NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN'S PLACE IN GEORGE ELIOT'S *MIDDLEMARCH* AND THOMAS HARDY'S *THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE* AND *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

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ABSTRACT

NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN'S PLACE IN GEORGE ELIOT'S *MIDDLEMARCH* AND THOMAS HARDY'S *THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE* AND *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

Sünbül, Çiçek
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This thesis proposes to demonstrate the representation of women in the 19th-century fiction through an analysis of the characters in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The study starts with an outline of the intellectual and industrial transformations shaping women's position in the 19th century in addition to the already existing prejudices about men's and women's roles in the society. The decision of marriage and its consequences are placed earlier in these novels, which helps to lay bare the women's predicaments and the authors' treatment of the female characters better. Therefore, because of marriage's centrality to the novels as a theme, the analysis focuses on the female subordination with its educational, vocational and social extensions, the women's expectations from marriage, their disappointments, and their differing responses respectively. Finally, the analogous and different aspects of the attitudes of the two writers are discussed as regards their portrayal of the characters and the endings they create for the women in their novels.

Keywords: George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, women, marriage, 19th century.

ÖZ

GEORGE ELIOT'IN *MIDDLEMARCH* VE THOMAS HARDY'NİN *YUVAYA DÖNÜŞ* VE *TESS* ROMANLARINDA 19. YÜZYIL KADININ YERİ

Sünbül, Çiçek
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Bu tez, George Eliot'ın *Middlemarch* ve Thomas Hardy'nin *Yuvaya Dönüş* ve *Tess* romanlarının analizi aracılığıyla 19. yüzyıl romanlarında kadınların tasvirini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, toplumda kadınlar ve erkeklerle ilgili varolan önyargıların yanısıra, 19. yüzyılda kadının toplumdaki konumunu şekillendiren entelektüel ve endüstriyel değişimlerin ana hatlarının incelenmesiyle başlar. Kadın karakterlerin evlilik kararları ve bunların sonuçları bu romanların ilk yarılarında yer almaktadır ve bu durum kadınların sıkıntılarını ve yazarların kadın karakterlerini ele alışlarını daha iyi ortaya koymaktadır. Evliliğin tema olarak romanların merkezinde olmasından dolayı, analiz de sırasıyla eğitimsel, mesleki, ve sosyal uzantılarıyla kadınların ikincil konuma itilişi, evlilikten beklentileri, hayal kırıklıkları ve mutsuzluğa farklılık gösteren tepkileri üzerine yoğunlaşır. Son olarak, yazarların tutumlarındaki benzeşen ve ayrışan yönler yazarların karakterleri tasvir ediş şekilleri ve onlar için yarattıkları sonlar açısından incelenir.

Anahtar kelimeler: George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, kadın, evlilik, 19. Yüzyıl.

To My Family

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thesis Statement

The aim of this thesis is to present a portrayal of women in 19th-century fiction through the analogous and differing representations in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* according to issues such as their circumstances in a male dominated society, their expectations from marital life, their disillusionments and their reactions to those disillusionments. In this light, Dorothea Brooke, Celia Brooke, Rosamond Vincy, Mary Garth, and Harriet Bulstrode in *Middlemarch*; Eustacia Vye, and Thomasin Yeobright, in *The Return of the Native*, and Tess Durbeyfield and Joan Durbeyfield in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* will be studied so as to come up with an analysis of them in relation to the historical context they were created in.

These three particular novels were chosen because both writers focus on the depictions of women in their works and attempt to reflect their position in that society by a shared thematic focus on their drawbacks, decisions and stance against the circumstances. The portrayal of these female characters creates a chance to see the representation of women in 19th-century fiction from manifold standpoints such as women's educational, vocational, and social circumstances in the society as well as their response to those circumstances.

1.2 Historical Context

In a letter to her eldest daughter, Queen Victoria comments on the institution of marriage as follows:

> All marriage is such a lottery—the happiness is always an exchange—though it may be a very happy one—still the poor woman is bodily and morally the husband's slave. That always sticks in my throat. When I think of a merry, happy, free young girl—and look at the ailing, aching state a young wife generally is doomed to—which you can't deny is the penalty of marriage. (qtd in Nelson 6)

This letter alludes to some of the drawbacks of being a woman and the physical and moral restrictions marriage imposed on women at the time. What makes these lines more striking is that they were written in the second half of the 19th century and that

they were written and felt even by the period's (1837-1901) female ruler, who was considered the epitome of the era with her morals and way of life as a Victorian woman who got married and bore nine children.

Although there is much Victorian content in both the historical context in which the novelists lived and the background of the novels themselves, the focus of this study is the 19th century. The reason is that the time span of the settings of the stories in these novels start with the late 1820s, the time before the First Reform Bill (and before Queen Victoria's reign) in *Middlemarch*, it moves to the 1840s in *The Return of the Native* (1895) and extends to the end of the 19th century with *Tess of The D'Urbervilles*, whose setting is the 1880s and 1890s. In addition, the entire era cannot be considered apart from the sequence of events of the previous centuries that led to women's awareness of their subordination in their lack of political, social, and legal rights and also the process that led to women's political organization, which had tremendous effects stretching to the 20th century. For this reason, the century will be studied in close connection with the eras preceding and following it. In order to put these novels in a social and historical context, then, it is necessary to present the social, economic, and cultural framework of the century which shaped the frame of mind of the authors as well. Thus, the characteristics of the society and women's place in it should be examined for a grounded and informed analysis of the novels in question.

Although British women were being gradually emancipated from many patriarchal restraints during the 19th century through the passing of certain laws such as the Child Custody Act (1839), the Matrimonial Causes Act (1857), the First Married Woman's Property Act (1870) and the Second Woman's Property Act (1882), the 19th century in Britain, as an era, was quite complex and difficult for British women on the whole. Obviously, women's subordination and occupation of a secondary position in society was not new to this century. However, it was a time when many norms and notions inherited from the previous centuries were still valid and awareness increased as a result of certain social and economic transformations in the country.

Taking their roots in the 17th and 18th centuries and extending to the 19th and even early 20th centuries, some major events and changes occurred in Europe and brought forward new conceptions of the world and societies, all of which directly or indirectly shaped the women's place in the British society as well. Among these, the French Revolution (1789) had a considerable effect on the recognition of individuals' social and political rights. However, a major impetus behind the revolution was the views of the Enlightenment. From the late 17th to the late 18th centuries, the dominant frame of mind in the intellectual climate of western European countries was a sense of optimism about "the potential of individual human reason" and the "possibility of understanding the natural environment of humanity" (Rendall 7). The idea central to the Enlightenment world-view was the questioning of already-accepted, traditional customs, institutions, religious thoughts, and morals. What replaced them was a strong sense of rationality and trust in science. There were a number of pioneering thinkers such as John Locke and Isaac Newton in Britain, Thomas Paine in the United States, Voltaire, Denis Diderot and D'Alembert in France. These figures challenged those institutions and systems of thoughts that confined citizens to a set of unnatural laws (7). The interpretation of the Biblical doctrines imposed on people and the religious authorities were challenged because the claim was that the individual had a freedom of speech, of conscience, and of religion. Therefore, at the core of the Enlightenment lay reason, and the liberation of the individual from the bonds of political, religious, and social rules and restraints that were not compatible with the natural laws and the essence of humanity. According to these Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke, Voltaire and Thomas Paine, the underlying thought was the necessity to "understand the natural environment of humanity", and they believed that this process of awareness had to be free of "the authority of the Church and the literal interpretation of the Bible" (7). It was believed that religious doctrines had no place for the comprehension of the physical world and human relations, the social relations and the individual had to be liberated from the "restraint of custom" and "arbitrary authority" (Leeb 49).

Women desired to have their share in this new system of thoughts as it focused on individual natural rights independent of artificial religious, political and social impositions. It is assumed that the roots of concern for and a better awareness of the

rights of women sprang from the 18th century Enlightenment. Nevertheless, the Enlightenment outlook turned out to be paradoxical owing to its contradictory views concerning women. While, on the one hand, it presented and encouraged a secular and contractual model of family relationship which seemed to promise women an existence free of religious and moral restrictions and also to promise some kind of political freedom (though not an existence yet), on the other hand it polarized men and women by placing them in two different spheres; the public and the private. So the woman's position in this system of thoughts was a two-sided issue.

What was meant by trying to remove the religious restrictions on women was the attempt to come up with a more "detailed exploration of the sexes, and much more explicit discussion of how far such differences were innate, how far they were moulded by the environment" (Rendall 8). What was natural to their sex rather than what was divinely ordered was to be taken into account. What was claimed by the phrase "divinely ordered", as Robert Filmer argued (1680), was that "monarchy was a natural institution, to be traced back to the Biblical account of Eden, to the sovereignty over his family given to Adam" (9). In accordance with this claim, men were considered to have absolute authority over women in the family. However, John Locke opposed this view by claiming that monarchs could not rule by the consent of heaven but by the consent of people, and he thought that a "contractual" relationship should have been in social relations and it should have been reflected on familial relations among the family members, too (9). A major argument, in relation, was that marriage was a kind of relationship that needed to be "contractual" and "although the male's superior ability might give him the right to manage joint affairs, it gave no absolute sovereignty", which, in theory, limited the authority of the man over the woman (Rendall 9). This argument by Locke was an attack on the patriarchy and a rejection of the idea that family was a political symbol, a model of authority (9). On the other hand, however, thinkers like Jean-Jacque Rousseau and Immanuel Kant defended the idea that, according to the *natural laws*, the two sexes had two different spheres, and while saying this, they based their claim on the different particular gender attributes nature granted them, which they called "the intention of nature" (9). In defining women, "the intention of nature" was used to mean that women were physically weak and they naturally had "moral love", which required another sphere

to put them in than the public sphere and made them a "minority" as a social group (Leeb 57). Women were also held back by their role in educating children. Education, one of the fundamental elements of the Enlightenment view, was thought to be essential as the idea was defended that children were innocent and that the impressions they got and the environmental factors they encountered in their early years would shape their adult years. Thus, with the bigger emphasis put on the formation of the individual's character, maternity gained a new prominence (Barker 35). The responsibility put on women was that they were seen as moral reformers and guides, which will be studied in detail later on.

The French Revolution was motivated by the thoughts of the Enlightenment and created an enthusiasm of universal equal rights for individuals, but deprived women of these new political rights such as the right to vote. The French Declaration of 1789 was titled as "The Rights of Man and the Citizen" (Clark 22). The French Revolution had offered "a political theory of universal rights" and women had also "participated in revolutionary crowds". However, they were excluded from these political rights such as equality and political liberty (22). There were basically two rationales: one termed women's roles in the domestic sphere "natural", which has already been mentioned mentioned as Roussaue's approach. The other idea was that "biological differences between the sexes led to different societal roles", which will be discussed later on. Therefore, women were to wait many years before they would get rid of their second-class existence in political and legal terms. Women would have to fight for their rights and they could get them.

The British society continued to evolve socioeconomically with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, which started in the late 18th century and progressed making major changes in the 19th century. Big changes were being experienced within the family and in the wider society. Nevertheless, the changes encountered in different ranks of the society were divergent in social, professional, and cultural terms.

Before talking about these particular differences, it is of crucial importance to mention the concept of family. Lilian Lewis Shiman asserts that "Medieval and early Modern England was a corporate world, a society in which men and women were

defined according to their associations. While membership in towns, guilds, and other associations was important, the basic social unit was the family" (1). Accordingly, the family was considered as the basic social and economic unit, the smallest institution in society. Marriage was an alliance of powers. Rather than being a private affair, it was thought to be the concern of the whole community. The greater whole was of more importance than the individual. "They perceived divergences of interest between classes, religions or families but not between the sexes within a family" (2), because they acted as a whole and were closely attached to one another like one social body operating in that system of affairs.

Yet, with the emergence of the movements emphasizing the importance of the individual as well as that of industrialization and its economic outcomes, the collective worldview weakened. There was a vital focus on the "producer, citizen, and the public figure" (2). Now that trade, production, and the individual gained importance, it was inevitable that the society was to evolve into a new phase with all its social classes.

In the new industrial society, the basic change was the shift of what was of importance; money replaced land as the basis of power. There emerged a new class of bankers, merchants, investors and so on, which was called the middle-class. It was not that there were not professions like those before, but their importance increased with the new market of the new industrial world. They were now economically and politically more dominant than the landed aristocracy (Hall 3). They were, in a sense, the embodiment of how the individual could expand his opportunities through self-help and of his capacity to gain economic independence and establish his social standing with his own efforts (Caine 14).

When this was the case, the women of the new middle-class experienced a new type of division of labour. They felt the separation of the two spheres (the public and the private) intensely because there was no more interdependence among family members in relation to work. "The shop-keeping family, associated with a physical environment which combined work and home" started to change gradually (Hall 4). Moreover, as the business of these tradesmen expanded, their aspirations also grew.

They “increasingly wanted their homes to be separated from their workplace and wanted their wives and children to be dependent on them” (4). In fact, the fact that women did not have to work was a sign of leisure, financial comfort in the family, which explains why this was strongly approved of (4). With Queen Victoria’s ascension to the throne (1837), the ideals of womanhood such as piety, good morality, and respectability were stressed even more as a domestic ideology emerged. In this new world, women were indicators of the family status, and that wives and daughters were unemployed proved the economic and social success of the family (Shiman 68). Accordingly, this was the end of the traditional idea that “families were income-earning units” in which all family members were the participants (68). Now the male was the head of the household with all the connotations of the word.

For the aristocracy nothing much had changed. Women of upper-classes had their own problems, too. Yet, they were not as isolated as the women of the middle-classes. They normally lived as “members of a collective household with many familial supports” (Shiman 65). Economically, too, they were comparatively more advantageous as, in general, they came from large extended families with connexions that protected and looked after all their family members. In marriage, they were not completely dependent on their husbands as they had their own dowry and the laws protected their properties in case of divorce.

Working-class women had a very different experience. Many women working in the nineteenth-century belonged to the working-classes. Unlike middle and upper-class women, they had to work. They were mainly occupied in domestic service, in garment making or worked in the textile industry or they were forced into factories and became wage-labourers. Lower standards of living and shortage of money were reasons of why they could and needed to work. “The poor, the illiterate, the economically and politically powerless of the past operated according to values which fully justified the employment of women outside the home” (Whitelegg 49). Just as leisure and spare time were signs of social status for middle-class women, hard work regardless of sex indicated being a member of the working-class. So, in this class, there was a division of labour as all members of the family had to work to make a living and were economically dependent on each other. Yet, although

working-class women were not debarred from the economic and productive sphere, patriarchal authority continued in society as a whole. Women had to work both at home and at work. “The working woman emerged as a ‘social problem’ in the thirties and forties” states Sally Alexander, implying the consequences of the new modern industrial world, and Friedrich Engels, who wrote an account of working-class life in Manchester in 1844, commented on this by saying that the roles of femininity and masculinity were intermingled; the conditions “unsexed both sexes” (Hall 17). From the 1830s on, certain changes were made for working women; working hours were slowly reduced, women as well as children were debarred from mines. However, the general outlook was that despite many middle-class women’s struggle to be allowed to work and their inability to do so, there was a vast number of working-class women who, regardless of their choice, had to work.

