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The New Woman as **Depicted** in Thomas Hardy's Novels

Far from the Madding Crowd (1874) and *Jude the
Obscure* (1895)

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Dedication

Our humble work
is dedicated to
our parents,
our brothers and sisters.
our friends,
our nephews
and nieces,
our grandmothers,
and to all
the teachers of
English around the world.

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Abstract

This dissertation attempts to examine the position of Victorian women and their representation in Thomas Hardy's works. More accurately, it investigates how Thomas Hardy portrayed women in relation to the conditions of the Victorian society. It is also an endeavour to provide a brief review of the period in which Hardy was writing emphasizing the socio-sexual intricacies of the late Victorian era and their effect on the characterization of women. In most of his works, Hardy had dealt with the 'Woman Question' and sympathetically sided with women and championed their struggles to get their rights. Accordingly, this dissertation is an exploration of Thomas Hardy's characterization of strong, independent, and rebellious women, precisely, his New Woman. Moreover, it displays Hardy's attitudes toward women and how these attitudes affected his portrayal of female characters. The study aims to demonstrate the aspects of the New Woman in his two characters; Bathsheba Everdene in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure*. It also aims to show his criticism of certain Victorian social conventions and how those conventions dismissed women. It hypothesizes that as long as Hardy's representation of women was against the contemporary established social conditions of the time, his female characters are assumed to contribute to a great extent in the emergence and development of the New Woman. By focusing on a feminist approach in analysing Hardy's female characters, the researchers have found that the two female characters Bathsheba and Sue, due to their unconventional traits and behaviours, are par excellence New Women. It has been also found that Hardy, as a feminist, opposed the patriarchal Victorian society and its rigid confines imposed on women urging them to rebel against the Victorian unfair practices and defend their rights.

Key Words: Bathsheba Everdene, New Woman, Sue Bridehead, Thomas Hardy, Victorian society.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

The nineteenth century England was well-known for its rigid and strict community's confines. Therefore, women were compelled to follow certain severe and stern conventions imposed mainly by men. Women in Victorian England were thought to be inferior to men and thus they were deprived of numerous rights. As a matter of fact, women's inferiority was enshrined in the Victorians' mentalities and was supported, though occasionally condemned, by the society's elites such as writers.

With the conviction that literature is used as a means to depict and reflect real life as well as to convey messages and ideas that are related to the period in which it is produced, many Victorian writers endeavoured to transfer their own views on women into works of arts. Some authors sought to idealize woman and depict her as an angelic creature who ought to be elegant, pure, obedient, submissive and devoted to her husband and children; whereas, others, generally those who had feminist views, rejected this stereotypical dehumanizing portrayal of women and preferred to provide a more realistic and fair description of them. As a result, they came out with a woman who was strong, independent, and intellectual; a woman who called for her rights; a woman who rebelled against the society's rigidity; a woman who erred; a woman who took the name of the New Woman.

Thomas Hardy, as one of the prominent writers of the late Victorian period, challenged the patriarchal English society and its common perception on women. In his two novels (*Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Jude the Obscure*), Hardy intended to endow his female characters (Bathsheba and Sue respectively) with the characteristics of the New Woman in order to enable women to break the constraints of the Victorian

society, move beyond its boundaries, and free themselves so that they could gain equality and be recognized as an active and essential entity in society.

1-Aims of the Study

The present work aims to study the extent to which Thomas Hardy's female characters embodied the aspects of the New Woman in order to show how Hardy, the man and the feminist, defended women and opposed the Victorian rigid confines imposed on them. Additionally, this paper aims at demonstrating Hardy's criticism of the patriarchal English society and its common perception on women.

2- Statement of the Problem

As women in Victorian England were believed to be subordinate, conform to the restrictions of their society and fit the role of the angelic creature who ought to be submissive, pure and restricted to domestic spheres, the early Victorian writers sought to depict yet promote this fact in their works of arts. However, the late Victorian writer Thomas Hardy, as many of his contemporaries, revolted against this stereotypical idealized portrayal of women and rejected their submission to the Victorian social conventions. As a result, he came out with a different kind of woman called the "New Woman" as it was the case with his two female characters Bathsheba and Sue from *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Jude the Obscure* who embodied to a great extent the characteristics of the New Woman.

3-Research Questions

As an attempt to uncover the main concern of the dissertation, the following questions could be asked:

- 1- To what extent did the Victorian patriarchal society dismiss women?
- 2- In what sense did Hardy oppose certain social Victorian conventions?
- 3- To what extent do Thomas Hardy's female characters represent the qualities of the New Woman?
- 4- What are the social circumstances that surrounded the emergence of the New Woman?

4- Hypothesis

To answer the aforementioned questions, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Since Hardy's representation of women was against the established social conventions of the time, his female characters are assumed to contribute to a great extent in the emergence and development of the New Woman.

5- The Structure of the Dissertation

The present dissertation is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, a historical background of the Victorian era is provided in order to explain and describe the conditions in which Hardy's novels appeared and to analyze the extent to which those circumstances influenced his writings. More accurately, an overview about the Victorian era and the position of women during this period is discussed. We spotlight on women and how they were perceived and treated in the Victorian patriarchal society. Moreover, we shall tackle their persistent struggle and determination to get their rights and be treated as equal to men. The chapter also would focus on the notion of the New Woman and the circumstances that led to its emergence.

In the second chapter, a brief account about Victorian literature is given, its themes and its prominent writers. We shall also discuss the novel as a major literary genre so as to

show that literature and especially the novel is not only a tool for entertainment, but it is intimately linked and connected to the real life and to the period in which it is produced since the chosen novels (*Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Jude the Obscure*) discuss one of the main social issues in the Victorian age which is the 'Women Question'. Through the second chapter, we would briefly speak about stereotyped women and their depiction in Victorian novels. We shall also shed light on how the late Victorian writers rejected the idealization of women in their novels. At the end of the chapter, we would discuss Thomas Hardy's views on women and his depiction of the New Woman.

Through the third chapter, we would analyse the characterization of Hardy's female characters Bathsheba Everdene in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure*, in order to demonstrate to what extent those female characters embodied the New Woman.

6- Scope of the Study

The main concern of the study is to analyze Thomas Hardy's female characters; Sue and Bathsheba in order to demonstrate their New Woman traits.

7-Methodology

The work will adopt a feminist approach to better understand Hardy's position towards women as well as to elucidate the status of women in Victorian society and how they gradually longed to get their rights and revolt against the society's restrictions causing the emergence of New Woman.

Chapter One:

Historical Overview of the Victorian Era

Introduction

Before analysing any literary work, it is essential to make an investigation about the circumstances and the period in which the work is produced. This is generally done by studying the society of the writer in terms of the people's way of living, customs, laws, standards, and conventions. In the present chapter, we would primarily have a general overview about the Victorian era with regard to its social, political and economical aspects. We shall also provide a brief account about women's lives in Victorian society discussing their position in issues related to marriage, divorce, spinsterhood and prostitution. Moreover, we would spotlight their deprived rights as well as their agitation to call for those rights. The end of the chapter reviews the Woman Question and the emergence of the New Woman concept.

1. Historical Background of the Victorian Age

The Victorian age in England was known by its great changes in almost all domains including politics, law, economics, education, and literature. Historians associated the beginning of the Victorian period to the year Victoria had become queen in 1837, and ended in 1901, the year of her death (Mitchell, 2009, p. xiv). This era was characterised by its prosperity and affluence in all aspects of life. It led the society to crucial transformation from the "agricultural to industrial, from rural to urban" (Black, 1973, p. xiii).

The era of Queen Victoria's reign was influenced by a series of remarkable historical events. The first one was "the Duke of Wellington's victory over Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815" (Mitchell, 2009, p. 01) where the Duke of Wellington held a battle occurred in Belgium at Waterloo on June 18, 1815. The British army won a decisive victory over French. This victory raised a sense of self-confidence and patriotism on the British society. It helped to shape a new economic system after the English naval took over the

seas. The second event was the Industrial Revolution. "The Industrial Revolution transformed England from an agricultural nation to one based on industry" (Mitchell, 2009, p. 01). It began with the cotton industry and was "traditionally associated with the spectacular expansion of the cotton textile industry" (Black, 1973, p.04). The third one was "the Reform Bill of 1832 [in which] political power was largely transferred from the former small governing oligarchy to the middle class" (Fletcher, 2002, p. 121). The Reform Bill was an act passed by the parliament stated to double the number of men to vote and it gave new chance to many people to vote. Before the Reform Bill, England was ruled by a Parliament composed of Commons and a House of Lords where the members of the parliament inherited and monopolised the right to sit and vote. "Most electors before 1832 were landowners or men of the upper classes" (Mitchell, 2009, p. 03). The Reform Bill began the democratic procedure by doubling the number of voters to one million. The voters became not just the rich men of higher social classes but there were also many delegates from the middle class since after the act of 1832 "large numbers of middle-class men also had the right to vote" (Mitchell, 2009, p. 03).

1.1. Queen Victoria

As mentioned before, the Victorian age began as the queen Victoria took the throne; she "gave her name to the age" (Black, 1973, p. xv). She was eighteen when she ascended the British throne. Victoria was the daughter of Edward the Duke of Kent the fourth son of George III. Since Victoria's father died in her infancy, the queen was raised by her mother. She was the sole George III's children who lived. Therefore, Victoria held the crown after the death of her uncle, William IV. In her journal, the queen Victoria wrote about the day she became the queen of England in which she narrated:

Tuesday, 20th June [1837].—I was awoke at 6 o'clock by Mamma, who told me that the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Conyngham were here, and wished to see me. I got out of bed and went into my sitting-room (only in my dressing-gown), and alone, and saw them. Lord Conyngham (the Lord Chamberlain) then acquainted me that my poor Uncle, the King, was no more, and had expired at 12 minutes p. 2 this morning and consequently that I am Queen (Mitchell, 2009, p. 04).

In the nineteenth century, the monarch authority was less powerful than the previous sovereigns due to the parliamentary contribution. However, the young queen had great public influence. In addition, she controlled large number of lands than any other monarch before (McDowall, 1989, p. 149). Queen Victoria had married Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in 1840, and she gave birth to nine children. In 1861, Prince Albert died; the queen was in her extreme grief thus she rejected to be in public (Mitchell, 2009, p. 11). As a result, this public appearance reluctance, outraged the British citizens, and many newspapers began to write about her. Some even questioned the value of the monarchy. After that social pressure, the queen appeared in the late 1870s "and she soon became extraordinarily popular. By the time Victoria died the monarchy was better loved among the British than it had ever been before" (Mitchell, 2009, p. 11). In 1868, the queen's diary *Our Life in the Highlands* was published to the public; it gave details to queen's private life. The queen did not only gain popularity, but rather the love and the respect of the people. In her diary, the queen Victoria wrote about her husband and her children and even about her servants, she considered them as a part of her family (Mitchell, 2009, p. 11).

1.2. The Industrial Revolution

According to Outman and Outman (2003), the industrial revolution is "the introduction of new technology into manufacturing processes at the heart of the revolution turned simple agricultural societies into complex industrial ones" (p.06). This crucial formulation which happened in the middle of the eighteenth century created the new world. As a result, all the domains of life had witnessed certain changes, it also affected how people communicated with each other and the way they lived and worked. During 1851, Queen Victoria "opened the Great Exhibition of the Industries of All Nations inside the Crystal Palace, in London" (McDowall, 1973, p. 138). This unexpected step from the queen intended to show the whole world what Great Britain was capable to do in the field of industry. As a result, Britain produced more goods like iron ships and steam engines in addition to woollen and cotton cloth. The latter was exported to the other countries like India and the Middle East which led to the destruction of the traditional cloth industry in these colonies (McDowall, 1973, p. 138). One of the greatest inventions the industrial revolution brought was The Railway, one of the most powerful means of transportation at that time. Its purpose was mainly to transport goods but it was also used for people transportation. It helped six million people to visit the Great Exhibition. "The new railway network made it possible for people to come from all over England on cheap one-day" (Mitchell, 2009, p.08). The railway helped in the rise of economy. "The speed of the railway even made possible the delivery of fresh fish and raspberries from Scotland to London in one night" (McDowall, 1973, p. 138).

1.3. The Victorian Society

Before the Industrial Revolution, people were using simple tools to grow crops. After that, they started to use new inventions. The Industrial Revolution resulted in great changes

in the way the Victorian society is formed (Outman& Outman, 2003, p. 18). Although, it helped the British economy grow faster, it led to an immense crack within the composition of Victorian social classes. This was mainly demonstrated in the use of the railroads which "designated different cars for first class, second class, and third class, passengers knew where they were expected to ride" (Mitchell ,2009, p. 17).

The upper class or the first class was the Aristocrats, the landowners who were the prosperous and the dominant class. They had the highest social rank and got special titles. In addition, they earned the big amount of money and they were characterised by their noble roots. The second class was the Middle Class which was a combination of "the working classes (who earned their living by physical labour) and the elite (who inherited landed estates)" (Mitchell, 2009, p. 19). For many years, the term 'Middle Class' was used to refer to small merchants, traders and farmers. With the emergence of Industrial Revolution, the number of the Middle Class increased quickly involving those who worked " in the professions, such as the Church, the law, medicine, the civil service, the diplomatic service, merchant banking and the army and the navy" (McDowall, 1973, p. 139). The third class was the lower or the Working Class "The largest number were agricultural labourers, domestic servants, and factory hands" (Mitchell, 1973, p. 18). The Working Class suffered from exploitation of the Middle Class, they were working under their authority with low price. Those poor people were not considered as humans, they lived in poverty and many of them died by severe illnesses. As a consequence, all members of the poor families were working under terrible conditions. Children worked for several hours. "In the early years of the industrial revolution,(...) in coal mines, children worked underground in small dark spaces opening and closing the traps that provided ventilation" (Mitchell, 1973, p. 42).

The class division was clearly found before the new inventions came to life. However, the Industrial Revolution deteriorated the situation of Working Class. "Industrialization brought with it a burgeoning or middle class whose increase in numbers had a significant effect on the social strata itself" (Chandravadiya,2013, p.01).

2. Life of the Victorian Women

It is a well-known fact that Victorian women were living in a patriarchal society where they were regarded as inferior to men in most areas of life. The subjection of women was nothing new to Victorian society since their segregation was enshrined in the English law and custom for nine hundred years. It was during the Norman Conquest where women were denied the legal rights they were once enjoying during the Anglo-Saxon period. In the Anglo-Saxon era, "women had rights to property, to a share in control of domestic affairs and of children, and even in the last resort to divorce or legal separation, departing with the children and half the marital goods" (Stenton, 1957, as cited in Perkin, 2003, p. 01). However, those rights were destroyed by the feudalism system.

The subjection of women continued to exist from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century during which women enjoyed no legal rights. On the contrary, woman in the nineteenth century was regarded as being physically, mentally, and economically the weaker sex and thus she should be under the control and the supervision of a man, usually the father or the husband. According to the Victorian conventions, any woman was supposed to pass from the tutelage of her father to that of her husband once married. That is, women were not supposed to have the least freedom to handle their own affairs since by marriage, as Blackstone (1978) argued:

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 (as cited in Perkin, 2003, pp. 01-02).

In the Victorian era, it was believed that "women's forte lay in being submissive, modest, docile, virtuous, maternal and domestic" (Porter, 1991, p. 36). In a society governed by males, Victorian women were expected to behave in a certain way that was not necessarily to satisfy their own desires and thoughts but to satisfy the men around them. They were supposed to be amiable companions rather than partners with whom men would discuss serious topics of politics or economy for example. Men, on the other side, were granted the privilege to be on top, run businesses, and held positions. As a result, no women had an important profession at that time; their roles did not go beyond that of a housekeeper or a housewife who took care of children and her husband's house. As 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" (p. 27). To be more explicit, once married, "a lady (...) had four cardinal functions. The first duty was to obey her husband. Second, she had to produce heirs (...) The third duty (...) was to run the household (...) Her fourth was to be ladylike, an ambassadress of grace" (Porter, 1991, p. 41). In short, they were expected to be 'the angel in the house'.

The Victorian era was named after Queen Victoria who reigned from 1837 till 1901. The queen's era was characterized as the domestic age par excellence. Queen Victoria herself represented the ideal of womanhood in the Victorian age. As Lynn Abrams suggested in the article *Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain*, the queen was not only the powerful and the strong monarch but also the perfect model of domesticity: "Victoria became an icon of late-19th-century middle-class femininity and domesticity" (para. 03).

Queen Victoria was a devout wife to her husband and a devoted mother to her many children. Thus, "she was also, first and foremost, a wife and a mother" (Rappaport, 2003, p. xiv). Queen Victoria was loyal and obedient to her husband whom she mourned "for the last 40 years of her life" (Mitchell, 2009, p. 167).

