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The Role of Women in Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure

**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of
a Master Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

This dissertation is wholeheartedly dedicated to our beloved parents, who have been our source of inspiration and gave us strength when we thought of giving up, who continually provide their moral, spiritual, emotional, and financial support.

To our brothers, sisters, relatives, mentor, friends, and classmates who shared their words of advice and encouragement to finish this study. Then to every person we have ever met in our life.

And lastly, we dedicated our hard work to the Almighty ALLAH, thank you for the guidance, strength, power of mind, protection and skills and for giving us a healthy life. All of these, depend on you.

Haifa Amel

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Abstract

The Victorian England Era has witnessed radical changes in almost all respects. One of which was an increasingly widespread emergence of awareness among women and their claims to rights. This awareness was the advent of the feminist literature in simultaneity with the feminist movement. The present dissertation investigates the representation of women characters in Thomas Hardy's last novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895). The study analyzes the novelist's views about concepts of marriage, sex, education and religion that are severely criticized through various tones. The study, also, aims to demonstrate the aspects of Hardy's female characters. Furthermore, it hypothesizes that as far as the writer's representation of women was against the contemporary social norms, his female characters still obscure about whether they resemble the real strong woman. The study under investigation adopts feminist and psychoanalytic theories as appropriate approaches that allow us to deeply interpret the collected data. Our findings show that the writer's expected 'New Woman' remained unattainable. The paper, also, concludes that Thomas Hardy is a feminist rather than a misogynist. Then, the tragic flaw of Hardy's heroines is represented in their infinite sorrow and incomplete desire.

Keywords: Feminism, Misogyny, *Obscure*, Thomas Hardy, Unorthodox, Victorian women

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General Introduction

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Background of the Study

The Victorian England is the era in which Britain was reigned by the Queen Victoria (1837- 1901). It was the period in which Britain marked the heyday of its imperial ambitions. The British Empire extended over about one fourth of the earth's surface. This vastness expressed by the saying 'the empire on which the sun never sets'. It was, also a time of prosperity and improvement; a time of considerable changes and great inventions. It was the most peaceful period ever witnessed in the history of Britain. The Victorian era witnessed the rise of the greatest poets such as William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) and the most eminent novelists like Charles Dickens (1812-1870), Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), George Elliot or Mary Ann Evans(1819-1880) and Thomas Hardy (1840-1928).

Despite the peaceful and prosperous time, women's status remained inferior. They endured inequality at different grounds. They were deprived of even the least rights. They suffered abuse, cruelty and violence. A married woman was considered as the property of her husband. This aforementioned mistreatment created a strong feminist movement which played an increasingly influential role.

Thomas Hardy was a notable novelist whose novels are almost all tragic love stories. He truthfully depicted the corruption and decay of rural life. He presented a gloomy pessimistic picture of the daily life and the struggle against sufferance and hardship which appear often in his tragic characters. Hardy is considered the second among the most prominent outstanding men of literature after the author of "Hard Times" Charles Dickens. Jude the Obscure (1895) was Hardy's last novel. It was published in installments. Hardy believed strongly in fate as a mysterious force, against a person's will, which often

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disrupts completely his characters' lives. This belief reflects a dramatic increase in Hardy's pessimism. This novel was considered as literary classics in which the writer dared to oppose the societal moral codes. His hardness shocked the public which expressed huge disapproval. He was criticized for being too pessimistic and preoccupied with sex and sexuality. The novel depicted the life of stonemason whose ambition was to study at Oxford but he was often a failure.

Literature Review

Women were considered inferiors and their status was lesser than men Patmore's epic (1854) "The Angel in the House" draws the truly feminine role of women. The women whose function as a wife and mother must devote herself to the service of her children and husband. Hardy's considerate sympathy towards his female characters earned his reputation. Because Hardy's novels were explicitly concerned with gender, there was no wonder that feminist critics focused on his writings.

Despite Hardy's sympathy for women, Kathleen Blake argues that Hardy presents female characters as weakened, changeable and they are generalized in their presentation, a male character is allowed to represent only himself (725 726). In her Sue Bridhead, The Woman of the Feminist Movement, Kathleen Blake states that Hardy is merely one knows a bit about feminist ideas and sympathizes with feminist views. Additionally, he is not an avowed feminist but one who cares about women (705).

The novelist H. G Wells who paradoxically criticized the novel as a work of "naked secular and ugliness" and renamed the novel Jude the Obscure while he praised him in an article in Saturday Review "there is no other novelist alive with the breadth of sympathy, the knowledge or the power for the creation of Jude".

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Kristin Brady, in Thomas Hardy and Matters of Gender, explains that a number of feminist critics noted that there is a distinct division in Thomas Hardy depiction of males and females. According to Virginia Wolf as Brady points the women seems to be always the weaker and the fleshier and has the tendency to stick to men and obscure their vision. This idea does not apply to Arabella in Jude the Obscure who does not cling to Jude for long nor is Sue a fleshy woman. Moreover, Wolf claimed that Hardy intended to create unconventional strong women characters, the result was even the strongest of whom turned into a state of weakness and self sacrifice her image exactly conform to the "Angel of the House" and both Sue and Tess lose their strength and regress to the conventional submissive female role. And when Sue decided to return to her husband Richard Phillotson she concluded that she punished herself for her sexual immorality of leaving him and producing an illegitimate child. (Ingham51). As sexuality and marriage are central themes in Hardy's novels abundant discussions about the topics have to show controversial views.

Women in the Victorian period were polarized between "the chaste and the depraved or the virgin and the whore" as explained by Boumelha Thomas Hardy and women (11). She added that such behaviour is acceptable for one gender and not for the other and while sexuality is considered an innate quality for males the ideal woman was not allowed to show any erotic signs. A woman must not be sexually expressive to conform to an ideal of feminine moral virtue. It is not the treatment and portrayal of sexuality that shocked the readers but his depiction as the female desire is in constant.

Some critics have integrated Sue Bridhead as totally sexless and frigid women while others found in her a feminist woman who avoids herself from sexual in order to get her independence. Kathleen Blake claims that Sue's feminist attitude is to remain a virgin to avoid any problem (689 -705).

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Aim of the Study

The present dissertation aims to investigate the feminist aspects in Hardy's novel Jude the Obscure and to detect the same aspects in the roles of the women characters. It also intends to clarify the conflict between the challenging attitudes of Hardy's female characters against societal religious norms. In addition, this study attempts to elucidate to which extent Hardy's unconventionality proves a feminist attitude.

Research Problem

Feminism is meant to promote the female situation not the exclusion of men. Man and woman must coexist on the bases upon the mutual interest and mutual respect.

Victorian women endured acute inequalities. They were oppressed at all levels. A woman is deprived of the least rights. The claim of 'The Angel in the House' is essentially thought to designate the happiness of woman as the term embodied the ideal Victorian woman, the wife and the mother who cared about her children and obeyed her husband. On the one hand, the term is bitterly criticized especially by the author Thomas Hardy and even satirized by Woolf and Charlotte as it doesn't fit for the ambitious woman. In the other hand, the shape of woman presented by Hardy is the ideal one in the literal meaning of the concept 'ideal'.

Research Questions

To accomplish the aim of our research about the role of women in Hardy's Jude the Obscure the following questions have been formulated:

- To what extent does Hardy sympathize his female characters and supports them despite their deviation from society's morals?
- To what extent does the obscurity in the novel divides the public interpretation of Hardy's intent?
- How does a feminist view allow confusion between purity and profanity?

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- To what extent it is assumed Hardy was a feminist?

Research Hypotheses

The present research questions will be answered on the basis of the following formulated hypotheses:

Hardy wants to convey his attitude towards the society's confines which are against his characters wills.

Obscurity reflects the writer's deep psychological insights that may be interpreted differently.

It is needless to charge religion of the women's subjugation if religion is contradicted and initially neglected.

Basically, Hardy defends his characters' deeds and finds vindications if they go astray.

Research Tools

Two main theories have been applied in this dissertation: Feminist Theory and Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory. We adopt the Feminist theory to shine a light on the issues of discrimination and inequalities on the basis of sex, gender roles and social stereotypes. Therefore our main reason for applying this theory lays behind the fact that, though the story of Jude the Obscure appears from its title is about a male character, however, Hardy emphasizes on the female characters and highlights many of the Victorian women issues. Hardy in this novel introduces two totally different female characters Sue and Arabella. Sarah Grand is among the female feminist. She has a passionate view about the need for reform in sexual relations in her fictional works she treats issues of women, marriage and sexuality. She was credited to be the writer who first used the phrase "New Woman".

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Psychoanalytic Theory, its founding father is Sigmund Freud, focuses on how the conflicts among parts of the mind shape a person's behaviour. It is, basically, as he argues a result of the interaction between three component parts of the mind: The 'Id' which is the first developed part, concentrates on the wants, needs and obtaining pleasure no matter what the consequences are. The 'Ego' which represents the part of a judgment in the personality; its main concerns are morals and justice. The Ego works on holding back the Id's drives. The last part is The 'Super Ego' which is the part that takes the role of the decision maker about different issues, whether they are right or wrong. In addition, Freud divided the mind into two parts, the 'Conscious' which includes the things we are aware of and the 'Unconscious' which includes the drives and impulses. Freud as well considered sexuality, which is central in Hardy's novel, as the core of human personality development. The main objective of using the psychoanalytic theory is to examine the psychology of the author or more likely to examine the psychology of certain interesting characters. Furthermore, we used it in order to understand the behaviours' characters.

Research Structure

The present research contains a general introduction, three main chapters, and general conclusion. The first chapter entitled Theoretical Background: Feminism and the Nineteenth Century, is a theoretical study of feminism in the light of the nineteenth century. The chapter tackles a historical background of the Victorian era and women image which reflected by "The Angel in the House". It also deals with the gender issue of the nineteenth century and status of women through the depiction of some major female writers. Moreover it demonstrates religion with the theory under study.

The second chapter, entitled Hardy's Feminist consciousness, is a theoretical study of Thomas Hardy depiction of women and his perspective on sex, marriage and religion in

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his novels which show his feminist views on those notions which results the debatable dilemma of Hardy's being Misogynist or Misandria.

The third and the last chapter, entitled obscurity in Jude the Obscure, is the practical part of the research. This chapter deeply analyzes Thomas Hardy's last work of fiction Jude the Obscure. It mainly deals with women love and the search for sexual identity that have been lost because of the Victorian institution of marriage. Furthermore, it questions the implement of the concept of "New Woman" on Hardy main female character.

Chapter One

Theoretical Background: Feminism and the Nineteenth Century

Introduction:

Before studying literary work, it is necessary to discern and consider the reality of the period. Especially, the society in which the writer lived as well as its people, the way they live, they think, and they believe. Consequently, this allows us to understand the writer's world view and pave the way for a complete study of the work.

