CHAPTER III

THOMAS HARDY

A. Introduction

In the Victorian age, literature came under the chastening influence of a predominantly prudish society which was essentially patriarchal in character. In spite of the fact that a woman was the queen, yet man was the omnipotent and supreme power everywhere, in society as also in the home. It was an age of virtuous stance and high moral values. Sex was the unmentionable subject and anything referred to it was considered as obscene. Woman was prisoner of sex or 'Lady of Shallot' who had to ordain her prison. If ever she wished for emancipation curse would be on her. This subjugated 'lady of shallot' of the Victorian age is beautifully brought out by Jennifer Gribble in her book The Lady of Shallot in the Victorian Novel published in 1983. She uses the poem as an allegory to reflect the feminine consciousness of the Victorian age in its relationship with society, and on the nature and rule of creative imagination. In Victorian literature and painting the enclosed lady is pictured again and again, sometimes at her window or her mirror or her embroidery but always locked in contemplation. It suggests the social position and rights of women. Women were regarded as the
property of man, their chastity was emblematic of property
being in tact. A slight deviation from the path of virtue
led to the curse of being called 'fallen women'. They had
to be ignorant about sex or even topics about sex, their
world was like the "mirrored camelot world". Obscenity if
proved was a matter to be dealt with by the courts. Women
were regarded as angels of purity, fleshless and sexless,
except for those fallen creatures who pandered for a price
to men's bestial desires. Venereal disease, never crudely
designated by its name, was the worst kept secret of the
age. There was also the possibility of prosecution under
the Obscene Publication Act (1857), but as a general rule
unofficial, private censorship worked efficiently enough to
enforce 'public morality'. The price of books was very
high, common people could not afford to buy them. They had
to depend mostly on libraries for their reading. Magazine
editors censored or 'bowlderized' the manuscripts if they
regarded some passages as risky for the public.

Marriage was the culminating point of a woman's life,
but with this she lost all her rights as a 'feme sole'. In
other words she remained no more an independent or a free
individual. By marriage man and woman were supposed to
become one, but as Barbara Bodichon and Caroline Norton
emphasized, she was only "treated as a minor and lost her
entire legal existence, and with it, any legal recourse
against her husband or anybody else." She was
economically impotent and had only a social, decorative and
child-bearing role to perform. Mrs. Norton had suffered
herself and demanded the need for reforms. The husband had the rights over the body and property of his wife. He could force her to live with him by sequestrating her. He could go to the extent of even beating her cruelly. In 1857, Matrimonial Causes Act gave a legally separated wife the right to keep what she earned. Divorce could be obtained by a private Act of Parliament which only the very rich could afford. A Mr. Rushworth or a Barnes Newcome could obtain a divorce without difficulty but it was out of question for an ordinary person like Stephen Blackpool in Hard Times. Childbirth was not only painful but also very dangerous sometimes resulting in death. In fact, the Bible commanded women to suffer. Women were regarded as masochistic creatures whose only lot was just to suffer pain. Contraception was practised. But women were supposed to be innocent about the mysteries of sex and contraception. Mill was jailed in 1823 for distributing pamphlets on birth control. There were some advanced women noticed by Grant Allen who did not want children. Separation could be obtained only in cases if husband's cruelty or adultery was proved which was a difficult matter for the poor wives. Again it was easy for man to ask for divorce because of his wife's adultery, but the wife had to prove adultery aggravated by desertion, cruelty, rape, or bestiality. Thus Grace is unable to get a divorce in spite of her husband's faithlessness in Woodlanders. Women were gradually awakened to a yearning for their individuality and selfhood. Hardy
presents this yearning in his women. He presents new and radical images about women. These changes came out of the feminist movement which by 1880 had a firm organisational basis in suffrage committees in all the major cities, and was rapidly becoming a large movement with some important achievements to its credit. The First Married Women's Property Act had been passed in 1870, and another more far-reaching one became law in 1882. This was the time when Hardy's Under the Greenwood Tree, A Pair of Blue Eyes, Far from the Madding Crowd and The Return of the Native were written.

There were many women novelists like Margaret Oliphant, Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, George Eliot, Susan Ferrier, Elizabeth Gaskell, Anne Bronte etc. But they did not have the same status as men writers, some of them like George Eliot and Currer Bell even adopted pseudonyms. There were women poets also Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti, philanthropists and social reformers — Elizabeth Fry, Mary Carpenter, Florence Nightingale, Josephine Butler and others travellers like Amelia B. *; scientists like Mary Somerville. Still they were thought to be the inferior sex. Charlotte Bronte who suffered and was accused for being unfeminine wrote to her critic G.H. Lewes, "I wish all reviewers believed 'Currer Bell' to be a man; they would be more just to him. You will, I know, keep measuring me by some standard of what you deem becoming to my sex; where I am not what you consider graceful you will condemn me——." Southey told
Charlotte "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be."

During the 1840s people concerned with the plight of single women began to talk seriously about training them for a career. Queens College was opened for girls in 1848 and in 1849 Bedford College came into existence. "in 1857 a group of feminists founded their own employment bureau which later on developed into the association for the Promotion of the employment of women". A girl was required to have good education in order to be a suitable companion for her husband and if single to earn her living. Frances Mary Buss (1827-94) founded the North London Collegiate School in 1850 and Dorothea Beale (1831-1906) became the principal of Cheltenhams Lady's College in 1858." There were many who supported the cause of women's education but they did not support the suffrage movement. Many girls left their homes to study and even to get jobs as teachers. After Mary Wollstonecraft's death the women question was discussed by Shelley who was married to her daughter. In The Revolt of Islam he asks "Can Man be free if woman be a slave?" Harriet Taylor wrote an article in the Westminster Review (1851) The Enfranchisement of Women. She wrote about the full equality between the sexes. The feminists had the influential backing of J.S.Mill, who in 1867 raised the question for votes for women for the first time in Parliament and wrote his The Subjection of Women (1869). Mill influenced Hardy tremendously and Sue Hardy's 'new
woman', quotes Mill when she leaves her husband Phillotson. Even the Queen herself did not agree with the feminists. In 1870 she wrote:

The queen is most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of women's rights, with all his attendant horrors, on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety ——. God created men and women different — then let them remain each in their own position ——.

Everyone living in the 19th century believed that men were the superior sex. Even women like Lynn Linton, and Margaret Oliphant criticised the women's movement. Ruskin transforms her into an angel in his Of Queens Gardens where he regards man as her guardian and she has to maintain peace in his home. He says:

so far as she rules, all must be right, or nothing is. She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise — wise not for self development, but for self renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband but that she may never fail from his side.

She had a duty towards her family and her home, if she failed in it she deserved no respect. Her husband would be to her what her father had been before marriage. In
fact, as an individual she had no identity. But the feminists stressed a wife's duty not to obey if her husband or father outraged her conscience. The range of morality was extremely narrow for women. Ruskin had made them prisoners of home. Any violation of chastity was pardonable for man, but any unchaste action was a sin for women for which they had to pay dearly. They were regarded as fallen women. In fact, the 18th century writers like Fielding and Jane Austen had been more sympathetic to women than the 19th century writers. The society was not ready to forgive women like Hetty, Ruth, Tess or Sue. Mill, Mrs. Gaskell, the Bronte sisters, George Eliot, Wells, Hardy and Zola were trying to revolt against this subjection of the Victorian women. They were suffering from moral masochism and hoped for the rainbow of emancipation to appear. The writers who tried to raise the question of their liberty were brutally criticised. "Groups like National Vigilance Association were formed. The most famous action brought by the NVA was the Vizetelly/Zola prosecution in 1888. Another important case was the Bradlaugh – Besant trial in 1877. Their offence was to publish a book on contraception". Havelock Ellis was prosecuted for his Sexual Inversion in 1898. Unwin refused to publish Edward Carpenter's Love's Coming of Age. Oscar Wilde had to face a trial in 1875.

Thus we find that chastity was the foundation of a woman's personality and its superstructure was made up of judicious arrangement of emotionalism, passivity and
dependence. Against such a background it was quite natural for women like Hetty, Ruth, Tess, or Sue to suffer. But by this time the feminist movement ushered by Mary Wollstonecraft in the 18th century had gained further strength although there were women anti-feminists like Mrs. Oliphant. The first Married Women's Property Act and another one in 1882 gave women economic independence. Women won the Local Franchise in 1882. Women's campaigning for liberty also broke down some of the absurd pretences and conventions about women's purity and sexual ignorance. The 'new woman' had emerged from the ashes of the suffering one and was fighting for her rights and equality with man. Like Ibsen's Nora women had started asking for their rights and were revolting against the double standard of morality where men could go scot-free and women were regarded as 'fallen women' and 'harlots'. Zola wrote frankly about sexual relations and wished women to rise above the moral inhibitions. Morality became a relative, not an absolute matter. Hardy and Gissing also felt the need to redefine morality. Freud was working in Vienna and experimenting on women patients. What women were gaining on political and economical fronts they were losing on psychological grounds. They were defined by Freud as the 'inferior sex' but this problem was left for the modern feminists to solve.

In the Victorian patriarchal society men were gods and women their worshippers. Their biological advantage enabled
the males to affirm their status as sole and sovereign subjects ever since the creation. Woman became the 'other' or the inferior. She was regarded as man's property only. The separated or deserted wife or the spinster could never have a high status in Victorian society. She was either known as her father's daughter or as her husband's wife. Only a man could raise her status. As an individual she had no status. As a wife in her husband's home she had to keep his house well, and adorn herself with good clothes to attract his attention. She had to be a total feminine narcissist always lost in glorifying her beauty and her ego centring round her and her home. Man was her master, the super power or the transcendent dictator who could rule as he liked. Tennyson's The Princess brings out his idea of male chauvinism. The hero wishes to marry Princess Ida, but is not prepared to marry an equal. She should be tamed into a docile but slightly above average housewife. Ida's demand for equality in education is symbolic of the women-question which was taking a revolutionary turn at that time. Tennyson changes the topic from learning to love and marriage. We find an interesting comment on the Victorian feeling that the female must relinquish sexuality if she is to be in any sense autonomous, and her chastity was to be a virtue in her.

Feminists or women fighting for their equal rights were called "blue stockings", "strong-minded", "wild women", or "the shrieking sisterhood". A common name used for them in 1890s was 'new woman'. Such new women were
described as hideous, semi-masculine, ready to grab male privileges. Parents were ashamed of such daughters. The Victorians considered them as neurotic characters. Gissing's Mrs. Wada in *Denzil Quarrier* (1892) is a hard, cold woman who wants the vote and destroys the sweet, feminine Lilian, who does not. Cecelia Cullen, in George Moore's *Drama in Muslin* (1886) hates men and marriage. But Meredith draws an attractive picture of an emancipated woman in his *Diana of the Crossways* (1885). The solution for such women was either to remain spinsters, or be punished as martyrs or to renounce the world, thus we have Rhoda Nunn, Maggie Tulliver, Tess, Sue or Hetty. By the 1890s there was an emphasis on self-fulfillment rather than on self-sacrifice or self-renunciation. Chastity was of course highly valued but there were the relative and the moral standards of judgement. Ruskin's prisoner of the home was seeking her fate away from it as a more independent individual, trying to run away from the yoke of patriarchy. The imprisoned lady of Shallot at last became 'sick of shadows' and looked away from the mirror to seek her individual self. This 'new lady' is to be found in Hardy's Tess, Sue and even Bathsheba.

