Yard, he observes an atmosphere based on religion; however, in Raveloe, the people live in a secular environment. Silas loses both his religious faith and trust in the secular

community, confronting a traumatic event in the process. In other words, while Lantern Yard is characterized by divine trust, Raveloe is portrayed distinctly in terms of spiritual and regional conditions. Thus, Silas loses his faith, leading to another dramatic loss in his life. For Kristeva, religion depends on “excluding the abject through taboos that protect the symbolic realm from semiotic influences. The semiotic drive gives religion its strength.” (Oliver, 2002, p.125). In this light, the wretched weaver Silas longs for interdependence and a sense of community.

4.2.2. Exploring Heteroglossia, Carnavalesque, and Dialogism in *Silas Marner*

In *Silas Marner*, heteroglossia is covered in the presence of various social voices. The presence of multiple voices allows for a nuanced analysis of identity and marginalization (Holquist, 2002, pp. 25-35). Different worldviews and ideologies shape the novel, covering diverse social voices. In particular, Silas’s isolation from his environment displays his monologic perspective. He clings rigidly to his beliefs, obsessively hoards gold, and remains disconnected from his surroundings. As Eliot describes, “Silas’s life had been reduced to the mere functions of weaving and hoarding, without any ultimate purpose toward which these activities were directed” (p. 17). These lines exemplify his inner isolated voice and alienated world from his environment. However, he cannot isolate himself from society as dialogue consists of various perspectives and voices rather than a single one (Bakhtin, 1981). Henceforth, although Silas is initially portrayed as an isolated character consumed by his obsessions, beliefs, and thoughts, his later interactions with others allow different social voices to emerge. As time passes, Silas’s engagement with others disrupts his initial monologic existence, gradually introducing heteroglossic elements into his worldview.

At the beginning of the novel, Silas remains a stranger to the rest of the community because of his unfamiliar appearance and job. The villagers perceive him as other because “his appearance is strange for the people of culture and experience” (p. 5), and their interactions are limited. Thus, villagers perceive him as a stranger, and their judgment demonstrates the suspicious voices of the Victorian community towards him. In fact, it is social norms that shape their perceptions of him. The shift in

the villagers' attitudes and opinions begins with the arrival of Eppie, a pivotal figure in the novel who influences Silas's life from different angles. Eppie, Silas's adopted daughter, reshapes his engagement with the world. She leads Silas to open up to diverse worldviews. Eppie serves as a bridge, bringing Silas into dialogue with a variety of perspectives. She becomes the central joy of his life, and as a result, he begins engaging in conversations with villagers, such as Dolly Winthrop, as he learns to care for her. Now, as he engages in dialogue, "Silas is met with open, smiling faces and cheerful questions, as one whose joys and struggles are recognized and understood" (p. 113). With Eppie, Silas's awareness of other voices and perspectives grows. This marks a turning point, as Silas's previously narrow perspective broadens, making room for the inclusion of diverse voices and viewpoints. He acquires new ways of perceiving and interpreting the world around him. This transformation is evident in the following words: "it was a bright autumn Sunday, sixteen years after Silas had found his new treasure on the hearth" (p. 119). Eliot illustrates the shift in Silas's mindset by comparing it with his former attachment to gold. As his beliefs transform, Eppie challenges the rigid, monologic world that Silas once inhabited.

Bakhtin (1981) suggests that identity emerges through interaction with others. Silas's identity in different roles, such as a friend, father, and even self, underscores the dialogic nature of identity formation. Initially, he resists external influences, yet his gradual interaction with the villagers presents a dialogic exchange of voices. As depicted by Eliot, he initially has barriers, but over time, he gradually opens up. Characters like Dolly and Godfrey challenge Silas's opinions, creating new perspectives. A notable example of dialogism is found in his conversations with Dolly, particularly when she helps him recognize his responsibilities as a father. As the narrator reveals: "It was Dolly who had first made Silas see that his life was not his own, his life belonged to the child" (p. 33). His ongoing dialogues with Dolly gradually shift his perspective and foster his personal growth.

Eppie's entrance into Silas's life makes the most significant change. She becomes a pivotal figure in Silas's dialogues. Thanks to their ongoing dialogue, Silas's worldview transforms. After a while, Silas questions his past choices, life, and values. As Eliot illustrates, while the child's mind develops into knowledge, Silas's mind evolves into memory. This transformation is vividly described in the novel: "As her

life unfolded, his soul, long stupefied in a cold narrow prison, was unfolding too and trembling gradually into full consciousness” (p. 110). This depiction emphasizes the parallel growth of Eppie and Silas, highlighting how her presence awakens his dormant emotions and consciousness. It is through his relationship with Maggie that Silas learns to be a father and discovers meaning in his life. Silas’s dialogism, mostly with Eppie and other characters such as Dolly, leads to his self-transformation (Bakhtin, 1981).

Moreover, Bakhtin’s (1984) concept of carnivalesque, which refers to the moments when societal norms are subverted, is often seen in societal hierarchy. The Victorian society's dynamics and values perceive Silas as an outsider. Yet, Silas’s transformation from an isolated and closed person to a father and an open-minded one shows how values and norms can be redefined. This aligns with Bakhtin’s argument that the carnivalesque creates space for personal change (1984, p. 27). While Silas initially remains an outsider, his growing openness to Eppie and the villagers allows him to integrate into society. This mirrors Bakhtin’s carnival moment of turning things upside down. His integration breaks down the boundaries between himself and the community. Silas comes to understand the significance of human connection, as reflected in his words, “Silas sat in silence a few minutes, looking at money. It takes no hold of me now, he said ponderingly, money doesn’t” (p. 144). Silas, who once held his gold, now holds something more precious, Eppie’s love and connection. This moment marks a crucial shift in Silas’s character, where his once overwhelming attachment to money gives way to a deeper appreciation for the human bonds he has formed, especially with Eppie. Hence, it is evident that Eppie plays a crucial role in Silas's transformation and reflects the dialogic exchange central to Bakhtin’s theories.

