Chapter 3
‘Threatening a Possible Enclosure’: Patriarchal Values in Hardy’s Novels

In an analysis of the sexual ideology and practices of the English bourgeoisie in the second half of the nineteenth century Boumelha refers to certain agreed interconnected features of the period including the virginity ethic, the sexual double standard and the polarization of chaste and depraved women. In a patriarchal set-up characterized by the predominance of the virginity ethic, the sexual purity/impurity of a woman determines her social position which is evident in the response of Angel who after knowing about Tess’s premarital sexual experience, pregnancy and the death of the baby, is “paralyzed” to his depths (Hardy, *Tess* 226). The imaginary contrast Angel builds between Tess’s “present mood of self-sacrifice” and the “past mood of self-preservation” (Hardy, *Tess* 227) is indicative of the subject’s refusal to accept any change in the identity of the object: “. . . the woman I have been loving is not you” (Hardy, *Tess* 226). The fact that the object is vulnerable to chance and contingencies creates “a whirlpool of fears and anxieties” in the subject’s mind which is an “essential part of the order of having” (Marcel, *Being* 162). Out of that anxiety, Angel expresses doubts as to Tess’s initiation into “the proportions of social things” and even connects the decline of her family to her “want of firmness” (Hardy, *Tess* 229). Going to his home at Emminster, Angel feels that he has spoilt his career by marrying Tess and has resentment against her for making him deceive his parents. Angel says that he cannot live with Tess in the “ordinary sense,” refuses to have sex with her and interprets his rejection of Tess as a proof of his masculine ideal concerning virginity (Hardy, *Tess* 239). Tess draws Angel’s attention to the other girls who in similar situations are sympathetically treated by their husbands but Angel hardly pays any attention to Tess’s
entreaties. According to Levinas, in any responsible communication involving an oblitera
tion of egotism, the subject is inspired to see his dubious assumptions exposed when faced with the
questions of the other. Angel behaves irresponsibly in the sense that he does not actually respond
to Tess and remains unaware of the arbitrary views into which his uncriticized freedom leads him.

Tess’s “conventional aspect” built up on the basis of her internalization of the social
codes regarding premarital sex produces a sense of shame and a feeling of repentance which are
in conflict with her “innate sensations” (Hardy, Tess 96). It is particularly evident when, terrified
by a “cloud of moral hobgoblins,” Tess becomes melancholic and goes to a church, and sits there
in an obscure place (Hardy, Tess 91). Although Tess baptizes the child herself, the vicar of
Marlott refuses to give him a Christian burial testifying to society’s disapproval of her illegitimate child. The misery of Hardy’s women who were not free to abort a fetus is evident not
only in the reference to the baby whose father refuses to send for the parson and who is finally
buried by Tess but also in the account of the last days of the abandoned Fanny Robin in The
Return whose child is discovered in a coffin and in the way Father Time in Jude commits suicide
and kills the children with a sign “Done because we are too menny” (264).

As an institution marriage is so deeply embedded with misogynistic values and sexual
double-standards that it destroys the spirit of women and renders them into passive objects in
Hardy’s novels. It may be mentioned here that though Angel demands absolute loyalty from
Tess he finds himself incapable of offering it to her. He has promised to marry Liza-Lu if Tess
dies and after Tess’s surrender to the police, the readers see him and Liza-Lu ascending a hill.
What is more, he confesses that he had once fallen into forty-eight hours of “dissipation” with a
Strange woman (Hardy, Tess 221). The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 brought some changes
to the divorce laws. Since then an Act of Parliament was not required in the case of divorce and it could be dealt with in a civil court. Yet women continued to remain in a disadvantageous position because the grounds for divorce, even in this new arrangement, were considered separately for each of the partners. A wife’s adultery was treated as a more serious offence than that of the husband. A wife could be divorced for a single act of adultery. But if a wife wanted to divorce her husband she had to prove not only the man’s adultery, but also some factors like incest, bigamy, sodomy or any extreme form of cruelty. What for a young man could be an adventure, would actually mean social ruin and degradation for a woman. Ingham argues:

So it is that Angel Clare admits to youthful fornication which confession to his new wife will erase. He takes, however, a very different view of her affair with Alec: it is a barrier to the consummation of their marriage and turns her into a new and deceitful person. Divorces rose from 148 in 1857-67 to 582 in the 1890s. It is divorce on these new terms that allows the husbands Jude and Phillotson in Jude to divorce Arabella and Sue Bridehead. But when in The Woodlanders Grace Melbury wishes to divorce her unfaithful husband Edred Fitzpiers, she cannot do so. (Thomas Hardy 57-58)

The conservatism in a patriarchal set-up that stifles women’s movements formulating laws about purity/impurity is also manifested in the account of the moral commotion caused by Sue’s absence at night in the training school in Jude. The headmistress not only tells the girls that none should speak to Sue who is forced to remain in solitary confinement for a week but also inhibits Sue’s meetings with Jude which is followed by her expulsion. The education-system of the school endowed with the spirit of Christian moral conservatism, strengthens the patriarchal
stereotypes about the inferiority of the women and with a sustained focus on an orthodox exercise of discipline, it eats into the vitals of the young girls:

Half-an-hour later they all lay in their cubicles, their tender feminine faces upturned to the flaring gas-jets . . . every face bearing the legend ‘The Weaker’ upon it, as the penalty of the sex wherein they were moulded, which by no possible exertion of their willing hearts and abilities could be made strong while the inexorable laws of nature remain what they are. They formed a pretty, suggestive, pathetic sight, of whose pathos and beauty they were themselves unconscious . . . . (Hardy, Jude 112)

Regulated by such structures of moral regimentation the young girls are, to a considerable extent, defined and reproduced which is evident in the way Sue wraps the busts of nude figures of Apollo and Venus in brown paper and puts them in a corner and learns to condemn herself for her “intimate” relation with Jude (Hardy, Jude 126), and sees women merely as temptresses: “. . . no average man . . . will molest a woman . . . unless she invites him” (Hardy, Jude 118). Sue is not comfortable with her clothes which are essentially related to her sexualized presence in a patriarchal society and she even develops a feeling of shame because she sees herself as the sexualized object: “I [Sue] suppose, Jude, it is odd that you should see me like this and all my things hanging there?” (Hardy, Jude 115). Medical studies and private diaries and letters of the era reveal that the Victorian middle-class women had the habit of “anxiously monitoring the slightest aspect of their bodily functions” (Shuttleworth 48) because of the threat of medical intervention in overtly physical forms and it has also been argued that since in Hardy’s novels the “female characters merge together their identity and that of the objects around them” their “clothes seem a part of their bodies by virtue of their incorporation into the woman’s sexual
awareness‖ (Boumelha, *Thomas Hardy and Women* 35). Sue is comfortable with a kiss given “in the spirit of a cousin” but not with one given “in the spirit of a lover” and when Phillotson kisses her cheek she shrinks away (Hardy, *Jude* 171). This is exactly how a woman is taught to treat her body with a sense of shame or anxiety and her discomforts “come less from her body than from the anxious concerns she feels regarding it” (Beauvoir 587).

Sue hates herself for her “meany sexual emotion” (Hardy, *Jude* 211) and tries to appropriate the male norms of ideal femininity but the conflict between these norms and the demand for behaving as a carnal object drives her to “frigidity” (Beauvoir 658). Sue leaps from the window to avoid the embrace of Phillotson with whom she hardly lives “as a human wife” for complex psychological reasons (Hardy, *Jude* 149). It is not only Phillotson who finds Sue “an odd creature” (Hardy, *Jude* 199) but Jude also describes her as “incapable of real love” (Hardy, *Jude* 190) and as a “phantasmal, bodiless creature” with “so little animal passion” (Hardy, *Jude* 204). Jude sees Sue as a “disembodied creature” and, when he puts his arms round her, he expects “them to pass through” the woman “as through air” (Hardy, *Jude* 194). Though Sue admits that she is not asexual and there is evidence in the text of a subterranean flow of eroticism in her personality, she decides to regulate her sexual passion and even argues that it is in act of regulation that her freedom and individuality, if there is any, lies. She says that she lived with her undergraduate friend in complete chastity not because of the fact that she is sexually chill or “innocent” but because she intended things in that way: “People say I must be cold-natured,—sexless—on account of it. But I won’t have it! Some of the most passionately erotic poets have been the most self-contained in their daily lives” (Hardy, *Jude* 119). This is how in a repressive social set-up a woman learns to hide her “real sentiments” from men and “deliberately dissembles her objective actuality” as she is taught from adolescence to be cautious in her social
relation with men (Beauvoir 288). By desire, Sue means more than carnal emotion as she has a
notion of heterosexual union that emerges through the sexual but then goes beyond that. Sue
cannot negate the influence of a repressive society on her growth as her reasoning which helps
her explain her sexuality in her own unique way, is appropriated by the dominant norms of
sexual modesty and repression.

When women internalize the norms of sexual modesty they are assimilated in
phallogocentric hegemony which requires a “renunciation of women’s own desire” as the
women are encouraged to have “the desire to be nothing other than a reflection, a guarantor of
the pervasive necessity of the Phallus” (Butler 62). That is why Jude who is not able to develop
the mode of thinking which acknowledges the feminine other is less concerned with Sue’s
radical otherness and is more concerned with the way she appears to his separated self. There
are, however, glimpses of Sue’s sexual fulfilment one instance of which can be found in the way
she smiles after Jude pushes her nose into the roses and also in her request that Jude kiss her until
he bruises her lips. It may also be treated as a case of masochism in which one deliberately
transforms oneself into an object so that the subject can grasp and encompass her. But these
moments are often overpowered by the intensity of her revulsion against sex testifying to her
internalization of the dominant modes of sexual modesty and purity. After leaving Phillotson and
pregnant from her relationship with Jude, Sue develops a sense of guilt for her “sinful ways”
(Hardy, Jude 270) and for giving birth to illegitimate and doomed children: “Our life has been a
vain attempt at self-delight. But self-abnegation is the higher road. We should mortify the
flesh—the terrible flesh—the curse of Adam!” (Hardy, Jude 270). This remorse is so profound
that she even starts thinking about self-mutilation: “I should like to prick myself all over with
pins and bleed out the badness that’s in me!” (Hardy, Jude 271). The death of her children, Sue
thinks, initiates the first stage of her purification. One symbolic expression of her repentance is her tearing of the pretty nightgown she had worn while living with Jude. Instead, she starts wearing an absolutely plain garment. Sue contemplates returning to the husband she found physically repugnant as a just punishment she should accept. Her self-reproach also leads her to a kind of religiosity that she earlier abandoned. In *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (2007) Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that the overvaluation of the Victorian feminine norms like submissiveness, selflessness and renunciation prescribed as ideals of women in the nineteenth century resulted in severe and widespread “ill health” (54). Freud also speaks of prolonged sexual repression leading to cases of psychical impotence as the women fail to “undo the connection between sensual activity and the prohibition” (*On Sexuality* 252). Women like Elizabeth-Jane, in spite of their incredible capacity for sexual imagination as voyeurs, remain cool and rigid in response to amorous gestures. Their ambiguous behaviour may be explained with these insights.

The moral conservatism of the Victorian era disempowered the women and restricted the freedom of the narrators as well. So far as the treatment of sexuality in novelistic discourse is concerned, Hardy was forced to make compromises. Simon Gatrell points out that in exploring sexuality Hardy was under three conflicting pressures: “what he wanted to show, what he thought it was acceptable to his audience and the circulating libraries to show, and what his bosses the magazine editors would allow him to show” (140). The indirectness of Hardy’s diction effectively ensured in the use of paraphrase and metaphor is, Gatrell argues, an important quality in the “strategic distancing of sexual urgencies from the sensitive Victorian reader” (141). The material body is not only repressed and de-eroticized in the course of the action of the novels but the narrator also represses the words and phrases, which directly refer to the bodily
functions related to erotic imperatives. So far as the history and development of the Western painting is concerned, one notices several ways in which the artists have alienated themselves and their audience from the full impact of the scenes charged with eroticism. One such technique of distantiation is the use of transformation and metaphor, which the artists have inherited from the Greek and Roman world and which has also been employed in the field of erotic writing: the participants in distinctly erotic scenes are often “half-human” (Lucie-Smith, *Erotica* 70). In Renaissance and Baroque painting the sexual gestures were often placed within a framework of classical myth for both “expressing and excusing” the erotic content (Lucie-Smith, *Erotica* 70). Transforming Tess into mythological creatures like Artemis and Demeter through the construction of setting and the use of allusions Angel builds up images of chastity and fertility, which are removed from the actual physical existence of the woman, thereby situating Tess’s eroticism within permissible limits. What is more, Angel’s use of mythology not only establishes the superiority of his learning over Tess, but points towards the class distance between them, thereby enabling him to protect his masculine self and concealing his clever manipulation of possessing Tess by redirecting his desire for her.

The narrator thus sublimes Tess’s sexuality making her belong more to the world of nature than to the world of men: “On these lonely hills and dales her quiescent glide was of a piece with the element she moved in. Her flexuous and stealthy figure became an integral part of the scene” (Hardy, *Tess* 91). Similarly, “diamonds of moisture from the mist” hang on Tess’s eyelashes “and drops upon her hair, like seed pearls” while she is milking the cows, stoking the autumn sheaves of corn, taking care of birds that have been wounded by the sportsmen, lying on the grass and looking up at the starry sky (Hardy, *Tess* 135). Integrated with the deeper forces of nature, Tess moves like an ethereal spirit whose hands display the “pinkness of the rose” and
whose arm feels as “cold and damp” as a “new-gathered mushroom” (Hardy, *Tess* 178). In the Garden scene Tess’s erotic sensations are in tune with the organic world of nature, which de-eroticizes her by lifting her to an elevated plain of existence. In doing the harvest Tess loses her individual personality, “becomes part and parcel of outdoor nature” (Hardy, *Tess* 93) and according to Charlotte Thompson, she is diminished to a nonentity as the narrator continuously diffuses “her vitality into the other realms of nature” (Thompson 118): “A field-man is a personality afield; a field-woman is a portion of the field; she has somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it” (Hardy, *Tess* 93). Sexual acts in the open air project sex as a ritual act of unification with the forces lying at the root of all life. Some of the greatest mythological love-paintings have been interpreted in this way where the allegorized and personified pagan gods representing the forces of nature make love to one another and “all nature responds” to them (Lucie-Smith, *Erotica* 150).

Obviously such instances of sex in the open air have de-eroticizing impact on the observers, which is also exploited by the narrator in the scene of seduction in *Tess*. In contrast with this, a more realistic view of outdoor sex can be found in *My Secret Life* (1888) which, in terms of the “directness and particularity” in the presentation of sexual activity, has no parallel even in the art of the second half of the nineteenth century (Lucie-Smith, *Erotica* 153). When Tess and Angel skim the milk together the latter cleans Tess’s finger “in nature’s way” and their lovemaking in the dairy is also depicted as a natural phenomenon (Hardy, *Tess* 173). Butler draws the readers’ attention to the problematic project of situating normative heterosexuality before the intervention of power: sex in the lap of nature, as it is evident in *Tess*, is projected as a prediscursive production of both the categories of sex and nature (2-4). Hardy’s depiction of the rural habits, speeches and values has charmed the urban readers over the ages to such an extent
that even the contemporary readers love to see his texts as records of a “lost rural way of life” (Millgate, “Thomas Hardy’s Wessex” 136). With a misplaced romanticism the readers can locate Tess in the background of an essentially vital and nourishing rural context—the context of ancient values and the timeless wisdom of rural England. The outdoor-indoor binary structures this delineation within a Victorian sexual ethic which is also being undermined at the same time for the “rustic” justifies the outdoor licence. Thus Tess slowly emerges as a woman endowed with life-giving impulse that connects her with the culturally “pure” landscape. Tess’s purity comes out of her image as the representative of an agrarian community threatened by the forces of urbanization as Angel associates her with nature, instinct and intuition and thus tries to situate her in a space beyond the constraint of power-relations. Foucault shows that to sustain and justify itself, power creates the illusion that the notion of sexuality has a ground “beyond the reach of power” (The Will 82). What Butler says about the ontological integrity of women can also be applied in an examination of the personality of Tess, who, linked up with nature, gains her place in a temporal “before”: “The performative invocation of a nonhistorical ‘before’ becomes the foundational premise that guarantees a presocial ontology of persons who freely consent to be governed and, thereby, constitute the legitimacy of the social contract” (4). Moreover, while binding the corn Tess ceases to be “merely an object set down therein as at ordinary times” and merges with all women to become an idealized abstraction: “a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form” (Hardy, Tess 134-35). Tess is depicted as “ghostly,” and as “a soul at large” which neutralizes the physical response provoked by her presence (Hardy, Tess 134). Kaja Silverman argues that Hardy uses abstraction as a means of “dissociating Tess from her body” one instance of which is available when Alec first looks erotically at Tess and the narrator is found preoccupied with “severing all connections” between
Tess and her image produced by that erotic male gaze (139). Here abstraction functions as a form of resistance to another representational mode in the narrative that seeks to ensure the sexual objectification of Tess by drawing the readers’ attention to her “fullness of growth” and the ways she is made to “appear more of a woman than she really was” (Hardy, *Tess* 45).