2.1. Women and Their Deprived Rights

In the Victorian patriarchal society, women were deprived of certain rights. They had no right to inherit or hold property, even worse, they were themselves seen as a "property" of men. They had no right to vote or to have any important job. They could only do some housekeeping works such as cleaning, needle work and baby-sitting. Moreover, they were not supposed to talk about politics, business, and science but instead they should care about their beauty, husbands and children. Women had a very restricted education; they were allowed only to have knowledge about art, music, and languages to fit the role destined for them as the angel of the house. They were not supposed to appear more educated or accomplished than their husbands. In this context, Perkin (2003) stated that "wives learned not to contradict their husbands too frequently, and above all not in public." That is, "it was inadvisable for them to appear to be more intelligent than their husbands, even if that were the truth of the matter" (p. 258). Otherwise, their marital lives would be destroyed. Ironically, Victorians believed that "the term 'educated woman' was an oxymoron" (Paxman, 1998, p. 222) and that "women had smaller skulls than men, which meant smaller brains [besides], the physical demands of menstruation, growing breast and childbearing meant that there was less effort available for mental activity" (Paxman, 1998, p.226).

In the first few decades of the Victorian era, married women had no legal existence; man and wife were one person in law and her existence was absorbed in that of

her husband. Before getting married, a woman may have personal property; however, once marrying, her personal property became automatically her husband's and he could assign or dispose it as he pleased and in case the woman's property was stolen, it would be laid in the indictment as the husband's since it legally belonged to him. Not only did the husband have almost complete control over the wife's property, money, and earnings, but he had also an entire control over his wife's body since beating wives and marital rape were legal. Legally, Victorian mothers had no rights over their children and fathers could take them whenever they wanted so. In case of separation between parents, the custody of the children belonged to the father. As they were perceived as weak, emotional and ignorant, women could not take any social or political decision or bring actions in court without the husband's permission and consent (Perkin, 2003, pp. 13-15). Victorian women were legally treated inferior to their husbands. In this context, Perkin (2003) stated " a Divorce Bill could be obtained as a matter of right by an innocent husband against a wife found guilty of adultery uncondoned by him; a wife who wanted a divorce had to prove not only adultery by the husband but aggravating enormities such as physical cruelty, bigamy or incest" (p. 23).

2.2. Women and Marriage

Marriage in the Victorian era was seen as an inescapable step in the lives of women. Like air and water, marriage was a necessity for their survival. Therefore, the majority of women did not have the option not to marry; most were predestined to become wives since marriage "defined a woman's entire future" (Mitchell, 2009, pp. 267-268). Victorians believed that a married woman was more respectful than an unmarried one. As a result, the ultimate aim of women in life was to ensure suitable husbands so that they could keep and maintain their social ranks and live the lives they were accustomed to. Wollstonecraft

(1792) argued that "the only way for woman to rise in the world is by marriage" (as cited in Perkin, 2003, p. 54). By marriage women ensured "the acquisition of an 'establishment', her own place, financed by her husband, (...) a place where she had at least some freedom of choice and activity, which she might not have had at all in the parental home" (Calder, 1977, p. 9). In a word, Victorian women longed for marriage as marriage would bring them respect.

In the upper-classes, marriage was a bargain in which woman was the product from which the woman's father and the husband tried to get the most of it. Victorians considered marriage as "more at stake than momentary infatuation" (Calder, 1977, p. 9). However, marriage was differently sought among the different social classes in the nineteenth-century England. William Bridges Adams in Perkin (2003) thought that:

In the upper classes, marriage was a matter not of love but of bargain and sale, a legally sanctioned species of prostitution. In the middle classes females were made to play a double part, housewives on ordinary occasions, and fine ladies when required. Among the poor, conditions of poverty destroyed any vestiges of refinement, and nothing could be done to help poor women until their physical circumstances were improved (p. 212).

He also declared that "in all ranks of society women were slaves, though in different fashions: the poor man seeks an efficient working slave, the rich person, an agreeable and well-taught harem slave. The man of middling circumstances endeavors, if possible, to combine both" (William Bridges Adams, as cited in Perkin (2003), p. 212).

2.3. Divorce in the Victorian Era

In the nineteenth-century England, marriage was "an indissoluble union, terminable only by death" since "the Church Courts could not give an absolute divorce,

though they could grant a legal separation, known as divorce *a mensa et thoro*, 'from bed and board'" (Perkin, 2003, p. 22). This kind of divorce could be given only in some limited and serious cases such as "adultery, extreme cruelty, or desertion" (Mitchell, 2009, p. 106) and it did not allow the couples to remarry. However, if the husband wished to end the marriage with the right to remarry, he would need a special Act of parliament that gave him the permission to have another wife. This parliamentary divorce was being given to rich men who had proved that their wives had committed adultery. In rural regions, there was another kind of divorce known as 'wife sale' by which a husband had the right to sell his wife to the man with whom she committed adultery, usually for small price aiming to humiliate the wife (Mitchell, 2009, pp. 106-107). As a matter of fact, the grounds for divorce were not the same for men and women. In case the husband wished divorce, he "had only to prove simple adultery by his wife" but woman "had to prove adultery plus aggravating offences by her husband" (Perkin, 2003, p. 23). By divorce, women would lose their social status since divorce was given only for serious reasons such as adultery. They also would lose any right over their children and the custody of the children would go directly to the husband. As a result, most Victorian women would prefer to endure their husbands' unfaithfulness and cruelty to lose their ranks in society or be departed from their children.

2.4. Sex and Sexuality in the Victorian Era

During the Victorian era, women were considered not only less valuable than men, but essentially inferior to them. The widespread conviction at that time was that women should be isolated from certain aspects such as work, education and sex knowledge. In this regard, various discussions have been raised claiming that "a respectable girl should be completely ignorant about sex and sexuality until initiated by her husband on the wedding

night" (Mitchell, 2009,p.269). Sex and sexuality were regarded as taboo topics in the Victorian society; no one was allowed to talk about it as a way for preventing people to do sexual behaviors. Therefore, women were completely ignorant about sex and they ought to be innocent and naïve concerning this topic. That is to say, women were banned from reading about sex or showing their affections and desires because it was thought that the aforementioned might shake the tendencies of men and women which make them commit crimes, those of moral matters. Thus, "explicit novels, sensuous pictures, and exciting dances were repressed because they might awaken sexual desire in young women and young men who were not yet mature enough to take on its responsibilities"(Mitchell, 2009, p.269).

Despite the fact that marriage was an essential step for both Victorian men and women, the issue of sex was yet obscure in the mind of the Victorian society members, "woman was believed either to assist or to exacerbate male sexual control and her sexual identity determined whether or not she was seen as a respectable and responsible member of society" (Nead, 1988, p. 06). As a result, the well prestigious woman had to be chaste and innocent. In other words, she should have sex only with her husband. In the other hand, if she committed adultery she would be considered immorally corrupted.

2.5. Unmarried Women in Victorian Society

The fulfillment of the role of a wife or a mother was a divine mission to Victorians. A woman who was unable to marry whether " through choice or through misfortune, was seen as less feminine than her domesticated counterpart" (Calder, 1977, p. 128). As marriage was the natural target for any women in the nineteenth century, being unable to

reach this purpose indicated that the women had a problem which prevented her from getting married. As a result, spinsterhood was a curse for Victorian women.

The status of spinsters in the Victorian society was not satisfactory. Old maids had no place in their society rather they were pitied, marginalized, criticized, and finger-pointed because they failed to fulfill the sole aim for women's existence that of building a family. Spinsters were accused of being useless, "unfortunate and unfulfilled" (Calder, 1977, p. 108). They were in one way or another seen as less respectful than married women. Greg (1869) went further and deemed spinsterhood as something dangerous and abnormal:

there is an enormous and increasing number of single women in the nation, a number quite disproportionate and quite abnormal, a number which (...) is indicative of an unwholesome social state, and is both productive and prognostic of much wretchedness and wrong (p.11).

Though women, by marriage, would be legally diminished and lose their rights to property, they showed no significant opposition to this as long as the marriage would uplift them socially and economically. As mentioned earlier, daughters did not usually inherit property from their fathers. This fact obliged women who did not succeed to secure husbands to be economically dependent on their brothers, uncles, or nephews and live in their houses, or ended up homeless and living in poverty. "The unmarried aunt, sister or daughter could be expected to pay willingly for the security of a home in terms of the service she could give" (Calder, 1977, p. 143).

2.6. Prostitution and Fallen Women in Victorian Society

Prostitution was not a new phenomenon to the Victorian society. It was widespread and feared by the society's members since it was against the Victorian standards and

principles. A woman who was known to be engaged in a prostitution affair was called a 'whore' or a 'Fallen Woman'. The term 'Fallen Woman' was used to refer to a woman who had a sexual incident outside the marriage boundaries and thus lost her purity and innocence. The reason behind their fallenness differed. Some may be forced into prostitution due to their poor living conditions, some may deliberately engage in a sexual relationship, especially upper class women, and others may be raped or seduced by wicked men (Tate, McMillan & Woodworth, 1997, pp. 13-26). In the Victorian society, women's illegal relationships indicated their deviation from the social norms and moral prospects. As a result, they were humiliated, shunned and neglected by their society which viewed them as depraved, corrupt, immoral, and sinful. They were even neglected by their own families to whom they brought shame and disgrace. Fallen women, though harshly condemned by their society, many had sympathized with their situation and defended them publically as what can be seen in many books of literature.

2.7. Women's Calls for Their Rights

As mentioned earlier, the segregation of women did not only result from the society's conventions or people's beliefs and convictions, but it was also rooted in the English law, more specifically, the Common Law. Undoubtedly, women were regarded inferior to men, compelled to be under their control and supervision. Ironically, this fact was reinforced by the law which was thought to be "for her protection and benefit, so great a favorite is the female sex in the laws of England" (Blackstone, 1978, as cited in Perkin, 2003, p. 18). However, the Victorian period was "the pivotal period of change" (Blackstone, 1978, as cited in Perkin, 2003, p. 03) in the conditions of women. It was the period during which women started calling for their rights. Victorians were the pioneers to the emancipation of women which was accepted and embraced by the majority of women.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the English Common Law started having certain changes in relation to women conditions. Common Law was only a branch in the English law, over this law was Equity which "frequently called in to assist, to moderate, and to explain other laws" (Blackstone, 1978, as cited in Perkin, 2003, p. 15). Equity ensured to married women certain rights denied to them under the Common Law. Among those rights was the right secured by *the Infants' Custody Act* of 1839 which stated that women, when divorced, had the right to take care of her children who are under the age of seven. In 1857, divorce became possible for the majority thanks to the *Matrimonial Causes Act* which stated that women who were treated with cruelty or deserted by their husbands could ask for divorce though this act was still granting men the privilege of getting divorce by simply proving adultery by their wives. In 1882, *the Married Woman Property Act* was passed. This act assured women's right to hold property. By this act, women could have their own properties, assign them, and dispose them as they pleased without the need of the husband's permission or consent (Cunningham, 1978, pp. 04-05). By and by, women could bring actions in court and sue wherever they had clear rights, they could even sue their own husbands if needed.

By the late of the 1840s, women started feeling the need to rise against the society's false conventions and restrictions and claim their deprived rights. Organized movements claiming the rights of women were being established mainly by Middle-class women who "sought serious education, rather than the painting, piano playing, social graces, and general knowledge that were usual in girls' schools. They also began trying to extend the range of women's employment" (Mitchell, 2009, p. 07) so that, they could get better working opportunities in order to enhance their living conditions and maintain a better social status.

Despite all the Acts passed in favor to women, the situation of women did not witness any considerable flourishing during the Victorian era. This underpinned the fact that the Victorian society was a patriarchal society governed by a patriarchal system in which women could not get their rights even with the force of law. The problem of Victorian women was never a matter of Acts and amendments rather it was a matter of conventions, customs, convictions and beliefs. The idea of women inferiority, weakness, and dependence was rooted in the minds of the society's members and it was hard to eradicate such ideas since they were supported by powerful women as Queen Victoria who believed in the supremacy of men and their eligibility to govern and rule the society.

2.8. The Woman Question

The nineteenth century witnessed a great change in all aspects of life as well as the traditional convictions about women's submissiveness in the English society. Many thinkers started to question the women's real position and their rights. They debated over women's proper role and status in society. As Thompson (1999) stated:

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century there was passionate discussion and agitation on matters such as marriage and divorce laws, women's property and custody rights, and educational and employment opportunities for women, as well as a vocal debate on female suffrage, which gained intensity later in the century (p. 02).

The Woman Question was referred to the different discussion on women's political, economical, and social position in the English society, emphasizing women's right to have equal economic, educational, and political opportunities as men. "Women's demand for emancipation from the duties of motherhood and family life, was hotly debated throughout the Victorian period" (King, 2005, p. 09). Consequently, many women showed their

interest in the 'Woman Question'. The concept Woman Question brought the idea that women were no longer 'the angel of the house', the idea of the perfect women as submissive to their husbands, obedient, weak, and dependent was questioned and doubted.

Several events happened in the Victorian era led to the rise of the 'Woman Question'. One of the main events was the industrialization that brought great changes in the English society as women contributed in working in the industrialized field. They "worked in laundries, retail shops, textile mills, and other factories" (Mitchell, 1973, p. 45). In addition to that, the working-class women did several jobs including working in mines and factories and many unsafe careers such as "brick making, chain making, and collecting trash from city streets"(Mitchell, 1973, p. 46). Concerning the Middle Class women, they helped their husbands in trade and ruling their farms. Moreover, they contributed in teaching in schools because they were well educated. Other reasons that brought women issues into discussion were:

the 1857 Divorce Act, the foundation of the Society for the Promotion of the Employment of Women in 1859, the opening of Cheltenham Ladies College in 1856, of Girton College in 1869, John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* in 1869, and the apocalyptic fears and apparent ideological threat of the New Woman in the 1890s (Thompson, 1999, p.03).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Woman Question became a widespread topic discussed in British newspapers, books and novels. Writers, artists and educators expressed their views on the position of women. It also led to the emergence of new notions and concepts regarding women's issues, the main concept was the New Woman.

3. The Emergence of New Woman

The Victorian *fin de siècle* or *fin de globe* was an era of remarkable transformation in all domains of life, including politics, economy, science, and society. It was the time in which everything could be questioned and mysteriously doubted. Owing to the huge change within the society, many theorists and thinkers started to challenge the standard concepts and traditional ideas of the Victorian formula. The most notable and revolutionary change is the position of Victorian women and their role in the society. In 1895, Mrs Roy Devereux wrote "life has taken on a strange unloveliness and the least beautiful thing therein is the New Woman" (as cited in Cunningham, 1978, p. 01). The new woman was described by Ledger (1997) as: "a feminist activist, a social reformer, popular novelist, a suffragette playwright, a woman poet; she was also often a fictional construct, a discursive response to the activities of the late nineteenth-century women's movement" (p. 01).

The concept New Woman appeared in 1894; Ouida was the person who estimated this phrase 'the New Woman' from Sarah Grand's essay 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question'. In her article, Grand presented the New Woman as strong independent woman who sought for their emancipation (Ledger, 1997, p. 08). Other historians stated that the term 'New Woman' was found since 1865, when the *Westminster Review* (1865) described the heroine of the new sensation novels as the "New Woman no longer the Angel, but the Devil in the House" (as cited in Heilmann, 2000, p. 22). These novels portrayed how women rejected the male authority regarding issues of marriage, family, and sex.

Many people found the idea of New Woman acceptable, they welcomed the notion of woman having the right to make her own decision and control her own life. However, it faced unexplainable attacks by other people." which included claims that she was a threat

to the human race, was probably an infanticidal mother and at the very least sexually abnormal" (Ledger, 1997, p. 10).

In a patriarchal society, the New Woman found her way in life through her education and employment and her rejection of marriage and motherhood which no longer became her main interest like it was before. As a result, "the New Woman conjured up an army of unmarried 'Odd Women', or married but unoccupied 'Superfluous Women'" (Heilmann, 2000, p. 16). In her novel *The Heavenly Twins* Sarah Grand challenged all the Victorian principles by writing about sex and attacking motherhood. As a result, many arguments were raised against her writing, they considered her as dangerous and as a threat to the status of Victorian women (Ledger, 1997, p. 11).

Blanche Alethea Crackanthorpe (1894) took a bold step when she wrote in her article *The Revolt of the Daughters* that unmarried woman particularly the daughter should have the right for education and the freedom in visiting the music halls as well as travelling freely alone. She believed that woman could not only be suitable for marriage, production and motherhood, but also she deserved to decide and create her own future (as cited in Ledger, 1997, p. 11). As Ledger (1997) stated, woman "deserved the option of a future other than as a wife and mother" (p. 11). Generally, the New Woman became a topic in which many opponents considered it as a menace and danger to the position of marriage.

The New Woman was considered as a phenomenon associated with a series of events that happened at that period of time including Socialism, New Imperialism, New Fiction, and New Journalism. It was also a part of Feminism in literature which was presented by many female writers such as Olive Schreiner and Sarah Grand in the 1880s and 1890s (Ledger, 1997, p. 01) and also by male writers such as Thomas Hardy who was one of the prominent novelists who wrote about this topic and who mainly focused on women suffrage and their deprived rights concerning their sexual ideology in addition to the

society's aggressive view regarding sexuality, marriage, and desire. Many years before the concept of the New Woman was presented by Sarah Grand, Thomas Hardy was writing in his novels about the strong free women who were no longer under the authority of men.