Hardy had experienced the strong influence of his mother, Jemima Hardy, who made him read Mr. Cassell's *The Popular Educator*, Dryden's *Virgil* and Johnson's *Rasselas*. She saw to it that he learnt some French from the lady who taught his sister. Like Lawrence he was his
mother's son. Jemima came of the:

numerous family of the early widowed Elizabeth Swetman, herself a woman of unusual ability and judgement, who had married a poor man for love. Elizabeth Swetman toiled hard for her children and sought solace in books. She was through her books, an intellectual influence in the early life of her grandson.

In fact, she set the intellectual tone for the Hardy family. She knew the writings of Addison, Steele almost by heart, she had read Paradise Lost and The Pilgrim's Progress. Thus Hardy had been influenced by cerebral women like Elizabeth and Jemima, whom he presents in his novels also. Instincts of scholar were sown by his grandmother and mother and like Jude he wished to be a scholar instead of an architect. His heroines Ethelberta, Bathsheba, and Sue all show what are to the historians of 19th century England, familiar features of the 'girl of the period' even the 'new woman'. Hardy had been friendly with the famous beauties of his time, some of them were lady Powis, Lady Yarborough, Lady de Grey, the Duchess Montrose, Mrs. John Hanbury, Lady Cynthia Graham, Amelia Rives. Mrs. Florence Henniker a writer herself was his friend and confidante. He wrote to her "I have been thinking that the sort of friend one wants is a friend with whom mutual confessions can be made of weaknesses without fear of reproach or contempt".

He attended women writers' club - "probably its first anniversary meeting - and, knowing what women writers
mostly had to put up with". Lady Jeune also invited him quite often. She was an intellectual woman. He met Miss Ada Rehan, an actress who acted as the Shrew in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Miss Ada Rehan he thought was a genius as he wrote to Florence Henniker "Miss Ada Rehan - whom I really wish to meet - she is a genius, as you would have said if you had been present Tuesday night". He regarded Mrs. Henniker as "the most valued of my friends". His second wife Florence Emily was the author of numerous books for children, magazine articles and reviews. He treasured the acquaintance with Mrs. Anne Procter, the famous literary hostess whose memories went back to the age of Wordsworth and Keats. His association with women and the feminist movement of that time made him deal with his women characters sympathetically and unconventionally. They search for their identity and selfhood.

Hardy is a social critic who rejected Victorianism and its ideology of sexual restraint, inhibitions imposed on female stereotypes. John Lucas in his *The Literature of Change* published in 1977 says that Hardy's novels "are much concerned with the nature of change". This 'change' is found in the controlling factor of social life and is experienced in his early heroines who are burdened by social conventions and the later ones who try to revolt against the existing laws of society. Hardy, Carpenter, Wells and Forster tried to break down sexual taboos in literature and liberate the fallen women. They had been
victims of moral masochism in a male oriented society and Hardy tried to be their redeemer. He had to recast women in the novel emphasising more the psychological inner conflict and sexual feelings which had been denied to them in that age. He fights for their sexual rights gradually in his novels, till he tries to liberate them completely in Jude the Obscure. According to Hardy the sexual passion is the kernel of the will to live, then, why should women be denied the 'right to live' as individuals? He questioned the laws of marriage and believed that why should women be compelled to submit unconditionally to the sexual desires of their husbands when they do not love them? Women were placed on the high pedestal of chastity, morality and innocence. If they stepped down from that pedestal they were regarded as 'fallen women' unaccepted by the society and liable to be condemned and punished. He reinvented women in the novel, introducing the inner conflicts and the sexual feelings which had been denied to women in English fiction for nearly a century. Both Rosalind Miles and Kate Millett think that Hardy has been credited with the honour of giving birth to 'New woman' in his novels. The 19th century demanded very different sexual standards from women and men.

The cruelty of the Victorian age to 'fallen women' was obvious to most of the novelists. Men, in spite of seducing young girls remained respectable members of society. We find this in George Eliot's Adam Bede, Mrs. Gaskell's Ruth and Hardy's Tess. But Hardy and Mrs. Gaskell show that a
'fallen woman' could herself be strong and good. Sarah Grand (Frances McFall, 1854 - 1943) was a feminist whose novel *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) made her famous. Her heroines behave unconventionally and insist on doing what they feel is right. Sarah thought that if husband and wife relationship was based on equal terms there would be a better future. Hardy also tries to point to this male - female relationship. He felt it was very important to champion women because they were 'the weaker'. It was women who bore children, and who broke down to pieces if anything went wrong. He was interested in the 'women question' and therefore pleaded the case in his novels.

The Poor Man and the lady was a sweeping satire on the socialistic age. Hardy emerges a radical here since he had suffered because of his inferior class. It was evidently a sardonic treatment of the theme of class distinction and an exposure of the hollowness of good society. *Desperate Remedies* was a sensational novel. *The Athenaeum* spoke of it as 'a powerful novel' but *The Spectator* dismissed it in contemptuous terms 'for daring to suppose that an unmarried lady owning an estate could have an illegitimate child. Later on Horace Moule wrote a favourable review of the book in *The Saturday Review* but it was a bit too late. *Under the Greenwood Tree* or Rural Painting of the Dutch School rose out of personal experience. The novel was also called in the beginning *The Mellstock Quire*. Thomas Hardy Senior loved music - making and dance which we find in *Under the
Greenwood Tree. The Hardys jigged and fiddled, carried their fiddles danced and sang in the kitchen, and the parlour. They carried their fiddles and viols to church on Sundays. Little Thomas also had his fiddle. As he grew young he played at bridals and harvest suppers. Dancing was a passion with him. As the title implies the novel is an idyll; a holiday novel. It deals with Mellstock choir and Fancy Day a possible threat and danger to it and the older settled values of Dick Dewy, whom she eventually marries. It describes the romance of Dick Dewy and Fancy Day which follows its course through the four seasons of one Wessex year. Fancy confesses to Dick about her sin:

---- I have allowed myself to flirt! 'What, not flirt!' he said, controlling his emotions as it were by a sudden pressure inward from his surface. 'And you said only the day before yesterday that you haven't flirted in your life!'

'Yes, I did; and that was a wicked story! I have let another love me, and ----' 'Good God! not flirt!'

Well, I'll forgive you ----

As her judge he passes the judgement "He looked into Fancy's eyes. Misery of miseries! - guilt was written there still". Fancy and Dick get married, and he thinks that she is innocent and pure. It was just a 'little flirtation' with Shiner that he had forgiven her. They promise to have no secrets from each other. The novel ends with "O, 'tis the nightingale, 'murmured she, and thought
of a secret she would never tell". Fancy's promise conceals a deception. She has had other lovers — Farmer Maybold and Mr. Shiner. Dick's father approves of Fancy since he thinks that her father had been better in the world than them. If a wife has a higher position in society her husband naturally gets better status. With Fancy Dick would also move up socially. Dick is aware of her vanity and flirtatiousness, yet he aspires to her. This guilt, vanity, ambition are further intensified in Elfride, Bathsheba, Eustacia, Tess and Sue later on. The book ends not in the idyllic way but with an astringent irony when Dick tells his bride that the reason why they are happy is because 'there is such full confidence between us'. He says 'We'll have no secrets from each other darling will we ever? - no secret at all'. To this Fancy replies 'no secret at all'. As she says so she is thinking of Parson Maybold. But it is a secret she would never tell. In these words we find the germ of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and later of *Tess*.
B. A PAIR OF BLUE EYES

The favourable reception of *Under the Greenwood Tree* in 1871 strengthened Hardy's belief in his ability to transfer his efforts from architecture to novel writing. He started writing a story with a Cornish setting provisionally entitled *A Winning Tongue Had He*. He was able to show Emma a contract of $200 for this new story. It was renamed *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and began in a serial form in *Tinsley's Magazine*. The book embodies his excited discovery of the Cornish landscape and first ardour of 'being in love'. *A Pair of Blue Eyes* is the story of Stephen Smith, the young Adonis with bright curly hair who is an architect and the son of a mason. Elfride Swancourt, an immature girl of nineteen has blue eyes and corn-colored hair; she is fond of riding her mare Pansy. We meet her in the first chapter when she is waiting in the vicarage of Endelstow, a remote Parish on the Cornish coast, for an architect who is coming to make drawings for the restoration of the church. Her father, the vicar, is in bed, suffering from gout. The second chapter describes Stephen's drive from Launceton to the vicarage, where he is received by the blue-eyed young lady. After a meal he goes upstairs to see the vicar, and then Elfride plays and sings to him. The next day he inspects the church, and the vicar drives them to Pentagon and along the coast. Critics have found similarities between Hardy and Stephen, Elfride and Emma and Emma,
father and Elfride's father who is a bankrupt snob. The novel seems to be a fairly accurate account of Hardy's first two visits to St. Juliot, though Stephen and Elfride are ten years younger than he and Emma when they met; as Henry Knight is ten years younger than Horace Moule. Elfride has already jilted Felix Jethway; whose mother hates her. Stephen conceals his lowly parentage, the idea that had haunted Hardy so often. Smith, who describes himself as 'a rural builder's son' - seems to be an exact description of the author.

Hardy had a crushing sense of social inferiority. Like Hardy his hero wishes to make his way in the world in spite of the disadvantages of wealth, education and connections. Since he loves Elfride, the daughter of a snobbish clergyman, we have the theme of the poor man and the lady. Smith has been much influenced by Knight, an older man who writes for the reviews and has assisted him with his programme of self-education. Elfride has written The Court of King Arthur's Castle, A Romance of Lyonesse under the pseudonym Earnest Field. Knight has reviewed and criticised it. Knight meets her when he comes to stay with her step mother who is his relative. He treats her very badly, but she finds him irresistible and falls in love with him. She does not disclose to him that during her infatuation with Smith she had been engaged to him and even eloped with him, they had travelled by train from Devon to London. This reveals her social disadvantage as a woman who
is caught in the destructive web of social conventions and prejudices. Chastity of a woman is the primary thing in a successful marriage. When Knight comes to know about her past he leaves her. Here he anticipates Angel Clare who also wishes to marry a virgin and an inexperienced wife. What she likes in Knight is his manly force as Hardy writes: "Elfride, under Knight's kiss, had certainly been a very different woman from herself under Stephen's". Knight tells her: "I always meant to be the first comer in a woman's heart, fresh lips or none for me". Her freshness and newness were her primary charm. She "idolized him, and was proud to be his bond-servant". When Knight comes to know about her past affairs with Stephen she asks him "Will you not forgive me?" But men are sadists by nature and only wish to inflict pain on their sweethearts who step down from their ideal of perfection, so is the case with Knight who answers her "You must forget me, we shall not marry, Elfride". He advises her to marry Stephen and even to keep her affair with Knight a secret from him, since no man can marry a wife who has a sinful past.