In the present chapter, we attempt to shed the light particularly on the historical and the social backgrounds of the Victorian era. We are willing to trace back the impact of the women writers in the battle of their rights. We highlight the inequalities between sexes, forms of marginalization and the underrepresentation of the women contribution, gender roles and distinction of stereotypes.

Furthermore, we attempt to highlight the influence of the new notion "feminism" that came to be prominent in the 19th Century on women situation and their treatment in writer depiction and religion.

1. The Image of Women in the 19th Century:**1.1. Victorian Era:**

The Victorian era is the period related to the time of Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 to 1901. During this period, Britain has witnessed significant changes and remarkable prosperity in almost all aspects of politics, law, economics, society and literature.

Furthermore, the Victorian Era saw substantial growth described by William J Long as "The modern period of progress and unrest" (579) serving Britain as the world's biggest empire "The empire over which the sun never sets".

In addition, Mundraand Sahni declares that the Victorian Age is one of the most remarkable periods in the history of England. It was an era of material affluence, political

consciousness, democratic reforms, industrial and mechanical progress, scientific advancement, social unrest, educational expansion, empire building and religious uncertainty.

However, The Victorian Age cannot be restrained to the period ruled by Queen Victoria. It may extend backwards and onwards to overlap with the preceding and the periods that follow. As Seaman in 1990 reports that “it cannot be thought as wholly contained within the sixty four years of the queen’s reign” (05) as it owed many of its characteristics that took place in the years between 1780 and 1837 and in its late Victorian era that dominated a whole century from The Great Exhibition of 1851 to the Festival of Britain in 1951. (Long)

Along similar lines, William Ralph Inge in his The Victorian Age argues that “one great interest of the Victorian age is that it was the time when a new social order was being built up and entirely new problems were being created.” (9)

The literature of the Victorian era has also its own features. It tended to be more realistic. It represented faithfully the details of everyday life. It shifted from the rigorous principle of “art for art’s sake” to assert the era’s morals and portrays the great ideals such as justice, truth, love, chastity and marital fidelity. The writers deal with an array of themes related to women and their rights. Marriage and sex are the most salient subjects that have been tackled among Victorian literature. In this respect, writers express their own views through their own perspectives.

1.2.The Industrial Revolution:

The industrial revolution has significantly changed the image of Britain. It offers a catalogue of innovations that have massively grown. Hobsbawm states that the industrial revolution is “probably the most important event in the world” (44).

The industrial revolution has been also divided into two significant phases. The first phase took place from the mid-eighteen to the mid-nineteen centuries. The second one has been continuing till today (Habib 543). The Victorian age coincided with this latter phase which created major transitions in the life of the British people. Engels argues that:

The Industrial Revolution's main developments were the invention of the steam engine and the cotton industry. Because of the new technology, the steam engine marked a shift in productivity power with less energy than before. An increase in the volume and variety of manufactured goods raised the standard of the living conditions for many people. As a result, this revolution brought about a greater improvement in the industrialization of many other areas. (16)

The industrial revolution has made most of the manual works replaced by the use of technology which transformed the society from agricultural to industrial.

In addition, it is also marked significantly a transition from a traditional world into the modern world. Notwithstanding, besides the positive changes there have come up new unexpected problems such as the pollution that harmfully affected the environment, the increasing rate of criminality, a great shift from the countryside to the city which led to the creation of massive slums at the edges of manufacturing towns, and most importantly the widening gap of social classes and other social problems caused by urbanization. (Chris 2004).

What the industrial revolution has done among the Victorians is likely as a sort of dilemma. It corrupts and repairs at the same time. The Industrial Revolution affected deeply people's lives. It created major changes and transitions in domestic culture and values particularly, women's issues such as women's rights as men, their economic

independence and thus, appeared the literature which revealed the inequities of the existing dominant Victorian culture.

1.3. Women Idealizations:

The question of women, the ideal women and the feminist women, the meaning of these concepts may vary depending on areas, religious context and geographical aspects. The Victorian era was distinguished by its own characteristics.

Overwhelmingly, the Victorian era consisted of hierarchical structure containing distinct classes which are: the upper class, the middle class and the working class. This difference in social classes could be distinguished by inequalities in wealth, education, working and living conditions (Mitchell 2009). The monstrosity of the disparity of classes clearly appeared in Victorian era women's situation.

In an androcentric society, a woman is to be shaped according to man's will. Women did not have the right to vote, sue or to own any property. A woman is supposed to look after her children and perform her household chores. In this context, Calder (1977) stated, "it was the wife who made the home, who cared for her children within it, who brought her husband back to it when work was done, who provided the hot dinners and created the atmosphere of comfort and protection"(27). Unfortunately, the fact that women had such great influence at home was used as an argument against giving her legal or social rights. Moreover, the Victorian law asserts on putting the women in an inferior situation than men as Gallagher notes "Whatever their social rank, in the eyes of the law women were second-class citizens" (57).

According to Coventry Patmore (1854), A poet based on his wife "Emily" structure and way of life portraying her as the perfect women. He called this portrait "The Angel in the House". This notion became, perhaps, the most famous term that describes the ideal

Victorian women. The portrayal of the perfect domestic bliss, and the ideal women, according to the poet, was welcomed by certain groups, but confronted by the refusal of others, mainly by women. From the first verse of his poem “The Angel in the House”, Patmore substantially, attempts to popularize his sense of the ideal woman and the male-female relationship in the Victorian society.

Man must be pleased; but him to please

Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf

Of his condoled necessities

She casts her best; she flings herself (74)

Ideally, the Victorian wife is a woman who shows her total obedience to her husband. She is known to be Godly, inefficient, powerless, modest and highly pure. These characteristic attributes make her “The Angel of the House” the widely popular icon of the Victorian women. Actually, The Queen Victoria urged to the above practice of the assigned household chores and to be realistically viewed as “the icon of femininity and domesticity” (Abrams par. 3). However, this truth did not prevent Victorian women to fight their social, economical, political and ultimately the intellectual rights.

Patmore's notion of the women was warmly greeted by John Ruskin, the leading English art critic of the Victorian era. Insomuch he propagated very similar views in his lecture “Queen's Gardens”, in which he also praised Patmore's work again. He wrote to Patmore: “I cannot tell you how much I admire your book. I had no idea you had the power of this high kind. I think it will at all events it ought to become one of the most popular books in the language — and blessedly popular, doing good wherever read” (12).

The idea of a “domestic angels” was customary for that period and remained a consistent theme throughout Victorian literature, especially poetry. Automatically, the

Victorian poems portrayed the women as a gem, but the fact was totally different. The woman was oppressed sentimentally, sexually and intellectually. The novels, differently, focus on the moralities of Victorian society and reveal its gaps and flaws. Apparently, the term “Love” was repeatedly mentioned in the poem “The Angel in the House” to show the affection of man towards the woman in a respectable and a romantic view. Instead, the deep analysis of this poem highlights an extremely negative portrait of the Victorian woman position which is a kind of sentimental and sexual subjection of women as Hartnell suggests “domestic woman, woman who has no existence outside the context of her home and whose sole window on the world is her husband” (460).

The English philosopher John Stuart Mill (2000) has his own way to oppose this radical idea about women in an essay entitled “The Subjection of Women”. He argued that the subordination of women is totally wrong and creates obstacles to human development. He writes that “the legal subordination of one sex to the other” is “wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement” (01). Mill lived in a society where women were supposed to devote themselves to their families and their husbands. Actually, women were restrained to some severe circumstances of bygone societies which motivate them to question their status and appeal for their equality with the other sex.

Mill claims that by denying women the same opportunities as men, society will impede the development of approximately half the population and renounce the benefit of their talents. Women’s contributions in many fields will not only benefit the society but grant women themselves the autonomy to pursue their desires to happiness. He assures that if society treats men and women equally, it will be impossible to know the natural abilities of women, or whether there are inherent differences between the two sexes. Mill summarizes his attitude as follows:

It is not sufficient to maintain that women on the average are less gifted than men on the average, with certain of the higher mental faculties, or that a smaller number of women than of men are fit for occupations and functions of the highest intellectual character (48).

As opposed to Patmore's phrase Mill appreciated the worth of women's personal independence as an element of happiness. Likewise, Mill deemed that "what is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing" (38).

Virginia Woolf has also bitterly criticized Patmore's narrative poem about "The Angel in the House." She found his depiction of women far more sarcastic than realistic, a disgusting view that tormented her. Woolf thought of Patmore's phrase as a phantom that represses women and deprives them of their creativity and hinders their ambitiousness. Yet, she has written in her Professions for Women And Other Essays (1995):

And the phantom was a woman, and when I came to know her better I called her after the heroine of a famous poem, The Angel in the House. It was she who used to come between me and my paper when I was writing reviews. It was she who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her (03).

"The Angel in the House" was an embodiment of the Victorian feminine ideal that confines the role of women to the households and hinders their eagerness to freedom. This role was, according to Woolf, extremely hard for a woman who wanted to have a career of a writer.

Woolf was striving to create a world she could believe in. She was convinced that it was up to the women writers to question women's struggle for social and economic equality. Woolf suggests a serious need to kill the Angel of the House. She wrote "Killing

the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer” (5). She importantly, believed that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (162). This prophetic statement summarizes her passion for women’s equality.

Thus, The Victorian woman who became married, must give her husband rights to what her body produced; as sex, bring children, and domestic works. She was considered as machine just to do the domestic affairs.

2. Gender Role and Stereotypes:

Gender inequality has been a debatable issue back to the beginning of the humankind creation. Despite that Adam and Eve creation did not indicate any fundamental gender difference, however it highlights the roots of the problem. As Patuand Antje Schrupp reports out of Adam and Eve story

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made her a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man (7).

Furthermore, Patuand Antje Schrupp claims that the story of Adam and Eve creation did not insert the notion of gender difference since Eve is basically born out of Adam, which means Adam represents the two genders male and female. However the indication of Adam's name to the human being as many cultures and languages did, pictures women as a minority. Thus, as it can be noticed the problematic of gender role has been always floating, back to the beginning of human being creation till nowadays.

Far from the biological and physical appearance, the idea of the distinction between male and female should be out of the discussion. However, every society, ethnic group, or culture has gender role expectations which vary from one group to another and from time to time even within the same group. For instance, our community shows different implement of its convention towards men and women. Particularly, in matters related to marital infidelity. The betrayal of a man is considered as a whim whereas the betrayal of women is considered a crime. This different treatment is based only on the difference of the sexes.

The nineteenth century which represents mostly the Victorian era, shows clearly the issues of gender and stereotypes of marginalizing women. An image of Victorian England was influenced by the industrial mentality, as Briggs illustrates "The masters privileged women since they were less demanding and more obedient"(125). Women were supposed to be passive, weak, domestic and obedient, whereas men seemed to possess virtue, courtesy, morality and reason.