It is, at this point, important to add that apart from the reconfiguring effects of the new industrial world and intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment, there were some deep-rooted, centuries-long notions regarding women which were hard to alter despite the changes in the social structure in the foreground and which were even renewed and intensified with the new movements like the Enlightenment. The reasons confining women to subordination basically arose from biological and religious assumptions regarding both men and women. Biologically, the assumption was that women were inferior to men. The man was superior in both muscular power and intellectual capacity. This was believed to be a major cause placing men and women apart. A noted physiologist of the time, Alexander Walker, asserted his view on the issue regarding biological differences: “It is evident that the man, possessing reasoning faculties, muscular power, and courage to employ it, is qualified for being a protector: the woman, being little capable of reasoning, feeble and timid, requires protection. Under such circumstances, the man naturally governs: the woman naturally obeys” (129). The thinkers of the Enlightenment explained this in terms of natural roles attributed to sexes in view of their supposed physical and mental differences. Due to his so-called biological *superiority* and capacity, man was defined as an intellectual and reasoning creature. The woman, “little capable of reasoning” was a being of emotions and sentiment. So, the separation between sexes went on with the division of “heart” and “head”. As Laura Morgan Green expressed

it, this lay beneath the "anxiety" to "associate women with self-sacrifice" and "men with power" (26). John Stuart Mill, in his *The Subjection of Women*, seeing these assumptions as simple theories, stated that "the adoption of this system of inequality never was the result of deliberation, or forethought, or any social ideas, or any notion whatever of what conduced to the benefit of humanity or the good order of the society. It arose simply from the fact that "from the very earliest twilight of human society, every woman (owing to the value attached to her by men, combined with her inferiority in muscular strength) was found in a state of bondage to some man" (93). Concepts like power, reasoning, protection, and courage were, therefore, associated with males whereas women were described as weak creatures dependent on male protection.

It should be added that the viewpoint regarding women as imperfect and "feeble" did not solely stem from observable physical differences, but it was strongly related to the Christian view on genders. Christian teaching also describes women as inferior beings basing its claim on "the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam" (Perkin 1). Thus, the subordinate and dependent nature of women was not only emphasized but also used to regulate human behaviour and social roles.

However, it should also be added that the religious restriction was stronger with the Evangelical theological stream, the origins of which went back to late 18th century. The discontentment with the individualistic and capitalist ideas the Industrial Revolution brought about made Evangelical worldview popular especially among the middle-classes (Evans 70). There was an increased stress on the moral significance of women's domestic role and the emergence of the virtuous, moral, and religious mother. "The woman, as wife and mother, was the pivot of the family, and consequently the guardian of all Christian (and domestic) virtues" (Whitelegg 32). The Evangelical movement, in a sense, was originally motivated by the views of the Enlightenment. As mentioned in relation to the Enlightenment, women were given the roles of moral reformers and guides. The moral mother and wife figures were, in some way, the reflections of the *moral* character of the country (Morgan 39). These interconnected biological and religious explanations, as a natural consequence,

formed the outline of the moral and also social roles and responsibilities of the men and especially the women of the nineteenth century.

The nineteenth-century people believed that home and the domestic sphere represented their national stance as well. For them, "the condition of England was to be seen, accounted for, and modified in the home" (57). Woman, as the mother and the wife, was supposed to make the home, keep the family together, and keep it securely Christian (Hogan 8). In this way, the responsibility was shifted to women's shoulders. A writer of the time, Edwin Hood, in *The Age and Its Architects* says: "The hope of society is in woman! The hope of the age is in woman! On her depends mainly the righting of wrongs, the correcting of sins, and the success of all missions" (377). The controversy was that, having been given such a lofty *duty* in the family, in fact, women's attention was being distracted from the outside world. In this way, they were being pulled away from active social roles. They were somehow being silenced in basic educational, professional, and political fields of life.

As women were bound to be at home to deal with domestic anxieties or to labour for sustenance, it was assumed that they did not need to trouble themselves to receive the kind of schooling that men received. For middle and upper class women, certain 'female accomplishments' such as needlework, making boxes out of shells, flower arrangement, playing the piano, performing on the harp etc. were considered to be sufficient to pass the time and prove oneself in girlhood, or womanhood (Houghton 352). Referring to these "female accomplishments" (as Jane Austen described them in *Pride and Prejudice*), the forerunner advocate of sexual equality of men and women in the previous era, Mary Wollstonecraft, wrote in *Thought on the Education of Daughters* (1787) that girls did not learn enough "to engage their attention and render it an employment of the mind" (25). Women from different classes had their particular predicaments. Upper-class girls did not go to school and were educated by their governesses and tutors at home. The well-off middle class imitated the aristocracy by teaching their daughters in the same way and the rest of the middle-class often sent their girls to school (Perkin 32). For the daughters of the working classes, on the other hand, there was almost no consideration of education. The author of *Two Lectures on Girls' Schools and the Training of Working Women*

(1857), Mrs. Austen, stated that "working-class girls' education was intended to fit them to be better servants to the rich and better wives to poor men, and nothing else" (qtd in Perkin 46). It shows that, in this way, girls' expectations were not only being limited by their gender but also by the class they belonged to. However, the second half of the nineteenth century was more promising due to certain changes in the educational system. The Education Act of 1870, also called the "Forster Act" as W.E. Forster wrote it, was considered to be innovatory as the compulsory schooling for children was extended to 12 years of age (Perkin 151). With the Education Act of 1876, it became "illegal to employ any child under 10 years of age in agricultural work" (191). The movement for higher education for women was to begin in the 1860s.

Such circumstances had repercussions on the political and legal spheres too. Women had no right to vote. They could neither sue nor be sued. Until the marriage acts of 1870 and 1882, women lost their property and other legal rights upon marriage. Married women had little or limited control over personal property, and in the case of divorce, the legal tendency was to give the custody of children to fathers except for some exceptions. In law, a woman belonged to the man she married. Man was "the absolute master of her, her property, and her children" (Basch 17).

Marriage was greatly encouraged. Paradoxically, marriage seemed to be a way out of their actual conditions and constraints. Women saw marriage as a means to fulfil their aspirations such as ensuring an economically comfortable life, maintaining their social status, or having their own home to conduct (Perkin 54). So, for the better life they imagined, marriage was a potential means of escape; a release from the burden of control they were exposed to. Even the idea that they would have their own order of things at their new home gave them a sense of novelty. However, after getting married, life did not become any better for the woman. On the contrary, now that she was married, the woman legally belonged to her husband. By marriage, husband and wife were considered one person in law "– and that person was he" (Perkin 73).

Restraints due to marriage showed nuances based on different classes. Compared to upper class women, who had a considerable amount of freedom, middle-class women

were constrained more by the marriage law. It was not that the laws were different for the upper-class women but middle-class women felt those restrictions more because of their economic dependence on their husbands. For the aristocracy, "the marriage settlement was the legal instrument by which the fate of the family for several generations was decided; fortunes and titles were readily intermingled as a result of bargains struck between families" (64). In this sense, their marriages were generally arranged alliances with economic and social advantages for both sides; suitable partners were found accordingly (64). There were "marriage settlements" and "the rich" attempted "to protect their daughters by this method" (66). In addition, "aristocratic women", states Joan Perkin, "obviously benefited from the Common Law provision that a wife did not lose her rank on marriage" (73). In case of divorce, they were not in a disadvantaged position since they had the economic support of their families, they had their personal wealth. Middle-class women generally formed marriage connections "with families who were roughly their equals" (73). It was almost impossible for a middle-class woman to get divorced. In lower classes, there was much "emotional dependence" on the woman who had the roles of a mother, a wife and also a provider for the family. Moreover, the women of the working-classes were in a sense "beyond the reach of civil law"; this was not because they had "a system of private law built up by their families to protect them" like the upper-class women did but it was because they had "too little or no property" that they were, in some sense, "outside the scope of law" (115). Things were not to change much for women until a group of acts would be passed in the second half of the century.

Morality was also very important as it was especially stressed as a *virtue* from the middle of the century onwards (Gowing 3). What was problematical, as Laura Gowing in *Domestic Dangers* also drew attention to, was the existence of a "gendered morality" in the society, and the fixed idea that women were potentially blameworthy and responsible for wrongdoing; they were "culpable" for adultery and the like. These women belonged to "a culture that perceived women's virtue, honour, and reputation through their sexuality" (3). Sexual virtue was seen as "the essence of feminine integrity", and "moral frailty was the foundation of feminine weakness" (3). The tendency was to associate morality or good morals directly with femininity. In *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, Simon Morgan

explains that woman's domestic position along with the emphasis on her moral role was "a part of the myth of Britain's 'civilizing mission' abroad. Women were to moralize, as well as being moral, and also civilize and create a public spirit in their children" (39). The moral mother and wife figure were, in some way, the reflections of the *moral* character of the country (39). Jill L. Matus in *Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity* points that "the moral, sexual, and marital behaviour can be taken as an index of a culture's degree of civilisation, which is judged according to middle-class norms" (57). "Since a physical component-the moral sense- is supposed to temper and refine brute sexual urge in human beings, talk about a culture's moral condition is usually talk about its sexual arrangements and attitudes, that part of culture which influences sexuality and shapes even physicality of a people" (57).

As stated before, a woman "feeble and erring" and acting against the Victorian code of purity was considered a social outcast. Seduction (or being seduced) and adultery were absolutely unacceptable. Seduced girls and women committing adultery were unquestionably fallen women and their "after-chances" were spoiled (Houghton 366). In spite of these moral codes and restrictions, curiously enough, prostitution was very common. It was widespread and was considered the ultimate point of moral and sexual decay in the society.

The concept of the fallen woman finds its definition in the attitude towards these women and how they were perceived. Keith Thomas talks about men's tendency to see women with a sense of possessiveness, as property. He indicates that, at the heart of this gendered morality, there was "the desire of men for absolute property in women", property "whose value is diminished if the woman at any time has sexual relations with anyone other than her husband" (qtd in Gowing 55).

The same moral rules did not apply to men, however. While women's place and respectability in society was defined by their chastity and purity and they were readily called "fallen" women otherwise, the men remained free of such moral responsibilities. This obviously pointed to a double standard regarding morality. Although the Puritan principle defended the necessity of "resistance to the desires of

the body" and "chastity" which "applied to men as well as to women" in theory, the real-life experience was not so simply defined (Watt 156). "The fashionable assumption that sexual purity was not so important for men as for women" began to be criticized through certain works and direct criticism by some writers (157). The examples of attack on the double standards regarding morality for men and women date back to the 18th century. The literary works such as Samuel Richardson's epistolary novel *Pamela*, which tells the story of a fifteen-year-old servant-maid trying to resist the sexual advances made by her master and finally managing to make him marry her, is considered among these examples. Similarly, another writer of the time, Mrs. Manley, questioned the hypocrisy of men who seduced women, especially women of lower classes, and then looked for sexual purity in women, asking: "Is it not monstrous that our seducers should be our accusers?" (157). Despite this raising awareness, however, the state of affairs still had a long time to be changed.

This sense of gendered morality, in a way, explains fixed images ascribed to women. The images created for them were polarized. Just as the traits considered appropriate for women were unrealistic, images created for them were unrealistic, too. Angelic, pure women were opposed to fallen women. Ray Strachey observes:

> In one section of the society there stood the sacred hearth and the inviolable family, and there women were, in theory, sheltered and respected, not so much for themselves as because they were the centre of the home and the guardians of the "honour" of their husbands. In the other section there were women, too, equally necessary, but very differently regarded. These women were not honoured either for themselves or for any other thing. They were exploited, bullied, and ill-treated, cooped up in the brothels of the great towns, condemned to a dreadful life and an early death, but "tolerated," and under the "protection" of the police. (qtd in Fernando 6)

Women were either angels in the house, as Coventry Patmore depicted, or fallen women in relation to their morality. Believing that his wife was the perfect model of a Victorian wife, Patmore held her up as an angel. The woman image in Patmore's poem gradually became more important as it was fully compatible with the expected traits of ideal womanhood such as sympathy, passivity, meekness, self-sacrifice, piety, and grace. However, the polarization of women was not peculiar to this century in origin, which takes us to the "pedestal or pinnacle" theory. This theory regarded "woman as a minor goddess to be worshiped from afar" giving her an

ethereal, spiritual role that guarantees her moral behaviour (Fernando 3). The idea of putting women on a pedestal can be traced back to the Medieval Ages when women were strictly polarized as good or evil. The tendency was to associate some with Eve, who symbolized temptation and fault and women of proper manners with the Virgin Mary. As Marty Williams and Anne Echols also stated in a caricaturizing way, talking of those times, "in philosophy and literature, womankind occupied either the pit of hell with Eve, or the pedestal of heaven with Mary" (3). So, this 19th-century inclination to uplift women to ethereal roles was not new.

In the 19th-century literary world also, female characters were depicted by a predominantly male world of literature. In literary works, as well as in society, there were the descriptions of Snow-White-like girls, angelic girls, monstrous women, witches, and fiends (Gilbert and Gubar 29). Far from being living, earthly beings, they were described with stereotypes. Moreover, women novelists themselves were not any different in the sense that they also felt edged out and restricted in a male-dominated literary atmosphere. This was also reflected in their use of certain pen names so as to be taken seriously. The fact that Anne, Charlotte, and Emily Bronte wrote as Acton, Currer, and Elis Bell and that Mary Ann Evans used the pseudonym George Eliot clearly pointed to the prejudice against women writers (Altick 51).

In the face of such inequalities, there were women who internalized the situation passively as well as those who went as far as to manipulate disadvantages into their own advantage. Joan Perkin argues that most couples accepted the *status quo*: "The majority of women preferred not to know they were living in subjection, did not care about lack of political rights, believed change was unlikely and would involve considerable risk if it came, or just did not have the stomach for the fight" (257). It can be indicated then that there was acceptance in many women. Doris Mary Stenton, in *The English Woman in History*, commenting on the gradual process of reaction on women's part, stated: "All through the nineteenth century and, indeed, on into living memory, a considerable body of feminine opinion satisfied with things as they were, hampered the movement towards greater freedom in which other women spent their lives" (312). Stenton is critical of those women who, let alone being involved in the emancipation of women, held back the social advancement of their own sex. A

successful educator and writer of her time, Hannah More (1745-1833) was one of the evangelical moralists who readily accepted that other women "than herself", were not like men and also "their knowledge was not often like the learning of men, to be reproduced in some literary composition, nor ever in any learned profession; but it is to come out in conduct" (Stenton 312). Similarly, one of the prolific writers of the time was Sarah Stickney Ellis who produced a number of manuals on women's role(s) in society. In *The Women of England*, speaking of women, she stated that "they are, in fact, from their own constitution, and from the station they occupy in the world…relative creatures" (123). So, there were specific manuals to control the conduct of ladies, to make them fitting to the society and accept the idea that the woman had a secondary existence and also a secondary right to speak regarding the welfare of things. In herself she was nothing, but she only gained some significance by means of her attachment and connection to other existences (Basch 5).