Eustacia’s personality is similarly defined in two ways: she is made a part of the landscape and a part of mythology. The fact that Eustacia is first seen on Rainbarrow suggests that she is “the raw material of a divinity” (Hardy, *The Return* 53) capable of uttering “oracles of Delphian ambiguity” which needed the mediation of the priests to be rightly interpreted (Hardy, *The Return* 58). The narrator remarks that in heaven Eustacia will sit between the “Héloïses and the Cleopatras” and the reference to Héloïse in particular is suggestive in another way as she was severely punished for her love for the poet Pierre Abélard (Hardy, *The Return* 58). All these allusions are intended to point out Eustacia’s obscure and anachronistic location as a woman that ultimately functions to justify the ill treatment she receives from a patriarchal set-up. In the seventh chapter of the First Book in *The Return* Eustacia is loaded with seductive pagan images which turn her into an exotic being evoking the spirit of a distant spatiotemporal location:

Her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies, and tropical midnights; her moods recalled lotus-eaters and the march in ‘Athalie’; her motions, the ebb and flow of the sea; her voice, the viola. In a dim light, and with a slight rearrangement of her hair, her general figure might have stood for that of either of the higher female deities. (Hardy, *The Return* 54)

In these representational images, Eustacia is eroticized in a certain sense but the concrete physical presence of the woman fades before the impact of such conceptual constructions of self and place and this kind of neutralization of the feminine other who becomes an exotic theme for
the subject is an instance of what is described by Levinas as “reduction to the same” (43). The description of Eustacia evocative of a nonhistorical “before” seems to empower the narrator or the male characters to have an authentic knowledge of the secrets of the object’s personality, but actually they fail to know what is outside the discourse or prior to the power structure because the description of the “outside” or “before” always takes place in language “within the terms” of the “after” (Butler 101).

The narrator, in spite of his obsession with the fragmented body-parts of the heroines, sometimes assesses their beauty as an integrated bodily response in which the focus is on assimilation of the body-parts rather than on fragmentation, which leads to the mystification of their beauty. The dissection of the different components of beauty like body, hair, clothes, voice, skin and movement can contribute to the demystification of the “aesthetics of ‘femininity’” (Isikoff 40). However, in Hardy’s presentation the readers are sometimes given a contrary view: not only are the parts of the body given as an integrated whole but also the dress, gestures and even the physical environment are seen as a metonymic extension of the body. In order to negotiate with the female body which has been found to be disturbing for its volatile and uncontrollable nature, the male artists have for centuries tried to bridle female sexuality as an unruly force by depicting the body as “harmonious and sealed” (Cavallaro 118). Thus female beauty is given a sanitized form to make it a fit object for consumption by the male viewer.

Levinas has demonstrated how the subject’s act of comprehension “thematizes and encompasses its object” (78). The theory of biological determinism which has been employed in western culture for over two thousand years to assert that the differences in behaviour, character traits and social status between men and women are based on biological differences, is one of the concrete manifestations of the subject’s “comprehension” of the feminine other implying the
impossibility and often, the immorality of any project to change the gender roles and hierarchy (Levinas 78). Aristotle proposes that gender differences are biologically determined suggesting that women perform a passive function in reproduction whereas “the principle of the movement” comes from men (31). The story of the Creation and the Fall in the Genesis gives support to the assumptions about the essentially inferior nature of women, which have been prominent in many phases of Christian church history. Beauvoir argues that man conceives himself as the essential being or the subject, and constructs woman as the inessential being who is taught that to “realize her femininity she must make herself object and prey . . .” (691). In the history of patriarchal discourse women, associated with waste and death drives, have been represented as the negative reflection of man: passive, irrational, emotionally driven and inherently nurturing. In a patriarchal set-up a woman is defined as other and the definition, Lacan observes, produces her as the other. Rose notes that Lacan does not deny the difference between man and woman but since for him there is no prediscursive reality and “no feminine outside language,” he questions the seeming consistency of that difference, which produces the definition of the woman (80). The institution of compulsory heterosexuality requires “gender as a binary relation in which the [privileged] masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term” and the “consolidation of each term” of the binary serves the patriarchal order (Butler 31).

The cultural habit of characterizing women’s activities as biologically determined or as an extension of their domestic role reached its zenith in the nineteenth century as, with the industrialization of the western world in that era, there developed a bourgeois ideology dividing the social world into public and private realms. The masculinization of the public realm, which refers to the space of the economic and cultural production and of political action contributed to the “exploitation and marginalization of women in patriarchal societies” (Wells “Public Sphere”
And there is a view that the extent of a woman’s subordination in society is “related to the degree to which the domestic and public realms are separated” (Wells “Separate Spheres” 366). Doctors in nineteenth-century America and Britain argued that women were constitutionally incapable of laboring in the public space and that higher education could have degenerating effect on women’s uterus and breasts and could decrease femininity one example of which can be found in the portrayal of Sue in *Jude*. Ignoring the experience of the working women, they proposed that women should devote all their energy for the act of reproduction. Scientists drawn to the Darwinian theory of evolution emphasized the evolutionarily regressive nature of the women’s suffrage movement.

Modern feminist projects have developed from the nineteenth-century reform movements in Western Europe and America. There is no doubt that the reformers like John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor (1807-1858), Robert Owen and the Chartists in England were committed to the emancipation of women but the nineteenth-century reform movements were actually a part of the middle-class response to the socio-economic changes taking place as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. Aristocratic and mercantile capitalism evolved into industrial capitalism and the middle class emerged as the dominant social force. Though there was diversity in terms of incomes, occupations and values in the middle class, in reality attempts were made to forge a coherent middle-class identity, which was manifested in the sculpture, paintings, novels, plays and popular prints of the period. The ideal of pure and modest womanhood evolved during the reign (1837-1901) of Queen Victoria which was central to the formation of the middle-class identity. Physiology, anatomy and biblical authority were regularly invoked to prove that the ideal was based on sound physiological principles. The Cult of True Womanhood that developed in the nineteenth century was a double-edged sword: women were considered spiritually superior
to men and were endowed with the responsibility for managing the home but their movements and activities were restricted in several ways. Moreover, the reinforcement of the middle-class ideal of femininity was exclusionary in its basic format: the working women, immigrants, slaves, social radicals and those who remained unmarried were stigmatized as deviants (Chadwick 176). But the household was only one aspect of Victorian life that for its smooth functioning depended on “abundant ‘cheap’ labor” (Chadwick 184). Female servants protected richer women from physical labor and other women, many of whom were underpaid and were compelled to work in unhealthy conditions “supported the British economy” (Chadwick 184). In this context one can recall the plight and tragic death of Fanny Robin, a working woman, in Far.

John Ruskin’s theory of “angel in the house” was the ideological foundation on the strength of which female labor was devalued, the boundaries of class and gender were strictly defined and the family was increasingly made a privatized space (Chadwick 40). The ideological trope of “angel in the house” associates ideal qualities like submissiveness, innocence and sentimentality with women in an essentialist manner. Jude is obsessed with the idea of an angelic woman whose job is to help the man explore his own potentials: “. . . your [Sue’s] freedom from everything that’s gross has elevated me, and enabled me to do what I should never have dreamt myself capable of, or any man, a year or two ago” (Hardy, Jude 209). Before he has spoken to Sue, he falls in love with his own idea of Sue because the reality of Sue is less important to him than the ideals he creates in order to expect an unchanging perfection in her, which will help him to avoid the moral responsibility of his own actions.

The angelic women like Tess and Sue who are de-eroticized and restricted by regimented moral discipline are carefully distinguished from deviant women like Arabella who are degraded and debased as sexual objects and whose sexuality offers a threat to the conventional patriarchal
morality in Hardy’s novels. What strikes the readers is the fact that Arabella’s indifference or
cruelty is analyzed with reference to her physical features. Sue describes Arabella as a “fleshy,
coarse woman” (Hardy, Jude 206) and finds in her voice and physiological attributes the traces
of moral corruption and low ethical standard: the bosom, lips, teeth and complexion of Arabella
bear the marks of a “complete and substantial female animal” (Hardy, Jude 33), her laughter is
“low” (Hardy, Jude 39) and she often speaks with a “hungry tone of latent sensuousness”
(Hardy, Jude 42). Arabella’s treatment of her son and the dying Jude are carefully emphasized to
suggest that she is a heartless woman: she is depicted making a visit to Jude and Sue after the
death of their children and “. . . talk[s] with placid bluntness about ‘her’ boy, for whom, though
in his lifetime she had shown no care at all, she now exhibited a ceremonial mournfulness that
was apparently sustaining to the conscience” (Hardy, Jude 273). The deterministic assumption
about the connection between Arabella’s sexuality and her moral nature is authoritarian in the
sense that the moral frailty seen through a patriarchal lens is traced back to Arabella’s embodied
being, as the sexual presence of assertive women is considered to inaugurate the whole network
of evil and corruption in conservative social formations.

The cultural politics of dividing women into two neatly compartmentalized groups like
the virgin and the whore is indeed misogynistic but what is more striking is that this polarization
collapses in Hardy’s narratives because the women refuse to be classified in such essentialised
categories. The angelic women like Tess and Sue remain enigmatic creatures because the more
one tries to project them as asexual, the more their sexuality becomes a threat to the orthodox
patriarchal order. Tess, though de-eroticized to a considerable extent, provokes the sexual
interest of the narrator and the readers. Angel desperately tries to idealize Tess by putting her in a
culturally static context of mythology and nature but is not always successful. Even the
shamefulness of Hardy’s women, which is a mark of moral conservatism, ironically intensifies the erotic quality of their presence in a patriarchal set-up. When Tess is kissed for the first time she resists, feels shame and tries to wipe the mark of lips with a handkerchief. Alec encloses Tess’s waist with his arm to protect her when they are on horseback but this “put[s] her on the defensive” and Tess pushes Alec away (Hardy, *Tess* 74). The narrator calls it her “impulses of reprisal to which she was liable” (Hardy, *Tess* 74). Earlier, when Alec gives Tess “the kiss of mastery” she “flushed with shame” (Hardy, *Tess* 58). Tess’s sense of shame lies outside her “lived freedom” in the sense that it involves an apprehension of the self stimulated by someone else’s potential or actual act of perceiving (Sartre 286). The shamefulness of the object generates curiosity in the male imagination and the men around her feel indirectly stimulated to possess her sexually. The narrator in *Jude* subtly encourages the readers to develop a sexual approach to Sue by presenting her as a shameful woman and thus shamefulness, a “force which opposes scopophilia” (Freud, *On Sexuality* 62) and acts as a resistance to the “sexual instinct” (Freud, *On Sexuality* 67) can ironically enhance the sexual curiosity of the observer in becoming “a kind of display” (Berger 43).

In order to ensure full subordination of the women the patriarchal order divides them into virgin and vamps and idealizes and/or sublimates the women belonging to the former category. Idealization as defined by Freud is a deflection from sexuality in which the instinct directs itself towards an aim that is remote from the aim of sexual satisfaction and in which the object is exalted and aggrandized in the mind of the subject though there is hardly any alteration in its actual nature:

Looking at his loved one as she [Sue] appeared to him now . . . so ethereal a creature that her spirit could be seen trembling through her limbs, he [Jude] felt
heartily ashamed of his earthliness in spending the hours he had spent in Arabella’s company. There was something rude and immoral in thrusting these recent facts of his life upon the mind of one who, to him, was so uncarnate as to seem at times impossible as a human wife to any average man. (Hardy, Jude 149)

The statement is underscored by deterministic assumptions about the link between women’s bodies and their moral typification. Since the cultural stereotype is that the fleshy women are voluptuous and the frail women are pure, a clear line of demarcation is drawn between the physical features of Sue and Arabella: “He [Jude] regarded the delicate lines of her [Sue’s] profile, and the small, tight, apple-like convexities of her bodice, so different from Arabella’s amplitudes” (Hardy, Jude 149). This is because the “physiological, mental and emotional economies of womanhood” were all regarded as “interdependent” in the “unified circulating system of body and mind” in the nineteenth century (Shuttleworth 47). In spite of the efforts to de-eroticize women like Tess and Sue through sublimation and/or idealization, their sexuality too causes tension and anxiety. Jude, for example, faces great difficulty in maintaining the idealized image he creates for Sue. When he sits behind Sue during a church service he realizes that he feels an interest in Sue that is “unmistakably of a sexual kind” (Hardy, Jude 79). Jude first sees her in a photograph on the mantelpiece of his aunt and kisses the photograph “he did not know why” (Hardy, Jude 69). Though for a long time Sue remains an enigma to Jude, he does not cease “to weave curious and fantastic day-dreams” about her (Hardy, Jude 72). After having a chance-encounter with her he thinks of her “liquid, untranslatable eyes” and his pent-up emotion “insensibly began to precipitate itself on this half-visionary form” (Hardy, Jude 73). Like a stereotyped voyeur he follows Sue, goes to the cathedral where she worships and waits for her:
“To see her, and to be himself unseen and unknown, was enough for him at present” (Hardy, *Jude* 74).

The Victorian trope of the “angel in the house” which associates men with the “outer” and women with the “inner” also exists in conjunction with another form of the inner-outer divide: women are outwardly fair but internally active as a threat and a source of pollution. As angels in the house, Sue and Tess, who are distinctly different from the threatening figures like Arabella and Eustacia, are expected to “cleanse the male from contamination” in the polluted space of the economic market and at the same time, paradoxically enough, they are seen as vulnerable to the unsteady nature of their bodies, which metaphorically represents the uncontrollable “excesses of the material economy” and the uncertainty in the new condition of the labor market as a result of the spread of industrial transformation by the 1820s and 1830s (Shuttleworth 55). Women, therefore, represented a threatening instability of physical forces in the nineteenth century that needed to be vigorously controlled and monitored. In the Victorian era, one way to control the women was to expose them to a culture of renunciation, which, as a distinctive form of patriarchal socialization made women sick, both physically and mentally: “To be trained in renunciation is almost necessarily to be trained to ill health . . .” (Gilbert, and Gubar 54). Thus women were expected to live “controlled” lives but the irony is that they were regarded as physiologically incapable of imposing control. The prescription for active self-help was also destructive for them because any obstruction in the “internal ‘excess’ of reproductive energy” was supposed to cause insanity (Shuttleworth 60).

This scheme of conceptualizing and representing a woman’s body and identity popular in the nineteenth century has at its centre a system of coordination developed by the masculine subject which is symptomatic of a causal and deterministic framework identified by Buber as an
essential feature of the “I-It” mode of relationship. And this, according to Marcel, is the realm of the problem in which the system of the knowing self matters most whereas in the realm of mystery the subject is involved in “an order” which can never be a knowledge-system for him and in which the subject fails to have power over the other because the other overflows every idea the subject can have of him/her (Creative 69). In the novelistic discourse of Hardy which apparently centers round what Marcel calls the realm of problem, the patriarchal authority creates many other stereotypes about women, mainly from an essentialist perspective to ensure their subordination as the other. In The Return, for instance, the narrator harps on the traditional misogynist opposition between emotivity and rationality and, needless to say, he ascribes the former to the feminine sensibilities of Eustacia. He notes that the nature of Eustacia’s passions for Clym “lowered her as an intellect” and “raised her as a soul” (Hardy, The Return 94).

This evaluation of Eustacia’s personality can be explained with reference to the Kantian notion of the beautiful and the sublime: “The fair sex has just as much understanding as the male, but it is a beautiful understanding, whereas ours should be a deep understanding, an expression that signifies identity with the sublime” (Observations 78). For Kant what belongs to beauty is the appearance of being “accomplished without painful toil” (Observations 78). The “sublime” which he calls a masculine trait, demonstrates, on the other hand, “strivings” that may include “laborious learning” or “painful pondering” (Observations 78). These forms of “strivings,” he notes, “destroy the merits” of a woman and “weaken the charms with which she exercises her great power over the other sex” (Observations 78). The meditative temperament of Clym, an instance of what Kant calls the “sublime” (Observations 78), is in sharp contrast with the beauty of Eustacia who demonstrates hardly any intellectual activity and is, as a result of her passions, “lowered” as an intellect (Hardy, The Return 94). When Oak demonstrates his stoical virtue he
exposes himself as a misogynist because his stoicism is founded on a firm belief in male supremacy in intellectual and ethical matters. Kant’s idea that women’s intellectual or meditative activities destroy their erotic charms is a stereotype which has its context in the misogynist tradition of Western philosophy and is also echoed by Hardy in his presentation of women, for example, in the case of Elizabeth-Jane in *The Mayor*. Farfrae presents Elizabeth-Jane, a quiet and observing woman, with many books which is recognition of her intellectuality that marks her off from Lucetta and it is suggested in the text that excessive thinking and book reading, to some extent, mitigates Elizabeth-Jane’s sexual presence. Sue in *Jude* and Elizabeth-Jane in *The Mayor* are the two heroines in Hardy’s novels who, though intellectually vibrant, are pale and shivering and they often seem to be the embodiment of sterility and sickness.

