T.C.
BEYKENT UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

AN ANALYSIS OF THOMAS HARDY'S *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES* and *JUDE THE OBSCURE* IN THE LIGHT OF FEMINIST CRITICISM

(M.A. THESIS)

Presented by: **Görkem KULLUK**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

AN ANALYSIS OF THOMAS HARDY'S
TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES* and *JUDE THE OBSCURE
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ABSTRACT

Victorian Age was a great time of change in many ways. The growth of urban civilization, the technological developments, the gradual increase in personal wealth were some of the reasons which caused to change the period of that time. Paralel to the innovations on technology, class issues, economy, family and love relationships, writers started to reflect such kind of changes in their work of arts. It was such a powerful era that most of the great novels were written in that period. The fiction of that era has taken its name from the Queen Victoria and has been called as Victorian fiction.

Thomas Hardy was one of the most prolific writers of the Victorian Age. As a reflection of great changes in social and economical life in the Victorian Age, he creates his own style in English literature. He focuses on the complex issues such as class distinctions, family and love relations with a various, open and self conscious form. His novels mainly deal with issues concerning women in this time period.

My argument in this study is focused on his ambiguity towards his female characters. On the one hand, he is praised by some critics as he defends his female heroines thinking that they are oppressed under the rigid norms of Victorian society. On the other hand, as other critics support, his perception towards women was influenced by the conservative society, therefore his novels are criticized as being biased from a male point of view.

In my thesis, I will examine his most well-known novels, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* in the light of feminist criticism in order to show his ambiguity towards his female characters.

Key Words: Victorian Age, Hardy, women, feminist criticism

THOMAS HARDY'NİN *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES* VE *JUDE THE OBSCURE* ROMANLARININ FEMİNİST ELEŞTİRİ IŞIĞI ALTINDA İNCELENMESİ

ÖZET

Viktorya Dönemi bir çok yönden değişimin yaşandığı bir zamandır. Teknolojik gelişmeler, şehir nüfusunun artması, yaşam şartlarının daha iyi hale gelmesi değişikliklerden bazılarıdır. Birçok alandaki gelişmelere paralel olarak, yazarlar eserlerinde bu değişiklikleri yansıtmaya başlamışlardır.

Thomas Hardy, Victorya Dönemi'nin en başarılı yazarlarından biridir. Yazar, eserlerine bu dönemde gerçekleşen yenilikleri yansıtarak, kendi stilini oluşturmuştur. Romanlarında genellikle bu dönem kadınlarını ilgilendiren konuları ele almıştır.

Tezimde, Hardy'nin kadınlara olan bakış açısındaki belirsizlikleri incelemekteyim. Yazar, bir yandan, romanlarına bu dönemde yaşayan kadınların tutucu toplum tarafından ezildiklerini yansıttığı için, bazı eleştirmenlerin övgüsünü toplar. Bununla beraber, aynı yazar, romanlarında kadınlara karşı önyargılı bir tutum sergilediğini savunan bir başka grup eleştirmen tarafından da eleştirilir.

Tezimde, Hardy'nin *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* ve *Jude the Obscure* adlı romanlarını feminist eleştiri ışığı altında inceleyerek yazarın kadınlara karşı olan tutumundaki belirsizlikleri irdelemekteyim.

Anahtar Kelimeler:Viktorya Dönemi, Hardy, kadınlar, feminist eleştiri

INTRODUCTION

Feminist Criticism is a type of literary criticism which aims to study literature from a female perspective. It focuses on how literature has presented women and relationships between men and women. Using feminist criticism to interpret fiction requires studying the repression of women in fiction. Therefore, its primary aim is to deal with the roles of women through the literature and the various challenges that they faced within the male-dominated society. In order to eliminate oppression towards women, feminist criticism attempts to support the rights of women by paying special attention to the way in which literature and society constructs certain identities for each gender.

The novels of Thomas Hardy have created intense critical debate and discussion in recent years, especially in terms of feminist readings and interpretations of the texts. As Richardson remarks "….in recent years much feminist criticism of Thomas Hardy has moved on from seeking to position him as either a lover or hater of women" (155).

On the one hand some commentators view Hardy's works in a positive light in terms of gender issues. As Cunningham suggests, "Hardy is a good deal more sympathetic towards women in his treatment of sex. His heroines, in deeper relationships, or if seduced and betrayed, they always have his full support" (88). In this respect, it is clearly felt that there is an obvious sympathy and a deep understanding in the works of Thomas Hardy for his female characters.

Moreover, he is considered by many to be one of the first English novelists to describe the 'new woman' or the women who were attempting to be liberated from the social structure and confines of the mores and norms of a society which restricts and predetermines the body and mind of women. "Hardy does allow many of his heroines a degree of independence which would make them more interesting to the reader with feminist leanings" (Cunningham 84).

While these are certainly important views that many feminist critic accept about Hardy's works, on the other hand, there is another view which claims that in Hardy's works there's an attitude that reflects the patriarchal and male-dominated Victorian society of the time. In other words, they state that Hardy's perception towards women was influenced by the conservative society and times in which he lived. Therefore, they see Hardy's treatment of characters like Tess as indicative of male and patriarchic perceptions and dominance in society, which are reflected in the main novels of his oeuvre.

Feminist critics who support this idea are more radical in their interpretation of the novels and see characters like Tess as being manipulated and perceived through the 'male gaze.'

This concept, as the terms suggests, is derived from a visual metaphor which implies the oppressive way in which the male view of gender and society is loaded in terms of that particular perspective. It also implies power and a sense of control and hierarchy. It is an "…activity of control, a power hierarchy of the viewer over the viewed object. And, as the entire Western visual arts tradition testifies, it is men who do the looking and women who are looked at." (Mitchell 10). This therefore suggests a sense of sexism and the overarching dominance and manipulation of the male in society. Coward, quoted in Mitchell, clearly sums up the concept from a feminist angle

> In our society men can and do stare--at women. It is a look which confers a mastery. It represents a right to assess, pass judgment and initiate or invite on the basis of that judgment. . . . Sexual and social meanings are imposed on women's bodies, not men's. Controlling the look, men have left themselves out of the picture because a body defined is a body controlled (10).

These feminist critics are of the opinion that in the analysis of a book like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* there are subtle sexist and gender prejudices that form part of Hardy's

view of women and which reflect the Victorian stance on gender discrimination and male dominance.

Thomas Hardy (1840 -1928), was a prolific writer during the Victorian era and has often been described as 'realistic' in terms of his writing style and philosophic outlook. Born in the Dorchester area of England, "a few years after the deportation of the farm labourers" (Williams 197), he was close to the rural life and community of the area. This close connection with nature and the rural lifestyle is reflected in his novels. He was born into a changing and struggling rural society, therefore he wrote in a period in which, while "there were still local communities, there was also a visible and powerful network of the society as a whole" (Williams 197).

In his works, there's "a portrayal of Hardy-country" which aims to colour his country, time and people. (Brennecke 2). His novels are realistic to the extent that they reflect the lives that ordinary laborers and farm hands experienced and the often unjust variations of their existence. In this sense, as Williams suggests, "the Hardy country is Wessex, mainly Dorset and its neighbouring counties" (197). However, one can easily feel the change in his novels after having read his last novels. "His novels, increasingly, are concerned with change..the last and deepest novels, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are significantly the most contemporary" (Williams 197).

Hardy was continually aware of the suffering of others around him and of the injustices in the society of his time. Hardy was also keenly aware of the way that women were treated in the society of his time. Abuse and unfair prejudice against women forms an extremely important part of his literary works. Hardy is also known for his keen insight into circumstances that affected his various female characters. There is no doubt that Hardy aims to examine his female characters from a different angle.

The Victorian age is one that has been characterized in the popular imagination as an era of conservative cultural oppression, especially with regards to women and sexuality. This popular notion is not far for the truth, as an analysis of any of Hardy's major novels will show. It should also be remembered that this period was also the age of economic and political expansion with the rise of commercialism and industry. The intrusion of the modern industrial age into the rural lives and landscape of the ordinary people is another issue that lies at the centre of the thematic content of the novel and characterization in the works of Thomas Hardy.

A clear example of the Victorian attitude towards women can be seen in one of Hardy's most well-known works, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. As Elaine Showalter of Princeton University states; "The Mayor of Casterbridge begins with a scene that dramatises the analysis of female subjugation as a function of capitalism: the auction of Michael Henchard's wife Susan at the fair at Weydon-Priors" (Showalter 56). This extreme example serves to illustrate the conditions under which many rural Victorian women existed. This was an aspect that Hardy tried to illustrate in his works. In addition, the women in conventional Victorian society were deprived of any real status and they were often seen as being relegated to the role of wife and mother. In Victorian society it was felt that; "Women ought to marry. There ought to be husbands for them. Women were potential mothers" (Neff 14).

In essence the Victorian society was essentially patriarchal and male centered in its conservative philosophy and scientific and rational outlook. Women were largely seen in stereotypical terms as objectifications of male desire and the male ideologies of marriage and home. It is the great success of Hardy to provide a social backdrop and analysis of the culture of the time.

In the writing of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy confronted many of these Victorian prejudices and gender perceptions. This novel explores the class and gender stratification in society through the seduction of a poor village girl by the wealthy Alec d'Urbervilles.

However in his late novels Hardy counters these stereotypes with his creation of the 'new woman.' "New Woman novelists such as Sarah Grand, Mona Caird... as well as male novelists such as Henry James, George Gissing, George Moore and Thomas Hardy, reacted to the New Woman phenomenon in the 1880s and 1890s" (Ledger 1). This refers to the women who is independent and who refuses to be constructed by the male society and the 'male gaze'. This is evident to some extent in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and is particularly strong in *Jude the Obscure*.

In *Jude the Obscure* we see the emergence of the 'new woman' and Hardy deals with the problematics of women seeking independence and selfhood in a male-oriented and dominated society

Sexism and Hardy's possible patriarchal bias is an important subject in terms of analyzing Hardy's novels. There is, according to some critics, a sense in which Hardy is never close enough to his heroines but that there is always a certain distance between the narrator and the main female character. This view is suggested by Mitchell as follows.

> Hardy seems at once excessively close to and excessively distanced from his female characters, creating an authorial proximity that seems too close physically and too remote in other ways. His unwillingness or inability to explore the consciousness of his heroines has led to much critical bafflement as readers try to deal with the nebulous personalities Hardy thus presents them with. (159).

In other words, there is a feeling that Hardy is never as concerned as he should be about the inner workings, emotions and psychological realities of his female characters. This situation suggests a certain male prejudice and distance that some feminist critics interpret in a negative light.

This view therefore leads to the suggestion that, while they are apparently different in many ways, the female characters in the novels are based on an essentially sexist prototype.

> ..... the prototype, unfortunately, is invidiously sexist, a mysterious, unpredictable and alien entity called Woman, who is capable of ruining men's lives. In other words as Miles remarks Hardy "saw women as dangerous simply in being, to themselves as well as to men and therefore never avoids himself to show his female characters dangerous. (Mitchell 159)

In this respect, many earlier critical views of Hardy's novels were focused on the idea that Hardy was more concerned with the larger cultural and social circumstances in the novel, rather then on the internal and psychological implications of these circumstances for his main female characters. Hardy, himself states that, "Most of [*Tess Durbeyfield's*] misery had been generated by her conventional aspect and not by her innate sensations…" (Law 247). This has led many earlier critics to suggest that there is almost no concern for the female perspective and for the inner workings of the female psyche in the novel. This idea from one point of view is equal to a feminist condemnation of the novel.

Another aspect that is central to the traditional feminist critique of the novel is the important concept of the male superiority. In this view, the novels of Hardy are seen as a form of male voyeurism and Tess is seen as an object of men's pleasure and desire. This again refers to the concept of the 'male gaze' that was discussed in the previous section and the view that the female character is defined and limited by the undercurrent of male

values and prejudices. “Traditional feminist accounts of Hardy's representation of his female characters focus on Hardy's and/or the narrator's manipulation of her story for sadistic pleasure. Tess appears to these critics as the helpless object of a cruel male gaze” (Grossman 609).

On the other hand, there are many feminist writers who are not as extreme and who see the character of Tess in less rigid terms. They rather view the way that Hardy deals with the character of Tess as a subtle interplay of elements and forces which illustrate the predicament of women in the society of the time. As Butler suggests, in this novel Hardy succeeds in “integrating the personal emotions of an obscure girl with an intense study of nature and an overall view of the cosmos and the meaning of man’s existence” and what is more all this is set within a “realistic framework” (96). In addition, “in the freer atmosphere of the nineties and, particularly with *Jude the Obscure*, under the influence of the popular enthusiasm for the New Woman question, he brought his earlier interests into sharper” (Cunningham 94).

While accusations of sexism cannot be discounted, it is felt that these should be taken account of and balanced against the other more positive aspects that relate to the more inclusive and comprehensive feminist reading of the text.

As has been repeatedly stated in this paper, more contemporary views of the feminist interpretation of Hardy’s works, tend to suggest a more open and contradictory view of the novels. In this respect, “*Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are the novels which brought Hardy into the centre of contemporary controversy” (Cunningham 94). This again refers to the central contradiction that can be found throughout his works; that there is a positive sympathy and understanding of the female characters in the novels and that this tends to contradict a critical view that sees male prejudice as the defining note of the work. Recent feminist readings of Hardy, without looking away from important

observations about the subtly exploitative practices of male narration, look beyond cliches about Hardy's "glib antifeminist generalizations…and toward explaining Hardy's blurring of the categories of female sexuality" (Grossman 609).

In this light Patricia Ingham, for example, writes of the narrators in Hardy and their "…attempts at interpretation (which) evoke the ambiguities of a language in transition" (Grossman 609). This broad and complex view of the novel is also supported by Penny Boumelha, who, "…historicizes the novels in the context of contemporary sexual ideology", and suggests that the "radicalism of Hardy's representations of women resides ... in their resistance to reduction to a single and uniform ideological position" (Grossman 609). In the light of these views, the following sections will attempt an analysis of central aspects of the novels.

A central focus of this critical study is the apparent ambivalence and ambiguity that many scholars perceive in Hardy's works with regard to his attitude towards women and their place in society. This apparent ambiguity in Hardy's presentation of women will form the underlying and central point in this paper and an attempt will be made to relate these critical views to his two novels, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, under discussion; as well as presenting an overall view of the feminist stance as it pertains to the interpretation of the selected texts. Furthermore, this paper will also explore to what extent the writer questioned and opposed the patriarchal views that were dominant in Victorian society at the time.

Another central element in this analysis of Hardy's novels will obviously be the focus on the politics of sex and the cultural and social norms and values that played an important part in the view of women and gender discrimination in Victorian society. There is little doubt that Victorian society had a very narrow view of the potential and individuality of women. This is a central focus in Hardy's work and he continually exposes

this narrow view of women in novels like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Boumelha notes in her book *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form* that Hardy challenged the Victorian social climate by writing a novel with aberrant sexual politics. In order to define the social context for the novel's reception, Boumelha writes:

> There was, first, the context of an increasing questioning, both in fiction and in public discussion, of sex roles and the double standard. But above all, there was the sense that Hardy was presuming to offer a moral argument in the shape of a structured defence of his central character, and the passionate commitment to Tess herself (120).

There are many feminist views, concepts and theoretical constructs that will also be incorporated into the analysis of the texts. For example, the importance of the theory that society 'politicizes' the female body and the way that the female body is objectified and becomes an "object of desire" rather then a living person. This aspect is explored, for instance, in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* where Tess rejects the sexuality of the body due to her traumatic experiences in society and this in turn becomes a reflection of the way that women were treated in those times.

There is no doubt that Hardy challenged many of the sexual and social conventions of the Victorian age. However, what also needs to be taken into account in a comprehensive analysis of these works from a feminist stance is the overarching realistic pessimism that was evident in much of Hardy's assessment of society as a whole. This is an aspect that will form an important part of the analysis of *Jude the Obscure*.

The thesis consists of six parts. In the introduction general information, background and objectives of the study will be presented. The first chapter provides good information in terms of discussing the Victorian Age and the emergence of the New Woman. This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, the Victorian Age and the proper

Victorian lady will be examined in detail while the second part is a study of the New Woman. The second chapter, Feminist Theory and Hardy provides a necessary overview and insight into some of the major feminist themes and critical approaches to the works of Thomas Hardy. The third chapter opens with the analysis of the *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.* In this chapter, the novel will be examined in different parts. The fourth chapter will analyze Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* in different aspects. Both works will be presented in the light of feminist criticism by showing Hardy's different attitudes towards his female heroines. In the conclusion, in addition to my personal feedback on the present study, a summary of the main arguments will be given.

CHAPTER I: THE VICTORIAN AGE AND THE EMERGING NEW WOMAN

1.1. A Brief Analysis of the Victorian Age

The Victorian Age, a time period which ran during the rule of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) was in many ways, the beginning of the modern world. Although, like any time in history, this period had its good and bad qualities, it was, above all else, a time of great change and was often portrayed as "a golden period of English History" (Daniell 176). There was no doubt that "in the first quarter of the nineteenth century politically, socially, intellectually, and spiritually a new society was growing up in England" (Levine 2).