Stephen simply adores Elfride and they even kiss each other while sitting on the grave of her former lover Felix Jethway. She tells him how he had died of consumption and his mother had blamed her for it. Mild and understanding as Stephen is still he has the ego of a man. When she talks about Felix, Stephen replies: "Let us go away, I don't like standing by him, even if you never loved him. He was before me." Both Stephen and Knight use woman as a piece
of property. Stephen wishes to rise higher in life through marrying Elfride who is a stage higher than him, when Stephen's mother comes to know that her son is going to marry Elfride she says:

I know men all move up a stage by marriage. Men of her class, that is marry squire's daughters; dukes marry queen's daughters. All stages of gentlemen make a stage higher; and the lowest stage of gentlewomen are left single or marry 26 out of their class.

Dick's father uses the same strategy in the case of Dick and Fancy. Knight refuses her since she is not a piece of property intact or absolutely pure. Women when married have to please their husbands by giving birth to sons, Hardy reveals Lady Luxellian who has two daughters and therefore had displeased her husband by not giving birth to a son "Lord Luxellian was dotingly fond of the children; rather indifferent towards his wife, since she had begun to show an inclination not to please him by giving a boy".

Sons, fathers, husbands all were godheads who subjugated women somehow or the other. When Stephen and Knight at the end read the coffin plate of Elfride, wife of Spenser Hugo Luxellian they are shocked that how she married Lord Luxellian. She had been denied to them both and Knight says that both of them should leave her alone since:

She is beyond our love, and let her be beyond our reproach. Since we don't know half the
reasons that made her do as she did, Stephen, how can we say, even now, that she was not pure and true in heart?

These lines are actually a complaint by Hardy for the downtrodden Victorian woman who is accused without any sound reasons, and the test of her purity is measured by those who hardly know her. She may be overpowered by circumstances but who considers that? The same question Hardy takes up further in Tess.

Elfride in A Pair of Blue Eyes is a genteel prototype of Tess as surely Knight is a spiritual cousin of Angel Clare. She jilts Felix Jethway and Stephen as Fancy flirts with Shiner and Maybold. But Knight is a hostile inquisitor and her pretences to hide her past fail under his pressure. She confides in him thinking he would forgive her. But he wants a woman to have a 'pure soul'. The confession is made but the love fades. The double standard of morality and the difference between man and woman is brought out by Hardy. As in the case of Tess, Elfride pays dearly for her sin. Fancy concealed the secret and remained happy but Elfride pays because of her honesty. Fancy and Elfride are not ordinary women. Fancy is well-versed in music and Elfride is a writer. Both are intellectuals but fall victims before man's power which society gives him. Elfride is identified with Emma, Hardy's first wife and Knight with Hardy. The novel came out when Hardy was courting Emma and eventually married her.
Hardy finished writing the story *Far From the Madding Crowd* in July 1874. On 17th September at St. Peter's Paddington, he and Emma were married by an uncle of Emma's, Canon Hamilton Gifford of Worcester who later became Archdeacon of London. It was published in serial form in the *Cornhill* magazine and a striking illustration was provided by "a woman, Miss Helen Paterson." "In the first week of January 1874 the story was noticed in a marked degree by the *Spectator*, and a guess was hazarded that it might be from the pen of George Eliot".

The author was highly flattered since he had always regarded George Eliot as a 'great thinker'. Like Fancy and Bathsheba Emma's father also considered that by marrying Hardy she was marrying beneath her. Hardy knew almost by heart works like John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and was rapidly emancipating himself from preoccupations with class and convention. He did not care for the disapproval of the Giffords and married Emma quietly. In his novels also he tries to overcome Victorian conventions and inhibitions. When Hardy was writing his novels (1871 onwards) it had become quite normal for women to work or study, and this is what his women generally do. They are teachers, writers, art designers, land workers and even servants. Bathsheba
surprises everyone by being an efficient farmer. Fancy is a school mistress and a singer, Elfride is a writer and Bathsheba is a farmer. In every novel he gives prominence to women. In the early novels, up to and including *Far from the Madding Crowd*, each heroine is contested for by three men. She is beautiful and careful of her appearance. To the choir and to Dick, Fancy seems to be 'waxwork - a spiritual vision'. When Dick discovers about Fancy's flirtation and vanity he thinks "she's not too good to be his wife". Elfride is also presented to us as a 'vision'. Like Fancy she has three lovers. Felix Jethway is already dead, Stephen Smith is the second one whom she deserts in preference of Knight. When Knight learns about her entanglement with Stephen he leaves her. She marries Lord Luxellian and dies. Both Stephen and Knight think that she has been beyond their love and so she should be beyond their reproach. How could they know whether she was 'pure' or 'not'. This was the conventional attitude of men towards women. The question of purity is taken up later by Hardy in *Tess*. *Far from the Madding Crowd* does not deal with the heroine's guilt or moral downfall although there are three lovers contesting for her love.

In Bathsheba, Hardy tries to portray a more independent and liberated heroine than Fancy or Elfride. We encounter a farmer woman who is proud and lonely in the world. She has no parents therefore she can have an independence of behaviour and action which is new among Hardy's women. She
saves Gabriel from suffocating in his hut. When he wishes to know her name she replies: "I would just as soon not tell it — rather not. There is no reason why I should, as you probably will never have much to do with me". Hardy says:

The only superiority in women that is tolerable to the rival sex is, as a rule, that of the unconscious kind; but a superiority which recognizes itself may sometimes please by suggesting possibilities of capture for the subordinated man.

Oak tries to follow her but she does not give in to him. Mrs. Hurst, her aunt tells Oak about Bathsheba "she's so good looking, and an excellent scholar besides — she was going to be a governess once, you know, only she was too wild". She is above the Victorian conventional woman who is just the prisoner of home.

Her observation about marriage and women is very modern when she tells Oak "I hate to be thought men's property in that way, though possibly I shall be had some day". Here is an echo of Hardy's feminist ideas dealing with the 'women question' — a hot issue of his age. He seems to sympathise with the suffering women of his age and deals with the problem of marriage and adultery. Bathsheba is a definite advance on Cytherea, Fancy and Elfride; she is even more assertive than Tess. In the beginning of the novel she tries to search for her true self. When Gabriel Oak meets her first time she is on a waggon where she takes
out a looking glass and studies her reflection. We see her here as a female narcissist. He thinks:

There was no necessity whatever for her looking in the glass. She did not adjust her hat, or pat her hair, or press a dimple into shape, or do one thing to signify that any such intention had been her motive in taking her glass. She simply observed herself as a fair product of Nature in the feminine kind, her thoughts seeming to glide into far-off through likely dramas in which men would play a part—vistas of probable triumphs—the smiles being of a phrase suggesting that hearts were imagined as lost or won.

This action of hers can be interpreted as vanity or as a mystery, her shallowness or coquettishness or "is she trying to recognize, account for herself"? She observes herself as a fair product of nature in other words she seems to be a female narcissist who is proud of being what she is. This search for individuality is the craving of Hardy's women.

Oak fascinated by her, tells her that he loves her and wants to marry her. She replies "You are better off than I. I have hardly a penny in the world—I am staying with my aunt for a bare substance. I am better educated than you—and I don't love you a bit." She is too independent and wants somebody who can tame her. Perhaps here she is the
ancestor of Ursula and in Lawrentian terms believes that man should overpower woman since he is the superior sex. She breaks free of Oak. As a girlish prank she sends a Valentine 'Marry Me' to Farmer Boldwood who is equal in status to her without pausing to think of the effect it would have on a 'melancholy man' like him. He assumes it to be seriously intended but she is not serious about him. The proud, independent Bathsheba is mastered and tamed by the romantic Troy who bewitches her by his silver-tongued flattery. She cannot resist his compliments and her vanity betrays her. It is the phallus power that subjugates her. His swordsmanship completely overpowers her. When he sheathes his sword in the scabbard he kisses her and she feels "like one who has sinned a great sin". She, a worshipper of Diana has fallen from her pedestal of purity. She who had craved for full-equal-relationship with Oak, or Boldwood falls a prey to Troy. She suffers from erotic masochism resulting from her sexual abandonment which is apparently unconventional. Even with Troy she cannot have a successful relationship. He has already seduced Fanny and is the typical privileged Victorian man who has no vows to offer at the altar of Diana. Her 'sin' can perhaps be best described as her abasement before a pleasure seeking man interested only in conquest. She surrenders to the gratification of being mastered.

Hardy portrays two girls Fanny and Bathsheba as a contrast and foil to each other. Fanny is a conventional
stylised version of the betrayed and forlorn 'maid of balladry'. Troy's seduction of Fanny Robin led to protests from "three respectable ladies and subscribers," and even a warning from the editor to the author (Leslie Stephen warned Hardy). Bathsheba even after her marriage looks down upon Troy and therefore he is incapable of loving her. As John Lucas says "it seems clear that she and Troy have no sexual life together". Troy threatens Bathsheba's well-being, her being the madam of the house, so we have the famous scene of drunkenness and he even starts gambling. Her vision of him is broken. In fact Hardy tries to show that for a successful relationship both man and woman should allow for the substantiality of each other's identity - a theme which is Lawrentian in its essence.

One day Troy asks Bathsheba to give him twenty pounds as he wishes to go out, she tries to stop him and pleads with him to stay at home and give up his other pleasures, "Do, Frank. Come let me fascinate you by all I can do - by pretty words and pretty looks, and everything I can think of - to stay at home. Say yes to your wife - say yes." He tells her that he does not want the money for racing debts. She questions him further saying that she has the right to ask. She says that their romance seems to have come to an end. He replies "All romances end at marriage. This is the common belief of Hardy which he elaborates in Jude the Obscure to a climax. She comes to know that Troy has preserved a curl of a woman's yellow hair. She suspiciously questions him. She had been proud of her chastity - that
her lips had not been stamped with a kiss by any man, that her waist had not been encircled by a lover's arms, she had looked down upon women who had previous affairs before marriage. She had adored goddess Diana. Her husband had betrayed her so badly it irked her heart. She hears of Fanny's death. Troy kisses the dead Fanny, she implores him to kiss her also. He refuses and looks at her in bewilderment and turns to Fanny's dead body and says "you are my very, very wife!" When Bathsheba asks about herself who she is, he answers "you're nothing to me — nothing — A ceremony before a priest doesn't make a marriage. I am not morally yours." The loud echoes of this we further find in Jude the Obscure. Treated so 'monstrously' by Troy Bathsheba feels totally shattered. She is a broken ivy who tries to cling first to Boldwood after hearing of Troy's death and then finally in the end to Oak. Like the typical conventional Victorian woman she bows before the circumstances prevalent in that age. But Hardy dives deep into the feelings of a woman who wishes to know herself, recognize herself, craves for her individual self, has her own narcissistic ego, but the age disallows her this freedom, she has to wait for the rainbow of emancipation to appear.
Throughout the late 1870s, the Hardys spent part of their time in Dorset and part in London. In 1876 they took a pretty cottage overlooking the Dorset Stour, at Sturminster Newton, where they lived in contentment for two years while Hardy wrote some verse and *The Return of the Native*. Hardy had shown the beginning of his novel to Leslie Stephen, who liked it, but feared that the relations between Eustacia, Wildeve and Thomasin might develop into something too dangerous for *The Cornhill* and would not consider it unless he could see the whole. So Hardy offered it to Chatto & Windus, who accepted it for their monthly magazine *Belgravia*, in which it was to appear throughout 1878.