This chasm between male and female roles is a cultural phenomenon that empowers men over women; it is basically a power issue. The controversy of male and female has been always a question of empowerment where men and women's role are determined by the power they are given. As Mitchell Foucault states in an interview entitled "What our Present Is" that "Power is relations; power is not a thing, it is a relationship between two individuals... such that one can direct the behaviour of another or determine the behaviour of another" (410). The power was heading to men in his relation with women. This latter was less educated, less respected, less powered, and even less human being. Women were considered as a problem. As Neff describes "not only working women regarded as problem. All women were problems"(11).

A Victorian girl is most likely to take the role of a good daughter and prepared to be an obedient wife and a caring mother. Klein (1949) declares that “Innocence and inexperience and a cultivated fragility were the characteristic attributes of the Victorian girls” (264). This stereotyping picture of women was an unfair judgment based only on her sex. Because she is a woman, she has to do whatever her society requires her to do, and what is meant by “her society” is basically the man. In this context the English author Ronald Fletcher states that “women were subjected to their men’s authority in many ways” (108). Moreover, the accurate determination of male and female’s function was highlighted by the British poet Alfred Tennyson in his poem “The Princess”

Man for the field and woman for the hearth
Man for the sword and for the needle she
Man with the head and woman with the heart
Man to command and woman to obey
All else confusion (427-431).

Tennyson, in this poem, distinguishes the role of men and women. He insists on women in the Domestic Sphere and men for the Public Sphere. Tennyson’s judgment was based only on sex difference rather than abilities. This demonstrates the inequality of gender role and highlights the stereotype of women in Victorian society. However, the notion of separate spheres and inequality of gender role for both sexes has been gradually changing.

Activists and literature writers challenged the stereotypes and gender role issues by creating fictional characters that defy such notions as well as establishing literary movements that support women mainly feminism. One of the most important manifestations of change, as the writer and the Professor Rod Edmond argues that in the late nineteenth - century is the notion of Transvestitism. This tendency was “nicely captured by a “Du Maurier” cartoon in which a young woman wearing her brother’s shirt,

tie, coat, and hat” (109). Edmond argues that in nineteenth-century writings “the frequent recurrence of the androgyny theme, its realization in terms of Transvestitism, and the blurring of gender lines it expresses, suggest deep anxiety about gender in nineteenth-century Britain” (109). Transvestitism notion has a profound impact. It was not just a matter of fashion or cloth. Actually, it showed a glimmer of hope in women path to be included among the public sphere.

Essentially, stereotype and gender ideology are related to the concept of power. Women were considered powerless because of their sex. The Victorian era seemed to be synonymous with the ideology of the “great men” as Tyson in 2006 stated that “traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective and decisive; they cast women as emotional, weak, nurturing and submissive” (85).

3. Women Writers’ Depiction of Women:

Previously, literature was the field of man; however, women’s suffrage revolutionized the quietness of women in literature. Superficially, women's reason behind practicing literature is to enjoy their writing talents; however the real reason is to resist the dominant oppression of female and showing that literature is not an exclusive male’s matter. As the professor, Alev Karaduman claims that the novel is written by women who not only question, but also resist both the male literary circle and male domination in society (160).

Unlike the previous times, the nineteenth century witnessed the flourish of women literature and the emergence of many female writers in which Elaine Showalter (1977) asserts “the nineteenth century was the age of female novelists; she thought that with the emergence of Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot, the question of women’s efficiency for fiction has been answered” (03-36).

Women writers have narrowly portrayed women's struggles in patriarchal Victorian culture. They strongly fight the strictly religious and hierarchal society. The nineteenth century's female writers handled various barriers when they marched out of their spheres by becoming professional writers. They authenticate their struggles by their writings in this context Salinovic claims in her article "Women Writers of 19th Century Britain" that they based their works on their personal experience and they tackled different themes such as their social status in British society, education, divorce and marriage. Naturally, it is impossible to give the exact female writer number that was influenced by the nineteenth century. Therefore, this period marked some of the best known female writers in history such as Mary Wollstonecraft, The Brontës and Virginia Woolf.

3.1.Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797):

The British author Mary Wollstonecraft was considered as the founding mother of feminism in literature. Her influential feminist work Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) demonstrates the crucial role of education for women. She asserts on education to constitute identity and to create an individual woman personality. Likewise, the English professor and writer Gregory Castle argues that Wollstonecraft's book did not only contributed sharply in defending women's rights essentially, her political, social, and intellectual equality but also influenced several other writers like John Stuart Mill to develop his arguments for women equality. Wollstonecraft was interested in dealing with women issues and supporting their battle for equality, as she declared that the book verbalized "for my sex, not for myself" (Walters 33).

Jenainati and Groves reveal Wollstonecraft's belief is men and women possess the same souls and the same mental capacities; therefore they should enjoy the equal rights as human being. She was deeply influenced by the thoughts of the American and the French

revolutions which essentially treating women's fundamental rights for equality which includes the right to vote and owning property.

Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Women is a feminist document that highlights women rights at a time when women were deprived from their least basic one. However, Wollstonecraft considers education to be the only means to achieve a unique personal identity. Finally, she is the woman writer who strongly fought against the dangers and social discrimination against women during the nineteenth century.

3.2. The Brontë Sisters:

Other notable female writers sincerely depict the depressed situation of women are the Brontës: Charlotte, Emily and Anne. These English writers are remarkable for being successful when women were not having much freedom at home and society in general. Gaskell in 2005 argued that the three sisters wrote under male pseudonyms, Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, respectively, because of sexism ingrained toward woman particularly in the 19th-century society. This scheme increased the Brontës chances to publish their writings. Despite the sisters' tragic life, they maintain successful writing careers. Through their novels, the Brontës depict challenging female characters that were not totally free from the dominant social convention; nevertheless, seek for the deserving partners. However, in a society which pretends to be conservative, it is not enough to redeem the idea of being radical.

3.2.1. Ann Brontë (1820-1849) :

The second and final novel by the youngest sister of the Brontë literary family, Anne Brontë, focused on the above issue in her feminist novel The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848) when she narrated "story of woman's liberation...it describes a woman's escape from the prison house of a bad marriage, and her subsequent attempts to achieve

independence by establishing herself in a career as an artist” (Gilbert and Gubar 80). Helen, the heroine of this novel, introduces the London society during an oncoming season where she should find a respected man, marry him and become an obedient wife. She also has very good prospects of finding such a man, thus she said

I may venture to say, there will be no lack of
suitors; for you can boast a good family, a pretty
considerable fortune and expectations, and, I may as
well tell you likewise-for, if I don't, others will- that
you have fair share of beauty (103).

According to the Brontës, the domestic role of the woman was a persecution attitude. They fought strongly for women's emancipation, as well, being regarded as equal as men.

Accordingly, it was observed from the preface of Ann's fiction, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, the way Anne overtly shows her yearning to be considered as such. She wrote “I am satisfied that if a book is a good one, it is so whatever the sex of the author may be. All novels are or should be written for both men and women to read” (Barker 216).

Anne spotted light on women's oppression in the nineteenth century, since woman writer could not be viewed as talented as her fellows' man or even allowed to read the same books as the man do. She emphasized on women freedom to read and educate without any limitations. The writer Thompson (1999) mentions in his book Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question that:

In the Victorian literature most of the women writers as Emily and Charlotte Bronte, their novels are inherently complicated and concentrates on the woman

question and the ongoing discussions about the position of woman and her nature, they were absolutely conflicted by their own beliefs about the proper roles of women (01- 03).

3.2.2. Charlotte Brontë (1816 – 1855):

The eldest Brontë sisters Charlotte, in her best known work Jane Eyre (1847), declares that “women were supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel as men feel; they need exercise for the faculties and a field of their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer” (111-112). It was assured that women should be totally absent from the political and economical spheres and only regarded as householders. This treatment restricted women capacities and weakened their creative powers. However, Charlotte did not neglect the passionate feeling of love in her protagonist character, as the Chinese writer Wang Guofu argues "Jane Eyre embodies a new conception of women as heroines of vital strength and passionate feelings" (225).

Moreover, when reading Jane Eyre, Villette (1853) and Sherly, (1849) it is noticed that the novels mirror Charlotte Brontë's real life. According to Gaskell, (1990):

The life of Charlotte Brontë is very substance of her novels; three times she summarized what she had imagined, seen or felt. In Jane Eyre she depicted her imaginative life; in Villette, her true moral life; in Shirley, coming out of herself a little- though very little in fact- and standing as it were at the window of her soul, she depicted the corner of Yorkshire where she lived and what little she had seen of human society (133).

Apparently, the parallels between Charlotte's biography and Jane's, is clear in attempt to represent the real Victorian woman life and her struggle when she was not accepted as a

creative human; however, Charlotte demonstrates that her writings neither reflect her personal issues nor show the fascinating femininity ideals. Moreover, Ann Douglas claims in her book The Feminization of American Culture that Charlotte declares "I cannot, when I write, think always of myself and what is elegant and charming in femininity; it is not on these terms, or with such ideas, that I ever took pen in hand"(59).

Charlotte, as many other female writers of her time, rose the bare for women freedom and tried to redeem them far from the imposed stereotype image. Yet, both the Victorian audience and critics did not expect such impact from those writings. The new representation of female characters and the courage to deal with matters related to gender inequality, mainly, in education, politics, economy and marriage, definitely have shocked both Victorian and contemporary readership.

3.2.3. Emily Brontë (1818- 1848) :

The last Brontës sisters, Emily as well, has a great impact on women's liberation portrayal in her single novel Wuthering Heights (1847). Her main character, Catherine Earnshaw is an unusually strong and assertive woman, who does not conform to the stereotyped Victorian "Angel in the House" persona. Carol Senf supplies a powerful argument about the Brontë's writing "is that she combines so many insights into historical evolution and the condition of women into a highly original work" (Senf 203). Emily emphasizes on the emancipation of women by depicting a highly powerful character, who, indeed, seeks for the independence of her own life.

All in all, the Brontës sisters were not only remarkable authors but also remarkable women who believed in their goals than to be supported by men whether a father or later, by a husband. Being successful authors was mainly due to their hard life which was depicted in many of their writings. the Brontës made from their weaknesses powerful

fictional characters which reflect their own educated, independent and powerful women view.

3.3. Virginia Woolf (1882- 1941):

Woolf was among the most inspiring female writers in the twentieth 20th century. She writes and criticizes the idealistic women of the Victorian era in her own way. She was a pioneer in the field of feminism and the struggle for the rights of women, their independence and emancipation. Her book A Room of One's Own (1929) was a title of women's independence. For Woolf, to own a room is synonymous to being independent. She has inspired activist women writers. Women need to achieve economic freedom and have the same intellectual opportunities as a man do.