However, there were also strong-willed women who openly claimed that they should be given certain rights. Referring to these female accomplishments, the forerunner advocate of equality of men and women in the previous era, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote in *Thought on the Education of Daughters* (1787) that girls did not learn enough "to engage their attention and render it an employment of the mind" (25). Besides, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), she accused the society of breeding females as "domestic gentle brutes" (20). She believed that naturally women were not inferior to men, yet, owing to lack of education, they appeared to be weak and ignorant. Women were also rational beings and could be treated so. The first book to appear with a coherent argument on the full emancipation for women and even with the their admission to the legislature was William Thompson's *Appeal of one half of the human race, Women, against the pretensions of the other half, to retain them in political, and thence in civil and domestic, slavery; in reply to a paragraph in Mr. Bill's celebrated 'Article on Government'* written in 1820 (Stenton 320). Women such as Harriet Martineau and Mary Somerville and Florence Nightingale were some of the exemplary women who embodied strong-will in a woman by being the leading women in their fields; sociology, science, medicine respectively.

The process of the emancipation of women did not have a regular rate but it gradually improved. Towards the end of the 18th century, Mary Wollstonecraft was undoubtedly thought-provoking in her demand for "a revolution in manners, based on a rethinking of conventional ideas about women's conduct and gendering of moral qualities" (Caine 27). For her, there was only one standard of human virtue and it must be the same for men and women. Yet her claims were not directly related to the political existence or political representation of women, because of which she was later criticized by 19th century feminists. The period of the French Revolutionary Wars held back the articulation of women's rights due to the already-conservative attitude of the country towards the new social and political milieu. With the emergence of socialist ideas of social transformation and so on, women started to become increasingly active in a range of public activities (Caine 57). Especially middle-class women and women from the aristocracy were involved in philanthropic acts and became supportive in the public sphere. In time, these women formed their own political and social organizations and groups. Hence, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there had emerged the idea of "The Woman Question.", which was interpreted as the "redefinition of womanhood" (54). Sheila Rowbotham comments on the process: "Women started to campaign for particular reforms in the nineteenth century not because they saw themselves as feminists but because circumstances in their own life forced them to protest" (49). This shows that slowly women started to understand that their wishes and interests did not always coincide with those of men. Out of this realization of diverging interests the women's movement was born in the second half of the nineteenth century.

They began looking for changes in their marriage and familial lives. Women from different classes had their particular problems, yet the woman was voiceless in many aspects**.** "An aristocratic woman, for example, Caroline Norton, struggled tirelessly to limit the legal control of husbands over wives. Her alcoholic husband, whom she had left, prevented her from seeing her dying child" (Rowbotham 50-51). A group of acts followed one another in the second half of the century pertaining to this end. The Child Custody Act (1839) allowed mothers to have the guardianship of children in case of a separation if it was agreed that the mother was "of good character" (Caine xiii). The Matrimonial Causes Act in 1857 widened the possibility for women to

divorce, which had earlier been the privilege of the wealthy few. The First Women's Property Act (1870) allowed women to keep their own earnings if they gained them separately, and in the same year the *Woman's Suffrage Journal* started to be published. The Second Women's Property Act (1882) extended and altered the law of the previous act by allowing women to control (buying and selling) their property. Legally, women were recognized as an identity for the first time. They could also sue and be sued. In 1873 Girton College, Cambridge, the first residential university college for women was opened. Judicial separation on the grounds of 'aggravated assault" became possible through the passing of the Matrimonial Causes Act in 1884 (ibid). In 1889, for the first time a woman was elected to London County Council. In 1894, the term 'New Woman' was coined by Sarah Grand. Although the grounds of feminism were built during these years, the term "feminist" was used first in *The Westminster Review* (51). All these developments and changes signified awareness on the part of women that they were going to have their own legal existence in time, even if it was limited to the familial and marital world.

Finally, the civil status of women was to a great extent reformed since political emancipation in the form of suffrage came in 1918. The fact that now they had the right both to vote and to run for office meant that they were politically in existence in the first half of the 20th century (Whitelegg 46). In the light of what has been presented, it can be stated that the 19th century in Britain was an age of transition not only for the country but also for its women in view of the fact that the era had both retained the longstanding values of the past and also, quite to the contrary, tried to adapt to the changing pattern of the new industrial world, which inevitably led to the evolution of woman's place in the society. This change was reflected in different ways on different social-classes of women. However, there emerged a gradual awareness on the part of women and it led them to get organized and to start looking for ways to negotiate with men on the way to gain their political and legal identities.

1.3 George Eliot

George Eliot, born Mary Ann Evans in 1819 in Warwickshire, is considered one of the most prolific writers of her time. Along with being a novelist; she was also an efficient translator and a journalist. Although she was a quite unconventional woman for her time, as she earned her own living and lived with George Henry Lewes unmarried, in time she became a soothing voice of the unstable 19th century for her readers. Her manifestation of "an articulate seriousness of intent" and her in-depth knowledge of other fields such as theology, biology, anthropology, philosophy and psychology gave her a respectable intellectual status both in the literary world and in real life. She admitted that "every writer was *ipso facto* a teacher" (Dodd 2): In a way, she accepted the reforming and guiding intent of her writings.

Eliot's time, as mentioned before, was a time of social changes that resulted first in psychological disenchantment in the public caused by the effects of the Industrial Revolution, and later by Darwin's publishing of *Origin of Species* implying the "awful possibility" that there was "no moral authority except the one which was to be found by digging deep within themselves" (Hughes 4). So, the implications, in simple terms, that humans descended from monkeys and that there was probably no God were a discomfort to the people who were already uneasily trying to adapt to the changing circumstances of the process of industrialization.

Eliot's response to those who were in a conflict as to what to do was to advise them to "stay within the parameters of the "working-day world", which was rather a practical and realistic approach. (5) The statement shows Eliot's conciliatory nature that avoids severe oppositions. She herself was a nonbeliever, and was frequently associated with an unusual life style; she made her implicit and explicit criticisms on different topics in her works, yet she was not radical at all. This is the reason why she was criticized harshly by the critics and feminists later on for not having taken a radical step to advance women's rights and also to change social and political existence in society. They thought that as she "mocked female passivity", questioned fixed rules and lines of ideal womanhood, she should have made her stance clearer (Dodd 3).

The contradictions between the life George Eliot led and the one described in her works are surprising. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar touch on this, saying:

> For, as an Agnostic setting out to write about the virtues of clerical life, a "fallen" woman praising the wife's service, a childless writer celebrating motherhood, an intellectual writing what she called "experiments in life" in celebration of womanly feeling, Eliot becomes entangled in contradictions that she can only resolve through acts of vengeance against her own characters, violent retributions that become more prominent when contrasted with her professed purposes as a novelist" (479).

As this statement makes clear, George Eliot revolted against injustices through her writings and through the characters she created. Yet, in real life, her attitude was considered striking for she defended in her novels many values and the kind of lifestyle that she herself could not attain such as getting married and being a mother. She was also modest enough to disregard the deeply intellectual content and style of her writings, which were associated with a masculine genius, and she tried to sound womanly in her writings.

Eliot had a strong sense of morality. Having stopped believing in God a long time before, she made "morality her religion" (Robertson 9). Hers was a deep philosophy of sympathy and good will combined with a sense of renunciation. Eliot was fully aware of the "struggle between the egoistic and altruistic functions in the adjustment of a stable equilibrium" in human beings (9). She knew that the sentiments of duty would help the individual empathize with people around him/her and his/her surroundings.

As a novelist, she went beyond her contemporaries and those who preceded her in making further revelations of the deeper soul of the woman by her analytical method in fiction. "Her heroines are not merely lovers of men or objects of their adoration...they are women of intellect and feeling, capable of taking their share in the progress of society" (Wasti 11). In a way, not only through her writings but also because of her own posture in society, Mary Ann Evans managed to "transcend the limits of her sex" (Gilbert and Gubar 180).

In her lifetime George Eliot wrote seven novels which were successful enough to secure her position as a reputable and productive novelist. Her novels are rich in rural content and depictions of rural communities, such as in *Adam Bede* (1859) which

was highly praised for its characterization and the realistic representations of rural life. *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) is widely accepted to be the autobiography of the author in many respects. The novel presents the individual's struggles against the circumstances restraining her. It exemplifies the individual's or more specifically the woman's attempts to determine her own place according to her own desires in a society that does not allow this. Maggie Tulliver, when the state of affairs forces her to "turn herself into an angel of renunciation", becomes very "monstrous" (Gilbert and Gubar 491). Her subject matters were diverse and all demonstrated her in-depth knowledge of the topics she put in the background of her works such as religion in *Silas Marner* (1861), history and art in *Romola* (1863), and social and political dynamics in *Felix Holt, The Radical*. (1866). Some of her characters were inspired from her family members; Adam Bede and Caleb Garth evoking her father, Tom Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* was drawn with similarities to her brother Isaac.

1.4 Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy, a poet and novelist, was born in 1840; three years after Queen Victoria ascended the throne. He wrote all his novels during her reign, which denotes that he was considered a Victorian writer like George Eliot also was. As Richard D. Altick describes, the literature of the Victorian Period is "the record of a society seeking ways to adjust itself to conditions as revolutionary as any we face today" (73). Hardy wrote at a time of change and evolution in a post-industrial country.

Although Thomas Hardy's reputation has been largely based on his fourteen novels written between 1871 and 1895 and they are best remembered for their half-fictitious, half-real provincial setting of Wessex, memorable female characters, class and gender topics, he considered himself "first and foremost a poet, just as he considered poetry the most important of literary genres" (Morgan 141). He was first a poet, then a novelist. Having realized that his poems did not receive the attention he had dreamed of, he resorted to novel-writing.

Thomas Hardy's novels have been praised because of their "timeless nature" and the "contemporary significance of the ideas addressed" (Sherrick 7). The reason must

have been the universality of the topics presented and the successful portrayal making them memorable. Hardy wrote about social concerns like gender, class, hypocrisy, which were restraining for the people of the century. Thus, the conflict between the individual and the community, nature and society were frequently integrated into his plots.

Among his most popular novels was *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), in which he first used the term Wessex for his half-fictitious, half-real setting. Having inherited a farm from her uncle, Batsheba Everdene, to everyone's surprise in a male-dominated community, decides to manage it herself; she is pursued by three suitors. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) is a tragic novel with an appalling beginning; a young hay-trusser, Michael Henchard sells his wife for five guineas. *Jude the Obscure* (1895) was so groundbreaking that the intensity of negative criticism it received caused the author to give up writing novels for good. The content of the novel was found offensive due to its attack on the marriage institution, class, and religion.

Thomas Hardy's works contain much material relating to matters of gender. Kristin Brady explains this in her article "Thomas Hardy and Matters of Gender" by saying that this is the case "not only because these texts confront and perpetuate ideas about sexual difference that were influential in Hardy's own time, but also because his vivid, contradictory, and often strange representations of sexual desire...have continually elicited from his readers intense and revealing responses" (93) This is why his novels attracted a great deal of attention.

Marriage and marital decisions were among his frequently used themes as well as being central to his plots. He dwelled on sexual double standards and inequitable relationships, personal self-delusions along with romantic projections of passion "which fail to flow on and beyond into broader, fuller, companionate partnerships" (Page 254). For Hardy, getting married and living happily-ever-after, the traditional literary convention of closure in narrative was something "ethically unjustifiable, undesirable" and also "a false representation of the world" (256). Class was as important as gender and they were interrelated concepts in his works and even

shaped the prospect of unions. With respect to women, he was fully aware of their expectations, dilemmas and capacities, which he echoed in his portrayal of them.

MIDDLEMARCH

Middlemarch, which belongs to the mature years of George Eliot in literary terms, is a historical novel that covers the period from September 1829 to May 1832, just before the passing of the Reform Bill although it was published in 1871-1872 in serial form. Doreen Roberts argues in the preface that for a novel to be historical, the author should have some reasons, the most considerable of which seem to be coming up with a comparison of "then and now" and "to assess the degree of equality and change" in the process (ix).

The time span covers the political changes and also the developments in "medicine (Lydgate and the fever hospital), farming (represented by Caleb and Fred), housing, (Dorothea's plans and Sir James's implementation of them) and transportation (the coming of the railway) which contribute to the sense that men and women at every level of the society believed in the 'march' of the progress" (Henry 89). So the period is a time of progress in science and technology and the effects of these changes on a single community are representative of bigger ones.

It is a multi-plot novel. Within the framework of changes, the provincial lives and interlocking stories of the Midlands town people are described. Thus, at the centre of the novel, there is not one individual, but many individuals whose lives are integrated, which forms the whole picture of a community. Each individual and his/her life choices constitute a wider range of questions presented such as the question of vocation, the woman question, and the nature of marriage. There are five chief narratives in the foreground. The first one is the story of Dorothea Brooke, an ardent girl who seeks intellectual guidance and vocational satisfaction. She realizes that she was wrong to expect such direction from Edward Casaubon, who is the pedantic cleric and scholar she married. After he dies, she discovers her love for his young cousin Will Ladislaw, with whom she shares an enthusiastic search for life's proper vocation. This idealistic outlook is linked to the subplot in the story between Tertius Lydgate and Rosamond Vincy. Lydgate's medical ambitions and Rosamond's indifference to them and her strong desire for financial comfort lie at the bottom of their mutual unhappiness. The third love story of the novel is that of Mary Garth and

Fred Vincy, which ends happily owing to Mary's logical supervisions of Fred that make him find a good job he will like doing. There is also the happy marriage between Celia Brooke and Sir James Chettam. The last of the subplots is the shocking story of Nicholas Bulstrode, who causes the death of his blackmailer John Raffles, who had threatened to reveal his unpleasant past and destroy his reputation. Although she is devastated upon learning the reality, Harriet Bulstrode does not desert her husband. Apart from these main narratives, there are many minor characters who all contribute to the constitution of the setting but they will only be mentioned briefly when they appear necessary to the analysis of the novel.

The novel has been mainly studied and read from a feminist perspective on account of its portrayal of divergent female characters representative of the role and position of the then society. "One further effect of having set her novel back in time is that the female characters George Eliot depicts are even more restricted socially and economically than the women of her own age, so the frustration of vocational ambition which, in the prelude to the novel, is described 'as the social lot of woman', is brought into sharper focus" (Billington 13). So, what George Eliot did was to look back at pre-Victorian times to present women's place in the early 19th century society and to show the circumstances that led to the gradual reforms concerning women in the coming years.

2.1 Female Subordination

In the crowded but small world of Middlemarch society, women are supposed to be content with what they have been born to, and live and make decisions in accordance with certain prescribed gender roles. Middlemarch women are overpowered by men and excluded from social and vocational spheres regardless of their social class, wealth, and their personal differences.

> Theresa's passionate, ideal nature demanded an epic life: what were many-volumed romances of chivalry and the social conquests of a brilliant girl to her? Her flame quickly burned up that light fuel; and, fed from within, soared after some illimitable satisfaction, some object which would never justify weariness, which would reconcile self-despair with the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self. She found her epos in the reform of a religious order.