During the Victorian Age, one of the most drastic changes that challenged all aspects of life was the Industrial Revolution. It had created profound economic and social changes, including a mass migration of workers to industrial towns. As Young states "industrialism had been coming over England like a climatic change" (22) and now, it was machines, industries and business that controlled the society. People started to give up working on simple farms to produce and therefore rural production became a thing of the past. People were forced to leave the peacefullness of nature behind and to move to the cities for work. Therefore, the countryside was becoming less populated as farmers weren't needed. On the other hand, cities started to grow up as workers and farmers migrated to urban centers in search of new opportunities and advantages.

"The Victorians had become addicted to speed and, like all speed crazy things, they wanted to go ever faster. Time was money and efficiency became increasingly important" (Robinson 3). This sense of speed was seen through many changes involved in the Industrial Age such as the steam engine, trains and telegraphs.

Prior to the Victorian age, people's lives were truly limited to travelling by horse, by the seasons and daylight hours. The steam engine and steam essentially changed everything. It was faster, more powerful, and could work independently of natural power sources, such as water. "Traction engines saw fields ploughed twenty times faster than before and factories could be anywhere" (Robinson 1). Therefore rural life lost its importance as many rural dwellers had to move to cities to find work. Thus the steam engine in a way changed the face of society, of the economic systems, and changed the manner in which people could survive and make a living. Cities gained importance now while rural life became insignificant.

"Energy was the key quality of the Victorians and their characteristic achievement was the building of the railways" (Young 1). The railroad was another change that completely changed the lives of the people in the Victorian Age. Since transportation was the major link between agriculture and industry, between village, towns and cities, with the birth of railways people could immigrate easily and quickly and they could travel to far places in short time in comparison to travel by horse or foot. It was in fact " a symbol of change and progress" that brought many facilities and stimulated communication. (Simmons 7).

The invention of the telegraph was another important change during the Victorian Period. It was seen as a powerful political and economic tool as it opened many doors for international business endeavors. The whole world literally changed as people could communicate almost instantly with one another with the invention of the telegraph.

Apart from the technological changes, social life of the Victorian people had changed in many ways. Previously, working people generally had Mondays off. Now it seems that work stopped midday on Saturdays and people went back to work on Monday morning. This brought about the weekend as we know it today, a time period when people

really tried to enjoy themselves. It was also at this time that certain sports and spectator sports such as cricket and football rose to a powerful status. In addition, it seems that many people began to feel that religion was not as important as it once was for people. This period had essentially destroyed many communities, communities that involved with Church activities, much "of the middle class became concerned about the godlessness of the working classes when it emerged that only 50 percent of the eligible population attended a church service on Census Sunday in 1851" (Robinson 4). There was a sense that people needed to help themselves, reflective of the business world, and they began to follow such ideals as "heaven helps those who help themselves" (Robinson 4). It was a time that stressed working hard and possessing strong self discipline.

The countryside, as mentioned, was becoming less and less populated as farming lost its importance. In addition, anyone who lived in the country was considered to be ignorant and the society as a whole looked down upon people who didn't choose to live in the city.

With a general understanding of the society, and of technological changes that were the marks of the Victorian Age, the following analysis will turn to more specific groups of the Victorian Age.

Women in the Victorian Age

During the Victorian Era men and women had completely different rights which brought gender bias, a prejudice against a person based on his or her sex. Since gender bias has an important role in controlling people's lives, it has a great ability to destroy the victim in many areas. Gender bias was a big problem in the Victorian era as men and women were thought to have completely different natures. Women were considered as a group of people who possessed no power in the Victorian Era. It was common for women to be seen as weak creatures whose jobs was to obey their husbands. Since they were seen

as the objects of desire, a good wife not only had to obey her husband but also had to satisfy his desires. Therefore, she was considered her husband's property in the sense that she couldn't act for herself. In this respect, it was believed that women had no desire for sexual relations. Female sexuality was controlled and suppressed under the social and religious circumstances of the Victorian Period. The basic reason for women to suppress their desire was because the Victorians regarded human desire as solely masculine. Thus, women couldn't express their emotions and desires, especially when it came to sex. When a woman asserted her sexual desires, it would be improper and impure. This led to women's sexual repression. Sex was only acceptable during marriage and it was meant entirely for the purpose of procreating. (Vicinus x)

Marriage defined a woman's status in the Victorian Era, in this respect it was believed that once a woman got married, she became a perfect wife who was "an active participant in the family" (Vicinus ix). To be a housewife was the best profession for a proper Victorian lady. Instead of having their own rights, she had to take care of the domestic roles, such as housework, childbirth and obedience to their husbands. Victorian society expected women to marry in order to prevent them realizing their own interests and talents. That was the only way to make them selfless and functional.

In the beginning of the 18th century, young girls could attend schools to study basic skills such as reading, writing and Maths. The purpose of this preparation was to make young girls ready for marriage. They could be educated and could study, as long as it didn't interfere with their housework. As Vicinus states, "the whole force of her education is sentimental rather than intellectual" (129). The Victorian women were only expected to know enough language and science "to sympathize in her husband's pleasures" (Vicinus 129).

As Victorian society was patriarchal men controlled government, business and law and therefore the status of the Victorian lady was totally dependent upon the economic position of her father and then her husband. (Vicinus ix) The primary reason of why they were economically dependent and couldn't compete with men was the fact that they didn't have equal professional and educational opportunities and therefore were unable to participate in political affairs and financial life. Thus, since Victorian women were seen as incapable of any duty outside of the home, most women preferred to stay at home providing the meals, caring for the children and planning social gatherings.

Although by marriage, which was the "ideal function of Victorian women" (Norton x), women could get the chance of "fulfilling their aspiration of creating a family", they didn't often benefit from being married in many respects. (Dunhill 23). That is to say, once getting married, woman lost her personal rights and started to continue their dependent and submissive roles.

1.2. The New Woman

"Violently abused by many, ridiculed by the less hysterical, and championed by a select few, the New Woman became a focal point for a variety of the controversies which rocked the nineties" (Cunningham 1). Although it is rather difficult to make an exact definition of the New Woman, in simple terms, she is the one who was aware of her female individualism and subjectivity by rejecting the rigid social norms of the Victorian society.

Many of the changes that characterized the Victorian period motivated discussion about the roles of women- what the Victorians called the "Woman Question." Throughout the 1880s and early 1890s, many articles on the Woman Question had appeared dealing with the place of women in the Victorian Society. The use of the term New Woman was first publicly acknowledged in 1894, and "it was Ouida who extrapolated the phrase 'the

New Woman' from Sarah Grand's essay 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question' " (Ledger 9).

Feminist thinkers had the opportunity for an adventurous investigation of the female role in the late eighties and nineties. They began to redirect their energies on "the formulation of a new morality, a new code of behaviour, and sexual ethics" (Cunningham 3). In order to achieve their goals, they emphasized the emancipation of women and the equality of both sexes in sexual, educational, political, legal and occupational aspects in opposition to the traditional Victorian concept of a proper lady. The main purpose of these feminist movements was to free women from domestic slavery and acknowledged their right to seek a career and work outside the home. After the efforts of the feminist movements which aimed to defend the women's rights, "highly qualified women emerged as a result of concessions wrung from the educational establishment, suitable work and social status" (Cunningham 2).

In the emergence of the 'new woman', Cunningham suggests that "the crucial factor was, inevitably, sex" (2). It was unexpectedly discovered that women, who had been protected from reading and hearing about sex in novels and periodicals, started to express their own feelings freely concerning sexual matters. "Unsavoury topics which had previously lurked in pamphlets, government reports... were dragged out by reforming women and paraded triumphantly through the pages of magazines and popular novels" (Cunningham 2). Therefore, the women began to expand their talking points and didn't hesitate to mention their ideas about divorce, adultery, contraception and venereal disease.

By the 1880s many important steps had been noticed in the struggle for emancipation. Instead of staying home all day, women started to work outside and had the chance of earning money. Therefore, they gained economic independence and shared in the domestic financial responsibility. When the domestic economy was no longer supported by

men only, women gradually gained a self confidence financially. That was how the New Woman threatened the economic supremacy of the bourgeois man. Their ultimate desire was to have the same freedom of choice and equality. In order to make men release their dominance and privilege, the women didn't hesitate to support themselves financially by working and taking parts in different areas. By the 1880s areas of female employment expanded as nurses and teachers and the commercial world provided an entirely new field of work; by 1881 there were nearly 6000 female clerks and by 1891 the number had almost trebled to 17,859. (Cunningham 4)

Another important step in the struggle for emancipation was seen in the educational establishment. By the 1880s, The Foundation of Queens's and Bedford Colleges in London in 1848 and 1849 produced the first generation of well-qualified women teachers. Furthermore, The North London Collegiate in 1850 and Cheltenham Ladies' College in 1854 set a high standard of secondary education and the foundation of Girton, gave women their first foot in the door for the assault on Oxford and Cambridge. (Cunningham 4)

Although general discussions concerning the emancipation of women were made by feminist thinkers in the eighties and nineties, the best and powerful work for female emancipation, before the emergence of the New Woman, was John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) which "became the bible of the feminists" in the latter part of the nineteenth century. (Cunningham 7) He wrote a series of supportive essays on human liberty regardless of class and gender. He discussed the role of women in Victorian society, emphasizing how the patriarchy placed such an intense limit on what woman could do. However, Mill's ideas concerning the New Woman were pointed out earlier by Mary Wollstonecraft who was considered as the pioneering figure of the feminist movement. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) was quite an influential work in which she emphasized the importance of education for both sexes. She pointed out the legal,

economic and educational disabilities of women arguing that in order to achieve a place in society, women had to see education as their primary goal.

Marriage which was traditionally regarded as woman's primary aim, "came in for a tremendous battery of criticism" (Cunningham 2). The new woman wanted to express her independence and subjectivity by rejecting marriage. She was aware that without the barrier of marriage she would have a free sexual relationship. They began to see financial independence and personal fulfilment gained through work as attractive alternatives to marriage. Therefore, the growing number of unmarried women increased which caused a social problem. These women who were determined that they had the ability to lead an independent life out of marriage, were regarded as the representatives of the New Woman.

The Married Women's Property Act of 1882 was the first step in giving property rights to married women. As Hughes states, "it gave wives right to their property acquired before and during marriage" (Tucker 38). It was a right which suggested to some that a "powerful incentive for discontented wives to remain married had been irresponsibly removed" (Cunningham 5). By the 1890s, married women started to enjoy certain improvements in their legal position. (Ledger 11).

By the 1890s, major progress had been achieved in many areas and therefore the New Woman began to emerge with a distinct identity. As Cunningham suggests, reforms in the law and in educational and professional institutions brought lots of opportunities. She could now put her energy into professional rather than matrimonial achievement, could express her ideas about marriage freely, could make her own choice about having children and she could demand complete freedom in selecting her sexual partner. (10)

The wild woman, the glorified spinster, the advanced woman, the odd woman, the modern woman.. were some of the names defining the New Woman. The New Woman, in a way, refused to be every woman who played the role of submissive and obedient. Their

refusal to be every woman symbolized their rebelliousness. In contrast to the good angel in the house or the proper lady, the New Woman was accused of neglecting her female virtues of a selfless housewife, mother and daughter. Thus, she was considered as a selfish and improper being who placed her individual needs above her family interests and the traditional morality. Another reason for the criticism of women was the fact that they entered the traditional sphere of education and professions reserved for men only and in a way betrayed their traditional roles as housewives.

"Writers also played an important role in raising the Woman Question" (Tucker 31). In order to provide vitality and reality to the English novel, major novelists, such as Hardy, Meredith and Gissing began to write new topics associated with the New Woman. Thus the novel played an important role in showing the roles of the New Woman. As Cunningham points out "the important point for this brief period is that emancipation of women and the emancipation of the English novel advanced together" (3). The heroines portrayed in these novels acted against the decorum of a traditional proper lady by challenging accepted ideals of marriage and maternity. Hardy's two heroines, Tess and Sue were chosen to represent the New Woman because both of them refused to conform to the traditional feminine role.

CHAPTER II: FEMINIST THEORY AND HARDY

2.1. Feminist Interpretations of Hardy

As Cunningham argues, "in many of his novels Hardy's view of women, and his ideas about sex and marriage, seem to pull him uncomfortably in different directions" (81). Feminist criticism of the novels takes into account the possibility that the works of Thomas Hardy, while being outwardly sympathetic to the plight of women in the Victorian era, also need to be deconstructed in terms of the underling ideologies and gender preferences that may exist in the texts. Therefore, from this standpoint the works of Thomas Hardy are questioned and examined for possible sexist and patriarchal bias.

> Hardy's critics continue to circumnavigate with difficulty his phallocentric reader-narrator dynamic, often maintaining a somewhat uneasy neutrality toward it. But as feminist criticism has taught us new ways of reading, it has become increasingly unworkable to ignore questions of gender in Hardy's work, particularly in light of recent feminist observations about the politics of the gaze. Such observations have made it virtually impossible to discuss the look in the realist novel without acknowledging its powerful sexist ramifications, ramifications which in Hardy's case color his entire oeuvre in ways that profoundly affect our understanding and appreciation of it. (Mitchell 156)

The above quotation is cited at length as it provides important information that is necessary to the present study in order to initiate a foundation for the analysis of the two novels in question. In the first instance the "phallocentric reader-narrator dynamic" refers to the "hidden" biases towards gender that may exist within the text. The most imperative aspect that Mitchell notes is that feminist interpretations are extremely important in an understanding of these works due to the fact that female characters and issues surrounding

sexuality and gender form such an important part of almost all of Hardy's novels and cannot be ignored in terms of modern analysis. This may seem like a rather obvious point but in many of Hardy's works the focus is on the female characters as a reflection of and comment on society and the cultural milieu of the novels.

One of the most important early feminist critics of the work of Thomas Hardy is Mary Jacobus. Her work has been focused on the psychological dimensions and representations of Sue Bridehead and the nature of her emancipation, in *Jude the Obscure*. (Harvey 183). In her analysis Jacobus argues that;

> the integration of the various issues raised by Sue is complicated within the text by the elusive relation that Hardy sets up between her psychology and the ideas she represents. By focusing on Sue's consciousness, Jacobus reveals her process of self-discovery, her refusal to conform to conventional thinking, and the peculiarly modern complexity of her relationship with Jude. (Harvey 183)

As can be seen in the above, the focus of much feminist critique is on the way that the female characters are first entrapped or confined by a culture which shapes their development and identity in terms of male stereotypes and denies these characters freedom of development and expression. Secondly, this also refers to the process of self - discovery, as can be seen in the case of Sue in particular, and in the search for psychological and moral freedom in a restrictive culture. This form of feminist criticism and commentary focuses on the way that the author presents the female character and also critiques his representation of the male figure in society.

Another example that exemplifies in - depth feminist analysis of Hardy's works is the view presented by Mary Jacobus that focuses on the changes that Hardy made to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* while it was still in manuscript form. This refers to the Hardy's awareness of Victorian norms and values with regard to sexuality and gender.

> She argues that Hardy's alterations to the characters of Tess, Alec d'Urberville and Angel Clare were dictated by the need to overcome Victorian censorship, and that Tess's purity is a 'literary construct, "stuck on" in retrospect like the subtitle to meet objections that the novel had encountered even before its publication in 1891…. She concludes that the textual changes which Hardy introduced offer a valuable insight into Victorian society's control of female sexuality. (Harvey 182)

Penny Boumelha is one of the most important contemporary feminist critics of Hardy. She attempts to interpret and read the texts in terms of ambiguities and anomalies which uncover the underlying principles and views that constitute the work. As Harvey explains, this process is essential in an uncovering of hidden ideological aspects that inform and determine the view of gender. "Adopting the method of analysing the presence of ideology in texts, Boumelha uncovers within the body of thought in Hardy's novels, contradictions, distortions and ambiguities." (Harvey 183)

An extremely important part of this process is that Boumelha emphasizes the view that Hardy refused to take a clear and obvious position on the issue of gender. This ambiguity and lack of a definite stance with regard to women is a central focus of this paper. However, this should not necessarily be seen as a flaw or a negative aspect of Hardy's writing but should rather be seen as part of the complex nature of his works and his struggle with the questions of gender, female individuality and identity in a society that tended to decrease the worth of women.

At times it is as if Hardy in these novels is struggling with the realization of the problems of social and gender discrimination in Victorian society and is unable to articulate his own position on the subject clearly. However, as will be discussed in the

section of *Jude the Obscure*, the later novels are far more daring and exploratory in their view of the modern woman.

Thomas Hardy was extremely radical in his approach and literary exploration of the female character. As Harvey states;

> Hardy's radicalism in overtly raising the issues of both gender and class is emphasized by Boumelha's New Historicist approach of exploring his writing in the context of scientific, medical and legal discourses, as well as alongside the work of minor writers of fiction on the 'New Woman' question. (183)

The above quotation contains a number of important points that should be taken into account in the analysis of any of Thomas Hardy's novels. It is Hardy's courage and difference to raise the issue of gender and class in a conservative society and therefore the novels like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* were in fact daring adventures into controversial areas of debate in Victorian society. This is possibly one reason for the assertion of Hardy's ambiguity and inability to make definite statements about gender issues. This also refers to the 'new woman' issue that is dealt with particularly in *Jude the Obscure*; which deals essentially with the woman as an independent entity who struggles for her own sense of individuality and refuses to accept the norm and standards of the male-dominated society.