The novel *The Return of the Native* was published by Messrs. Smith & Elder. *The Times* remark on the novel was "that the reader found himself taken farther from the madding Crowd than ever". Mrs. Procter's criticism in a letter was "Poor Eustacia. I fully understood her longing for the Beautiful". Anne Z. Mickelson puts Hardy's women into two groups - strong and the other timid. Susan, Thomasin, Elizabeth and Jane are timid ones while Eustacia, Tess, Mrs. Yeobright and Sue "are all vulnerable in one way or another. Their kind of vulnerability goes back to Bathsheba (FFMC) one of his most intelligent and independent
women." Fancy, Elfride and Bathsheba had been singers, writers and farmer women. But Eustacia is idle living on a heath, she nurtures the passionate ambition to go to Paris. His titles mostly are based or centred round women: A Poor Man and a Lady is the story of a lady and a poor man, A Pair of Blue Eyes has Elfride who has blue eyes, Far From the Madding Crowd has Bathsheba who goes far away from the 'madding crowd' to become a rich farmer woman, Tess is based on the character of Tess D'Urberville. Jude the Obscure may have a man as a hero but Sue is the 'new woman' who captivates our attention. Eustacia Vye is the witch-like queen of Egdon Heath in The Return of the Native.

In the extremely sensuous, voluptuous and passionate Egdon spells endurance for her, and she wishes to fly away from it. Her ambition and craving for freedom symbolises the feministic attitude of Hardy. She wishes not only to run away from her home, but from the entire Egdon Heath. She has undoubted intellect and ability, but her abilities turn inwards and become self-destructive in a society which has no use for them simply because she is a woman. Set in contrast to her is Thomasin Yeobright, very submissive, polite, modest and the typical Victorian conventional ideal woman who would have made a heaven of any man's home, described by Ruskin. She takes all the blames of Wildeve on herself. In fact, she is a Fanny Robin re-caste and Eustacia is the replacement of Bathsheba. In the chapter entitled Queen of Night Hardy describes
Eustacia:

Eustacia Vye was the raw material of a divinity. On Olympus she would have done well with a little preparation. She had the passion and instinct which makes a model goddess, that is those which make not quite a model woman.

The words "not quite a model woman", hint at the fact that Eustacia was not the conventional Ruskinian woman. She is a queen on the lonely heath and is ambitious to run away from her prison (Egdon Heath). The questions before her are how to be free? How to live? Who to live with? She thinks Clym who has come back from Paris can be her redeemer. Like Arabella she tries to entrap Clym who falls a prey to her seductiveness.

Clym calls her 'Olympian girl'. Her figure recalls "Artemis, Athena or Hera". She weaves her dreams as Lady of Shallot. But she is too ambitious and protests against the restrictions imposed on her. Her protest is symbolised in her bonfire, the brightest of all those pagan rituals renewed at the onset of winter. Her own essence is 'flame-like' quite Promethean in character. The 'fire' and 'flame' symbolise her passionate and sexual nature which completely overpowers Wildeve. She challenges society's definition of female normality. She craves for something higher, something that would liberate her to be her individual self. When she finds that Wildeve cannot satisfy her ambitious heights she turns to conquer Clym.
masquerades as the Turkish Knight in the Christmas mummers' play. She does this to "get excitement and shake off depression". We can see a hazy glimpse of schizophrenic complex in the subconscious mind of Eustacia who finds excitement in dressing up as a man. Perhaps here in the subconscious mind she is aware of her castrated powers as a woman. She wishes to be as liberated and as free as a man.

The story in the novel follows an intricate pattern, Diggory loves Thomasin, who marries Wildeve, who is loved by Eustacia, who nevertheless marries Clym Yeobright. "The pattern embodies disappointment, frustrated desires, infidelity, ambition and unrequited love". There are marriages but they signal fail to accommodate the existing love—relationships. Clym is the only son of a widowed mother. He returns from Paris where he had been engaged in some undefined branch of the diamond trade. During his absence his mother's only companion has been her orphaned niece, Thomasin, whom Mrs. Yeobright would like Clym to marry. But Thomasin loves Wildeve and Diggory Venn loves her. Mrs. Yeobright disapproves of both. She dislikes Eustacia also whom she considers to be too proud. Thomasin and Wildeve marry, Eustacia hopes for a gay Parisian life with Clym who renounces all that Paris symbolises. He wishes to settle in Egdon as a teacher of the underprivileged. He marries the sensational and volcanic Eustacia for whom Egdon is no more than a prison. Mrs. Yeobright disapproves of this marriage. Overpowered by her love for her son, one day she comes to their cottage but
goes back disappointed when Eustacia does not open the door. On her way back home absolutely broken hearted she dies. Once again Eustacia gives in to Wildeve and lights the bonfire symbolic of her flaming love for him and ultimately runs away with him. She stumbles in a whirlpool and is drowned. Wildeve dies while trying to save her. Thomasin marries Venn and Clym becomes an itinerant preacher.

Eustacia like the lady of Shallot is imprisoned in the Egdon heath. When she refuses to remain there as a prisoner, craves for a freer and more emancipated life the curse in the form of death comes over her. This was the fate of some of those women who tried to fight for their equal rights with men during the Victorian age. They suffered moral masochism, and erotic masochism. In fact, they could not look out of their bower of bliss like home, if they did they had to encounter the fate of lady of Shallot. Hardy presents the two contrasting women Thomasin the subjugated, submissive and Victorian woman who was like an angel in the home, and Eustacia the liberated, emancipated, unconventional woman who became the uncontrollable demon, spelling destruction for the home and for herself. In spite of trying to search for her true self she still has to look for support to man - thus Eustacia clings to Wildeve first, then to Clym and finally turns back to Wildeve again; committing an act of adultery which imposes punishment on her since she has violated the sanctity of marriage with
Clym. This theme he elaborates further in Tess and Jude the Obscure.

Patricia Stubbs brings out the contrast between the conventional Victorian woman Thomasin and the modern woman Eustacia who is over-ambitious, destructive, 'neurotic', passionate and "unable to adjust to Egdon Society." Thomasin is "practical, stable, the little woman in harmony with her world". She is the anticipated origin of Felice Charmond and Arabella. She wishes to enjoy life completely by going to Paris or failing that to Budmouth. Clym the idealistic hero wishes to educate the Egdon men into spiritual awareness. He idealizes Eustacia in the same way as he idealizes the Egdon labourers. He fails to see that she can never give up her worldly ambitions. He thinks that she would make a good teacher. Mrs. Yeobright criticises her as 'lazy and dissatisfied'. Eustacia revolts against her husband's plan to stay at Egdon. When she finds her ambitions failing she does not accept defeat easily. She refuses to live with a blind furze-cutter and runs away with Wildeve whom she hardly respects. She is an opportunist, a materialist and even selfish, her rebellion against Wildeve and Clym make her a 'modern woman' a feminist who was fighting against the environmental circumstances and the living norms of society. She suffers defeat and destruction because she is a woman, thinking of a future that may spell liberation and freedom. She anticipates Lawrence's Ursula who fulfils the ambitions of Brangwen women in The Rainbow.
Thomasin is a typical submissive Victorian woman who never questions and is content with her female role in a man-made world. She is satisfied with what she has, whereas Eustacia wants something more and refuses to accept the laws set by society. When she marries Clym she thinks that he is "like a man coming from heaven." Here she anticipates Lawrence's women (daughters of men) bowing before the 'sons of God'. But as a modern woman she does not cling to him when her dream of Paris is shattered, rather she turns to Wildeve, quite unaware of the sacred marriage vows. She is compared to the 'witch of Endor' and has 'Pagan eyes'. Her paganism points to Sue's Paganism and modernity even in appearance she rises above the normal Victorian woman. She is 'demon-like' and even compared to a 'goddess'. Her flaming desires make her revolt against the society. She is stupified by the narrow cage of her existence. Egdon was her Hades. She overpowers Wildeve and Clym by her bewitching sexuality and is aware of her superiority. When Clym refuses to go to Paris she is agonized by his social inferiority. Here we can compare her to Fancy, Elfride and Bathsheba who were troubled by thoughts of their lovers' social inferiority. Marriage spells destruction for Eustacia and not security. Irving Howe and Albert Guerard have emphasized that it is not so much the men as the women who interest Hardy. Like a true feminist he takes up the cause of 'the feminist movement' and his women consciously or subconsciously are shown as
revolting for their rights in attaining their identity and selfhood.

E. THE WOODLANDERS

The Woodlanders was written about ten years after The Return of the Native in 1887. Hardy offered Macmillan's Magazine the choice of two titles: "The Woodlanders or Fitzpiers at Hintock", the former one was chosen. It was first published in Macmillan's Magazine and later on as a novel. Unlike Bathsheba and Eustacia, Grace Melbury is not without parents, and cannot do freely what she wants with her life. Her father, Mr. Melbury regards her as a valuable property and therefore educates her so well that she becomes a refined lady for any refined high-class man to marry easily. Hardy reveals a typical Patriarchan world where father is the head of the family and his decision are regarded as a law. The duty of a Victorian woman is laid out for her from cradle to grave — submission to parents, and obedience to husband. Women were educated to raise their price in the marriage market. Hardy shows this picture of Victorian men in his novel. Mr. Melbury educates Grace with the intention of marrying her well. He is proud of the fact that even Mrs. Charmond "is not better informed than my girl Grace." He had intended Grace to marry Giles Winterborne, but when she comes back from the boarding school he realizes that she is above Giles' social status, so he discourages her to marry him. He tells her:
Marty South a poor girl loves Giles, but Giles does not love her. Mr. Melbury thinks that Edred Fitzpiers a young doctor who belongs to a famous family of Fitzpiers should marry Grace. Edred exercises a psychic fascination over Grace who cannot resist him; and eventually this culminates in their marriage. He has already seduced a robustly carnal village girl Suke Damson, who gave herself to him readily enough on Midsummer Night during the traditional revels in which the local maidens go into the woods and seek to learn the names of their future husbands.