Furthermore, the party arranged for Eppie and Silas represents Bakhtin’s carnivalesque community celebrations. It demonstrates a communal joy that challenges and subverts the original societal order. Silas’s role in society is redefined, evolving from an outsider to a cherished father. A moment of carnivalesque in the novel is reflected in the following paragraph:

But this means they could not only enjoy the slow advent of their pleasure; they also had ample leisure to talk of Silas Marner’s strange history and arrive at

due degrees at the conclusion that he had brought a blessing on himself by acting like a father to a lone motherless child. (p. 157)

This mode temporarily disrupts the social hierarchy, effectively overturning the established roles (Bakhtin, 1984). For a brief moment, the villagers come together around Silas, celebrating his joy and happiness. This carnivalesque moment encourages Silas to embrace his role as a father, and, through this process, he discovers a new way to express himself (Kristeva, 1982). Ultimately, Silas's journey embodies Bakhtin's carnivalesque, where rigid societal norms are temporarily challenged, leading to Silas's transformation. His evolution from an alienated outsider to a beloved father underscores the liberating potential of dialogue and human connection (Bakhtin, 1984; Kristeva, 1982).

4.3. MIDDLEMARCH

This section examines *Middlemarch*, one of Eliot's masterpieces, focusing on Kristeva's theories of melancholia, abject, and strangeness, exploring their influence on identity formation, social constraints, and character transformation. By utilizing these concepts, this chapter will analyze the complexities of identity formation, rigid social constraints, and character transformations through Kristeva's perspective, offering insights into the interplay of these elements. Alongside Kristeva's theoretical framework, the chapter also draws on Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia to deepen the analysis of character construction. Initially, *Middlemarch* will be analyzed through the concept of the other, followed by an analysis grounded in the notions of melancholia and strangeness. Moreover, the examination of the multiplicity of voices through Bakhtin's theories of heteroglossia and dialogism will shed light on the narrative complexity and character dynamics within the novel. Bakhtin's theories will serve to challenge the dominant ideological structures and analyze multiple perspectives in the novel, offering a nuanced understanding of the narrative. The integration of Kristeva's theories on melancholia, abject, and strangeness with Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia will offer a comprehensive perspective on the struggles and experiences of otherness faced by characters, particularly Dorothea and Mr. Casaubon. Numerous studies on *Middlemarch* have explored gender issues, female character transformations, and

bildungsroman through feminist critical perspectives. In contrast to existing studies, this thesis offers a more nuanced and comprehensive perspective on identity formation, psychological aspects, and characters' desires within societal constraints. Accordingly, before undertaking a detailed analysis of the characters and the theoretical frameworks employed, it is essential to provide a brief overview of the novel.

Middlemarch is widely regarded as one of the most significant works in English literature and a seminal achievement in Eliot's literary career. It covers social issues and moral dilemmas with its complex characters. In this novel, Eliot is concerned with traditional roles, patriarchal society, and individual dilemmas (Showalter, 1977). The novel is set in the fictional town of Middlemarch around the year 1830. It consists of characters whose lives are closely interconnected with one another. It portrays how characters face personal and moral dilemmas within the constraints of society. The story encompasses multiple characters and, in doing so, highlights both individual and social issues. Dorothea Brooke, a young and intellectually curious woman, marries Mr. Casaubon, an older, educated clergyman motivated by her aspirations for intellectual and spiritual fulfillment. Yet, she experiences disappointment in her marriage due to Mr. Casaubon's cold personality and obsession with his self-pursuits. Eventually, Dorothea falls in love with Will Ladislaw, a passionate and idealistic young man. Their relationship becomes complicated by familial obligations and social expectations, causing them trouble. While Dorothea appears to be the central character, Eliot weaves the lives of other characters into hers.

Although *Middlemarch* begins and ends with Dorothea, it encompasses several interwoven narratives. For instance, Rosamond Vincy, Celia Brooke, Mr. Arthur Brooke, Mr. Edward, Mr. Casaubon, and Will Ladislaw come into play with the progression of Dorothea's story. Rosamond Vincy, portrayed as both beautiful and ambitious, marries for social advancement, reflecting the prevalent societal values of her time. Additionally, Lydgate is a passionate doctor who aspires to advance his career and contribute to the betterment of society. In other words, Eliot combines multiple narratives throughout the novel. The novel presents the lives of characters like Mr. Casaubon, Lydgate, Rosamond, and others. It also explores the stories of other characters and reveals their personal ambitions and societal pressures. As Sewall

(1954) notes, through its portrayal of various characters, the novel delves into the complexities of personal struggles and societal challenges. Through these interconnected stories, Eliot explores themes of otherness, selfhood, patriarchal structures, and their transformations.

Moreover, *Middlemarch* offers a critique of Victorian ideals surrounding marriage and education. For example, Dorothea and Rosamond marry for personal development, yet it ends with disappointment due to their departure from traditional female roles. Through the experiences of these characters, Eliot illustrates the prescribed roles for women while also criticizing societal pressures that constrain individual desires. Furthermore, Eliot's conception of realism plays a central role in the novel. Dorothea's pursuit of intellectual fulfillment clashes with the societal expectations regarding marriage. Her exposure to reality challenges the ambitions and desires she seeks to fulfil. In this regard, the novel highlights social dynamics and norms through the struggles of individuals. An important point to underline is that *Middlemarch* not only depicts the formation of the characters' identities but also delves into social and moral issues. Through interconnected stories, Eliot places significant emphasis on roles and relationships. This connection between the characters and their stories makes *Middlemarch* one of the most insightful Victorian novels. As a result, it remains a crucial source for exploring the multifaceted dynamics of the Victorian era, providing a nuanced look at the complexities of the period.