Therefore, in the writings of feminist critics like Boumelha we find a concern with "…the cultural ideologies that produced Hardy's novels…combined with a structuralist reading of the sign 'woman' that the texts create" (Harvey 183). This writing helps to inform a reading of both novels under discussion.

There are many other feminist critics of Hardy's work that could also be mentioned. Among these is the work of Patricia Ingham. She explores the way that the sign or the concept of 'woman' is created as an ideological concept, or as a concept that is generated and manipulated by the perceptions and prejudices of society. As with the views

of Boumelha, the modern feminist critic of these works tends to focus on the intersection between society and culture and ideology and the written text. It is this combination of meaning that emerges in the novel which informs the basis of a deconstruction of the meaning of femaleness in Victorian society. Patricia Ingham therefore, "…also investigates the sign 'woman', how it was formed by ideology, and in particular how it exists in the narrative language and syntax patterns available to Hardy when he began to write" (Harvey 184). Similar to other critics she finds that Hardy is an extremely adventurous and even radical writer in his exploration of the situation and experiences of women in society.

> Her examination of the disjunction in Hardy's novels between his narrative voice and the construction of plots reveals a radical, even subversive writer. Her aim is to examine how the female subject of Hardy's novels is created by the language as the product of ideologies. She discerns in his writing a 'fault-line', which denotes that 'there is in relation to women a subtle subterranean shifting taking place' (Harvey 184)

In other words, these theorists in their analyses find that Hardy is very sensitive and sympathetic to the plight of women in society and they also show how this sympathy manifests itself through the conscious description of his main female characters. This is a point that is clearly emphasized in the writings of Patricia Ingham and she argues that "…in spite of the male narrator's theology of woman, he allows another discourse to emerge which speaks of how a sensitive woman may experience social and individual pressure upon her" (Harvey 185).

This is an extremely important statement in terms of the main thesis of this paper. This refers to the fact that Hardy in his writing was continually trying to open up the reader to the predicament of the situation of women in the society of the time. There is however a central ambiguity in that the novels are often dominated by a male voice and a "male

gaze". In other words, since the novels were written by a male author, many feminists have criticized the novels as being intrinsically biased from a male perspective. However, as Ingham states in the above quotation, Hardy's works allow for a much deeper perception of gender than just the male point of view and another dialogue emerges in the novel, which is the female point of view.

Furthermore, Ingham also sees the later novels as going even deeper into the exploration of femaleness and suggests that the novels like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in fact promote female sexuality. As Harvey states; "….in the later novels Ingham sees Hardy endorsing spontaneous female sexuality by evolving a 'new set of feminine signs' … Grace of the womanly, Tess and Arabella of the fallen woman, Sue of the New Woman" (185). Ingham sees a wide range of women in the later novels who are more assertive and independent and who in fact defy and refuse to accept the restrictions of the society around them.

A good example of this view can be seen in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* when Tess recovers from her fall and is not bowed down by the unjustness of a male dominance but rather continues to develop even after the death of her child. There are many strong female characters in the novels and Hardy is continually stressing the courage and the endurance of women in the society. "Both Tess and the narrator resist the male characters' attempts to impose on her the categories of signification available to their language" (Harvey 185).

This perception of the female characters also applies to a reading of *Jude the Obscure*.

> Sue Bridehead, the New Woman, sharing with Jude a self-awareness of oppression, which in her case is sexual, disdains convention by asserting her autonomous sense of identity. All these women create a new meaning for their autonomous selves outside the bounds of male language. (Harvey 185)

Neither does Hardy present a simplistic view of the 'new woman'. He rather explores the complexity and developments of women who attempt to liberate themselves in a repressive and decadent society. In *Jude the Obscure*, for example, although she is apparently an independent woman, Sue Bridehead is still constructed by the 'male gaze' and she cannot express her natural sexuality fully in her relationship with Jude.

2.2. The Problem of Hardy as a Feminist Novelist

Feminist literary theory often criticizes authors who classify women as innocent, submissive housewives or independent, rebellious dreamers. In the stereotypical male-dominated world, society appreciates the dependent and obedient woman. As Rosemarie Morgan explains:

> With the advent of adulthood and a fully awakened sexual consciousness, every exploratory move towards self-discovery, self-realization and sexual understanding by the female, meets with obstruction in a male-dominated world intent upon highranking the docile woman over the daring, the meek over the assertive, the compliant over the self-determining, the submissive over the dynamic. (58)

The reason why feminist critics despise writers who seem to support these views of women is the fact that they limit the development of individualism and respect for females. That is to say, the writers who follow accepted roles for women achieve approval from society, while the others who follow their own course are scorned. In this respect, in many of Hardy's novels, female characters clearly illustrate one of these stereotypes. However, what Hardy aims to show is how society forms such images of women and pressures them to conform to the proper angelic image. Therefore, he makes indistinct these stereotypical roles as each novel progresses showing the improbability that a woman accurately fits into a simple category.

Thus, as has been referred to, many feminist critics see ambiguity or even contradictions in many of Hardy's novels. The question is often asked in the context of this debate and in the literature – to what extent is Hardy a feminist novelist? This question has also been applied to many of the later novels and particularly to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.* As was discussed in the theory section above, in this novel we have on the one hand a narrative about the emergence of a young women's sense of sexuality and individualism. In this sense, the analysis of the character of Tess is one that is positive in terms of female development and independence. As Sankey remarks, in "*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Hardy proceeds less conventionally, giving a full-scale development to Tess's character, and making that character a pretty strong one" (33). On the other hand, from another critical perspective, this focus on sexuality is seen as form of male 'voyeurism' and an example of the predominance of the 'male gaze' in the novel.

The latter view raises further critical questions about the extent to which the author is reflecting the mores and restrictive norms of Victorian society and even to what extent Hardy was interested in these more sexist views. This view is explored by feminist critics such as Mitchell.

> The heroines of Hardy's early novels are presented primarily as objects of erotic interest not only for the narrators and for the male characters... but also for the implied reader/voyeur. . . . What they think or feel seems not to matter; the focus of attention is on the feelings they arouse in a variety of men. (155).

This view, therefore, sees the focus on sexuality in a novel like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as an example of the male preoccupation with their own feelings and perceptions; with little evidence of any real concern for the feelings of the female characters.

Of course, this is only one point of view of the novel and from another perspective we have feminist theorists noting the literary courage that Hardy evidences in his exploration of these issues in the light of the conservative nature of his audience. As a result, modern feminist literary discourse has resulted in a seemingly endless debate about the pros and cons of Hardy as a feminist writer.

> The question of Hardy and the representation of women have perturbed literary critics since the turn of the century. Just as mainstream critics remain unsure about Hardy's formal virtuosity (citing him with equal conviction as both a great literary artist and a crass technical bungler), feminist critics seem undecided whether to accept Hardy with distaste or to reject him with reluctance. (Mitchell 155)

At the same time Hardy is praised by critics for his attack on the conservative and restrictive nature of Victorian society and their view of women. By creating *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy aims to shock Victorian readers with the novel's sexual themes and pessimistic outlook. Tess, who is condemned by society, yet pitied by Hardy, is painted as a pure and innocent victim of selfish men and snobbish society. It is the great success of Hardy to turn Tess into a major female heroine ignoring typical views of Victorians who consider Tess immoral and whorish. Thus, throughout the novel, Tess having noble characteristics never loses the reader's admiration. As Duffin asserts, "Whatever else we call her, Tess remains the most lovable of Hardy's heroines" (225).

This is countered by critics who state that Hardy is in fact sexist as can be seen in his "….blatantly sexist remarks that are scattered throughout his oeuvre like some kind of sexist graffiti" (Mitchell 155). Both these different points of view will be taken into account in the following discussion of the central female characters in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. It should also be noted at the outset that Hardy's

female characters are usually extremely strong and resilient and that, as will be seen in the case of *Jude the Obscure* in particular; they are surprisingly modern in their actions and attitudes.

Another factor that affects the critical interpretations of these novels from a feminist point of view is that it is also important not to become too entrapped or restricted by a rigid dualistic view of Hardy's feminism, or lack of it.

With this view in mind, the following analysis will deal with the various aspects of feminist criticism of the novel in an extensive and open-ended way; so that the ambiguities and complexities of the novel can be revealed. In other words, the analysis will not attempt to come to a definitive conclusion about the text but is rather more concerned with opening up the text to the different views and opinions that relate to the central character of Tess.

CHAPTER III: FEMINIST CRITICISM OF *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

3.1. Introduction and Overview

Among the aspects that will be considered are Ingham's opinion that *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is a novel that deals with "…a new set of female signs…" and explores "a new vision of women in Victorian times" (Harvey 185). This also refers to the development in the works of the 'new woman' or the women liberated from the limits of male dominance. This is an aspect that is more clearly developed in *Jude the Obscure*.

Another central aspect that is important to examine in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is sexuality. As Carpenter states, "in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the heroine Tess, unlike the others, is more vitally alive; specifically, she is more female, more sexual, more passionate. In combination with her innocence, her gentleness, and her worshipful loyalty, this sexuality makes her indeed a memorable character" (129). Hardy does not hesitate to express the problem of female sexuality in a society that is dominated by male perceptions. This also leads to the important aspect of Tess's development as an individual human being. As Harvey remarks, "Tess embodies a fierce impulse to self-determination against daunting, and ultimately insurmountable, odds" (186).

The plot of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* has been described as "a paltry thing" by critics like Irving Howe. (LaValley 5) In other words, the plot is fairly straightforward and uncomplicated and is in essence the story of the tragic life of the main character, Tess. However, the plot also acts as the foundation which creates and builds the most significant element of the work; namely the development and struggle of the main female character. "…it provides a basis for the manifestation of Tess's character and her steady growth, which are the real life of the novel" (LaValley 5).

Therefore, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is not only about Tess's suffering; Hardy simply uses the plot of the novel as a foundation upon which to ground Tess as a truly

complex heroine. Instead of remaining the passive victim that she sometimes seems, Tess rises above the usual stereotypes to claim her place as one of the most fascinating heroines in fiction.

Furthermore, if we focus on plot only, the book seems like a disjointed and perverse tragedy in which the heroine is continually degraded. Boumelha points out Hardy's unconventional plotline when she states, "the text is divided not into a series of chapters adding up to a more or less continuous narrative, but into discontinuous Phases which repeatedly edit out the most crucial episodes of the plot" (126).

The plot deals almost exclusively with the crises that Tess experiences in her life. In other words, the central focus of the novel, as the title suggests, is on the female character who "yields to circumstance and fate" (Morgan 84). Hardy also simplifies our responses to the events in Tess's life and to the character as a whole. His focus is more on the way that the outer world interacts with and affects Tess. This focus has also been criticized by many feminist theorists, who claim that this emphasis on the social world, rather than on the inner psychological workings of the main character, suggests a male bias and a typical patriarchal attitude towards the feminine.

The plot can even be reduced to a conventional and simple formula. This can be summarized as follows: the pure woman who is wronged by the society and by men with no morals or ethics. This is a typical Victorian stereotype of the 'ruined women.' In this respect, the plot is "simple and unoriginal" in terms of dealing with the wronged woman who cannot escape her past and the double standard of morality for men and women which are themes known to Victorian literature. (Brooks 233, 234)

However to describe the novel in this way would be to over-simply and to miss the depth and meaning of the work, as well as the artistic achievement in the creation of the

character of Tess. There is a much more complex and deeper dynamic at work in this novel.

The novel doesn't have a simple story concerning a pure woman betrayed by men and her constant fight for re-acceptance and happiness or the restrictive norms of Victorian society. All these aspects are there but as it is supported by Brooks, the novel gives importance to the emphasis on the heroine by examining her in two different roles. She is portrayed as "the dairymaid Tess, an individual human being that she had set herself to stand or fall by her qualities", but she is also " 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles' and the novel is shaped by the tension between the personal and impersonal parts of her being" (233).

In brief the story or plot unfolds as follows. A young woman attempts to find her place in the society of the times. The Durbeyfield family, who are essentially part of the lower-class structure of the society, discover that they are related to the higher – class d'Urbervilles. This awareness of class pride and consciousness results in Tess's mother sending her daughter to ask for money from her rich relations in the hope that she will marry one of the wealthy d'Urbervilles.

These actions subsequently initiate the sequence of events in the novel which results in Tess being taken advantage of by Alec d'Urberville, with all the awesome social, moral and psychological implications of rape. This of course also provides Hardy to show the obvious gender preferences that existed in the Victorian male-dominated society. This is a clear area of feminist concern and will be explored in more detail in this section.

This situation that the young women find herself in is exacerbated further by the fact that Tess gives birth to a child, who later dies. She is tortured by the guilt of the event but continues to attempt to re-establish her life. She however feels impure and vows that she will not marry. She meets and falls in love with Angel. Tess constantly refuses Angel's offers of marriage because of her past; he takes her refusals "as proof of her virgin

modesty" (Butler 97). However, the confession of her past drives him away, feeling that "he has been tricked by an apparently pure woman" (Butler 97) although, and effectively from a feminist point of view, he is also guilty of certain mistakes. This results in Tess's returning to Alec d'Urberville. She later kills him and is executed.

The plot itself, as Howe and other commentators state, is not of paramount in terms of the deeper signification and meaning of the novel. What is of extreme importance however is the development of the main character of Tess and the way that she responds to the unjust and even cruel events that she finds herself involved with; and the way that the society and male prejudice shapes her fate.

Howe claims that although the character of Tess can be seen as cultural stereotype of womanhood, Hardy elevates her character "...through the sheer intensity of his affection…into a high plane of moral seriousness" (LaValley 99). However part of the problem that feminist critics find with Tess is that she seems to be a stereotype without a real centre. As Ellen Moers states in her study entitled, *Tess as Cultural Stereotype*;

> The problem is, which cultural stereotype. Tess is everything. She is the milkmaid, sensual, full- bodies and open-hearted, with swimming eyes and a flower mouth which takes on, at moment of strain and terror, "almost the aspect of a round little hole." She is also : 'A Pure Women'. (LaValley 99).

It is this stereotyping and the lack of a fixed social and psychological identity that concerns many feminist critics. They see the figure of Tess as a male construct and a combination of conventional attributes of womanhood that are determined by the 'male gaze'. On the other hand as other commentators point out, the essence of the novel lies in the way that this stereotypical character is creatively enhanced to become an individual whose identity is not limited by male stereotypes. As Carpenter suggests, "she is beautiful

with a full-bodied femininity, staunch in character, passionate in emotion and therefore she is Hardy's vision of an ideal woman" (129).

3.2. Tess as a New Woman

> "Tess is not a New Woman, but the novel which is built around her embodies essential features of the New Woman fiction" (Cunningham 103).

In the Victorian days, as mentioned before, women lived in the male dominated world. However, by the great challenge of Hardy, Tess's character slightly deviated from this in the beginning. Hardy's Tess was very different from her mother's generation. Hardy himself says that there existed a gap of 200 year between the two. While the mother belonged to the dying rural society of England, Tess, from the beginning, belonged to the modern type of women in Victorian times. "Between the mother, with her fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folklore, dialect, and orally transmitted ballads, and the daughter, with her trained National teachings and Standard knowledge under an infinitely revised code, there was a gap of two hundred years as ordinarily understood" (TD 23, 24). That is to say, "her mother did not see life as Tess saw it" (TD 246).

Tess had modern outlook and independent spirit, which are not real virtues from the Victorian point of view. She continuously shows that she has the courage to dream and reinvent herself. Her determined outlook is clearly shown when she says: "If there is such a lady, it would be enough for us if she were friendly - not to expect her to give us help . . . I'd rather try to get work" (TD 39, 40). Hardy brings up her progressive feelings and plans many times while also showing how desperately helpless she is, because of the cultural backwardness and lack of opportunity surrounding her. "She had hoped to be a teacher at the school, but the fates seemed to decide otherwise" (TD 55).

Unlike some critics' views, who claim that Hardy never mentions Tess's feelings during the novel, in some parts Tess's feelings and emotions towards the situations are

clearly felt by the readers. He makes Tess's feelings known to the readers by showing constantly how guilty she felt with her unwanted relationship with Alec, whom she never liked. She was raped and had to bear the indignity of having a child from Alec. As Ingham remarks, "her son, Sorrow, brings her nothing but pain" (129). Despite the child's death, she had been unable to forget the incident, especially throughout her marriage to Angel. Hardy takes us very close to the ache in her heart.

He also shows us the sympathetic attitude of the villagers of Martlott who do not insult her and her child. Their attitude is in a way was Hardy's hope that the society would be more tolerant and less censorious. Tess's guilt does not go away and she thinks that she has let down the community, nature and herself. It is clearly felt that "Nobody blamed Tess as she blamed herself" (131). Nevertheless, she has the courage to struggle with obstacles and to find some solutions. She does not want her life to stop there. While walking on the hills, we are told: "She looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference . . . She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly" (TD 108). It sounds as though Tess was a heroine of today and the years that separated Tess and modern times did not exist at all.