Mrs. Felice Charmond is a rich widow with 'strange smouldering, erratic passions'; even more bewitching than Eustacia. Fitzpiere cannot restrain his intense feelings of love for her. She cannot suppress her hungry heart full of wild desires. She feels that Hintock is imprisoning her very existence and she can feel the suffocation. A man had brought her there and she says 'women are always carried about like corks upon the waves of masculine desires'.

This sentence proves true regarding her relationship with Edred also because he has his way with her as he desires. Infact Hardy anticipates Lawrence's idea that woman is
swayed by the phallus power. Grace asks Mrs. Charmond "he's had you! Can it be - can it be!" This reflects on the sexual relationship between Felice and Edred. Edred develops a hold over her which she cannot break. Although she was the one to begin the affair, yet it is not Felice who is exploiting him, but Fitzpiers who is using her. She is the one who suffers erotic and moral masochism. Both she and Grace are victims of male selfishness. "Where Felice is an emotional casualty of sexual ideology, Grace is a victim of legal and social injustice". Her life is ruined because she is persuaded by her father to marry for class and social status and cannot divorce when she wants to. Her education cuts her off from her plain way of life of Hintock and from her old love Giles. Her father regards her education as an investment which will fetch a gentlemen of high social status as son-in-law. Grace discovers her fiancé's infidelity since he has 'had' Susie Damson; but is pressurised by Mr. Melbury to marry him. She is used as a 'commodity' for purchasing social status. As a daughter she is subjugated to the will of her father, and as a wife she has to tolerate the infidelity of a husband. Further she is tortured by the illicit relationship of Fitzpiers and Felice Charmond. Under the provisions of 'the new law', her father thinks that she would be able to divorce her unfaithful husband. But this is not possible because Fitzpiers' conduct had not been "sufficiently cruel to Grace to enable her to snap the bond. She was apparently doomed to be his
wife ---". Melbury says "He has not done you enough harm
you are still subject to his beck and call". He could
have his way with the women he loved, but poor Grace did
not have the same freedom. This is the double standard of
morality of the Victorians that Hardy tries to condemn in
his novels. When Giles makes love to Grace, she feels guilty
but there is no guilt experienced by Fitzpiers. He thinks
it is his right to exploit and flirt with women. He is a
typical Victorian philanderer whom we have already seen in
Troy and Wildeve. Melbury tells her that she should not
allow Giles to love her any more since divorce is
impossible. Grace thinks of her 'free' conduct towards
Giles:

His (Giles) love making had been brief as it was
sweet; but would he on reflection condemn her
for forwardness? How could she have been so
simple as to suppose she was in a position to
behave as she had done? (brackets are mine).

The suppressed masochistic girl breaks into volcanic
revolution when Giles dies, she tells Fitzpiers that she
does not care any more for anything Giles was everything
for her. She even repents why she had kept him outside her
house to get wet and catch cold. She did this because of
the fear of society as she says; "O Giles", said she, 'I
know - I know! But - I am a woman, and you are a man. I
cannot speak more plainly. I yearn to let you in, but ----
"

These lines reflect on a woman's total helplessness to
have her will. Getting wet and suffering from the cold -
weather outside had resulted in his illness which finally caused his death. After his death she tells Edred that her heart is in the grave with Giles. Grace and Marty had sworn to show the dead Giles full devotion by visiting his grave. Grace has devotion for Giles and status infatuation for Fitzpiers. When Grace is frustrated in the end and Fitzpiers comes back to her after the death of Mrs. Charmond who has been shot by a disappointed lover she plainly tells him that she cannot love him; since she wishes to be true to the memory of Giles. "And I don't see why you should mind my having had one lover besides yourself" when he had, had so many." Here she rises above the submissive conventional woman, and like a true modern woman tries to question her husband for her rights and equal status. Hardy brings out Victorian hypocrisy and prudery. Ladies found Hardy attractive and he was attracted by them. He attended parties hosted by Lady Carnarvon. Lady Jeune, Lady Dorothea and others. He had been fascinated by John Stuart Mill's writings and his speeches. Emma Lavinia Hardy had been "an expert horse woman and an ardent cyclist and had walked in suffrage paradies." Naturally being a feminist he makes his heroines revolt against the double standard of morality set by man. These words are echoed later on by Tess also when she ...Angel that if she could forgive him sleeping with other women, why couldn't he forgive her one sin of hers. This is the pleading of the suffocated Victorian woman who could hardly find justice for herself in that
Hardy tries to solve this 'women question' and tries to emancipate women from the close fence of conventions. Marty suffers silently for Giles love and cannot even complain why he loves Grace. She lives just to see him happy, and even after his death when Grace goes away with Fitzpiers she whispers before Giles' grave:

you are mine, and only mine; for she has forgot 'ee at last, although for her you died! but I— whenever I get up I'll think of 'ee, and whenever I lie down I'll thing of 'ee again ——

If ever I forget your name let me forget home and heaven!

This is the promise of the typical conventional woman of the past and the Victorian times who suffers moral erotic masochism and thinks this is her duty, and all the privileges are those of man who is the super power or her master. Marty is set in contrast to Grace who craves for emancipation from her father, the society, and her husband. Mrs. Charmond is the female narcissist who is lost in her sensuous 'bower of bliss'. Even she is exploited by a lover who shoots her and even Fitzpiers who masters her through phallus power. Both Felice and Grace are victims of male selfishness although Felice Charmond is a strong woman like Eustacia, Bathsheba or Arabella. The problem of marriage is taken up in the novel and 'the new law' after the Matrimonial Act is also attacked since it cannot provide divorce or freedom to a woman whose husband has committed adultery. Mere adultery of the husband is not
enough, it has to be the cruelty, brutality merciless whipping of the woman that may make her case a bit strong. Grace has no rights even after the reconciliation, she just has to keep Fitzpiers contented in his home. Particia Stubbs rightly points out: The Woodlanders, Tess, Jude the Obscure and The Return of the Native seem to her to be" an expressive, irreputable criticism of society's debilitating version of womanhood."

Like Jude the Obscure, Woodlanders explores quite explicitly the marital unhappiness and sexual incompatibility which law and social custom refused to acknowledge. Marriage, in these novels is seen as the cause of so much suffering. The divorce law as it then stood discriminated between men and women. Grace suffers after marrying Edred, and Sue suffers after marrying Phillotson and Jude. Grace is not as revolting a 'new woman' of the feminist wave as Sue who argues for her freedom with her husband. In spite of knowing of Fitzpiers' affair with Felice and the adultery it involves she goes back to him in the end when she cannot get divorce from him. She suffers moral and erotic masochism. Sue, in spite of her illegal stay with Jude and her illegitimate children is also a sufferer. Hardy deals with the theme of rebellion and struggle against the conventions of society which suppressed women, but it is only a case that he strongly pleads by arousing pity and sympathy in the minds of his readers. Hardy had himself suffered the pangs of a
disillusioned marriage with Emma, who had become a bitter woman in the later years. His conception of marriage perhaps springs from his own experience. His *Tess* deals with the problem of sexual purity and *Jude the Obscure* elaborates[the theme of marriage that he had already shown in *The Woodlanders*.

**F. TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES**

Sex outside the bounds of marriage was stigmatized as evil, its violator was regarded as immoral and was condemned by the society. Adultery, rape, veneral diseases, illegitimate births, homosexuality and prostitution were kept discreetly hidden from the reading public. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, when published in magazine form, in 1891, had been subjected to serious mutilations. Hardy felt highly indignant at these restrictions. The cry raised against its immortality poured salt on his wound. He was furiously attacked by critics. The sub - title "A pure woman" attached to it was a direct challenge to the Victorian conception of morality, its heroine was naturally a new woman. She had her origins in Ruth and Hetty, but Mrs. Gaskell and George Eliot did not have the courage of calling her "pure". Hardy did not mean "pure" in the conventional sense, he thought that if a woman is seduced or raped against her will and without her intentions she remains pure. He wished to raise the status of the "fallen woman" whose fall was not an intentional one.
Before he was even sixteen years of age Hardy had seen a public hanging in Dorchester of a woman who had killed her lover, this is very likely the origin of Tess. In the course of writing he changed his heroine's name several times. Her previous surname was Woodrow, "but when her father was conceived as a descendant of the Turbervilles of Bere Regis, it became Troublefield before the final Durbeyfield. Then her first name was successively Love, Cis, Sue and Rose Mary before he finally chose Tess." The title of the novel was changed many times: "from 'Too Late Beloved' to 'A Daughter of the D'Urbervilles' before becoming 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles'." Tryphena died in 1890. Hardy wrote his article Thoughts of Phena. It is not certain how deep were Hardy's affections for her, but he always treasured the past. Perhaps Tess has been inspired by Tryphena only whose grave he had also visited and even placed a wreath on it with a card: "In loving memory, Tom Hardy." The story of the novel is based on Tess - a nineteenth century woman whose personality develops as she becomes blighted by cultural pressures.

In the first phase of the novel The Maiden Tess appears as a fresh flower of nature. John Lucas rightly brings out the fact that the theme of the novel is centred round "separation from self, and the ways in which Tess's sense of selfhood is denied to her." Her freedom to be herself is hampered first by her parents who send her to Trantridge and later by Alec and Angel. Tess is born in a poor family who had once been part of the aristocratic
d’Urbervilles but now the family had decayed into a poor peasant family. As a typical Victorian girl and woman Tess’ duty from birth to grave is only to obey and submit before the wishes of her parents, lover and husband. Even as a worker in the fields she has to expect lower wages than those of men. The lot of peasant women in 1850s was miserable, they had to work for even more than eleven hours a day. In the chapter Tess: Poor And A Woman Anne Z. Mickelson brings out the sad plight of Tess where she writes:

Tess copes with the hard realities in every way she knows how, by back-breaking manual work, or caring for her many brothers and sisters, or taking charge of her parents staggering home from the pub. As for the passivity exhibited sometimes not only with family, but with Alec and later to a greater degree with Angel, it is not only the result of guilt feelings. It is impressed upon her by the inhibition of woman’s right to aggression prescribed by society.

The similar suppression of women’s right to be individuals we find in Fanny, Elfride and Thomasin also. Patricia Stubbs says: "Tess is, above all, a study of true and false ideas of sexual morality. This is worked out through the suffering thrust on a spontaneously moral woman by a distorted value-system." Further she thinks that Tess suffers because she has "absorbed the false code and so is
prepared to accept Clare's judgement of her even though her instincts tell her he is unjust." She is of course in many ways the Victorians' ideal woman but her volcanic revolt against her suppression is found in her murder of Alec. In fact it is a revolt of the woman who has continuously undergone moral, erotic and sexual masochism and at last wishes to destroy her suppressor. Hardy's glorification of Tess is a satire against the Victorian double standard of morality. Nina Auerbach observes: "Tess seems to tower over the arbitrary conventions that label her a sinner, especially as they are embodied in the callow and vacillating Angel Clare."