Woolf claims for the principle that the two genders should work side by side with no mentioned differences either mental or physical. Women were deprived of their individuality. Their lives were confined to the home under severe family life restrictions. Women suffer tyranny at home and outside. She wants every woman to react against repression and formalities of Victorian times. Inevitably, writing remains, for Woolf, the most effective means for a woman to be successful in advocating freedom. She believes that "books are the mirrors of the soul" (Woolf et al 13). She, also, confirms that the soul should work in harmony with intelligence to show up a writer's creativity. Snaith, Anna 2003 said that writing according to Virginia Woolf is a crucial part of feminism transit from private sphere to public sphere.

In her lightest work Orlando (1928), a playful satiric novel, Virginia Woolf reflects her lover and close friends in real life through the fictional protagonist personality of Orlando. The novel describes the adventures of a poet who changes sex from man to woman. Its main focus is on gender differences. A feminist such as Woolf who was

seeking for absolute equality between sexes, is the one who wants to prove intrinsically no essential difference between the biological construction of the male and female (Junho). When Orlando wakes up and finds him/herself a woman, he/she does not feel any uneasy embarrassment. It is only when Orlando interacts with the society that he/ she realizes the difference. Woolf believes that from inside every human being is both male and female and it is the society which is behind the identity construct. More than exaggerated, the novel appears as if it is a revenge of all men who denied women's individuality and status, men who believe women is better seen than heard.

4- Feminism and Religion (Blasphemy)

In the 19th century, the Christianity was the dominant religion in Europe. The society's law towards women was predominately attached to the bible texts and to women's portrayal. Victorian feminists cautiously dealt with the concept "Religion", they thought that it was the sole obstacle behind the society's views towards women. Regarding women issues, the bible was either unfair or more artlessly unsatisfactory. Sue Morgan declares in this context that "Historically, the Christian faith has been a powerful exponent of sexual inequality while simultaneously declaring the equality of souls before God, irrespective of gender" (2).

In the same context, Judith Baskin reports that the bible sometimes portrayed women as once equal to men and other times as their own property and subordination. The religious activities were approximately the only Victorian women's practice that could be fulfilled freely outside home.

Commonly, Feminists see religion as a conservative force because it acts as an ideology that legitimates patriarchal power and maintains women's subordination in the family and the wider society. This idea did not come randomly, but it was one of the

results behind the women subversion in the nineteenth century. The meaning of subversion differs from one culture to another. For the Victorians, subversion means to deprive woman from education, divorce, love relations and being totally equal with men. Feminists believe that religion thwarts women improvement and creativity because the array of occupations and households decrease their chances to fight for their alleged rights and concerns. Thus, feminists were totally convinced that religion did not serve their interests. Even responsibilities that fell within the home were under the authority of the husband to delegate to his wife. Nevertheless, it was more often assumed that the primary role of women was dedicated to the religious education of children. Feminists did not only criticize the role of society but they also have criticized the bible itself. Helen H, Gardener (1885) states that the “religion and the Bible require of women everything, and give her nothing. They ask her support and her love and repay her with contempt and oppression” (97). Gardner attempts to link between Christianity and the subjugation of women. Many of these ideas were collected into her first book, Men, Women, and Gods, and Other Lectures (1885). Furthermore, she asserts that religion simply makes a man more intensely what he was before. Gardener harshly opposed religion, not only the concept of “Religion” but everything could control people especially women in such way. She states in the same book, denying its whole meaning:

That Moses or Confucius, Mohammed or Paul, Abraham or Brigham Young assert that their particular dogma came directly from God, and that it was a personal communication to either one or all of these favored individuals, is a fact that can have no power over us unless their teachings are in harmony with our highest thought...”I am parallel with your richest development; I still lead your highest thought; none of my teaching shock your sense of justice. Not one (par. 05).

There is no doubt about the highly important role of religion in the life of human beings. The reason behind its importance was not only because of the judgments, but it is the key to understand its moral concerns.

Additionally, in her book Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain Sue Morgan overtly unveils the dilemma of religion and feminism in the Victorian era. She declares a crucial truth in her saying “The Victorians lived with, in, for, and against religion” (73).

In Britain, feminists have begun to take seriously the role of religion within the movement. Religious affiliation has made significant and beneficial steps in which women play an important role. There is a causal link between feminism and religion. Women’s participation and involvement in religious activities develop in them a considerable degree of practical independence. Education is, also, an instrument that provides women with the necessary responsibilities of motherhood and citizenship, and implants in them the moral and religious values. Hardy states an example of an educated woman who participated in English foreign missionaries. Her status and skill as a doctor afforded her broader opportunities and greater freedom than the other female missionaries. Despite the fact, it remains more difficult for a woman to acquire her due rights under an established religious authority. Thus, conservatism in Christianity keeps religion far more incompatible with feminism. Nancy Hardesty also challenges the conventional wisdom that any movement for women’s right is a secular one because religion inherently oppressive.

Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has attempted to illustrate the characteristics of the Victorian era from different perspectives and brought to light the general conditions of the Victorian social life. We have provided a short overview about the Victorian women and

their domestic and societal roles. We have tackled female contribution in the field of literature and examined the recurrent images that are presented in their novels.

The chapter has also examined the feminist attitudes towards religion and dominant values.

We have, consequently, resulted that the Victorian women writers were excited by the values of their conservative society and how the feminist movement through women's novels made a hue and cry among the prevailing stereotypes.

Chapter Two

Hardy's Feminist consciousness

Introduction:

In this chapter we attempt to spot light to Hardy's exposure of matters related to women's sex and sexual desires. In addition, we endeavor to highlight Hardy's criticism of marriage as the ultimate goal of sex. Hardy distinctly showed his skepticism of the Victorian's institution of marriage that led him to question certain religious convictions. We also examine Hardy's religious views that differ from the prominent existing ones, particularly, those related to women's emancipation. The reason that caused a lot of confusion about Hardy's treatment of women subjects, which divided his audience and critics views between either Hardy's being a Misogynist or a Misandry.

1. Sex and Sexuality:

The Victorian literature mostly covers the concerns about love, sex, and marriage among the Victorian deeds and intellectual practices especially towards women. Thomas Hardy, in particular, had a profound instinctive comprehension of female nature, and he was especially keen on managing women's anguish, and experience of distress—female delicacy, women's agony, the torment of living as a lady. Mostly, his reclamation about the principle of the respectable girl that "should be completely ignorant about sex and sexuality until initiated by her husband on the wedding night" (Mitchell 269).

In the early nineteenth century, being attached to the issues of the relation between love and sex is a kind of taboos for writers. With time, novelists have gradually broken these limits in their writings. Accordingly, forbidden subjects were openly discussed mostly by the Victorian novelist Thomas Hardy. Hardy had successfully described the innate nature of women. He, shockingly, expressed the sexual desire of his characters as part of their daily life habits. He also found no reason behind this shame. "It is said that if a

man was not ashamed of hunger and thirst there was absolutely no reason for him to be ashamed of sex" (Tyagi 94). Most feminist critics agree that the theme of women and sexuality is central in Hardy's novels. Rosalind Miles observes that they are "the summit of his highest endeavor, his initial inspiration and his ultimate goal" (44).

In his novels, Hardy stresses on the physicality of women and their sexual vitality. He kept in presenting women's voluptuousness and attraction, a view which is repugnantly reviled by critics and contemporaries. The presentation of women in Hardy's novels seems to be superior to that of the societal traditions. He portrays his heroines erotically. He particularly represents their body parts with much intensity and distinctness. A woman becomes a victim of her body. Her life in the story is determined by the body and the beauty she possesses.

Hardy challenged the established standards and the norms of the Victorian culture. Critics do not favour Hardy's views and see that he is against the Victorian prudishness and conventions and describe his treatment as wild and idolatrous. Despite the quality of the human depiction of his heroines as imperfect but lovable, Hardy was charged of misrepresenting womankind (Rosemari). The image of the less-than-perfect nature of some of Hardy's heroines, the state of being sensual and weak prevents them from being granted the opportunities given to men and denies their legal rights and privileges (Rosemari). Hardy asserts that the model of the perfect woman remains unattainable. A woman is like man. Her shortness is similar to his. This imperfection leads inevitably to the female sufferance and the iniquities between sexes. Rosemari Morgan notes, Since women, like men, must fall short of perfection, the more worthy and desirable female model should, in all reasonableness, as Hardy saw it, embody less than perfect qualities for presenting readers with humanly imperfect, sexually challenging heroines. He was, to his hurt and

indignation, charged not only with misogyny, but also with misrepresenting womankind (*Oxford*).

Besides, Hardy's explicit treatment of sex in this novel aroused a storm of protest among his readers who had inhibitions caused by the Victorian notion of prudery and sexual morality. Hardy is considered as "grimy" in describing intimate moments of love affairs, for instance, his description of the sexual relation, as the scene of Tess's rape by Alec in Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891) and the scene of Arabella's relation with Jude in his last novel Jude the Obscure (1895) in his fictional region in south England "Wessex". Hardy, through his focus on the sexual side of his characters mainly females, attempts to be more realistic. His novels are based on his own real life experience which allows him to present the human life in a perfect style. Hardy's novels seem to be controversial and were castigated for their social and moral ideas. They upset and annoy readers' well-known view of the manner in which things are: They challenge received opinion and decline to comply with traditional social and moral values (Correa).

Both of Katherine Rogers (1975) and Patricia Stubbs (1979) tend to think that although Hardy's novels view of the world were radical and broad-minded; they keep some of the characteristically negative attitude towards women that were dominant by the end of the nineteenth century. Same as Hardy's portrayal those women were treated just as creatures that have no desires and no expectations. They simply need to leave and work for the welfare of different creatures around them. To demystify Hardy's attitude towards women in short, women must struggle to shape their proper lives and must act of their own volition in a society which is dominated by men and continues to be unfriendly to them.

Sex and sexuality is a highly sensitive topic to be dealt with, in the time of Hardy's novels. Hardy's openness to sexuality is considered as a treatment of the relative prominent

issues of sex. Some of Hardy's novels received massive and harsh criticism by the Victorian audience and critics because of their involvement of sexual contents; however the exaggeration in his criticism to an extent that compelled him to abandon writing novels. This is more likely an evidence of how harsh his community was. Thomas Hardy's novels are not pornographic novels; he uses sex in a dramatic plot in order to simulate a painful reality of Sexual persecution. Thomas Hardy as Victorian writer surpassed the limits in describing the sexuality of his characters that put his novels in a special category in literature. Though all the critiques, the novel still enjoy great popularity.

2. The tragedy of marriage:

Feminists constantly regard marriage as a social issue for women. Because of the unequal status between husband and wife in their partnership, women's role diminishes. The brilliant American feminist writer Betty Friedan notes in The Feminine Mystique (1963) that the women treatment is a kind of enslavement. She argues:

Each suburban wife struggles with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slip cover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night- she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question-- 'Is this all (85).

Friedan highlights women's situation in the relationship of marriage where women lose all their chances of personal achievement, under the full submission to serve their husbands.