> That Spanish woman who lived three hundred years ago was certainly not the last of her kind. Many Theresas have been born who found no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity; perhaps a tragic failure which found no sacred poet and sank unwept into oblivion. (3)

By invoking a female figure like Saint Theresa, the narrator points to the similarities of her expectations from life with those of her foremost heroine Dorothea Brooke. St. Theresa, who did not desire to lead an aristocratic life, yearned for an existence of martyrdom for the sake of her beliefs. This is why she left home with her seven-year-old brother, to find martyrdom among the Moors. However, for women like Dorothea who wish to have similar "heroic", "epic", lives, the circumstances are "tangled" and the opportunities are "mean" (3). In this way, the idea is given that although these women feel the same need to accomplish certain "recognizable deeds", their struggles and efforts remain unrecognized. Thus, there is a sense of irony that within the to-be-presented social milieu, "modern Theresas" and their high aspirations are doomed not to be appreciated enough and they are to come across the consequences of being members of the "social lot of women". Commenting on the comparison between St. Theresa and modern-day Theresas like Dorothea, Alison Case and Harry E. Shaw assert:

> What was truly remarkable about St. Theresa (and this must be why she is the heroine of the Prelude) is that she was a woman who was famous both for her ecstatic mystical visions and also for her practical, this-worldly success in reforming the day-to-day life of an order of nuns. To have achieved both of these things would suggest that St. Theresa must indeed have lived a life that was for her unified in all its aspects, from the minutely mundane ("a grand life *here – now*—in England") to the transcendently spiritual. (179)

Modern-day Theresas such as Dorothea Brooke, sadly, are faced with a much greater challenge in identifying "an object that would never justify weariness" in the first place to achieve. For people in the modern world, life is in pieces. We cannot join our spiritual lives with our daily lives in a seamless way, as St. Theresa did, partly because we no longer have a unified spiritual and intellectual vision capable of bringing all parts of life into a single focus. As also understood from Case and Shaw's interpretation that regardless of the spiritual depth and practical ends of both women, society in the world and time of Middlemarch lacks that "coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul" (3).

As Harriet Farwell Adams puts it, "the parallel with St. Theresa provides the scheme both for Dorothea's character and for the action of Miss Brooke" (73). Accordingly, then, Dorothea Brooke's character, actions, and decisions will be seen with references to this St. Theresa example. This pattern of behaviour will also be a symbolic role model to see to what extent not only Dorothea but also other female characters push the limits of their given chances and opportunities in that society.

2.1.1 Lack of Educational Possibilities for Women

As Gillian Beer also puts it in *Middlemarch and the Woman Question*, "education is one of the key factors that greatly determines the characters and George Eliot takes as her central topic the unfit preparation of women for life's opportunities" (159). In the novel, the inadequacy of education is portrayed in a different way through each woman. In this part, the sisters Dorothea and Celia Brooke represent two different female attitudes towards lack of opportunities, which shows the differences between their personalities. Rosamond Vincy and Mary Garth, on the other hand, are two individual examples regarding both the education they received and their manners.

2.1.1.1 Dorothea Brooke and Celia Brooke

In *Middlemarch*, women lack the kind of education given to men. Regardless of their social rank, familial connections, or expectations from life, almost every girl is destined to feel aggrieved by the educational inadequacy they experience in one way or another. The consequences are not very different for any girl even if she belongs to an aristocratic background. The Brooke sisters, Dorothea and Celia "had been both educated on plans at once narrow and promiscuous, first in an English family and afterwards in a Swiss family at Lausanne" (6). The implication given at first sight is that the education the sisters have received is inadequate; "narrow" and "promiscuous". It is not enough, because it was not systematic or programmed.

The nineteen-year-old and "remarkably clever" Dorothea Brooke is a girl "of some good birth and fortune". Although they are not exactly aristocratic, her uncle Mr Arthur Brooke, who raised her and her sister Celia, has very good connections. From the very first description given about Dorothea, it is asserted that she is not a girl of

mediocre expectations; at least for her time and place. Her thirst for knowledge or being knowledgeable is hinted at frequently. She knows "many passages of Pascal's ***Pensees*** and of Jeremy Taylor by heart" (6). She thinks to herself that "such destinies of mankind, seen by the light of Christianity, made the solicitudes of feminine fashion appear an occupation for Bedlam" (6). The ironic tone of the narrator associated with comments about Dorothea actually starts here with the fact that Pascal and Jeremy Taylor were then considered "improbable authors for a young girl" to read and thoroughly absorb (6).

However, although Dorothea has many plans, she is ambivalent about what to do as she lacks the certainty that could be provided with a proper education applicable to her pending designs:

> Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it. (6)

Dorothea has a spiritual depth, a religious intensity of feeling that makes her feel obliged to accomplish something "lofty" and "great". Her plans' starting point is the parish of Tipton Grange where she believes she can build cottages for the local poor. What is noteworthy is that she remains "theoretic" and "rash", which is a sign of her unformed nature. The elusiveness of her dreams combined with her impatience and her potential hastiness in devoting herself to anything that might be useful is an evident sign of her future decisions. She is in search of a sort of a great cause, a belief system for the sake of which she could make necessary self-sacrifices, but she does not know what that cause would be and how she should act. Her "Puritan energy", which pushes her to ponder on doing things for the good of all, is combined with her strong sense of spirituality. She likes "sitting up at night to read old theological books." The narrator adds with irony that "such a wife might awaken you some fine morning with a new scheme for the application of her income which would interfere with political economy and the keeping of saddle-horses: a man would naturally think twice before he risked himself in such fellowship" (7). It is both explicitly and implicitly repeated that Dorothea needs to plan and act, she has particular hopes, which would most probably—as the narrator implies—clash with

the opinions of the male-dominated society she resides in. It is doubtful whether the community she lives in will respond positively to the rich imagination of this "ardent, open" girl and her hunger for knowing the truths of life" (8). Since Dorothea likes "regulating life according to notions", it is quite likely that she will be disappointed in some way if she cannot get reactions in tune with hers. So, regardless of her good birth and intelligence, Dorothea, cannot know how exactly she can turn her dreams into solid plans because she lacks the necessary education. Her female education precludes her access to anything practical or worth trying for the wellbeing of people. The description of the views of townspeople also demonstares the limited perspective reflected on women's education. "Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them" (7). The point made here is not only about an opposition between the individual and society but especially about woman clashing with society and its norms. The statement expresses the intolerance of society to strong-willed women. Such a difference can be interpreted as a threat in such a small community.

The narrator portrays the differences between the sisters with irony. With all her "eagerness to know the truths of life" and "ardent" nature, Dorothea, as we have seen, was identified as an unusual girl from the viewpoint of the town people (7). In spite of Dorothea's being mentioned as a "remarkably clever girl", the narrator ironically states that Celia "had more common sense" (5). While the rural opinion is in favour of "amiable" and "innocent-looking" Celia, Dorothea's large eyes manifest her "too unusual" and "striking" nature. The narrator is again sarcastic in calling her "poor Dorothea", because she was considered to be different just because she was not like her sister Celia in terms of her manners and the impression she made on people (7).

In view of the education they received, Celia is not much different from Dorothea. However, she seems to be content with what she has been given and what she is. Unlike her sister, she is not in search of deeper knowledge; she does not seek beyond what she has. In this respect, Celia is much more mild and predictable in her actions. She is even a little bit afraid of her sister lest she should annoy her by her own views.

Although she cannot openly protest against Dorothea's unfitting opinions openly, she remains fixed on her opinions. "The best way of defining characters", says Amy K. Levin, "is by contrasting them", which is definitely true for Dorothea and Celia Brooke (50). The sisters are portrayed with opposite features, which can be interpreted as the narrator's aim at emphasizing their different personalities. In *The Suppressed Sister* Amy K. Levin states that "Eliot's sisters often seem connected by nothing but blood" (78). They are very different. While Dorothea, despite being a wealthy girl, deliberately abstains from dressing flamboyantly and chooses to remain plain, Celia is secretly interested in looking more feminine. The first solid example of their dissimilarity is the time when Celia suggests that it is now time for them to sort out the jewels their mother had left them (9). At this point, Dorothea puts on an authoritative, patronizing tone, trying to show that she is not interested in such materialistic things as Celia is. "What a little Almanac you are, Celia! Is it six calendar or six months?" She belittles her sister's enthusiasm, perceiving it as exaggeration and "frivolous"(9). Celia, in return, feels hurt by Dorothea's seeming indifference and being told boldly to "take her property" (10). Despite Dorothea's desire to prove her "Puritanic superiority" to her sister, Celia is smart enough to recognize the contradiction between what her sister asserts and what she does, because she detects Dorothea's indecisiveness over whether or not to take a ring and a bracelet for herself (11). For Celia, the inconsistency was that either "she should have taken her full share of the jewels, or, after what she has said, she should have renounced them altogether" (11). This means that even though Celia seems to be a mild and compliant younger sister, she also has her own views and ideas, which might even be critical towards Dorothea at times.

So, the opposing views and features between the sisters also function as a paradigm for two differing philosophies of life and also for "rivalry between the conventional and the unconventional" (Levin 79). Levin explains that "the disloyalty among sisters dramatically sets off the social isolation of her unconventional heroines. Her heroines consider themselves different from other women as well as from their sisters" (79). Although Dorothea cannot be categorized as an eccentric girl, the differences emphasized in the sisters' descriptions underline their differing worldviews. Moreover, Dorothea's attempt to look and think differently from her

sister may be a sign of her inward belief that she has more different, higher hopes in life than her sister does.

2.1.1.2. Rosamond Vincy

Rosamond embodies another kind of Victorian female as regards the inadequacy of female education. In Middlemarch, she is considered to be the most "accomplished" young girl according to the narrator's ironical description of society's expectations from a proper female education.

> She was admitted to be the flower of Mrs. Lemon's school, the chief school in the county, where the teaching included all that was demanded in the accomplished female-even to extras, such as getting in and out of a carriage. Mrs Lemon herself had always held up Miss Vincy as an example: no pupil, she said, exceeded that young lady for mental acquisition and propriety of speech, while her musical execution was quite exceptional. (79)

Rosamond is the daughter of Mr. Walter Vincy, the mayor of Middlemarch, and a middle-class manufacturer. She shows "exceptional" success in completing all these stages of being lady-like, which makes her exemplary to all the girls of the town and grants her a promising reputation among her elders. "Rosamond Vincy, the prize pupil of Mrs. Lemon's finishing school, is offered as an epitome of what nineteenth-century society seeks in its women", says Karen Chase (12), noting that what nineteenth-century people meant by the most proper education for women and Rosamond, with all the connotations of her name, is a personification of the ideal girl. It can be stated that what is called "accomplished" in a female, and the education Rosamond receives to be so, is rather shallow and trivial. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar also comment on both Dorothea and Rosamond's lack of opportunities; "both are victims of miseducation causing them not to 'know Homer from slang' and neither, therefore, shows any unbecoming knowledge" (514). They do not have any "unbecoming", improper knowledge because they know too little. By the Homer example, the critics make a reference to the dialogue between Fred and Rosamond where the former teases the latter for her inability to comprehend the deeper meanings of the words and expressions she labels as "correct English" (82). Fred's sarcastic manner towards Rosamond reveals the implicit criticism of her superficial knowledge of the world.

Rosamond's beauty is described frequently and associated with her approved manners. Because she is beautiful, she is perceived as very graceful by the townspeople and also because she is gracious and elegant in manners, her beauty is emphasized. With her pure, infantile blondness, she is a nymphlike figure who everybody admires (79). "By a simple transference, Rosamond's blondness comes to have this suggestion too; her blond hair (and her gesture of patting it), her long neck, her 'silverly neutral' voice, all become, as the novel proceeds, aspects of her character as well as of her physical qualities" (David Daiches 27). As a consequence, her physical qualities, in a way, are described as the reflection of her personality. It is also added that no one "exceeded that young lady for mental acquisition", which can be read as implicitly ironic when one considers the shallowness of the knowledge granted to girls at Mrs. Lemon's school. In addition, it is doubtful how reliable such a conclusion is: "Rosamond's accomplishments and refinement are achieved at the expense of trivializing her intellect and coarsening her feelings, while her exquisite manner and charm conceal an egoism and social ambition which are the antithesis of the docility she appears to represent" (Billington 76). It is hinted that the association of Rosamond's intellect and personality with her beauty and so-called accomplishments will have a destructive effect later on in the novel. Talking about her beauty combined with her character, Zelda Austen states that "we are introduced to a perfect English beauty with 'infantine blondness', bowed upper lip, smooth braids, faultless dress." However, she goes on to say that "the interior of this lovely skull is a perfect rag-and-bottle shop of lace collars, china, gossip, status-hunger, spite, envy, unsatisfied desire, and vanity controlled by an adamantine and unyielding self-will" (559). Austen's comment demonstrates the difference between Rosamond's outward grace and her thirst for rank, luxury, and her extravagance.

2.1.1.3 Mary Garth

Belonging to a lower-income family, Mary Garth, the daughter of Caleb and Susan Garth, is a girl of modest expectations from life, unlike Dorothea and Rosamond. Her mother is a former schoolteacher. Although she no longer works, she educates her children herself. Most probably, she has instructed Mary, too, which is why she can apply for teaching jobs herself. It is asserted by the narrator that "at the age two-and-

twenty", although she has not acquired the kind of maturity peculiar to a less fortunate girl, she is well aware of her limitations. "She neither tried to create illusions, nor indulged in them for her own behoof, and when she was in a good mood, she had humour enough in her to laugh at herself" (93). Thus, she has the tendency to reject any world of make-believe and is content with what she has. "She was fond of her own thoughts and could amuse herself well sitting in twilight because she had learned to make no unreasonable claims" (261). Mary is at peace with herself and her opportunities due to her "strong reason to believe that things were not likely to be arranged for her peculiar satisfaction", in other words, she could see the difference between imagination and reality.

She is honest and straightforward, then, not only about facts concerning other people but also about things directly in relation to herself. Physically, Mary is not described as the Victorian idea of a beauty. She is short, brown and she has curly dark hair which is rough and stubborn (93). Her description is given as a striking contrast to that of Rosamond. She even calls herself "a brown patch by the side of Rosy" (93). It is frequently repeated in the novel that she does not have the proper feminine qualities; both in physical and personal aspects. It is an ironic touch made by the narrator, questioning the aspects of that fixed ideal woman image in the minds of the people and leading readers to think how that image should be.

2.1.2 Lack of Vocational Possibilities for Women

In *Middlemarch*, the inadequacy of education and lack of vocational opportunities presented to women are interrelated and together they constitute an integral part of women's subordinated position in society. As Gillian Beer also suggests the novel is "about work and the right to work, about the need to discover a vocation which will satisfy the whole self and the need to be educated to undertake it" (150). Vocation, in the context of the novel, can be interpreted as the female characters' understanding of a useful occupation. While some women look for active, useful occupations, others experience being a woman as a vocation itself as an inevitable outcome of the expectations of the society from women.