Eustacia’s restlessness as an effect of the presence of Clym, the incoherent nature of her fantasy and her sexual jealousy are fundamentally connected with her emotional nature in the text, which is suggested to be a womanly quality. That Eustacia is not in a position to control the arbitrary movement of her fantasy is carefully emphasized in the text: her mind uses the face of Clym as a “mere waste tablet whereon to trace its [mind’s] idiosyncracies as they developed themselves” (Hardy, *The Return* 109, emphasis added). Visiting Egdon hills four times to have a glimpse of Clym Eustacia feels “a sense of shame at her weakness” and resolves not to “look for the man from Paris” (Hardy, *The Return* 94, emphasis added). T.R. Wright observes:

Eustacia’s longing for Wildeve is irrational, uncontrollable and inconstant, fanned into life, ‘by his skill in deserting her at the right moments.’ The feeling she had ‘idly given’ when he was readily available is ‘dammed into a flood’ when he wants to marry Thomasin, the metaphor suggesting the fluidity as well as the perversity of subconscious desire. (58-59)
Eustacia lives like a loner in Egdon Heath which is also a metaphor of her uncontrollable desires: it is a place of strange phantoms and midnight dreams, which are difficult to tame down, and which have an antagonistic relation to civilization supposed to be founded on an exercise of reason. While male health was imagined to be based on the principle of self-control and rationality in the Victorian age, a woman’s health depended on her archetypal inability to control the body. It was believed that any “exertion of the mind” or will-power on the part of the woman for controlling her bodily impulse, for example, through intellectual exercise, might prove fatal in creating hindrance to menstrual flow (Shuttleworth 57).

In Hardy’s scheme, too, sex and nature are assigned to the female whereas the male represents intellect and culture and such production of sex, nature and femininity as prediscursive entities ought to be viewed, according to Butler, as the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by gender because the “anatomically differentiated bodies” are comprehended as “passive recipients of an inexorable cultural law” (11). Tess is associated with the “natural” modes of knowledge like instinct; moreover, intuition as the “invincible instinct towards self-delight” sends her to Talbothays and the appetite for joy influences her to accept Angel’s proposal of marriage (Hardy, Tess 104). In Far Bathsheba similarly fails to exercise her reason in dealing with Troy: “Bathsheba, though she had too much understanding to be entirely governed by her womanliness, had too much womanliness to use her understanding to the best advantage” (146-47, emphasis added). The womanly intuitiveness suggested in this observation does not actually refer to intuitive understanding but treats intuitiveness as an irrational form of behaviour characteristic of women. When Jude drunkenly recites the Creed in a tavern the narrator makes a typical patriarchal observation of women as hyper-emotional beings and, it would not be pointless, to mention that as a marker of womanhood intense emotion was
associated in the Victorian age with the flow of bodily fluids: “If he had been a woman he must have screamed under the nervous tension which he was now undergoing” (Hardy, *Jude* 101, emphasis added).

According to Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), the ruling class, in order to “justify its dominating position in the process of production,” makes the “particular interest of its class seem valid as the general interest” and also identifies some traits of those who are subject to authority and designates those traits as their common features (95). The male members of the community obviously in a position of power and authority do the same thing in Hardy’s novels in defining the feminine other by circulating and legitimizing their prejudices and misconceptions about womanhood. The relation between the masculine subjects and the women as other has no “directness” at all: the relation is in the “I-It” mode described by Buber which is marked by the intervention of the subject’s preconceived notions, intentions and calculations. When the gatekeeper insists that Bathsheba pay two pence and the latter refuses, Oak offers him two pence and resolves the issue. The narrator’s explanation of the situation is marked by his sexist observation that women in general are inclined to “take a favour of that kind” (Hardy, *Far* 11). The narrator’s remark on Tess’s “half-unconscious rhapsody” (Hardy, *Tess* 110) and her state of mind after the death of her child reveals his preconceived notions about the women’s mythical capacity for suffering: “Let the truth be told—women do as a rule live through such humiliations, and regain their spirits, and again look about them with an interested eye” (Hardy, *Tess* 110).

Overemphasizing the maternal instinct of women is certainly one of the most widely employed strategies in the patriarchal conceptualization of the feminine other. Aristotle argues that women are relegated to the interior bodily role of reproduction as “the birth must take place in the female” whereas men are fit for superior intellectual activities (33). This reductive theme
is perpetuated in the arguments of Saint Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) and Saint Augustine (354-430) who hold that the ultimate purpose of the existence of women lies in their “usefulness in the preservation of the species” (McGrath 250). To justify the ill-treatment of women in a patriarchal set-up the narrator essentialises them by celebrating their role as mother, though in many of Hardy’s novels marriage is condemned as an institution that frustrates the freedom of individuals. Bathsheba faces humiliation and a series of difficulties, which point out the disadvantages of a woman in a patriarchal set-up when she remains unmarried and a loner. Even Oak condemns Bathsheba for the threat posed to the year’s crops by the debacle of harvest supper and attributes it to the instability of the woman. It is therefore not surprising that Bathsheba’s status in the community depends on whether she remains unmarried and there is a strong opinion in the community that she should marry and thereby put an end to her solipsistic pleasures. The attempt to connect feminine pleasure with her ability to conceive is motivated by the wish to appropriate femininity under the aspect of maternity. The “discursive production of the maternal body as prediscursive,” is, according to Butler, a tactic aimed at the “concealment of those specific power relations by which the trope of the maternal body is produced” (125). It is an effect of a system of sexuality in which the female body is required to assume maternity as the “essence of its self” (Butler 125). The “privilege” of being a mother is something, which fascinates even a “deviant” woman like Arabella: “I suppose it is natural for a woman to want to bring live things into the world” (Hardy, Jude 47).

Jude’s comment that “. . . women are taught by other women that they must never admit the full truth to a man” refers to another popular misconception about women in a conservative society that defines them, owing to their capacity to bear children, as reservoir of secret truths (Hardy, Jude 204). And since the secrets of women “articulate a boundary” that excludes men,
they have been seen as “potentially either threatening—or alluring” to men (Keller 178). To affirm this misconception the readers’ attention is drawn to the way Arabella plays a hide and seek game with Jude before seducing him and the way she falsely tells Jude that she is pregnant. When Jude discovers the truth he views himself caught in a trap that will, he assumes, cripple him for a lifetime. The idea of secrecy latent in these situations is significant in another sense as Marcel argues that the secret is something that can be possessed and the projection of motherhood as central to feminine identity is interpreted by Marcel as indicative of the mode of having: “[t]he possession of a secret” (Being 145).

One of the most time-honored patriarchal misconceptions which Alec uses as a justification of his effort to take the upper hand of Tess is that a woman’s “No” actually means “Yes.” Angel’s “experience of women” also produces the knowledge that “the negative often meant nothing more than the preface to the affirmative” (Hardy, Tess 176). When Tess laments “I didn’t understand your meaning till it was too late,” Alec stresses this generalization: “That’s what every woman says” (Hardy, Tess 83). Tess protests against such reductive essentialisation: “Did it never strike your mind that what every woman says some women may feel?” (Hardy, Tess 83). But Alec remains indifferent to such a response as he is not capable of demonstrating what Levinas calls the genuinely critical reason that enables the subject to remain attentive to the distinctive features of the other as an individual. Like the other male members of the community Alec seems to suggest that women’s behavioral patterns in general can be explained with reference to an authentic female sexual identity or the inner truth of female desire which is kept from view but what he refuses to admit is the fact that in reality these are “effects of institutions, practices, discourses” of an orthodox compulsory heterosexuality (Butler xxxi).
However, in spite of the spread of all these categories and conceptualizations women remain obscure and enigmatic objects because they refuse to be transformed into dull stereotypes based on a patriarchal logic of the gender-divide. In the patriarchal discourse Bathsheba’s is an enigmatic personality: she is not a stereotype flirt and yet she is “like what a flirt is supposed to be” (Hardy, *Far* 98). Unable to read the meanings of Bathsheba’s gestures, Boldwood sometimes feels that she wants to see him and sometimes feels the opposite as the looks, words and accents of Bathsheba contain a “mystery quite distinct from its obvious import” (Hardy, *Far* 98). Sue remains a “riddle” to Jude (Hardy, *Jude* 107). Even to Phillotson she remains “one of the oddest creatures” (Hardy, *Jude* 182) as he finds “no order or regularity” in her sentiments (Hardy, *Jude* 175). When during her first marriage to Phillotson, Sue requests Jude to give her away in Church, Jude fails miserably in trying to figure out the inner properties of women in general and argues whether women, instead of being viewed as more sensitive, actually demonstrate a callousness. Jude finds it difficult to explain Sue’s response to his marriage with Arabella which is essentially large-minded and generous on reflection though he finds in it the traces of a previous exercise of what he describes as narrow, womanly impulse.

What adds to this culturally built-up sense of ambiguity about a woman’s response and identity is the fact that a woman like Sue is never directly presented to the readers but mediated through the consciousness of Jude or Phillotson or the male narrator and she is also presented through the eyes of Arabella, Aunt Drusilla and widow Edlin. After his marriage Angel is shocked to trace a “want of firmness” (Hardy, *Tess* 229) in Tess, an embodiment of “rustic innocence,” and remains unsure how to understand her (Hardy, *Tess* 234). Tess is rendered indeterminate and obscure as attention is drawn to an amazing correlation between her body and the spirit ⁴:
She was yawning, and he saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake’s. She had stretched one arm so high above her coiled-up cable of hair that he could see its satin delicacy above the sunburn; her face was flushed with sleep, and her eyelids hung heavy over their pupils. The brim-fulness of her nature breathed from her. It was a moment when a woman’s soul is more incarnate than at any other time; when the most spiritual beauty bespeaks itself flesh; and sex takes the outside place in presentation. (Hardy, *Tess* 172)

The inaccessible nature of feminine beauty suggested in the reference to sleep which is also a mark of self-effacement is cemented in this part of the text where there is no explicit reference to Tess’s sexuality but an emphasis is there on an innate eroticism that is mysteriously frightening and paradoxically, at the same time, an outlet of her “spiritual beauty” (Hardy, *Tess* 172). It is true that because of their egocentricity and possessiveness the male characters fail to have an objective understanding of women as other and they fail to get an access to the “interior” of the feminine other, i.e., knowledge of how the women see themselves. But this ineradicable sense of alienation which marks any relation based on manipulation and power is also culturally defined as an evidence of the unknowability and the enigmatic quality of the feminine other to project the women as unreal creatures lying beyond the power-relation so that the men can justify their exploitation of women at the societal level. As Butler argues, it is a mechanism of domination that reinforces the separation of the self and the other and then frames an “artificial set of questions about the knowability” of the other (197). The projection of women as enigmatic and unknowable creatures exposes the inadequacy of the patriarchal stereotypes but it should not be forgotten that this projection itself can also function as a patriarchal construct as it helps to
situate the women beyond historical transformation, thereby justifying the ill-treatment they receive in a patriarchal social set-up as it happens in the case of Tess and many others.

There is a view in psychoanalysis that though men feel drawn to women, at the same time, they fear that through the women they might die; and the basis of this dread lies not only in castration, which is more related to the father, but also in “fear of the vagina” (Kaplan 312). Not only are women, like Eustacia and Arabella who are eroticized or transformed into debased sexual objects but also the sexuality of women like Sue and Tess causes anxiety and fear among male members of the community in Hardy’s novels. The sense of anxiety or fear may also be interpreted as the subject’s fear of being objectified by the women as other as he fails to obliterate them from his world. The ideal of masculine restraint, celebrated in the Victorian era, was in conflict with the disruptive potential of female sexuality and in that sense the sexual presence of the women emerged as a threat to the fictional integrity of men. As a gentleman of the Victorian period Angel demonstrates honour and self-discipline which makes it difficult for him to accept both the physicality of love and the idea of an absolute surrender to the other prescribed by Marcel and Levinas: “He could love desperately, but with a love more especially inclined to the imaginative and ethereal; it was a fastidious emotion which could jealously guard the loved one against his very self” (Hardy, *Tess* 193). With his “small compressed mouth indexing his powers of self-control” (Hardy, *Tess* 231-32), Angel demonstrates a love that is “doubtless ethereal to a fault, imaginative to impracticability” (Hardy, *Tess* 240). Angel manages to prevent himself from kissing Tess when he has her in his arms but Tess’s sexual charm threatens his composure as he contemplates the “distracting, infatuating, maddening” (Hardy, *Tess* 152) shape of her lips: “. . . they sent an aura over his flesh, a breeze through his nerves, which well-nigh produced a qualm; and actually produced by some mysterious physiological
process, a prosaic sneeze” (Hardy, *Tess* 152-53). As a consequence, Angel’s “[r]esolutions, reticences, prudences, fears, fell back like a defeated battalion” (Hardy, *Tess* 153) and he “jumped up from his seat, and . . . went quickly towards the desire of his eyes, and kneeling down beside her, clasped her in his arms” (Hardy, *Tess* 153). The abstracted vision of Tess, which Angel has so carefully built up to preserve the ideology of masculine restraint is replaced by an erotic presence described as “the desire of his eyes” (Hardy, *Tess* 153). Be that as it may, there is hardly any doubt that even under the spell of Tess’s eroticism, Angel cannot shake off the feeling of unease because deep down he sees Tess’s erotic presence as a hindrance to his fictional self sufficiency as a masculine subject-position. It is observed that Angel and Alec are faced with the task of protecting their self-conceptions of masculinity while negotiating with Tess’s eroticism and it even introduces a rivalry between them because to get rid of the anxiety produced by the woman’s presence, both of them begin to objectify her and treat her as a possession. Tess’s sexuality is a threat to them as it exposes the unreality and the fragile nature of their conceptions of masculinity.

Eustacia creates tremendous anxiety in the community as Mrs. Yeobright blames her for Clym’s figurative blindness preceding his physical blindness and the absolute degeneration of his personality: “You are blinded, Clym . . . It was a bad day for you when you first set eyes on her” (Hardy, *The Return* 152). The narrator seems to endorse this when he refers to “the first blinding halo kindled about him [Clym] by love and beauty” (Hardy, *The Return* 159, emphasis added) and depicts her sexuality as inherently destructive as she tries to “bewitch” (Hardy, *The Return* 255) Clym with it and “like a devil” (Hardy, *The Return* 253) “bring[s] a curse” upon him (Hardy, *The Return* 256). When Eustacia’s little hands quiver while trying to fasten her bonnet, Clym comes forward to assist, both fascinated and fearful of her charms. Unaware of the
beautiful turn of her face that could have mesmerizing impact on any man, Eustacia lifts her chin and Clym avoids looking at her at that moment because of his anxiety that he might be “tempted to softness” (Hardy, *The Return* 257). Wildeve regrets that he has given up his career of engineering to become an innkeeper for the sake of Eustacia and remarks: “. . . what lower stage it has in store for me I have yet to learn” (Hardy, *The Return* 50). Immediately after this scene there is another when Eustacia throws back her shawl and asks: “Have you seen anything better than that in your travels?” (Hardy, *The Return* 50). The erotic implication of this remark is visually emphasized in Hardy’s imagery of the firelight shining upon her face and throat at that moment when Clym can recognize his wife as an alluring woman which reinforces the culturally constructed connection between a woman’s charm and the decline of a man’s career. Eustacia’s careful effort to attract Clym is also hinted at in the narrator’s observation that she “seized the moment” (Hardy, *The Return* 50). The traditional conflict between asceticism and provocation is also explored in the depiction of Bathsheba’s frustration after interrupting the “steady flow” of Boldwood’s life by her “look” or “sign” (Hardy, *Far* 98). Like Jude, Boldwood is projected as a man absorbed in his studies having hardly any knowledge of the ways of women and of the “erotic philosophy” which allows the subtle meanings to be expressed in “misleading ways” (Hardy, *Far* 97). When the “disturber of his dreams” becomes visible to him Boldwood closely examines her black hair, facial curves, the “roundness of her chin and throat,” the “side of her eyelids,” the “shape of her ear,” her skirt and even the soles of her shoes (Hardy, *Far* 93). Bathsheba primarily considers this a personal triumph but then feels sorry to realize that she has disturbed the “placidity of a man she respected too highly to deliberately tease” (Hardy, *Far* 94).