Tess is symbolic of "the triumph of life over spirit". In the sexual fall of Hetty and Ruth George Eliot and Mrs. Gaskell do not plead their case as strongly as Hardy does of Tess, where he subtitles his novel "Tess - A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented". Her fall is a cry of the feminist movement for emancipation and equal rights of which Hardy had been a strong believer. Like Shaw's St. Joan or Ibsen's Hedda Gabler she lingers in our minds as one of the great feminine protaips in the modern idiom as Hardy understood the word modern - to quote his phrase "the ache of modernism" is in them. In fact, perhaps the "women question" raised by the feminists of that time always haunted his mind.

Tess' father is a drunkard and her mother has six children living in unmitigated poverty. Mr. Durbeyfield discovers that his family is descended from the illustrious
line of d'Urbervilles. Forced by circumstances Tess goes to Mrs. d'Urbervilles to find a job on her estate. She meets Alec, a young man with bold, roving eyes. Before this, at the May dance she has already seen Angel Clare whose picture she cherishes as an ideal lover and a husband. Alec is the wrong man she encounters. Her mother who is a more practical woman wants her to marry Alec somehow. During the Victorian age marriage was considered as the chief aim of women through which they got security and respect. Joan advises Tess not to be 'hontish' with him and thereby lose her chance of marrying him. Alec's character is again modelled on the same lines as Troy and Fitzpiers. There is the same panache, the same confident mastery over women. Actually Tess had wanted to be a teacher, but on account of her family's poverty she is forced to go into service for the d'urbervilles. Alec's gradual advances towards her finally lead to her seduction. After the seduction she says:

"My eyes were dazed by you for a little, and that was all." —— "I didn't understand your meaning till it was too late". "That's what every woman says." "How can you dare to use such words" !

She cried.

She answers "Did it never strike your mind that what every woman says some women may feel?" He admits that he has done wrong. Further she agrees and says "see how you've mastered me!" He imprints a kiss on her cheek. She tells him that she has never loved him and therefore cannot come
back to him. Still Victorian conventionalism stares her in the face and warns her: "Thou, shalt, not, commit ——.

When she goes home she questions her mother "Why didn't you tell me there was danger in men folk? Why didn't you warn me?" Her mother says "Any woman would have done it but you, after that!" Here 'any woman' stands for conventional woman of the age, but Tess is different. She is a defiant modern woman. Her revolt against masculine power is symbolized by her slapping Alec. Therefore Tess is not the typical conventional woman to have given herself to the man she does not love. After her desertion of Angel this slap makes Alec realize that she was still Tess of d'Urbervilles an individual self. After the baptism of her son 'Sorrow' she tells the parson "I'll never come to your church no more!" This is again a challenge to the religious conventions of Victorian times.

At Talbothay's she meets Angel and falls in love with him. She wishes to confess her lost maidenhood to him but she is a human being too and cannot surrender the present 'appetite for Joy'. She tries to confide in Angel, only to be thwarted by accident or indecision. She suddenly cries at night that she could not bear to let anybody 'have him'. Angel's restraint breaks down and he embraces her and plans to marry her. "She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter and other fanciful names half teasingly, ——" "Call me Tess,"
She says that she wished to remain an ordinary-human being only. Her plea for being regarded as a human being is a plea for her 'self-hood'. She is placed on such a high pedestal by him that when her guilty sin is discovered it becomes impossible for him to accept her as a 'fallen woman'. The Victorians regarded women as 'queens', 'goddesses' or 'harlots'. In fact, they refused to make them have an identity of their own or a right to be just human—beings or individual selves. Women's chastity or virginity was important for man since it proved the fact that she was a piece of property intact. Even Knight craves for the 'virgin' lips of Elfride but when he comes to know about her other lovers he leaves her. Tess pays heavily for her sins and says "I will obey you like your wretched slave even if it is to lie down and die." She accepts the Victorian norms of society and is ready to undergo any masochistic punishment set down by the man she loves. She has forgiven him his sin, but he cannot forgive her, her sin. This is the double standard of morality that Hardy tries to confront in his novel.

The fifth part of the novel is entitled "The Woman Pays". Her confession changes everything and she is entirely transformed in his eyes. "They are legally married, but the marriage is not consummated. He is a believer in the masculine imposed double standard of morality. What is venial in the man is unpardonable in the woman whom he has chosen as his wife." Even when they
spend the first night of their marriage in the ancestral home of Tess, Angel sees the portrait of D'Urberville dames, "sinister design lurked in the woman's features, a concentrated purpose of revenge on the other sex." (men).

It appears that woman has always craved to take her revenge on man, in the past and in the present case of Tess, but society crushes her. The budding hope is crushed as soon as it blossoms. We find this in the ancestral women of Brangwens in The Rainbow, but Ursula's revenge has a hope and promise when she sees the rainbow. There is no such hope for Tess in Victorian times. In her letter to Angel she makes a very submissive appeal "I would be content, ay, glad, to live with you as your servant, if I may not be your wife." It is a total surrender of a woman to a man who is her master. Hardy gives us a picture of patriarchy in which man has the super power over a woman. In delineating his women Hardy tries to challenge the existing order of that time. Hardy's heroes think of their women as 'visionary essences' or goddesses, when they come to know that they are ordinary human beings committing faults they cannot accept them. This was the typical attitude of men towards their women in that age. Woman was just a piece of property for them. They did not think that she was a human being like them.

When Alec tempts her again to marry him after her father's death he assures her that Angel would not come back to her. She felt:
Her husband, Angel Clare himself had, like others, dealt out hard measure to her, surely he had. She had never before admitted such a thought; but he had surely. Never in her life—she could swear it from the bottom of her soul—had she ever intended to do wrong; yet these hard judgements had come. Whatever her sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should she have been punished so persistently?

This paragraph throws light on Hardy's purpose to show her as innocent of her sin since it was unintentional. It is also a woman's challenge against the cruelties of man. In another letter she writes to Angel "Oh, why have you treated me so monstrously, Angel! I do not deserve it."

This is the cry of the entire race of Victorian women demanding justice from men. Mill had advocated their cause and feminists were fighting for their rights. It is not only that Tess does not deserve this "monstrous treatment", it is the Victorian woman who does not deserve this unjust double standard of morality. In the end her murder of Alec is the final challenge against the suppressing conventions which bind women. It is her ultimate decision to be free of male—power which crushes women and treads her down completely making her a non-entity. The concluding words "justice" was done, and "the President of the Immortals in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess" the heart's cry of Hardy to judge woman rightly eith an equal
standard of man. In fact, 'justice' is used ironically here for the poor innocent Tess who is hanged and society thinks that justice has been done. What sort of justice is this, that punishes woman and makes man go free? This is an attitude of the feminist Hardy who wishes to liberate woman, and cries and appeals in the end to all Victorians to do justice to the suffering women who have been totally enslaved by man. It is in the manner of Mill that he makes an appeal for the emancipation of this 'weaker sex', so that even woman may be regarded as a human being and not only as a Ruskinian angel in the home to satisfy the needs and wants of man. Fancy had hidden a secret from Dick, Elfride had suffered desertion from Knight because of her confession of eloping with Stephen and Tess is hanged for murdering her seducer Alec. Isn't this justice a wrong one?

Aren't the norms set by society artificial ones? These are the questions that echo in the novels of Hardy who tries to fight for the cause of women in a society that tried to subjugate them.

Tess had asked Angel that if she could forgive him his sexual indulgence with other women, why couldn't he forgive her for a sin that she had not been aware of? Hardy purposely takes up the problem of 'purity' based on virginity and chastity. He had hinted at it in his previous novels Under the Greenwood Tree, A Pair of Blue Eyes, and finally he comes to a climax in Tess. Victorian Puritans called Tess 'a harlot' and they even thought that 'she
deserved hanging, but there were liberals like Hardy who thought her to be a "wronged innocent". For such feministic attitudes Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett and others think that like Havelock Ellis, Hardy is a feminist also. Tess also wondered like her creator "was once lost always lost really true of chastity?" Why was woman who was not a virgin regarded as a piece of damaged property? Why was she regarded only as a sexual object? Couldn't she be the cerebral type as Florence Henniker or Sue Bridehead? Why did society allow man sexual freedom? Why was it that woman had to be innocent regarding sex? All these questions are put in Hardy's novels. In contrast to Tess is Mercy Chant who is pious and just the opposite of Tess. Why was it that a good woman had to be devoid of sexual passion? Why should she always be man's forgiving angel and he always a hard task master for her? Alec regards her as a sexual object and Angel thinks of her as a 'visionary essence'. Their male ego makes them aggressors. She just wants to be a woman and be allowed to develop as a woman. Wasn't this a psychic damage to women who were treated that way by men and society? Hardy presents her as a woman who battles to be recognized as a person in her own right. Hardy did not limitize himself with the problem of purity only, in Jude the Obscure he questions the true conception of marriage whether it should be based on the religious sanction of the church or on the approval of the society or of mind and soul? Sue is the cerebral new woman who leaves
her husband Phillotson to stay illicitly with Jude her lover.

G. JUDE THE OBSCURE

In Hardy's diary for 1888 there is a note, "a short story of a young man who could not afford to go to Oxford." The story would deal with his struggles and failures of the young man. Six years later the projected story had grown into a novel entitled The Simpletons or Hearts Insurgent and finally Jude The Obscure. Hardy writes about the evolution of the title of Jude in his letter to Clement Short written on December 17, 1895. He had written to Chavelita Clairmonte (Australian born novelist 'George Egerton') "I have been intending for years to draw Sue, and it is extraordinary that a type of woman, comparatively common and getting commoner, should have escaped fiction so long." George Egerton praised Jude The Obscure in a letter on November 22, 1895 describing Sue Bridehead as "a marvellously true psychological study of a temperament less rare than the ordinary male observer supposes." In 1892 Hardy visited the village of Great Fawley on the Birkshire Downs. He was interested in the village because it was the native place of his grandmother Mary Head. He celebrated her by calling his heroine Bride-Head. He wrote to Gosse that Sue was the type of woman "which had always attracted him". Florence Hardy told Purdy that she was in part drawn from Mrs. Henniker whom he had
met "shortly before writing Jude." She was a 'small woman' like Sue." Lois Deacon Terry Coleman and F.R. Southerington "argue that Sue was drawn largely from Tryphena." Hardy himself says that certain circumstances in the book were 'suggested' by 'the death of a woman in 1890.'