2.1.2.1 Dorothea Brooke

The only woman who specifically looks for an active, purposeful vocation in the novel is Dorothea Brooke. Dorothea is full of energy and ardour to do some great deeds for the good of humanity. However, as expressed earlier, due to her inadequate education and also her inexperience, she is rather unsure about what to do and how to do it. "For a long while, she had been oppressed by the indefiniteness which hung in her mind, like thick summer haze, over all her desire to make her life greatly affective. What could she do, what ought she to do?" (20). Thus, she is in need of some concrete plan to eliminate her uncertainty. She believes that the hindrance before her is her lack of a guiding figure to show her what she should do to be effectual.

Dorothea, like her sister Celia, has almost everything that a girl of her own age was considered to need or at least desire: class, wealth, and a lot of free time in an aristocratic milieu. However, the fact that she has nothing to do is a discomfort to her, because it makes her feel useless. Hers is an "oppressive liberty" which she will try to get rid of for quite a while more. Kathleen Blake also states that "her problem becomes the reverse of cramp—too much space. Her goals necessarily suffer from haziness of outline since they are not demarcated with the rigid procession of those offered ready-to-hand by society" (291).

> Although she enjoys some kind of authority in her uncle Mr. Brooke's estate, she wants to be more active and free to act. She has established an infant school in the village, she works on cottage plans for the local poor; deprived people of Tipton. Still, she looks forward to the day when she will be of age to command her own money and implement her own schemes. (6)

So, rather than an accumulation of theoretical information, Dorothea needs the kind of knowledge that would direct her in how to be of some practical use to people. This shows that Dorothea still finds it hard to make independent decisions and use her initiative to do so.

She cannot find any social medium for her energies. Alison Case and Harry E. Shaw focus on Dorothea's limited options and even on her lack of options. "Dorothea is reduced to drawing amateurish diagrams of houses for the labourers on her uncle's estate, and then trying to persuade the men around her to build them" (179). This dependence on men for the realization of her plans can be seen as one of the reasons

why she does not recognize Sir James Chettam's special interest in her, but is very much content that he will help her build the cottages. "Dorothea has only the meagerest work in which to acquit herself and the meagerest education to help her tread out her own path. Instead of being reinforced, her energy, which is greater than anybody else's in the book, often fails of effect precisely because energy is not expected of a woman" (Blake 294). In this respect, Dorothea can be considered as the only woman in the novel who openly demands more than what she has been given although, on an individual basis, what she hopes for is merely some kind of occupational satisfaction.

Dorothea is an idealistic girl yet the very fact that she cannot channel her ideals into definite, specific paths makes her feel incomplete and uncomfortable. Her sense of self-respect can only be fulfilled through the knowledge that she can be effective in some way. Kathleen Blake associates this with the individual's search for identity, saying: "Women are especially vulnerable because society offers them so little to do, expects less, and never imagines that they need work as much as men do. A woman's life offers a paradigm of the novel's theme—lack of vocation as tenuousness of identity" (289). Therefore, it can be stated that Dorothea is not ony in search of a gainful occupation but also in search of herself; she feels the urge to define herself through the good actions she plans to perform. As she does not have anything currently available to her, she feels useless and regards herself as lacking in talent. When Mr. Brooke holds out Will Ladislaw's sketch-book to show the sisters a picture and receive their reaction, Dorothea claims that she is not the person to judge such things:

> 'I am no judge of these things,' said Dorothea, not coldly, but with an eager deprecation of the appeal to her. 'You know, uncle, I never see the beauty of those pictures which you say are so much praised. They are a language I do not understand. I suppose there is some relation between pictures and nature which I am too ignorant to feel – just as you see what a Greek sentence stands for which means nothing to me'. (65)

As already mentioned, Dorothea does not find it right to speak her mind on things as she believes she lacks the background information necessary to make any comments or claims. Dorothea Barrett refers to Alan Mintz's remark on Dorothea's lack of opportunities:

> As a woman, Dorothea is not allowed the direct access to the world possible to men. Despite this fact, what she wants most in life is to do some great good for the world, and although there is no adequate vehicle for this desire, it remains in George Eliot's eyes unequivocally vocational. The impossibility of its satisfaction does not change its nature. (130)

The writer suggests here that although there is no apparent vehicle or object for Dorothea to channel her energies to, for George Eliot, the problem of Dorothea is clearly vocational. The lack of vocation does not change Dorothea's insistent thought that she should achieve her goal to do something good for the benefit of all.

2.1.2.2. Rosamond Vincy

Unlike Dorothea, Rosamond Vincy is content with life within the specific domain given to women in society. She is the best example of the type of woman who, in that male-dominated society, sees leisure and comfort for women as a sign of status and wealth. Her concerns about life are completely self-oriented. "She displays no feminist rejection of a woman's scope of action, though, throwing all her will, energy into achieving the daintiest wardrobe and the highest-ranking, best-providing husband" possible. (Blake 301). As Rosamond does not have the urge to provide needy people with help, she strongly desires to be well-provided. This means that her sole *occupation* is what society conditions women/girls to do, to find a well-off husband and live a luxurious, care-free life. Rosamond has aspirations, then, but her aspirations are entirely different from those of Dorothea, in that, they are completely directed to her own self. Hers is the ambition to better her life standards and change her social milieu through the aid of a successful man. If there is something that Rosamond wants to get rid of, it is the provincial people and their ordinary, modest lives that constitute her inherited social circle.

Rosamond has the egoistic notion that, being the most distinguished girl of the province, she deserves a more socially distinguished life. As Elaine Showalter puts it, in such an era, "women were not accustomed to *choosing* a vocation; womanhood was a vocation in itself" (21). The point to be made here is that Rosamond has already accepted her role as a girl in that society and she acts in accordance with those preset rules and expectations. In this sense, she is clever enough to play the

game by its rules and manipulate people and conditions to her own advantage. Her so-called female accomplishments, then, can be interpreted as her equipment and also as weapons to get what she wants.

2.1.2.3 Mary Garth

What Mary symbolizes is almost the exact opposite of Dorothea's and Rosamond's daily lives. Her concerns for work have very different aspects. Although her family has seen better days, they now have to make ends meet with a very low income. Caleb Garth, Mary's father, is a businessman, "a surveyor, valuer" and an estate "agent". Although he is a hard-working man and was "prosperous" in the past, he "failed in the building business" (191). Mary has already an occupation, no matter whether she wants to or not, she has to work to back up her family financially. She works as a nurse for Mr. Featherstone, the old and wealthy landlord of Stone Court. To look after him, she has to stay day and night with him, without going home for days. Although the man is stubborn and at times treats her harshly, she does not give up her job. Even when she feels dispirited at times and cries, she clings to her job. Her conversation with Rosamond exemplifies Mary's attitude:

> '-What have you been doing lately?
> -I? Oh, minding the house – pouring out syrup – pretending to be amiable and contended – learning to have a bad opinion of everybody.
> -It is a wretched life for you.
> No, said Mary, curtly, with a little toss of her head. 'I think my life is pleasanter than your Miss Morgan's'. (93)

Rosamond evidently pities Mary. She easily makes a generalization and calls her "life wretched" for the fact that she works. For Rosamond, working is an obligation, a sign of poor conditions and, therefore, pitiable. The assumption can also be made that, of the two girls, Rosamond considers herself luckier. Mary, on the other hand, gives quite a jovial reaction to Rosamond's comment saying that her life is much better than that of an old spinster of the town, Miss Morgan. Instead of imagining a better prospect, and pitying those "without any prospect" (94), she lives in the present moment and concentrates on the present state of things.

After Mr. Featherstone dies, Mary starts looking for a job again. She wants to keep supporting her family and also to make up for its loss of money due to Fred's failure

to pay his debts. Mary thinks of accepting to work at a school at York as a teacher, her father feels sorry for her; which again shows the common view of the era that a woman's place is her home (330).

> 'Yes father; the school at York. I have determined to take it. It's quite the best. Thirty-five pounds a year, and extra pay for teaching the smallest strummers at the piano.'
> 'Poor child! I wish she could stay at home with us, Susan,' said Caleb, looking plaintively at his wife. (330)

On her father's dismay at the situation, her mother, Susan Garth, energetically responds and defends the idea that Mary would not be happy without doing her job as she herself has done the same thing. Having educated all her children herself, her mother sees teaching "as the most delightful work in the world" (330). Mary has also accepted long before that she "must teach", as "there is nothing else to be done". In a sense, her reply has a twofold meaning; there is nothing else for Mary to do as the family should be supported, and there is no other profession for the middle-class woman of that century than being a teacher, especially for girls like Mary.

2.1.3 Prejudices against Women

In *Middlemarch*, it is not only the inadequacy of education or rejection of women's entrance to male-oriented vocational domains that confine women, but also people's notions, preconceptions and gossip that limit women's lives. It should be asserted that these prejudices and fixed notions arise not only from men but also from women. The narrator puts instances of such prejudices with irony again, showing some characters' insecurities as well as their inflexibly-moulded views on women. Some striking examples are briefly given here although the biased attitudes of men and women towards women are integrated into the analysis of the characters in general.

The first group of these preconceptions is the assumed superiority of men over women. The most universal of these presumptions is about women's intellectual capacity. The general tendency is to think that women are not as fit to delve much into intellectual processes as men are. They are "expected to have weak opinions" (7). There are, thus, certain forms of behaviour considered "ladylike" and shared by women. An example of these prejudices occurs at the dinner given in Mr. Brooke's

house where Sir James Chettam mentions his agricultural plans and their possible effects on his tenants. Dorothea reacts to this "with more energy than is expected of a young lady" and says that "it is better to spend money in finding out how men can make the most of the land which supports them all, then in keeping dogs and horses only to gallop over it" (13). Mr. Brooke responds, "Young ladies don't understand political economy, you know" (13). Thus, Dorothea is "twitted" with her ignorance of political economy.

On the same night, the conversation comes to how to arrange documents effectively so that they can be useful. Upon this question, raised by Mr. Brooke addressed to Mr. Casaubon, Dorothea, with enthusiasm again, offers her uncle to sort them out for him, "letter them all and make a list of subjects under each letter" (15). However, Mr. Brooke demonstrates his fixed view on the limited space of freedom for women: "I cannot let young ladies meddle with my documents. Young ladies are too flighty" (15). Mr. Brooke's remark is quite stereotypical in the sense that he labels girls as being rather impatient and therefore unfit to arrange things. In this way, he puts women or girls specifically in one category, disregarding their individual qualities.

Mr. Brooke's attitude in relation to women's intelligence is applied to every woman. When Mrs. Cadwallader, the wife of an old Rector, implies in her speech that townspeople think that Mr. Brooke is ambivalent about his political stance, he feels irritated and shows his annoyance by stating, "I don't argue with a lady on politics...Your sex are not thinkers" (44). In fact, it is evident that Mr. Brooke feels a threat to his male authority owing to these strong views. He uses the same classification against his woman guest to evade unpleasant topics where he feels himself lacking in self-confidence. Similarly, Mr. Brooke belittles women's intellectual capacity by seeing it as more appropriate for women to pass time with things such as music and the fine arts, which are, in his opinion, suitable for "the lightness about the feminine mind" (53). For him "such deep studies like classics and mathematics are too taxing for a woman" (53). This biased attitude is also the reason why he feels somehow relieved when Casaubon states that "Dorothea is learning to read characters simply" (53). "Ah, well, without understanding, you know-that may not be so bad". He thinks that women should "learn up to a certain point", and "in a

light way" (53). Mr. Brooke thinks women are unfit to have deep knowledge about anything.

It is not only Mr. Brooke who has limited views upon women and women's nature. Sir James Chettam, the young landowner in love with Dorothea, ponders on Dorothea's apparent dominant attitudes and thinks he will be able to cope with them:

> Sir James had no idea that he should ever like to put down the predominance of this handsome girl, in whose cleverness he delighted. Why not? A man's mind – what there is of it – has always the advantage of being masculine – as the smallest birch-tree is of a higher kind than the most soaring palm – and even his ignorance is of a higher quality. (17)

Although he inwardly delights in Dorothea's self-confidence and quick perception of things, he also fears the possibility that her "predominance" might be a problem if they get married. He consoles himself with the fallacy that men are always superior to women in nature. It does not matter much if men are sometimes beaten by women in small topics as they are always a "higher kind" than women kind. He also falls into the trap of acting according to already-drawn myths of society about women: He buys a Maltese dog for Dorothea, thinking that she will accept it without a second thought. When rejected by Dorothea, who finds these animals helpless and parasitic because they are used as pets, he explains that "ladies usually are fond of these Maltese dogs" (24). It can also be added that Dorothea's rejection of a toy-like pet is a rejection of her foreseen roles as a toy-like pet or wife to Sir James.

2.2 Marriage as an Escape: Expectations from Marriage

The theme of marriage is central to the novel. It functions differently for the different female characters. Some female characters see it as a means to get what is beyond their reach while others marry because of love. Some women's illusions about life are also reflected in their marital decisions which hinders them from evaluating things and people objectively while others are more realistic and down-to-earth in choosing their partners.

2.2.1 Dorothea Brooke

Dorothea does not have conventional reasons to marry. Dorothea's sole intention is not to marry or to find a suitable husband through whom she can access comfort and luxury. She searches for a kind of fulfilment of the occupational and educational inadequacies in her life:

> Dorothea, with all her eagerness to know the truths of life, retained very childlike ideas about marriage. She felt sure that she would have accepted the judicious Hooker, if she had been born in time to save him from that wretched mistake he made in matrimony; or John Milton when his blindness had come on; or any of the other great men whose odd habits it would have been glorious piety to endure; but an amiable handsome baronet, who said "Exactly" to her remarks even when she expressed uncertainty, --how could he affect her as a lover? The really delightful marriage must be where your husband was sort of a father and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it. (8)

Dorothea, because of her inexperience combined with her religious/spiritual enthusiasm, has very naive feelings about marriage. In her hunger for intellectual satisfaction and the need for guidance, she has mixed visions of a possible/prospective husband. She dreams of being of assistance to a great man like John Milton, thinking that it would be blissful to know that she is a part of a big cause. The narrator's ironic tone should be noted here again regarding Milton's reputation as a husband who failed in his first marriage, lost two wives, and whose daughters were miserable and poor. While Dorothea herself "doubted her own conclusions because she felt her own ignorance" (52), the kind of suitor who would say "exactly" to her every remark, like Sir James, seems to her ineffectual and also unimpressive. Gillian Beer in *Middlemarch and the Woman Question* comments on this confusion:

> Dorothea finds it hard to distinguish between love and learning: this is a problem which bears particularly hard on women. The mentor-pupil relationship in its male-female form presents the man as teacher and the woman as pupil. The pattern traditionally extends across intellectual and sexual experience. Men teach women sexually and intellectually. To Dorothea, passion and knowledge are identified. She seeks to know more than her meagre education has so far allowed her and thereby to do more than her society designates as appropriate to her. (160)

Dorothea cannot distinguish between what love is and what admiration for learning is. This is why Dorothea feels attracted to Reverend Edward Casaubon who is a clergyman almost fifty years old, "a man of profound learning". She believes that a man like him providing knowledge can be her way to happiness as he may bring her up intellectually and direct her professionally; it seems to Dorothea blissful to lead such a life near such a mighty man: "though only as a lamp holder" (14). She

believes that this possible tutor-pupil relationship will be quite satisfactory. She feels excited by the possibility of being the wife of such a man like Mr. Casaubon. She interprets such a potential as if "a winged messenger had suddenly stood beside her path and held out his hand towards her":

> The thing which seemed to her best, she wanted to justify by the completest knowledge, and not to live in a pretended admission of rules which were never acted on...the union which attracted her was one that would deliver her from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance, and give her the freedom of voluntary submission to a guide who would take her along the grandest path. (23)

As Dorothea believes that she lacks a mighty cause to follow, she is sure that being of assistance to Mr. Casaubon will elevate her. Seeing into the "ungauged reservoir of Mr. Casaubon's mind" she understands "the scope of his great work, *Key to All Mythologies* and its "attractively labyrinthine extent" (19). She perceives him as instructive as "Milton's affable archangel" (19). Dorothea's deep respect for Mr. Casaubon arises from her unshakeable belief in his vast knowledge.