Just as Bathsheba’s presence threatens the intellectual activity of Boldwood, the highly sexualized presence of Arabella appears to be an impediment to the academic aspiration of Jude.
The higher learning of Jude and his ethics of sexual control allot a place of purity for him in bourgeois culture which in opposition to the “innate” eroticism of Arabella’s personality gives her a lower position in the hierarchy. Jude’s three-year relation with Arabella who is “too low” and “too coarse” (Hardy, Jude 209) is interpreted as a cause of “disruption” of Jude’s academic career (Hardy, Jude 62). When Arabella urges Jude to marry her soon suggesting that she is pregnant, Jude describes the situation as “a complete smashing up” of his academic plans (Hardy, Jude 48). Finally, after Jude goes to Christminster, the narrator, in a similar vein, views it as “... making a new start—the start to which, barring the interruption involved in his intimacy and married experience with Arabella, he had been looking forward for about ten years” (Hardy, Jude 62). Though Jude tries to trivialize Arabella’s sexual charm as a “momentary surprise” he really considers it a threat to intellect and morality which constitute the foundation of the “general progress of his generation”:

There seemed to him, vaguely and dimly, something wrong in a social ritual which made necessary a cancelling of well-formed schemes involving years of thought and labour, of foregoing a man’s one opportunity of showing himself superior to the lower animals, and of contributing his units of work to the general progress of his generation, because of a momentary surprise by a new and transitory instinct which had nothing in it of the nature of vice, and could be only at the most called weakness. (Hardy, Jude 52, emphasis added)

Connecting masculinity with “years of thought and labour” and femininity with “transitory instinct” and “momentary surprise,” the narrator not only reinforces the institution of compulsory heterosexuality which requires gender as a binary relation in which the privileged masculine term is differentiated from the feminine term, but also projects “general progress” (Hardy, Jude
52) as an ahistorical and universal formulation involving the agency of a globalizing masculine subject, which is, nevertheless, threatened by the notion of a disruptive female sexuality: “... the epistemological paradigm that presumes the priority of the doer to the deed establishes a global and globalizing subject who disavows its own locality as well as the conditions for local intervention” (Butler 202).

In the Victorian sexual imaginary, women were destined to fail in controlling their own bodies and for their supposedly unstable physical systems and predisposition to insanity they were made subject to both physical scrutiny and moral vigilance and by the second half of the nineteenth century female sexuality became integrally related to the “cohesion” or the ruin of the “social body” (Rose 104). The cycles of production and reproduction were regularly compared in the medical and social texts of the Victorian era, cementing the link between the female and the social body. Herbert Spencer’s physiological theories of the social economy are also marked by the conventional link between the “uncontrollable operations of credit and the female sex” (Shuttleworth 58). The Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s show how state policy on hygiene constructed a category of women as diseased. The extremity of the angelic woman’s “alienation from ordinary fleshly life” and the “severity of her selflessness” actually led to the development of “morbid weakness” (Gilbert, and Gubar 24-25). This apart, in many ways the feminine body was projected in the nineteenth-century discourses as the malfunctioning organism representing the ills of the society. Jude, a reader of “theological books” and patristic literature, internalizes the wisdom of his time and is ashamed of his own sexual desire for women considering it as a hindrance and therefore tries to suppress his sexual passion in vain (Hardy, Jude 108). Arabella reasserts “her sway in his soul” (Hardy, Jude 41) and Jude who has thought that sex is “outside his life and purposes” finds himself drawn to the “full round naked arms” of the woman (Hardy,
Though Jude morally condemns Arabella’s location in a public space, he cannot help feeling sexually drawn to her clothes, looks and her “amplitudes” (Hardy, *Jude* 149). The “ecclesiastical basis” of his training and his orthodox moral orientation pale into insignificance before the irresistible force of Arabella’s sexuality: “For though it had seemed to have an ecclesiastical basis during the service, and he had persuaded himself that such was the case, he could not altogether be blind to the real nature of the magnetism” (Hardy, *Jude* 75). In Christianity, there is a connection between the sexual and the demonic as in the Christian imagination the sexual renunciation has been made the “ultimate symbol of devotion to God” (Tejirian 171). Jude realizes that he cannot become a licentiate of a religion in which sexual love is regarded “as at its best a frailty, and at its worst damnation” (Hardy, *Jude* 171) and, therefore, he develops such an extreme sense of guilt that he feels that the capital letters on the title page of his book regards him with “fixed reproach in the grey starlight, like the unclosed eyes of a dead man” (Hardy, *Jude* 41).

What makes the matter worse is the women’s internalization of the patriarchal ideology which is evident in Bathsheba’s sense of regret after stimulating a sexual response in Boldwood and also in the attitude of Sue who after leaving Phillotson joins Jude but cannot shake off the feeling that she is creating some kind of problem for him: “I fear I am doing you a lot of harm. Ruining your prospects of the Church; ruining your progress in your trade . . .” and adds “O I seem so bad—upsetting men’s courses like this!” (Hardy, *Jude* 188). The use of the plural marker in the phrase “men’s courses” is important because it includes even Phillotson in its reference-frame to suggest that he too has suffered much, is humiliated in public and finally dismissed from his job after being generous in freeing Sue (Hardy, *Jude* 188). The conservative readers can sympathize with Phillotson whose mental power is said to have been crippled by
Sue’s enigmatic personality but it should not be forgotten that Sue supports the old woman’s observation that Phillotson is unbearable for any woman and confesses: “. . . it is a torture to me to—live with him as a husband!” (Hardy, *Jude* 168). Though morally good, Phillotson lacks vitality and has “grown a little cold” to the response of Sue (Hardy, *Jude* 168). What happens to Sue is not important; rather how she plays a pivotal role in Jude’s tragedy occupies a central place in the thematic design of the narrative which, as noted in the misogynistic epigraph of the novel, categorically identifies the presence of women as the cause of men’s intellectual, social and most significantly, moral deterioration: “Yea, many there be that have run out of their wits for women, and become servants for their sakes. Many also have perished, have erred, and sinned, for women. . . . O ye men, how can it be but women should be strong, seeing they do thus?” (Hardy, *Jude* 9; ellipsis in orig.).

In their engagement with female sexuality as a source of threat and anxiety the masculine subjects, like Jude and Angel, adopt the method of ensuring masculine self-control through the regulation of their own bodies as instruments or possessions but the same bodies, used as possessions, go against the will of their own masters as Marcel has pointed out that this sense of “having,” as an intention of the subject, has a tendency to “destroy and lose itself” in the very thing it begins to possess: “. . . it is of the very nature of my body, or of my instruments in so far as I treat them as possessions, that they should tend to blot me out, although it is I who possess them” (*Being* 164-65). The following self-analysis of Angel reveals the internal turmoil he faces in asserting himself as a self-sufficient and sovereign subject on the basis of his fictional capacity for self-restraint. This is reminiscent of Levinas’s opinion that the capacity of the independent self does not always contain “its own being” because the willingness of whole being is not “enacted within oneself” (Levinas 228):
“Well—I have betrayed my feelings, Tess, at last,” said he with a curious sigh of 
*desperation*, signifying unconsciously that *his heart had outrun his judgment.*

“That I—love you dearly and truly I need not say . . . I am as surprised as you are.
You will not think I have presumed upon your defencelessness—been too quick and unreflecting, will you?” (Hardy, *Tess* 153-54, emphasis added)

Angel not only manufactures an asexual image of Tess but also takes pride in the discursively constructed notion of masculine self-control, but there is a gap between what he constructs as a supposedly detached subject and what he feels as an embodied and incarnate being which explains his alienation from the feminine other in the sphere of interpersonal relationship: “it [the other] permits itself to be taken by” but “it does not give itself” to the subject (Buber, *The Martin Buber Reader* 185).

In Hardy’s novels there is a focus on how women are in numerous ways subjected to the disapproval of the community as a cohesive social unit defending the misogynistic principles and the moral conservatism of a patriarchal formation. For Clym the public disapproval of Eustacia is a formidable reality: “How could there be any good in a woman that everybody spoke ill of?” (Hardy, *The Return* 256). On the occasion of Wildeve’s first marriage, the heath-folk come and sing ballads to congratulate the newly married couple, particularly to please the young wife. But this kind of community approval is significantly absent in the case of the Clym-Eustacia marriage. Clym has no existential crisis for, in spite of his blindness, he has the approval of a local cultural tradition; whereas Eustacia has nothing to fall back upon since her presence is simultaneously a source of exotic eroticism and a threat to the bourgeois morality of a patriarchal set-up.
It has been argued that in *Far* Bathsheba is involved in two different spheres of action: the romantic and the moral. She is both the dazzling heroine of popular romantic fiction and the representative of community culture. In the structure of the novel the readers find a gradual dissipation of Bathsheba’s romantic self and the justification of her commitment to the ethic of the community. The “allegiance to the communal ethic” (Hasan 25) is best expressed in the storm scene in which the mutual trust and impersonal toil of Oak and Bathsheba in the backdrop of a natural disaster situate them firmly in the context of the values of the community; and it also involves an erasure of any subjective pleasure as they are related to each other here not only “in their pleasures” but also “in their labours” (Hardy, *Far* 303). While celebrating the final phase of the Oak-Bathsheba relationship, characterized by a unique form of love which is “strong as death” and “which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown,” the narrator expresses his conservative ideals about love, which, in allotting hardly any space for the sexual response of the woman, negates pleasure and strengthens the patriarchal value-system of a community in its exclusive focus on ideas like trust and durability (Hardy, *Far* 303–4). Tess’s decision to go to Trantridge for claiming kinship with the Stoke d’ Urbervilles is suggestive of the way she is forced to subordinate the claim of her own self to the needs of her family. Unlike many of Hardy’s other heroines, Bathsheba seems to be connected with the life of the community and in her moments of crisis she turns to Oak, the representative of the communal ethic. Yet she sometimes finds herself friendless and insecure as the rustics who cannot ignore the “beauty of her face and movements” (Hardy, *Far* 74) are simultaneously suspicious of the “headstrong maid” who “won’t listen to no advice at all” (Hardy, *Far* 84). On his way to Weatherbury Oak listens to Master Poorgrass and Bill Smallbury who are presumably talking about Bathsheba and the latter, like a typical misogynist, comments that beneath that beautiful exterior, the woman is
“as proud as a Lucifer” and also points out that being a “very vain” woman, she looks in the glass to put on her nightcap properly at the time of going to bed (Hardy, *Far* 37-38). Thus the eroticization of Bathsheba simultaneously involves a denigration of her being as she lives alone, remains unmarried and shows a “masculine” spirit in manipulating farm activities.

A woman who asserts her individuality is, sooner or later, undermined in a patriarchal social order and one such extreme form of denigration is her experience of being projected as a witch in the public-eye. The witch is a woman encapsulating “a set of uncontrollable female stereotypes” the forced suppression and simultaneous attractiveness of which makes her both vulnerable to and threatening for the patriarchal order (Tabron 427). Since one of the many characteristics assigned to a witch is that her sexuality crosses the prescribed limit of a given set-up, the connection between danger and her body makes the “witch image a negative expression of a certain sort of inescapable essential femininity” that ought to be controlled for the “good” of the community (Tabron 427). Eustacia who is viewed as a “witch” (Hardy, *The Return* 130) and compared by Clym to “a devil” (Hardy, *The Return* 253) after his mother’s death, is also projected as a promiscuous sensualist who has “advanced to the secret recesses of sensuousness” and can take any risk to find a new intensity of passion (Hardy, *The Return* 77). Sam, the turf-cutter, describes Eustacia as a woman who “seems to care for nothing at all,” “mopes about by herself” and “don’t mix in with the people” (Hardy, *The Return* 141) while Mrs. Yeobright is similarly struck by her peculiar habits: “No lady would rove about the heath at all hours of the day and night as she does” (Hardy, *The Return* 160). Susan Nunsuch, who knows that Eustacia is “very strange in her ways” and lives “by herself” (Hardy, *The Return* 23) attributes her son’s “indispositions” to “Eustacia’s influence as a witch,” pricks Eustacia’s arm in church, and burns the wax effigy of the woman (Hardy, *The Return* 249). During the bonfire, Eustacia compares
her feat to “the Witch of Endor” who called up Samuel for King Saul (Hardy, *The Return* 52) and looking like “an apparition” (Hardy, *The Return* 54) emerges as “a figure in a phantasmagoria—a creature of light surrounded by an area of darkness . . .” (Hardy, *The Return* 272).

The “retribution enacted upon women” who violate social norms often assumes the form of “carnivalesque punishments” involving “sexualized display of the female body and the violent public humiliation of the offending woman” (Chedgzoy 67). Lucetta confronts such a public censure for building up sexual relation with Henchard in which Farfrae’s men organize a satirical mummary without thinking of the effects it will have on the reputation of the woman. One maid describes the scene: two figures are back to back on a donkey, their elbows are tied, and the woman is dressed just as Lucetta was dressed at the play at the Town Hall. Before the magistrate tries to stop the procession with the policemen the people in the parade disappear and the onlookers claim to have seen nothing. As Lucetta can identify that it is her effigy, her face grows wilder and she cries out before falling to the floor in an epileptic seizure: “She’s me — she’s me — even to the parasol — my green parasol!” (Hardy, *The Mayor* 211). After a brief recovery of consciousness she has another fit. When Farfrae returns he finds that Lucetta has had a miscarriage and is very close to death.

*The Mayor* and *The Well-Beloved* (1892) are apparently marked by the “minimisation of sexuality” that distinguishes these two texts from the rest of Hardy’s novels (Langbaum 116). It is perhaps because of this fact that the pleasure of sexuality is not as important for Henchard, as the pursuit of money and power: “. . . and being by nature something of a woman-hater, I [Henchard] have found it no hardship to keep mostly at a distance from the sex” (Hardy, *The Mayor* 61). Though Farfrae is not as indifferent to women as Henchard, it has been aptly
observed by Robert Langbaum that “sex does not interfere with his other faculties” (126). There is no sexual undertone in Henchard’s relation with Elizabeth-Jane as he feels a paternal love for her which, in the final stage of its development, marks his “unmanning,” his acquisition of feminine qualities and his confrontation with “the arid limits of patriarchal power” (Showalter, “The Unmanning” 396). Be that as it may, in the cultural construction of Victorian manliness, one has to subjugate sexual passion before attaining financial success and Henchard, a successful businessman, represents the core ideology of Victorian manliness as he, in the initial phase of his career, decides to live in a fortress of romantic male individualism thinking that close contact with women can extinguish the masculine self. In the Victorian sexual imaginary, masturbation was condemned because it disrupted the logic of masculine self-control and the focus was rather on the need to retain semen and to expend it only in a “productive” manner. The male subject was discursively constructed as a preexisting and a globalizing subject whose universal validity was established as an embodiment of self-control and rationality rather than as mindless part of the “social machinery” and whose duty was to separate himself from women representing frailty, moral weakness, and sexual pollution (Shuttleworth 55). Henchard’s mindset can also be explained in the light of Freud’s observation that to a man the whole existence of a woman can become a taboo while he interprets sexual intercourse in terms of its effect of “causing flaccidity” (On Sexuality 268) in men and, therefore finds himself “afraid of being weakened by the woman, infected with her femininity and of then showing himself incapable” (On Sexuality 267). In the first chapter of The Mayor the gossip in the tent also centers around the subject of the disastrous effects of early marriage on young men.

In negotiating this archetypal fear, men often decide to adopt a life of solitary confinement, a fixed life of “being-in-itself,” though they may fail to stick to this segregated
mode of living. Henchard’s self-sufficiency and integrity in a masculine subject-position, for instance, face challenges when he gets ill and sexually succumbs to Lucetta. The problem with Henchard is that in his solipsistic consciousness \(^5\) “everything comes about from within” which does not allow the development of what Levinas calls language because language comes to the self from the other and reverberates in consciousness by putting the self in question (Levinas 204). In fact, the archetype of the “self-made” man in mid-Victorian ideology who is expected to exploit his internal resources for gaining requisite self-control involves the ideological erasure of female agency and therefore it violates the “idea of infinity” which, according to Levinas, designates “an interior being that is capable of a relation with the exterior” and is capable of “containing more than it can draw from itself” (Levinas 180). In this context it would be worthwhile to mention Marcel’s observation that intimacy with one’s own self and the habit of concentrating on this own self can make one feel “opaque” and “non-permeable” and one way of putting an end to this self-obsession is to “submerge” oneself in the life of another person and “see things through his eyes,” which Henchard fails to do (Creative 51). On the other hand, he talks about the extinction of the feminine other: “... I don’t see why men who have got wives and don’t want ’em, shouldn’t get rid of ’em as these gipsy fellows do their old horses ...” (Hardy, The Mayor 9).