4.3.1. Dorothea as the Other in Middlemarch Society

Kristeva (1984) argues that abjection is the process of rejecting something that threatens the self's integrity, identity boundaries, and subject stability. When certain ideas, individuals, or norms challenge the established symbolic order, they become abject. Abject sets boundaries between the self and the outside. However, according to Kristeva (1984), the abject serves as a crucial threshold for the subject, enabling an experience that leads to the understanding of the self. Therefore, abjection is closely related to rejecting certain aspects of the identity that society considers unworthy or unacceptable. Furthermore, abject has a profound effect on the emotional and psychological angles of identity. In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea's experience of abjection leads to both emotional and psychological disruption, prompting her to act in defiance

of societal norms. She remains stuck between her internal desires and external expectations. This struggle between societal norms and internal pursuits aligns with Kristeva's symbolic and semiotic notions. The symbolic represents the societal norms and structures that impose constraints, while the semiotic embodies internal, pre-linguistic drives and emotions. In her surroundings, Dorothea does not fit the common expectations of society. Hence, she defies the rigid roles of Victorian society and is portrayed as an outsider due to her curiosity about intellectual and philosophical pursuits, which were deemed inappropriate for a woman. Although she is intellectually curious and eager to learn, Dorothea is hindered in her pursuits by societal constraints.

Dorothea is portrayed as a woman of profound intellectual curiosity, possessing extensive knowledge in philosophy, architecture, and science. Her intellectual depth is demonstrated by her ability to "recite passages from Pascal's *Pensées* and Jeremy Taylor's works by heart" (p. 8), highlighting her deep engagement with complex theoretical and philosophical ideas. She seeks not only intellectual pursuits but also yearns for emotional and spiritual fulfillment. However, within the Victorian society, her quest for this kind of satisfaction put her in an abject position. As a result, her otherness sets boundaries between her and society. As Gillian Beer (1983, p. 395) argues, "women are locked by their needs and hopes" rather than viewed as separate, autonomous individuals with their desires and intellectual agency. Henceforth, Dorothea discards the ascribed traditional female roles and challenges them. To achieve her goals, she reveals and projects herself. At this juncture, with abject, Dorothea presents an endeavor to bring the "I" into existence (McAfee, 2004, p. 28). Her quest for fulfillment is perceived as a rejection of these roles, positioning her in conflict with a society that intends to define her.

As Eliot highly prioritizes education, she depicts Dorothea as an intelligent character who aspires to learn complex languages, philosophy, and architecture. In particular, with Dorothea's interest in Greek languages and scholarly dreams, Eliot integrates the theme of education into the novel. Unlike the idealized women of the Victorian period, Dorothea is portrayed in a more complex and unconventional way. However, in the Victorian period, women were illustrated as angels in the house. During that period, women were supposed to be good homemakers and serve their husbands. Moreover, their value is assessed according to their qualifications in these

areas. As Eliot (2011, p. 9) illustrates, “What society would like to observe is that women were expected to have weak opinions, but the great safeguard of society and domestic life was that opinions were not acted on”. This sentence encapsulates the constraints placed upon women, emphasizing their expected passivity. In this novel, Eliot draws attention to the unequal educational opportunities of the Victorian period for men and women. Despite her status as an upper-middle-class woman, Dorothea faces significant barriers to her intellectual advancement. Particularly, whenever she expresses her opinions, her uncle criticizes her. For instance, Mrs. Brooke's statement that “such profound studies like classics and mathematics are considered too challenging for women” (p. 65) illustrates the systemic limitations imposed on women. Thus, the novel foregrounds the patriarchal oppression that structures Dorothea's experience of abjection.

The societal norms of the Victorian era restrict Dorothea's educational pursuits, prompting her to marry Mr. Casaubon in the hope of gaining intellectual stimulation and knowledge. She chooses to marry Mr. Casaubon because her desires for learning and education are oppressed by society. Dorothea's statement, “I should wish to have a husband who was above me in judgment and all knowledge” (p. 40), reflects her conviction that intellectual fulfillment is tied to her marriage, despite the societal constraints limiting her education. To her, marriage is a pathway to enlightenment. Despite these barriers, she believes that marriage offers the opportunity to fulfill her desires. Dorothea's eagerness is evident in her belief that, by marrying Mr. Casaubon, she “would be able to dedicate herself to substantial and meaningful duties, and live continuously in the light of a mind she could revere” (p. 45). This perspective reflects her view of marriage as a means of intellectual engagement, highlighting how her aspirations are closely tied to the hope that a union with Mr. Casaubon would provide the intellectual freedom she seeks. Nevertheless, her quest for knowledge in her marriage with Mr. Casaubon not only reveals her tragedy but also illustrates how she faces otherness. What Dorothea seeks is in stark contrast to what Mr. Casaubon and society expect from her, leading to a profound disappointment in her life. Dorothea undergoes a search for knowledge while Mr. Casaubon and society expect her to pursue domestic roles. Mr. Brooke criticizes her aspirations by remarking, “young ladies don't understand political economy, you know” (p. 17). Hence, rather than

facilitating her intellectual growth, her marriage reinforces her status as other, deepening her sense of alienation. She gets married with huge dreams and expectations. Initially, she idealizes Mr. Casaubon's intellect: "He thinks of a whole world of which my thought is a poor two penny-mirror. And his feelings too, his whole experience—what a lake compared with my little pool" (p. 25). However, she soon realizes that he views her not as an intellectual partner but as a passive entity. Dorothea's sense of inadequacy becomes evident as she reflects that "she was not in the least teaching Mr. Casaubon to ask if he were good enough for her, but merely asking herself anxiously how she could be good enough for Mr. Casaubon" (p. 51). This shift reveals her tendency to underestimate her own potential and intellect, constantly comparing herself to the men around her and doubting her own worth in the intellectual realm. Her marriage, rather than being a space of intellectual collaboration, becomes a site of oppression and disappointment. This isolation is poignantly depicted in the narrative when "Dorothea sank into silence on the way back to the house. She felt some disappointment, of which she was yet ashamed, that there was nothing for her to do in Lowick" (p. 78). This moment reveals her growing sense of unfulfillment, as her desire for meaningful engagement is stifled by the restrictive environment of her marriage.