Dorothea, therefore, sees Mr. Casaubon as a means of reaching "beyond the shallowness of ladies'-school literature", his work will reconcile complete knowledge with devoted piety. For Dorothea, his qualities were the united glories of "doctor and saint". "What a lake compared to my little pool", Dorothea thinks (20). She is fascinated by the knowledge that Casaubon has and she feels inadequate in comparison. This is the reason why Dorothea feels exultant by Casaubon's letter of marriage proposal:

> Her whole soul was possessed by the fact that a fuller life was opening before her: she was a neophyte about to enter on a higher grade of initiation. She was going to have room for the energies which stirred uneasily under the dimness and pressure of her ignorance and the petty peremptoriness of the world's habits. (36)

Dorothea reads the letter as an opening of a new phase in her life, the beginning of a new, "fuller", satisfactory process in which the "dimness" of her ignorance will be enlightened; she will be liberated from the pressure of inexperience. She will be dealing with big, lofty causes rather than petty, trivial worldly habits. So, Casaubon will be both her intellectual and her spiritual guide, who is "above her in judgement and in all knowledge" (33). Harriet Farwell Adams interprets this as a religious justification for marriage, so Casaubon's "icy letter of proposal" seems to be a "call"

for Dorothea (74). Dorothea repeats her criterion for choosing such a husband to Mr. Brooke when he tries to learn her views on a possible marriage to Casaubon. She says: “I wish to have a husband who was above me in judgement and in all knowledge” (33). Moreover, she states to her uncle that she is aware of some “trials” in marriage for “marriage is a state of higher duties”, she thinks (33).

In actual terms, then, marriage has other connotations for Dorothea than solely a union of two people in love or than the usual expectations other girls aspire to. She has her plans. “He does represent a way out of safety”, says Gillian Beer, about her decision. “She needs risks as well as usefulness and her enclosed environment has not taught her to recognize worse imprisonment” (160). She wants to be able to read Latin and Greek to Mr. Casaubon as Milton’s daughters did to their father “even without understanding what they read” (52). Similarly, Dorothea believes that even if she does not understand what she does, just knowing the fact that she is on the right path and of some real use will make her happy. “The provinces of masculine knowledge seemed to her a standing ground from which all truth could be seen more truly” (52). She sees this marriage, then, as a tool for reaching knowledge, which she is unable to attain through her own means.

However, as opposed to Dorothea’s individual decision, the Middlemarch people are not in favour of this coming alliance, which can be read both as women’s resistance to the expectations of the society and also a foreshadowing of what will befall Dorothea. The first objection comes from Celia, who expresses her dislike of the proposed marriage. Dorothea, in return, criticizes Celia harshly for looking “at human beings as if they were merely animals with a toilette, and never see the great soul in a man’s face” (16). As Susan Rowland Tush also states; “in creating Celia, George Eliot not only gives her heroine a confidante, but also creates an opposing voice of unromanticized reality to aid in the reader’s evaluation of Casaubon” (119). In the novel, Celia sees Casaubon as he is, middle-aged, unattractive, and, most important, “too restrained in conversation to give away much information about himself” (119). So through Celia’s voice, the reader has an alternative image of Casaubon. Mrs. Cadwallader finds the decision “frightful”, her objections hint clearly at fear that Dorothea will not obtain sexual satisfaction or masculine

companionship with her chosen husband. To her, “this marriage to Casaubon is as good as going to a nunnery” (48). Similarly, Sir James Chettam who has been courting Dorothea for a while is appalled for he had never expected that Dorothea would accept any kind of proposal of marriage from “a dried bookworm towards fifty” (18). As a blooming young girl, she cannot be allowed to marry “the shadow of a man” (56). Having “perfect liberty of judgement”, Mr. Brooke also finds it hard to understand why Dorothea accepts a man like Mr. Casaubon as her husband. Again hinting at a physical discrepancy between the couple, Mr. Brooke gives his implicit warning about Mr. Casaubon’s age and weakness saying that he has hurt his eyes “a little with too much reading” (34). He cannot understand Dorothea’s choice and does not try to understand it, lapsing instead into blaming the peculiarities of the female sex. “Mr. Brooke wondered and felt that women were an inexhaustible subject of study, since even he at his age was not in a perfect state of scientific prediction about them. Here was a fellow like Chettam with no chance at all” (33).

In such a social milieu, then, predominated by a male-dominated worldview, not only men but also women oppose, categorize and tend to judge their women companions. This explains why women are opposed even more strongly than men, like Mr. Brooke and Mr. Cadwallader the rector, Dorothea’s husband-to-be. “The women of Middlemarch are afraid of their neighbour’s unconventionality, taking it as implicit criticism of their own lives” (Levin 84). Levin’s statement can be interpreted, on a broader view, as the society’s inflexibility towards free individual decisions. Although all these characters disapproving of Dorothea’s choice wish well for her, they also cannot help interfering with her plans and let her learn through experience. The society’s influence is restricting on the individual.

2.2.2 Rosamond Vincy

From the first moment in which we are introduced to Rosamond, it becomes clear that she is attracted to the upper-class ways of life, the advantages of having a “good” family, and luxury. It is thus not surprising that she is fully absorbed in thoughts of the newcomer, Doctor Tertius Lydgate and his arrival in the town. She finds him very interesting even before she sees him, because she has overheard that

Lydgate is “of excellent family”, and his relations are “quite county people” (94). She arranges a ride to the Stone Court on the possibility of seeing him there, which she does. She also asks Mary about him and what he is like, as Mary sees him more often since she nurses old Mr. Featherstone. For Rosamond, “it always makes a difference to be of good family” (95).

Another reason that makes Lydgate attractive in Rosamond’s eyes is his being an exotic figure: a stranger to the town, a newcomer. In fact, such a trait makes him more mysterious in her view and makes her build up more assumptions about Lydgate. She already has an image of him in her mind before she sees him. This can be considered as the stereotype famously alluded to in Jane Austen’s sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*, that any eligible man is seen as a potential suitable husband, providing the girl with a ticket out of her countrified life and in Eliot’s deeply ironical observations of Rosamond’s mind, offering her a life of different adventures.

> Strangers, whether wrecked and clinging to a raft, or duly escorted and accompanied by portmanteaus, have always had a circumstantial fascination for the virgin mind, against which native merit has urged itself in vain. And a stranger was absolutely necessary to Rosamond’s social romance, which had always turned on a lover and bridegroom who was not a Middlemarcher, and who had no connections at all like her own: of late, indeed, the construction seemed to demand that he should somehow be related to a baronet. Now that she and the stranger had met, reality proved much more moving than anticipation, and Rosamond could not doubt that this was the great epoch of her life. (97)

Lydgate, therefore, completely fits into Rosamond’s definition of an ideal suitor with his “good family”, “possessing connections which offered vistas of that middle-class heaven”, his “rank”, a man of talent; in other words, “he is a man whom it would be delightful to enslave” (98).

Rosamond also has an almost narcissistic self-love, a trust in her own beauty, which makes her certain that all the young men in town are her suitors, now including Lydgate. She is so self-absorbed that her “every nerve and muscle was adjusted to the consciousness that she was being looked at,” she was “an actress by nature” as she “always had an audience in her consciousness” (97). Rosamond’s fantasy of a perfect match followed by a blissful marriage convinces her that what she and Lydgate feel is a “mutual impression” called “falling in love”. For this reason, Rosamond interprets their first meeting’s effects as “symptoms of awakening love”

(97). However, “she held it more natural that Mr. Lydgate should have fallen in love at first sight of her” (97). Therefore, on her part, she thinks that this should be love that she is feeling, still, and moreover, she is assured of Lydgate’s attraction to her. “Rosamond, in fact, was entirely occupied not exactly with Tertius Lydgate as he was in himself, but with his relation to her; and it was excusable in a girl who was accustomed to hear that all young men might, could, would be, or actually were in love with her, to believe at once that Lydgate could be no exception” (138).

Susan Rowland Tush comments on Rosamond’s conditioning herself for a romance with Lydgate as follows:

> Rosamond herself, having read all of the “best novels”, is not only aware of the conventions which structure the lives of their heroines, but also attempts to lead her own life as though she were such a heroine. Rosamond has “woven a little future,” “a social romance,” before she even meets Lydgate. She has “contemplated beforehand” that since she and Lydgate would fall in love at first sight; such a “scene was the necessary beginning”. Moreover, Rosamond knows that “These things (happen) so often at balls” but speculates “why not by the morning light when the complexion showed so much the better”. Clearly, Rosamond has mastered all the superficial elements of the typical romance”. (123)

Rosamond has superficial and artificial ideas about marriage. She already has a romance plot in her mind to put herself and Lydgate into. She is ready to do all that she can so as to live such a dreamlike romance.

Rosamond wants to be a high achiever in terms of social status and this makes her regard Middlemarchers with disfavour. Thus, a prospect of marrying a stranger with good connections is a sort of an escape for her from being always in touch with the “vulgar people” of the town. She would be getting “a little nearer to that celestial condition on earth” and additionally could “associate with relatives quite equal to the county people who looked down on Middlemarchers” (138).

2.2.3 Mary Garth

As we have already seen, Mary Garth is very different from the other leading female characters of the novel in that marriage does not bear instrumental connotations for her. She is a realistic and practical girl with down-to-earth expectations both from life and from marriage. Mary is wary of marriage. Although she and Fred Vincy have

loved each other since their childhood, and Fred frequently shows his love and enthusiasm for getting married to Mary, Mary remains somewhat undemonstrative and cautious. Because Mary is a sensible girl, she has her reasons for not making haste to marry Fred. Knowing him very well, she is completely sure that Fred can never be a clergyman, although his father has had him educated to be so. She wants him to have a steady job that he will like doing. Even when his family members fail to understand that Fred is not fit for such a job, Mary defends him saying "he would be a great hypocrite" if he forced himself to perform it (95).

In spite of her love for Fred, she is proud and feels so grateful to her family that she does not want to disappoint them with an unsuccessful marriage. Upon her father's remarks about whether she is willing to marry Fred some day or not, she consoles her father:

> 'Don't fear for me, father,' said Mary, gravely meeting her father's eyes; 'Fred has always been very good to me; he is kind-hearted and affectionate, and not false, I think, with all his self-indulgence. But I will never engage myself to one who has no manly independence, and who never goes on loitering away his time on the chance that others will provide for him. You and my mother have taught me too much pride for that.' (214)

Mary is honest to everyone about her wishes; including her father Caleb Garth. She does not deny her love for Fred as a good human being, yet she is realistic enough not to create a world of make-believe about him. Unlike other female characters, she perceives both the positive and the negative qualities of the object of her love. She is not overwhelmed by strong feelings and illusions that would hinder her from seeing things as they really are.

Mary is also perceptive enough to recognize that a possible alliance between her and Fred is not likely to be approved by Fred's family either, especially his mother Mrs. Vincy. Understanding what Rosamond is hinting at in a conversation about marriage, she rebuffs her as she knows that as a family they think Fred will have descended socially if he married her. Besides, Fred's mother does not find Mary lady-like and beautiful. She is quick and sharp in her tone when she replies, "If your mama is afraid that Fred will make me an offer, tell her that I would not marry him if he asked me" (95). Mary is aware of Fred's family's possible reaction, especially that of Mrs. Vincy.

2.3 Disillusionment Versus Happiness in Marriage

Talking about the theme of marriage in *Middlemarch*, Catherine Neale states: "The prevailing tone of Middlemarch is irony: it is the reversal of expectation from courtship to the reality of marriage that figures prominently" (100). The novel, in this respect, also abstains from the conventional plot structure of the time ; starting with engagement and leading to matrimony in the closing pages because we are presented with a focus on these people's lives after they have married. Jerome Thale asserts that "most of the major characters come to grief because they are too preoccupied with their aspirations to know themselves. This ignorance of self leads to misestimation of others" (116). It can thus be stated that unhappiness arises because of a lack of self-knowledge in characters, as well as because of characters' blindness to the personality and desires of their partners; both lead to misinterpretation of the roles of husband and wife and lead both women and men to disillusionment and unhappiness.

Similarly, then, in the novel, frustration is almost inevitable; although characters have different personal traits and expectations, there are certain common points in the reasons of their disillusionment. The main reason for unhappiness in marriages is illusions. Women characters create in their minds false illusions about their prospective husbands. Rather than trying to know each other thoroughly as individuals with their positive and negative traits, both men and women tend to be taken in with the images they created for the men. Inevitably, their illusions are shattered.

2.3.1 Dorothea Brooke

Dorothea Brooke gets disillusioned because she starts to know the real Casaubon shortly after she has got married. Having married him with the hope of acquiring both intellectual and practical knowledge, she is left alone, dissatisfied and isolated. Only six weeks after her wedding she "sobs bitterly" (161). She feels so much self-reproach that she cannot confess her unhappiness even to herself:

> She had married the man of her choice and with the advantage over most girls that she had contemplated her marriage chiefly as the beginning of new duties: from the very first she had thought of Mr. Casaubon as having a mind so much

> above her own, that he must often be claimed by studies which she could not entirely share; moreover, after the brief narrow experience of her girlhood she was beholding Rome, the city of visible history, where past of a whole hemisphere seems moving in a funereal procession with strange ancestral images and trophies gathered from afar. (160)

Dorothea has no one to blame as it was her own decision to marry this man against the advice of her many well-wishers. She had thought Casaubon superior to her in knowledge, but she cannot "share" his studies now. Seeing Rome, the ancient city with its past seems like moving "in a funereal procession" to Dorothea. The word recalls how Celia had felt at first about this marriage: to her, the idea of this marriage had been "funereal". Now Dorothea feels "strange" and cannot identify her feelings clearly.