4. Thomas Hardy

Known for his depiction of women and nature in the Victorian era, Thomas Hardy remains one of the most unique writers of the nineteenth century. Hardy was born at Higher Bockhampton in Dorset on June 2, 1840 to humble parents (Thomas Hardy and Jemima Hand). He grew up in a rural region, which figures most of his novels. Hardy's education lasted until the age of sixteen after which he was articled for three years to John Hicks, a Dorchester architect, to receive instruction in architectural drawing and surveying. He soon moved to London where he worked as a draftsman but his poor health forced him to return again to Dorset and work as an architect. Hardy started writing at the age of seventeen while he was practising architecture. His first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady* (1867-68), failed to find a publisher; however, his second novel, *Desperate Remedies* (1871), was accepted and published just to be followed by his next novel, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1871), which demonstrated a more refined style and language and paved the way for his coming novels. He died on 11 January 1928 (Millgate, 2004).

4.1. His works

During his career as a novelist, Thomas Hardy wrote fifteen novels, fourteen of which were published. In most of those novels, Hardy mainly concerned himself with the characterization of women describing their struggles against the unfair practices imposed on them by the Victorian society. In his time, the position of women was not satisfactory.

Victorian women were supposed to be submissive and fitted the role of the angelic housewife whose main role in life is restricted to fulfilling the needs of her family. In his novels, Hardy initially presented this type of stereotypical women, but he did not encourage or side with this image of women rather he aimed to show how the Victorian society promoted this view and pressured women to subdue to its conforms. Nevertheless, Hardy's female characters seemed to break those restrictions and rebel against the accepted role of women as the novels progress. In this sense, Elizabeth Langland (1993) claimed that "Thomas Hardy's representations of women, by and large, exceed the simple stereotypes scholars initially identified as characteristic images of women" (p. 32). This development in the personality and the psyche of Hardy's women characters distinguished them from the usual Victorian women and they took the title of the New Woman on merit.

Hardy's works, which are known as the Wessex novels due to the fact that those novels took place in Wessex which is basically a fictional region in south England, differed in terms of their themes; Hardy's works are classified into:

a-Novels of Character and Environment:

This category contains *Under the Greenwood Tree*; *Far from the Madding Crowd*; *The Return to the Native*; *The Mayor of Casterbridge*; *The Woodlander*; *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; and *Jude the Obscure*.

b-Romances and Fantasies:

This one included: *A Pair of Blue Eyes*; *The Trumpet Major*; *Two on a Tower*; and *The Well-Beloved*

c-Novels of Ingenuity and Experiment:

This kind of novels contains: *Desperate Remedies*; *The Hand of Ethelberta*; and *A laodicean* (Drabble, 2000, P. 451).

When *The Poor Man and the Lady* was rejected by many publishers, Hardy had the opportunity to show his novel to his friend George Meredith, the well-known poet and novelist, who advised him to never publish this novel due to its political content which might prevent Hardy from publishing in the future. Hardy followed his friend's advice and the novel was never published.

After *The Poor Man and the Lady*, Hardy wrote two other novels entitled; *Desperate Remedies* (1871) and *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872). Both of them were published with anonymous name. The first novel that was published under his name was *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873); a novel that mirrored the life of Hardy and his first wife Emma Gifford. Hardy's next novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) gained much success which convinced Hardy to abandon his job as architect and take novels writing as a career. In this novel, Hardy introduced the Wessex England which is a region in the west of England, where most of his novels are set.

Far from the Madding Crowd was followed by more successful novels. Consequently, Hardy wrote *The Return of the Native* in 1878 and *Two on a Tower* in 1882, a romance story placed in the world of astronomy. Then in 1885, he wrote *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891). The latter outraged the public readership because of its 'unsuitable content'. The fact that Hardy sided with a "Fallen Woman" and presented her as a pure was not welcomed by the conservative Victorian society and the novel was denounced by many. However, the novel was followed by a more striking one. *Jude the Obscure*, published in 1895, received more harsh criticism and refusal from society due to its treatment of religion, marriage, and sex. Hardy's attack on the institution of marriage in *Jude the Obscure* as well as his controversial view on religion, affected Hardy's reputation and he decided to quit his career

as a novelist and turned to writing poetry. Nevertheless, Hardy had become one of the prominent writers by the 1900s.

4.2. Thomas Hardy and the Issue of Gender

One of the essential issues Thomas Hardy discussed in his work was the inequality between man and woman. His work clearly reflected his consciousness of the injustice which was committed against woman. He was a defender of women's rights. Most of his novels referred to women's position in society. As commonly known, their status was much complicated in which they had lower ranks than those of men. As a matter of fact, Hardy's novels spotted light on those issues of gender. Almost all his works talked about heroines who faced social struggles in their way to prove their identity. Hardy analyzed these problems as Brady (1999) stated:

To study the changing responses to gender in Hardy's published works from 1871 to the present is, in effect, to trace a fairly detailed history of the ways in which sexuality has been constructed within the British Isles and North America since the late-Victorian period (p. 250).

His novels shaded light on the unfair treatment of women. He was successfully able to present brave women who sought for emancipation despite all the restrictions of society. According to Stephen Regan (2001), "Thomas Hardy repeatedly shaped his characters and plots to show his sympathy with women and his awareness of the disadvantages society laid upon them" (p. 344).

In his novels Hardy presented woman as being treated in real life, he was trying to depict the real situation of the Victorian rebellious woman aiming to change their destiny. He deeply believed that stability in society should be based on the equal position to both

men and women. If this did not happen, women would encounter great suffrage. Accordingly, most of Hardy's heroines had a sad ending as Duffin (1962) said:

It is not Hardy who treats his women cruelly, but life-life as Hardy saw it. What Hardy could do for his women how did- he made them full of beauty, interest, fascinating and loveable qualities of all kinds, he gave them great parts to play, and let them (generally) play those parts well. His estimate of women is high, but tempered and conditioned by keen observation of the realities around him. He has the necessary ideals of her as a creature nobly planned and bright with angelic radiance, but he knows also that it is only in rare cases that she if found free, undimmed, ideal (...) Hardy is no misogynist, but true lover in very deed (p.238).

4.3. Hardy and Feminism

The fact that most of Hardy's woks dealt with issues related to women, made feminism the suitable literary theory to study his novels. In this sense, Harvey (2003) claimed that "Hardy's texts were at the centre of these theoretical movements [like psychological and Marxist], including one that came to prominence in the 1980s, feminism" (p. 145). Hardy's portrayal of women earned him the title of 'feminist'. His "intelligent and sympathetic portrayal of women is informed by his perception of the inextricable entanglement of gender and class issues" (Harvey ,2003, p. 34). This means that Hardy was aware of the fact that women's rights in the Victorian society were deprived. In his novels, Hardy "championed the struggle of the strong, intelligent, sexual woman to achieve selfhood and social freedom" (Harvey, 2003, p. 34) and this is exactly what feminists do. Though he did not claim himself as a feminist, many writers did. Mitchell (1994) in her book *The Stone and the Scorpion: The Female Subject of Desire in*

the Novels of Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy stated that "all the writers are significantly feminist in terms of the surface polemic of their novels, with Hardy being the most vociferously so" (p. 210). Hardy's depiction of women who were against the marriage institution, indicated that "Hardy was deeply opposed to the liberal feminist's idealization of marriage. Tending, instead, towards socialistic views and the abolition of marriage in its current institutionalized form, he was more readily drawn to the radical feminist fringe" (Morgan, 2006, p. xiv).

Nevertheless, Hardy's categorization as a feminist was a controversial topic. Blake (1978), a feminist critic, claimed that Hardy is not an avowed feminist though he certainly knew things about feminist views (p. 705). Others like Widdowson were more doubtful about Hardy's feminism. Widdowson (1999) claimed that Hardy's over treatment of sexuality and gender " forces us to debate whether Hardy is a proto-feminist, sympathetically exposing the victimisation of women in a patriarchal society, or a closet misogynist, terrified, like many of his male contemporaries, by the rise of a the New Woman" (p. 88). To put it another way, the fact that most of Hardy's female characters encountered sad ending, led many to accuse him of being misogynist; unsympathetically punishing women for their disobedience, opposition, and alienation from the Victorian social conventions. However, his treatment of taboo topics as sex, rape, illegitimate children, and divorce as well as his criticism of the hypocritical and the double standard Victorian society especially with regard to women position pushed many to consider him a feminist. The present dissertation would adopt the view which classifies Hardy as a feminist due to the way he portrayed women in his novels.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, this chapter was mainly devoted for the analysis of the major events that happened in the Victorian age which led to the new classification of the British society. In addition, it tried to put more emphasis on women's conditions and their position in the patriarchal system. More specifically, It discussed issues of equality, marriage, and divorce. This chapter examined new Victorian concepts such as the 'Fallen Woman' and the 'Woman Question'. At the end, it provided a brief overview of the emergence of New Woman which would be tackled in details in the coming chapters.

Chapter Two:

Literature and the Portrayal of New Women by Some

Victorian Writers and by Thomas Hardy

Introduction

During the nineteenth century, English literature reached its peak due to the emergence of brilliant male and female writers as well as to its serious and sensitive social themes and topics. The art of writing novels, in particular, witnessed its highest because novels at that time were mainly concerned with social issues like the Woman Question. In the present chapter, we will shed light on the Victorian literature and its main themes. We shall, also, review the flourishing of Victorian novels by discussing the writings of certain major novelists of the period. Furthermore, this chapter is an attempt to discuss the portrayal of stereotyped women in the Victorian literature and how the late-Victorian novelists rejected the idealization of women and depicted non-conventional pictures of women. At the end, we will elucidate the main concern of the present dissertation Thomas Hardy's portrayal of the New Woman.

1. An Overview about the Victorian Literature

The Victorian era witnessed the start of great transformation in social preferences concerning literature. Commentators declared that there was a transition from a time of certainty and accepted values to a time of deception. This change "was a fearful thing" (Ryals, 1990, p. 02) for people. The Victorian era was preceded by the Romantic period where poetry had been the prevalent genre. Apparently, literature marked a remarkable reluctance to poetry which had been gradually replaced by prose more specifically by novels. By the beginning of the Victorian period, the art of poetry had disappeared with the death of Lord Byron in 1824 who was known as one of the greatest poets in the Romantic period. Thus, "Byron's death seemed and seems to mark the end of an era which relegates the subsequent years before the ascent of Victoria" (Adams, 2009, p. 01).

As mentioned before, the name 'Victorian literature' was mainly borrowed from the monarch's name Queen Victoria who held the crown from 1837 to 1901. At that time, literature had taken new dimension; this could be seen in the style of writing, the themes exploited and in people's tendencies which had slightly changed from reading poetry to reading prose. This can be traced back to 1880 during which literature witnessed "changes in both the content and readership of fiction"(Adams, 2009, p. 01).

The Victorian literature was considered as a landmark in the history of Britain. One of the characteristics of the Victorian literature was its social orientation because it widely explored the problems of the British society at that period. In this respect, Many writers used literature to express and indirectly explain their attitudes towards certain issues and rules that have been applied and followed within the Victorian society. Hence, as Davis (2008) stated in his book , Literature " is not just a branch of social history; it is more (and more personal) than a receptacle of cultural and historical meaning" (p. 02).

Victorian writers such as Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy and Emily Bronte used literature as a tool to criticize social and economic circumstance and to convey some hidden messages to the readers. More importantly, they considered literature as a means to account for considerable socio-economic problems. Being part of the Victorian society and influenced by its laws and conventions, Victorian writers reflected, in a way or another, real social conditions and economic facts striving to speak about their own lives and experiences.

1.1. The Novel as a Major Literary Genre

It is believed that the first appearance of the novel as a literary genre was in the early eighteenth century in England with the publication of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). This novel though did not significantly adhere to the norms to which any

contemporary novel should conform. It served its purpose thoroughly by depicting the commercial world and the middle-class life of the period. Definitely, Defoe's novel was followed by other writers' works such as the novels of Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-1748) which, like Defoe's novels, talked about either a young man seeking for a comfortable life or a young woman looking for a husband. This kind of novels, which tackled everyday life and domesticity issues like marriage, had soon flourished and developed by significant writers in the early nineteenth century such as Walter Scott and Jane Austen whose novels centered on marriage and social relationships among a group of middle-class property owners (Peck & Coyle, 2002). Though the novels of the early nineteenth century were highly appreciated, the novel as a major literary genre did not witness its peak till the mid-century of the Victorian era which is signalled by the industrial revolution.

The industrial revolution, as mentioned earlier, brought about fundamental changes in the standards of living in the Victorian society and affected most domains of life including literature. Literature, precisely novels, witnessed a huge flourishing in the period due to the development of printing industry. Victorian novel was" nevertheless related to the revolution in printing and reading that affected everyone in early nineteenth century Britain" (James, 2006, p. 04).

The audience for this literary genre, the novel, grew enormously during the nineteenth century due to the cheap production costs of papers and printing processes. As the reading population expanded, the need for novels readability increased especially by middle-class people. Writers turned from poetry and journalism towards the most profitable and demandable genre which was the novel. It is believed, though not accurately, that about 60,000 novels were published between 1837 and 1901 by nearly 900 novelists (James, 2006). That was the reason why the Victorian age, as Moseley (1985)

thought was "The Golden Age of the English novel" (p. 485). Diaches (1994) stated that "the novel was the vehicle best equipped to present a picture of life lived in a given society against a stable background of social and moral values by people who were recognizably like the people encountered by readers" (p. 1049). Thus, Victorian novels were meant to shed the light on "the affairs of everyday life" (James, 2006, p. 02). In the beginning of the Victorian era, novels although depicted the real life, they:

tend to be idealized portraits of difficult lives in which hard work, perseverance, love and luck win in the end; virtue would be rewarded and wrongdoers are suitably punished. They tended to be of an improving nature with a central moral lesson at heart (Janney, 2010, p. 82).

Nevertheless, this became no longer the case. Gradually, novels started dealing with more complex situations by the era depicting the contemporary concerns of the Victorian society like industrialization and reflecting the spirit of the period with its pros and cons. The Victorian novel was highly regarded by Victorian readerships as it was a means of entertainment among middle-class educated people as well as a tool used by writers to address some sensitive issues of the society aiming to denounce and criticize the injustice and the unfairness of certain social conventions and customs.

The Victorian era gave birth to the most significant writers in the history of English literature. Charles Dickens is seen as the most popular literary figure of the era. Dickens' *Oliver Twist* serial publication started in 1837 coinciding with the same period of the queen's coronation. This fact made *Oliver Twist* the first major Victorian novel (James, 2006, p. 01). As far as *Oliver Twist* is concerned, Dickens "highlighted the problems of poor city children who after the Poor Law Act of 1833 ended up in the workhouse" (Carter & McRae, 2005, p. 226) suffering from the ill-treatment of their masters. Generally speaking, Dickens mainly dealt with the Victorian society's issues in terms of the

unfairness of the law, the "dehumanising aspects of the Industrial Revolution", the "disorder of the rapidly growing capital", "the clash between wealth and poverty", and the unbearable situation of Victorian women (Carter & McRae, 2005, pp. 226-227). As a matter of fact, Dickens was disgusted by the hypocrisies of his society and accordingly he had harshly criticised it in his novels.

The Brontë sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, as well added much to the development of the English novel. The Brontës took the mission of elevating the position of women as their main concern and they longed to change the way women were perceived at that time. They demonstrated more violent, independent, and powerful women than those who were portrayed in other novels like those of Jane Austen:

The Brontë sisters opened up new possibilities for the form of the English novel; at the same time they provided a basis for which psychological exploration became a key component in the development of the genre of the novel. They also offered new possibilities for the portrayal of women in fiction. Women became even more of a 'foreign land', but increasingly familiar and central as subjects for fiction (Carter & McRae, 2005, pp. 240-241).

Like the Brontë sisters, George Eliot (Mary Anne Evans) contributed much to the richness of the English novel. In her novels, Eliot treated deep and sensitive topics of her time. Such topics were mainly linked to social relationships, unsuccessful marriages, single mothers, sex and gender, and divorce. She spoke about intimacy and solidarity between a woman and her brother. She, as well, talked about wives dealing with drunken husbands and unmarried women accused of murdering their infant children. Moreover, she wrote about intelligent and enlightened women who struggled to achieve intellectual autonomy. Using a male pen name, Eliot wanted to attack and rise above the 'Silly Novels by Lady

Novelists' as she concerned herself mainly with serious social and political issues (David, 1987).

Moreover, Elizabeth Gaskell is one of the leading literary figures of the Victorian era. She was best known for her industrial novels and her courageous willingness to address serious social problems. Gaskell's best valuable works may include *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) which was considered as one of the greatest Victorian biographies ever written (James, 2006, pp. 117-118). Her novel *North and South* (1854-5) as well witnessed an outstanding success due to its sensitive theme. Through this novel, Gaskell "wants to heal rifts and division within society, notably between employer and worker. But the novel also presents two distinct versions of middle-class ideology, and attempts to reconcile them" (Peck & Coyle, 2002, p. 181). The novel as well contradicted some social conventions in terms of the position of women in the Victorian society as it provided "the complex depths of a female characters, whose way of thinking will always differ from the dominant ways of thinking in a male-led society" (Peck & Coyle, 2002, p. 183).