Dorothea initially marries Mr. Casaubon, an older and intellectually oriented man, in pursuit of her ambitions for intellectual and spiritual fulfillment. Following Mr. Casaubon's death, Dorothea's feeling of alienation deepens; however, her emotional and intellectual bond with Will Ladislav begins to strengthen. After his death, she becomes progressively attracted to Will Ladislav, a youthful and passionate individual with whom she has a more authentic emotional connection. This relationship, founded on mutual respect and affection, signifies an important change from the expectations imposed on her as a Victorian woman. Her affection for Ladislav represents an act of rebellion, indicating her rejection of the strict societal rules that dictate women's conduct in her society. This tension can be comprehended through Kristeva's semiotic and symbolic framework, clarifying the conflict Dorothea encounters. Her emotions and desires immediately oppose the established social standards that govern appropriate female behavior, including subordination, modesty, and self-effacement. Dorothea's relationship with Ladislav not only challenges

traditional gender norms but also places her in an abject position within society, as she transgresses the established boundaries of Victorian womanhood.

It is essential to underline that Dorothea's journey in *Middlemarch* illustrates how intellectual and emotional desires are marginalized within a patriarchal society. Though she attempts to show her real self to society, her desires continually lead her to be seen as an outsider. Through Kristeva's lens, Dorothea's experience illustrates the profound tension between the individual and the constraints of the symbolic order, highlighting the nature of abjection in the formation of identity.

4.3.2. Dorothea's Melancholia: Loss, Mourning, and Transformation

Kristeva (1989) defines melancholy as a deep and unresolved mourning that cannot be fully articulated and leads to an identity crisis. Due to Dorothea's unconventional goals, she is alienated from her family and social environment. As a result, she undergoes numerous traumatic experiences and periods of melancholy. Indeed, Dorothea initially believes that marriage will enrich her intellectual and spiritual life, but Mr. Casaubon's coldness and detachment soon shatter this illusion. In the early stages of their relationship, she suppresses her thoughts for the sake of his well-being and aspirations. Even during their engagements, when she goes to see their home, she adores all the decorations, and "her role as a wife's role is to align her interests with those of her husband" (Kane, 1995, p. 103). Thus, for Dorothea, marriage becomes an experience that is both "bright and black simultaneously" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 13).

Mr. Casaubon's thoughts on marriage are completely different from Dorothea's. He seeks a conventional, domestic partner who functions more as a helpmate:

And when he had seen Dorothea, he believed that he had found even more than he demanded: she might really be such a helpmate to him as would enable him to dispense with a hired secretary, an aid which Mr. Casaubon had never yet employed and had a suspicious dread of. (p. 27)

From his perspective, Dorothea is the ideal woman as she is beautiful, young, and comes from a wealthy family. His expectations reveal how societal norms affect partner selection and reinforce standardized ideals of womanhood. As in much of the

Victorian era, aesthetic appearance is valued over intellectual depth; consequently, their marriage and mismatched expectations lead Dorothea to lose her idealism. Mr. Casaubon fails to appreciate Dorothea's intellect and her desire for intellectual growth, causing her to lose a fundamental part of herself. On the contrary, he considers her intellectual curiosity a threat. This becomes painfully clear when Dorothea suggests a title for his book, only to be met with suspicion. As the narrative reveals "He distrusted her affection; and what loneliness is more lonely than distrust?" (p. 320). This moment underscores Dorothea's emotional isolation—her mourning is not for Mr. Casaubon's eventual death but for the loss of her aspirations. Therefore, Dorothea does not mourn the death of Mr. Casaubon as much as she mourns the death of her desires. Dorothea's life is marked by displeasure and melancholia. In this context, the reality she is forced to confront alters her emotional state, with her melancholia stemming from deep disillusionment. The narrator uses Dorothea's sleepless nights and sudden emotional outbursts to illustrate her melancholy and notes, "Soon she could hear that he was sleeping, but there was no more sleep for her" (p. 478).

Moreover, Dorothea's emotional turmoil is vividly portrayed through her silence and inability to express her grief. Her internal suffering is so intense that it transcends words, and the narrative highlights this silent anguish with the observation that "She did not even speak, but sat looking at her hands, absorbed in the piteousness of that thought" (p. 208). Dorothea's silence, punctuated by a single tear, embodies her inexpressible suffering. This tear symbolizes the emotional depth that she cannot articulate, further emphasizing her alienation. Similarly, in a moment of isolation, "Dorothea was silent, but a tear which had come up with the sob would insist on falling" (p. 210). All those reveal the profound grief she must process privately.