Victorian women were dehumanized; they were deprived from most of their political and social rights; they did not have the right to be educated and their only role within the society was a domestic role, mainly to get married and have children. Thus, marriage during this period was seen as the only fate for women and it was considered as a

way of escaping from the male-dominated family oppression for many others. Women were not supposed to have the least freedom to handle their own affairs even by marriage, as Blackstone (1978) argues:

The husband and wife are one person in law; that is, the very being, or legal existence of a woman is suspended during marriage, or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection and cover she performs everything (01-02).

Hardy aversion to marriage is a result of the society's attitude towards it. The Victorian society sobs their women rights under what they called "marriage". As Basch explains women were deprived from their personal property as well losing any legal right immediately after marriage before marriage acts of 1870 and 1882.

Accordingly, Hardy criticizes the notion of marriage. He has devoted most, if not all, of his novels to the issues and subjects related to it. According to some Hardy's contemporary critics, Hardy's depiction of the role of marriage and sex especially in his latest novel Jude the Obscure as Penny Boumelha argues that Hardy puts for the first time the examination of sexual relationships at the center of his novel and makes the tragedy turn on marriage. Though Hardy indicates in his postscript that the centered theme of the novel was not marriage when he says: "It is curious that some of the papers should look upon the novel as a manifesto on 'the marriage' question" (although of course, it involves it) (190); however, the reviewers considered it as the main novel's theme due to Hardy's characterizations of his heroines in marriage.

Hardy through his novels, essentially Jude the Obscure, declines the idea that makes women as a property for man after marriage. The novelist offers women a voice reflecting the anxiety and ambiguity of their changing role in the society. One of his most

successful heroines, Bathsheba Everdene, best articulates women's difficulty in expressing themselves. In her effort to dissuade Farmer Boldwood from his marriage proposition as a business transaction in Far From the Madding Crowd (1874), Bathsheba states "It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in a language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs" (308). Hardy breaks the silence of women by introducing female characters that express his skepticism of marriage institution. He shows it clearly in Sue the heroine of his novel Jude the Obscure.

Hardy also insists on the idea that marriage perspective of the Victorian era is totally different from what it was before, in the Romantic period. The woman character the Widow Edlin in Jude the Obscure notarizes his idea when she says: "Matrimony has grown to be that serious in these days that one really does feel afeard to move in it at all. In my time we took it more careless; and I don't know that we were any the worse for it!"(440). In addition, Richard Gill in his discussion of the English novel dedicates a headline called "marriage" to Jude the Obscure and by quoting Sue's letter to Jude emphasizes "But later in the 19th century, there are indications that marriage might not be so valued" (399)

Hardy criticizes the notion of marriage in an attempt to convince his readers with many of his expectations. "Hardy does not put marriage at the end of his novel as a final resolution. Marriage for many characters starts at the beginning of his fiction, and thus, presents a reversal of readers' expectations" (Keshavarz 371).

Marriage has been dependably a difficult decision. It puts individuals between two choices. The first one is the personal which goes back to the personal preference of the individual as a strong relationship based on love and understanding, will not be sufficient to the stability of marriage; unless it is followed by a second choice, which is a social one: choosing the a spouse also requires paying attention to the social class of that individual

and the how economically s/he is ready to sustain and support a family. Hardy preserves a kind of unhappy conventional marriage; he escaped the tragic doom of his pioneer fictional characters. For instance, Sue's remarks: "For a man and woman to live on intimate terms when one feels as I do is adultery, in any circumstances, however legal"(Hardy 266); however, when she tells Jude, "We must conform!"(409), "I have thought that I am still his wife!" through Sue's words Hardy shows the careless feelings about marriage as a legal institution.

Based on the necessity that Foucault believes in and considering what have mentioned above , it is justifiable to say that, on the one hand, Hardy intentionally criticizes the conventional marriage .On the other hand, Jude the Obscure implicitly supports such an institution of marriage. The Victorian period is not the suitable time for the unconventional, marginal discourses of marriage. As Jude says, "Our ideas were fifty years too soon."(Hardy 355) It is obvious that Hardy is influenced by the dominant discourse of his own time. He has definitely created an intellectual female character (Sue) and a nonconformist male character (Jude), and brought them together through an unconventional unity and finally has left them defeated because the time is not ripe for their ideas yet.

In Jude the Obscure, Hardy attacks the institution of marriage through Jude because it is seen as the root cause of so much human suffering if it joins into a permanent wedlock two incompatible temperaments. After his marriage with Arabella Jude realizes the folly of a permanent union between an ill-assorted couple, although it is then too late to withdraw. Marriage becomes a tragedy not only as a social theme but as an institution whose form lends itself to the shape of the novel Hardy is trying to write. This tragic end was described as "the tragic crimes of two bad marriages." (Hardy 174)

Therefore, we can conclude that the "Hardy" we have known as a critic of "institutional marriage" is not the only "Hardy" we may find in *Jude the Obscure*. It is evident that the tragic fate of Sue and Jude can be the example to be used to convince the Victorian readers that there is no chance of happiness for those who choose an unconventional marital state.

3. Thomas Hardy and the Truth of Religiosity:

The influence of Christianity and the Bible on the Victorian literary authors is evident in most of the period literature. The Christian doctrine plays an important role in the writer's perception of the world. Therefore, religion is the core of Victorians, as the British historian Thomas Carlyle states that "a man's Religion is the chief fact with regard to him" (25), Carlyle insists that religion in the Victorian era is fundamental part of people's identity. However the author Geoffrey Harvey in his work The Complete Critical Guide to Thomas Hardy, believes that in addition to the advances of science and increasing industrialization as well, the impact of numerous remarkable writers as Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Sir Charles Lyell, and John Stuart Mill marked a substantial change in the Victorian England mainly in certain writers' perspectives on religion highlighted by Thomas Hardy.

Accordingly, the impact of religion is profound in the life of the late Victorian writer Thomas Hardy. Hardy possessed a religious history. He was born into a Christian family that had significant connection with the church, which influenced Hardy's relation with God on the personal level. Furthermore, Hardy was interested in reading theological books as well as reading the bible. (Millgate) James Townsend states that factually, there are roughly more than (2000) references to the bible in his works, some of them are explicit reference and others are roundabout. Some critic of Thomas Hardy

have a constant belief that Hardy is deeply connected with his religious background, as the Professor Dalziel insists that Hardy's Evangelical sermon influences deeply on his writings which makes him a passionate Christian.

Hardy presents multiple characters that had strong religious beliefs. He, in fact, does not neglect the spiritual arc of most of his characters. The English schoolmaster and writer Timothy Hands argues that Thomas Hardy portrayed several religious characters in his novels that had different ways in their religiosity. Characters were described pious as Hardy reflects Jude in Jude the Obscure, particularly in his early life. Accordingly, Timothy Hands notes the religious attitude of Thomas Hardy's heroine, Elfride Swancourt toward her lover in his novel A Pair of Blue Eyes, in a quote claimed to be borrowed from Hardy's first wife, that "she will take him as she does the Bible, find out and understand all she can, and 'swallow the rest in a lump, by simple faith.'" (Hands 55) In addition, Hardy's novels introduce many of his characters practising their everyday religious rituals, which are evident for instance in his novels, The Hand of Ethelberta and Desperate Remedies. The heroines of Hardy's novels are churchgoers, and delightfully say their prayers. The amount of such description and use of religion related matters makes the Professor Marlene Springer describe him as "an author, Hardy out-alluded virtually every allusionist.... he was virtually a walking Bible" (4).

However, scholars show always contradictory opinions about Hardy's religious leanings. In an interview with William Archer in 1901, Hardy stated that: "my practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist. What are my books but one plea against man's inhumanity to man, to woman, and to the lower animals?" (147). Hardy believes in supporting powerless creations, particularly in his novels that mainly advocates the weakest creation of his time 'women'. He strongly supports women emancipation, the reason behind the rejection of most of his novels by society and the clergy, as well as

receiving harsh criticism that questions Hardy's personal beliefs. Fundamentally, due to Hardy exposure to the sexuality of his characters and his depiction of his female characters as free as they are from the dominant social conventions (Morgan).

The irreconcilability conflict between Hardy's biography and his works reflects profoundly the conflict between his emotional side and his intellect. Hardy clings to the hope that God is positive force but intellectually he cannot support this idea with evidence of any kind. Accordingly, his art, as the author Mary Ann Stotko states, "oscillates between hope and doubt while at its heart lays the everlasting and unanswered question about the nature of God" (47). She insists that the contention among feeling and reason in Hardy's mission for confidence was the controlling power behind Hardy's workmanship in religious terms. Hardy's works do not give a reasonable image of his religious perspectives as those of his counterparts, nor would one be able to recognize a discernible impact of a particular way of thinking. In his works he didn't state or name a specific conviction, his motivation is to investigate reality. He demands that his craft communicates impressions not feelings and in this manner cannot be deciphered as an individual explanation or conviction.

It is noteworthy that Hardy, as far as religion and confidence are concerned, he tries to mirror the uncertainty and free-thought which are the consequence of his huge readings and leanings. He finds little comfort in Christianity, yet he is unfit to dismiss scriptural religious philosophy or to reexamine Christianity to suit the cutting edge framework. As Florence Emily Hardy claims "his ideas take a more nebulous view, which may be called Transmittive (122) Hardy's spiritual dilemma is a critical one. He neither could disregard God's presence since God is constantly obvious in nature, nor he could acknowledge the Christian doctrine in its present shape. In a letter to Maurice Hewlett, a novelist and poet,

Hardy writes that “what we call immorality, irreligion. &c, are often true morality, true religion, quite freely to the end” (Selected Letters 224).

Altogether, Hardy does not preclude the presence from securing God and religion; however, he trusts that religion alone is not sufficient. In regard to Hardy's novels, faith exists but it does not fully convince him.

4. Hardy between Misogyny and Misandry:

Thomas Hardy was subjected much criticism about the theme of women femininity and sexuality. He cares a lot for women. In his early anonymous published writings, Hardy was thought to be a woman. Yet, Katherine Rogers (1975) and Paula Black (2006) suspected Hardy of being a misogynist (Rosemarie 28).

Hardy's treatment of his women characters is seen from different angles. And the readings of Hardy and his characters were not always favorable. Katherine Rogers suggested that Hardy's creation of his women characters was negatively biased. (Kramer 99) “According to Hardy, women are irrational, irresponsible, vain and inconstant.” (Childers 317) They are, also, depicted that they never have a legitimate chance to succeed on any level. Besides, he creates an unconventional woman whose passionate desire urges her to seek love from many lovers which is a subversion of the ethical codes of the society.