Hardy tells us that her sensations are very different from the conventional way in which she was brought up, because despite of her traditional background and less education, somehow Tess has managed to remain modern in her outlook. As an example of a modern woman, she has a great ability to express her thoughts freely. Tess shows her ways of thinking clearly to Alec and Angel in many times. For example; when Alec compares her with the other women, she says: "My God! I could knock you out of the gig! Did it never strike your mind that what every woman says some women may feel?" (92). This kind of spirited answer was not usually heard by Victorian readership and Hardy has

made genuine inroads into the Victorian morality with this book. The work remains Hardy's criticism of many shortcomings of his society. As Carpenter claims "*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is a frontal attack on some of the bastions of Victorian mores" (127).

Through Tess, Hardy seems to be bringing natural goodness and justice to society. He knew that the rigid values should go to have more sympathy on fellow creatures. Tess also represents Hardy's challenge to the Victorian society, especially about her child's baptism and later, burial. It is very difficult for the readers not to feel for Tess and that is what exactly Hardy wants to happen. Here, Hardy is posing a straight challenge to the rigid and heartless morality of the society. "If Providence would not ratify such an act of approximation she, for one, did not value the kind of heaven lost by the irregularity " (TD 120).

Many characters led by Tess are breaking away from unfeeling conventions and superstitions. There are some rare psychological insights about the hard morality and regression of the society when Tess says: "It is in your own mind what you are angry at Angel; it is not in me" (TD 296). Even though Angel comes from a higher background and posed as an intellectual throughout the novel, it is easy to make out that Tess is the one with progressive outlook whereas Angel with all the external posing and nobility, is weak and conventional. He is a "slave to custom and conventionality" (TD 338), and Tess, with backward upbringing and not much of education is actually modern and courageous. Angel returns after one year and during that period, "he had mentally aged a dozen years" (TD 433) with the internal struggle between modern pose and traditional mindset.

In addition, she is pragmatic and can read reality. She knows that happiness with Angel is an illusion, despite her loving him so much . She knew that he is neither noble, nor strong while she has the strength to accept him as he really is. " I am almost glad - yes, glad! This happiness could not have lasted. It was too much. I have had enough; and now I

shall not live for you to despise me!" (TD 505). These are sad lines, but Hardy knew their impact. His Tess was something like a modern psychologist, placed in the Victorian era and this shows how the novel does not get outdated even today. As many critics pointed out, perhaps there was an influence of the reigning queen with a strong feminist individuality.

This does not mean that the Victorian ways are totally defied. However, Tess has brought in the defiance in a subtle way. "The stories Hardy and Oliphant tell in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Phoebe Junior* reveal both authors to be, perhaps because of their own marginal professional and social status, passionate critics of the gestures of exclusion that prevented members of the working and lower-middle classes from joining the ranks of the intellectual middle classes" (Michie 306). Within the framework of Victorian society, Hardy posed clear rebellion in the form of Tess.

3.3. Double Standard of Morality

Thomas Hardy brings up many double standards of morality in his *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as prevalent in the Victorian society of the day. The first double standard that hits the eye in the novel is the sexual double standard, holding sex as the yardstick of morality. In fact, this situation was not done only in the Victorian society, but in most of the modern societies, too. Victorians had excess of it compared to today's British society, but not compared to today's societies, who still hold the same, rather outdated point of view.

"Another important theme of the novel is the sexual double standard to which Tess falls victim…. Hardy clearly means to criticize Victorian notions of female purity, the double standard also makes the heroine's tragedy possible, and thus serves as a mechanism of Tess's broader fate" (Hui-Zhen 70). Hardy himself, keeping with the customs of the time, had to plan a tragic death for Tess for having ignored the moral dictums. It is possible

that he was trying to please the Victorian readers by creating such a horrible tragedy in which his pure heroine suffers too much.

As mentioned many times throughout the paper, Tess was a very well-endowed female who had beauty, intelligence and capability. Even though, "in the sight of the world, she stood condemned; she was a fallen woman, a kept mistress, and finally a murderess", for Hardy "she was pure of heart" (Pinion 47). Hardy takes exceptional care of Tess and really invests in her character. There is no doubt that in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy was supposed to be very fond of his character, Tess, better than his other heroines. He called the book initially, *A Pure Woman* and even after he changed the title, it still remains her book and entirely about her. "Hardy's willingness to confront prudish hypocrisy is also apparent in the fact that, when making his final pre- publication revisions, he added the subtitle '*A Pure Woman, Faithfully Presented by Thomas Hardy*'" (McEathron 2). In other words, by subtitling, he aimed to "issue a deliberately provocative challenge to conventional notions of purity" (Cunningham 18).

However, she had to suffer owing to the double standards of the society and Hardy, due to societal compulsions, could not depict her in any other way. Therefore, a totally successful heroine, in spite of her 'sins' would have been suicidal for him. The sexual respectability designed for the Victorian female could not be taken lightly even by a writer of Hardy's stature. By killing Alec and making herself a candidate for hanging, Tess becomes self-destructive, almost as a penance for her past deeds mainly to satisfy the 'moral' readership. "Now punish me! . . . Whip me, crush me. . . . I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim: that's the law" (TD 423), she tells Alec, as though she wants the tragedy to take place. She fights against the double standard of the society for a long time and at the end of it all, she is almost resigned to it.

It has always been accepted that Hardy wanted a societal change and was unhappy with the society in which he found himself and hated its hypocrisy especially against the women and the sexual oppression.

> There is widespread agreement that Hardy earnestly wished, through his portrayal of Tess, to complicate and enlarge people's notions of 'purity', especially though not exclusively, in relation to 'womanhood' and that he also wanted readers to engage with the narrative processes by which an imaginary individual might be 'faithfully presented.' (McEathron 2).

As a prolific thinker, Hardy was aware of the suppression, unhappiness and compulsions in the society that were loaded against the women of Victorian era. Victorian men had all the freedom and women were allowed to live in the kingdom of men without any actual authority of their own. At the same time, they were not answerable to any of the immorality they indulged too often and society thought it was their right to be so, because they were men. "Victorian men monopolised political, military, legislative, economic, medical, religious and educational authority….But in the private sphere the moral actions of men had less value" (Kern 20).

Tess of the d'Urbervilles could be considered as a social document, showing the final and sad division of the English pleasant class which has been subjected to double standards of morality as a whole. Tess was the product of its times, showing the sexual and moral compulsions of gender, religion and class and had to suffer for societal outlook. As Cunningham argues, "Tess herself is unique among Hardy's heroines in being quite clearly the victim of men's cruelty" (97).

From the beginning, Tess feels the compulsion of responsibilities because of the family who were variously dependent on her in many ways. The poverty and the limited scope makes her a victim of Alec and the readers get a feeling that if the family

compulsions were not existent, perhaps she would have had a better choice under the limited circumstances. Her moral integrity and kindness towards her family is definitely an admirable trait. Moreover, she has a moral price and self-righteousness and this comes to the centre when Angel rejects her. Instead of giving way to feminine type of sorrows and submission, she faced the situation proudly. " Pride, too, entered into her submission - which perhaps was a symptom of that reckless acquiescence in chance too apparent in the whole d'Urberville family." (TD 324)

She fights against the double standards in social, natural, emotional, economic and financial arena of the English society. Some of the double standards are due to poverty that could be located to their own doing. Tess has a superstitious mother, who makes home decisions depending on some printed prophecy and the father was a terrible drunkard with irresponsible habits. None of the family members helps her support the family financially. As Carpenter argues, "the constant need for steady income to support the family later takes Tess far away from home, and turns her into an itinerant farm laborer" (127).

Another double standard comes in the form of Angel, who does not believe that he was conventional, although he was clearly so. Angel, feeling society's pressure on himself, forces Tess to return to her parents. He thinks that she is "spotless" before their wedding (TD 337), and after knowing the truth, she looked absolutely different to him, "a species of imposter; a guilty woman in the guise of an innocent one" (TD 293).

In fact, the couple seems to be almost equal as Angel had previously confessed a similar past sexual experience. That is to say, his affair with the woman in London is obviously a parallel to Tess's relationship with Alec. However, once again, "the cruelty of the moral code which condemns the innocent" is clearly felt in this novel. Thus, "the double standard enables Angel to palliate his own sins while condemning Tess" (Carpenter 126). Although the situation is almost the same, because of the gender bias in this rigid

Victorian society, women are the ones who are accused and condemned. As Cunningham suggests, "in Angel's case, because he is a man, the triviality is obvious" (100). On the other hand, there is another idea which shows that Hardy doesn't argue the general unfairness of the double moral standard. Therefore, he constructs the circumstances of Clare's sexual past and the movement towards the twin confession on the wedding night as to make Angel seem positively diabolic in his injustice. (Cunningham 100)

His only saving grace is the last scene where his real love for Tess comes out despite his conventional double standards. "his horror at her impulse was mixed with amazement at the strength of her affection for himself; and at the strangeness of its quality, which had apparently extinguished her moral sense altogether. . . . As well as his confused and excited ideas could reason, he supposed that . . . her mind has lost its balance, and plunged her into this abyss," (TD 492). Unfortunately, it was of no use to Tess now, and somehow Angel remains a coward to the reader, while Tess becomes the rightful heroine, who, in the blindness of her love for Angel, commits murder and gets hanged for it. The double standards that existed in the society must have been gratified by the tragic end.

City versus Country

" 'Country' and 'city' are very powerful words" (Williams 1). The city in Williams' words, is portrayed as "a place of noise, worldliness and ambition"; whereas the country is perceived as "a place of backwardness, ignorance and limitation" (Williams 1). Hardy, in order to examine this struggle between the city and the country, he, first of all, presents the country and then tries to examine its connections with the city. Since he mainly portrays the nature itself, he likes illustrating the lives of people from the country. Therefore, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is opened with various descriptions of the country. It is the great success of Hardy to paint a vivid picture of the scenery. In order to show that he

is also part of the community, he makes a great effort to give his reading public this observable picture.

In the first instance, the plot of the novel refers to the plain world that Hardy portrays as background to the lives of his main characters. In this respect, there is a sense of reality which is vital to the novel. It is the "reality of the physical world in which a human being without God finds meaning and definition" (Brooks 264). That is to say, this is a world of unfairness and tragedy, where nature and society are not controlled or ordered by God, but seem rather to be a cruel play of fate and unjust societal discrimination. The background to the plot and the social milieu suggests, "…the bleak impersonal world of ancient folk-ballads…" (LaValley 5). Since nature, playing "a larger part" in Hardy's books, is depicted as cruel and without sympathy (Cecil 23), he shows Tess as the "helpless victim not only of society but also of principalities and powers for which no human agency can be held responsible" (Carpenter 128).

Throughout the novel, there seems a constant fight between the country and the city. They are presented by Hardy as if they are the representatives of two different worlds. The city tries hard to make country people leave their fields. In fact, these people aren't totally attracted by the city. However, most of them are forced to leave their countries by the rigid Victorian society.

There is no doubt that Angel is a good representative of the country in the novel. He intends to be an agriculturist, working in the fields under the conventional rural traditions. He feels confident in the country and doesn't feel like having an academic career. Similarly, Tess perceives the city as an enemy that she can't beat. That's why she hesitates to go to the city, thinking that the city life could destroy her. However, in order to escape society's judgmental attitudes, she has to leave the country. That is to say, she only goes to the city when overwhelmed by Alec and by the society. When Angel returns, she

foresees the possibility of a peaceful life with him in the country. When she kills Alec, in a way she thinks that she kills the city, as well. As she is portrayed as a country girl, she cannot belong to the city life. Thus, her return to Angel could be considered as her return to the country.

3.4. Sexual Politics and Sexual Construction

"*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* appeared to its first readers as not only the most strongly argued of Hardy's novels, but also the most outspoken in its treatment of sexuality" (Cunningham 103). An analysis of the character of Tess reveals the sexual politics of the time. This area of discourse is discussed in an analysis by John Goode. This refers to the way that Tess's identity is 'constructed.'

> Goode argues that the trajectory of the novel is one in which Tess is 'selected' out of a sociologically dense and detailed setting (the novel's initial discourse, which emphasizes the relations of production), is subsequently installed by both narrator and male characters as a representative icon of 'nature' and 'sexuality,' and is eventually returned forcibly to the now even more graphically-realized anthropological, social setting of labor. (Law 249)

This is a particularly materialist reading of the text, but it serves to show how the novel and the character of Tess can be seen as part of the politics of sexuality that exists in a male-oriented society. In other words, the novel from this perspective is interpreted in terms of class and the classic Marxist conflict between labor and production. Women are a 'product' of the system and trapped within the ideological constructs of male-capitalistic society.

From this perspective in essence Tess becomes an 'object' in the social and cultural expression of Victorian mores and norms. As Pinion remarks, she is "much more the victim of circumstances" and therefore "she never fully succeeds in becoming a subject

rather than an object" (47). In this view sexual politics are a part of class conflict and the two are inseparable in this analysis of the character of Tess.

> Goode's argument, finally, is that although subjective identity (in this case, Tess's sexuality) cannot be represented, the politics of personal identity (in this case, sexual politics) can be; to this Goode adds the proviso that sexual politics must eventually be seen as inextricable from class politics. While the advantage of this formulation is that it allows for a dialectical relationship between gender and class analysis… (Law 249)

However, the results of an analysis of character that emphasizes social structure over gender is that, "…Goode's sees sexuality as an ideology produced within class" (Law 249). Thus, while this theoretical stance is more directed towards class rather then gender, it is an analysis that can be applied and help us understand the way that Tess is 'constructed' by the society. Furthermore, the fact that she is raped reflects the double standards of a society which ideologizes one view of womanhood as 'pure' but allows this purity to be defiled with very little justice or to any real protection from abuse.

Notwithstanding a social and materialistic analysis, many critics feel that a comprehensive reading of Tess and her development should include more than only an analysis of the structure of the society and should also search thoroughly the other facets of sexual politics and prejudice that exist in the novel in detail.

The sexual dimension in Tess's life is suggested from the very beginning of the novel and its introduction is one that is complex and reveals much about her character and the way in which women are perceived in the society. Tess sees this sexual identity as a form of 'social coercion' and she is contrasted to the open sexuality and sensuality of the dairy maids at the start of the novel (Law 251). She is described at the start of the novel as follows; "Tess at this time of her life as a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by

experience" (TD 13). Her innocence is contrasted with the suggestions of sensuality and in the dancing of the people around her.

At the same time, "since it is the intimate life of feminine sensations, that Hardy devotes his time and attention in this novel" (Morgan 91), she is described with obviously sensual terms by the narrator. That is to say, Hardy doesn't hesitate to stress Tess's sexuality and there is no doubt that "her sexual allure is something that all the men in the text, Alex, Angel and the narrator, respond to" (Ingham 126).

> The pouted-up deep red mouth to which this syllable was native had hardly as yet settled into its definite shape, and her lower lip had a way of thrusting the middle of her top one upward, when they closed together after a word… As she walked along to-day, for all her bouncing handsome womanliness, you could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks (TD 13).

As the above description of Tess shows, there is certainly no desire on Hardy's part to reduce the character of Tess to a mere sequence of sensations; rather he would seem to "have aimed at a character susceptible to the full force of natural instinct, social coercion and personal values" (Sankey 36). He allows for the full expression of Tess's surging psycho-erotic drives and Tess utters herself sensuously, self-expressively-by word and by gesture, actively (Morgan 91).

Therefore her description is a combination of internal innocence and outward sensuality, which sets the scene for the exploration of the sexual politics of the time. In one sense her denial or refusal to accept the social connotations of her sexuality is possibly a reflection of Victorian norms and mores equating sexuality with the lower aspects of life. As Ingham states, "Tess feels shame over her sexual attractions. The men in the text, Alec, Angel and the narrator, may relish her voluptuous appearance but Tess has accepted society's standards of femininity" (130). Thus, the virtuous 'pure' woman in an

ideal Victorian context denies her own sexuality. In feminist terms, this can be interpreted as the ideals and values that are created by the male dominated world about female sexuality that are imposed on women. Law refers to this aspect as the "…willed amnesia to the gendered history of the body" (251). There is a clear irony in the fact that Tess is socially required to maintain her purity - a concept that is imposed by the male society and it is the male society that does not adequately condemn her rape.

An extremely important aspect of the sexual politics in the novel is the issue of the objectification of the female. This is a primary feminist criticism of a patriarchal society and refers to the de-individualization of the female and the loss of identity and the sense of unique humanity that transcends gender categories and opposites. It is possibly this point of transcendence or escape for the categories of gender that Hardy is working towards in his story about the development of a young woman in a restrictive and gender-biased society. Tess, in fact succeeds in struggling with the prejudice of that society to a great extent and Hardy makes it clear that she goes a long way in achieving her own sense of identity in her refusal to be reduced to an object that exists only in the male gaze. This point in Hardy's novels is extremely important and will be further developed in the section on *Jude the Obscure*.