However, after Mr. Casaubon's death, Dorothea eventually finds a way to transform her experience of loss into a new identity. In this light, the Will's existence gives Dorothea courage to escape from melancholia and the prison of self. Will recognizes and appreciates her intellectual and emotional depth and she explains her feelings to him, "Will was looking animated with his admiring speculation about her feelings" (p. 209). Hence, she marries him and believes there is still a beginning for her. With this transformative perspective, she makes her choice, rejects societal expectations, and embarks on a different path with Will. Critically, this shift reflects

her choice to prioritize love and personal fulfillment over social prestige. As Cara Weber (2012, p. 94) argues, “in Dorothea’s experience, the self emerges as a process, an ongoing practice of expression”. This aligns with Kristeva’s idea of sublimation, where melancholia is not just destructive but also a source of renewal and creation of new meaning. Her relationship with Will presents her rebellion against the conventional norms of society. Unlike Mr. Casaubon, Will supports her intellectual and emotional desires. Instead of giving up, Dorothea pushes the limits and subverts the expectations of a hegemonic society. Therefore, Kristeva’s notion of sublimation, where melancholia transforms into renewal, is evident in Dorothea’s eventual rejection of societal limitations. She reclaims her autonomy and redefines her identity outside of oppressive structures. Dorothea embodies otherness and melancholia in *Middlemarch*, yet ultimately transcends these conditions. Through suffering and alienation, Dorothea evolves into a character who rewrites her story instead of adhering to societal expectations.

4.3.3. Voices of Alienation: Gender, Strangeness, and Dialogism in *Middlemarch*

Exploring the theme of strangeness regarding Dorothea is crucial for understanding the complexities of her character and social context. According to Kristeva (1991), strangeness is not just an external sensation but an internal conflict. This resonates with Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia, as Dorothea’s voice is constantly negotiated within the conflicting discourses of Victorian society. Analyzing Kristeva’s and Bakhtin’s theories together allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how Dorothea navigates her alienation within a world that fails to accommodate her aspirations.

In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea embodies alienation and isolation because she does not fit conventional women's roles, particularly in her marriage. Dorothea’s disillusionment with her marriage becomes increasingly evident as she realizes that her union with Mr. Casaubon has failed to provide the purposeful life she had envisioned. As the narrative states, “Marriage, which was to bring guidance to worthy and imperative occupation, had not yet freed her from a gentlewoman's oppressive liberty; it had not even filled her leisure with ruminant joy of unchecked tenderness”

(p. 274). This moment highlights the stark contrast between her idealized expectations of marriage and the oppressive reality she endures, leaving her trapped in unfulfilled aspirations. Dorothea does not embrace the domestic roles assigned to women. On the contrary, she follows spiritual and intellectual aspirations and seeks a higher purpose. For example, she has an unconventional passion for psychology and theological works. When she experiences a surge of rebellious anger—stronger than any emotion she has felt since her marriage she finally find words to express her feelings as, “What I have done-what am I-that he should treat me so? He never knows what is in my mind-he never cares. He wishes he had never married me” (p. 426).

The people around Dorothea often misunderstand her, and her goals do not make sense to them. This internal and external estrangement aligns with Kristeva’s idea of strangeness. Simultaneously, Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia is manifest in the competing ideological forces that shape Dorothea’s life—her voice is molded by the patriarchal expectations imposed on her and her intellectual resistance against these norms. On their honeymoon in Rome, Dorothea’s and Mr. Casaubon’s opinions about each other almost totally change. In their conversations, they start to observe how their views on the roles within marriage differ. The dynamics of their relationship begin to change slightly, and they are surrounded by a strange feeling towards their marriage. This feeling of strangeness is evident in the following lines:

Dorothea had not distinctly observed but felt with a stifling depression that the large vistas and wide fresh air she had dreamed of finding in her husband’s mind were replaced by ante-rooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither. (p. 195)

Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia, which refers to the presence of multiple voices and perspectives, is also central to *Middlemarch*. The novel does not merely encompass a single voice but presents a chorus of perspectives. Through heteroglossia, Eliot captures the complexity of interaction, class struggles, and internal conflicts. Each character, from Dorothea to Mr. Casaubon and from Rosamond to Lydgate, carries a unique voice that reflects different desires, social backgrounds, and ideological frameworks. For instance, Dorothea represents idealism and intellectual pursuit, while Mr. Casaubon embodies scholarly rigidity. Dorothea embodies idealism and the pursuit of intellectual fulfillment, while Mr. Casaubon represents scholarly rigidity and an obsessive desire to control. Their interactions reveal a stark contrast in

perspectives: Mr. Casaubon views marriage as a hierarchical, intellectual pursuit, while Dorothea seeks emotional fulfillment and mutual growth in a partnership. As Mr. Casaubon asserts, “You will be my helper in the completion of my work. That is what marriage means” (p. 277), reducing marriage to a utilitarian function where Dorothea's role is merely supportive. Unlike Mr. Casaubon, Dorothea longs for a partnership based on shared intellectual and emotional intelligence. Their divergent perspectives clash with one another and highlight Bakhtin’s perspective. Bakhtin (1993) states that dialogic engagements challenge the supremacy of a singular perspective, and consequently, dialogism allows the unveiling of novel meanings (p. 27). Regarding marriage, Dorothea has a romantic vision and seeks an intellectual partnership. She is pursuing personal achievement and independence in marriage. Nevertheless, from Mr. Casaubon’s perspective, marriage is mostly self-centered, and he expects his partner to act according to conventional gender roles. Mr. Casaubon expects Dorothea to devote herself to prescribed roles, and he enforces his authority. This proves that Dorothea’s voice reflects her desire for fulfillment; Mr. Casaubon’s voice, on the other hand, represents a scholarly obsession that is distinct from emotional considerations. Throughout their interactions, he consistently belittles Dorothea's desire to make meaningful intellectual contributions, dismissing her aspirations and reinforcing traditional gender roles. Mr. Casaubon perceives marriage as a hierarchical, intellectual pursuit, contrasting sharply with Dorothea's desire for emotional fulfillment and mutual growth. When Dorothea expresses a desire for autonomy, Mr. Casaubon curtly dismisses her, stating, “you are quite mistaken, my dear, if you suppose that you can do anything without me” (p. 280). His remarks reflect his attempt to protect his masculinity and the strict norms of a patriarchal society. Given his discursive stance, he positions his wife as a subordinate who must behave like his assistant, and who is not intellectually equal. It is worth noting that the ongoing conflict between them highlights Bakhtin’s argumentation on dialogue. Bakhtin (1981, p. 39) asserts that “every utterance is directed toward an answer, and this answer can never be final”. Throughout their marriage, Dorothea’s broader voice for development and freedom is limited by Mr. Casaubon’s self-centered and patriarchal voice. This tension between them emphasizes Bakhtin’s idea that meaning is not fixed, and the dialogue helps release the character’s complex ideas.

