
late their homes, and so forth, seem just as futile, Inhaber and Saunders observe: "Overall energy consumption refuses to drop toward the cellar. People always seem to find new uses for energy—hot tubs, floodlighting for their houses, central air conditioning—most of which were unknown a generation ago."

Is the failure to reduce consumption a bad

thing? The authors think not. Energy independence is an unrealistic goal in the modern world, they believe. And reducing overall energy use does not necessarily help future generations. Twentieth-century Americans, the authors note, would be no better off if their 19th-century forebears had insisted on hoarding their chief source of energy, wood.

ARTS & LETTERS

Middlemarch Down the Aisle

"George Eliot for Grown-Ups" by Gertrude Himmelfarb, in *The American Scholar* (Autumn 1994), Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

What a disappointment it was for many viewers of the recent PBS television series based on *Middlemarch* (1871–72), not to mention generations of readers, when the high-minded Dorothea wed the morally flawed Will



Love and reverence is the message of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*—and the motto on her memorial stone.

Ladislaw. The idealistic Dr. Lydgate (who, inconveniently, was already married) seemed so much more suited to her. But even a marriage to Lydgate—had author George Eliot (1819–80) contrived to make him available—would have had some feminists gnashing their teeth. To them, Eliot (whose real name was Mary Ann Evans) is a feminist role model who defied the bourgeois, patriarchal convention of marriage by living in sin with the man she loved. Why, then, in her greatest novel, could she not create an equally independent spirit in Dorothea?

"The simple answer," writes Himmelfarb, the noted historian, "is that Eliot herself was not a feminist in the modern sense." Indeed, she honored the bourgeois virtues even in the breach. Yes, she defied convention by living with George Henry Lewes without marrying him, but "she did not willfully choose that role; she had no alternative, since Lewes was already married and could not get a divorce." Nor did she flaunt her defiance of convention. "Although Eliot lived with Lewes in that 'irregular relationship,' as the Victorians delicately put it . . . she tried to 'regularize' it by making it as much like a proper marriage as possible."

Eliot referred to Lewes as her "husband" and to herself as his "wife." She signed letters "Marian Lewes," and asked friends to address her as "Mrs. Lewes" (and even the real Mrs. Lewes did so). The 24 years that Eliot and Lewes were together "were spent in perfect domesticity and fidelity," Himmelfarb says. After he died, she wed John Cross, "with all the trappings of a proper marriage: a trous-

My Doppelgänger

In *Antaeus* (Spring 1994), John Updike considers the "other" John Updike, the one who writes all those novels, essays, and poems.

I created Updike out of the sticks and mud of my Pennsylvania boyhood, so I can scarcely resent it when people, mistaking me for him, stop me on the street and ask me for his autograph. I am always surprised that I resemble him so closely that we can be confused. Meeting strangers, I must cope with an extra brightness in their faces, an expectancy that I will say something worthy of him; they do not realize that he works only in the medium of the written word, where other principles apply, and hours of time can be devoted to a moment's effect. Thrust into "real" time, he can scarcely function, and his awkward pleasantries and anxious stutters emerge through my lips. Myself, I am rather suave. I think fast, on my feet, and have no use for the qualificatory complexities and lame double entendres and pained exactations of language in which he is customarily mired. I move

swiftly and rather blindly through life, spending the money he earns. . . .

I brush my teeth, I dress and descend to the kitchen, where I eat and read the newspaper. . . . Postponing the moment, savoring every small news item and vitamin pill and sip of unconcentrated orange juice, I at last return to the upstairs and face the rooms that Updike has filled with his books, his papers, his trophies, his projects. The abundant clutter stifles me, yet I am helpless to clear away much of it. It would be a blasphemy. He has become a sacred reality to me. I gaze at his worn wooden desk, his boxes of dull pencils, his blank-faced word processor, with a religious fear.

Suppose, some day, he fails to show up? I would attempt to do his work, but no one would be fooled.

seau, a church wedding, and a honeymoon."

"The idea that only in marriage can Dorothea find her personal happiness as well as her moral mission seems peculiarly Victorian. And so it is," Himmelfarb says. "For the Victorians, even for Victorian feminists, marriage and family were the primary human relationships. . . . Victorian families, recent scholarship has shown, were not nearly as oppressive or patriarchal as was once thought. But the idea of the family was very nearly sacrosanct, and that idea implied that men and women had distinctive natures and virtues which bound them together in a complex relationship of rights, duties, and, if they were fortunate, love."

Dorothea marries Ladislav, by her own account, because of their mutual love. But *Middlemarch*, Himmelfarb says, is also what Henry James called a "moralized fable." Precisely because Ladislav is morally imperfect, he provides Dorothea with "her mission: to redeem him." Her love and faith in him can

make him "a better human being . . . worthy both of her and of society." For Dorothea to marry the noble Lydgate, on the other hand, would have been lacking in moral drama. He sought to do "great work for the world," and did not need a wife to help him. The ending of *Middlemarch*, Himmelfarb concludes, is not tragic, but rather, "as Eliot meant it to be, eminently moral, even heroic."

When Opera Had Sex Appeal

"Finding a 'Real Self': American Women and the Wagner Cult of the Late Nineteenth Century" by Joseph Horowitz, in *The Musical Quarterly* (Summer 1994), Oxford Univ. Press, Journals Dept., 2001 Evans Road, Cary, N.C. 27513.

In the late 19th century, the operas of Germany's Richard Wagner (1813-83) dominated musical high culture in America. This did not, as in Eu-