Hardy's *Jude The Obscure* represents patriarchy's masochistic system where sex is female and evil. In spite of the patriarchal background the heroine Bridehead emerges as a New Woman or a modern woman, who becomes a victim of sexual and moral masochism. In the 1890s he had expressed some sympathy with the feminist movement traces of which we find in his novels. Though his heroines try to transcend the limit of time in being liberated, yet they have to pay the penalty by their sufferings in the end. Kate Millett calls Sue a "New Woman" and a "Frigid Woman." He portrays the tragic fate of an innocent female victim who rebels against the social laws that determine sexual guilt. Sue represents the modern woman fighting against the artificial constraints of matrimony, the legal contact that turns the woman into a "chattel." "She sets herself against a number of patriarchal institutions, principally marriage and church." She is a woman in pursuit of her own identity, her sense of self and encountering various kinds of self - separation. She is at different times an artist, a trainee teacher and even a wife. She is not happy in any of these roles for they all impose upon her and constrict her. She tries to search for her individual self
but is overloaded by man-made laws of society who regards woman as the weaker sex or the second sex. The sadistic patriarchal world imposes masochistic punishment on women, who follow the Narcissistic male chauvinists like Echo in the myth of Narcissus. Any woman who tries to fight against the set norms of society is crushed in the end.

The novel *Jude The Obscure* begins with two males - the boy Jude Fawley and the Schoolmaster Richard Phillotson, who inspires the boy with a vision of ‘Christminster’. Arabella captivates Jude with her sexual trap and they marry. After their separation Jude finds a new but ill-starred relationship with his cousin, Sue. He leads Sue to Phillotson, who gets her a job in a school and marries her. She deserts him and returns to Jude. Arabella appears again and renounces Jude but puts in his care the child of their wedlock. In jealousy Sue bears children to Jude, her frigidity melts into a warm relationship. When the children are murdered by Arabella's son Father Time Sue returns to Phillotson in a mood of self-mortification. Arabella ensnares Jude for the second time. He dies, trying to regain Sue. Hardy's preface to the first edition describes the novel as an attempt to tell of "the strongest passion known to humanity — of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims."

He describes personal and societal aims and the relationship between man and woman. In fact, in *Jude The Obscure* Hardy renews the questions he asks in *Tess* about...
Tess' relationship with Angel Clare and Alec d'Urberville.

What really does constitute a marriage? How do you reconcile the inner subjective forces with social circumstances? Where does the flesh have mastery, and where the spirit?

Arabella is Hardy's symbol of the Flesh and Sue is a symbol of Spirit. In portraying her he stresses her animalism, her big breasted fecundity, her blind assertion of the life force pursuing its biological goal. Instead of fulfilling his dream of going to Christminster he is trapped by her to marry her. But soon he realizes his mistake. They break off, she emigrates to Australia and later proposes a divorce, and he goes to Christminster to realize his dream of becoming a scholar. Second time again he is distracted by a woman whose nature is the very opposite of Arabella's. His cousin Sue Bridehead is intellectually unorthodox, contemptuous of conventions and stylishly brilliant and dazzles Jude. She is a pagan and buys statues of Venus and Apollo and prefers them to 'church fal-lals'. She argues with Miss Fontover a Christian that even Venus and Apollo are saints. Miss Fontover comes to know that they are Pagan images so she destroys them. Sue's work with her as an art - designer comes to an end and she is independent of her. Her Pagan attitude points to her emancipation and liberation from the set norms of social conventions and society. Jude's aunt at Marygreen thinks of Sue to be "a pert little thing ------. Many's the time I've smacked her for her impertinence."
The neighbours had remarked about her "She was not exactly a tomboy, you know, but she could do things only that boys do, as a rule." This points to her fascination to be a man - perhaps it is the schizophrenic complex in her subconscious mind. She wishes to become a school teacher which would give her independence. Tess had also wished to become a teacher but failed to be one whereas Sue is successful in becoming one. Sue has the capacity to revolt, whereas Tess had taken everything submissively. In Tess, Hardy had asked the question what really constitutes a marriage? Who was Tess' actual husband Alec or Angel? Here in *Jude the Obscure* he tries to answer the same by revolting against the established laws of the sanctity of marriage. Two women are set in contrast to each other - Arabella who is buxom, lusty, coarse and worldly, symbolic of the flesh. The other woman is Sue who is unorthodox, contemptuous of conventions and stylishly brilliant in a way that dazzles Jude. She is identified with the Pagan world of 'Greek joyousness'. Jude and Sue belong to families where marriage has not been a happy affair. Aunt Drusilla warns them of this superstition. She tells Jude of her earlier life how she lived with a Christminster undergraduate in London for fifteen months of 'friendly intimacy' refusing to become his mistress because she was not in love with him. He died of consumption but her conscience pricked her for her cruelty. We have a similar confession by Elfride when she sits on the grave of Felix Jethway and later by Tess But in
The Obscure Hardy's revolt against such 'double-standard' men gains power, when Jude listens silently and patiently to her story and thinks that she is modern. The roles of man and woman are altered here because Jude becomes passive and Sue active, in other words Jude has feminine principle in his nature and Sue masculine principle. This reversal of roles is also pointed out by Anne Z. Mickelson who observes "Jude takes on the role of the docile Victorian wife and Sue the masculine role of decision-making." Both have unhappy family histories. Jude's parents had separated and his mother had drowned herself. Sue's parents had also separated. Both had lived with aunt Drusilla though not at the same time. Aunt Drusilla had not been very fond of them but had advised them not to marry since it was an unlucky affair in the family.

When Sue and Jude attain maturity they are both lonely and isolated individuals. Jude falls a prey to Arabella's marriage trap. Books have not been able to give him full satisfaction, he thinks love can be a better substitute, so he seeks 'emotional dependence' from Arabella. But for Jude, only sexual gratification is not everything his mind wanders and he wishes to go to Christminster. At Christminster he is unable to get admission in a university. He meets Sue there and is completely baffled by her intellect. When he hears her reading he feels inferior and says "you have read more than I." He begs of her to love him as he cannot stay without her. He is ready to
undergo any suffering for her, here he assumes the masochistic role that the previous heroines of Hardy had played. He cries to her "crucify me, if you will ---- you know you are all the world to me, whatever you do." In his emotional dependency he surpasses even Clym. Usually women were supposed to be emotionally dependent, here in the case of Clym and Jude the roles are reversed. On the other hand Sue's love for him makes her have power over him. She fortifies her position through love and power. For this reason she tries to maintain distance between herself and the men she meets. In Lawrentian terms she does not succumb before Phallus power. Her love remains surface level or on Platonic terms with the journalist, Phillotson and Jude (in the beginning). In her heart she knows that men have all the advantages. She tells Jude "men are ------ So much better than women." In fact, she points to the fact that men are better off in society than women. They have better freedom and better status. She tells him clearly that she is a rebel against the double standard set for men and women. She would "kick" the established system. This is the actual revolt of the 'new woman' who had such an attraction for Hardy and he had desired to write about her in his novels. He felt why should women remain the 'weaker sex'? Couldn't they be regarded as equal to men? In Sue he represents a woman who dominates Jude in her relationship with him. She even goes to the extent of asking him to give her away in marriage to
Sue hastens to marry Phillotson, who has shown himself to be sensitive in understanding and magnanimous in judgement. Jude is to give her away in marriage. The marriage with Phillotson is a disaster from the outset. She tells Jude that she had never thought out fully what marriage meant. It is torture for her to live with her husband "though I like Mr. Phillotson as a friend, I don't like him — it is torture to me — to live with him as a husband! --- there is nothing wrong except my wickedness." Jude gets his liberation from Arabella through divorce. Sue tells Jude "I am called Mrs. Richard Phillotson, but a woman tossed about, all alone, with aberrant passions, and unaccountable antipathies ---." She argues with Phillotson quoting Mill to make her free. "Would you mind my living away from you." He tells her it would be a sin to live away from him. She replies "For a man and woman to live on intimate terms when one feels as I do is adultery, in any circumstances, however legal."--- "Why can't we agree to free each other?" Phillotson is presented as a liberal husband who allows her to leave him. She goes away to live with Jude. Phillotson tells his friend Gillingham "Yes ----- I would have died for her; but I wouldn't be cruel to her in the name of the law." Sue respects his large-mindedness. She tells Jude that she hates "conventions." In her opinion "in a proper state of society, the father of a woman's child will be as much a private matter of hers as the cut of her underlinen, on who
nobody will have any right to question her."

Her ideas are coloured by Mill's essay on Liberty and she emerges out as the culminating point of Hardy's liberated woman, which is a gradual process from Fancy, Elfride, Mrs. Charmond to Sue. Mrs. Oliphant criticised Hardy for questioning the institution of marriage. Mary Jacobus says "it is primarily through Sue's consciousness that the novel explores the tyranny of sexual orthodoxy." Jude and Sue live together only to fall victims to pitiless degradation. Arabella comes back to Jude and he tells Sue "She is, rather more than you, come to that," — "I've wanted you to be, and I've waited with the patience of Job, and I didn't see that I've got anything by my self — denial."

Here, the patient Jude becomes eager to get his rights as a husband. The Victorian male tries to assert his power over woman. In jealousy that Jude may not go back to Arabella, Sue gives herself physically to him. "I ought to have known you would conquer in the long run, living like this!" she tells him "'I give in'". Hardy tells us "The little bird is caught at last." We find the same woman who had craved and fought for liberty so bravely is conquered by man, the god - head who always conquers her in the end. As in Lawrence Sue is conquered by Jude through phallus power. They had done what was right according to them. Their union brings about three children, and the fourth one she is expecting.

Jude and Sue have challenged the legal and moral
conception of marriage therefore they suffer in the end. Hardy does fight for feminine rights but as Kate Millett rightly says that he was "far too astute, or far too timid to permit himself to be identified with the notorious feminists." In his Candour he had also observed: why a man stand before the bullets if he knows he is going to be shot at. He wrote Tess and then Jude The Obscure. He did encounter the 'shots' or criticism of the conventional Victorian public but it was too much for him and therefore he gave up novel writing after Jude The Obscure and The Well Beloved. Arabella's son, Father Time kills the three children and himself also. He writes on a paper before his death:

"Done because we are too many."

Their union is stained with blood. Even the child she is expecting is prematurely born and is also a corpse. The Pagan Sue now becomes religious and thinks "It is no use fighting against God." She says "We ought to be continually sacrificing ourselves on the altar of duty!" She thinks she is guilty and she belongs to Phillotson rightly. Their love is based on wrong concepts. She would like to suffer moral and physical masochism. "I should like to prick myself all over with pins and bleed out the badness in me!" In fact Arabella's child has proved "right slaying he wrong." She decided to go back to Phillotson her husband, he begs of her to stay and not to abandon him, he even calls her a "sprite - not a woman." Before Jude dies Arabella forces him to marry
her. Sue gives herself as a living corpse to Phillotson. Her tormented consciousness haunts us more than Jude's bitter oblivion. A typical modern woman, a feminist suffers this masochistic fate at the hands of a society who relishes conferring sadistic tortures on women who wish to transcend the limits of conventions. Hardy does try to plead the feminists' case but he lays the cards before the Victorian public and readers to sympathise with the "wronged innocent woman" whose due rights should be given to her.