The relationship between Lydgate and Rosamond offers another site for examining Bakhtin's concept of multiple voices. In the novel, Rosamond is portrayed as a self-centered woman who is obsessed with material things. She yearns for wealth and a higher position. In contrast to her, Lydgate is driven by intellectual and scientific ideals. When Lydgate faces financial difficulties, Rosamond's indifference to his struggles exposes the tension between their differing priorities. Lydgate's bitter disappointment, as he reflects on her materialism, highlights the emotional distance between them. He laments, "What can a woman care about so much as house and furniture? A husband without them is an absurdity" (p. 656). This sense of alienation is further emphasized by Rosamond's reaction to their financial hardship, where she protests, "I could not have imagined then that you would want to sell our furniture and take a house in Bride Street, where the rooms are like a cage" (p. 670), demonstrates her deep attachment to wealth and status.

Rosamond aspires to get a higher position through marriage, while Lydgate's target is to contribute to science. His commitment to his profession is evident in his declaration, "But I acknowledge a great deal of pleasure in fighting, and I should not care for my profession if I did not believe that better methods were to be found and enforced there as well as everywhere else" (p. 125). This contrast between Rosamond's social ambitions and Lydgate's scientific idealism underscores the fundamental disconnect in their values, which ultimately becomes a source of tension in their marriage. In light of Bakhtin's theory, these different voices offer both social and individual portrayals of Victorian times. For example, in one of their conversations, Rosamond states, "You really are a very extraordinary person, Mr. Lydgate. I am afraid you will never be anything but a poor doctor" (p.130). Also, when Lydgate encounters financial problems, they have several discussions; as a result, he is disappointed, as Rosamond offers little support and remains deeply attached to her material possessions:

He was feeling bitter disappointment; she preferred not looking at her, not speaking until he had got over the first spasm of vexation. After all, he said in his bitterness, what can a woman care about so much as house and furniture? A husband without them is an absurdity. (p. 656)

Furthermore, Rosamond's attachment to wealth and status becomes evident in her reaction to Lydgate's financial difficulties. She expresses her disbelief, stating, "I

could not have imagined then that you would want to sell our furniture and take a house in Bride Street, where the rooms are like a cage” (p. 660). This reaction highlights her inability to adapt to a more modest lifestyle, further deepening the rift between her and Lydgate. The complex relationship between Rosamond and Lydgate is driven by conflicting values and desires. Rosamond's longing for wealth and social status often contrasts sharply with Lydgate's professional ambitions and intellectual pursuits. During their marriage, Lydgate's internal struggle is evident when he reflects on his feelings for Rosamond. In a moment of self-reflection, he acknowledges, “He wished to excuse everything in her if he could—but it was inevitable in that excusing mood he should think of her as if she were an animal of another and feebler species. Nevertheless, she had mastered him” (p. 670). This reflects Rosamond's perspective, which values wealth and a higher position. Their interactions illustrate how the novel establishes a dialogical space in which Lydgate's professional ambitions clash with Rosamond's yearning for social status and material wealth. Those discussions not only project the persistent tensions in their conversations and power relations but also exemplify how diverse voices and viewpoints generate layered meanings and multiple interpretations of their marriage.

Another key concept worth highlighting is dialogism, which provides room for the creation and expression of various ideas within the narrative. For example, the interaction between Dorothea and Mr. Casaubon can be analyzed by addressing Bakhtin's dialogism. Dorothea's voice, in Bakhtinian terms, argues for an evolving dialogue. This is due to her openness to new ideas and experiences. In contrast, Mr. Casaubon's voice remains static and resistant to evolving ideas of the new world. Their ideas conflict with each other constantly. Bakhtin (1981) emphasizes that language is never fully one's own, as every word carries traces of others voices revealing the impact of external influences. Mr. Casaubon's voice, echoing conventional and rigid Victorian norms, represents a hegemonic society, suppressing Dorothea's intellectual and personal aspirations. Dorothea's voice, on the other hand, remains confined within Mr. Casaubon's echo chamber, making it incomprehensible to those around her. This multiplicity of voices enables the exploration of social structures, gender roles, and intellectual aspirations from various angles.

Moreover, Rosamond's voice is influenced by the dialogic power dynamics within her marriage to Lydgate. Although Lydgate initially takes on a more authoritative role as the intellectual and financial provider for the family, Rosamond's manipulative tendencies gradually shift the power dynamics within their relationship. As Lydgate faces increasing economic hardship and mental fatigue from his professional obligations, Rosamond exerts her influence, gently undermining his principles through her demands for an improved standard of living. In a pivotal scene, Rosamond asserts, "You know you can't have everything, but you must try to make me happy in this one regard" (p. 143), indicating her recognition of her influence and Lydgate's vulnerability in response to her requests. This example highlights the heteroglossic character of their discourse, wherein Rosamond's social pragmatism and Lydgate's intellectualism create a tense, occasionally sad interaction. Lydgate's idealism is persistently confronted by Rosamond's present worries, illustrating how social forces of class, gender, and materialism overshadow the characters' interactions. As the narrator states, "Lydgate was ambitious above all to contribute towards enlarging the scientific, rational basis of his profession" (p. 147), while Rosamond "had excellent taste in costume with that nymph-like figure and pure blondness" (p. 96).