As the nineteenth century proceeded, more brilliant novelists continued to appear such as Henry James and Thomas Hardy. With regard to James' novels, most of them are centred on women who, after marriage, encountered sexual corruption and unhappiness. Additionally, many of Thomas Hardy's novels, the main concern of the present research, were used as a means to express his dissatisfaction concerning the rules governing the Victorian society. Thus, he focused on the lives of the poor working-classes, the social constraints in terms of marriage, divorce as well as the situation of women in the Victorian patriarchal society.

1.2. The Main Topics and Themes

Historians had divided the Victorian writers into two categories: those who belong to the early Victorian era (1837-1880) like Charles Dickens and those who belong to the late Victorian period (1880-1900) or what is called *fin de siècle* as Thomas Hardy. The majority of the writers of this era (*fin de siècle*) wrote about the great changes that happened in law, politics, economic and social class divisions as Fletcher (2002) put it "Victorian literature speaks for an age which witnessed incomparably greater changes than any that had gone before in all the conditions of life" (p. 137). What those writers wanted was to raise their readers' consciousness aiming to make them aware of the facts that took place at that time because those writers assumed that Victorian people were not well informed about the problems, the injustices and the unfair practices in their society. In this respect, James (2006) believed that "the first readers of Dickens and George Eliot did not think of themselves as living in the 'Victorian period' " (p.01).

The Victorian era was considered as Diaches (1994) thought "the great age of the English novel" (p. 1049). The main themes presented by the Victorian novelists were related to industrial revolution and its effects on society. The novel reflected new social and political division between the north and the south of England which was clearly illustrated in mid nineteenth century's works such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *North & South* and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* which represented a typical portrayal of the Victorian social division into modern and rural classes.

Writers' endeavour to give a realistic picture of their society and their intensive trial to approximate their works to reality led to the emergence of the Realism as a major literary movement. Within the scope of realism, "every artist wants to give the real representation of something"; Thomas Hardy objected the word realism as "unfortunate, an ambiguous word" (Peck & Coyle, 2002, p. 169).

In the same vein, Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist*, a significant depiction to early Victorian period is regarded as a message of social reform and a manifestation of Victorian social conscience. The story of a poor orphan child working in the workhouse under in terrible conditions was a direct criticism to the New Poor Law of 1834. It is regarded one of best Victorian exemplar of realism in the early and mid- Victorian literature. As stated by Carter and McRae (1997), "Dickens described increasingly realistically the society of his time but with a faith and optimism" (p. 226). Dickens succeeded in portraying London's political and socio-economic problems and gave a realistic account to London's bad and good sides. "Dickens's scope expands greatly during the 1850s, from the concentration on the individual hero to the examinations of society, the law, industrialism, trade unions, historical ideals" (Carter and McRae ,1997, p. 227).

Literature was then used as a tool by which Dickens situated himself and his readers among some complex areas of the criminal law and highlighted some issues like corruption, poverty, illiteracy, inhumanity of mankind, etc. To put it differently, Dickens successfully criticized society, unveils reality behind the social and the legal systems and reveals the secrets realities. Dickens used his writing "to help people in the nineteenth century make sense of their lives" (Peck & Coyle, 2002, p. 172). Most of his novels covered the themes of the development of individual identity and the complexity within the social class i.e. the middle class and the lower class.

The late Victorian literature which appeared at the end of the nineteenth century displayed another vision to literature wherein many social and political complications had been raised and this reflected contradictions and doubt. It appeared as a reaction to the early Victorian view in which:

Social awareness and realism in the novel go hand in hand. As Oscar Wilde was to put it in his Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), 'The

nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass'. Like Shakespeare's half-man half-beast Caliban in *The Tempest*, the Victorians did not necessarily want to see reality in the novels they read. Like Dickens's character, Mr. Podsnap, they wanted to put it behind them, for it offended them (Carter & McRae, 1997, p. 245).

The writers of this period gave special concern to the role of woman in society. A large number of writers wrote about woman suffrage and strived to raise "the consciousness of women about their rights and potentials. Soon, the social awareness was transmitted to literature" (Bint Anis, 2006, p. 01). Most late Victorian writers started to explore Woman Question in their works. They sought to question the issues of gender and the inequality between men and women in all the aspects of life including politics, economic, education and social relationships. This could be seen in New Woman fiction of Sarah Grand and Thomas Hardy.

The prominent novelist of this time was Thomas Hardy. Apparently, in his novels "the move from the high moral didacticism of mid-century to the exploration of moral issues and responsibilities can be seen particularly clearly" (Carter & McRae, 1997, p. 254). He put much emphasis on issues related to moral and social rules, especially those related to woman's deprived rights. Hardy's novels depicted women as being oppressed by the Victorian patriarchal society:

Most of Hardy's novels are tragedies, or they reveal the cosmic indifference or malevolent ironies which life has in store for everyone, particularly for those unable to curb the demands of their own natures. His last two major novels were *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). *Tess* is a deeply pessimistic novel, revealing how an intelligent and sensitive girl can be

driven to her death by a society which is narrow in morality and in spirit (Carter & McRae, 1997, p. 255).

Another theme many writers used was the prostitute or the Fallen Woman. Victorian society had some conventions that should not be broken or even challenged. Women were believed to be the *Angel in the House* and any deviation from the standard patterns of society would be considered as a crime. Evidently, a fallen or an adulterous woman who had sexual relationship outside marriage was considered guilty and eventually rejected from society. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy clearly described the heroine Tess as a pure and innocent girl, even though she had been raped by Alec. According to the Victorian social conventions, Tess was considered fallen and accused for committing an immoral act despite the fact that she was a victim of rape. In 1891, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* first appeared with the subtitle: 'A Pure Woman' as a protest against social prejudice and a clear challenge to the conventional ideas of purity.

Being a woman in a patriarchal society was a challenge for women. Writers who defended and condemned the hypocritical and segregated procedures committed by society against women faced more complex challenges. To sum up, almost all writers of the Victorian era used fiction as a tool to convey their disapproval of the prosecutions and the laws which contributed to the division of society and created a great crack on the structure of society. However, readers' responses to these works varied according to readers' social background, knowledge, and beliefs. Some readers react positively to the call of the authors while others considered their novels as scandalous since they tackled taboos like sexual issues and the Victorian society's hypocrisy.

2. Stereotyped Women in Victorian Literature

In the nineteenth century England, it was conventionally accepted that women's fate and duty was to conform to domestic spheres by managing their houses, bearing children, and pleasing their husbands, avoiding any other preoccupations that may distract them from fulfilling their roles as 'the angel in the house'. The phrase *The Angel in the House* was actually a title of a poem by Coventry Patmore first published in 1854. The poem was meant to symbolise the ideal Victorian domestic female that corresponded to the Victorian masculine thoughts. As the title suggested, woman should be like an angel, paragon of virtue, purity, domesticity, and humility. The angel in the house was a "domestic woman, woman who has no existence outside the context of her home and whose sole window on the world is her husband " (Hartnel, 1996, p. 460) to whom she should devote herself and endure his faults as if they were hers. In this respect, Patmore (1962) said:

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.
Her heart to an icicle or whim,
While she, too gentle even to force
His penitence by kind replies,
Waits by, expecting his remorse,
With pardon in her pitying eyes;
And if he once, by shame oppress'd,
A comfortable word confers,
She leans and weeps against his breast,
And seems to think the sin was hers;

At any time, she's still his wife,
Dearly devoted to his arms;
She loves with love that cannot tire;
And when, ah woe, she loves alone,
Through passionate duty love springs higher,
As grass grows taller round a stone.

Therefore, the poem was an illustration of the roles women should confine to by being good and loving partners whose ultimate objective in life was to make their husband's lives joyful and happy. The poem clearly claims that men were superior to women and they should do their best and devote their lives only to please their men. Patmore, also, suggested that men are the women's refuges without whom women would be at loss.

As it was commonly agreed that women and men's duties differed, the poet Alfred Tennyson clearly distinguished between the roles of women and men in his poem *The Princess* (1847) in which he placed women in houses performing certain tasks like needlework, whereas men should be outside, working to gain money. In his poem, it was apparent that Tennyson granted the right of commanding to men as they were more thoughtful and intelligent than women who were more emotional and weak and thus supposed to obey the husbands' orders, be submissive and stick to household works. In this concern, he said:

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 (Mitchell, 2009, p. 267).

The same idea was shared by women writers as Sarah Ellis who wrote a book entitled *The Mothers of England: Their Influence and Responsibility* (1844) in which she clearly expressed her view on women: "they are, in fact, from their own constitution, and from the station they occupy in the world (...) relative creatures" (p. 48). Thus, women were inherently inferior and subordinate to men and their existence was merely absorbed in that of men. Ellis believed that woman should not think of herself or how best she could provide comfort to her soul but rather she ought to think of ways that make people around her happy and comfortable. Ellis, as one of the defenders and advocates of the devoted domestic women, provided an ideal portrait of the domestic women:

Much more congenial to the highest attributes of woman's character, are inquiries such as these: "(...) Is any one sick, I must visit their chamber without delay, and try to give their apartment an air of comfort (...) Is any one about to set off on a journey, I must see that the early meal is spread, or prepare it with my own hands, in order that the servant (...) may profit by unbroken rest. Did I fail in what was kind or considerate to any of the family yesterday; I will meet them this morning with a cordial welcome, and show(...)that I am anxious to atone for the past. I am consequently the most at liberty to devote myself to the general good of the whole, by cultivating cheerful conversation, adapting myself to the prevailing tone of feeling, and leading those who are least happy, to think and speak of what will make them more so (pp. 23-26).

As the passage suggests, the merit of women lays in her self-sacrifice and ability to make the ones around her blissful and comfortable by devoting herself completely to them. Moreover, Ellis expressed similar ideas in her later books *The Wives of England: Their Relative Duties, Domestic Influence, and Social Obligations*(1843) and *The Daughters of*

England: Their Position in Society, Character and Responsibilities (1842) in which she stated that women's brains would not bear serious and formal education as their brains were weaker than those of men's. Besides, she suggested ways by which women could be trained to please their husbands the most.

The ideal domestic Victorian women, however, occupied a considerable part in Victorian novels. Charles Dickens was one of the Victorian novelists who endowed many of his female characters with the qualities of the angelic woman. Such Dickensian female characters are Agnes Wickfield in *David Copperfield*, Esther Summerson and Ada in *Bleak House*, Florence Dombey, Rachel and Amy in *Little Dorrit* and Sissy Jupe in *Hard Times*. All the mentioned characters were presented with the intuition of sacrificing for the ones around them like fathers, husbands, lovers and friends. As far as Agnes Wickfield is concerned, Charles Dickens presented her as a devoted daughter to her father. Agnes is "presented straight away as the tutelary angel of the home when, armed with the required bunch of keys, she presides over the tea ceremony, works at her sewing, and makes music for her father and his guest" (Basch, 1974, p. 64). Once married, Agnes whose Christian name significantly associated her with Christ as the sacrificed Lamb of God, demonstrated all the qualities of the angelic domestic women. She was exemplified as a heavenly figure, passive, gentle, meek, graceful, self-sacrificing, pious, and a pure creature who was devoted and submissive to her husband and contentedly performing the daily routines of eating, dominoes, music:

When we had dined,(...) Agnes set the glasses and the decanters in the same corner, and Mr. Wickfield sat down to drink,(...) Agnes played the piano to him, sat by him, and worked and talked, and played some games at dominoes with me. In good time she made tea;(...) I see her, with her modest, orderly, placid manner, and I hear her beautiful calm voice, as I write these words. The

influence for all good, which she came to exercise over me at a later time, begins already to descend upon my breast(...) I feel that there are goodness, peace and truth, wherever Agnes is; and that the soft light of the coloured window in the church, seen long ago, falls on her always, and on me when I am near her, and on everything around (Dickens, 1981, p. 230).

Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* was presented as exactly what a Victorian woman ought to be. According to the Victorian standards, she was the perfect young woman. She is "blissfully grateful to her tutor, or steeped in kind actions towards (...) the poor, towards her little(...) servant (...) and her sinful mother. She carries sacrifice(...)to the point of wanting to marry a tutor much older than herself" (Basch, 1974, p. 64).According to Basch, Esther Summerson was " perhaps the most set, the most insipid, of Dickens' angelic women" (Basch, 1974, p. 64).

The stereotyped Victorian woman was characterized in many of the Victorian novels other than Dickens'. William Makepeace Thackeray's novels are full of idealized females. Such females are Amelia in *Vanity Fair* who was endowed with kindness, sweetness, and submissiveness for the sake to embody the real gentlewoman. Laura Pendennis in *the Adventure of Philip on His Way through the World* is another example of the stereotyped Victorian woman. Laura the dutiful woman, who played the role of a mentor to Arthur Pendennis, was seen by him as a saint who deserved to be worshiped or as a heavenly pure creature full of love and goodness. In this sense, Arthur addressed Laura saying: "Teach me my duty. Pray for me that I may do it-pure heart" (Thackeray, 1835-43, as cited in Basch, 1974, p. 70).

This idealization of women, though supported by many writers, was harshly criticized by others. George Meredith, George Moore, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy were among the novelists who strikingly contrasted the stereotyped and the symbolic

representation of Victorian woman and tended to portray new and different woman in their novels.

3. New Woman in Victorian Novels

As the age of the *fin de siècle* approached, the representation of women in literature had gone through a substantial transformation. The position of Victorian women in society was highly criticized by the late Victorian novelists such as Hardy, Meredith, and Gissing who rejected the portrayal of stereotyped women in literature and tended to portray "heroines who refused to conform to traditional feminine role, challenged accepted ideals of marriage and maternity, chose to work for a living, or who in any way argued the feminist cause" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 03). This kind of female characters were identified as New Women.

As stated earlier, the New Woman was a concept first introduced by Sarah Grand to refer to the woman who was strong, independent, intellectual, intelligent and against the idealization of women. The term was used to describe a woman who refused to conform to the Victorian standards that undervalued woman and restricted her role to the domestic spheres. As the late Victorian novelists revolted against the situation of women in their society, the character of the New Woman became the main protagonist of their novels. In those novels, they reflected their views concerning the status of women in society in terms of marriage, sexuality, domesticity, motherhood, freedom and independence. In this respect, Diniejko (2011) wrote:

New Woman fiction dealt frankly with sex and marriage as well as women's desires for independence and fulfilment. Many New Woman novels strongly opposed the idea that home is woman's only proper sphere. The female authors revealed the traps of conventional Victorian marriage, including the condition

of marriage which tolerated marital rape, compulsory or enforced motherhood, and the double standard of sexual morality. Many female protagonists of the New Woman fiction experienced conventional marriage as a degrading and oppressive institution because women suffered inferior status and were often victims of domestic violence and other threats (The New Woman in Late Victorian Fiction, para. 03).

Marriage for New Woman, according to George Drysdale (1861)," is one of the chief instruments in the degradation of women (...) it is the province of the female sex to depend upon man for support, and to attend merely to household cares and the rearing of children" (as cited in Cunningham, 1978, p. 05). Sue Bridehead the protagonist of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, is identified as a typical New Woman due to her "quivering nerves and ante-marriage sentiments" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 80). Sue who was married to Mr. Phillotson, expressed the agony of unsuccessful 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, 2003, p.264).

Sue's refusal to conform to the accepted Victorian feminine role and her ante-marriage sentiments made her an exceptional Victorian woman. Although Sue got freed from her miserable marriage with Mr. Phillotson, she refused to be engaged in another marriage ceremony with her lover Jude. Among her reasons to refuse marriage is her belief that marriage is an "iron contract" that extinguishes the tenderness between man and woman (Hardy, 2003, p. 307). Sue went further with her view on marriage and deemed it as a sign of degradation for women:

I have been looking at the marriage service in the Prayer book, and it seems to me very humiliating that a giver-away should be required at all. According to the ceremony as there printed, the bridegroom chooses me of his own will and pleasure; but I don't choose him. Somebody gives me to him, like a she-ass or she-goat, or any other domestic animal (Hardy, 2003, p. 220).

Nevertheless, Hardy was not the only late Victorian novelist who took sides with women; many female writers as well bravely stood against the unfair Victorian society and resisted its men's dominance. Charlotte Bronte, as an example, demonstrated a unique female character in her novel *Jane Eyre*. Her heroine Jane was endowed with certain characteristics that were against what was commonly expected from Victorian women. Jane Eyre was represented as an intellectual, strong, independent, passionate, and an unconventional female who, though, "poor, friendless and above all plain... wins the love of a man who has vainly combed the whole of Europe looking for satisfaction" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 41). Despite the fact that Jane Eyre was not a beautiful and attractive woman, she could earn the love and the respect of Mr. Rochester who was her superior due to her intellectual mind and enlightened personality.