Henchard’s relation with Farfrae which Elaine Showalter calls a “homosocial friendship” and “an insistent male bonding” may be interpreted as another way of negotiating with his own romantic male individualism, which does not allow him to respect female sexuality; neither does it exhaust his innate tendency to possess and annihilate the other (“The Unmanning” 399). Elizabeth-Jane is surprised to note “a rugged strength” (Hardy, The Mayor 75) in their relation but she also discovers in Henchard’s feeling for Farfrae a “tigerish affection” which actually
refers to Henchard’s tendency to ignore the separateness of the other and which is similarly perceived in Henchard’s relationship with the women around him (Hardy, *The Mayor* 71). It is owing to his deep-seated anxiety about female sexuality that Henchard wants to ensure complete possession of the women he meets which may be regarded as another cryptic manifestation of his male individualism. H. M. Daleski’s argument that the need for filling an “inner void” (Daleski 428) has a crucial function in the “psychology of sex” (Daleski 428) in Hardy’s characters in general can be illustrated with reference to Henchard who moves in “exasperated desire” from one woman to another—to Susan, Elizabeth-Jane and Lucetta (Miller, “A Nightmare” 380). Confronting an “emotional void” caused by Susan’s death and the alienation from Farfrae, Henchard tells Elizabeth-Jane that he is her father but does not tell her anything about the wife sale (Hardy, *The Mayor* 113). But after getting the news that Elizabeth-Jane is actually the daughter of Richard Newson, Henchard starts behaving with her in a cold and constrained manner. When Newson returns, Henchard falsely tells him that Elizabeth-Jane has died with the hope that he and Elizabeth-Jane can be father and daughter again. Incited by “the lack proper to need” and “the memory of a lost good” (Levinas 62) Henchard, a childless man, tries to use Lucetta to cope with his own frustration but in all these events and encounters what the readers perceive is that Henchard, unlike a hospitable self, places himself at the centre of things and instead of making room for the other in his own self he tries to make others a means to his ends and thus inevitably fails to “receive” the other: “. . . to receive is not to fill up a void with an alien presence but to make the other person participate in a certain plentitude” (Marcel, *Creative* 28). And in doing so, like any other ego-driven individuals, Henchard fails to realize that it is absolutely no use indulging in secret calculations for determining the structure of one’s relation with the other.
When Henchard threatens to let Farfrae know that he had an intimate relation with Lucetta and thus wreck their agreement of marriage, he fails to understand that freedom can be “manifested” only “outside totality” and it is the “transcendence of the Other” that accounts for the genuine freedom of the self (Levinas 225). Lucetta’s argument that she should have the right to choose her lover, however, has no impact on Henchard who remains “hot-tempered and stern” (Hardy, *The Mayor* 135). Angel’s possessiveness, too, does not escape the readers’ attention as he seeks to “secure” the “rustic innocence” (Hardy, *Tess* 234) of Tess through entering the mysterious depth of her “ever-varying pupils” (Hardy, *Tess* 172) and transforming the pink-cheeked rustic maidenhood overnight with a few months’ travel and reading; but, in all these projects, what is not taken into account is the subjectivity of the feminine other. Angel wrongly thinks that his intention alone will determine the structure of his relation with the other and thus fails to achieve what Marcel calls “unbelonging,” a state of mind in which the self does not belong to itself and feels that he is “absolutely not autonomous” (*Being* 135).

As Henchard is embarrassed to find Farfrae looking at Lucetta in *The Mayor*, Oak and Boldwood in *Far* get enormously frustrated because both of them want to possess Bathsheba but cannot protect her from the masculine charms of Troy. One of the ironies of possession is that it can be “contested or disputed” (Marcel, *Creative* 39). When Mark Clark makes a gallant comment on the cherry lips of Bathsheba Oak gets angry and when he sees Troy leaning from Bathsheba’s window, he turns pale and looks “like a corpse” (Hardy, *Far* 183). Oak refuses to accept Bathsheba’s claim that Troy goes to church and asks her not to trust the latter for, as a possessive subject, he is afraid to find his object vulnerable to changes and fails to understand that, conditioned by “indeterminateness” as the “essential datum for the consciousness” he, along with his objects, exist in time and are “required to live in the non-resolvable” (Marcel,
Preoccupied with his own thoughts, Oak considers himself a sovereign self and thinks that what he possesses is external to him or “independent of” him and in that sense, disposable (Marcel, *Being* 155). However in his analysis of having-as-possession, Marcel shows that the stronger the emphasis placed on possession, the more difficult it becomes for the subject to rely on this externality. As a result, the subject is horrified to find the object vulnerable to the process of change, chance and transformation. Oak refuses to accept the process of change because it involves the possibility of Bathsheba’s proximity with Troy and in that sense it certainly dismantles Oak’s position as a possessive subject belonging to what Marcel identifies as the realm of problem.

When Oak as the subject accuses Troy of ill-will, he has to ask himself whether the soldier’s attitude suggests this to him or is simply because of the fact that he is opposed to Oak’s own will to persuade and subjugate Bathsheba. Even when Oak claims to prove to Bathsheba that the latter’s doubts are mistaken, he has to acknowledge that he is trying to exercise his will to power over the other. Here Oak behaves irresponsibly without having any awareness of what Levinas calls the unlimited and asymmetrical nature of the subject’s obligation to the other: the subject has no right to ask of the other what the other asks of him. Bathsheba becomes so irritated with Oak’s intervention in her life that she once asks him to leave her alone. In order to teach Bathsheba how to sharpen the shears at the grindstone, Oak “for a peculiarly long time” encloses her two hands “completely in his own” which is a gesture of absolute possession resisted by the woman (Hardy, *Far* 104). Instead of disappearing “in the full exercise” of an unconditional love Oak reinforces his presence as a possessive self whose only project is to control Bathsheba and occupy her (Marcel, *Being* 152). This is exactly contrary to what Levinas considers as the ideal structure of interpersonal relationship in which instead of functioning as
the subject’s alter ego, the other person appears as transcendent with respect to the subject and the subject as learner not only observes what the other offers as teacher but also receives what “it [the subject] cannot derive it from itself” (Levinas 204).

Thus Boldwood, as a possessive masculine subject similarly condemns Bathsheba for being “[d]azzled by brass and scarlet” (Hardy, *Far* 160) and blames Troy for stealing Bathsheba’s “dear heart away with his unfathomable lies” (Hardy, *Far* 161). When Troy shows Boldwood a notice in the newspaper of his marriage to Bathsheba Boldwood calls him a “black hound” and like “an unhappy Shade in the Mournful Fields by Acheron” Boldwood is seen walking about the hills of Weatherbury all night (Hardy, *Far* 182). When Troy reappears in a party to pull Bathsheba toward him and the latter refuses to go, Boldwood kills Troy as he finds that as a consequence of the rival’s entry, everything is “fixed in the direction of a new object” leading to a “decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization” Boldwood is “simultaneously effecting” (Sartre 279). Thus sexual jealousy as an ultimate expression of possessiveness plays a crucial role in the psychology of Bathsheba’s male admirers who objectify her in terms to each other. Thus, viewed from the perspective of each of the male admirers, there is not only a subject and an object but a third presence too, i.e. the presence of the rival. The rival’s position mostly occupied by Boldwood and Troy is extremely important within the system. In this context one can refer to what René Girard (1923- ) says in his analysis of desire and violence:

Rivalry does not arise because of the fortuitous convergence of two desires on a single object; rather, *the subject desires the object because the rival desires it*. In desiring an object the rival alerts the subject to the desirability of the object. The rival, then, serves as a model for the subject, not only in regard to such secondary
matters as style and opinions but also, and more essentially, in regard to desires. 

(154-55)

The question of rivalry is no less important in Tess in which Alec, an embodiment of aggressive sensuality, regards the gentlemanly self-control of Angel as inferior and antithetical to his own form of masculinity and the long-delayed consummation of Angel’s marriage with Tess takes place only after Alec is murdered. Angel’s masculine ego is satisfied only when he finds Alec murdered as it ensures the uninterrupted control of his gaze on Tess. Richard Nemesvari aptly remarks:

. . . both Alec d’Urberville and Angel Clare find their self-conception of masculinity endangered by their desire for Tess. This danger increases when each becomes aware of the other’s existence as a rival, because it forces them to confront the precarious status of the masculine identity they have constructed. Their destruction of Tess is a direct result of their attempt to stabilise that identity, and in so doing defeat the rival who embodies an alternative vision of self which they cannot accept. (88)

The probability that the presence of a rival enhances the desirability of women as objects of possession implies that the women are then used only as an excuse for the establishment and reinforcement of the male ego and in that satisfaction of the male subject’s need the world “loses its alterity” and implies that “the forces that were in the other become my forces, become me” (Levinas 129). Wildeve is jealous after learning about the forthcoming marriage of Clym and Eustacia: “Wildeve forgot the loss of the money at the sight of his lost love, whose preciousness in his eyes was increasing in geometrical progression with each new incident that reminded him of their hopeless division” (Hardy, The Return 185, emphasis added). In such an approach
Eustacia is merely an image, which the masculine subjects construct and manipulate in order to preserve their erotic ideal instead of accepting her as an autonomous and distinct centre of subjectivity. It is only death that resolves the tension between Eustacia’s demands for self-regulation as a subject and the erotic objectification society creates for her. According to Levinas, this image-formation which does not recognize the multiple dimensions of the object’s personality, plays a crucial role in this desire for possession that “suspends, postpones the unforeseeable future of the element—its independence, its being” (158).

According to Sartre, it is difficult for the subject to see himself as an object because the “Me-as-object-for-myself” is a “degraded consciousness” (297). The object is something that is not the subject’s consciousness since the only existence which has for the subject the characteristics of consciousness is the consciousness which is only that of the subject’s own. Thus, from the very outset, an object is a degraded entity. Since women as objects lack the penis, which provides a speaking position for the male child and acts as a signifier of phallic power in patriarchal society, they also lack access to the symbolic order that structures language and meaning. Men try to offer language embedded with misogynistic assumptions and they expect that women will describe their emotion and feelings in that language. Their language, therefore, does not allow a diversity of voices which, according to Levinas, should mark a discourse. When Boldwood asks Bathsheba, “Do you like me, or do you respect me?” it creates an either-or situation, thereby offering a restrictive freedom for Bathsheba who rightly rejects both options: “I don’t know—at least, I cannot tell you. It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs” (Hardy, Far 270). This particular situation is reminiscent of Butler’s observation that women cannot assume the position of the speaking subject within the “linguistic system of compulsory heterosexuality” and thus discourse
becomes oppressive when to speak within the system is to be deprived of the possibility of speech (Butler 157). It is a “performative contradiction” because to speak in such a context means “the linguistic assertion of a self that cannot ‘be’ within the language that asserts it” (Butler 158).

Women are forced to occupy positions of degraded subordinates in several other ways by the male characters in Hardy’s novels. In her moments of crisis, Tess, for instance, hardly gets any support from her family, the “moral foundation of the social system of domination” (Marcuse 97). Her mother rebukes her for telling Angel the truth and takes the news of their separation as she would have the news of a crop failure, something merely to be endured. Similarly, Tess’s father is only worried that such a fate has befallen “Sir John,” the descendent of the d’ Urbervilles, and has no concern for the feelings of his daughter. Tess’s feminine pleading, moreover has no impact on Angel who, “[w]ithin the remote depths of his constitution” contains “a hard, logical deposit” though he reconsiders his position after getting an assurance from a masculine source, the unnamed stranger he encounters in Brazil (Hardy, Tess 237). Troy whose father was a noble man and who himself is a military officer certainly represents English patriarchy in paying no serious attention to what Bathsheba says because he considers cowardice as an essential trait of women (Hardy, Far 145). Thus he identifies the feminine other as an unchangeable and fixed identity and therefore remains indifferent to the fact that as an individual Bathsheba can offer a new experience free from the burden of the past. Even in the material situations of daily life, Troy remains indifferent to the arguments of Bathsheba. During their wedding celebration, for instance, Troy ignores Bathsheba’s plea that the men not be given brandy and hot water as they are not used to it. Further, Troy invests money which he has taken from Bathsheba in the horse races at Budmouth and looses more than one hundred dollars in a
single month and what is worse, is not attentive to his own inadequacy as a subject and is not therefore conscious of what Levinas describes as the unlimited and asymmetrical nature of the self’s obligation to the other in which the self has no right to dismiss the other as Troy does here. The narrator observes that Troy is “moderately truthful towards men” but lies “like a Cretan” to women (Hardy, *Far* 131). It is mainly because of his ability to be articulate that he tends to “be one thing and seem another” (Hardy, *Far* 132). He believes that women can be treated in only two ways: with flattery and swearing. And that is why he flirts with Bathsheba, promising her his father’s gold watch. For men like Troy, women are nothing but disposable commodities, evident in his treatment of a trusting and affectionate woman like Fanny Brown who is seduced by Troy and finally dies in childbirth. In spite of the difference in their class position the readers are made to realize that both Bathsheba and Fanny Brown are victims of the predatory Troy.

The degradation of women is also found in the way connections are formed between the degenerated city and female sexuality. Caught in a fictional struggle between village life, endowed with a precivilized innocence and the experience of living in a city, involving the moral corruption of industrial, urban culture, Clym, in spite of his exposure to city life, hates it as a space of cultural decline. Sander L. Gilman’s observation linking sexual corruption and the degraded city life explains Clym’s motivation for living in a village:

The city becomes the icon of ‘modern life’ and the locus of degenerate sexuality. The Rousseauan idea that ‘idyllic’ life is contaminated by social institutions lasts through the nineteenth century and directs the fear of revolt to one specific locus of ‘modern life,’ the city. The city, as opposed to the image of the garden, is, . . . represented as the breeding ground of perverse and unnatural sexuality. (120)
Clym’s reformist tendencies are in tune with the patriarchal system that adores docile women devoted to a less exciting rural mode of life and denigrates assertive women whose unruly sexual force, connected with a degenerate city life, can have devastating effect on a man’s life. Naturally, a tension develops between Clym’s meditative serenity in a self-imposed exile and Eustacia’s ever-increasing desire to visit the city of Paris. Similarly, Arabella’s moral corruption is also hinted at when placed in an urban public space, she is required to mix with strangers and particularly when Jude notices her tidying her hair and lighting a customer’s cigarette in a pub. Jude is extremely shocked to hear that Arabella spent some time serving in the taproom in a public house as he morally disapproves the idea of women working outside their homes and advises Sue to attend to the family instead of seeking jobs. Jude even objects to Arabella’s false hair, as his notion of ideal womanhood implies the image of a rustic, innocent girl. Arabella, however, describes her three months’ work in the pub as her finishing school and she values it more than the experience of “staying where I [she] was born” (Hardy, Jude 51).

The kind of sexual attraction Jude feels for Arabella is, ironically linked also with a sense of repulsion manifested in the frequent reference to Arabella’s connection with unclean animals like pigs degrading her as the sexual object. Women are related to the abject as their menstrual blood and their bodies in general are reminiscent of the state before the ego abhors the abject. In the medical discourse of the nineteenth century women’s bodies were seen as containers of polluted blood. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) Julia Kristeva analyses how in Western culture the functioning of repulsion consolidates the act of instituting the other as a degraded entity through expulsion. Kristeva also interestingly observes that women who remind one of the abject are culturally connected with fascination and ecstasy for that same link with the abject which is evident in the narrator’s observation that, at the time of reading the New
Testament, Jude is drawn towards Arabella as if “a compelling arm of extraordinary muscular power” was driving him “towards the embrace of a woman for whom he had no respect . . .” (Hardy, Jude 37).

The degradation of women reaches its zenith when men treat women as commodity, which they can own and disown at their own will. Henchard publicly sells his wife for five guineas, which is an expression of the husband’s absolute power over his wife and such wife-selling was a practice that continued through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century among poor people. Importantly enough, the child, who has been sold with the wife, is female. Henchard sells them because “‘to have’ is ‘to have power to’, since it is clearly in a sense ‘to have the disposal of’” (Marcel, Being 150). Henchard takes Susan back like a piece of material goods enclosing five guineas in a note he sends her; similarly the letter of apology to Lucetta whom he had promised to marry is attached with a substantial cheque. Thus through money he buys back and buys off a mistress. Moreover, his new-found knowledge that Lucetta has become a wealthy lady gives “a charm to her image which it might not otherwise have acquired” and makes her all the more attractive to him: “He was getting on towards the dead level of middle age, when material things increasingly possess the mind” (Hardy, The Mayor 114).

In The Return, Eustacia’s life, devastated by the blindness of Clym and his stubborn refusal to leave Egdon, exposes how the institution of marriage is embedded with the values of patriarchal misogyny and the social marginalization of women. Living in an insulated space, Clym seems to refuse the fact that the other is not only the one whom he sees but also the one who sees him (Sartre 252). He does not consider Eustacia an “honest wife” and a “noble woman” (Hardy, The Return 256) and wrongly accuses Eustacia of infidelity and of murdering the mother-in-law who was absolutely hostile to her. What people and even the narrator describe as
the inexplicable nature of destiny causing Eustacia’s doom, can be traced to a complex web of power relations centering in the institution of marriage: “All persons of refinement have been scared away from me [Eustacia] since I sank into the mire of marriage” (Hardy, *The Return* 256).