Dorothea's depressive mood is reflected on her perception. To her, the city has no "deep impressions"; all those "basicilas, palaces, colossi set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reverence" (161). The sense given by the view has implicit parallelism with Dorothea. The adjectives "living" and "warm-blooded" may signify Dorothea's youth.

> All this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation...Our moods are apt to bring with them images which succeed each other like a magic-lantern pictures of a doze; and in certain states of dull forlornness Dorothea all her life continued to see the vastness of St. Peter's, the huge bronze canopy, the excited intention in the attitudes and garments of the prophets and evangelists in the mosaics above, and the red drapery which was being hung for Christmas spreading itself like a disease of the retina. (161)

How Dorothea perceives the ancient city actually reflects the "wreck" of her "ambitious ideals"; her frustration, the first moment of recognition seems to have been an "electric shock" for her. In a sense, Casaubon can also be seen as a wreck, Now seeing the upcoming "monotonous" marital days, she feels "confused" (161). In her eyes, everything is rendered ugly, meaningless, and lifeless under her gaze "like a disease of the retina" (161).

Dorothea recognizes that Casaubon, far from leading and guiding her "along the grandest path" of a big cause, is absorbed in his own work even to the exclusion of his relatives and friends. He is neither interested in Dorothea's plans for cottages nor

inclined to listen to her intellectual and vocational needs. There is almost no sense of novelty and surprise in Mr. Casaubon's perception of the world. Nothing is new to him. "What was fresh to her mind was worn out to his, he had long shrunk to a sort of dried preparation, a lifeless embalmment of knowledge" (164). She understands that it is very difficult for him now to share her enthusiasm and thirst for knowledge, he himself is an "embalmment" of it. This is very depressing considering Dorothea's ardent nature and especially so when she realizes that "with years full of knowledge", Casaubon shows "a blank absence of interest and sympathy" (164).

Getting the wrong impression about the opposite sex is also valid for men. Casaubon misreads Dorothea to some extent, too. Before marriage, Casaubon thought that "the great charm of your sex is its capability of an ardent, self-sacrificing affection, and herein we see its fitness to round and complete the existence of our own" (41). Dorothea both shows and gives the impression that she is submissive. When she tells Casaubon that she is "ignorant" and has many questions to ask, yet, she promises not to "trouble you so much, only when you are inclined to listen to me", Casaubon is very pleased as he understands that this girl has no "hidden calculations either for immediate effects or remoter ends" (41). However, in Italy when Dorothea offers him to help by writing what he dictates for the book, he feels irritated by this "unaccountable , darkly-feminine" attitude of his young wife which he interprets as attempting to know and interfere with more than "sifting notes" (166). Her demand gives Casaubon the feeling of "a spy watching everything with a malign power of inference" (167). He feels threatened by an onlooker. Dorothea's enthusiasm forces him to see that he will never be ready to start, and to see himself and his procrastination and pretences, which is something he has avoided up to now. The narrator has an emphatic tone describing Casaubon, saying "she was as blind to his inward troubles as he to hers; she had not yet learned those hidden conflicts in her husband which claim our pity" (167). From that time on, for Casaubon "Dorothea was not only his wife: she was a personification of that shallow world which surrounds the ill-appreciated or desponding author" (168). With this early conflict in their marriage, Casaubon's shaky confidence in his work comes to the surface. Dorothea is no longer the always-ready-to-help, submissive wife for him, "she was capable of agitating him cruelly just where he most needed soothing" (168). Besides,

Casaubon does not have big ideals as Dorothea did in marrying him: he marries her because “he had always intended to acquit himself by marriage” (312). As he is growing older, he “needs a companion”, as Mr. Brooke also puts it, and, moreover, he does not experience any kind of masculine passion “that the poets had much exaggerated”; and as Celia also observes he does not look “half fond enough of Dorothea” (318). So, Casaubon has sought rather a secretary and maid, however, after the argument he sees her like a critic, more to the point, he cannot bear anybody interfering with his work because of his excessive pride and hidden lack of self-confidence.

The inference here, then, can also be made that there is a lack of warmth and intimacy in this marriage, doubling Dorothea’s discontent. With a husband who is described as “lifelessness” and indifferent even to “the sunlight”, Dorothea’s longing for an ardent affection is emphasized. The possibility is given that “such fixed and unchangeable” characteristics of Casaubon “might have remained longer unfelt by Dorothea if she had been encouraged to pour forth her girlish and womanly feeling-if he would have held her hands between his and listened with the delight of tenderness and understanding to all the little histories which made up her experience...” (165). Obviously, the two have too little to share not because Dorothea desires it, but because Casaubon does not let her approach him with affection and enter his domain. He secludes himself, studying alone in his library and is disturbed by Dorothea’s presence which awakens his hidden fears and worries about himself and his work. “He cannot abandon his own egoism and recognize the individuality of the person he has married”, states Catherine Neale (101). In time, due to all these factors of incompatibility, the distance between Dorothea and Casaubon grows.

The sense of imprisonment Dorothea feels becomes concrete with her life at Lowick. The very leisure and absence of something to do oppresses her. When she asks what she should do, the answer “whatever you please my dear” only heightens her feeling of loneliness and uselessness. Dorothea becomes completely aware of her “busy ineffectiveness” in the house: “The duties of married life, contemplated as so great beforehand, seemed to be shrinking with the furniture and the white vapour-walled landscape” (226). The effect of the difference between imagination and reality grows.

Now that her rich imagination is not satisfied because of such a "solemnly pledged union of life" everything, including even the household furniture, seems meaningless, empty, and futile. Now that Dorothea suffers from the shattering of her ideals, all the meanings she had attributed to relevant or irrelevant things fade away, too.

> When would the days begin of that active wifely devotion which was to strengthen her husband's life and exalt her own? Never perhaps, as she had preconceived them; but somehow still somehow...
> Marriage, which was to bring guidance into worthy and imperative occupation, had not yet freed her from the gentlewoman's oppressive liberty: it had not even filled her leisure with the ruminant joy of unchecked tenderness. Her blooming full-pulsed youth stood there in a moral imprisonment which made itself one with the chill, colourless, narrowed landscape, with the shrunken furniture, the never-read books, and the ghostly stag in a pale fantastic world that seems to be vanishing from the daylight. (227)

Dorothea is almost hopeless, she knows that her dreams are unlikely to be fulfilled and she is fully aware of her restraints in this marriage. Such a marriage, she had thought before, would "exalt" her. Still, she tries hard not to despair. Marriage, which was meant to be a means for her to do some crucial duty, did not change her life which had always been led in "gentlewoman's oppressive liberty" (227). What aggravates her predicament is that her husband is also restrained either in showing and receiving affection. The repetitive use of contrast between the words like "oppressive" and "liberty", "unchecked" and "imprisonment", "blooming full-pulsed youth" and "ghostly stag" all point to the big difference not only between Dorothea's imagination and the bitter reality of the present but also between her and Mr Casaubon. Her world seems "fantastic" to her now. Referring to the similar sense of unreality Dorothea felt in Italy, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubart state:

> It is interesting, then, that when the setting of Dorothea's life seems most theatrical and unreal to her, she feels that marriage means being forced to renounce her native land. That Dorothea will be entrapped in sterile submission to male force is what disturbs Will when he is obsessed with her marriage as the 'most horrible virgin sacrifices' and irritated by visions of "beautiful lips kissing holy skulls". (302)

Dorothea becomes conscious of the irony of her marriage. Everything that seemed fascinating to her now looks like the ornaments of an unreal setting in which she placed herself. Will, Casaubon's young cousin, also feels irritated by the idea of a young, blooming woman being married to such an old and unattractive man. On the whole, a big part of Dorothea's disillusionment is due to the fact that "she lacks foresight", her ardent nature makes her blind to both Casaubon's real personality and

to her own wishes (51). Celia, who seems to be the more naive of the two sisters, perceives sharply that Dorothea is metaphorically short-sighted, she never looks just where she is, and is always "treading in the wrong place" (51).

The biggest conflict between Dorothea and Casaubon arises from jealousy. Because of the letter sent to Dorothea by Will Ladislaw, to announce a visit, Casaubon and Dorothea fall out with each other. Casaubon demonstrates his discomfort with this letter, although he is too proud to reveal his jealousy. Unaware of the "subtle sources of her husband's bad temper", Dorothea retorts angrily. This climactic moment is important in the sense that it is followed by Casaubon's heart attack, which starts to change Dorothea's stance in this marriage.

2.3.2 Rosamond Vincy

Rosamond and Lydgate's marriage also turns out to be a failure owing to their wrong assumptions about and preconceptions of each other. They fall in love with the idealised conceptions of each other, but before long they understand that they have quite contrary expectations from life. Rosamond, due to her selfish nature, fails to fully recognize her husband's passion for his profession and his ideals. Her interest in his job is defined only by the potential benefit it may bring to their lives. When Lydgate playfully asks her whether or not she has ambition enough to wish that her "husband should be something better than a Middlemarch doctor" (360), her response shows her ambition for a better and a more luxurious social life, gained by his higher position rather than by his ambitions as a medical researcher. "But we cannot live like Hermits", she adds (360). Once she goes as far as to confess to Lydgate that she does not like his profession: "I often wish you had not been a medical man" (377). Disregarding how ardently Lydgate chose and held on to his job, Rosamond thinks that he has "sunk below" his cousins in his "choice of profession". It is the only job he discovered fit for his character and philosophy of life, it is the grandest profession in the world to him (378). In contrast, for Rosamond, "politics and medicine are two topics sufficiently disagreeable to quarrel upon" (385).

In time, Lydgate realizes that Rosamond was not attracted to him for what he really is but for alluring elements such as wealth, rank, and a prospect of reputation due to success. When Rosamond asks Lydgate why he does not live and act like Captain Lydgate, Lydgate's snobbish cousin, he replies critically that "the fact is, you would wish me to be a little more like him, Rosy":

> Those words of Lydgate's were like a sad milestone marking how far he had travelled from his own dreamland, in which Rosamond Vincy appeared to be that perfect piece of womanhood who would reverence her husband's mind after the fashion of an accomplished mermaid, using her comb and looking-glass and singing her song for the relaxation of his adored wisdom alone. He had begun to distinguish between that imagined adoration and the attraction towards a man's talent because it gives him prestige, and is like an order in his buttonhole or an Honourable before his name. (479)

Lydgate awakens to Rosamond's real personality gradually. Beyond that previous image of "perfect piece of womanhood", he sees the woman who chose him for his potential to bring her prestige, used her manners of an "accomplished mermaid" to a specific end. Lydgate is no more in a dreamland of overwhelmed adoration for his wife, because he now senses her deepest thoughts. Although idealistic with regard to his profession, Lydgate, too, had his prejudices about women. He failed to differentiate between a woman's beauty and her soul, thinking that one already reflected the other, and he (like Rosamond) considered a wife merely in terms of the advantages that she would bring.

Rosamond is an obstinate woman, who, looking as if she was perfectly submissive, wants things to be done in her way. Before their marriage, Lydgate liked it when she said that she would never give up anything that she chose to do, because then it meant that she would resist her father's opposition to their marriage (288). Later, however, Lydgate suffers from the same persistence of his wife. When he warns her not to go horse-riding with Captain Lydgate because she is pregnant and it may affect the baby, and that he is going to warn Captain Lydgate too, she answers:

> 'I beg you will not do anything of the kind, Tertius,' said Rosamond, looking at him with something more marked than usual in her speech. 'It will be treating me as if I were child. Promise that you will leave the subject to me.'
> There did seem to be some truth in her objection. Lydgate said, 'Very well,' with surly obedience, and thus the discussion ended with his promising Rosamond, and not with her promising him. (480)

The narrator's closing comment displays Rosamond's manipulative nature, making Lydgate obey her even on a topic where he is critical of Rosamond and has his well-grounded reasons. Yet, evidently, Rosamond is not a woman of impulses and sudden bursts of anger. Rather her "obstinacy never wastes its energy", because she comfortably believes that what she likes to do is always the right thing. Lydgate himself realizes, in time, "an amazed sense of his powerlessness over Rosamond", who goes against his wishes by riding the horse and miscarries her baby but just receives pity in return. "Lydgate could only say 'Poor, poor darling!', but he secretly wondered over the terrible tenacity of this mild creature" (481).

Rosamond's expensive tastes and love of luxury gradually increase their debts and put Lydgate into trouble even though he tries to hide it for some time. Many kinds of indulgence such as high-priced furniture, jewels, and dinner parties all contribute to the accumulation of their debts. When it becomes clear that the amount is as high as three hundred and eighty pounds, and a man must come to make an inventory of the furniture as a security, he feels obliged to reveal the situation to Rosamond and informs her about the inconvenience (489). On Rosamond's part, this event becomes a specific ground for her disillusionments in her marriage. Her attitude is indifference to their shared problem. She exclaims "What can I do?" but it becomes evident that she will try to avoid taking any responsibility regarding the issue; she asks if the inventory can be put off, and why they do not move to London or Durham where Lydgate's well-off friends can be helpful. As a last resort, she suggests that they could borrow from her father, Mr. Vincy. When Lydgate replies angrily, saying "this is idle...you should take my judgement on questions you don't understand" and adds that necessary arrangements must be carried out (490). Rosamond inwardly admits that "if she had known how Lydgate would behave, she would never have married him" (490).

Rosamond's disappointment can be interpreted as a consequence not of Lydgate's unfulfilled promises but of Rosamond's predetermined dreams of luxurious life standards. They married in each case for selfish reasons. Both feel disappointed as they have read each other through the prescribed gender stereotypes. Susan Morgan observes:

> For Lydgate's failure, though it is his responsibility, it is ultimately a cultural as well as an individual problem. Lydgate's blindness to Rosamond, his good taste in furniture and women that makes him unable to distinguish subject from object, Rosamond's soul from her long neck and "blue flower (222) eyes, is a cultivated stupidity after all. It is part of the proper education of a well-bred man, one who has successfully absorbed the gender biases of his culture. (156)

It is thus made clear that not only Rosamond but also Lydgate is the product of a so-called "proper education" that has failed to teach men the difference between the real intentions and the seeming, pretentious attitude of a woman. Having internalized fixed notions about women, men themselves also become the victims of their own making. Thus, the problem goes beyond the idea of a woman facing the society, it turns out to be a cultural problem in which both men and women suffer almost equally as individuals within the boundaries of their social community, which represents the society as a whole. Lydgate has those "spots of commonness" in his character (132) which, Kathyrn Hughes comments make him "unable to perceive that the delightfully mild and pretty Rosamond Vincy will not make the docile wife of his lazy dreams" (298).

2.3.3 Harriet Bulstrode

Another woman who becomes completely disillusioned in *Middlemarch* is Harriet Bulstrode, Mr. Walter Vincy's sister, and aunt to Fred and Rosamond. The difference in Harriet's case is that it is not herself who creates illusions about her husband, but it is Mr. Bulstrode who has created a false impression of himself in the eyes of the townspeople; including his wife.