Hardy's intentions in the creation of Tess are evidenced by the way that he shows her rejection of the narrow mores and norms of Victorian society. The objectification of the body and the reduction of the female to an object of sexual desire is something that appalls Tess from the very beginning and she rejects the male oriented version of her own sexual being. As Law states,

> Tess responds initially to the sexualization of her body by asserting herself as a political subject, and by interpreting the oppressions and vicissitudes of her life in material and class terms (as we shall see, she is less metaphysician or child

> of the soil than poetic social critic when she tells her brother Abraham -- prior to her sexual exploitation -- that they live on a "blighted world," and that the sign of this is the disfiguring labor her parents are obliged to undertake … (252)

In other words, feminist critics see this rejection of the society as in actual fact referring to the rejection of a male-oriented world and the norms and values central to that world. In essence Tess rejects a world that would determine what and who she is. Although Tess doesn't fulfill a type of woman who is trying to free herself from the classical conception of woman in the Victorian era, she is considered as a strong character whose actions are viewed as acceptable by the readers. She grows in determination and strength and is able to confront anything whatever befalls her. In spite of having so many hardships, she refuses to succumb to despair. She is such a "powerful woman who always believes in herself " (Jekel 161).

However, this world of male dominance is literally forced on her in the rape. This male abuse of the innocence of the young girls is subtly conveyed by Hardy in various scenes and suggestions that precede the actual rape. For example, the subtle but obvious male imposition on Tess's individuality is clearly evident in the scene when Alec insists that she eat a strawberry. He tempts Tess by offering her strawberries, "much as Satan offers Eve an apple" (Butler101).

> "They are already here." D'Urberville began gathering specimens of the fruit for her, handing them back to her as he stooped: and presently selecting a specially fine product of the "British Queen" variety he stood up and held it by the stem to her mouth.

"No, no!" she said quickly, putting her fingers between his hand and her lips. "I would rather take it in my own hand."

"Nonsense!" he insisted; and in a slight distress she parted her lips and took it in. (TD 46, 47).

In this passage, Hardy carefully constructs the actions and dialogue to show not only the awkward innocence of the young girls, but also the merciless and knowing insistence of the man. It is this reduction of the female to an object of desire and the neglect of her feelings, innocence and individuality that is one of the central facets of this novel as an accusation of male dominance and a male-centered society. This dialogue is also important as it hides an important clue for the next events between Tess and Alec. "When Alec forces a ripe strawberry between her lips, the scene is clearly proleptic of the later rape/seduction episode" (Ingham 126).

Critics suggest that after the exploitation and abuse of her body Tess rejects her own innate sexuality and there is a psychological ".... split between self and body" (Meisel 129). In other words, Hardy shows through the effect of the rape on Tess how the society not only abuses women physically but also creates an unnatural psychological divide in her psyche.

The description of the rape is expressed in metaphorical terms and in a language that hides the awesomeness of the action. However, Hardy's description also hints at the larger implications of the rape and his language suggests the feeling of innocence much more effectively than would have been the case with a description in purely physical terms.

Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the

> man, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order. (TD 91)

There is a tone of deep sadness rather than anger in the above passage. The innocence of the young girl is described as “feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer” and the actual rape is compared metaphorically to that “coarse pattern”. This is also significant in terms of the feminist judgment of the text, as the word “pattern” refers to a pattern of human and female abuse that has been occurring throughout history.

Therefore, the rape of Tess is seen not only as the rape of a single and passive girl but also as the representative of a wider and historical discrimination of the female sex in society. This female abuse is reflected more tragically by what Hardy describes as its ‘inevitability.’ As Tess's own people are never tired of saying among each other in their fatalistic way: “It was to be” (TD 91).

Hardy continues and comments on the impact that this single event will have on the young girl. He tries to show the rape’s impact on Tess by continuing to comment on that event saying, “There lay the pity of it. An immeasurable social chasm was to divide our heroine's personality thereafter from that previous self of hers who stepped from her mother's door to try her fortune at Trantridge poultry-farm” (TD 91). It is also significant that Hardy notes that the effect will have ‘social’ consequences and this obviously implies the social disgrace that will be attached to the young woman – even though the fault was not her own. The division of mind and body that results in Tess’s psyche as a consequence of the rape is also effectively described, for example in her fantasizing about leaving her body.

> “I don't--know about ghosts,” she was saying. “But I do know that our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive.” …”A very easy way to feel 'em go,” continued Tess, “is to lie on the grass at night, and look straight

> up at some big bright star; and by fixing your mind upon it you will soon find that you are hundreds and hundreds o' miles away from your body, which you don't seem to want at all." (TD 154, 155).

Furthermore, Tess is also under the influence of the norms and values of the Victorian society and blames herself for the birth of a child as a result of the rape.

> Tess had drifted into a frame of mind which accepted passively the consideration that, if she should have to burn for what she had done, burn she must, and there was an end of it. Like all village girls she was well grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and had dutifully studied the histories of Aholah and Aholibah, and knew the inferences to be drawn therefrom. But when the same question arose with regard to the baby it had a very different colour. Her darling was about to die, and no salvation. (TD117).

The above extract shows how the society that informs the values of the culture in the form of the Christian Church, serves to show the way in which the consciousness of the young girl is structured. That is to say, Tess's predicament is shaped by the norms of the society. Hardy skillfully manipulates the writing so that the reader is aware of the awful irony that although she is the innocent one in the affair, Tess feels that "…if she should have to burn for what she had done, burn she must, …" The male-centered society has imposed a sense of guilt onto Tess which is obviously out of phase with the reality of the situation. As Butler suggests "she is bitterly ready to assume guilt where the blame is not really hers, and capable of wishing that she had not been born" (106).

Law elaborates on this aspect examining the way that the acts of violent sexual abuse on a character like Tess impacts on her sense of self and her female identity. Her body becomes "… the object to which random events happen, and upon which random acts of violence and domination are inscribed -- her real self remains beyond" (252).

The topic of the sexual construction of the female is extended further in much of the feminist analysis of Hardy's novels and particularly in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.* Boumelha argues that Hardy attempts to employ an "androgynous mode of narration, which has as its project to present woman, 'pure woman', as known from within and without, explicated and rendered transparent" (Harvey 184). However in her analysis of the various binary oppositions and contradictions in the text, Boumelha comes to the conclusion that the real tragedy of the main character lies in the lack of a secure identity. In Boumelha's terms Tess cannot be properly 'placed'.

> By deconstructing the text's gender-based binary oppositions in their historical and social contexts, Boumelha exposes Tess's tragedy as hingeing on the way she is 'constructed as an instance of the natural', structured by the 'ideological elision of woman, sex and nature' (Boumelha 1982:123). Fundamentally, Boumelha concludes, Tess of the d'Urbervilles represents Hardy's recognition of the limits of his project of simultaneously presenting Tess's experiences and gaining an understanding of her female identity.
>
> (Harvey 184)

This is a very significant insight into the novel. It suggests that the central to all sexism and the abuse of women in society is the denial of identity. By identity, it is not meant only the social or ideological identity that is created and forced on the women in society but rather the true individual identity that is not dependent on the categorizations and the preconceptions of a male orientated world view. Critics like Boumelha explore this area of feminist discourse and deconstruct the way in which society imposes an identity on the female, and at the same time denying the woman's natural individuality.

In terms of the character of Tess this construction of identity is severely criticized and explored in the novel. Tess is unfairly treated and her identity is constantly

undermined by the male view and stereotypes around her. An example of this is the way that Angel reacts when he finds out about her past. He rejects her not because of anything essentially wrong in her as a person but because of the larger more invasive construction of her character by the society and the conservative norms of the Victorian era. In other words, "he is too blinded by his prejudices to see the reality.. her fundamental purity and innocence; instead he allows himself to be controlled by his barren notions" (Carpenter 130). In this sense a case could also be made for the way in which Angel himself is also 'constructed' and in a way 'perverted' by the male construction and ideology that the society imposes. The following passage deals with Angel's response to the revelation of Tess's past.

> "But you do not forgive me?"
>
> "O Tess, forgiveness does not apply to the case. You were one person: now you are another. My God--how can forgiveness meet such a grotesque--prestidigitation as that!"
>
> He paused, contemplating this definition; then suddenly broke into horrible laughter--as unnatural and ghastly as a laugh in hell.
>
> "Don't--don't! It kills me quite, that!" she shrieked. "O have mercy upon me--have mercy!" (TD 226)

The above passage is enlightening for a number of reasons. First, is the way in which Angel changes his view of Tess as a result of social norms. Even more enlightening are the words he uses, "You were one person: now you are another." This seems to suggest that Tess's identity and her very nature has changed. In fact she has not changed at all but the revelation of her past changes her identity for Angel. This analysis therefore aligns with the feminist critics that the female characters in Hardy's novels have no stable

identity; but rather that their identity is determined by the social norms and unwritten laws of the 'male gaze.'

In this light, the novel has also been analyzed in terms of the larger social dogmas and conceptions of gender that influence the individual. For example, LaValley describes the way in which Hardy exposes the dogmatic views and ideas in the society that destroy individual lives.

> Within Tess of the d'Urbervilles is a deeply sustained mistrust, not merely of particular dogmatisms but all dogmatism. All was of thinking that gives abstract ideals or principles – whether religious or social – a priority over the actual needs of specific human situations. (21)

This view is significant in that it places the feminist view and the analysis of the novel in line with a larger criticism of other aspects of the society of the time. It implies that not only are women affected by the ideologies and false dogmas of the society but that all such dogmas prevent individuals of both genders from expressing their true nature and feelings. LaValley goes on to show how the dogmatic views of gender and relationships affect our view of Tess and her relationships. "Thus Hardy comments that Angel's mistake has been that of …allowing himself to be influenced by general principles to the disregard of the particular instance" (21).

In essence this remark made by LaValley points to a larger framework within which the analysis of the novel should be considered; namely the analysis and critique of human society and the human condition in general. This is an aspect that will be further discussed in *Jude the Obscure*.

One of the most effective analysis of the above passage and Angel's reaction to the revelation of Tess's past comes not from formal contemporary feminist discourse but rather from the modernist writer, D.H. Lawrence. The following extract from an article

written by Lawrence entitled *Tess and Alec as Aristocrats* captures the essence of the restrictive Victorian world view.

> It is not Angel Clare's fault the he cannot come to Tess when he finds that she has, in his words, been defiled. It is the result of generations of Ultra-Christian training, which had left in him an inherent aversion to the female, and to all in himself which pertained to the female. (71)

Lawrence's view emphasizes the way in which the individuals, both male and female, are conditioned and constructed to react according to the ideological master narratives that underlie the culture. Lawrence continues to present his view of the way that the female identity is constructed and mispresented with reference to the novel.

> What he, in his Christian sense, conceived of as Woman, was only the servant and attendant and administering spirit to the male. He had no idea that there was such a thing as positive Woman, as the Female, another great living Principle overbalancing his own male principle. He conceived of the world as consisting of the One, the Male Principle. (71)

Lawrence is suggesting a central concept that is vital to the understanding of the novel from a feminist point of view and social commentary. The male, through the example of Angel, is unaware or unable to understand the reality of the female; of the woman as a separate and independent entity. Angel and other men in the Victorian surroundings of Hardy's novels have been indoctrinated into the view that it is only the male or the masculine principle in life that is of significance. This view will also become clearer with the emergence of the 'new woman' in *Jude the Obscure*.

3.5. The Development of Tess and the Fight Against 'Male Gaze'

A number of feminist critics have noted that Hardy's female characters show resilience and tend to 'fight back' against the imposition of the male gaze and the unfairness of a male - centric world view. This applies particularly to the later development of Tess. "Tess is young and resilient; and Hardy's purpose is to demonstrate the natural power of a healthy young person to recover from a painful experience" (Sankey 14). While the abuse and rape has severely affected her centre of self, she continues to develop as a person in spite of the abuses of the society. As Law states, there is a stage after the rape where she develops another identity that is not linked to or dependent on the laws and norms of the society.

> But there is a phase beyond this as well, for Tess sporadically reappropriates her body in the mode of a pseudo-biologized romantic instinctualism: her body is natural and is hers -- a source of vitality, regeneration, and pleasure, which does not acknowledge social law or its inscriptions. We might say that this is a non-gendered body, except that it is an attitude she is forced to adopt in response to the social fate of her gendered body (252).

This section will attempt to analyze the various developmental aspects of the character of Tess in the light of feminist criticism.

The analysis of the text in terms of binary oppositions is an area that is explored by many feminist critics; for example studies of the various oppositions that are evident in the construction of gender; such as social law vs. natural law, body vs. mind, experience vs. reason, reason vs. emotion, antiquity vs. modernity etc. (Law 252). This method of analysis tends to find that the female figures in the text, and Tess in particular, are constituted by and a product of the various forces and ideologies as well as male attitudes which shape the body and mind of the main characters. It is this shaping and this tendency

to dominate and to create in the form of male-centric and logocentric society that is the real struggle in this book and in the real development of Tess from a feminist point of view.

This view is extended in an article by Grossman entitled Hardy's *"Tess" and "The Photograph": Images To Die For* (1993). Grossman states that "In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy repeatedly shifts between fixing the image of Tess as a particular object of male vision and permitting her to defy the male gaze by escaping into an all-powerful incorporeal conception of femininity" (Grossman 442). This is an extremely important insight in terms of the present analysis and the central thesis of this study.

In essence what Grossman is saying is that there is a struggle and a dichotomy in the novel. From a feminist perspective, this is analyzed in the first instance as the male oppression and objectification of the female or the male gaze which situates and determines the identity of the female in the society. In the novel, Tess is described as sensuous and pretty and she is situated or objectified according to the desire and needs of the male-oriented society. This refers to her "mobile peony mouth" and "ever-varying pupils, with their radiating fibrils of blue, and black, and grey, and violet" (TD 20).

On the other hand, the novel explores the struggle that Tess undergoes in the effort to establish her own identity that exists outside or is transcendent of the disapprovals and categories of society. For instance; "Tess's leaving Alec is an 'eminently modern idea' - of a woman's not becoming the chattel and slave of her seducer" (Meisel 124). In this sense she is searching for freedom beyond the parameters of gender. This is what Grossman refers to as the author's attempt in "…permitting her to defy the male gaze by escaping into an all-powerful incorporeal conception of femininity" (442). However, Tess feels the "ache of modernism" throughout the novel. Her main hope as Hardy makes clear is "to enter a world where her sensitivity and intelligence would mean something; but her past has disqualified her for that world" (Sankey 36).

These two aspects - the objectification of the female as an object of manipulation and sexuality and the related desire of the woman to escape from these rigid classifications are at the centre of the feminist view of the novel. This also adds to a reading of the text that sees the need for an analysis of erotic desire and the dominance of the male gaze in determining the nature of womanhood. As Mitchell states;

> Tess's "mobile peony mouth" and "ever-varying pupils, with their radiating fibrils of blue, and black, and grey, and violet" are repeatedly displayed in all their beauty, at once objectifying Tess and creating one of the most obvious erotic effects of the novel. Tess is delectable to look at, and it is the male narrator who focuses the zoom lens, so that the look of desire, unfiltered through the point of view of a male protagonist, falls on her with a peculiarly relentless scopophilic intensity. (188)

There are numerous examples from the text that further support this view. For example; Angel sees Tess,

> …yawning, and he saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake's. She had stretched one arm so high above her coiled-up cable of hair that he could see its satin delicacy above the sunburn; her face was flushed with sleep, and her eyelids hung heavy over their pupils. (TD 217)

This again emphasizes the image of desire. However what is noteworthy is the fact that this is only a view and interpretation of the female from the male perspective only.

Feminist critics also claim that what is missing for Hardy's treatment of Tess is her 'interiority.'

> …what disappears most emphatically in Tess is Tess. . Tess's being . .disappears into form; put another way, her being is never more than the formulations of others and of herself. Others objectify her by separating her

> into parts, only to submit these parts to a curious blurring process and then to eroticise this blur as a wonderfully malleable or chameleon image. Tess takes on any shape for those she meets, but it is a conveniently empty shape, ready to be filled in and then longed for…(Mitchell 190)

In this analysis it is this absence of identity that is the most noticeable characteristic of the character. However, the novel is also about Tess's resilience and her attempts to develop and re-establish her own identity. It could be argued that the real reason for the killing of Alec D'Urberville is a final attempt on the part of Tess to assert her identity in the face of persistent male dominance on construction of her being. Tess doesn't hesitate to fight against the injustices of the male society to retain some sense of identity and selfhood.

As a consequence, after having examined the novel in different aspects, one can say that the novel clearly indicate Hardy's ideas, radicalism, humanity and sympathy for Victorian women who were bound by outdated moral values and lived within the domain created and dictated by men. As Middleton asserts, "*Tess* was also Hardy's response to the contemporary debate about women and sexual knowledge and ideals of purity; its subtitle, '*A Pure Woman'* – was a deliberate provocation to readers and critics, and a clear, and a clear signal that the novel was an expression of Hardy's disdain of conventional sexual morality" (60).

Hardy defended Tess and did not appreciate negative criticism of the character. He thought it was high time that Tess was received by her readers with sensitivity and understanding. Hardy, being a passionate thinker, knew that Tess would change the thinking of the later Victorian readership and would create compassion in their minds. It is very important to note that Hardy showed the necessity of modern thought in the English society of later Victorian days through Tess. Tess is a free thinker, modern woman, caught

helplessly by the Victorian values and the rigid dogmas and in the end, she finds a way out, without succumbing to conventional death in life, which would have been an anti-climax. Hardy shows his and her feelings and both their progressive outlooks throughout the novel. However, at the same time, he tries to please his readers without alienating them. Therefore, he doesn't avoid expressing his views about Christianity known in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* when he says: "The last grotesque phase of a creed which had served mankind well in its time (TD 115).