Another reason has led to accuse him as such is the tragic outcomes of most of his fictional heroines and his harshly punishing women for their open defiance of Victorian social expectations. Hardy's character ‘Tess’ displaces from one difficult situation to another till her loveless marriage. Her suffering was because of her own destiny, because of the hardships that come along with her. Tess is a victim to man's atrocity and continuous torture. However, Hardy perceives Tess as a “pure” woman. Hardy wants to show the causes behind the sufferings of his characters. His positive attitude makes his

presentation of the female the most favorable and thus, this proves his guiltless of being a misogynist but a real feminist. He oftentimes exposed the failing of women and their caprice. However, one never feels that Hardy demeans women, or finds anything strongly opposing them. “ whoever wants to claim that Hardy didn’t write positively about women doesn’t understand the genre he wrote in!” Moreover, almost all Hardy's female characters are women who desperately struggle for success in life and not failure. And they don't cease to tackle their misery, but society itself prevents them to succeed. In Tess of the D’Urbervilles, despite it challenged the sexual moral of the late Victorian England, ‘Tess’ is an example of a woman character who does whatever she can do to get out of the misery she undergoes, “despite her lazy father, her naive mother, her non-virginity, her dead baby, her husband who leaves her because she is not a virgin.”(28)

The discussion has been intensified to decide the truths that lead Hardy to such kind of defending women. Widdowson, in his opinion, the steady foregrounding of sex and sexuality in Hardy's books “ forces us to debate whether Hardy is a proto-feminist, sympathetically exposing the victimization of women in a patriarchal society, or a closet misogynist, terrified, like many of his male contemporaries, by the rise of the New Woman” . Hardy has all the potentials of being increasingly distrustful about his frame of mind both to his female characters and to women's feminist issue.

Hardy associates traits like lack of will confusion, indecisiveness and inconstancy with woman. (Childers 328) Women without will are those who keep refusing men’s will until they are forced to accept and surrender. This use is frequently repeated in Hardy’s fiction.

Conclusion

Thomas Hardy in his novels covers the reality of the Victorian society's oppression of women. He has a sense of women struggle that motivates him to speak up for them even though he is a male. Hardy accuses the Victorians for the submissiveness that women face in every aspect of life. Hardy through his over-expression of women's sexual desire, in fact, he is giving a defending argument against the male domination of his time. To show that women are like men naturally have instincts of sexuality that should not be neglected either by society or religion, which he criticizes in most of his novels for being biased to men. And consider marriage as the permission of any sexual practices which puts women under the mercy of their husbands. Hardy's interesting opinion about sex, marriage and religion is a result of an oppressive environment that he witnesses most of his life. Hardy's women are unique for being out of the usual, and they show the freedom of expressing and exercising independence that reflects Hardy's vision of women.

Chapter Three

Obscurity in Jude the Obscure

Introduction:

In this chapter, we are going to conduct attentively the analysis of Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure*, aiming to unveil objectively his ideas. We attempt to clarify Thomas Hardy's identification of women's love and its impact on their sexual freedom, highlighting its strife between purity and sexual desire. Moreover, we endeavour to examine the issue of women identity and her tussle to achieve autonomy in Victorian male society. This chapter as well is an attempt to illustrate the influence of Thomas Hardy's work obscurity on his characters. Additionally, we tackle Thomas Hardy's characterization of the concept of "New" Vs "Fallen" Woman. Furthermore, we seek in a further study of the extent of Hardy's women newness characteristics as well as her flaws.

1. Love between passion and purity:

The majority of Hardy's female characters are innately inactive, an attribute that makes them powerless, however not mediocre. Hardy strongly attempted to accommodate his adherence in the conviction of a characteristic contrast among people while upholding for equity between them.

The relation between love and human sexual instinct is one of the main Hardy's themes in most of his novels. Predominantly, Hardy characterizes the meaning of love in two dimensions, the erotic-animalistic love and the platonic love. The latter does not correspond to the platonic idealism which is based on the purity of love, however, the driven sexual nature of human being cannot be totally denied. Even though, love interactions have typically correlated with the nature of lovers as Claudia MacTeer mentions "love is never any better than the lover. Wicked people love wickedly, violent people love violently, weak people love weakly, stupid people love stupidly, but the love of a free man is never safe" (Morrison).

In his last darkest novel, Thomas Hardy presents the notion of the “platonic love” through the character Sue in her relationship with the protagonist Jude and his teacher Phillotson, but from a different perspective. The latter had a physical repulsive relationship with her. Sue’s refusal of having sexual affairs with her legal husband was not for her platonic thought, but due to her rejection to him personally. As he says, “the ethereal, fine-nerved, sensitive girl, quite unfitted by temperament and instinct to fulfill the conditions of the matrimonial relation with Phillotson, possibly with scarce any man...” (261). Also, she regretted her being convinced of her marriage only after she recognized she loved Jude. Through the novel, Phillotson expresses the character of a respectable man in an exaggerated way. He allows his wife to go with another man just because he is respectable! Or, he is no longer dazzled by the ideals! Phillotson thinks that Sue and Jude “seem to be one person split into two!”(274). Sue’s abandonment from her husband left the shame on him and marked his failure as what Jude says:

He would have had a day of despair if the news had not arrived during his sweet Sue's presence, but even at this moment he had visions of how Phillotson's failure in the grand university scheme would depress him when she had gone (Hardy120).

Sue has taken from her love toward Jude an argument for her decision. However, it is not enough neither for the society nor for her to be forgiven.

The erotic-animalistic love has mostly presented in Arabella character, the shrewd woman. Arabella’s animalism appears in her selfishness; she is a self-centered character. Even though, she had lived within a religious society, she is distinguished by her multiple relations and freedom from any social restrictions. Arabella’s violation of the society’s taboos was the secret behind Hardy’s portrayal as such. Even though, Hardy endeavours,

through picturing a completely different two characters, to indicate the notion of platonic love versus the animalistic one. He depicts his heroine, Sue, to be pure from any sexual desires towards men. Though, she gave up on her belief and eventually, she did it. Despite Sue's love for Jude, she did not have sexual affairs with him only, when she fears to lose him. Basically, she has her sexual affair not for her own desire but for her man. Arabella is the opposite she had sex with Jude to fulfill her own desires more than Jude's.

Accordingly, the notion of platonic love did not exist in Hardy's novel, despite his trial to show such concepts through Sue. Hardy's Jude Fawley, the protagonist, links the two female characters in the same category of animalistic love. Hardy summarizes the relationship that goes between love and sex in depicting two female characters supposed to be different; however, the two indicate the same love that cannot be void of the human sexual instincts.

2. Women's Identity:

Liberal feminists confirm that a woman should utilize her own insights and standards in settling on a choice. One of the best known figures of liberalism in general and particularly liberal feminism is John Stuart Mill who underscores self-determination in women and scrutinizes their accommodation to men. He states that "All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission and yielding to the control of others" (232).

The notion of minimizing women and considering them as followers instead of rational and independent humans is a solid and essential idea for years. In reviewing Mill's works, Donner and Fumerton argue that, "Individuality involves developing an identity

that is authentic to the person and autonomy is clearly essential for this project. “Being autonomous means self-determined and free from the dominating will of others” (62).

Thomas Hardy’s depiction of his characters in *Jude the Obscure* adopts the idea of granting his females an authentic character. In the case of Sue, Hardy depicts one of the most freewill and independent woman. Sue does not pursue and act dependently on traditions, essentially on the grounds that other people do. She acts out of her own decision and feeling of good and bad to build up a real existence which is “authentic” to her character. Sue proves her autonomy when she declares that “I shall do as I choose” (185). Many critics see that Thomas Hardy visualizes his female character, Sue, as victim. This idea has been supported by Brady in “Hardy’s Narrator on Women”, as he states that Sue is “the victim of her own sexuality” and “nature’s law” (99). In addition, Kaur believes that Sue is “the victim of the conventional codes of morality” (71). Those critics envisage Thomas Hardy’s female as a powerless character. However our conception is that Sue is a proto feminist character rather than a victim. She cannot be described as victim only because she is not compelled any of her deeds, rather she is free in most of her actions.

In a society where women are oppressed by men, Hardy delineates a character like Sue who is obstinate and endeavours to have power over her fate and searches for her independence and autonomy. In her speech with Phillotson to persuade him to let her go and to show her sense of individuality and self-determination, they discussed

And do you mean, by living away from me, living by yourself?

Well, if you insisted, yes. But I meant living with Jude.

As his wife?

As I choose (266-267).

Sue believes in every choice she makes. She pursues her instincts, searching for her identity and individuality that have been stolen by the traditions of a society that she never cares about. It was more than just a love affair; she is not leaving her husband for a lover, rather, she leaves a convention that she never accepts to find herself. Despite all the struggles she faces in order to find her uniqueness in a society that totally ignores her, an innate sense tells her about an undefined identity that no one else can understand. This sense motivates her to find her true self, based on her own perception and desire to detach her from social conventions. Sue battles to discover her identity against the structures allowed by the world she possesses. Her internally persuasive discourse urges her to look for her individual rights in a general public that needs to deny them.

One of the important phases of liberalism, in the late Victorian age, was cultural changes in the relationship between the two sexes. Having equal status in a relation between man and woman, and not the superiority of the man she is related with, is a new concept encapsulated in the relation of friendship. As the American literary critic William Deresiewicz demonstrates that “as standard social practice as well as social ideology, friendship between the sexes appears to have been nonexistent before the 19th century” (55) and the reason for this was “the subordination of women to men; the separation of male and female spheres; the confinement of women to the roles of daughter, wife and mother” (56). Thomas Hardy using this notion of change, he noted that Sue relations, whether with her legal husband or with her lover, were unusual relations. Sue chose to follow her own understanding of a relationship between men and women. She told Jude that “Fewer women like marriage than you suppose, only they enter into it for the dignity it is assumed to confer, and the social advantages it gains them sometimes—a dignity and an advantage that I am quite willing to do without” (309).

Sue's refusal of marriage as the ideal fate for women was based on her own desire of freedom, since marriage is submissive to women and subjugates her to her husband. As Elizabeth Langland argues:

Her feeling about marriage and sex derive from a sense of her
Individuality and independence, which seem to her threatened
by sexual or formal commitment. Sue wants an identity of her own.
she does not see marriage as her ultimate goal in life.
she is fearful of submerging her identity in that of another or worse, of
becoming a kind of chattel (22).

Being in a free relationship as it can be in a friendship is more likely what she looks for.

Sue's fear of losing her identity is the reason behind her rejection of marriage. When she is attempting to convince Phillotson to let her go with Jude, she says "be my friend and have pity" (266). She asks him:

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... Then we might be
friends, and meet without pain to either (266).