Since infancy, Jane Eyre was a rebellious girl who did not fear saying her opinion freely and openly. As a little girl, Jane was exposed to harsh treatment and violence by her cousin John Reed to which she reacted by calling him "murderer", "a slave-driver" and "the Roman emperor" (Bronte, 1897, p. 14). Jane's verbal self-defence against 'master John' was considered inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour from a girl. Jane "does not fit the ideal picture of a small girl at the time, she has a strong sense of justice and she questions too much; traits not suitable in a little Victorian girl who was supposed to be a pretty ornament" (Anderson, 2011, p. 06). As she became a governess, she remained the same rebellious girl who, though longing for kindness and love, refused the proposal of

marriage of the wealthy Mr. Rochester because she did not want to marry him till she had the same social rank and financial status as him; she refused his proposal until she could become his equal:

Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong!—I have as much soul as you,—and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh;—it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,—as we are! (Bronte, 1897,p. 423).

Bronte's heroine refused to submit and subdue to the patriarchal society and fought to restore her self-respect by striving to get her rights. Jane Eyre was "a tough and independent woman who pursues true love and equality" (Gao, 2013, p. 926). She was "different from any other women at that time" because "she strives for her life and defends her fate in hardships and difficult conditions. In the Victorian period, the image of Jane Eyre casts a sharp contrast to the man-dominated society" as she modeled "a new lady who has the courage to fight for her own rights and love" (Gao, 2013, p. 926).

Elizabeth Gaskell as well was among the writers who dealt with 'Woman Question'. In her novel *Ruth*, she represented her heroine Ruth as innocent and pure despite the fact that she is, according to the Victorian conventions, a "Fallen Women". Ruth whose mother died as a little girl did not have anyone to advise her or direct her conduct. Therefore, she was seduced by the rich Bellingham who left her pregnant at the age of sixteen. Ruth's young age, ignorance and inexperience did not excuse her from being a sinner or be blamed by the society. However, Mrs. Gaskell made sure to represent Ruth's downfall and

corruption not as a crime but rather as a misfortune (Cunningham, 1978). Throughout the novel, readers feel that Mrs. Gaskell is insisting on presenting Ruth as a victim who did not help escaping blame from her society. Fortunately, Ruth was taken by Mr. Benson, a minister who saved her from committing suicide, to his house where she repented her sin and decided to lead a life of goodness and honour. After giving birth to her child, Ruth moved to work as a governess in the house of Mr. Bradshaw and though she still committed to the life of goodness and honour, she, after discovering her sexual history, was harshly criticized and blamed by Mr. Bradshaw who accused her with contaminating his innocent girls and claimed her as fallen, depraved and disgusting. Mr. Bradshaw's words were not a surprising reaction but an expected expression of the common conventional Victorian view and thought on the 'Fallen Woman'. Mr. Bradshaw, like all his society, condemned Ruth by the fact that she had once been fallen and engaged in an illegal relationship outside the boundary of marriage, ignoring Ruth's present good manners and regular behaviours. Relating to Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the heroine Tess as well was presented as a pure and innocent girl who was seduced and ruined by Alec D'Urbervilles, the tricky and selfish man who caused the falling of Tess. Tess as well as Ruth broke the Victorian boundaries and went against their community's confines, yet they were both pitilessly criticized and blamed by their society (Cunningham, 1978, p. 29-31).

Kate Chopin, an American novelist, in her novel *The Awakening* concerned herself with the depiction of a Victorian woman who rejected the stereotyped Victorian role destined to her as a loving wife and a caring mother. The heroine of the mentioned novel Edna Pontellier, though primarily presented as an ideal woman, soon revolutionized against gender role and social conventions. In the novel, Edna refused to obey and submit to her husband in many occasions and deemed "her marriage to Leonce Pontellier [as]

purely an accident" (Chopin, 1995, p. 39). Besides, Edna demonstrated a lack of interest in her children and carelessness towards them: "their absence was a sort of relief, though she did not admit this, even to herself. It seemed to free her of responsibility which she had blindly assumed and for which fate had not fitted her" (Chopin, 1995, p. 39).

The title of the novel *The Awakening* suggests Edna's voyage towards emancipation and freedom from the rigid Victorian conventions. Edna first incident towards enlightenment is her refusal to submit to her husband's command to go to sleep which made him angry and irritated. Her refusal to obey her husband and his irritation arose Edna's awakening slowly:

She perceived that her will had blazed up, stubborn and resistant. She could not at that moment have done other than denied and resisted. She wondered if her husband had ever spoken to her like that before, and if she had submitted to his command. Of course she had; she remembered that she had. But she could not realize why or how she should have yielded, feeling as she then did (Chopin, 1995, p. 55).

Edna's most rebellious incident is the abandonment of her husband and her rejection of the role destined to her as a wife. Edna decided to move to live in another house leaving her husband, his house, their children, and her status in society giving up all her marital and social life. In the new house, Edna felt free and contented as she at last broke the rigid social conventions and escaped the female stereotypical role designed by the Victorian society.

4. Thomas Hardy and the New Woman

Thomas Hardy, as a writer, started to be known in the late nineteenth century for his description of Victorian women. He was considered as a defender for women's rights such

as freedom, education, and work. This was obviously presented on his last three novels *The Woodlanders*, *Jude the Obscure* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* where they "clearly embody ideas of central interest to the New Woman" (Cunningham, 1978, p.80). In his novels, Thomas Hardy wrote about women's suffrage and the discriminatory laws against them; he cried against the persecution and the harassment the Victorian women suffered from.

Because of his willingness to influence Victorian women's mentality, he presented new Victorian woman which was characterized as being strong, intelligent and independent from man's authority. This can be seen in his character Bathsheba, the single educated woman who refused to marry the farmer Oak because she despised the idea of being 'man's property'.

The emergence of New Woman and the female self-control were prevalent themes in most of Hardy's novels. He was striving to change the wrong ideas which surrounded Victorian woman as well as the social pressures woman faced. Moreover, "New Woman fiction was adapted and reshaped by male writers keen to explore new female identities" (Heilmann, 2000, p. 06). It was a challenge to present such topics in conservative society where the status of men would never be equal to that of women and topics such as marriage and divorce would never be discussed publically. Hardy stood against all these beliefs and presented new type of fiction, the fiction that had put the constant social and legal convictions into dispute. It was noticed that "Hardy's novels often act in a way that threatens and undermines the social institution of marriage" (Peck, 1987, p. 05). Most of his characters were responding to their desires and instincts rather than to the demands and the requirements of society. Hardy's novels were known by almost the same plot, where one character "rebels against the discipline of marriage, craving freedom or adventure or passion." (Peck, 1987, p. 05). This can be clearly seen in his heroine, Sue, who had

experienced unsuccessful marriage with a schoolmaster, a man she never loved. Thus, she escaped from her husband and went to her beloved friend Jude "she and Jude start living together; they both obtain divorces but Sue is reluctant to marry Jude" (Peck, 1987, p. 64).

As Robert Tyrrell wrote in his review of *Jude the Obscure*, 'we cannot but class it with the fiction of Sex and New Woman' (Cunningham, 1978, p. 80). Hardy took advantage to tackle new concepts and non-discussed topics regarding woman's mental and physical issues. He lavished more of his attention on his heroine's sexuality. This can be seen apparently in Sue's personality when she "offers herself like a sacrificial victim and is carried with clenched teeth to the bed; and partly it is used schematically to chart the flesh-spirit dichotomy in Jude (Cunningham, 1978, p. 112). In her thought "she seems to be a New Woman of the free-love persuasion" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 113) when she responded to the insistence of Jude to have a sexual relationship with him. In general, Hardy considered his heroines as modern products, they were with no doubt New Woman heroines maybe because they were "the more perceptive, or more sympathetic" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 118). Despite the fact that most of Hardy's women were different to some extent, New Woman "appears as farmer (Bathsheba), or field labourers (Tess), or text-illuminator (Sue), or as a highly competent head of household (Paula Power and Ethelberta), she is personable, desirable and by no means mannish or grotesque" (Morgan, 2006, p.xi).

Hardy dealt sympathetically with women and their sexual life. His heroines "if seduced and betrayed", Hardy's fallen heroines "always have his full support" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 89). Hardy's heroines possessed "self-exposure expressing both daring and intimacy—the ultimate intimacy which demands facing the fear of ego-loss in those moments which call for abandon" (Morgan, 2006, p. xi). This astonished the readers and made them criticize Hardy's writing when:

Far from the Madding Crowd brought Hardy a shower of personal correspondence objecting to the staining of its rural purity by Fanny Robin and her illegitimate child, and *Two on a Tower*, in which Viviette is seen stealing from her home at night to visit Swithin's bed, brought down a torrent of the *Spectator's* epithets of moral outrage (Cunningham, 1978, p. 89).

Although the Victorian fiction was banned from discussing any kind of sexual issues which Hardy called the 'insuperable bar', he succeeded in exploring the female sexual issues. Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was sub-titled by 'A Pure Woman' though Tess was considered as fallen woman. To sum up, "New Woman fiction were sexual morality in general and a pervading cynicism about marriage" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 81).

For Hardy, marriage did not "invariably lead to a happy ending" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 85), most of his characters experienced unsuccessful marital life and misery. Due to the restricted social rules, women did not enjoy social equality to men and they were obliged to marry the men their parents chose without taking their opinions into consideration. More importantly, women were regarded as unemotional creatures to whom marriage was the only tool to maintain a higher position, give birth to children and amuse their husbands. Almost all Victorian women were against those misleading ideas about marriage since many of them suffered with unwanted husbands or unfaithful ones. Thus, "marriage, which had usually provided the conventional happy ending, began to be used more frequently as a beginning of bad one" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 17). Most of rules were not supporting women's rights; therefore, Hardy considered marriage as a trap for women since "it is deceptively easy for people to get married and disastrously difficult for them to untangle the knots of legal and social obligation that such a small ceremony ties them up in" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 89). However, many of Hardy's heroines were independent, unsupervised and had the complete freedom to choose if they wanted to be married.

Hardy's heroine Bathsheba Everdene, for example, did not marry to attain a higher social position but her decision to marry "springs from a shared ideology and a shared feminine consciousness which hotly denounces the notion that marriage should be the expressed goal of a woman's sexuality" (Morgan, 2006, p.xiv).

Usually, in Hardy's plot there was always "a wedding (...) which is not secret, abortive or runaway" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 87). He presented woman who is different from the typical picture of the Victorian lady whose main concern was to be married and adopt the submissive obedient behaviours. Despite his heroines' intelligence, they were "flighty and inconsistent, they have a built-in predilection for making the wrong choice" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 87).

Thus, many of his heroines chose to be unmarried rather than losing their careers or their fortunes because law at that time gave men the authority to control their wives' lives and properties. Almost all Thomas Hardy's female protagonists were characterized by their free spirits and independence before marriage such as Bathsheba who refused to marry the farmer Oak. Even though, she insisted that she did not hate him; the idea of marriage frightened her because she thought it might restrict her freedom. Despite the fact of being single was an unconventional matter for young women at that time, she succeeded in running a large farm and increased her income.

Hardy was not against marriage. In fact, he considered it as an inevitable step for two lovers. However, he was trying to convince the Victorian society that woman should have the right to decide if she wanted to marry or not. He believed that the problem with marriage occurred when woman was forced to marry. Thus, Hardy was striving to convince his readers that woman should choose the man she wants to be with neglecting her male relatives' decision. This can be apparently noticed "when his heroines marry, they do so on the whole by their own, not their parents' choice" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 85). If

marriage was not successful, "the responsibility is placed squarely with the participants"(Cunningham, 1978, p. 85). In other words, all the outcomes and the negative effects which marriage may cause are on the charge of the woman and her husband only with no intervention from other sides. Generally "since it is the woman who has chosen unwisely from among several possible suitors it is she who has to seek a solution" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 85).

Thomas Hardy was eagerly aware that his novels would gradually change the Victorian view towards woman, he believed in woman's hidden power when he demonstrated his compassion and his understanding of the agony women faced in their way to be New Women. In most Hardy's novels, readers were able to notice Hardy's determination to defend the rights of women and to change the social reactions regarding sex, marriage and divorce.

Hardy's novels were considered dangerous novels because they dealt with the New Woman theme. In each novel, he presented heroines who were against the institution of marriage and for free love. Hardy's heroines who had not succeeded in their marriage sought divorce: "in *The Woodlanders*, a great deal is said in favour of divorce and against the discriminatory marriage laws" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 80). Those laws prevented woman to marry a man who had not the same social class and they granted the husband the right to have control over his wife's possessions. In addition, woman was not allowed to get divorce even though her husband was adulterous. This was what the Divorce Law of 1857 stated; it had made marriages dissolvable and regarded marriage and divorce religious matters which cannot be discussed. This is what happened with Grace in *The Woodlanders* when she was prevented from getting divorce due to the Divorce Laws which were basically written under the moral inequality among men and women. As a result, it was impossible for Grace to break her marriage although her husband was unfaithful.

Hardy's novels appeared in parallel with the debate about divorce which was a new topic for Victorians. His novels showed how the law restricted the freedom of women and led to disastrous results. Thomas Hardy used divorce and marriage laws "as the tragic machinery of the tale" (Orel, 1966, p. 35). He transferred his thoughts into papers by insisting that "a girl should certainly not be allowed to enter in to matrimony without a full knowledge of her probable future in that holy estate, and of the possibilities which may lie in the past of the elect man" (Orel, 1966, p. 249). Hardy stated that "Laws are the Cause of Misery" (Orel, 1966, p. 249); like what happened in *The Woodlanders* when Grace lived in melancholy owing to the divorce laws which prevented her from being free from her unhappy marriage. After the new law of divorce appeared, Grace "for a short time is allowed to believe that the law endorses her independent judgement" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 93). Although Hardy talked about divorce indirectly through the events of the novel, he perfectly oriented his readers to the way in which they should sympathize with woman, as it was seen in *The Woodlanders* where divorce was:

of central importance for the plot. If the law had reflected what the novel shows to be moral justice Giles would not have died and Grace could have been happy in a second marriage. But the very fact that all the characters are prepared to abide finally by both the law and the proprieties makes the novel essentially less challenging in its social theme than those which followed it (Cunningham, 1978, p. 94).

What Hardy wanted was that women should have the same rights and equality regarding divorce laws as men. According to his view, this inequality among the two sexes had led to the rebellion of women against the laws and their husbands. More specifically, it could lead to immoral commitments, such as adultery and the birth of illegitimate children,

which are against the legal and social confines. This can be seen in *Jude the Obscure* when both Jude and Sue were:

granted on the grounds of wife's adultery (...) Hardy shows himself to be in favour of free divorce, but by no means confident that a fairly minor adjustment of the law would sweep away all the problems of sex and marriage in the modern world (Cunningham, 1978, p. 94).

Education in the Victorian era was mainly based on children's "sex and on their parents' financial circumstances, social class, religion, and values" (Mitchell, 2009, p. 169). With no doubt, Hardy discussed the issue of female education as a serious matter in his novels "almost all his women have a good formal education or a quick native intelligence" (Mitchell, 2009, p. 82). In most Hardy's novels, women were presented as well educated in comparison with other women in that period. He presented Sue as an elementary school teacher when "Jude urges Sue Bridehead to become a trained teacher, describing the occupation as bringing an income sufficient to ensure freedom" (Sutherland, 2015, p. 149). She was presented intellectually superior to her lover. Hardy did great deal when he depicted the life of a young woman who confronted the whole society to be one of the "young women teachers in maintained schools, who had the financial independence and in some cases the ambition, appetite and stamina to explore a larger cultural and political world and to experiment with relationships" (Sutherland, 2015, p. 133). Sue was regarded as incomprehensible woman because her thoughts, beliefs and even her visions to life were different from other uneducated women. She appeared as "an isolated instance of modern femininity since there is no other 'bachelor girl' to share her thoughts or provide emotional support" (Heilmann, 2000, p. 55). Furthermore, his heroine Tess could read and write. Since she was educated by her father, Tess spoke polite language which proves that she was familiar with reading books. Compared to Tess, Grace received a better education; she

was sent by her father to study in a boarding school. In addition, Bathsheba Everdene, who was a well-educated woman, explained her rejection for marrying the farmer Oak saying "I am better educated than you" (Hardy, 2005, p. 39). Hardy tried his best to give women equal position as men by giving them the right to be educated and independent even though they received cruel legal and social judgments.

Hardy allowed his heroines to be independent which made them more interesting to the readers. Though Hardy presented his female protagonists as strong, worth being free and equal to men, most of his heroines had tragic ending with pain and punishment, which proved that the society conventions were the reasons behind the difficulties and the struggles they faced. By those sad endings, Hardy illustrated that the social institutions and laws were behind the suffering and discrimination of women. In his view, women were victims of many social misconceptions. He sympathized with them because they had a lot of obligations and duties in contrast to only few rights. Furthermore, there were strict social patterns where every Victorian woman should obey and apply otherwise she would be considered as an opponent to the natural life of their society and would be excluded from what was called the prestigious world.