CHAPTER IV: FEMINIST CRITICISM OF *JUDE THE OBSCURE*

4.1. Introduction and Overview

In many ways this novel is an extension and a development, from a feminist point of view, of the issues and the problematics that were broached in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.* The foundational aspect and central theme of *Jude the Obscure* is the modern world and the change from a natural to an industrialized and contemporary environment. The essential difference between this novel and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is the societal and cultural context. In *Jude the Obscure* the old world of nature and the traditional rural culture has largely disappeared. In its place is the modern industrial world. Cities replace villages and there is a "demise of the 'old Gods' of the culture" (Pinion 167).

This movement in Hardy's work from the traditional rural settings is an extremely important development; not only in terms of its significance in relation to the growth of Hardy's literary oeuvre as a whole, but also for the interpretation and understanding of his work from a feminist perspective. In this respect, one of the central arguments that is being explored in this part is modernism and the setting of the industrial city, in the feminist sense, is seen as the natural outcome of a male centered, patriarchal, scientific and rational approach to life. Therefore, from a feminist perspective the world in which Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead survive and in which their children die so terribly, is one that is a result of the views and attitudes that have been created by a male-oriented society.

Another central argument that is being clearly presented in this part is the New Woman issue. "*Jude the Obscure* was widely received as an addition to the New Woman fiction, and Sue emerges as a curious hybrid, part contemporary feminist, and part the traditional Hardy heroine" (Cunningham 103).

Jude the Obscure initiates the modern novel with its ambitious working- class hero and its neurotic heroine; city life in the back streets; the problems of adaptation to a rapidly

changing world; of commercial and material values; of sexual and social maladjustment of the 'abnormal' variation from the species. "It foreshadows the modern themes of failure, frustration and futility, disharmony, isolation, rootlessness, and absurdity as inescapable conditions of life" (Brooks 254).

The novel centered on Jude's defeat in academic society because of his working class background and Sue's suffering from prejudice against the second sex. Furthermore, this novel mainly deals with Jude and Sue and their changing marital relationships as they both went through defeat in life. "Jude's academic struggles were eventually to form a secondary theme in the novel....Hardy decides to change his course and make the marriage and divorce questions the main theme" (Pinion 52). In this respect, *Jude the Obscure*, was not only a tragedy of the New Woman, but a 'tragedy of unfulfilled aims' as Hardy put it in his preface to the book. Both Jude and Sue were caught up in this modern spirit of restlessness, and they suffered and overwhelmed in their struggle with the society.

The characters are also influenced and affected by the harsh modern world and to a large extent distorted and perverted by it. Both the central female characters, Arabella Donn and Sue Bridehead, are the result of the alienated society and the materialistic and decadent social milieu of late Victorian society. Both are "unnatural" in different ways and Jude is trapped between these figures. (Butler 120) The central focus of this section will be on an analysis of the two central female characters as they provide an extensive range for critical analysis from a feminist perspective.

The plot can be summarized as follows: Jude Fawley is a well-meaning and ambitious young man who is intent on studying at the University in Christminster. However, class and social structure intervene in his dreams and due to his background as a working-class orphan he becomes a stonemason. Jude falls in love with a sensual young

woman, Arabella, and he is manipulated into marrying her. The marriage eventually deteriorates and Arabella leaves for Australia.

After she has left, Jude decides to resume his dreams and ambitions of studying at the university. However, he is once again prevented for doing so. Jude then meets his cousin, Sue Bridehead. Sue is not happy in her marriage to Richard Phillotson and in her general situation. She leaves Phillotson to live with Jude. This results in both Jude and Sue getting divorced from their previous spouses. However, Sue does not want to marry Jude. This is also an indication of her independence and of her refusal to accept the norms of the Victorian society.

In the meantime, Arabella tells Jude that they have a son in Australia and Jude offers to take him in. Sue and Jude look after the boy and they have two children of their own. Their refusal to marry and defiance of the Victorian norms and values results in Jude not being accepted in Christminster and they have difficulty in finding accommodation due to their lack of martial status. Jude has to live separately from Sue and the children.

Tragedy strikes when the young boy has a notion that the family would be better off without the burden of the children. He hangs the other children and himself. This action results in a deep sense of guilt on the part of Sue. She sees the deaths of her children as a result of her transgression against social and religious propriety and feels that she is being 'punished' for her 'sins.' Sue goes back to live with Phillotson, and Jude is tricked into living with Arabella again. Jude dies at the end of the novel.

Similarly to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the plot of this novel is also uncomplicated and clear in its intention. The issue of societal norms and values and the way that these aspects impact on and affect the lives of the characters is central to the story. What is also of significance is that in this instance it is both male and female who are affected by the

rigidity of society and the way that people are 'constructed' by the norms and values of the culture.

Another central aspect that flows through the novel is the critique of the institution of marriage. The novel dealt with the inequality women suffered in marriage and the possible solution of free union as an alternative to conventional marriage. Free union as this novel suggests, is a means of accommodating sexual relations with fairness to both sexes and with a more permanent relationship.

However, the novel is much deeper philosophical and more critical of the society than a superficial reading would suggest. From a feminist perspective, the novel attacks and interrogates not only the way that the female identity is constructed and distorted by Victorian ideals and the 'male gaze' but also the way in which the male is affected and constructed. This novel therefore can be seen as a development of the themes of gender construction that are evident in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and relates to the way that both Angel and Tess are affected by the dominant mode of cultural perception of gender.

4.2. City versus Country - the male world divided from nature

Jude the Obscure is one of Hardy's most fatalistic and negative novels and has been described as grim and even depressing in its sense of the futile tragedy of life. Central to this view is the background of the loss of nature and the denial of traditional ways of life that features so strongly in many of the previous novels. As Drabble mentions, *Jude the Obscure* is a novel which deals "more with thought than with instinct, and more with the town than the country, there are very few rural scenes" (165).

The shift in Hardy's approach in general in this novel is seen in the fact that it is not nature that is cruel and inhuman as was the case in many other novels, but that society and culture now assumes this thematic role in *Jude the Obscure*. This leads to the important view which relates to the feminist analysis that has been mentioned, that human society has

become divided from nature; which in the view of the novel results in a malfunctioning of individuals of both gender in the society.

Jude's story is one of extreme failure and is a tale of immersion in an environment and in circumstances that seem to be continually hopeless. Jude Fawley is essentially a likable character and he is well -meaning and sympathetic to others. He is however caught within the drama of his involvement with the two main female characters.

On the one hand, he is attracted to Arabella whose attraction is based on her intense female sexuality. Hardy illustrates the meetings between Jude and Arabella with images of physical lust and desire to show the reader that their relationship is purely sexual. On the other hand, he is attracted to Sue Bridehead whose charm is based on her intellectual mind and therefore is a far more fair-minded and likeable women. It is this extreme difference and tension that creates the inner dynamics of the novel as well as providing the deeper thematic content as well. Stave clearly describes the differences between the two women saying, "one … is sexual but ultimately uses sexuality as a means of power, the other of whom is loftily idealistic but finally even more destructive than the blatantly sexual one" (123).

In order to understand this conflict in terms of the thematic connection of the novel, they have to be placed against the atmosphere and setting of the novel as a whole. This atmosphere is characterized by a tone of despair and a loss of energy, hope and faith. This is mainly due to the fact that; "the edenic world that informed the earlier novels--even that as grim as *The Woodlanders*--is absent…" (Stave 123). As Pinion remarks, in "*Jude the Obscure* both nature and civilization are harsh" (174). Stave clearly outlines the setting of the novel and environment and context in which the main characters act.

> The universe--and specifically, the earth and all its inhabitants--is no longer perceived as sacred. The mystical glimpses into the other world which the

> other novels offered have disappeared. The modern world has been achieved; the past is no longer within grasp and the bitterness evident in the narrative voice suggests that likely it never was. (123)

This is a radical and dramatic shift in atmosphere in Hardy's novels. While the tone and theme of pessimistic fatality has been present in all the main novels, in *Jude the Obscure* this tone and mood is more concentrated and is sustained by the descriptions of the surroundings and the lives and views of the characters.

A number or critics have referred to this shift in time and background in the novel. For example, Mary Jacobus points out how the world of *Jude the Obscure*, "…is more social and less natural than the world of any of the earlier novels… and cites Jude's nonagricultural profession and urban life as exemplifying that change" (Stave 123). As C.Chew suggests, "nature gradually disappears from the field of Hardy's interest in *Jude the Obscure*" (107), and it is the modern world that is being examined in detail; and what is more this has a dramatic effect on the way that Hardy constructs his characters and the relationships between them.

The terms that best describe the world of the novel are alienation and desolation of meaning. This is the view that Hardy has of the modern consciousness.

> Like the characters within the novel, readers are locked into a modern consciousness that is despairing and destructive of spirit. The perceptions of nature as sacred held by characters such as Gabriel, Tess, and Giles allowed readers access to Hardy's mythical world; here, like Jude and Sue, readers are confined within the limitations of their skepticism. (Stave 124)

This view is also found in the description of the village at the beginning of the novel. On the one hand the village is a typical rural village that is described in many of the previous novels. However, there is a sense in which the old and the new coexist in the

village. What is more effective is the way that Hardy describes the buildings in the village. This description is coldly rational and in "purely functional terms" (Stave 124). There is a decided lack of any spiritual or deeper signification in the buildings and the environment.

The following extract from the beginning of the novel serves to illustrate this change from the pastoral and rural to the new and coldly modern. What is important to note is the sense of loss and the impression of decay and emptiness that is the central tone of the description

> Old as it was, however, the well-shaft was probably the only relic of the local history that remained absolutely unchanged. Many of the thatched and dormered dwelling-houses had been pulled down of late years, and many trees felled on the green. Above all, the original church, hump-backed, wood-turreted, and quaintly hipped, had been taken down, and either cracked up into heaps of road-metal in the lane, or utilized as pig-sty walls, garden seats, guard-stones to fences, and rockeries in the flower-beds of the neighbourhood. (JO 6)

Hardy's description of the village also leads to the reason for its present condition - the influence of modernism. He continues:

> In place of it a tall new building of modern Gothic design, unfamiliar to English eyes, had been erected on a new piece of ground by a certain obliterator of historic records who had run down from London and back in a day. The site whereon so long had stood the ancient temple to the Christian divinities was not even recorded on the green and level grass-plot that had immemorially been the churchyard, the obliterated graves being commemorated by eighteenpenny cast- iron crosses warranted to last five years. (JO 6)

The reason for the emphasis on the above description is that it is central to the understanding of the characters in the novel. As is often the case in a novel by Thomas Hardy, background and setting are inherent parts of the character development and they are also essential aids in the understanding of the human relationships in the work. In previous works, like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy portrays a rich and intense background from which the characters emerge; which is remindful of history, traditions, spirituality and myth. However, as can be seen in the above example, the description of the surroundings from which the characters emerge in *Jude the Obscure* is one that is free from this rich traditional heritage and is especially 'modern' in its atmosphere and presentation.

For Jude and the other characters the urban environment and aspirations take precedent over the rural. As Ingham states, "Jude Fawley is, in a sense, an urban man. More than any other Hardy novel, *Jude the Obscure* insists on the town as the natural habitat of its protagonists" (165). As has already been noted, the important aspect is that this modernity is seen by Hardy in a definitely negative light represents a lack of intimacy and healthy relationships. This is clearly reflected in the central female characters in the novel. In essence what exemplifies the relationships in this novel is "… Modern consciousness, which alienates 'self ' from 'other' " (Stave 124).

The term 'other' is often used in a feminist context to describe the situation of women in patriarchal society. The innate identity of the woman is denied and therefore she is relegated to the 'outside' of society in a psychological sense and she becomes the 'other' or the alienated gender. In this sense, the characters in the novel are separated and alienated from each other largely as a result of the structure of the modern urban society that Hardy describes and which acts as the background to their lives. Implicit in this view of the novel is the general feminist critique of modern male-centered and male - dominated modes of reality and perception; which in effect have resulted in a logocentric and rational

world which lacks sensitivity and deeper values. It is this perception that informs many feminist readings of the text and which apply to the understanding of the main characters.

Another related theme is the alienation from nature. The two main characters, Sue and Jude, are isolated from the natural world in many ways. The most obvious way is the references to the urban rather than the rural landscape that dominates the novel. “In their desire to enter contemporary society, to rise socially, Sue and Jude break with nature…” (Stave 125). This also implies the break with tradition and this aspect can be seen in the attitude that Sue Bridehead reveals about religion and faith, which acts against the conservative male orientated views of Jude. The following conversation between Jude and Sue illustrates this aspect.

> “I won't disturb your convictions--I really won't!” she went on soothingly, for now he was rather more ruffled than she. “But I did want and long to ennoble some man to high aims; and when I saw you, and knew you wanted to be my comrade, I-shall I confess it?--thought that man might be you. But you take so much tradition on trust that I don't know what to say.”
>
> “Well, dear; I suppose one must take some things on trust. Life isn't long enough to work out everything in Euclid problems before you believe it. I take Christianity.” (JO 183)

Sue’s attitude in the above extract is thoroughly modern in its rejection of the views ands conservative opinions of the past. It is also a rejection of the male-centered world view. However, it is this male-centered view that still dominates the society and both Sue and Jude encounter this aspect in their refusal to marry. But, it is again the effect of the Victorian morality and male-dominated society that changes Sue’s religious views. Sue, “feeling that her sinful relationship with Jude has brought divine retribution down on her head, reverts to a fanatic religious attitude completely the reverse of her former

skepticism" (Carpenter 140). Therefore, by the end of the novel, in order to conform to social convention, she converts to conventional beliefs and standardizes her chaos of principles according to the traditional morality.

4.3. Double Standard of Morality

"Clearly Hardy thought Sue represented a type, however brilliantly individualised. She herself says that she is not such an exception among women as Jude thinks, particularly on the subject of marriage" (Blake 704). But there is another argument that in Hardy's novels, common with other novelists of the day, there always exists an element of 'woman pays'. In *Jude the Obscure*, in a way man pays too, and it is a surprising end with the violence of Arabella, helplessness of Sue and the unfortunate and tragic death of Jude. It is a complicated, complex work with moral double standards influencing the lives of Sue and Jude, while the same double standards have been used by Arabella for her own advantage.

In the final page of the novel, a conversation of an elderly woman with Arabella shows that Sue has become spiritless, old, with hardly any will to continue her life. She was not the headstrong, impulsive person any more. According to some critics, Sue is left to outlive Jude,

> Sue however, outlives Jude the one man she could bear to live with, provoking a sense of utter hopelessness for her situation. Jude's death closes a door in her life and she cannot run away from Phillotson again, even if she wanted to. Having turned from atheism and immorality to Christianity and repentance and she is condemned to a life of misery. (Nicholson 32)

Nicholson says that she, in her repentance, has turned to Christianity. Women in the novel are trying to establish their own identities in many ways rather tentatively. Unlike Sue, Arabella who is depicted as a cunning person by Hardy, has the capability of

turning any situation to her favour. She lies till the end and creates situation that are potentially helpful to her and once again, unlike Sue, she remains quite untouched by the events. Even though, she was much more immoral than Sue, she knew how to please the society and does not mind lying. In this respect, there was no trace of repentance in Arabella. This is a clear double standard that could be seen in any society, that it condones secrecy and lying and abhors truth and sincerity. The double standard is shown in hating the character of Sue, but tacitly accepting the character of Arabella. Sue was very different from the other heroines of the day. As Larson remarks, "The traditional role for women is to influence men and in that sense Sue is not unlike other Victorian heroines. Where she differs from them, however, is that her moral influence is only as intellectual as it is emotional; it is thoroughly unconventional" (55).

The double standard is also seen in the relationship between men and women. The male domination in the society was accepted to that extent, that even Jude agrees that when Sue left Richard, it was a great thing favourable to them because Richard agreed to her going away. In spite of its being Sue's decision, her own lover for whom she leaves the legal husband, agrees that Richard's approval was necessary. "It may not have worked so well for us as if he had been less kind, and you had run away against his will" (JO 261). Sue agrees: "Put it down to my timidity, to a woman's natural timidity when the crisis comes…Assume that I haven't the courage of my opinions" (JO 262), thus showing that she lacked the courage of acting on her own opinions.

In the same way, Sue begs her husband to release her from the binding marriage. "Why can't we agree to free each other? We made the compact, and surely we can cancel it – not legally, of course; but we can morally" (JO 200). Sue does not walk out of the marriage; instead, she begs her husband to release her and there exists the dent she is going

to cause to the sanctified marriage. Her immoral acts were followed by a terrible tragedy, and from then on, the novel becomes a tragic saga.

This does not mean that Hardy does not give any moral or sexual courage to his women, despite the discouragement of the society. The days were such that the sexual proposal should always come from the male and never the female. Surprisingly, Hardy makes his women bolder. "In *Jude the Obscure* there are two women who are in broad terms sexually deviant" (Ingham 178).