All in all, the relationships between Dorothea and Mr. Casaubon, as well as Rosamond and Lydgate, exemplify Bakhtinian concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism. Within the narrative, social conventions and individual pursuits trigger tension, revealing the character's views on different themes. According to Bakhtin (1981, p. 279), "the word in language is always in the process of becoming," and the dialogue between characters illustrates the evolution, conflict, and eventual contribution of their voices to the tragic development of their marriage. This ongoing process of becoming is reflected in the shifting power dynamics and emotional complexities that emerge throughout the narrative. The characters' dialogues serve as a mirror to their inner thoughts and desires, ultimately shaping the trajectory of their relationship. The integration of Kristeva's concept of strangeness into Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia reveals that Dorothea's alienation is not merely an individual psychological struggle but a complex interaction with the societal discourses that aim to define and constrain her. Through this perspective, Dorothea's journey becomes a

poignant exploration of the limitations imposed on women in Victorian society and how they engage with and resist these constraints. The novel ultimately presents a nuanced portrayal of the intersection between personal agency and external influences in shaping one's identity and relationships.



CONCLUSION

This study has investigated how the problem of otherness is portrayed in Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*. The theoretical foundations of this study include Kristeva's concepts of abjection, being a stranger, melancholy, semiotic and symbolic patterns, identity, and gender dilemmas. Furthermore, Bakhtin's theories of dialogism, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque serve as a supporting theoretical framework for the analysis. This dissertation has attempted to analyze gender issues through the ambivalence of identity and social conventions. Eliot's themes revolve around individual reflection and exploration of alterity problems. In *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*, Eliot masterfully explores the multi-faceted dimensions of otherness, weaving together societal expectations, familial dynamics, economic disparities, and moral considerations. The main concern of this study is to discover how the semiotic and symbolic prompt gender issues and identity construction. In this respect, a critical reading of the social conventions and gender roles in conservative Victorian society offers a fresh perspective to the field. Consequently, this study presents a broader viewpoint on the literature by examining the problem of otherness mainly through the lenses of Kristeva's and Bakhtin's theories. This combined theoretical approach offers nuanced perspectives that contribute meaningfully to Victorian literary criticism.

The study begins by presenting its core objective and research questions, which center on analyzing George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*, through the theoretical perspectives of Kristeva's psychoanalytic approaches and Bakhtin's sociolinguistic theories. Chapter I outlines the aim of the research and formulates key questions, including the exploration of identity formation in marginalized characters, the representation of otherness in societal contexts, and the challenges of gendered subjectivity in Eliot's fiction. Chapter II then establishes the theoretical framework, focusing on Kristeva's concepts of language, abjection, melancholia, and "women's time," alongside Mikhail Bakhtin's complementary notions such as dialogism, heteroglossia and carnivalesque. These theoretical insights provide a foundation for exploring how meaning, identity, and difference are constructed and negotiated within the context of identity formation, social dynamics, and narrative structure in the novels. Chapter III shifts the focus to the historical and

literary context of the Victorian era, highlighting George Eliot's intellectual background, including her philosophical influences and socio-cultural observations, to illuminate her authorial identity. By situating Eliot within her socio-cultural milieu, the chapter offers a deeper understanding of the ideological tensions embedded in her narratives and sets the stage for a Kristevan and Bakhtinian reading of her characters' inner conflicts and existential dilemmas.

Chapter IV begins by exploring *The Mill on the Floss*, primarily through the lens of Kristeva's theory of abjection. Maggie's life has been analyzed following the notions of abject gender construction, melancholy, and women's time. Her familial relations, along with her desires, emotions, and dilemmas, reveal the contradictions and patriarchal pressure inherent in her society. As a female character, she endeavors to challenge and resist the social expectations imposed by her family and society. Hence, the novel can be read as a resolution for Maggie because it represents her embarrassment of her abject. It can be stated that, Maggie overcomes the binaries of self/other and gets rid of the oppression of society. In the same vein, Kristeva's abjection theory has been useful in exploring the issue of otherness. In this context, otherness is not a separate entity but rather a construct that the self rejects. Furthermore, in light of Bakhtin's theory, the novel's dialogic and heteroglossic elements have been analyzed. It has been argued that Maggie's story reflects carnivalistic disruptions and social tensions. In her journey, conflicting voices and societal pressure are emphasized regarding resistance and identity formation. Thus, Eliot constructs a world that not only reflects the historical background of the era but also diverges from it in significant ways. Her novels allow for an evaluation of otherness through the context and language in which they are formed. Furthermore, Eliot stands out as an innovative writer who mingles fiction and realism in the same pot. Although she has been criticized for not addressing the issue of feminism, she demonstrates her moral stance with her novels. By delving into the historical and social background of the period, Eliot presents problematic issues by tackling new ways of otherness. This nuanced analysis of *The Mill on the Floss* not only deepens the understanding of Eliot's engagement with otherness but also exemplifies how literary texts can challenge and reinterpret socio-cultural norms through complex character portrayals and narrative strategies.