The patriarchal order denigrates women by identifying the intellectual abilities of women like Elizabeth-Jane as symptomatic of morbidity and internal disorder. Elizabeth-Jane’s intellectual activity in *The Mayor* enhances this tendency one manifestation of which can be found in her philosophy of endurance that helps her to realize that “happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain” and enables her to marry Farfrae without demonstrating any enthusiasm (Hardy, *The Mayor* 252). Realizing that Farfrae loves Lucetta for her “blindness” (Hardy, *The Mayor* 162) as it confirms the self-validating truths of patriarchy about the naivety of women and that her own intellectual competence, on the other hand, makes her somewhat unacceptable to the men, Elizabeth-Jane compares Lucetta to a moon that has risen in the skies and describes ownself “as one of the ‘meamer beauties of the night’ ” (Hardy, *The Mayor* 136). The male characters in Hardy, instead of finding the irrational and the disorderly within themselves, try to locate it outside themselves, especially in the identity of the women like Eustacia, Arabella and Elizabeth-Jane. Thus they miss the opportunity of welcoming the other who “comes from on high” and in that preferred act of welcoming, Levinas argues, the freedom of the self is curtailed because as a consequence of the realization of its guilt the self rises to a sense of responsibility (203). Hardy’s masculine subjects, however, prefer to remain irresponsible as it strengthens their antagonistic relation with women, thereby allowing them to assert their own fictional self-sufficiency.
The women who signify absence, sexuality and the castration anxiety in the male imagination are not only turned into debased materials through cultural practices and social institutions but also “silenced” in the novelistic discourse in several ways. A woman’s death, which may be represented in a safe marriage or any other patriarchal mode of living often marks the end of the traditional realist narratives. Ambivalence towards a woman who has threatened the patriarchal order in several ways is an effective strategy to situate her in a space of indeterminacy, thereby negating her agency in the patriarchal system. Eustacia’s death is a case in point: the readers are not sure whether it is an accident or whether it can be seen as an act of defiance or an act of guilt-ridden self-destruction that is traditionally ascribed to the “fallen woman.” In spite of the narrator’s fetishistic obsession with the physical features of Tess and in spite of her presence as an object of “vision,” the basic realities of her life remain unknowable because, on some significant occasions, she “disappears” from view. At the moment of Prince’s death and at the time of her seduction by Alec, for instance, Tess is absent: either she is asleep or is in a reverie. The moment Angel sees “the red interior of her mouth” (Hardy, Tess 172) the narrator emphasizes the sleepy nature of Tess and again she slips away from the view when Alec finds her “sleeping soundly” (Hardy, Tess 77) after the seduction: “The obscurity was now so great that he could see absolutely nothing but a pale nebulousness at his feet, which represented the white muslin figure he had left upon the dead leaves. Everything else was blackness alike” (Hardy, Tess 76-77). Tess, who disrupts the ethical norms of Victorian society, is finally condemned to death and when she is hanged, the eyes of Angel and Liza-Lu are “riveted” on “a tall staff” fixed on the cornice of an octagonal tower from which a “black flag” is raised (Hardy, Tess 384). This exclusion is metaphoric because it implies that she is reduced to a sexual object
when she is seen from the perspective of the male onlookers and the voyeur-narrator and when her own assessment of situations is considered, she is reduced to a non-entity.

Death, which is often seen as an extreme state of passivity, can also be understood as a “feminine” state and femininity itself becomes “a form of death or non-being” (Barcan 118). Death is aligned with the negative terms in the hierarchical binaries sustaining phallogocentrism: nature, passivity, woman, and mother (Barcan 118). In the moments of erotic response, the self-awareness of Tess is cancelled in the narrative because the erotic response of a woman, which involves her body, is actually a moment of death, a moment of passivity and absence in patriarchal cultural formations. Further, it can also be observed that within the conventional representational systems of western culture women “constitute the fetish of representation” and in that sense they remain “unrepresentable” (Butler 25). This is because women are sometimes seen as not simply the negation or other of the masculine subjects but as beings fully excluded from the system as they are supposed to constitute “a difference from the economy of binary opposition” (Butler 25).

When Levinas argues that the self is not transcendent with regard to the other but, actually, the contrary, he means that the transcendence of the other accounts for the freedom of the self. The obligation of the self to the other is not only asymmetrical but also unlimited. Levinas uses the idea of “substitution” to refer to a process in which the subject or the self, already assigned to the other, takes the responsibility of the other. Quite contrary to this, what the readers find in Hardy’s novels is that the masculine subjects often sexually exploit the women but refuse to take responsibility of the sexual relation. When Henchard is restored to himself after the sex act he not only refuses to acknowledge his responsibility for his relation with Lucetta but also avoids the description of their physical acts because his main intention is to gain
credibility as a fundamentally detached and discarnate subject immune to the sexual imperative: “I won’t go into particulars of what our relations were” (Hardy, *The Mayor* 62). What is more, he calls Lucetta’s desire for him a “foolish liking” (Hardy, *The Mayor* 62). The cause of this intimacy, he says, can be found in their staying together in the same house and in her “warm” feelings (Hardy, *The Mayor* 62). He only admits that his “dreary state” which is a form of self-forgetting and therefore not a steady component of his self-sufficient masculine identity was responsible for the scandal that ruined the women (Hardy, *The Mayor* 62). It is important also to remember that he explains the act of selling his wife similarly ascribing the responsibility to his drunken state and to the “idiotic simplicity” of the woman (Hardy, *The Mayor* 15-16). When Henchard is sure that he has not heard of Susan for a long time, he gives Lucetta the proposal of marriage. But as soon as Susan returns, he takes the full advantage of the patriarchal set-up that sanctifies marriage as an institution in constructing an argument to avoid Lucetta: “My first duty is to Susan-- there’s no doubt about that” (Hardy, *The Mayor* 62). Interestingly enough, what Lucetta writes in a letter of reply suggests that as a consequence of the internalization of the patriarchal norms she judges the situation in terms of a virtue-vice binary and exempts Henchard from the charge of treachery: “I thus look upon the whole as a misfortune of mine, and not a fault of yours” (Hardy, *The Mayor* 90).

The narrator in *Jude* draws the readers’ attention to Jude’s absorption in his academic project to argue that Jude passes through puberty and the accompanying physiological changes without noticing the power of female sexuality. This construction of Jude as a disincarnate subject in the initial phase of his career enables the narrator to manufacture the logic for the denigration of Arabella as he holds her responsible for the disruption of Jude’s academic plans. Though initially, Jude eagerly participates in the sexual relation with Arabella it is projected as
“mere sportiveness on his part” and he is carefully represented as naive in sexual matters (Hardy, Jude 36). Though Jude cannot ignore the sexual charms of Arabella, he cannot accept the proposition of living with her because it clashes with his middle-class morality, his social ambition to rise above his class and his “so-called elevated intentions” (Hardy, Jude 37). To avoid this difficulty, he makes a compromise: he marries Arabella but “in the secret center of his brain” he believes that “Arabella was not worth a great deal as a specimen of woman kind” (Hardy, Jude 48) and as a result of such deliberate image-formation in which the other is “uprooted and taken to bits, or at least in process of being taken to bits” (Marcel, Being 107) Arabella is reduced merely to Jude’s idea of her: an “idea of her was the thing of most consequence, not Arabella herself . . .” (Hardy, Jude 48). When Jude blames Arabella for seducing a gentleman like him and wants to prove that it was because of Arabella’s manipulations that he could not control himself, he seems to forget that he became involved for the fun, enjoyed the sexual encounter and even felt uniquely inspired during those moments: “What were his books to him? what were his intentions, hitherto adhered to so strictly, as to not wasting a single minute of time day by day? ‘Wasting!’ It depended on your point of view to define that: he was just living for the first time: not wasting life. It was better to love a woman than to be a graduate, or a parson; ay, or a pope!” (Hardy, Jude 41). Marcel designates this state as the realm of primary reflection in which the knowing subject seeks to project himself as alienated from the concrete experience of the living body because it helps him to protect his ethical safety while objectifying the woman as the degraded other. The way Jude uses Arabella’s image to form his own identity as a gentleman exposes the arbitrariness of his freedom and his inevitable dependence on the other. Yet, unfortunately Arabella internalizes the patriarchal values considering herself responsible for the sexual act: “Every woman has a right to do such as
that. The risk is hers” (Hardy, Jude 56). Though Jude agrees to Arabella’s proposal that they take the train to Aldbrickhan and spend the night together, he subtly shifts the responsibility onto Arabella. In spite of spending a night of sexual pleasure with Arabella, when Arabella informs him of her marriage in Australia Jude gets angry and assumes a morally superior stance to find that Arabella had not mentioned this before they spent the night together. But he is actually relieved to learn of Arabella’s “secrets” as it enables him to avoid the feeling of guilt about his sexual encounter with the debased woman (Hardy, Jude 147). It also allows him in future to force Sue into believing that while making love to Arabella, he had not a full knowledge of the situation.

The life of enjoyment, as that of Jude (though he is, like Henchard, wretched at his death) is the essence of the drive to sameness, which, as Levinas observes, is an egocentric experience in which the subject takes precedence over the various objects around him and learns to manipulate and control them to his advantage as an individual. Jude desperately tries to get maximum advantage from his relation with the women he meets but whenever he finds himself in a problem he does not hesitate to put the blame on the others. In this context it would not be irrelevant to remember that Jude, who is dissatisfied with his relation to Arabella and is agonized to assume that Phillotson and Sue could make a successful marriage, spends the night at a tavern drinking and falling-in with various customers including two ladies of doubtful reputation. Kevin White analyses the nature of Victorian morality to serve as an explanation of Jude’s moral location:

The choices for Victorian males had been clear. A man of ‘character,’ a Christian Gentleman, controlled his sexuality both publicly and privately. If he could not control his sexual drives, he might visit a prostitute, but such behavior was only
tolerated; it was never respectable. He must never admit it for fear that he might lose his ‘character’. . . . And as late as the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the Victorian system of morality remained intact, despite the stresses on it. (316)

The domesticated middle-class femininity was defined in opposition to the perils of unregulated female sexuality and therefore the stability of the Victorian household, it has been argued, was ironically dependent on the existence of prostitutes. Delineation of the prostitutes in painting increased and reached its peak in the 1850s and 1860s and what the Westminster Review noted in 1868 testifies to the theory of the strange correlation of prostitution and marriage: “Prostitution is as inseparable from our present marriage customs as the shadow from the substance. They are two sides of the same shield” (qtd. in Chadwick 188-89). There is also an implication that since “the cult of the purity of the young women” of the bourgeois class made them “inaccessible,” the “romantic idealization of the wife made prostitution even more necessary” (Corbin 132). In connection with that, Freud, while discussing the behavior of men in love in the civilized world, points out that the idea of getting complete sexual pleasure is based on the assumption that it is possible when men can “devote” themselves “unreservedly” to the task and this is something which they are unable to do with their “well-brought-up” wives and respectable women (On Sexuality 250). They need debased sexual objects 9 who are “ethically inferior” and who do not know and judge them in their “other social relations” (Freud, On Sexuality 250). Freud’s observation may enable the readers understand not only Jude’s purpose of visiting the prostitutes but also his longing for a culturally “debased sexual object” like Arabella “to whom, psychologically, the possibility of complete satisfaction is linked” (On Sexuality 251). Ironically, Arabella whom Jude considers absolutely untrustworthy does not tell Jude lies as Sue does
though Jude finds Sue constant and reliable and even dismisses her contradictions as merely “one lovely conundrum” (Hardy, Jude 109). There is a formation of two distinct categories of women: on the one hand there is the “coarse” and sensual Arabella whom Jude can desire without any hesitation but with whom, because of his moral grooming, he cannot have a full adult relation and, on the other hand there is the “ethereal” Sue with whom he forms a neurotic and anxious relationship, and whom he admires, idealizes and simultaneously desires in more complex ways. His construction of “pure” love as different from sexual requirement is a narcissistic wish-fulfilment as he projects his ideal of an absolutely worthy existence upon Sue. This is how he, in spite of his complex erotic craving for Sue, creates a barrier between Sue and Arabella as if they belong to two opposite poles.

However in order to position Jude as innocent and vulnerable the narrator is also forced to identify even the “angelic” woman like Sue as a source of uncertainty and terror which to a certain extent problematizes the binarism of Sue and Arabella. Jude feels that Sue is treating him cruelly, though he “could not quite say in what way,” notes the discrepancy between Sue’s verbal assurances and her letters and is also worried to find that Sue gives all of her lovers the same exclusive photograph (Hardy, Jude 119). The narrator’s sympathy for Jude is evident when it is admitted that, under Sue’s influence Jude develops the habit of “attaching more meaning to Sue’s impulsive note than it really was intended to bear” (Hardy, Jude 124). Jude’s remark “O, do anything with me, Sue—kill me . . . Only don’t hate me and despise me like all the rest of the world” is also indicative of the misogynistic intention of the narrator to project Jude as vulnerable to the enigmatic presence of women (Hardy, Jude 100). Thus the role of Jude as an active agent of the patriarchal order is deflected and the readers are motivated to feel that it is Jude who needs moral protection as he is in the company of manipulative women like Sue and
Arabella. The readers’ attention is diverted from the subtle ways in which Jude, far from being “involved in the act of hospitality,” continues exploiting the women and defending his position (Marcel, Creative 91). The construction of an angelic stature for Sue can also be interpreted as Jude’s strategy to sexually possess her. It should not be forgotten that Jude platonically lives with Sue but uses Arabella’s return as an excuse to force Sue into a sexual relationship: “I do love you, Sue, though I have danced attendance on you so long for such poor returns!” (Hardy, Jude 209). Jude’s strategies can be explained in the light of Buber’s observation that in its attempt to determine the other through calculations and guesswork the subject starts relating to “It” and not to the “Thou” 11. Jude’s relation with these two women is “permeated by means” (Buber, The Martin Buber Reader 184) and instead of indulging in a surrender before the unknown, which Buber defines as an ideal approach to the other, Jude tries to remain outside the relationships as his sole intention is to withhold and protect a part of his self from the feminine other which is, for Buber, an essential trait of the “I-It” mode of relation: “The basic word I-It can never be spoken with one’s whole being” (The Martin Buber Reader 181). Placing the women at the centre of his fantasy, Jude constitutes a discarnate and non-attached masculine self through the binarization of women. When the woman is characterized as either virgin or vamp she becomes an object of fantasy and the absolute otherness of the woman, as argued by Rose, serves to secure for the man “his own self-knowledge” (76). Butler extends this argument implying that there is only one sex which is masculine and which “elaborates itself in and through the production of the ‘Other’ . . .” (25). Women are falsely represented in a “closed phallogocentric signifying economy” as they are not granted a space of linguistic presence or alterity but are made to reflect the “masculine mainstays” of the system (Butler 13). While enjoying the authority of classifying the women, Jude projects his own divided psyche onto Arabella and Sue
and constructs a necessary precondition for the reinforcement of his own masculine identity. For he feels that he can define the nature of the other’s participation in a relation and can also monitor its response, which is, nevertheless, a misconception: “Of the complete relational event we know . . . our going out to the relation, our part of the way. The other part only comes upon us, we do not know it; it comes upon us in the meeting. . . . it is not our object . . .” (Buber, The Writings 56).

The masculine subject is afraid to think that just as the woman is a “probable object” for him, there is a possibility that he can also discover himself “in the process of becoming a probable object” in relation to a certain subject-position occupied by a woman (Sartre 280). And it is to conceal or annihilate the threat women pose as castrated or fearful beings and as potential subjects, that the masculine subject ensures the objectification of the other. That is why in patriarchal social formations characterized by a deep-seated fear of the feminine other the easiest way the other can reveal herself to the masculine subject is “by appearing as an object” to his knowledge (Sartre 255). In a study of the history of Western painting, Berger shows how the passive, sexualized images of women are produced to satisfy the requirement of the “ideal” spectator who is assumed to be male. Berger’s central argument is that there is a complex visual regime in which the European nude tradition is a key component and which constructs women as spectacle, even to themselves. Mulvey’s theorization in Visual and Other Pleasures (1989) has provoked debate as to whether there is any possibility for female desire unfettered by the cultural representation of women as objects of desire. There is no denying that the feminine other, regulated by the political and linguistic structures of patriarchy, are often constituted and reproduced according to the requirements of those structures. And one of the most striking ways
in which the patriarchal order represents women as passive objects of desire is through a sustained focus on a discursively constructed notion of physical beauty.