Even with Jude, who supposed to be her lover she insists on keeping their friendship relation rather than having a sexual one. In a subsequent response to Jude, she said: "with the freedom of a friend" (119). She considers Jude as a friend and not as a person who possessed her. She said: "Jude, please still keep me as your friend and associate" (190). Sue's insistence on having this kind of relation with the men of her life is due to her constant search for her identity that she would not lose even for the man she respects or more even for the man she loves. At her weakest moment in her breakdown in the end of the novel, when she left Jude, Phillotson tells her "under the affection of independent views you are as enslaved to the social code as any woman I know!" Sue replies "Not

mentally. But I have not the courage of my views” (288). Though Sue submits to the conventions of her society at the end, however she never gives up on her autonomy and her own mental independence. The only thing that distinguishes her as well allows her to be the person she is.

Sue’s journey searching for her identity is the precious thing she lives for. She fights for her independence through every decision of her life. Her commitment to herself is unique in a time when woman was not considered as a self.

3. Fiction Obscurity:

Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* was not the first title of the novel. The novelist has changed the title several times because of the rejection of society of its title and content. *Jude the Obscure* was the last and formal addressed title. Actually, it is the one which fits the work skillfully. Alexander Fischler reports in his article entitled “A Kinship with Job: Obscurity and Remembrance in Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*” “the obscurity dominates the work” (515), and Hardy was familiar with the allegory derived from this title from the first time. The characters, the events and the challenging tone of the novel were not the only obscure aspects of the novel. The mysterious facts were also surrounding Hardy’s impetus behind his abstention from writing novels whether it was a final decision the moment he started editing his last novel, on purpose, or whether to protect himself from the society’s insults and annoyance (Fischler 533)

The obscurity has multiple meanings; darkness is one of them according to Oxford English Dictionary which is the central allusion that Hardy wants to achieve through his characters and their situations. Jude declares to Sue “There is this advantage in being poor obscure people like us...nobody inquired, nobody suspected it” (Hardy 306). Due to Jude, being talent, ambitious or educated will be nothing. Because of poverty, he

remains obscure. Thus, he relates poverty to obscurity when he describes himself as an obscure being. The frequent repetition of the word “poor” such as “poor soul”, “poor dear!” taps on the hearing of Jude from his both women adds more conviction that there is a bind relation between poverty and obscure state of Jude.

3.1. Female Obscurity:

Hardy’s novels are ambiguous on the potential of close relations between women to form an alternative space for the expression of female desire. The female characters in the novel Sue and Arabella are not void of this enigma. Their personalities and actions reflect a part of this obscurity. Hardy represents his characters in *Jude the Obscure* within conflicting roles which mainly occur between them, their societies and their passions as Amy M. King introduces it as a “conflict between flesh and spirit”. Moreover, they are the main line of the plot in *Jude the Obscure*. Jude is between both Arabella and Sue; the endless oscillation between the loveless marriage with Arabella and the inaccessible and unattainable, yet desirable relation with his cousin, Sue.

3.1.1. Arabella Donn:

Arabella is the first woman in Jude’s life, his wife and his destroyer. She was depicted as heartless seductress, and who was repeatedly interpreted as such. Arabella’s actions and views are animalistic (“I Will Survive: Jude the Obscure’s Arabella”). She was described by Clark as “the fleshy animal Arabella” (58). The scene of killing the pig between Jude and Arabella clarifies this side of her personality. The possibility of life and demise among Jude and Arabella remains as the real obscurity between them. At the point when Jude must murder a pig, he does as such rapidly and benevolently. However, Arabella needs the pig executed gradually for the blackpot. Jude said: “It is a hateful business!”(76).Unlike Arabella who said: “Pigs must be killed” and when the pig is dead,

Jude says wonderfully "Thank God!" "He's dead." she answers him "What's God got to do with such a messy job as pig-killing, I should like to know! ... Poor folks must live" (76). This dialogue between Jude and Arabella summarizes the way Arabella views, feels and behaves towards Jude and society in general; Hardy has represented her as "a complete and substantial female animal—no more, no less" (42). The only thing Arabella cares about is she herself. Arabella's faking personality covered some of her obscurity also; however she was the least obscure one. Arabella practiced her mysteriousness in her relations. She prefers sexual affairs with Jude rather than emotional relationships. Arabella needs a beneficial sexual relationship so as to live. She is looking for another buddy so as to satisfy her sexual wants. Jude confirms this truth and he does not trust her anymore "There was something particularly uncongenial in the idea of Arabella, who had no more sympathy than a tigress with his relations or him, coming to the bedside of his dying aunt, and meeting Sue." (219). She is a woman who has no qualms of conscience, no scruples. She will employ any method; will go to any extent, to achieve her goal. Arabella is sex incarnate. She makes every effort to get by as a Victorian woman while likewise satisfying the obligations of the Mother Earth (goddess), which subsequently portrays her just like an awful, childish, and unbridled individual.

Arabella, in any case, stays glad. Her objectives in life were not to elevate the solicitations of society or the congregation - rather, her objectives in life were basically man, sex, and happiness. As she reports after the death of her husband Jude, "Well! ... it's well to keep chances open. And I can't pick and choose now as I could when I was younger. And one must take the old if one can't get the young" (481). Naturally, this response to Jude's demise is viewed as savage, but her condition would not have called for whatever else. A solitary, lower-class Victorian woman had only the alternatives of living with her family, being prostitute, or commit suicide. She perceives the quandary she is in,

and that so as to endure; she should get another husband. Arabella is a woman who is very independent by nature and so cannot be fallen by her husband's death. "She is standing by Jude's coffin; Vilbert awaits her somewhere in the city. Hardy gives the last line of the novel to Arabella, "She's never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she's as he is now!"(490). It seems obscure! But she is the only one who could understand the situation of Jude and Sue. Arabella shows that whatever Sue sacrifice to feel peace her feeling of guilt remains.

3.1.2. Sue Bridehead:

A totally different woman, different personality appears in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. Sue Bridehead is Jude's cousin and beloved. She is the heroine of this novel and the focal point of consideration and analysis. Hardy describes her when he says: "Sue is a type of woman who has always had an attraction for me, but the difficulty of drawing the type has kept me from attempting it till now"(175). Hardy, by these words indicates that he had never created woman character like her in his novels. Sue's obscurity is different from Arabella's. She looks as the woman who fights customs, society and religion. Actually, through the characteristics of Sue, Hardy has raised the questions relating to the value of marriage, motherhood, sexuality and the prevailing tradition. Sue represents the rebellious attitude towards religious orthodoxy and traditional morality.

Sue's obscurity appears in the way she lives and in her deviation from the Victorian social limits. She is unconventional and unorthodox in her attitude to society; she is devastatingly incredulous of good and religious conventionality. Unlike Arabella, Sue loves Jude sentimentally, but she never wants to have any sexual affairs with him even though she lives with him. Sue's words clarify her rejection of sexual relations which asserts her obscurity when she says: "I have no fear of man, as such – nor of their books. I have mixed with them...almost as one of their own sex."(177) As a different woman, Sue

cannot conceive man sexually. Sue loves Jude as much as he loves her. The benefits of this love lay on his sensitive towards her sufferance. Jude describes her when he says "Sue--my own too suffering dear! ...there's no evil woman in you. Your natural instincts are perfectly healthy; not quite so impassioned, perhaps, as I could wish; but good, and dear, and pure." (412) Moreover, Sue challenges the Victorian society to improve her intellectuality. Unlike Arabella, she believes in liberalism. Yet, she becomes a highly intelligent and well-educated woman. For that Jude was calling her "a creature of civilization" (176).

Although Sue is a sensitive woman, she embodies the male principle. She insists on having no sexual affairs. Her rejection to be like a woman shapes her own obscurity. Dennis Taylor describes Sue as being "distractible and unfocused in her sexuality" as she views man as one of her own sex, while conversing with Jude she confessed that she has "no fear of men" and she has "mixed with them almost as one of their sex" (177). She lives with "her strange ways and curious unconsciousness of gender" (179). Sue completely contradicts the normal incentives assigned to females. She is described to be a cold-natured, sexless creature." (317) Sue also is a direct reason for Jude's failure; he is driven to despair and finally to death all because of Sue's aberration.

Religion is profoundly tackled by Sue in *Jude the Obscure*. Her obscurity remains even in her religious views. Sue at first is represented by Hardy as the free and irreligious woman. She reflects her views when she tells Jude "you are in the Tractarian stage just now, are you not? let me see_ when was I there? _ in the year eighteen hundred and..." (181). Sue depicts herself as modern women that careless about an ancient churches or Gods. She also considers prayers to be a kind of insincere practice of religion as she constantly mentions that to Jude "should seem so_ such a hypocrite" (179). Furthermore she calls Christian saints "the demi-gods in [Jude's] Pantheon" as well "those legendary persons" (199). This shows her skepticism of religion and her unbelief of many of the

Christian principles. However after the miserable death of her children, Sue changed her mind completely concerning her religious views from being an anti religious woman to an authentic religious one. All in all, Hardy characterized Sue as an incongruent woman whose sexuality and religion remain a puzzle!

Even though the huge analysis of Sue and the different interpretations of her actions she remains obscure. Mysteriousness of Sue involves all her aspect of life and her changing views. Choosing the “villain woman” of the novel seems to be a hard task. Arabella is not considered as a villain, because of her negative traits and bad decisions, as she simply seeks for happiness. Sue is not also considered as the villain as she holds modern woman traits. Sue, according to Jude’s views is just something less than the ideal woman of the nineteenth century. Actually, it is notable that the only villain of the novel was the society and the church because all of the characters’ reactions were the product of them.

4. The New Women Vs the Fallen Women:

Hardy's women are usually led by love and passion. His female characters are completely different from the stereotyped Victorian women. They are unconcerned with the restrictions and customs of their society. His characters are mostly led by instinct rather than reason. Intellectually, they are passive. Emotionally, they are super charged. In Jude the Obscure, Sue represents a modern and a free woman. As a matter of fact, she possesses a contradictory personality. A determined individualist who fears marriage as a degrading form of social prostitution, she is deeply narcissistic and neurotically insecure, which results in a farcical vacillation. Sue’s life ends by tragedy in which resulting different interpretations between considering her as the icon of the New Women or as a sort of Fallen Women.

On one hand, a woman considered “fallen” in the 19th Century is a woman who loses her virginity, raped, seduced or fallen in prostitution. A woman that is no longer “pure” according to the Victorians. As the writer Sprechman declares “A woman who was seduced or raped, or in the worst scenario, had a child out of wedlock, was considered a fallen woman” (8). These reasons seem to be less submissive for judging woman purity. None logical reasons are to consider woman as fallen just because they are educated, none married, divorced, or has friendship relations with men. Another reason to consider a woman as fallen was her freedom to express her sexuality as Lawrence Rothfield argues that “the Victorian regarded female sexuality as dangerous both to women themselves as well as to others”(176).