With all those consequences, it is difficult to understand why Hardy was attacked so much by readers and critics despite showing the tragedy as a result of immoral ways. As Ingham states, it is the social system, as well as what the system makes of women, that Hardy finally blames" in *Jude the Obscure*. (165). The book says a lot about the author's courage when he almost calls the wrong marriage contract a version of prostitution and Sue "does not recognize the necessity for most of her sex to follow marriage as a profession, and boast themselves as superior people because they are licensed to be loved on the premises" (JO 52). Even though he was stating a sociological fact, the society of the day was not ready to hear it. The people would rather be tied to a wrong marriage for the sake of pretension, instead of dissolving such unhappy marriages. Another point that has to be mentioned here is that such unhappy marriages are binding mostly women, and not men.

4.4. Sue and Arabella- 'two sides of one person'

In one sense, in the creation of Arabella and Sue, it seems as if Hardy has created one female character with two opposite sides. " …so Sue and Arabella can be seen as two sides of one person--a brilliant, highly sexed woman who lacks spirituality and who perceives herself as fragmented, not a unified whole" (Stave 133). The point that is being made is that in terms of the central themes and Hardy's analysis of the modern Victorian

world, his construction of these two female characters is an exploration of the effect of the male - centered world on the female.

From one perspective the novel is an exploration of the concept of modern or 'new' woman. Both Sue and Arabella are essentially modern women. Hardy uses both these characters as examples of the different ways in which the female has been subverted by modern culture. As will be discussed, Sue is the antithesis of Arabella but also has serious flaws and failings that serve to illustrate the central thesis that Hardy suggests in this work; namely that both genders are changed and corrupted by the Victorian norms and that this has profound implication for the natural balance between the sexes.

Arabella could almost be described as a female stereotype that Hardy creates to illustrate one side of the essence of the modern female. Her entire nature seems to be based in her female sexuality; which she uses to advance her social position and power in society. In this sense, she is a very 'modern' woman in relation to the degraded idea of modernism that was discussed in the previous section. In the creation of this character it is as if Hardy is showing how the female psyche has been split or made unnatural by its divorce from a rootedness in the traditional world. From a feminist perspective, this is essentially a result of the environment and the mode of perception of life that has created a rational and male orientated modernism.

Arabella is Hardy's stereotypical sexual adventurer, but she rudely masquerades as a woman attempting to appease society's accepted view of woman. She's driven by her sexual impulses and frequently aligns herself with men for her own enjoyment and fulfillment. From her first introduction onward, she is " a complete and substantial female animal- no more, no less" (JO 42). As Jekel points out, Arabella "consistently chooses the option that will give her more security, material riches, or status" (199). In other words, she is constantly looking for a better life. There is no doubt that no character obtained final

success in the novel except for Arabella, who symbolizes the malign universe as she always enterprised, trying to take advantage of other people for her own purpose.

Arabella is therefore presented as a rather unlikable and manipulative individual. "Virtually her only natural attribute is her sexuality; however, she exploits that quality, seeking not pleasure but respectability in the form of marriage and social status, whether or not she feels love for the man" (Stave 128). Hardy is successful to demonstrate the lack of emotional intimacy between Jude and Arabella in their marriage, showing that sexual attraction is the primary motive.

On the one hand, the creation of this character can be seen as sexist or a representation of the female as sexually aggressive and heartless – which seems on the surface to be a very male-oriented and biased view. However, if one takes into account the background and the overall thematic intentions of the novel, it becomes clear that what Hardy is attempting is a view of the way that 'progressive' and urban society has disrupted the natural order of things and in fact perverted the sexes and hence individuals. In this light, Arabella is a creation of the society and she is merely responding to the norms and mores of the time – or rather the lack of these values.

Hardy is very clear in his assessment of her character. He describes Arabella as having an "… instinct towards artificiality… " (JO 68). In other words, Arabella represents a society and a cultural milieu that is divided from the authenticity of nature and tradition – where nature and tradition are not seen as male constructs. It is clearly felt that she accepts the values of the city. Her artificiality is a response to the artificiality of society and the modern urban environment. In a sense Arabella is one of the most uncomplicated and sincere characters in the novel as her artificial sexuality and manipulation is never really hidden or in doubt. She is shamelessly and obviously modern in her manipulation of men for position and power. However, it is important to restate the view that rather then

interpreting her character as evidence of Hardy's sexism, one should possibly see the development of Arabella as a comment on the modern structure of a society which accepts and urges individuals like Arabella. "Arabella is a scheming woman who wants nothing more than to rise socially and who has learned all the artifices associated with women in society to allow her to do so, down to her fake dimple and her artificial hair" (Stave 128).

The quality of her character is shown in the way that she betrays Jude's privacy and "…reveals to her girlfriends every word he spoke to her, not in celebration of her attraction to him, but to procure their help to snare him" (Stave 128). However, possibly the most significant portrayal of the type of women that Arabella is, is in the pig-killing scene. The couple's opposing personalities becomes evident in the pig-killing scene when Jude chooses to kill the pig quickly and mercifully, but Arabella is concerned only with profit and making her blackpot from the pig's slow-draining blood.

> "Upon my soul I would sooner have gone without the pig than have had this to do!" said Jude. "A creature I have fed with my own hands."
>
> "Don't be such a tender-hearted fool! There's the stickingknife--the one with the point. Now whatever you do, don't stick un too deep."
>
> "I'll stick him effectually, so as to make short work of it. That's the chief thing."
>
> "You must not!" she cried. "The meat must be well bled, and to do that he must die slow. We shall lose a shilling a score if the meat is red and bloody! Just touch the vein, that's all. I was brought up to it, and I know. Every good butcher keeps un bleeding long. He ought to be eight or ten minutes dying, at least." (JO 75)

As the dialogue between Jude and Arabella shows, Jude focuses on the animal's pain, while Arabella sees only profit.

Two central aspects become apparent from the above extract. The first is the apparently insensitive and heartless way that Arabella responds to the killing of the pig and secondly the way that she is continually aware of social position and aspirations. Another important aspect is the obvious difference between the natural cruel Arabella and more sensitive Jude. The merciless and hard attitude that Arabella displays is an aspect that many critics see as an intrinsic part of her character throughout the novel. Thus, this dialogue between Jude and Arabella is a good example showing that they have different views on the value and purpose of life, and their marriage suffers the consequences.

> Arabella maintains her matter-of-fact attitude almost to the end, caring only that the pig bleed long enough for the meat to sell for a high price. Similarly, while Arabella's conduct at Jude's death can be read as calloused and cruel, many critics have commented on the unsentimental survivalist instincts she reveals. (Stave 128)

The character of Arabella should however be aligned with feminist and cultural critiques of the novel. A number of critics point out that her harsh and unfeeling attitude to life is a product of the culture in which she lives. Stave sums up this point of view efficiently saying, "just as she has learned her artificial beauty secrets in society, so has she assimilated society's values and viciousness" (128).

Therefore, the critique of her character shifts from a personal gender level to an analysis of the society and culture which in essence 'created' her nature. In this view and from a feminist perspective, it is the society that has created a woman whose actions are in line with the rational and insensitive nature of the patriarchal society. Critics such as Enstice, cited in Stave, states that "Arabella is a symbol of the hypocrisies and self-interest of society" (128).

In her defense a number of feminist critics are of the opinion that the fault lies with the society, just as much as with the character of Arabella. It is the male-centered Victorian society which, in the words of Stave,

> …grants an unmarried woman no status. Arabella acts in self-defense, as she must in a sexist, patriarchal society, but the cost of her acting is her soul. Her defense, that "Every woman has a right to do such as that. The risk is hers", is morally indefensible, but it reveals her understanding of the powerlessness of women in Victorian society and her own drive for survival . (128)

This is an important view and expresses the feminist point of view with clarity. From this theoretical standpoint the woman in Victorian society is largely at the mercy of the male – centered and controlled norms and values. Arabella therefore has no choice in reality but to continue her own life through the use of her feminine tricks and sexuality in the face of the prejudice and lack of status or freedom that women are subjected to in the culture. As Stave and others have pointed out, this view of Arabella, while does not excuse her actions and attitude, at least explains the harshness of apparent insensitivity, for example when she kills the pig.

Much of the novel deals with a discourse and implied debate about the institution of marriage in Victorian society. In term of this theme, the novel also shows how this institution has become corrupted in modern urban society and how it lacks its real intrinsic value to promote position and power. It is for this reason that Arabella accepts the institution of marriage and the Victorian norms and values that go with it. She does this not out of inner faith or love but rather as an act of suitability. Since Jude has been “ignorant of women and the world of love, he is an easy victim for Arabella’s temptations” (Webster 118). He blindly falls into her sexual trap believing that she’s pure and honorable.

Arabella's intentions are far from innocent and Jude is soon seduced. She claims that she's pregnant to compel him to marry her. Because she knows Jude is "honorable and serious minded", she feels confident he will adhere to social expectations and marry her. (JO 54) Therefore, Jude was easily trapped by Arabella, who only used him to satisfy the comforts and some of the luxuries of life. In fact, she seems to condone and even promote the sexist view of the times and culture. Referring to the first marriage between Sue and Phillotson, she states the following;

> But you shouldn't have let her [escape]. That's the only way with these fanciful women that chaw high--innocent or guilty. She'd have come round in time. We all do! Custom does it! it's all the same in the end! . . . You were too quick about her. I shouldn't have let her go! I should have kept her chained on--her spirit for kicking would have been broke soon enough! There's nothing like bondage and a stone-deaf taskmaster for taming us women. Besides, you've got the laws on your side. Moses knew. . . . "Then shall the man be guiltless; but the woman shall bear her iniquity." (JO 335)

Feminist critics view this apparent approval of wife-beating and sexist practice by Arabella not necessarily as an accusation of her character or individuality, but rather as indicative of the extent to which she has "…absorbed culture's messages, even to the point where she can cite scripture to condone violence against her own gender" (Stave 129).

Arabella is the hard side of the female who has no pretensions towards spirituality or emotional sensitivity. She is described as the "…kind of modern woman who grabs what pleasure she can while remaining emotionally uncommitted, constantly struggling to survive in a spiritually devoid world" (Stave 132). More importantly in terms of a feminist analysis, she is the inhabitant of a "…barren, modern world" (Stave 132).

Sue Brideshead is the direct opposite of Arabella in many respects. Arabella is defined by her sexuality and cunning nature, while Sue has problems with expressing her sexuality and is likeable and more sensitive than Arabella. The central defining aspect of her nature is intellectualism.

Sue is a much more likeable and intelligent character than Arabella. Her central flaw is her avoidance of sexual intimacy and this again refers to the theme of the unnatural in society and in the split between the natural and the modern urban life and environment.

Another aspect that bears noting is that Sue is also a reflection of an alienation from society. She is also alienated from others and only relates to others on an intellectual level. Her rejection of the traditions as well as religious context of the society has been referred to at some length in previous sections of this study. Her analytic and intellection penchant is an aspect that frustrates Jude, especially in her refusal to understand the religious yearnings that he has. Sue states clearly that "The Cathedral has had its day!" (JO 153). Tradition, in terms of either scholarship or the social structure, is insignificant to her. (Stave 133)

In essence Sue is a result of modern industrialized society. In more Marxist terms she is a 'product' of the ethics and social norms of culture. One could argue that, "just as Tess and Eustacia embodied the landscapes of which they were a part, so Sue is the embodiment of her modern, urban world, that she is Hardy's bearer of culture within the text" (Stave 134). In terms of personality she is the inverse of Arabella, but they are similar to the extent that they respond and react to the sexist repression to the society of the time.

An aspect of feminist analysis of the novel which is obvious in the case of Sue's character, and which is reflected in the creation of Tess, is the rejection of the body and sensuality. Sue's warped sexuality is directly related by many critics to the culture. Her rejection of sexuality is "…a further example of Sue's enculturation. As the bearer of

culture, Sue is the logical extension of its sexual ethos…" (Stave 133). This view is supported by the fact that as young child she was naturally expressive and sensual and she showed no shame in baring her legs. As a result of her natural tendency for the expression of normal sensuality, she was often beaten in accordance with the values and perceptions of the female sensuality in Victorian society. Therefore, Sue "…began to associate bodies--and any pleasure derived from them, whether the pleasure be as simple as wading barelegged in cool water on a hot day--with wickedness" (Stave 135).

The repression of natural sexuality is not common to Sue's individual nature but is a result of the way that the society and culture associate female sensuality with 'sin' or with decadence. Her lack of sexuality is therefore seen as a result of the teachings and norms of society rather than any individual personality deficiency.

> ….society reinforces the concept of sexuality as unwholesome and sinful. Sue, unlike the earlier Hardy women, spends most of her time in culture rather than in nature and hence is presented with little opportunity to observe the sexual in nature. As a result, her sense of the sexual act as distasteful should come as no surprise; she has never seen the sexual celebrated and affirmed. (Stave 135).

There is a rather obvious correspondence that can be made with the way that Tess views sexuality as a result of the cultural norms that are imposed on her. Sue's lack of sexual passion illustrated the problem of the New Woman sexuality. She showed no interest in physical intimacy with any men in the novel. At first, Jude doubted if Sue had any feeling or desire for sex, because she didn't show any interest in sex even after she had went off with Jude. Since Sue supports free union, she refused marriage and any sexual relationship with men. In other words, she desired to live an absolutely independent life, without too much intimacy with a man. Instead of being defined as a woman in the sense

of her reproductive capacity, she would rather have led a life as an independent person. Thus, she could pursue her individual rights without the limitation of the sexually-biased moral codes. Jude stated that she was hardly flesh at all and incapable of real love.

Although Sue marries and has children with Jude she is never naturally at ease with the act of sex or the consequences of this act. There is even a certain shame that she expresses in the fact that she is pregnant. This again affirms the view that she has developed a deep seated distaste for the sensuality from her upbringing and that this corrupts her natural femaleness. This of course also relates to the Victorian attitudes towards sex and birth. "…one must consider Victorian attitudes concerning pregnancy--a woman went into 'confinement' because it was not proper for her to be seen in public in her 'condition'--to discover the source of Sue's shame" (Stave 135). A number of critics have also take this point further and have shown how Sue becomes psychologically unbalanced due to the repression of her own sexuality, which leads to masochistic behavior patterns and tendencies.

4.5. Sue's Experiment of Free Union

There is no doubt that Hardy's last novel, "*Jude the Obscure* was widely interpreted as a problem novel on the New Woman theme" (Cunningham 17). The novel reflects the New Woman figure with Sue, who could be described as complex and courageous in many respects. Her vivid character easily differs from other conventional Victorian characters as she prefers living in the light of her own ideas rather than living in reality. Therefore, throughout the novel, she is portrayed as very daring and totally unconventional in any class of the society.

The central new woman figure, Sue was certainly endowed by Hardy with some typical New Womanly attributes. She was described by Hardy as a modern and townish girl who was well-educated, intelligent and sexually rebellious and hence had more control

over her life. Sue had been very different in her outlook. Her attitudes, ideas, the way she looked at herself and her religious disrespect were totally in contrast with the other girls of her age and class, or for that matter, any girl of the late 19th and early 20th century society. She calls herself pagan, and sticks to it. She constantly laughs at Jude's traditional outlook. She has lived alone in London and has no fear of men or cities. She has no desire to be chaperoned anywhere. She mixes with the other sex "almost as one of their own sex" (JO 177). She shares lodgings platonically with an undergraduate who later falls in love with her and dies with a broken heart, which puzzles her to no extent. She treats Jude with the familiarity of a cousin and her attitude towards him does not have any sexual implication initially. She behaves "with the freedom of a friend" (JO 100). No doubt, she makes a mistake in marrying Richard Phillotson without loving him. When she realises her error, she tries to come out of her without qualms; but hopes to continue as a friend of Phillotson. Usually, we feel that Sue has a suitable answer for everything, in her own impatient and self-righteous way, which sometimes fails to support her fully. Since she had such innovative and enlightening qualities, she wished to free herself from the patriarchal tradition thinking that it could bring people misery.

In order to free herself from the patriarchal tradition, Sue experimented free union which was a kind of natural way to unite both sexes. Sue tried to make an experiment of free union in order to liberate herself from the confinement of traditional marriage. She decided to challenge the social convention because she believed that marriage institution didn't favor true love. That is to say, she opposed to the marriage institution and glorified the importance of real love instead by practising free union. As Morgan explains "Sue's campaign against the Institution of Marriage is rigorous, radical and militant" (Morgan 111).

Since she disapproved of conventional marriage, which was in her mind the obstacle of true love, she doesn't get married with Jude and experimented free union by living with him without submitting to the legal, social and sexual injustices suffered by women in conventional marriages.

Since the Victorian morality was obviously sexually biased and only served the male advantage, women became the second sex. Parallel to this idea, the New Woman was accused of provoking adultery, while the man was considered to be victimized. In this sense, Sue, at one point in the novel was accused by Jude of being a flirt, though Jude was still married when he claimed he loved her. Sue was despised because she lived with a man without a legal marriage, though her act didn't harm anyone. As Cunningham states "the New Woman is regarded as a highly sexual being, all the more dangerous since she cannot be dismissed as a prostitute or a fallen woman" (14).