The other novel that has been studied in Chapter IV is *Silas Marner*. Indeed, the novel not only focuses on Silas as a character, but it also covers several complex issues such as gender roles, feminism, identity dilemmas, alienation, and reflections on Victorian society. The novel engages with significant themes such as material fetishism, faith, secular-based society, and social stratification. Silas's exclusion from society prevents him from being a unitary subject. Like Maggie, he inevitably separates himself from others and is absorbed in his psychic realm. Although he does not directly project the concept of otherness, he challenges the conventional roles of the Victorian period. Eliot critiques gender roles, social constructs, and the roles assigned to Maggie and Silas through various narrative strategies. In this respect, Eliot's novels enable readers to visualize distinct ways to evaluate the case of being other. Both Silas and Maggie resist the patriarchal system and disrupt the symbolic order. Furthermore, Silas's transformation reflects Bakhtin's concept of dialogism. With the help of Eppie and other villagers, he moves from a monologic existence to dynamic interaction with multiple voices. He evolves from being an outsider to a beloved father through the powerful influence of dialogue. Ultimately, Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque demonstrates temporary hierarchical changes in social dynamics and becomes a tool for Eliot to challenge social norms. Hence, the novel illustrates how dialogic exchange leads to reintegration and transformation. Thus, *Silas Marner* serves as a vivid example of Eliot's critique of Victorian social structures, demonstrating how dialogue and communal interaction can facilitate personal transformation and challenge societal hierarchies.

The final novel examined in the chapter is *Middlemarch*, analyzed through the lens of Kristeva's theories of abjection, melancholia, and strangeness. In addition to Kristeva's theories, *Middlemarch* has also been examined through Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism. The integration of these theoretical frameworks grounds a layer for exploring Dorothea's internal struggles and sense of otherness within the constraints of a patriarchal society. Dorothea's journey has been evaluated through her expectations, aspirations, dreams, and desire for self-formation. This analysis offers a clearer understanding of Dorothea's identity and the challenges she faces within a male-dominated society. It shows how Eliot reflects the tension between individual desires and social expectations. Through Dorothea, the novel explores how

a person can question traditional roles and search for meaning, even when shaped by the limits of the time. In this sense, *Middlemarch* presents a rich ground for examining identity, gender, and otherness together. By bringing together Kristeva's and Bakhtin's ideas, *Middlemarch* reveals Dorothea's internal and external struggles. Kristeva helps understand the deep emotional challenges Dorothea goes through as she pushes against the strict rules of her society. Bakhtin shows how different voices and expectations around her shape her experience. Hence, Dorothea's journey isn't just about what's happening inside her mind; it's also about how she constantly negotiates with the world around her. Her story demonstrates how personal identity is built through internal feelings such as loss and alienation, as well as through ongoing conversations with social norms. *Middlemarch* goes beyond Dorothea's story; it reveals how gender, identity, and resistance interact within a society that restricts women's roles.

In terms of character portrayal, Maggie, Dorothea, and Silas are depicted as figures who either undergo assimilation or face social rejection. As Kristeva underlines, such an experience gives rise to contradictions and oppositions between the semiotic and the symbolic. Regarding otherness, Eliot presents their quest for identity by depicting themes of alienation, melancholia, gender, sexuality, and societal relationships. This case highlights shows alternative approaches to embracing otherness and difference. These novels depict the other not merely as an object, but as a complex subject in its own right. Furthermore, the interplay between Kristeva's psychoanalytic insights and Bakhtin's dialogic framework allows for a more nuanced reading of these characters, revealing how language, voice, and inner conflicts construct and disrupt their identities. Consequently, it reveals how language, competing voices, and inner conflicts shape and complicate their identities within the constraints of Victorian social norms.

This study contributes to the existing body of research on the concept of otherness. The issue of otherness continues to persist in the modern world, manifesting in terms of class, race, and even physical appearance. Therefore, this thesis aims to address otherness within the realm of literature. In this regard, Kristeva's theories are rooted in a psychoanalytic perspective, while Bakhtin's theories offer a broader social analysis of the period. It can be argued that Bakhtin and Kristeva share a similar approach. In fact, the psychoanalytic perspective provides a common ground for their

convergence. Kristeva's arguments in psychology and literature highlight the impact of societal conventions on individuals. Additionally, Eliot employs a canon that combines elements of realism with fiction to uncover deeper truths. The juxtaposition of realistic and fictional elements facilitates a deeper understanding of the characters' psychology. Consequently, the analysis of the novel sheds light on the wholeness and unity of the problem of otherness. From this perspective, the study offers valuable insights into the workings of the human mind and its desires. As a significant theoretician, Kristeva's insights regarding otherness can be applied across various fields, including interdisciplinary studies. Future analysis of literary works can deepen our understanding of others as individuals with distinct desires, values, and aspirations.

To conclude, the main focus of the study has been Kristeva's theories, supported by Bakhtin's concepts. A nuanced and multifaceted approach has been offered to analyze Eliot's characters. In other words, these theories allow for a rich and multidimensional analysis of the characters' internal struggles and the external factors shaping them. While both Bakhtin's and Kristeva's theories have been applied in literary criticism, there has been limited exploration of how their ideas intersect, particularly in Victorian literature. Existing research tends to focus on either dialogism or psychoanalysis in isolation, without considering how the self-other dynamic operates both linguistically and psychologically. This thesis aims to address the gap in the literature by applying Bakhtin's dialogism and Kristeva's psychoanalytic framework to analyze the characters alongside themes of revolt, melancholia, abjection, and strangeness in Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*. In doing so, it aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the characters in these novels explore their identities through interactions with social and moral others. This integrated perspective not only deepens our understanding of Eliot's characters but also opens new perspectives for examining other nineteenth-century literary texts through the combined lenses of psychoanalysis and dialogism. Furthermore, by establishing a solid conceptual framework through this study, future research can expand on Kristeva's and Bakhtin's theories across different periods and authors, contributing valuable insights not only to literary studies but also to interdisciplinary fields such as cultural studies, psychology, and sociology. Additionally, the theme of otherness explored in Eliot's works reflects both the social

realities of her time and universal human experiences, offering rich, multilayered meanings for diverse contexts.



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