On the other hand, the concept which challenges the women abuse under the fallacious ground to be fallen, the “New Women”. The phrase "New Woman" was invented by the women’s rights advocate and novelist Sarah Grand in her article "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" published in the *North American Review* in March 1894. She argues that it is a generalized concept depicting financially free women who stood socially, politically and instructively equivalent among men. In the late Victorian era, this concept was depicted by many writers of the period who create fictional female characters who challenge the stereotype image of Victorian women as Jane Eldridge Miller states the New Women is an “antithetical to the Victorian stereotypes of the proper lady and the angel in the house.”(14)

The heroine Sue is a complicated and most challenging character to conceive particularly by the Victorians. Sue’s emergence out of the stereotype Victorian frame of women as she marries Phillotson, but the marriage is not consummated; she elopes with Jude, but refuses to sleep with him; she even can talk about sex with her friends. All this evidences can show that she quite differs from the traditional women at that time.

Simultaneously, her sacrifices to be subjected to society at the end when she left her beloved Jude because she cannot handle the trauma of losing her children whom finally hang themselves in a move suggestive of their utmost despair and the realization that they (the children) have become a burden to their miserable parents. These outcomes arising from the consequent events make the decision of putting her under any class or category virtually impossible.

Between 'New ' and 'Fallen ' women, Sue's character is under the constant debate of whether she fulfills the new women aspiration or she falls into the fallen women. Sue is a conceited character, needing more than she is eager to give. This is shown when she left her husband and lived with her beloved Jude, however when their relation did not succeed she immediately returns to her husband. This indicates her use of Phillotson's admiration and respect for her. Likewise Sue is a candid character yet hesitant to suit her actions to her words, she needs to love and be cherished, yet she is bleakly scared of her feelings and wants. The facts demonstrate that Sue has some New-Women-like qualities, which is exhibited by her contempt of the limitations of the Victorian marriage institution, and her living autonomously by working in Miss Fontover's ecclesiastical shop and instructing in Phillotson's school. However as Showalter points out Sue's "sensitiveness" (37) and "nervousness"(Hardy 224) connote her New-Womenness, characteristics that were usually associated with women in the Victorian period. Hardy introduction of Sue as representative of new women is inconvenient, due to the gap between her characteristics and those of New Women.

Notwithstanding, The New Woman is a concept that Hardy involves the novel can be considered as natural result of a long suppressed and stifled phase of women sufferance by the Victorian society. As Penny Boumelha notes in her Introduction to The Woodlanders (1887), Hardy was not a pioneer in the discussion on women's rights and

marriage laws in the press and Parliament during the 1890s. However, he was unquestionably part of the discourse, because of Hardy's ability to address socially sensitive issues that related to sexuality and intimate desires. Sue, the heroine of Thomas Hardy shows the advancement of woman's reemergence as autonomous in a society that disapproves such people just as the ruinous repercussions. Likewise Sue's opinion about marriage, which can be summarized in her expression of her agony of unhappy marriage to her lover Jude:

And it is said that what a woman shrinks from – in the early days other marriage – she shakes down to with comfortable indifference in half -a-dozen years. But that is much like saying that the amputation of a limb is no affliction, since a person gets comfortably accustomed to the use of a wooden leg or arm in the course of time (Hardy 264).

Sue's view about marriage demonstrates one of the New Women qualities. Vulgar institution as she indicates the relationship of marriage shows her refusal of adopting the Victorian feminine role.

However, Sue's break down at the end of the novel forces her to return to Victorian conventions, makes us doubt Hardy's views about his women. As the author and Professor Kranidis argues that:

Hardy's treatment of Sue reveals that he was familiar with the feminist agenda but less with its underpinnings... she lacks the self determination that distinguished New Women from other women socially... as a woman ready and willing to

subordinate her own desire to societal norms, Sue may serve as a model of Hardy's own view of, and puzzlement over, the New Woman. (124)

Furthermore, the author Sprechman suggests that Sue's dichotomy is "perhaps because of Hardy's uncertainty about how to handle the idea of a woman's sexual free will" (112). Because of this changeability, some critics, like Maria A. Dibattista, call Sue an "enigmatic figure" (168). As well the Professor and author Kranidis views Sue as a character who lacks the capacity for self-determination due to her changeability, which detaches her from the feminist movement. She indicates Sue an inadequate character who "fails in the capacity of female and / or sexual liberator" (125). As Jude reflects her in the novel " Sue you seem when you are like this to be one of the women of some grand old civilization whom I used to read about in my bygone, wasted, classical days rather than a denizen of a mere Christian country" (323) shows her change from being modern to a sort of an old lady.

Sue appeared the typical New Women, because of her intelligence, independent, anti marriage, and free persona. However, Hardy surrenders when his heroine, at the end of the novel, reincarnates to Victorian women personality and eliminates Sue from the New Women concept. Despite Sue's constant justification of her move, she apparently did not satisfy many critics to call her "the New Woman". However it would not be fair to totally detach her from the New Woman league since she has certain qualities that represent newness of the Victorian women. Unfortunately, Hardy did not support his heroine till the end which can reveals his unconscious Victorian persona as well as the English Professor Kranidis argues his unclear feminist views.

Conclusion

The novel covers many Victorian issues. Especially, those related to women subject. This chapter documents the life and perspectives of the heroines of the novel.

Moreover, it deals with Hardy's women's oppression. Thomas Hardy by presenting Sue and Arabella, the totally different women, reflects the woman who presents reality and fakeness in the Victorian patriarchal society. Thomas Hardy depiction of his women shows the ambiguity that surrounds his work. The Victorian women are supposed to be strong, independent and self determined, however they fall into the obscurity of Thomas Hardy's work.

General conclusion

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General Conclusion:

Jude the Obscure is the last fictional work of Thomas Hardy before turning to poetry. Superficially, readerships regard only love and sex as the central themes of the novel. However, it profoundly questions the issue of the Victorian woman idealism. The study focuses on the writer Thomas Hardy and his female characters mainly in his last and darkest novel. The theories used to answer the research questions are the feminist and psychoanalytic theories. Feminism is used to discover the women's nature and role among the Victorian England society which considers women as second class citizens. In an attempt to isolate women from any external activity that ensures their intellectual, economic and political openness, psychoanalysis helped us to understand Thomas Hardy's mind and perspective for further comprehending the reasons behind the way he depicts his female characters.

The status of woman in the Victorian community seemed to be complicated. Different interpretations can be held by Victorian and contemporary critics about the submissiveness of the Victorian woman. These critics are divided between supporters who link the ideality of woman with the "Angel in the House" persona and opponents who insist on women's individuality and intellectuality as the ideals of a woman. Thomas Hardy, the Victorian novelist, encouraged those who believed in women's freedom which made his ideal woman, the one who challenges and breaks the social conventions. With each novel, Hardy's heroines were growing more vocal and the storylines were shifting more socially challenging with topics of sexual desire and social commentary. A woman in Hardy's novels, mainly, Jude the Obscure, is developing shared characteristics of the challenges faced by the independent women forced to live in a world not ready for their yearning for equality of treatment the reason behind labeling him as 'the man who liked women'.

General conclusion

Sex is a focal point in Thomas Hardy's writings. Hardy insists on the sexuality of his female characters challenging the taboos of Victorian women. Moreover, Hardy presents marriage with disregarding its relation with sex as he depicted Sue and Phillotson's marriage. Hardy links sex with love rather than marriage, as Sue and Jude's relationship which is considered as an offence of Victorian institution of marriage. Hardy's unusual feminist consciousness rose skepticism about his feminist nature which remains a subject of controversy.

Hardy's unstable and contradictory depiction of the morals of his female character Sue and her Subjugation to society and sense of guilt, consequently, issued in the loss of the real meaning of "The New Woman" morals. Hardy's female character may not conform to the "New Woman" ideal; however, the certainty of his feminist consciousness is undoubted. Hardy's tragic end of his female character indicates his unclear feminist views.

The tendency of dark feminism that supports the ultimate freedom for women and urges women dominancy over men is a phenomenon appeared to reject the male societies. Hardy in his novel Jude the Obscure insists on the equality of male and female character rather than justice.

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Résumé

L'ère Victorienne de l'Angleterre a été témoin de changements radicaux à presque tous les égards. L'une d'elles était l'émergence de plus en plus répandue de prise de conscience chez les femmes et de leurs revendications de droits. Cette prise de conscience a été l'avènement de la littérature féministe en simultanéité avec le mouvement féministe. Dans la présente thèse, nous examinons la représentation des personnages féminins dans le dernier roman de Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (1895). L'étude vise également à démontrer les aspects des personnages féminins de Hardy. Il émet également l'hypothèse que, dans la mesure où la représentation de la femme par l'écrivain était contraire aux normes sociales contemporaines, ses personnages féminins ignorent toujours s'ils ressemblent ou non à la vraie femme forte. Nous adoptons les théories féministes et psychanalytiques comme des approches appropriées nous permettent d'interpréter en profondeur les données collectées. Nos résultats montrent que la «Nouvelle Femme» attendue de l'écrivain est restée inaccessible. Le document conclut également que Thomas Hardy est un féministe plutôt qu'un misogyne. La faille tragique des héroïnes de Hardy est représentée par leur douleur infinie et leur désir incomplet.

Mots-clés: Femmes victoriennes, féminisme, Thomas Hardy, *Obscure*, Misogynie, Non orthodoxe

الملخص

شهد العصر الفيكتوري تغييرات جذرية في جميع النواحي تقريبًا. أهمها الوعي النسوي المتمثل في مطالباتهن بحقوقهن. أدى هذا الوعي إلى ظهور الأدب النسوي بالتزامن مع الحركة النسوية. تتحرى الأطروحة الحالية تمثيل الشخصيات النسائية في آخر عمل روائي لتوماس هاردي. (1895) *Jude the Obscure*. قمنا من خلالها بتحليل آراء الروائي حول مفاهيم الزواج والجنس والتعليم والدين التي تعرضت لانتقادات شديدة من خلال اتجاهات مختلفة. تهدف الدراسة أيضًا إلى توضيح جوانب شخصيات هاردي الأنثوية. كما أنه يفترض أنه طالما كان تمثيل الكاتب للمرأة يتعارض مع المعايير الاجتماعية المعاصرة، فإن شخصياته الأنثوية لا تزال غامضة حول ما إذا كانت تشبه المرأة القوية الحقيقية. تعتمد هذه الدراسة النظرية النسوية والتحليل النفسي كنهج مناسب يسمح لنا بتفسير البيانات المجمعة بعمق. النتائج التي توصلنا إليها تبين أن "المرأة الجديدة" التي يتوقعها الكاتب تظل غير قابلة للتحقيق. وتخلص هذه الدراسة أيضًا إلى أن توماس هاردي ناشط نسوي وليس الشخص الكاره للنساء. يتمثل السقوط المأساوي لبطلات هاردي في حزنهم اللانهائي ورغبتهم غير المكتملة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحركة النسائية. كره النساء. الغموض. توماس هاردي. لا تقليدي. المرأة الفيكتورية.

المرأة الفيكتورية، توماس هاردي، لا تقليدي