The New Woman's refusal to go into a conventional marriage was considered as their refusal to be faithful and responsible. Sue chose to be faithful to her own convictions, so she couldn't accept marriage as it limited women's life in many ways. Although she is already aware that her free union could exist outside of other social relationships and could hardly gain any recognition and respect, she never submits to social injustices. As Ingham remarks, "Sue attempts to break free of constraints imposed generally regardless of the individual" (175).

Throughout the novel, we notice that Sue has been misunderstood by men and women. Women think that she was immoral, too unconventional and try to shun her company. Her decisions and attitudes do not go with the majority attitude of women of the society. Men do not understand Sue, either. Mostly men are wary of women like Sue and dread their independence and courage. The particular morality they mention or worry about is usually the morality of women, and not of men. Mostly in all the societies, women

become the flag bearers of morality and definitely not the men, who live without any boundaries. By imposing moral rigidity on women, men usually make their place secure at home and in the society. In addition, men are worried by the thought of losing their homely comforts and worthy lineage. So, along with other men, Jude also accuses Sue of being 'sexless' a charge levelled on many new women of the time. Men, according to their own perspectives, call her frigid, unnatural, manly, not a woman at all, and a flirt. But she is actually a highly passionate woman. She is "light and slight, of the type dubbed elegant. She is mobile and living" (JO 106).

Sue is not "sexless," but has her own desires (JO 317). She has no intention of getting bound in another marriage so she rejects getting married to Jude if marriage has been on the cards. That is how Sue and Jude think of a relationship where marriage had no meaning. She tries hard to establish her identity and the way of life she preferred; but the society was not ready for her thoughts and both Sue and Jude get repulsed and the tragedies one after another follow, till both abandon the effort paving way to further tragedies. "Sue Bridgehead, The New Woman, sharing with Jude a self-awareness of oppression, which, in her case is sexual, disdains convention by asserting her autonomous sense of identity" (Harvey 185). Both Jude and Sue realize that living in the society was not possible with the dislike and suspicion heaped on them. They have no help coming from any side and with the societal disapproval, life becomes impossible and that is when Sue feels that she was slightly ahead of her times. "...every face bearing the legend 'The Weaker' upon it, as the penalty of the sex wherein they were molded, which by no possible exertion of their willing hearts and abilities could be made strong while the inexorable laws of nature remain what they are" (JO 168).

From the beginning the reader feels that unlike other females of her time, Sue has been belligerent about all kinds of conventional bindings forced upon women in the society

and Hardy says she opposes it with "all the bitterness of a young person to whom restraint was new" (JO 158). So she is a new woman, but not frigid, has her own passionate desires and sexual compulsions. "Her physical desires pull her in one direction, her intellectual and social desires in the other. In terms of New Woman fiction, she is an unstable compound of the two characteristic types of heroine" (Deresiewicz 60).

Hardy mentions the gender-conditioning of the society throughout the novel and never forgets to mention the rebels against such conditioning. Due to this gender-conditioning, there are many things in the society, 'which only boys can do' and this means, that the girls do not even try to any of those things. Sue can "do things that only boys do, as a rule" (JO 133). Sue does these things not naturally, but she wants to do them to show that girls too can do the things which boys do. From her point of view, it is a gender statement, an act of defiance. She has an uncontrollable spirit and took pleasure in defying the little rules of the girls made by the society, and these rules differentiate between 'good girls' and 'bad girls'. To show her spirit, she would even walk "into the pond with her shoes and stockings off, and her petticoats pulled above her knees", saying loudly, "Move on, aunty! This is no sight for modest eyes!" (JO 133). With the same defiance, she opposes marriage, because marriage is an accepted, expected 'good girl' thing and she wonders "how hopelessly vulgar an institution legal marriage is!" and it seems "awful temerity to go marrying" (JO 322, 337).

Her statement against the marriage could be found too modern even now. She calls it a "sordid business" and what is more "she can't bear to think of it" (JO 334, 322). She says, it is a "sort of trap to catch a man" (JO 322). Her radical thoughts about marriage reveal her another side which is afraid of losing the special love of Jude. She keeps marriage out of their relationship "lest an iron contract should extinguish [Jude's] tenderness" (JO 280).

Although Sue wants Jude's tender love in the latter stage, we see that she lives with him with a "curious unconsciousness of gender" (JO 170), in a sexless way, for more than fifteen months, before she realizes that Jude is not happy with the arrangement of being mere comrades. Even though she doesn't like having sexual relations, and does not volunteer for such a relationship with Jude, she accepts his offer. It is actually his desire with which she complies. Sue, being an "epicure in emotions" (JO 206), highly tuned to find and live in dramatic situations that others would have disliked, allows her "curiosity to hunt up a new sensation" (JO 181). This hunting for sensation leads her into many kinds of fulfilling and not-so-fulfilling experiments such as living with the undergraduate and later living without marriage with Jude and having their children, all the experiments being totally abhorred by the society of the day. But even to Jude who has known her all his life she remains a "riddle" (JO 160) and he describes her behavior as "one lovely conundrum to him" (JO 166).

Her husband Richard does not understand her either. For him, she is "puzzling and unsatiable" (JO 245), and to all her emotional state remains forever a "mystery" (JO 235). But the ultimate admission comes from her when she admits to Jude, before leaving him for the last time to remarry Richard: She says her love for him; "it began in the selfish and cruel wish to make your heart ache for me without letting mine ache for you" (JO 422). That is the core admission of this complicated, modern and townish girl, who remains a mystery throughout the novel.

However, at the end of the novel, the heroine, Sue was defeated by the consequences resulting from her experimentation. As Ingham argues, "Sue's story is the failure of her attempt to free herself from the predetermined mould that marriage imposes and validates" (168). Her experiments of free union ended in a bloody murder, with all the participants persecuted or executed under the patriarchal system.

Since her life style aroused social condemnation and contempt, Hardy puts an early end to her dilemma, punishing her behaviour by having all her children killed by Little Father Time. The murder of her children by Little Father Time was Hardy's exaggeration of Sue's destructive power over family institution. That is to say, Little Father Time as a representative of Victorian society, symbolized legitimate marital relationship and Sue's children were the products of free union. Little Father Time practised the execution of free union.

Therefore, she repented for her relationship with Jude and chose to conform to tradition. In order to gain moral salvation, she chose to return to her ex-husband to whom she belonged physically. Turning from rebellious to obedient, Sue gave up her individualism to gain inner peace, though she could never achieve that as she knew she could never forget Jude. Thus, her return to Phillatson could be viewed as an escape from reality to a refuge.

She struggled between the moral pressure and her female liberty, but it merely resulted in her mental breakdown and ultimate subjugation to social convention. As Ingham states, "she evidently acquires the status of a fallen woman willfully" (182). Her transformation from a rebellious Victorian New Woman to an inconfident, timid woman confused the readers. It is the great success of Hardy to invent a kind of strategy to illustrate the contradictory and chaotic representations of the New Woman. Sue remained an unintelligible fictional character, whose action was full of indecision with mental and sexual paralysis. Her inner struggles and mental breakdown showed that a New Woman always had a hard life whether she chose to live her own way or the traditional way. She played the role of a scapegoat as did Tess for the rigid and unjust Victorian morality. Middleton, commenting on her mental breakdown says:

"Mental breakdown and subjugation to social convention, were the common fate of pioneering, fictional New Women, and Sue is no exception" (274).

As a result, with all the arguments above, it is impossible to deny that Thomas Hardy did create one of the best examples of the New Woman in *Jude the Obscure*. Sue is a special character he always wanted to portray, but hesitated doing so for a long time. The novel deals with woman's struggle between the accepted role and the real self.

Throughout the novel, Sue's different stages of life and her conflicting personality symbolize the various critical responses to the New Woman and the New Woman's struggle with the sexually biased Victorian tradition. In this respect, the novel reflected the contemporary phenomena of feminist activities, and therefore participated in the debate of the issues.

Hardy, in *Jude the Obscure*, dealt with Sue's anti-marriage philosophy which again activated public confrontation, but this time more fiercely. As Ingham argues, by creating a character like Sue, "Hardy offers a forceful attack on the institution of marriage" (176). Though Hardy didn't show as much sympathy for Sue as he did for Tess, his earnest interest in the subject matter once more unveiled the sexual taboo. With a similar vehemence, this novel of Hardy faced immense criticism. The great writer was targeted by personal and literary criticism both. People thought that he demeaned himself by writing such an immoral book. They thought he lowered himself enough to write about the sex problems and also took an anti-marriage stance. They lamented that he demystified the maternity. They thought he was advocating celibacy that might lead to the extinction of English race.

However, there is another view which reveals Hardy's sexist attitude towards women. According to Wood, this new woman's attitudes are not fully approved by her

own creator. Wood is of the opinion that there is subtle disapproval in Hardy's tone while nurturing the difficult character of Sue.

> The attitudes she strikes are not so much acts of purposeful resistance as the only ones possible in a woman neurologically unfitted for the roles of marriage and motherhood. Not that that excuses her in the judgement of the narrator whose observations barely conceal the suggestion that Sue's antipathies are self-generated. (183).

CONCLUSION

As the above analysis of two of Hardy's best known novels attempt to show, his works could be considered as a progressive and complex involvement with the issues confronting women in the society. On the one hand, it cannot be denied that Hardy is also a product of his times and there are intimations of underlying prejudice in the portrayal of some of the female characters. There is, for example an intimation of stereotyping in the initial weakness and naivety of the earlier portrayal of Tess. However, as becomes clear in the analysis of *Jude the Obscure*, in the later novels Hardy was in fact dealing with his growing awareness of the complexity of the female stereotype in Victorian society and with the need to liberate the view of the female from the constructs of a male-dominated society. This sense of struggle with these problems in a male-dominated environment can be seen in the following assessment.

> By the time of Jude the Obscure…Hardy felt confident enough to ally himself openly with the voice of Sue Bridehead, although like the other heroines she has only male language to express her right to retain control of her body, and her radical antagonism to marriage. (Mitchell 162)

There are many contrary views about Hardy's analysis of the female situation in Victorian times. On the one hand, he is seen as not being able to overcome his own fixed male prejudices. Therefore, many feminist critics argue that the novels are dominated by a male voice and a 'male gaze.' As Mitchell points out. "…he was handicapped by the perceptions of the classically ambivalent male whose castration anxieties are disturbingly close to the surface. The novels that result from this volatile combination are interesting indeed, containing more than meets the eye…" (162). Feminists who criticize Hardy's novels as being biased from a male point of view, think that his last two novels *Tess of the*

d'Urbervilles and *Jude the Obscure* offer sufficient evidence of his rather conservative attitude towards the role of women in Victorian society.

On the other hand, he is at the same time praised by feminists for the attempts he made into an awareness of the problems and the situation of women in Victorian society. This refers to the fact that Hardy in his novels was continually trying to open up the reader to the predicament of the situation of women in the society of the time. Thus, this paper also tried to examine Hardy's feminist thinking reflected from the novel, even though it is limited, to show his great sympathy to women which was a real shock in that patriarchal society. The above paper has been an attempt to explore these different views in the two novels in question.

In addition, attention should also be given to the larger social and philosophical environment from which the characters in Hardy's works evolve. Informing and providing the impetus to many of his novels is a realistic but negative assessment and view of human society and the possibly of positive solutions to the human predicament. Possibly his central philosophy can be summed up in the words of Tess: "God's not in his heaven: all's wrong with the world!" (TD 248). This is a view of society that permeates the novels and also influences their interpretation from a feminist point of view. In the final analysis what makes the novels so important in terms of social and feminist criticism is their continual interrogation of the master narratives and the underlying ideologies and attitudes that characterized not only Victorian society but which still have value and literary currency in the modern contemporary world.

The main objective of my thesis is to examine the apparent ambivalence and ambiguity in Hardy's novels with regard to his attitude towards women. Throughout the study, Hardy's presentation of women in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* forms the central point in this thesis. Moreover, this study explores to what extent the

writer questioned and opposed the patriarchal views that were dominant in Victorian society at the time. The apparent ambiguity or ambivalence that many critics find in the attitude towards women in the works of Thomas Hardy is in fact a progressive attempt to understand and to face with the problems of female abuse and domination in Victorian society in an artistic sense.

The introduction presents a clear outline of the thesis, which aims to show the development of the study. In order to establish the main goals of the study, the general information and the background are presented in this part.

The first chapter deals with the Victorian Age and the Emergence of the New Woman. In the first part of the chapter, I give detailed information about the Victorian age and the Victorian proper lady. Furthermore, since Hardy portrays the examples of the new women with his heroines Tess, Sue and Arabella, the second part is the study of the New Woman.

The second chapter examines Hardy's place in feminist theory. It is divided into two parts. The first part aims to show different views of critics concerning Hardy's works. The second part of this chapter questions Hardy's attitude towards his female characters to show if he could be considered as a feminist novelist.

The third chapter analyses Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in a feminist perspective. In the beginning, I presented a clear overview as well as writing a brief summary of the novel. I tried to emphasize that the novel portrays the development and struggle of the main female character, Tess. On the one hand, the plot is fairly straightforward and is in essence the story of Tess. In this sense, the novel has a simple story concerning a pure woman betrayed by men and her constant fight for happiness in a male-dominated Victorian society. In this respect, the second part of my analysis deals with Tess as a new woman. Hardy, mentioning Tess's modern outlook and independent

spirit, tries to show that she could be a good example of the new woman. In the third part, I analyzed the double standard of morality in the novel. Since it is the Victorian society that is depicted in the novel, Tess is constantly condemned and accused by the society. However, Hardy seems to be very sympathetic to his Tess, as he called the book initially, *Pure Woman*.

I strongly believe that the reason of why Hardy pities Tess is the fact that he also was unhappy with the society in which he found himself and hated its hypocrisy especially against women. Therefore, he doesn't hesitate to criticize Victorian norms and mores by showing their restrictive manners towards women.

However, the same writer, at the same time, plans a tragic death for Tess for having ignored the moral dictums. It is clearly felt that although he criticizes the rigid society, he gives importance to the customs and rules of the society. As a male writer, his perception towards women could be influenced by the conservative Victorian society. In this respect, the book also includes Hardy's sexist views and gender prejudices. Therefore, it is possible that in order to make his society pleased, he creates such a horrible tragedy at the end of the novel.

Sexual politics and construction forms the fourth part in which I discussed the female sexuality in a society that is dominated by male perceptions. The development of Tess and the fight against male gaze is the last part in this chapter. In this part I attempted to analyze the various developmental aspects of Tess in the light of feminist criticism.

The fourth chapter is the analysis of *Jude the Obscure*. The introduction of this chapter opens with a brief overview and the plot of the novel. In this part, I emphasized the important development in Hardy's ouvre, saying that *Jude the Obscure*, unlike his other novels, mainly portrays the modern world. In order to mention this shift in Hardy's novels, in the second part, I examined the effects of the modern world on the main characters. I

tried to show that in this novel, it is both male and female who are affected by the rigidity of Victorian society. In the third part, I discuss the double standards of morality in the novel by focusing on Sue and Jude's constant struggles. The fourth part examines Sue and Arabella as if they are two sides of one person. Since *Jude the Obscure* reflects the modern novel, there is no doubt that both Arabella and Sue are the representatives of the new woman. This chapter provides necessary information about Hardy's two female characters. Sue's experiment of free union is the last part of this chapter. In this part I analyze how Sue free herself from the patriarchal tradition by rejecting the marriage institution. Her refusal to go into a conventional marriage shows her self-confidence. Her faith in individualism and independent thinking together shortened the distance between the masculine and feminine qualities. It is clearly felt that with her enlightening qualities, she embodied the image of the new woman. However, I also mentioned how her constant struggle for freedom ends in a tragic way. In my conclusion, I summarize the main arguments of my thesis.

Society's judgmental attitude towards shaping the character of women is clearly evident in this novel. Hardy constantly comments on how Sue's life would be different if society didn't have its prejudices and opinions about sexual encounters. He makes a clear distinction between social laws and natural laws. Hardy dealing with Sue's anti-marriage philosophy, criticizes the Victorian morality which only served the male advantage.

However, at the end of the novel Sue is also punished by Hardy. Her constant struggles resulted in her mental breakdown. The reason why Hardy puts an early end to her struggles is the fact that Hardy wants to please his conservative society.

There is a sense of personal intellectual development of Hardy's heroines as they moved through the hard school of life towards Hardy's own position. Although it may be true that Hardy did not have a consistent philosophy, it is equally true that in novel after

novel he produces various opinions on a number of topics which are forthright and usually echo one another accurately. Towards these opinions Tess and Sue painfully move. (Butler 117)

In conclusion, after having read Hardy's two novels in detail, I realize the fact that almost all New Woman heroines of Hardy break down at the end. One can easily feel that his last novels were in fact daring adventures into controversial areas of debate in terms of raising the issue of both gender and class in a rigid Victorian society. Hardy may have felt that his audience was not able to accept a full discovery of the problem of gender in the narrow confines of Victorian society. This is possibly an important reason for the assertion of Hardy's ambiguity and inability to make definite statements about gender issues.

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

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