H. CONCLUSION

When Hardy was writing his novels women had begun to form their own organisations and it was widely accepted that they should take an active part in the world outside home. A series of Acts passed by the Parliament after 1837 removed most of the legal disabilities of women. By 1900 although they still had no votes yet they were much freer than they had been previously. Many colleges were opened, jobs were found available for them and there were debates regarding how they should live. While still they were kept out of most professions, literature had always been open to them. Even in literature writers like George Eliot wrote under pseudonyms. The Matrimonial Causes Act in 1857 had given the legally separated wife the right to keep what she earned. By 1882 they had the complete control of their incomes. Girls or women were required to work for
their family. Men like Ruskin thought women should be educated but only so far as may enable them to sympathise in her husband's pleasures and be better mothers. Modern women of that time had realized that they could begin not by changing the world, but by reassessing themselves. Women had become aware of their duty towards themselves. Their cry was the same as Nora's who tells her husband: "I have another duty, just as sacred——. My everything else I'm a human being—— just as much as you are—— or at any rate I shall try to become one." Hardy's novels reflect the zeitgeist or the spirit of that age. Conventions were trying to crush the budding desires of women. Life was not an easy task for the Noras of that time. Even writers like Ibsen and Hardy or liberal thinkers like Mill could not gain for women equal status at par with men. There were men who still believed that woman "was created to be the toy of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused." She was the sexual object sought by all men, her value was attested by the sex demand she excited in others. Her own sexuality was denied and misrepresented by being identified as passivity. Freud went to the extent of calling her a castrated being or wanting in something that she did not have.

D.H. Lawrence rightly says that Hardy's people of Wessex "are always bursting suddenly out of bud and taking a wild flight into flower, always shooting suddenly out of tight convention——." His men quite often find themselves on Arnold's 'darkling plain' and turn to women
for consolation. We have such male characters as Clym, Henchard, Oak and Jude. His ideal heroes are torn between the demands of the spirit and the flesh. His women are worst sufferers since they are regarded as socially inferior. They had to satisfy, sympathize, and serve man — there master and mentor in every way. Though "queens" yet they were the imprisoned queens of the home only and had to ordain their prison and master. It was a patriarchan world where man placed woman on a high pedestal, thinking of her not as a human being but as a goddess. His over-idealization of her lead to disillusionment, resulting in the moral masochistic suffering of woman. It was the sadomasochistic world. The other type of woman is the sexual one, considered as a harlot, she was the condemned one from whom the expectation was not much and was left to her own fate. Hardy was consistently interested in women and became more compassionate towards them, as his work matured, so that the vanities of a Bathsheba Everdene and the fickleness of a Fancy Day grow into the complex, self-tormenting contradictions of Eustacia Vye or Sue Bridehead. He shows how women's lives were distorted simply because they were women, trapped in a moral order rooted in sexual discrimination and in a social structure which refused to acknowledge them as complete human beings. Hardy uses love as force and women succumb to the temptation of the phallic power of man. Such victims are Fanny Robin, Thomasin, Tess and Grace Melbury who are passive sufferers of moral and
There are other women in Hardy who have charismatic beauty of irresistible charm like Eustacia and Bathsheba or the passionate seductresses like Felice and Arabella. Arabella uses her sexuality to entrap Jude. Felice Charmond uses it as a power to exploit Fitzpiers, ultimately falling a prey to him. In Grosvenor Gallery, Hardy felt particularly drawn to the picture "Ariadne Abandoned by Theseus," which he viewed for a long time, perhaps this impact on his mind makes him sympathize towards women. He presents them as tough and tender and thinks that they all deserve better understanding from men. Fancy had hidden a secret with the fear that Dick may not forgive her easily. Elfride tells about her past to Knight and therefore suffers desertion. Bathsheba is helpless against Troy who is unfaithful to her. Fanny is a prey to Troy's sexual passion. Grace marries Fitzpiers who becomes disloyal to her. She cannot stop him from passionately loving Felice. She cannot betray him by allowing Giles to enter her room even though he gets wet in the rain, in spite of his illness. Tess is seduced by Alec and tormented morally by Angel. Sue a broad-minded new woman is also a sufferer.

Sexual women like Eustacia, Felice and Arabella are also victims of male passion. Women may be virtuous moral beings, or fallen - ones, or vamps or harlots or even witches, they are all 'abandoned' ones victimized by men in some way or the other. "All are caged birds ---- the only difference lies in the size of the cage," wrote Hardy in
his Life. Unlike George Eliot, who insists that characters must adapt themselves to the world in which they live, Hardy stresses individuality - specially the individuality of women who were seeking their identity and selfhood in that age. This was the question that feminists were trying to solve at that time and even now feminists like Germaine Greer, Kate Millett and Betty Friedan have taken it up. Hardy had not only read but even met Mill who was fighting against the subjection of women. Hardy read Havelock Ellis' *Sexual Inversion in Women* which he received from him in a letter on July 29, 1895. Jude was published in Nov. 1895. Perhaps Ellis' liberal views about sex had also influenced Hardy. Moreover Emma used to attend 'suffrage parades'. Hardy himself was friendly with the intellectual women of his time - like Mrs. Florence Henniker who was a writer, Angelena Frances Milman a critic and translator; Lady Jeune, Mary Haweis, Mary Chavelita Clairmonte (George Egerton) and others. His mother Jemima was an educated lady, his sister Mary was a schoolmistress in Dorchester. In fact, Mrs. Yeobright is probably a near portrait of Hardy's own mother. Tryphena Sparks with whom his name is mostly linked was also a school teacher. In the character of Sue he presents "the woman of the feminist movement - the slight pale bachelor girl - the intellectualised, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing --- ."

In *Jude The Obscure* Hardy the narrator sympathetically reflects on seeing the tender feminine face in Sue's
training college and thinks "every face bearing the legend 'The Weaker' upon it, as the penalty of the sex wherein they were moulded ----."

Further he says "Is it that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex - impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?" He simply cries for justice for the innocent women, 'the weaker' sex who suffer because of the artificial norms of society, the double standard of morality and the wrongly established order of the age. He had dealt with this problem mildly in Under The Greenwood Tree, A Pair of Blue Eyes, Far From The Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native and Tess. We find Hardy's sympathy for women simply erupting like a volcano in Jude The Obscure and he simply pleads bleeding for justice. Sue fights for her rights to live with a man she loves although she is not married to him. She argues with Phillotson that mere legal rights of Marriage do not constitute real marriage. This had not been done by Elfride, Thomasin, Eustacia, Grace or Tess? Men like Knight, Troy, Wildeve, Fitzpiers and Alec had sexually exploited Elfride, Fanny, Thomasin, Suke Damson, Felice and Tess. Strong women, timid ones, virtuous and vicious ones had all suffered in this man - made world. Men like Henchard had gone to the extent of selling their wives as mere pieces of property.

D.H. Lawrence in his Study of Thomas Hardy says that "every man comprises male and female in his being, the male
always struggling for predominance. A woman likewise consists in male and female, with female predominant.

The male exists in doing and being. Dick, Knight, Fitzpiers, Troy, Boldwood, and Alec all comprise the male principle and Oak, Giles, Clym and Jude comprise the feminine principle. Knight, Fitzpiers, Troy and Alec can reach "some of the real sources of the female in a woman, and draw from them ----. Therefore they have a power over a woman. They draw from the depth of her being." Angel harms Tess since he denies the existence of the female in her, he cannot see her as the woman in the body therefore he thinks her as 'degraded' or 'fallen'. Tess despises herself in the flesh and suffers as Lawrence says because "the female in her was indomitable unchangeable."

According to Lawrence, "Jude is only Tess turned round about. Instead of the heroine containing two principles male and female, at strife within her on being, it is Jude who contains them both, whilst the two women with him take the place of the two men in Tess. Arabella is Alec d'Urberville, Sue is Angel Clare." In Jude The Obscure the female principle dominates, and in Arabella and Sue it is the male principle. But man, passive or active, having male or female principle remains a man only. He is the supreme being and thinks that the woman is administered unto him. Even Jude who obeys Sue in everything breaks her frigidity when he threatens to go back to Arabella who has come back to him. Sue is not ready to give him up in her jealousy or she many be found "wanting in something", gives
herself up sexually to him. The "little bird" (Sue) is caught at last by the phallic power of man. Their mating is symbolic of 'marriage - consummation in its beauty'. But it was a blasphemy of the Law, religion, spirit and consciousness, for this Sue and Jude suffer and Hardy though fighting hard against the conventions had to give up only for another one like Lawrence to take up the cudgels on his behalf.

This feministic problem had been taken up by him steadily. In Under The Greenwood Tree Dick settles down to physically satisfactory married life, though Fancy remains uneasy on account of a 'hidden secret'. Elfride in A Pair of Blue Eyes breaks down in her attempt to break the conventions when she runs away with Stephen. She comes back only to submit to Knight who adheres to the conventional belief of 'purity and chastity'. An aristocrat marries her only to die in the end. She stands victimised by her lovers and society. In Far From The Madding Crowd Bathsheba's pride is shattered when Troy treats her badly and even betrays her. Although Gabriel Oak marries her yet Troy has victimised her. In The Return of the Native Eustacia craves for some form of self-realization, she wants to be herself. Her love of Paris makes her marry Clym who decides to stay on Edgon only. She moves outside the barriers of convention when she runs away with Wildeve, therefore she suffers death in the end. In Woodlanders Grace, Felice and Marty are the sufferers, because Fitzpiers deserts Grace
for the passionate Felice Charmond and Marty keeps on devotedly loving Giles who loves Grace. Grace is unable to break the conventions in returning to Giles, and even divorce from Fitzpiers is impossible in her case. All these masochistic women in Hardy find themselves up against the established system of human government and morality, they cannot detach themselves and are brought down. They are denied the right to be individuals. The climax of Hardy’s views on women is found in Tess and Sue. He fights for Tess’ purity and Sue’s liberty. Women may be timid or strong, virtuous or vicious, frigid or passionate, conventionally submissive or sex-objects they are all denied the right of self-hood and equality with man. Men are narcissists, loving their own ego, they refuse to give up their rights. When women try to demand their liberty and emancipation, they are crushed or bound by the strong fence of conventions. In spite of the strong barriers of conventions and morality, Hardy’s female characters fight for their emancipation and freedom. When the cruel fate crushes them and they are helpless in this man-orientated world he brings about a catharsis by appealing sympathetically and emotionally so that they can gain pity and compassion. In spite of his feminist views he could not gain total freedom for his heroines. Sue goes back more like a corpse to her husband, she, unlike Ursula is unable to see a rainbow of promise for a liberated future.
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