Adopting the paradigm of thinghood rather than selfhood the narrator in Hardy’s novels gets obsessed with the physical beauty of women like Tess and Eustacia and when the latter internalize the patriarchal habit of viewing themselves either as beautiful or as ugly it leads to the suppression of their potential as they cannot get the opportunity to define themselves in other terms or by other categories like personal or professional achievement. Thus the beautiful female body attains the passive qualities of an object reflecting the subjectivity of the possessor. In this context, one may also refer to Otto Weininger’s argument that the beauty of woman is a projection, an emanation of the requirements of man’s love and, “to realize one’s ideal in a woman” man pays no attention to the object’s own nature which results in “a necessary destruction of the empirical personality of the woman” (qtd. in Zizek 140). The complexity of Eustacia’s characterization basically comes from a tension that exists between her dual roles: her function as a beautiful erotic object and her emergence as a subject with her own desires which can be threatening for patriarchal hegemony. A patriarchal cultural formation which attempts to destroy Eustacia’s freedom when she is alive does not forget to interpret her as a beautiful, lifeless art-object after her death, thereby transforming the woman into a static and almost an aestheticised image in “an artistically happy background” as her black hair surrounds her brow “like a forest,” and “[t]he expression of her finely carved mouth was pleasant, as if a sense of dignity had just compelled her to leave off speaking” (Hardy, The Return 293).

Representing “the feminine” within a language that “conflates the female and the sexual” is another discursive practice through which women are reduced to their status as sexual objects (Butler xxxii). For Jude, therefore, Arabella’s only significance lies in her function as a sex-pot
who is described as “a complete and substantial female animal,” with “a round and prominent bosom, full lips, perfect teeth, and the rich complexion of a Cochin hen’s egg” (Hardy, Jude 33). Though Jude claims that Arabella is “not worth a great deal as a specimen of woman kind” (Hardy, Jude 48) his gaze is evidently sensual as it moves from “her eyes to her mouth, thence to her bosom, and to her full round naked arms, wet, mottled with the chill of the water, and firm as marble” (Hardy, Jude 35). All these confirm the apprehension that the “erotic attractiveness” provides the justification of a woman’s “opportunity for happiness” and once it disappears, the woman is “suddenly deprived of her femininity” in society (Beauvoir 587).

Though it is difficult to know for certain what actually happens in the Chase because of the indirectness employed as a strategy in the novelistic discourse and though Tess later tells Alec that “[m]y eyes were dazed by you for a little . . .” (Hardy, Tess 83) implying her own complicity in the event, this section of Tess clearly defines Tess as a sexual object who, connected with sculpted artifacts and other objects of nature, remains a passive creature and whose “pure” body is disfigured by Alec’s fingers as they sink “into her” (Hardy, Tess 76) while the symbols of masculine strength like “the primeval yews and oaks,” the “roosting birds” and the “hopping rabbits and hares” surround Tess in the end of the first phase of the novel, thereby reinforcing a hierarchically predefined position of subordination for her (Hardy, Tess 77). What is more, as sexual objects, women are insecure and vulnerable evident, for instance, in the way Tess finds her exposed to the dangers of male-dominated world after Angel’s departure. She even writes Angel a letter begging him to come back to her. An element of coercion may also be found in the sexual encounter of Alec and Tess as he has financial control on Tess’s family.

One of the numerous other ways in which women in Hardy’s novels are reduced to passive objects can be demonstrated with reference to their positioning against a backdrop of
nature that tends to raise two fundamental questions: whether humanity is part of nature and whether women are part of humanity. The consideration of humans as superior to the beasts and plants in Western civilization has disconnected the human world from the world of nature. The rise of science in the West has widened the gulf between nature and humanity and the relationship has become a relationship of conflict and domination. In the patriarchal culture of the Western civilization women are not only considered essentially different from men but also as lesser than men who, therefore, like nature, deserve to be dominated by men. It has been observed that human beings were included in the realm of nature which was seen as a nourishing mother, a source of life for the early-sixteenth-century Europeans and the relation was that of harmony and cooperation. But, with the scientific revolution in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, nature gradually lost its value as a benevolent force and became a purely material domain to be conquered through the masculine exploration of science and technology. The metaphor, often used to define this relation of domination, is the metaphor of “rape” or “seduction”: the active male investigator should rape the passive female nature to get hold of it (Mooney 284). Significantly, when Alec rapes Tess she is depicted as almost a part of nature. Anthony Pagden holds that the distinctive feature of European thought can be found in this attitude to nature in which it is considered a potentiality waiting for man’s intellectual and technological intervention through which it can achieve its completeness. In European thought, according to Pagden, there is a belief that “to transform nature . . . is a crucial part of what it is to be a man” (qtd. in Barcan 154; ellipsis in orig.). So, when Tess is identified with the sphere of nature she becomes a passive creature, requiring masculine intervention: “. . . reason and mind are associated with masculinity and agency, while the body and nature are considered to be the mute facticity of the feminine, awaiting signification from an opposing masculine subject”
(Butler 50). Tess’s link with nature not only de-eroticizes her but also legitimizes the male aspiration to control her bodily existence and sexuality.

The middle-class Victorian women’s love for animals and the involvement of women in the animal rights movement which was a culturally significant phenomenon can be cited as another important aspect to demonstrate the nature of the subordination of women in Victorian society. The relationship of women and animals marked by tender feelings in the Victorian era had a specific context. During the nineteenth century, the new medical science of gynecology submitted women to the horrifying processes of early gynecological practice. There was “medical interference in the regulation of the female uterine economy” the extreme form of which was in “surgical excision” (Shuttleworth 56). As a consequence, many women came to be identified with the misery of abused and vivisected animals. By 1900 a large number of women supported the antivivisection movements. Similarities between the situation of women and the situation of animals drew much attention with the publication of Anna Sewell’s (1820-1878) novel Black Beauty (1877). Under the veil of the autobiography of a horse, Black Beauty was actually a feminist tract referring to the misery of a working animal which was at the mercy of the owners and a piece of property, like a wife. There are several references in Hardy’s novels to the loving relation between horses and middle-class women. Tess’s profound love for the animal is suggested when Tess feels a tremendous sense of guilt after the old horse, Prince is killed by the mail cart in an accident. The identification of women with horses has many other implications in the Victorian imagination: horses were frequently used to spread the value of docility among workers and assertive women. In the Victorian pornography, to control the women attempts were made to reduce them to animals and they were saddled and whipped into submission. Whipping as a gesture is associated with masculine supremacy even in Hardy’s
novels. In gynecological practice, quite similarly, women were strapped to tables and their feet were placed in footrests called “stirrups.” Horses and women were thereby subjected to the norms of male control. The death of Prince and the horse ride followed by the seduction of Tess in Hardy’s novel, in this context, suggest the torture and brutality faced by women as subordinates. The connection between animals and women, however, is not always based on the logic of subordination: it can also offer challenges to patriarchy. The sheer delight of Bathsheba on horseback obviously reveals her close bonding with the animal but more than that, her transgressive posture that stimulates a voyeur’s delight is also suggestive of her uninhibited feeling of pleasure and a reversal that could have caused anxiety for the patriarchal order.

The sexual objectification of women often involves the exercise of male violence as a device of control which is manifested in the several images of taming and in the use of instruments like spurs, sword and gun which dominate the Troy-Bathsheba relationship in *Far*. Bathsheba finds herself sexually excited as she watches Oak shearing a frightened ewe. Similarly, Troy holds the reins and whip and lightly lashes the horse’s ears. These surrogates for the physical punishment of Bathsheba and whipping, in particular, carry fetishistic connotations and convey sexual messages (Lucie-Smith, *Erotica* 198).

The use of violence as a technique of domination is also perceived in the exhibition of Troy’s extraordinary skill in swordsmanship which situates Bathsheba in the place of a submissive sexual object. The sword is an obvious metaphor of the penis while Troy raises it into the sunlight “like a living thing,” demonstrates the right and left “thrusts” of the instrument, repeats the “thrusts” and asks “Have ’em again?” (Hardy, *Far* 143). The “tightly closed” lips of Troy testifying to his “sustained effort” and their physical proximity enhance the sexual implication of the swordplay (Hardy, *Far* 145). Bathsheba can feel the “point and blade” of the
sword moving quickly with a gleam towards her left side and then she finds them on her right
seeming to come out from “between her ribs, having apparently passed through her body”
(Hardy, Far 144). When Bathsheba asks whether the sword is very sharp, Troy replies that the
sword “stand[s] as still as a statue” (Hardy, Far 144). Troy, all the while, urges her to remain
unperturbed, even suggesting that he cannot “perform” if she is afraid (Hardy, Far 144). The
sexual implication of the swordplay is evident when she cries out: “Have you run me through? –
no, you have not!” (Hardy, Far 144). Bathsheba feels the overwhelming impact of male
sexuality when she finds herself “enclosed in a firmament of light, and of sharp hisses” produced
by the sword like the Foucauldian centers of power (Hardy, Far 144). It is only when Troy’s
“movements lapsed slower” that Bathsheba is able to identify the movements of the sword and
finally the hissing of the sword ceases to almost suggest Troy’s exhaustion as an after-effect of
this implicitly sexual encounter (Hardy, Far 145). There are other visual and auditory elements
in that scene which have sexual associations. With “long, luxuriant rays,” the sun, a symbol of
masculine power and sexual potency appears like a “bristling ball of gold” and brightens up the
“tips of the ferns” and their “feathery arms” which caress Bathsheba (Hardy, Far 142). In
Hardy’s writings, rustling is a sound that has erotic overtones. When Bathsheba first meets Troy
there is a “rustle of footsteps” (Hardy, Far 126). Here also the “rustling” among the ferns
anticipates her erotic encounter with Troy (Hardy, Far 143).

Troy’s swordplay can also be interpreted as a clear instance of sadism as it was defined
by Richard Von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902):

Sadism is the experience of sexual pleasurable sensations (including orgasm)
produced by acts of cruelty, bodily punishment afflicted on one’s own person or
when witnessed in others, be they animals or human beings. It may also consist of
an innate desire to humiliate, hurt, wound or even destroy others in order thereby to create sexual pleasure in one’s self. (162)

What Krafft-Ebing says about the possessive nature of male sexuality can also be mentioned in the analysis of the psychological location of Troy during the swordplay:

In the intercourse of the sexes, the active or aggressive role belongs to man; woman remains passive, defensive. It affords man great pleasure to win a woman, to conquer her. . . . This aggressive character, however, under pathological conditions may likewise be excessively developed, and express itself in an impulse to subdue absolutely the object of desire, even to destroy or kill it. (163)

Troy’s desire to dominate the feminine other requires the application of only a part of one’s being since the surrender of the whole being which Buber considers as the most valuable way to approach the other fundamentally negates the idea of dominance and power-play: “An action of the whole being must approach passivity, for it does away with all partial actions and thus with any sense of action, which always depends on limited exertions” (The Martin Buber Reader 184). Troy is far from being in a state of passivity which is a consequence of the “action of the whole being” and instead he depends on “partial actions” manifested in the swordplay (Buber, The Martin Buber Reader 184). All “partial actions” are aimed at the protection of the ego of the subject and the suppression of the other (Buber, The Martin Buber Reader 184). Seen in this light, Troy’s swordplay may be interpreted as a case of dominance where “subservience” is used for the purpose of “sexual arousal” as “[f]orced submission” is considered a “key erotic element,” especially in “[s]adomasochistic behavior” (Levay, and Baldwin 497). During the swordplay Bathsheba feels that she is being ravished by Troy’s incredible strength and there comes a moment when she closes her eyes and feels she is being killed by Troy. When the
woman pleads fear, Troy finds it “[w]onderful in a woman” (Hardy, Far 145). Troy’s swordplay depends on the prevailing cultural homology between the penis as a weapon and women’s fear of the actualization of this homology of rape. Troy deliberately generates violence that is inextricably related to the cultural stereotype of aggressive male sexuality and it would be relevant here to include Girard’s observation that sexual excitement and violent impulses manifest similarly as in the easy shift from violence to sexuality and vice versa the “discernible bodily reactions” are mostly “identical” (37).

There are suggestions in the text that during the swordplay Bathsheba finds herself sexually aroused and follows Troy’s directions with pleasure: “Bathsheba’s adventurous spirit was beginning to find some grains of relish in these highly novel proceedings” (Hardy, Far 144). The narrator cleverly sidelines the subversive implication of Bathsheba’s feeling of pleasure and instead considers this as a trait of the women in general to manufacture a consent for the physical and psychological humiliation of women in the patriarchal order: “The facility with which even the most timid women sometimes acquire a relish for the dreadful when that is amalgamated with a little triumph, is marvelous” (Hardy, Far 125). The narrator’s observation that a “woman may be treated with a bitterness which is sweet to her, and with a rudeness which is not offensive” actually legitimizes the use of force and violence against women in order to ensure an absolute domination that finds a concrete expression in Troy’s symbolic swordplay (Hardy, Far 106).

The swordplay also involves a ritual nudity where the penis is not literally exposed but there is an exaggerated use of phallic imagery. Troy’s whole body, not only the actual penis or its symbolic counterpart, upholds and celebrates the authority of the phallic principle of paternal power during the swordplay. It has been argued that in theatrical performance the “performer’s
voice” can be as important as the “content” of his speech in influencing the audience’s “perceptions of how naked a performer is” (Barcan 21). Troy’s voice, the sound the sword produces and most importantly his gestures and movement constitute a particular context that creates the phallic implications of the swordplay as an exhibitionistic performance. Freud’s analysis of exhibitionism is relevant in a discussion of Hardy’s novels in which exhibitionism is closely linked up with the voyeuristic impulse: “Every active perversion is thus accompanied by its passive counterpart: anyone who is an exhibitionist in his unconscious is at the same time a voyeur; in anyone who suffers from the consequences of repressed sadistic impulses there is sure to be another determinant of his symptoms which has its source in masochistic inclinations” (On Sexuality 74). The “club-walking” girls in Tess take part in “their first exhibition of themselves” (19) and the Clare brothers are “on-lookers” (21) at “the spectacle of . . . girls dancing . . .” (22). Though it is supposed to be a secret performance, Bathsheba exhibits her image to herself and obviously to voyeurs like Oak and the readers while looking at a mirror. As a horse rider too, she unknowingly displays her body to the male gaze. Troy who demonstrates his potential as a voyeur on several occasions in Far indulges in an exhibitionistic ritual during the swordplay. Troy’s physical strength, powerful rhetoric and sexual aggressiveness reinforce the penetrating quality of his gaze as he is facing Bathsheba and his eyes ceaselessly measure the “breadth and outline” of her form during the swordplay (Hardy, Far 145).

In many erotic prints of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries such “situations and devices” are noticeable which, as argued by Edward Lucie-Smith, make the point that “exhibitionistic and voyeuristic impulses are closely connected” (Erotica 107). As observed by Berger in an analysis of the erotic in Western painting, looking is an activity primarily directed towards as extraneous object and the woman is not naked “as she is” but “as the spectator sees
her” (44). Similarly, Troy’s gaze creates the nakedness of Bathsheba as a sexual object who, during the swordplay, feels shame and pleasure at the same time as she, in spite of being properly dressed, becomes conscious of her own nakedness as a consequence of her feeling of being exposed to the male gaze. And in this stage, the sight of the victim’s reaction provokes the subject’s erotic pleasure. The scopophilic instinct of the masculine subject may also be turned towards a part of the subject’s own body as he gradually becomes aware of the fact that he can also be seen. Thus a new aim is gained for the masculine subject too: the aim of being looked at. In the next stage a new emphasis is placed on someone to whom the subject displays himself in order to be looked at by him/her. Therefore, as an exhibitionist, Troy must also feel that he is being seen in order to gain a secure sense of self and, to fulfil that need, he puts so much effort in turning the movements of his sword into a powerful visual experience for Bathsheba. Troy objectifies Bathsheba because, deep inside, as Sartre’s analysis reveals, the subject is afraid of being objectified by the other. That sense of fear and insecurity is suggested in his insistence on ritualized violence and on his need to be seen as an exhibitionist. According to Marcel, the first step required for making one’s self available to others is to realize that the self’s body makes him vulnerable to the contingencies and needs of life. Troy’s inability to admit the fragility and vulnerability of the male sexual organ and therefore the inherent emptiness of his exhibitionistic performance renders him an unavailable self especially to Bathsheba as the other. The unashamed nature of Troy revealed both in the full force of his gaze in a face-to-face encounter with Bathsheba and the way he eulogizes her indicates his ignorance of the “arbitrary” and unstable nature of his freedom as a subject (Levinas 84).

With his sword, Troy cuts off Bathsheba’s lock of hair and then appreciates her as she has not flinched “a shade’s thickness” (Hardy, Far 145). He twists the lock round his fingers and
keeps it as a fetish. It would not be irrelevant to point out that one of the most important elements in the tradition of erotic art is not the stripped body itself, but the accoutrements that accompany the body and almost any object of clothing can become the “object of fetishistic fascination” (Lucie-Smith, Erotica 198). Thus, in the erotic dream of Eustacia, the emphasis is less on the individuality of the man from the Paris than on his attire, helmet and other objects that are associated with his outward appearance.