Conclusion

To sum up, Victorian era was an age where many writers revealed their social and political opposition towards the restricted rules. It was the time where the new concepts and notions emerged. It can be described as an age of transition and great change in almost every sphere. As regards, The Victorian writers used their writing as a tool to criticize the problematic and the complex law behind the marvellous portrait of the prestigious etiquette of the Victorian society. They dealt with social, moral and political apprehension more specifically those related to women's living conditions. In addition, Thomas Hardy, like

many writers, put himself on the spot of harsh social criticism when he intimated in his writing the harmful effects of people's inferior views towards women on society as a unit. He gave more emphasis on the conflict between the persistent strong women or what was called the New Woman and society's concerns. Thomas Hardy declared in his novels that society's wrong expectancy was behind the distress most society members suffered from at that time. The next chapter, then, would be specifically devoted to Thomas Hardy's New Woman.

Chapter Three:

Bathsheba and Sue, The New Women

Introduction

Thomas Hardy was well known for his unique characterization of women. He "was a master of the art of characterization. He chose his characters from lower strata of society because(...)characters(...)from high society are concealed by convention(...)His female characters are vigorous and more skilful than his male characters"(Jayapalan, 2001, p.289). Hardy demonstrated a profound sympathy for the women of his time due to their extreme suffrage and the injustices practised on them by the Victorian patriarchal society. Most of Hardy's female characters were portrayed as women striving yet rebelling against the confines of their society seeking to be recognized and accepted as independent and free entity equal in status to men. The type of woman Hardy portrayed in his fiction is known as 'New Woman'. In his novels, he tended to portray strong, intelligent, rebellious and independent women whose aim in life was to live up to their own expectations and convictions. Through the present chapter, we shall discuss Hardy's portrayal and characterization of the New Woman focusing on two of his female characters: Bathsheba Everdene, the heroine of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and Sue Bridehead, the heroine of *Jude the Obscure*.

1. Bathsheba Everdene, *Far from the Madding Crowd*

1.1. A Historical Background about *Far from the Madding Crowd*

Far from the Madding Crowd, Thomas Hardy's most famous novel, was published in 1874. It was the first of Hardy's novels to be considered successful and important even outside his country. Although he had published three novels beforehand, these novels did not witness the great success in literary domains or the wide public interest that *Far from the Madding Crowd* achieved. The novel dealt with serious issues that surrounded women's

physical, psychological and emotional life. Like all Victorian writers, Hardy in his *Far from the Madding Crowd* presented love and marriage as the major themes of the novel, yet from different angle.

Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* is regarded as a treasure. Cox (2005) stated in his book *Thomas Hardy the Critical Heritage*:

Far from the Madding Crowd is so clever a novel, so original in atmosphere and in character, that its brilliant qualities are likely to neutralize the glare of its equally prominent faults. The writer has the advantage of dealing with an almost untouched side of English life (p.45).

He added "*Far from the Madding Crowd* displays undeniable talent, which has scarcely as yet found its best and easiest and most natural expression" (Cox ,2005, p.48). Regardless to its popularity, *Far from the Madding Crowd* received some criticism concerning its main themes in which "The central issue of the novel is sexual love, a grinding passion that sweeps men and women"(Carpenter, 1976, p. 27). As a matter of fact, Hardy had been questioned about his unexpected presentation of women as struggling for changing their destiny in a patriarchal society, as Morgan (2006) wrote "in *Far from the Madding Crowd's* microcosmic Victorian world the inescapable fact of male dominance and privilege is rigidly maintained" (p.30).

Although it received many critiques, *Far from the Madding Crowd* won great success and acceptance by readers. It was " Hardy's first commercial success, and the most rewarding novel of his early period, *Far from the Madding Crowd* may be seen to match its achievement in the creation of character and event, scene and image" (Ireland, 2014, p. 52).

1.2. A Brief Summary of *Far from the Madding Crowd*

Far from the Madding Crowd is a story of independent beautiful young woman, Bathsheba Everdene, who had been loved by three men: Gabriel Oak, a well trusted shepherd, Sergeant Frank Troy, a rakish dissolute soldier, and William Boldwood, another prosperous farmer. At the early beginning of the novel, Bathsheba the poor young woman who lived with her aunt, met farmer Oak who proposed to her, but she promptly rejected him because she did not love him in addition to her rejection of being a man's property. Later in the novel, Bathsheba inherited her uncle's prosperous farm and then she moved away to the town of Weatherbury. When Bathsheba left the moor, Oak lost his flock of sheep in a tragic way. Since he became unemployed, he found himself obliged to seek for a new job. While farmer Oak was wandering from town to town and from village to another, he by chance rescued a local farm from fire. Eventually in the story, farmer Oak knew it was Bathsheba's inherited farm. He won Bathsheba's trust; therefore she employed him as a shepherd in her farm.

Bathsheba was characterized by her free spirit and her inconsiderate behaviour, this was clearly noticed when she sent an anonymous valentine's card to landowner, Mr. Boldwood, a middle-aged bachelor. He became obsessed with her and then he also asked her for marriage but she rejected him like farmer Oak. However, he decided to persevere until she agreed to marry him. One night, Bathsheba met Sergeant Francis Troy, who with his spiel words and his attractive appearance, captured her interest. Troy had a secret affair with a local girl named Fanny Robin. He had deceived her and recently made her pregnant without Bathsheba's knowledge. Bathsheba loved Troy and then she married him. After a period from their marriage, Troy discovered that Fanny died in childbirth. Troy and Bathsheba were surprised. Desperately, Bathsheba felt guilty for being indirectly

responsible for the tragedy and knew that her marriage reached its end. Troy run away with shame and was thought to be drowned.

Over a year of Troy disappearance, Mr. Boldwood took the chance to ask Bathsheba's hand again. Just after she had agreed, Troy appeared to stop her, foolishly Mr. Boldwood shouted him and he was buried next to Fanny, his beloved. Mr. Boldwood had been sentenced to life in prison. A few months later, Bathsheba went to Gabriel Oak and asked him to marry her; he accepted her proposal and she became Bathsheba Oak.

1.3. Bathsheba Everdene the New Woman

As mentioned before, *Far from the Madding Crowd* was the best of Hardy's novel that illustrated the New Woman. This was apparently displayed in Hardy's presentation of Bathsheba Everdene as a beautiful and wayward young woman. In this novel, he depicted Bathsheba as "largely unsupervised or entirely independent" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 87). She adopted certain traits of the New Woman and acted as strong, independent, and uncontrolled woman through the events of the story.

1.3.1. Bathsheba and Marriage

Hardy feminist's view could be clearly noticed in his portrayal of the famous female protagonist Bathsheba Everdene. Bathsheba is a "beautiful and wilful young woman who spurns the earnest suit of Gabriel Oak from sheer caprice" (Carpenter, 1976, p. 81). She refused farmer Oak proposal for marriage only because her attitude toward marriage and men was unique. She preferred to be independent by rejecting marriage when she announced "I hate to be thought men's property in that way, though possibly I shall be had some day" (Hardy, 2002, p. 48). This untypical statement revealed how Bathsheba was strong and emancipated in her actions, she was highly conscious of her position as

different woman. In fact, her opposition to the marriage system seemed to be odd decision to a woman in the Victorian society; she thought that:

A marriage would be very nice in one sense. People would talk about me and think I had won my battle, and I should feel triumphant, and all that. But a husband(...) he'd always be there. Whenever I looked up, there he'd be (...) I shouldn't mind being a bride at a wedding, if I could be one without having a husband. But since a woman can't show off in that way by herself, I shan't marry -- at least not yet (Hardy, 2002, p. 49).

Farmer Oak as a man of his age, considered Bathsheba's view towards marriage unexpected. Indeed, Hardy's women are typically regarded as "hindrance to men, captivating yet essentially separate from the sterner demands of life, has the effect of actually heightening the differences between the sexes" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 82). Bathsheba later explained her rejection for marrying farmer Oak by saying "I am better educated than you- and I don't love you a bit" (Hardy, 2002, p. 51), this displayed the vanity aspect within Bathsheba's character." Bathsheba [was] represented as pretty and vain (...) Hardy tells us that Bathsheba was beautiful, and gives us an idea of what her beauty was" (Cox, 1979, p. 43). Yet Bathsheba was not only vain but rather free in expressing her beliefs, this was seen when she told Gabriel about the main reason of her prevention to marry "I want somebody to tame me; I am too independent; and you would never be able to, I know" (Hardy, 2002, p. 51). She defended her opinion regarding marriage by claiming that she was too strong independent woman who sought for a husband who could understand her because she was not easy to be controlled. Her expression that Gabriel would never be able to tame her, was in fact regarded as an escape from marriage. She directly admitted that she is a woman without any restrictions. As Cox (1979) claimed "there was independence and strength about her. She was a child of the people" (p. 125).

1.3.2. Bathsheba and Love

Bathsheba was considered as unrestrained and childish. Hardy called her "an impulsive nature under a deliberative aspect" (Hardy, 2002, p.145). Her impetuous behaviour, her desire for independence and her determination to decide her own destiny was displayed when "she played fast and loose with poor Gabriel Oak. She blew hot and cold upon Farmer Boldwood. She flirted with Oak in the most heartless manner. She sent Boldwood a valentine with the words 'Marry Me' on the seal" (Cox, 1979, p. 43). Granville (1947) in his book, stated that Hardy's Bathsheba Everdene was "passing from late adolescence into young womanhood, when she [was] longing with a mad impulse for larger, freer life" (p. 59); henceforth, Bathsheba chose to be unmarried without love by rejecting farmer Oak's proposal.

Although she was considered as "a more complex and a stronger character than any of her predecessors" (Carpenter, 1976, p. 86), Bathsheba found herself vulnerable to the flattery and the appearance of Troy, who aroused her sexuality and made her fall in love with him where:

Bathsheba, after dismissing her bailiff, is compelled to make a late inspection of the farm herself. She carries a dark lantern, which she uses intermittently. On her way from the paddock she passes through a small fir plantation, the interior of which is 'as black as the ninth plague of Egypt at midnight'. She hears the rustle of approaching steps, finds her skirt caught, and is addressed by a man who opens the lantern to set her free (Pinion, 1977, p. 24).

And thus Bathsheba had, like any other independent women in patriarchal society, a moment of weakness, when she met Troy at that night. Hardy's view on her surrender upon Troy's scarlet uniform and his manhood appearance indicated that Bathsheba, as a self-

determined woman, had faced a downfall greater than a normal Victorian woman. All her exertion to be self-independent had collapsed, consequently, this collapse was enormous to a self-reliant woman like Bathsheba. By time, she was surprised and startled by the real nature of the man to whom she had foolishly undermined her New Woman's principles by the fact of loving him. Troy's deeds were shameful and caused Bathsheba to be abashed in society. He was drinking excessively; he ruined the work; he was poor manager to the farm; he extravagated her money on gambling; and above all, he was unfaithful to his beautiful wife. She felt like she was caught in a trap when she opened her heart to Troy. As Hardy (2002) wrote:

Bathsheba loved Troy in the way that only self-reliant women love when they abandon their self-reliance. When a strong woman recklessly throws away her strength she is worse than a weak woman who has never had any strength to throw away. One source of her inadequacy is the novelty of the occasion. She has never had practice in making the best of such a condition. Weakness is doubly weak by being new (p. 204).

Bathsheba's fault was her determination to choose a bad man like Troy. She unwisely gave up her emancipation for an unfaithful fellow. As a matter of fact, her unsuccessful marital life brought her a big depression; it was hard to Bathsheba to remain as proud vain woman as she was before marrying Troy. She followed her desires and let Troy scatter her emotional and mental behaviour. Those emotions which farmer Gabriel Oak was prevented to see, were recklessly been given to Troy, the man who was now despicable and intolerable. The only reason she chose Troy over farmer Oak was that she:

desired to be dominated by a sexually aggressive man; and, until that desire has been chastened, she cannot make a wife for Oak, who is essentially a passive lover, no matter how strong and good he is otherwise. On the discursive level

Hardy informs us that it is Troy's ability as a flatterer and dissembler that enables him to capture Bathsheba (Carpenter, 1976, p. 87).

What Hardy symbolically wanted for the readers to consider was that "Bathsheba will be connected with Troy through sex rather than through the romance or respect she could expect from her other lovers" (Carpenter, 1976, p. 88).

1.3.3. Bathsheba and Vanity

Bathsheba was characterized by her vanity and self-centredness, however, "she reaps the reward of this vanity when Troy shows his true self after their marriage: he squanders her inherited fortune, debauches her farmhands, and finally admits that he never loved her" (Carpenter, 1976, p. 86). As a result, the neighbouring farmers called her 'proud as a Lucifer' and 'very vain feymell' this was displayed in her treatment and in her speech with the local farmers, like when she promised to surprise them by her strength:

Bathsheba takes over full management of the farm she has inherited she promises her men: 'I shall be up before you are awake; I shall be afield before you are up; and I shall have breakfast before you are afield. In short, I shall astonish you all'. And for a time, indeed, she does (Cunningham, 1978, p. 84).

Bathsheba's longing for emancipation revealed when she visited the farmer's market, where she was a strong and a successful business woman. She was speaking confidently with farmers:

Those of the farmers with whom she had no dealings (by far the greater part) were continually asking each other, "Who is she?" The reply would be—"Farmer Everdene's niece; took on Weatherbury Upper Farm; turned away the baily, and swears she'll do everything herself. "The other man would then shake his head. "Yes, 'tis a pity she's so headstrong," the first would say. "But

we ought to be proud of her here—she lightens up the old place. ‘Tis such a shapely maid, however, that she’ll soon get picked up (Hardy, 2002, p. 105).

Bathsheba's rank as an owner of a farm and house was a challenge for a woman in Victorian era. She was a single business woman, self-controlled and unstoppable. She was aware of her desirable aspects and her present situation, unlike most women of that time. She wished to win the respect of her workers although she was harsh and termagant. She decided to run the farm by herself without hiring a bailiff because the former one was a thief; as a result, the men were astonished by her treatment and her fabulous performance in governing the farm.

However, her uncontrolled behaviour led her to send a valentine's letter to Mr. Boldwood with the words 'marry me'. Hopelessly, he was "infatuated but Bathsheba did not find it possible to love him" (Carpenter, 1976, p. 86). Thus the reader was surprised by the impetuous behaviour of Bathsheba who was opposing marriage:

The early illustrations of *Far from the Madding Crowd* present her as a demure, sympathetic, mature woman—thus anticipating the textual development of her character... so crucial to the confusion that develops from sending the valentine to Boldwood, Bathsheba seems steady, quiet and, surprisingly enough, too somber for the textual version of the scene. In these early illustrations, the Victorian audience did not see Bathsheba as she was created by Hardy in his text. The audience in this particular case lost a valuable pictorial insight into Bathsheba's psychology, into the impulsiveness that serves as explanation for later episodes (Jackson, 1981, p. 82).

1.3.4. Bathsheba's Struggles Against the Patriarchal Society

Despite the fact that Bathsheba was strong Victorian woman, she could not escape from the restriction of the society. She, as all the women who were seeking emancipation at that period, was struggling to survive in the Victorian patriarchal system and thus she successfully portrayed the New Woman's difficulty in expressing themselves. Hardy sympathized women's conditions as victims to the male-led society. Therefore, in his novels specifically in *Far from the Madding crowd* he criticized the male characters who were intentionally treating women as inferior in addition, he indirectly commented on Victorian men's fear from changing their conceptions about women. In this regard, it was assumed to be a sign of weakness if men showed any kind of empathy to women or endeavoured to challenge social principles and conventions. As a result, the patriarchal system led them to misunderstand and misinterpret women's traits and behaviours. In this respect, many Victorian women suffered to great extent in Hardy's novel. His presentation of women and their sufferings draws sympathy from the readers like what happened to Fanny when she died in her childbirth. Hardy sought to touch readers' heart when he wrote the scene of the storm. "The scenes just mentioned, the storm, and Fanny Robin's last journey, touch the extreme verge of dramatic vividness, if they rarely overpass it. Sergeant Troy, who belongs to the same class as Wild eve, is thoroughly successful" (Cox, 1979, p. 125).

The other woman character in the novel, Funny Robin, is regarded as the victim of society who had been seduced and abandoned by the dashing sergeant Troy. Funny was eventually considered as a Fallen Woman according to the Victorian societal norms:

In the scene which depicts Troy leaning onto the coffin to kiss the lips of Fanny Robin, emphasis divides between the grieving Troy and a deeply disturbed Bathsheba. Troy has the central position in the engraving, and the

sweeping lines of his kneeling figure, the grip of his hand on the coffin's edge, reveal his agony (Jackson, 1981, p. 81).

Troy's reaction to the tragic death of Fanny showed his dark side and his decisive and fake emotions towards Bathsheba. He betrayed Fanny and Bathsheba at the same time. He abandoned Fanny and lied to Bathsheba only for her beauty and large fortune. Consequently, both Fanny and Bathsheba were victims of his ill-treatment. Bathsheba reminded Troy by saying that "this woman is your victim and I not less than she" (Hardy, 2002, p. 315). When Bathsheba saw Fanny dead near her child, she cried and felt sorry for her "Fanny's death and Bathsheba opening the coffin, introduced to warn womankind against the Troy" (Cox, 1979, p. 172). She felt her "mistake and its results [were] part of the tragedy of life" (Cox, 1979, p. 172). Bathsheba's extreme emotional pain raised when Troy kissed Fanny and frankly said that "this woman is more to me, dead as she is, than ever you were, or are or can be" (Hardy, 2002, p. 315). When Sergeant Troy was in his grief of the death of Fanny "he asserts that he would have married her if Satan had not tempted him with Bathsheba's beauty and her 'cursed coqueties'." (Pinion, 1977, p. 40). One of the possible reasons that made Troy choose Fanny over Bathsheba was that Fanny had produced his child and Bathsheba had not. This indicates that motherhood was important for woman's perfection in the patriarchal society. When Bathsheba was whining her miserable marital life, her heart was full of regret for the sake that their love had come to an end, Bathsheba admitted to Troy that, "all romances end at marriage" (Hardy, 2002, p. 286). She later questioned her position on his heart but Troy retorted heartlessly "You are nothing to me – nothing (...) A ceremony before a priest doesn't make a marriage. I am not morally yours" (Hardy, 2002, p. 355). This harsh confession by Troy apparently illustrated how the relationships between the Victorian husband and woman were artificial based on social and financial matters not that of love between two souls. Unfortunately, Bathsheba

was still legally his wife, according to Parliament, and she was not considered free from her unhappy marriage until Troy died.

Bathsheba, despite her unique personality, had been considered as a target to the patriarchal society specifically that she was a victim to Troy's maltreatment who had never proved to her that he loved her as his wife. Unexpectedly, Bathsheba was depressed after her marriage with Troy because he spent most of his time in grumbling and drinking. His bad behaviour affected Bathsheba emotionally when "she allowed herself the dubious satisfaction of the glamorous Sergeant Troy's flattery" (Carpenter, 1976, p. 86). She tried to show him that it's illogical to treat her such way and spend her money in this way, he threatened her position and said that he had never thought that she was such weak minded woman. When life became intolerable to Bathsheba being a Troy's wife; she was overwhelmed by the idea of fleeing away from him and turn back to her position as an independent woman. She had hesitated for a moment but then she run out. When Bathsheba was brought back by her lady servant Liddy, she admitted her devastated heart of being an oppressed member of the patriarchal society. She said that her willingness to change her mind was only because she, as virtuous woman, was obliged to stay home in order to avoid sick rumours:

No, I've altered my mind. It is only woman with no pride in them who run away from their husbands. There is one position worse than that of being found dead in your husband's house from his ill-usage and that is, to be found alive through having gone away to the house of somebody else. I've thought of it all this morning and I've chosen my course. A runaway wife is an encumbrance to everybody, burden to herself and a byword - all of which make up a heap of misery greater than any that comes by staying at home though this may include the trifling items of insult, beating and starvation (Hardy, 2002, p. 320).

Bathsheba's temperament indicated her rebellious side. However, she did not rebel against her husband because she found herself encountered by the sick social conventions; she indeed was New Woman in patriarchal society. The idea of running out of home seemed to her as a resort to get back her freedom. But at the end, she retreated from her decision that fleeing would underestimate her value.

In her endeavour to dissuade Mr. Boldwood from asking her hand, Bathsheba expressed her sorrow for being controlled by a patriarchal system admitting that "it is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in a language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs" (Hardy, 2002, p. 366). Bathsheba's burden had ascended when she found herself a widow when her husband was thought to be dead; her struggle and endeavour to keep herself an independent woman as earlier was a challenge to her. It took her great effort and work to retain the New Woman she was before in such conservative society. Morgan (2006) believed that Hardy took the first step aiming to change the Victorian attitudes regarding woman issues through his heroines. In her analysis to *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Morgan wrote that Hardy's writing "tends to empower readers to a sense of omnipotence and, consequently, to an emotional generosity and a compassion for the human struggle in perspective" (p. xxv). Morgan suggested that Hardy displayed how difficult is for a woman to be equal to man even if she was characterized by some traits of strength and independence.

Bathsheba's uncontrolled behaviour and her selfishness brought the tragic ending of Fanny, Troy, and Mr. Boldwood. Her playfulness of Mr. Boldwood's feelings led him to be the murderer of Troy:

Troy's subsequent disappearance and reported death only *seem* to remedy the situation, for her engagement to Boldwood is shattered when Troy reappears to

claim her as his lawful wife. Boldwood, finally driven to distraction by this final blow to his hopes, snatches a gun from the wall and shoots Troy, then tries unsuccessfully to commit suicide. Bathsheba's wilfulness has reaped its ultimate reward in the death of one man and spiritual distraction of another. Eternal Eve has found the fruit of this tree bitter indeed (Carpenter, 1976, p. 87).

The events of the story revealed how Bathsheba's wilfulness, instability and womanhood instinct made her regret her actions. Her harsh treatment made people, surrounding her, hate her. Moreover, her inability to control her feelings showed her as temperamental. At the end, Bathsheba realized her bad treatment to Oak, she neglected her dignity and disdaining traits and decided to win his trust again. As Cunningham (1978) wrote:

Indeed Hardy's women do a lot of running. Bathsheba begins her relationship with Oak by panting after him to deliver the assurance that he is perfectly at liberty to love her so long as he does not expect a return, and concludes it by seeking him out in the hope that he will propose again (p. 83).

At the end of the novel, Bathsheba's speech with Gabriel and her indirect desire to ask his hand, allowed the reader to think that Bathsheba's self-independence and her freedom in expressing her thought as New Woman remained present in the story. Despite her confusion, she uttered what she wanted in order to break the oppressive results of social conventions which stated to woman what to do and what to do not. In spite of all the tragic events in the novel, Hardy wanted for his female character a happy ending by making her indulged in marriage based on love and respect, more specifically a happy ending for the New Woman as Cunningham (1978) stated:

In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, he had planned a genuinely happy ending; his desire to reward the hero can be seen to tug uneasily against his conception of

the woman. It is of course fitting that Bathsheba should finally have to make approaches to the long-suffering Oak, but her reasons for doing so are by no means as flattering as he might suppose (p.87).

The novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* dramatically depicted Bathsheba's predicament and accordingly the struggles of New Woman. The novel in general was a portrait of the Victorian society in the late nineteenth century where the laws and the rights were made only for men.

1. Sue Bridehead, *Jude the Obscure*

1.1. A Historical Background About *Jude the Obscure*

Jude the Obscure, Thomas Hardy's last novel, was published in 1895. It was widely accepted to be his best due to its thematic complexity. The novel dealt with sensitive issues related to marriage, education, religion, class, love, and sex. Seemingly, the novel is a simple story of a doomed love set in the Victorian era. However, the novel is more complex in depth. Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* is considered to be a masterpiece. Havelock Ellis regarded it as "the greatest novel in England for many years" (Cox, 2005, p. xxix). He added that the novel showed "a fine self-restraint, a complete mastery of all the elements of an exceedingly human story" (Cox, 2005, p. 314). Nevertheless, the novel received a great denial from the conservative Victorian society due to its sexual content. Many reviewers called the novel 'Jude the obscene' instead as a way to summarize, though unfairly, the plot of the novel as well as to denounce and criticize Hardy's treatment of taboo topics as sex (Morgan, 2007, p. 129). Bishops like the one of Wakefield announced openly that the novel is a scandal and fit only to be burned and he publically threw it into fire (Morgan, 2007, p. 115) which compelled Hardy to quit his career as a novelist and return to his preferable art 'poetry':

If he wished to retain any shadow of self-respect, (Hardy had to) abandon at once a form of literary art he had long intended to abandon at some indefinite time, and resume openly that form of it which had always been more instinctive with him (Pite, 2006, p. 357).

Jude the Obscure, though superficially read and understood by many readers as a story of love and sex, it was in its core a novel that attacked the Victorian conventional standards and constraints; it mainly attacked and opposed the regime of the marriage institution. As mentioned earlier, Hardy was a feminist writer who exceedingly dealt with women related topics. In his novels, he talked about women who refused to conform to the Victorian unjust conventions, denounced accepted ideas of marriage and maternity, sought for education and employment, and rejected the traditional female role imposed on them by the society. As a result, Hardy's novels were "received as an addition to the New Woman fiction" (Cunningham, 1978, p. 103). *Jude the Obscure* in particular is one of those novels.

1.2. A Brief Summary of *Jude the Obscure*

Jude the Obscure is the story of Jude Fawley, a young man from southern England who always dreamt and longed to enter the university to become a scholar at the prestigious university at Christminster. However, his class background and poor living conditions prevented him from realizing his dream and instead he worked as a baker in his great aunt's bakery. Jude fell in love with a woman named Arabella, who had seduced and tricked him into marriage pretending to be pregnant. The marriage, however, did not succeed. Arabella soon left Jude who decided to travel to Christminster in attempt to have the opportunity to enter the university later. While there, Jude met his cousin Sue and fell in love with her. Shortly afterwards, Jude introduced Sue to his former schoolmaster Mr. Phillotson upon whom Sue later on would be prevailed to marry though he was twenty

years her senior. As expected, Sue's marriage had not lasted long. This was because she, besides her love for Jude, was horrified by the notion of sex and against the marriage institution. Sue soon got divorce and went to live with Jude who as well legally separated with Arabella. Though living together, Sue refused to marry Jude or to have any sexual relationship with him. Following this, Arabella had appeared and told Jude that he had a son. Subsequently, she sent the boy to his father Jude to live with him.

Eventually, Jude was able to convince Sue to have sex with him and the couples had two children later on. Due to the illegal relationship of Jude and Sue and their illegal children, the family was shunned by the Victorian society and they spent their life moving from one place to another seeking housing and jobs. Unfortunately, one morning, Jude's son from Arabella murdered Sue's two children and hanged himself.

Sue blamed herself for what happened and deemed the death of her children a divine punishment for her taboo relationship with Jude. Sue punished herself by remarrying Mr. Phillotson and having sex with him. Jude, however, was once again tricked by Arabella into marriage. At the end of the novel, Jude fell ill and died.

1.3. Sue Bridehead the New Woman

As mentioned, *Jude the Obscure* is definitely one of Hardy's novels which clearly depicts the New Woman. Its classification as a New Woman fiction was due to the characteristics Hardy attributed to the main character of the novel Sue Bridehead. It was argued that "it is in this novel that Hardy voices his strongest pro-feminist position through Sue"(Dutta, 2000, p. 126). In his book *Hardy and the Erotic*, Wright (1989) claimed that "Sue Bridehead is in many ways at the centre of *Jude the Obscure* (...) because she is stronger, more complex, and more significant" (p. 120). As the heroine of the novel, Sue demonstrated in certain aspects the features of the New Woman of the Victorian era. From

the very beginning of the novel, Sue was portrayed as a different woman who was intellectually emancipated, liberated, intelligent, vivacious, and obviously attractive. However, she was, first and foremost, a strong woman who rejected the accepted angelic feminine role and opposed certain Victorian conventions related to important issues as marriage. Sue was described as:

the first delineation in fiction of the woman who was coming into notice in her thousand every year—the woman of the feminist movement—the slight, pale bachelor girl-- the intellectualized, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing, mainly in cities as yet; Who does not recognize the necessity for most of her sex to follow marriage as a profession (Williams, 1984, p. 184).

However, others like Watts did not regard "the characterization of Sue the first delineation of the New Woman". Watts (1992) instead considered it as:

The (...) part of a tradition of representation of the New Woman, the proto-feminist, the young woman who is educated, and who is resistant to the conventional notion that marriage and maternity should be the goal of any normal female's progress (p. 41).

1.3.1. Sue's Intellectuality

One of the main features of Sue Bridehead the New Woman was her intellectuality. Sue was an educated girl in a time when women were denied their rights to education. She received her education from her father and the book she had read. Her emancipation and brilliant thinking is confessed by the novel's male characters themselves who basically represented the Victorian males. Mr. Phillotson said that "Her intellect sparkles like diamonds"(Hardy, 2003, p.280), while Jude called her "a woman-poet, a woman-seer" (

Hardy, 2003, p.380), he said further "She was once a woman whose intellect was to mine like a star to a benzoline lamp, who saw all my superstitions as cobwebs that she could brush away with a word"(Hardy, 2003, p.453). Sue represented "a distinct type (...) a refined creature, intended by Nature to be left intact" (Hardy, 2003, p. 395), and was "impossible as a human wife to any average men" (Hardy, 2003, p. 237). In a time when women were not supposed nor encouraged to talk about or discuss intellectual topics, Sue Bridehead demonstrated significant interest in different intellectual matters because of the various books she read. Heilman (1966) noticed that Sue hated "everything medieval, admires classical writers(...), the work of neo-classical secular painters(...)reads eighteenth century fiction and the satirists of all ages(...)She is influenced by Shelley as an intellectual rebel(...). Rational scepticism, critical intelligence are her aims"(p. 319). This enabled her to quote lines from classic literature and political theories of John Stuart Mill and use them in daily conversations. In the novel, there were numerous instances through which Sue showed her intellectualism. For example, Sue's yell "O why should Nature's law be of mutual butchery!" (Hardy, 2003, p. 358) and "I said it was Nature's intention, Nature's law and *raison d'être* that we should be joyful in what instincts she afford us – instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart"(Hardy, 2003, p.390) voiced Hardy's own view on life and his belief in Darwin's theory *The Origin of Species*. This was actually seen by Watts who thought that Sue, due to her intellectuality, mirrored Darwin's theory when she identified herself with the pigeons she set free so as not to be sold as food. Through Sue's emancipated thoughts, Hardy conveyed his belief that Darwinism had presented a "strong justification to humans who sought to be more humane to their fellow-denizens of earth"(Watts, 1992, p. 26). Though Christminster was highly regarded as a place of education and learning that modelled Oxford nowadays, Sue's advanced thoughts and illuminated mind did not appreciate it as so. She rather said "I have no respect for

christminster (...) intellect at Christminster is new wine in old bottles"(Hardy, 2003, p.198). She added that "the medievalism of Christminster must go, be sloughed off, or Christminster will itself have to go" (Hardy, 2003, p.198). While Jude thought "Christminster has much that is glorious" (Hardy, 2003, p.198), Sue emphasized her view by telling Jude that Christminster was "an ignorant place, except as to the townpeople, artisans, drunkards and paupers" (Hardy, 2003, p.198). Sue's emancipation and enlightened personality made her a woman who was ahead of her time. In this prospect, Jude claimed that:

As for Sue and me when we were at our own best, long ago - when our minds were clear, and our love of truth fearless - the time was not ripe for us! Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. Therefore, the resistance they met with brought reaction in her, and recklessness and ruin on me! (Hardy, 2003, p. 453).

This was argued by Watts (1992) when he said:

One meliorist suggestion in *Jude* is that both Jude himself and Sue are, in terms of human and social evolution, ahead of their time: if they could have lived in a future era, their plight would not have been so lonely and beleaguered, because there would then have been more fellow-beings able to share their enlightenment and sensitivity, and social progress would have made the world more congenial to them (p. 27).

Therefore, Sue did not fulfil the role of the naive Victorian girl whose aim in life is to ensure a husband and build a family. She was rather a woman who sought to educate herself and rise beyond the Victorian barriers that prevented women from getting formal and serious education. Sue's intellectuality urged her to oppose the fact that she was in many ways inferior creature in the Victorian male-led society. Her emancipation and

educated mind led her to question yet to rebel against the Victorian conventions. This fact made her a New Woman.

1.3.2. Sue's Religious Views

Sue's unconventionality and alienation from the other old-fashioned Victorian girls appeared in her sceptical view on religion. Sue is not satisfied with Christianity and in many occasions she doubted it. Accordingly, she openly declared that she did not belong to the middle ages churches but to the ancient pagan Gods. Sue can be seen as irreligious and that seemed abnormal in her time. She reflected on this when she told 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..." (Hardy, 2003, p. 199). In this quotation, Sue was teasing Jude about being in his 'Tractarian' stage of development and hinted that she passed it years ago. Thus, she passed, due to her intellectualism and extensive reading, the stage of being a religious person who believed in Jesus or the Christian beliefs. She said further "at present, intellect in Christminster is pushing one way and religion the other, and so they stand stock still, like two rams butting each other" (Hardy, 2003, p. 199). Moreover, Sue's sceptical religious views appeared when she offered Jude to rearrange his New Testament into chronological order, and then she could not help but criticised the synopses at the beginnings of each chapter which exemplified Sue's disobedience of the Christian authority. Sue did not believe in prayer at all. She frankly told Jude that, if she recalled with him the evening's prayer, she "should seem so_ such a hypocrite"(Hardy, 2003, p.198). Sue's religious scepticism pushed Jude more than once to call her 'Voltairean' as Voltaire himself was doubtful about the Christian teaching and the Gospel's instructions. Sue went further into her disobedience and objection to Christianity and she sarcastically called the Christian saints as "the demi-gods in [Jude's] Pantheon" and as "those legendary persons" (Hardy, 2003, p. 216). She also said that she did not see marriage as a Sacrament.