Freud defines the concept of fetish as a primarily male condition where a nonsexual body-part or an object becomes the exclusive or significant source of sexual arousal. According to Freud, because of the fear of his own castration a boy not only attempts to suppress the fact that the mother has no penis but also tries hard to find penis-surrogates in a woman that leads to the deployment of fetishism. In his analysis of fetishism, Karl Marx (1818-1883) notices that in the capitalist social formation certain characteristics are conferred on material objects and in that process an illusion of fetishism is generated which motivates the consumers to feel that those characteristics are inherent in those objects. An impression is given that the objects, which the labourers produce, begin to have a social life of their own. This is how, according to Marx, the reality of social labour is covered by a veil of the self-generated values of commodities in the capitalist society. The commodity relations appear as a relationship between the products, concealing the relationship between the producers. And when the objects get fetishized the workers are not only alienated from each other but even from the product of their labour. This is also what happens in the sexual fantasy of the voyeurs and the fetishists whose intense preoccupation with the particular body-parts of their beloved determines the structure of their belief, value and attitude to female sexuality. The attributes of the object’s body-parts achieve a unique dimension in the world of the fetishist’s imagination and become the bedrock of their
sexual fantasy. The fetishized body-parts are imagined to have some inherent characteristics which make them appear to be independent of the voyeur’s motive and alienated from the other body-parts or the personality of the object. Just as the commodities begin to dominate the producers rather than being dominated by them in the culture of commodity fetishism marking a capitalist society, the fetishized body-parts, acquiring a sense of autonomy, begin to govern the mental state of the voyeurs and this situation, to a certain extent, involves a masking of the role of the fetishist engaged with fantasy and voyeuristic activities. Boldwood’s case can be cited as an example of object fetishism whose wardrobe is full of objects with labels printed on them containing the name of his beloved or the lock of Bathsheba’s hair that Troy cuts off and keeps after the sword-exercise. As a lover Boldwood does not succeed in getting access to the “real” object of his desire and what widens the gulf between him and the feminine object is his decision to fix his attention on fetishes representing that object. The fetish also gives the subject the opportunity to fix the position of the other as an unchangeable identity. Through a fetish, the masculine subject transforms a woman into a sexual object and a commodity, which is clearly evident in the activities of Boldwood, Troy and the voyeur-narrator in Hardy’s novels. The narrator’s engagement with the different body parts of Tess which are treated as fragmented things can be cited as an instance of “partialism,” a fetishistic fixation on specific parts of the body (Levay, and Baldwin 493). When the narrator, in some particular moments, concentrates on the skin or the eyelids of Tess, she is reduced to a particular part of her body whose metonymic implications are both sensuous and mechanized: sensuous because the narrator is identified with the smell, colour and feeling of that particular part of the body and mechanized because he treats that part as a separate entity, independent of the woman’s overall appearance or existence.
Notes

1. The fact that Hardy deals with rural England precludes the implicitly “loose” country ethics which is suggested in his treatment of the yokels, the peasantry and the “common” girls who work in the dairy and the fields. This is an assumption which is prevalent about sexual ethics in rural England and is evident in popular culture and country festivities; an aspect of which is evident in Roman Polanski’s (1933-) *Tess*, filmed in 1979. Hardy is undoubtedly deterministic in the case of Tess who is singled out for moral censure and made to represent the notion of a “pure” woman: she is “chaste as a vestal” (*Tess* 166). Tess’s location as a victim of the Victorian moral hypocrisy constructs a sense of tragic inevitability. The almost teleological deployment of tragedy reinforces the patriarchal values in legitimizing the suffering of Tess as a matter of destiny and excluding her not only in the end but also in some other crucial moments in the narrative. To manufacture this logic of tragic inevitability, Hardy, however, draws a clear line of demarcation between Tess and the other girls: she is “mighty sensitive for a cottage girl” (*Tess* 58) who, apart from functioning as a sexual object, is “thoughtful to excess” (*Tess* 215) and is even capable of thinking of her own death with symbols of “reflectiveness passed into her face” (*Tess* 103). Her distinctive trait lies in her oscillation between the position of “a divinity who could confer bliss” and that of “a being who craved it” (*Hardy, Tess* 135). Unlike the other girls projected as stereotypes, Tess grows as an individual. She is not only “receptive” and “intelligent” (*Hardy, Tess* 166) but also “more finely formed” and “better educated” (*Hardy, Tess* 141). What is more striking is that she exploits her distinctive qualities to perform as an erotic object, feeling the need to “hold her own against the other women of the world” though she remains capable of both appropriating the male gaze and resisting the process of sexual objectification (*Hardy, Tess* 135). Her complex and ambiguous location as an individual,
therefore, enhances her value as an erotic object and also ironically endows her with the 
“timeless” qualities of a traditional tragic heroine which indirectly leads to a negation of the 
material specificity of gender-based exploitation in a patriarchal society. It has deterministic 
implication as it suggests that the root of Tess’s tragedy lies in the “depth” of her personality, not 
in the structural principles of the patriarchal social formation.

2. Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) may be mentioned as one such poet. Though her love poems are 
in general marked by the “lack of erotic detail” and contain “little of the passionate” (Griffith 
163), she had of course written poems in which there is an “orgiastic quality” transforming them 
into “something monstrous and almost obscene” (Griffith 173). Fear of male sexual intervention 
and a solipsistic mode of living haunted by sex fantasies mark those poems in which there are 
images suggestive of sexual intercourse. She had “so desperate a fear of all emotional 
involvements” (Griffith 155) that the “very idea of an intimate relationship . . . caused her to 
retreat” (Griffith 155-56). She was able to “suppress the responses that could disappoint and hurt 
her . . . if she expressed them without restraint” (Griffith 158). In letters sent to friends and 
relatives, Dickinson demonstrated remarkable self-restraint and even in the moments of personal 
revelations, the readers are made “doubtful of their meaning by the crabbed and highly guarded 
style in which they are couched” (Griffith 274-75). She used “concealment” as the means of 
negotiating with a hostile environment (Griffith 166). The conflict between self-restraint and 
self-expression marks Sue’s personality as well, though in a different way.

3. The discourse of the garden has a crucial role in the representation of love down the ages. In 
Renaissance literature gardens invite people to delight in the pleasures of the senses. 
Traditionally the garden is represented for the lovers as a place of retreat from the anxieties of 
the outside world. The traditional Renaissance interpretation of the garden as a paradise of
sensory delights is evident, for instance, in Christopher Marlowe’s (1564-1593) “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” in which the speaker invites the person he loves to indulge the senses of sight, touch and hearing:

And we will sit upon the rocks,

Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,

By shallow rivers, to whose falls

Melodious birds sing madrigals. (132, lines 5-8)

Though Andrew Marvell’s (1621-1678) poem “The Garden” seems to conform to this conventional Renaissance spirit, it finally represents the garden as a spiritual paradise, not a paradise of the senses. And it also relies on solitude, not on the idea of sharing with someone else the beauties of nature. The speaker’s desire to get rid of “passion’s heat” (247, line 25) in Marvell’s poem takes a definite shape in the climax of the poem: “Meanwhile the mind from pleasure less / Withdraws into its happiness” (248, lines 41-42). In spite of the overpowering impact of the fruits on the senses, the garden is represented in Marvell’s poem as symbolic of the contemplative life. In Tess, there is definitely an emphasis on the functioning of the sensory organs in the delineation of the encounter of human beings with nature which is evident in the connection between the passion experienced by Tess and Angel and the landscape in the Talbothays dairy where the flowers burst with pollen and swell with moist juices. But the way Tess is assimilated into nature or the way the material specificity of her identity is dissolved in nature is certainly indicative of a patriarchal strategy of transforming her into an abstraction and in that process, de-eroticizing her to a considerable extent.

In Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712-1778) critical framework of optimistic benevolism and antirational associationism, nature is considered to be innately good and sponsoring sentimental
feeling, which dominates in much of the eighteenth and to a certain extent, in the nineteenth century. Though the English Romantic poets are generally celebrated for their moments of incredible enthusiasm and vision in the treatment of physical nature, poets like Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) and John Keats (1795-1821) were at once passionate and uncertain about physical nature. Like the Victorians, they had the doubt whether men were merely capable of deriving meanings from nature as a meaningless and deterministic space. This dilemma arising out of this conflict between projection and perception was intensified and given a new dimension in the latter part of the nineteenth century which witnessed the effect of the Darwinian concept of nature as an indifferent and blind force. The spirit of the landscape in Hardy’s novels is often consonant with the mental state of the characters because the disposition of the seer seems to have an effect on what is seen and the narrators project their own ideals and observations while reacting to the landscape which is evident in what Hardy says in the preface to Jude about his attempts to “give shape and coherence to a series of seemings, or personal impressions” (5). The bleak landscape confronting Boldwood after his receipt of Bathsheba’s valentine, for instance, reflects his confusion. At the beginning of the Third Phase in Tess the nature is in tune with the hopes of Tess as she is starting a new life: the air is fragrant and the birds are hatching. And after the rejection by Angel, Tess finds herself in a landscape that is absolutely devoid of shelter: no trees grow in the lofty downland farm and there is an exposure to cruel icy rains of winter. But there are also moments when the narrator emphasizes the lack of reciprocity between human beings and the living natural environment, as the domain of organic life does not respond to the private sensibilities of characters: “Meanwhile the trees were just as green as before; the birds sang and
the sun shone as clearly now as ever. The familiar surroundings had not darkened because of her [Tess’s] grief, nor sickened because of her pain” (Hardy, *Tess* 96).

4. This is an interesting observation as it refers to Hardy’s attempt to understand the relationship between soul and body—something which takes it to metaphysics like the writings of the Scholastics and that of John Donne’s (1572-1631) poetry. In “The Ecstasy” Donne observes that the body and sex are the medium for the union of souls and implies that the soul cannot exist without body. The first part of the poem describes the conversation of the lover’s “soules” which have “gone out” of their bodies (Donne, 32, lines 15-16). In their ecstasy, they learn that the souls have been “mix[ed] again” by Love, which makes “both one” (Donne, 33, lines 35-36). Finally the lovers, it is said, must “turn” to their bodies (Donne, 34, line 69). Only through the material bodies the souls can “flow” into each other (Donne, 34, line 59). In some poems of *Songs and Sonnets* (1633) like “Love’s Growth” and “The Anniversarie,” the physical and the spiritual work together. In “The Canonization” sexual love offers an experience of transcendence. There are poems in which erotic experience is capable of fulfilling both spiritual and sexual aspirations. It is revolutionary as it opposes a long-standing Christian tradition that distrusts body and sexuality. However, it was not fully possible for Donne to negate the legacy of a Christian tradition that associated sexual love with sin. So far as the interrelationship of the body and the mind is concerned, Hardy’s main emphasis is, however, on the material foundation of emotional and mental processes. Tess is both body and the soul: sometimes her body dominates and sometimes the soul. In this part of the text, there is a fusion of the two. But there is also a dissociability of the two in her. Angel’s cracked music enables her to realize what her mind is and what it can be for her and she feels spiritually drawn to it. Her feeling that her soul is going out of her body gives the impression that when required, she can live in her soul. She also
responds to the flesh, while, for instance, Alec insists on feeding her strawberries in a sexually suggestive manner. Thus, the spirit and the flesh are sometimes fused, and sometimes dissociated. The polarization of Angel and Alec, which apparently develops in the text, is, however, dismantled as Angel faces serious challenges in sticking to his project of embodying Victorian cultural integrity.

5. Possessive individualism which emerged with the growth of commerce in the late Renaissance and into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the growth of trade and capitalism and Puritanism actually linked the unitary pursuit of wealth as a simultaneous denial of women and family. This solipsistic singleness was part of the Puritan ethic and capitalism.

6. The category “totality,” according to Levinas, summarizes the way in which the ego inhabits the world. In the realm of “totality” the self reduces the other to sameness of thought, the essence of which is the life of enjoyment. The self treats the other individuals as its own extensions or passive objects. In enjoyment the self is “[e]goist without reference to the Other” and is “like a hungry stomach” (Levinas 134).

According to Levinas, while facing the other who “comes from on high” the self becomes aware of his irresponsibility and the arbitrariness of his own position (203). But during this process the Other does not offer any counterattack to the self. The self, in its sense of guilt, rises to responsibility. The transcendence of the Other lies in the fact that “the Other” remains “irreducible to the representation of the Other, irreducible to an intention of thought . . .” (Levinas 204). The Other overflows every idea the self can have of him and “his [Other’s] freedom is a superiority that comes from his very transcendence” (Levinas 87). The “privilege of the Other” results from the “dimension of the height in which the Other is placed” and that is why the other is able to measure the self “with a gaze incomparable to the gaze” by which the
self discovers the other and tries to grasp him in a possessive manner (Levinas 86). The self experiences genuine freedom when, exposed to the transcendence of the other, it respects the other, receives his teaching in terms of concrete experience rather than through forming conceptual constructions and learns how to get rid of the egoistic drive.

7. An awareness of “indeterminateness,” according to Marcel, forces the self to “reckon together chances, probabilities, and risks” (Creative 112). In Marcel’s term, Oak belongs to the realm of problem and therefore he has a “centred” existence (Being 166). He thinks that he can interpret and manipulate a situation through the determination of an objectivizing reason. But this is a state of partial truth as it is explained by Marcel when he distinguishes mystery from problem. In the realm of problem, one’s experience and one’s system matter. But in the realm of mystery, which is a superior state, the subject is led beyond any “system for” him/her and rather finds himself/herself involved in a system that “includes” him/her (Marcel, Creative 69).

8. As Sartre observes, the subject in such situations fixes the people whom he sees into objects. But if the other observer sees those objects and sees him, the first subject’s look loses its power and he cannot transform those people into objects in the same way since they are already the objects of the other’s gaze (291). With Alec appropriating the gaze, Angel is no longer exclusively master of the situation which has so far allowed him to possess Tess as an object. Theoretically, Angel is no longer in sole control of the situation since now, after Alec’s entry, it is, at least partly also that of Alec. Or rather, as noted in the terms of Sartre, though Angel remains master of it, the situation has one “real dimension” which “escapes” him (289).

9. Freud observes: “A boy’s mother is the first object of his love, and she remains so too during the formation of his Oedipus complex and, in essence, all through his life” (New Introductory Lectures 151). Freud, however, also notes that “the continued denial of the desired body” may in
the end “lead the small lover to turn away from his hopeless longing” (On Sexuality 319). In the current context of the debasement in the sphere of love, Freud’s assumptions of the Oedipal fixities of male sexuality draws the readers’ attention to the way the child learns to “negotiate and resolve its ambivalent feelings towards its parents” (Homer 52). The act of negotiating with ambivalent feelings, though in a distinctly different manner, also marks the men’s behavior in the civilized world when they deal with debased sexual objects.

10. Defining the idea of hospitality, Marcel observes that “to receive is not to fill up a void with an alien presence but to make the other person participate in a certain plentitude” (Creative 28). Marcel incessantly talks about the need for making room for the other in one’s own self and also incorporating in own self the message of the other: “. . . to receive . . . is to open myself to, hence to give myself, rather than to undergo an external action” (Creative 91). According to him, instead of protecting himself from the other, what the subject needs to do is to expose himself to the other person which “makes him penetrable for me [the subject] at the same time as I [the subject] become[s] penetrable for him” (Creative 36). Marcel’s notion of hospitality is closely connected with the awareness of disposability which stimulates the subject to place his freedom in the hands of the other, thereby realizing his own freedom.

11. In the “I-It” mode of interpersonal relationship, the other person, caught in the causal chain of the material world, is reduced to an object. The subject, on the basis of classification, analysis and formalization, makes calculations about the response of the other and in this mode a defensive position is left to which the subject can retreat. In the “I-Thou” mode, on the contrary, the other is not viewed as a fixed entity and therefore the subject is not willing to rely on stereotyped assumptions about the other. The “I-Thou” mode is marked by the involvement of the whole being of the subject as the subject is not afraid of risks involved in full surrender.
12. Reification, commonly viewed as one of the aspects of alienation, refers to the act of “transforming human properties, relations and actions into properties, relations and actions of man-produced things which have become independent (and which are imagined as originally independent) of man and govern his life” (Petrović 463). Reification involves a form of objectification in which commodification is implicit as it also refers to the “transformation of human beings into thing-like beings which do not behave in a human way but according to the laws of the thing-world” (Petrović 463). Marx identifies reification as characteristic not only of the commodity, but also of money, profit, capital etc. as the fundamental categories of capitalist production.

13. Mulvey argues that the very “fetishistic attempt” (11) which is aimed at diverting the attention from the “sight of the female genitals” (10) is a technique of withdrawal: “The fetishist becomes fixated on an object in order to avoid knowledge, he has to abandon the desire to know the true nature of sexual difference in order to avoid castration anxiety. . . . It [the fetish] avoids the restless probing of curiosity to see what lies behind a mystery” (xi).