In this respect, she told Jude "now if I had done such a thing it would have been different and not remarkable for I at least don't regard marriage as a sacrament" (Hardy, 2003, p. 216).

1.3.3. Sue and Marriage

Through his novel *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy directly criticized the marriage norms instituted by the Victorian laws showing the brutality of the system to both men and women. In this sense, Bjork (1987) believed that Hardy considered marriage as an institution that "enslaves man in general and human passions in particular" (p. 121). Nevertheless, Hardy did not actually oppose marriage as a social institution rather he was against the inequality that the contract bear on the side of women. Hardy was for a marriage union that can be easily dissolved if the couples wished so. By way of explanation, Hardy did not only condemn the Victorian laws governing marriage but also denounce the laws of divorce. As mentioned in chapter one, the Divorce Law of 1857 had made marriage a dissolvable union, broken only in certain severe cases as adultery or extreme cruelty. This fact signified Hardy's call for a more loose matrimonial union. In this sense, we may shed light on what the novelist said in his article *Law the Cause of Misery* that appeared in Hearst's Magazine in 1912 when answering the question, "How shall we solve the Divorce Problems?"

I regard Marriage as a union whose terms should be regulated entirely for the happiness of the community, including, primarily, that of the parties themselves. As the English marriage laws are, to the eyes of anybody who looks around, the gratuitous cause of at least half the misery of the community, that they are allowed to remain in force for a day is an 'amazement', and can only be accounted for by the assumption that we live in a barbaric age, and are the slaves of gross superstition. As to what should be done ... can only

suppose, in a general way, that a marriage should be dissolvable at the wish of either party, if that party prove it to be a cruelty to him or her, provided (probably) that the maintenance of the children, if any, should be borne by the breadwinners (Brennecke, 1966, p. 120).

Hardy, in the Postscript of the third international edition (1912) of *Jude the Obscure*, explained that "My opinion at that time, if I remember rightly was what it is now that a marriage should be dissolvable as soon as it becomes a cruelty to either of the parties -being then essentially and morally no marriage" (Pite, 1912, p. 03). Accordingly, the existing matrimonial conventions were unsatisfactory for Hardy because they were destructive and humiliating to women who, by the marriage contract, would be their husbands' property. Hardy's controversial view on marriage was successfully conveyed through the heroine of *Jude the Obscure* 'Sue Bridehead' who did not relish, as the women of her time, the idea of being married to or sexually subjected by men.

One of the fundamental characteristics of Sue as a New Woman is her attitude towards marriage. As a woman who had read to brilliant writers, who in their writings had tackled the woman's unsatisfactory status in marriage, Sue never accepted the contract of marriage and its laws as it was in the Victorian era. Her independent thinking which she obtained from the books of J. S. Mill and others prevented her from accepting the fact of being a property of her husband or sexually controlled by him with the force of law. As a matter of fact, Sue did not oppose marriage as a natural concept of union, but she was against it as a legal binding agreement. Though she dearly loved Jude, Sue rejected his marriage proposal because "she fears that marriage would destroy spontaneity and deprive her from the right to deny him sexual intercourse when he chooses" (Wright, 1989, p. 120). In this quote, Sue apparently attacked the relation between the husband and the wife as she thought that marriage would bring limitation on the life of the couple and in this she

blamed the patriarchal Victorian society which allowed the husband to have the right of ownership over his wife's body and obliged her to behave according to the husband's desires and the male members of her family. In this sense, Sue reflected that the husband could "spend until midnight balancing the school registers, and then muttering on about school committees and draughty ventilators he can ascend to the nuptial chambers quite as if sexual intercourse with his wife were just part of the day's function"(Wright, 1989, p. 120). When Jude revealed his intention to marry her, Sue rejected saying:

I think I should begin to be afraid of you, Jude, the moment you had contracted to cherish me under a Government stamp, and I was licensed to be loved on the premises by you - Ugh, how horrible and sordid! Although, as you are, free, I trust you more than any other man in the world (Hardy, 2003, p.308).

As she viewed marriage as an 'iron contract' that would destroy their love and relationship, Sue would never be happy in a union where she would be licensed to be loved on the premises of her husband. Sue's objections to marriage lied on the fact that marriage " is as culpable to bind yourself to love always as to believe a creed always, and as silly as to vow always to like a particular food or drink" (Hardy, 2003, p. 274). In a time when the sole purpose of women was to get married merely for social and economical reasons, Sue seemed to think differently when she told Jude that:

I am not so exceptional a woman as you think. Fewer women like marriage than you suppose, only they enter it for the dignity it is assumed to confer, and the social advantage it gains them sometimes – dignity and an advantage that I am quite willing to do without (Hardy, 2003, p. 308).

In her view, marriage was "a sordid contract, based on material convenience in house holding, rating, taxing, and the inheritance of land and money by children, making it

necessary that the male parent should be known" (Hardy, 2003, p. 260). Having read to J. S. Mill, Sue seemed so much affected by his thought on marriage in which he believes that:

A female slave has (in Christian countries) and admitted right, and is considered under a moral obligation, to refuse to her master last familiarity. Not so the wife: however brutal a tyrant she may unfortunately be married to – though she may know that she hates her, though it may be his daily pleasure to torture her, and though she may feel it impossible not to loathe him- he can claim from her to enforce the lowest degradation of a human being, that of being made the instrument of an animal function contrary to her being inclinations (Mill, 1895, p. 263).

Sue refused the matrimonial conventionalities including that which allow women to be called by their husbands's names; she told Jude that "I am called Mrs. Richard Phillotson living a calm wedded life with my counterpart of that name. But I am not really Mrs. Richard Phillotson, but a woman tossed about, all alone with, aberrant passions, and unaccountable antipathies" (Hardy, 2003, p. 257). Sue did not only refuse to engage into a matrimonial relationship, but she also pitied women who willingly yet blindly do so. When She saw a newly wedded couple, she said that "the flowers in the bride's hand are sadly like the garland which decked the heifers of sacrifice in old times" (Hardy, 2003, p.337).

In the Victorian era, the marriage norms allowed the man to choose his wife but did not give the same right to woman. Sue, as a New Woman who consciously and repeatedly questioned the social conventions, was aware of the humiliating and unfair situation of woman in the Victorian marriage system and she commented saying "my bridegroom chooses me of his own will and pleasure, but I don't choose him, somebody gives me to him, like a she-ass or she-goat, or any other domestic animal" (Hardy, 2003, p.220). From this quotations, it can be concluded that in a period when woman were denied the right to

speak and tell her opinion freely, Sue is able not only to frankly expose her opinions but to attack and reasonably denounce the confines that ruled the Victorian society. This fact undoubtedly made Sue a rebellious woman and thus a New Woman.

1.3.4. Sue and Physical Contact in Marriage

Another feature that made Sue Bridehead a New Woman is her refusal to any physical contact with her husband. Sue was against the sexual relationship between husband and wife because she thought that such relation would certainly destroy the essence of their love. For her, sex "spoils the highest and the purest love that exists between man and woman" (Hardy, 2003, p. 405). Though she was married to Phillotson, she refused to have any physical contact with him. According to Blake (1978), Sue's method is to remain virgin so that she could maintain her self-esteem and dignity and avoid the oppression the sexual relationship would bring to her (p. 709). As a matter of fact, when she mistakenly understood that Phillotson wanted to have sex with her, she jumped out of the bedroom window and went to Jude. Sue justified her deed by saying to Phillotson "for a man and woman to live on intimate terms when one feels as I do is adultery, in any circumstances, however legal" (Hardy, 2003, p. 257). In other words, Sue married Phillotson on the principle of not having any physical contact with him but when she discovered that this would be inconvenient to Phillotson, she went to Jude in hope of having the spiritual and the bodiless marriage she believed in. She was frightened by the idea of physical contact in marriage and she referred to marriage as a dreadful contract while she explained to Jude her problem in marrying Phillotson:

There is nothing wrong except my own wickedness, I suppose you'd call it –are pugnance on my part, for a reason I cannot disclose, and what would not be admitted as one by the world in general! (...) What tortures me so much is the necessity of being responsive to this man whenever he wishes, good as he is

morally! - the dreadful contract to feel in a particular way in a matter whose essence is its voluntariness! (Hardy, 2003, p. 264).

Thus, when she went to live with Jude, she refused to have any sexual intercourse with him either and as he tried to convince her on the matter, she bitterly responded "you are always trying to make me confess to all sorts of absurdities" (Hardy, 2003, p. 347). Sue thought differently about the relationship between man and woman. She thought herself different, perhaps unique than other women of her time. She told Jude that "my liking for you is not as some women's perhaps(...) it is a delight in being with you, of a supremely delicate kind, and I don't want to go further and risk it by an attempt to intensify it!" (Hardy, 2003, p. 291). Heilman (1966) claimed that sexuality is something disgusting and unacceptable for her:

Sue cuts herself off from the two principal foundations from the beliefs and from the physical reality of sex. The former she tends to regard as fraudulent and coercive, the latter as 'gross'. In resisting marriage she resists both, and so she has not much left. Her deficiency in sex, whatever its precise psychological nature, is a logical correlative of her enthroning of critical intellect (p. 222).

While A.J. Guerard (1963) commented on Sue's sexual attitude saying:

Sue combines, with her sexlessness and even repugnance to the 'gross' sexual act, a very strong impulse to arouse sexual desire in men. Sue never outgrows her childhood oscillations between the tomboy and the coquette. She re-enacts them with a Christ minister undergraduate when she is of eighteen.... She wants Jude to avoid Arabella not merely because sexuality is 'gross' but because she wants Jude to desire only herself. Her own happiness, as she half realizes at last, depends on reenactment of this pattern; to live with a man in an ostensibly

sexless and fraternal intimacy, arouse his sexual desire, lead him on, reject him and them do penance for the suffering (p. 187).

The sexlessness nature of Sue was of great importance to the identification of her character. Her refusal to the physical union with her husband then with her lover indicated that she is alienated from what was common in her society. She rebelled against one of the significant laws of nature; the one that assures the continuation of the human race, merely for attaining self-gratification and dignity. Nevertheless, when Arabella returned and met with Jude, Sue felt compelled to surrender to Jude's desire and she engaged in a sexual relationship with him only out of jealousy and fear that Jude may leave her for Arabella, though she regretted her deed after that.

To sum up, the fact that Sue is a New Woman is with no doubt true. Sue Bridehead demonstrated many of the features of the New Woman. She successfully represented the ideal example of the strong-minded, emancipated, self-determined woman. Throughout the novel, Sue's ultimate aim was to retain her self-independence and dignity. She was the perfect model of a well-educated woman. Sue built her own convictions and principles and lived up to them rejecting to subdue and surrender to her society's confines. She resumed this when she said, "I shall do just as I choose!" (Hardy, 2003, p. 203) and she often did. Sue longed for independence claiming "I shall be more independent" (Hardy, 2003, p. 147). Sue was exceptional woman in the sense that she rebelled against the conventions of her society as she educated herself by extensive reading and opposed marriage as well as sexuality in a time when woman was supposed to have a very restricted education and be the oppressed sex. That is, she did not only seek to emancipate herself and satisfy her urging intellect, but she also carried a different concept of marriage different from the one shared by other women because she was aware of herself as the weaker part in the marriage contract.

Hyde (1965) in his analysis of the novel, described Sue as "a striking model of advanced womanhood, aligning herself with Mill and striving to attain a high and beautiful level of existence" (p.156). Duffin (1962) claimed that Sue is "a woman of spiritual quality, born to live a life of fine passion, she made intellect her star: perhaps the 'complex' that resulted in the explanation of her tragedy" (p. 226). While Grimsditch (1962) remarked that "from the intellectual point of view, Sue Bridehead is by far the most highly developed woman in Hardy's pages" (p. 132).

Conclusion

The primary aim of this chapter was to analyse the way Thomas Hardy portrayed the New Woman in his novels. It focused on the characterization of two of his female characters: Bathsheba Everdene in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* so as to highlight their New Woman features and to show to what extent Hardy succeeded in his portrayal of the New Woman characters. By the end of this chapter, we conclude that Hardy had succeeded in his depiction of the New Woman as he portrayed women who are different from the Victorian stereotypical women.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This study is concerned with the analysis of Thomas Hardy's novels. The primary objective was to determine the traits of the New Woman that Hardy attributed to his heroines in some of his novels, and to examine to which extent his characters contributed to the development of the New Woman. Furthermore, through this study we aim to consider the reason behind Hardy's defence on women's rights and to arrive to the conclusion that his opposition to the rigid social restricts is a manifestation to his feminist attitudes.

This dissertation sheds light on Thomas Hardy's view towards woman and how his representation of his heroines Bathsheba in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and Sue in *Jude the Obscure* embodied the New Woman aspects. The work was carried out under a feminist viewpoint; for better understanding the status of women in Victorian society and how they struggled for their rights in the patriarchal society which led to the emergence of New Women.

The present work is divided into three chapters. The first chapter was devoted to the historical background of the Victorian era for the sake of giving a clear framework to the circumstances that were behind Hardy's influential writings on these conditions. The researchers have mentioned the main events that happened at that time and their impacts on the reformulation of the Victorian society. Moreover, a special concern was given to woman's life and position during this period. In this regard, a particular emphasis was placed on how Victorian women were deprived of certain rights and how they were exploited in a society ruled by men's power. The researchers also have spoken about women's perseverance to get their equality with men. Furthermore, this chapter spotted light on some new notions and ideas related to women which emerged during the Victorian era, the most important one was the New Woman notion.

In the second chapter, a clear overview about the Victorian Literature and its major themes was provided. In addition to that, it discussed the Victorian novels which were intentionally used as a tool to express their writers' points of view on certain social convictions at that period. Moreover, the researchers tried to analyze the change of women's portrayal by both the earlier and the later Victorian novelists. In this respect, Some prominent Victorian novelists who had tackled the Woman Question in their work were presented in addition to a brief account of stereotypical women and their illustration in the Victorian novels. Then, we put emphasis on how the Victorian writers rejected the idealization of women in their works. By the end of this chapter, a general insight over the concept of New Woman and its representation in the Victorian novels was provided. More specifically, its representation by Thomas Hardy which was the main concern of this study. This was in order to prove that Hardy's portrayal of women was unlike other writers' of his age. In his novels, Hardy presented his heroines' issues more frankly and clearly than any other writer.

The third chapter which was the practical part, it was feasible to work on two of the most famous and controversial Hardy's novels *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Jude the Obscure*. Through this chapter, much emphasis had been put on the characterization of the main characters Bathsheba and Sue who proved to be New Women. In this prospect, the study showed that most of Hardy's heroines were independent and rebelled against the social restrictions seeking to get the same emancipation and equalities of men. Consequently, we arrived to the conclusion that Hardy, as a feminist, succeeded in his depiction of New Woman where he portrayed women who were completely different from the Victorian stereotypes.

As a conclusion, it can be said that Thomas Hardy as a feminist novelist attacked the Victorian concepts which were imposed on women. He challenged and criticized the

social, economic, and political Victorian principles only to portray his heroines as strong independent women who revolted against the society's standards. He apparently sympathised women's conditions as being victims in the patriarchal society and aimed to change the Victorian beliefs which stated that women should be inferior to men. In this regard, Hardy demonstrated his opposition to these social norms only to show that women must rebel against the society where traditions had been the reason behind their suffrage. In a nutshell, what Hardy intended for his readers to consider was that women should have an equal status to men.

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ملخص

البحث عبارة عن دراسة أوضاع المرأة في المجتمع الفيكتوري تحديدا كيف صُوِّرت من قبل توماس هاردي. اهتم هاردي في معظم أعماله بقضية المرأة حيث دافع عن النساء وناصر كفاحهن من أجل الحصول على حقوقهن في المجتمع الفيكتوري الذكوري وبالتالي فإن هذه الأطروحة ترمي لدراسة تمثيل هاردي للمرأة القوية والمستقلة والمتمردة في رواياته ومنه تمثيله للمرأة الجديدة. تهدف الدراسة لإظهار خصائص المرأة الجديدة في شخصيتين من شخصيات هاردي النسائية هما باثشيبا افردين من رواية بعيدا عن صخب الناس وسو برايدهاد من رواية جود الغامض. تهدف الدراسة أيضا لإظهار نقد هاردي لبعض الأعراف السائدة في المجتمع الفيكتوري وكيف نبذت هذه الأعراف النساء. بناء على الفرضية القائلة أن تمثيل هاردي لنساء ضد المعتقدات الفكتورية ساهم في ظهور وتطور المرأة الجديدة وأيضا من خلال اتباع المنهج النسوي في تحليل شخصيات هاردي النسائية تم الوصول إلى أن شخصيات هاردي النسائية باثشيبا و سو يمثلان ودرجة كبيرة المرأة الجديدة و ذلك بسبب شخصياتهما المختلفة عما هو سائد في المجتمع الفكتوري. كما تم الوصول أيضا إلى أن هاردي عارض وبشدة المجتمع الفيكتوري الذكوري و ممارساته الصارمة ضد المرأة ودافع عن حقوقها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: باثشيبا افردين, توماس هاردي, سو برايدهاد, المجتمع الفكتوري, المرأة الجديدة.