Nicholas Bulstrode is the well-off banker of Middlemarch. From the first time he is introduced in the novel, he is displayed as a devoutly religious man respected by everybody. "Mr. Vincy's sister had made a wealthy match in accepting Mr. Bulstrode, who, however, as a man not born in the town, and altogether of dimly known origin, was considered to have done well in uniting himself with a real Middlemarch family" (69). As explained, no one knows Bulstrode's origins. Harriet Bulstrode herself is a religious and honest woman; she also thinks of her husband as a distinguished man: "she believed that her husband was one of those men whose memoirs should be written when they died" (286). However, the words used to

describe the banker such as having an "undertone", being "inconsistent", and given to "concealment" suggest hidden elements in his life (101).

> Loud men called his subdued tone an undertone, and sometimes implied that it was inconsistent with openness; though there seems to be no reason why a loud man should not be given to concealment of anything except his own voice, unless it can be shown that Holy Writ has placed the seat of candour in the lungs. (101)

Later on, with the arrival of John Raffles, an old business partner, Bulstrode becomes extremely uneasy because he is the person who knows about Bulstrode's dark past. Before long, it becomes evident that Raffles is blackmailing Bulstode. Bulstrode's secret; is that he had made his fortune by pawn broking selling stolen goods. Moreover, Bulstrode's first wife was Mr. Casaubon's grandmother, the mother of Casaubon's mother and Will's grandmother (502). When his wife wanted Bulstrode to find her daughter Sarah and her grandson, so that she could legate her, Bulstrode managed to find and locate her, yet he kept their existence a secret so that he could get all his wife's wealth after her death.

When the reality about Bulstrode is revealed, he is disgraced in public. When Mrs. Bulstrode wants to learn exactly what has happened; her brother Mr. Vincy discloses the subject to her.

> There were hardly any wives in Middlemarch whose matrimonial misfortunes would in different ways be likely to call forth more of this moral activity than Rosamond and her aunt Bulstrode. Mrs. Bulstrode was not an object of dislike, and had never consciously injured any human being....When the scandal about her husband was disclosed, they remarked of her 'Ah, poor woman! She is as honest as the day—*she* never suspected anything wrong in him, you may depend on it'. (610)

The people of Middlemarch are not suspicious of Harriet Bulstrode, they do not blame her for her husband's mistakes as they know and all agree how honest and trustworthy she is. Her good intentions, they think, can also be seen in the very fact that she has never been suspicious of her husband. Yet she herself suffers great pangs of sorrow.

2.3.4 Happy Couples

However, in *Middlemarch*, some marriages end happily. The implication is given to the reader that these couples are Celia Brooke and Sir James Chettam, Mary Garth

and Fred Vincy. These marriages survive because they are grounded on realistic perceptions of both partners and also on the partners' realistic assessments of their circumstances. Celia and Sir James Chettam marry as a result of Mrs. Cadwallader's matchmaking. When Dorothea decides to marry Casaubon, Mrs. Cadwallader, meaning Celia, says; "The truth is you have been courting one and won the other. I can see that she admires you almost as much as a man expects to be admired" (48). Celia and Sir James get married and have a son. They do not look beyond what has been given to them. They are not in search of some remote, inaccessible goal or aspiration. Theirs is the marriage of predictable expectations and responses. They live happily with the specific gender roles modified slightly at times to keep compatibility. When Celia states her wish to Dorothea that she could also submit to James at times as she did to Casaubon, she adds: "And, of course men know best about everything, except what women know better...Well, I mean about babies and those things...I should not give up to James when I knew he was wrong, as you used to do to Casaubon" (606). Celia seems to have accepted the conventional husband-wife relationship, in which each sex has his/her scope of action in different spheres.

Mary and Fred's waiting brings happy results, too. Understanding that he would not make a good clergyman, he accepts the job offered by Caleb Garth and when Bulstrode gives Fred Stone Court as a kind of redemption for his sins, Mary and Fred are able to settle into a life together, and they have three sons. Their situation is exemplary of how a man can be saved from the misery of doing a job he hates with the support of a clever, farsighted girl.

Commenting on the happy marriages of the novel Susan Morgan asserts:

> And once reality in the time and place of Middlemarch is represented as cultural and as unfulfilling, then the conventional happy endings for Celia and her baby or Mary Garth and Fred Vincy on their farm are revealed not only as old-fashioned solutions but as outmoded fiction, conventions from a fiction that had not yet tied the earthly paradise to a patriarchy. They are pretty pictures, pleasingly realistic rather than idealized. But we understand too much to view them as historical possibilities. (156)

The writer suggests that Celia's and Mary's happiness is not an unusual or extraordinary ending for both of them experience the result of their realistic attitudes towards life and people. As they did not have any ideals or expectations larger than what they were presented, it was less likely that they would be disappointed.

Elinor and the Rector Humphrey Cadwallader can also be considered another happy couple in the novel. Although Mrs. Cadwallader was criticized and pitied by her family and friends for having married a man lower in rank, Mr. and Mrs. Cadwallader manage to maintain their compatible union to the present. She is described as "a lady of immeasurably high birth, descended, as it were, dim as the crowd of heroic shades" (43), however, the couple is greatly respected by the townspeople, their opinions are highly valued as may be seen in the case of Dorothea's marital decision where people like Celia and Sir James Chettam ask about the couple's approval. They can be taken as a good example of a cross-class marriage, which, despite disapprovals and criticisms, manages to survive.

2.4 Reactions to Disillusionment

All the heroines in the novel go through various predicaments; however, the way they respond to their misfortunes crystallizes their differences as regards their stance in society and their compatibility with it in spite of their sufferings. In some way or other, all the characters face disappointment, and assume a pose, knowingly or unknowingly. How they respond to events is strongly related to their world-views as well as to their surrounding circumstances.

2.4.1 Dorothea Brooke

Dorothea's response to disillusionment can be said to consist of three different categories; sympathy out of a sense of duty, repulsion, and love for somebody else. The first and the most prevailing one of these attitudes is Dorothea's sympathy towards her husband Mr. Casaubon, which arises from her strong sense of morality.

Having realized the fact that Casaubon is not the man to respond to her intellectual and vocational needs, and that his work the *Key to All Mythologies* is a kind of "labour all in vain", and faced with Casaubon's deteriorating health, Dorothea enters into a stage of renunciation:

> But Dorothea was strangely quiet—not immediately indignant as she had been on a like occasion in Rome. And the cause lay deep. She was no longer struggling against the perception of facts, but adjusting herself to their clearest perception, and now when she looked steadily at her husband's failure, still

> more at his possible consciousness of failure, she seemed to be looking along the one track where duty became tenderness. (303)

Dorothea's sense of duty prevails over her regret; it leads her to the renunciation of her own desires. Aware of the fact that it is too late to change the circumstances, she makes efforts to settle things both within herself and with her husband. Now, she pities her husband, feeling for him because he has his insecurities about his work. This realization makes Dorothea more mature. So as to prevent any kind of argument, she behaves in a submissive way on purpose. Along with the deterioration of Casaubon's health, she feels more sympathy and even pity for him. Her marriage, in this sense, becomes an act of self-sacrifice.

Though not fully understanding the real cause of Casaubon's growing dislike for Will Ladislaw, Dorothea tries to avoid meeting him as a part of her wifely devotion. Casaubon's demeaning request of an open-ended promise from Dorothea before his death is also meaningful in the sense that, as Dorothea is too honest to lie, she wants to ponder on her husband's wish that when he dies she will fulfil a promise. Not knowing surely what the promise may be about, Dorothea's answer is delayed. Later that morning, Mr. Casaubon dies without Dorothea's being able to answer him. She cannot learn what the promise would have been about and, out of her self-sacrificing virtue she blames herself for not answering earlier.

However, Dorothea confronts a fact and very severe disillusionment when she learns about Mr. Casaubon's codicil to his will stating that if she marries Will she will be disinherited. "Everything was changing its aspect: her husband's conduct, her duteous feeling towards him, every struggle between them –and yet more, her whole relation to Ladislaw" (405). The codicil acts as a revelation to her, and everything starts making a new sense to her. In discovering her husband's distrust of her she also discovers her "yearning of the heart" towards Will (405). While Dorothea feels repulsed and surprised and staggered by her dead husband's jealousy, mistrust, and suspicions about her, she awakens to her feelings for Will.

The description of Will's physical appearance and gestures is also noteworthy in the sense that Dorothea is introduced to a completely different man from the dominant notions regarding men. Asha Kanwar suggests that his "light-brown curls and slim

figure, his complexion suddenly flashing by shyness" all point to "Eliot's radically anti-patriarchal attempt to create an image of masculinity attractive to women", as with "feminine qualities", he displays the image of an androgynous person "rather than the typical male" (135). It can be argued that George Eliot tries to transcend gender stereotypes not by creating only wilful and headstrong women but also by introducing men with feminine attributes.

With Will Ladislaw, Dorothea rediscovers herself. A relationship of mutual love and understanding replaces the pupil-tutor relationship.

> When Dorothea accidentally discovers Will in what appears to be a compromising situation with Lydgate's wife, she faces a crisis greater even than that posed by the earlier discovery that her own marriage was a disastrous mistake. The discovery is harrowing for Dorothea; it bites into her consciousness. It fills her with revulsion because it seems to cheapen Will and sully her own affection for him, yet the jealous rage she feels also reveals to her what she has previously avoided knowing: that she is (or was) deeply in love with Will. (Case and Shaw 184)

Although she spends a terrible night because of jealousy and grief, it is the beginning of a new phase for Dorothea; a time of reciprocal, answered feelings (646). Dorothea has actually found Will alone with Rosamond a second time. On the first occasion she had hurried to find Lydgate at the hospital to learn the details of her husband's health. However, "the repetition both of the farewell scene and of the interruption of Will alone with Rosamond", explains T. R. Wright, "has been recognised as a product of Eliot's conflicting reluctance and determination to drive her characters towards self-knowledge at the expense of innocence" (49). With "the farewell scene", Wright refers to Dorothea's leaving Rosamond and Will behind twice: first when she comes to Rosamond's house to look for Lydgate, and a second time when she sees them holding hands. Having recognized her love for and even jealousy of Will, she no longer restrains her feelings and for the first time she only thinks of herself.

In spite of Casaubon's codicil, she takes the radical step of renouncing her inheritance, and they decide to marry and move to London for Will's political career. In this marriage although Dorothea has not yet realised anything about her plans to do good, she feels confident and happy to be the wife of a man she loves and whose philosophy of life she supports. Dorothea's second marriage has two different connotations: she is freed from the burden of her previous mistake in marriage, and

she shifts from a marriage of bondage to a marriage where she is in control. Susan Morgan, in *Suppressed Sisters,* asserts:

> Dorothea's release from that oppressive marriage is a gift. But as with all the gifts from the gods, we should suspect it. Freedom does give Dorothea a second chance to make at last the right choice, the choice of open eyes and admitted passion that leads to fulfilment. But the catch is that this gift of a second chance is not so fulfilling after all. Rather than teach us that individual moral failings will damage our lives—the lesson of the two marriages, the permanent lesson for Lydgate—we learn through this apparently generous ending for Dorothea a harder and more general lesson. Our lives will be limited anyway. Moral failures may trap us, but it hardly follows that moral victories will open the gate. Becoming good doesn't save us. The fault may lie in ourselves. But it certainly, and this is the inescapable point, lies in our times. (154)

What the author suggests is that our moral stance may be restrictive for us if we do not live in the exact time and place compatible with our ideals. Dorothea does not fulfil her dreams such as her plans for cottages. At the end of the novel, she is presented as a supportive wife and a mother. This reminds the reader the St. Theresa allusion at the beginning of the novel. In St. Theresa's times a "coherent social faith" was so fully established that she could fulfil her most ideal wishes. It is not so for Dorothea and this answers the question why Dorothea's expectations are left unsatisfied in spite of her strong character and ardent nature. It can be added, however, that although Dorothea does not put into effect any of her material plans, as she herself also states, she achieves self-knowledge, she educates herself through predicaments, and what she lacks intellectually, she gains spiritually through her sympathy. She becomes more mature.

2.4.2 Rosamond Vincy

Rosamond's response to her unhappy marriage is mostly indifference and subtle obstinacy. Although she wants Lydgate to provide her with the luxury she desires, she does not desire to share the responsibility when trouble arises. She looks at the "mantelpiece" instead of at him when Lydgate tells her of their increasing debts, which signifies her rejection of the news, as well as her contempt for being asked for help. She utters "What can *I* do?" (490). It becomes clear that she wilfully refuses to share any responsibility with Lydgate for the debts they have accumulated together.

Rosamond has her subtle ways of being obstinate and of persevering in her wishes. She wants to keep her life standards no matter what her husband's predicaments are. She goes out riding with Captain Lydgate and interferes with Lydgate's business secretly to rid them off their debts. She also writes letters to Sir Godwin to ask for money. Rosamond's self-absorption collides with Lydgate's idealistic nature. He blames himself, saying continuously, "it is my fault" because he sees women as a "feeble" species to be cared for and looked after and also he cannot bear the idea of a loveless home. Although both recognize the huge differences in their character, it is Lydgate who "accepted his narrowed lot with sad resignation. He had chosen this fragile creature, and had taken the burthen of her life upon his arms. He must walk as he could, carry that burthen pitifully" (657). He feels a strong sense of responsibility. While Rosamond recognizes that Lydgate is not the man she thought he was and sets out to change him, Lydgate refuses to admit how different Rosamond is from the flower-like creature he would like her to be, and therefore Rosamond is able to manipulate him but he is unable to manipulate her.

Just like Harriet Bulstrode, Rosamond also becomes the topic of the gossip of the townspeople, in this case because of Lydgate's apparently ambivalent involvement in the death of Mr. Raffles. In the small social community of Middlemarch and like her aunt, she is exposed to social disgrace on the grounds of her husband's actions. However, to Lydgate's deepest disappointment, she never says that she believes in her husband's innocence, nor does she ask Lydgate what exactly happened. She prefers to listen to news from her father instead of from her husband: "Surely now at last you have given up the idea of staying in Middlemarch. I cannot go on living here. Let us go to London. Papa and everyone else, says you had better go. Whatever misery I have to put up with, it will be easier away from here" (624). Rosamond uses Lydgate's public disgrace as a weapon to achieve her desire to move to a better place.

Rosamond's subdued anger at her husband and marital problems lead her to spend more time with Will Ladislaw. When she and Will are caught together by Dorothea, the event leads to a meeting between Rosamond and Dorothea. Dorothea, having sensed the unhappiness in the marriage both from Lydgate and from Rosamond, tries to convince her of her husband's innocence, and to make Rosamond more

sympathetic to Lydgate by telling her that he even thinks of moving to London for her. At this point, Dorothea's love for others is sharply contrasted with Rosamond's egotism.

At the end of the novel, Lydgate becomes "successful for the treatise he has written on gout" and gains "excellent practice alternating, according to the season, between London and Continental bathing place" (685) and "Rosamond simply continued to be mild in her temper, inflexible in her judgement, disposed to admonish her husband, and able to frustrate him by stratagem" (685). It is understood that Rosamond does not mature like Dorothea does. She remains fixed in her views and behaviour. Besides, she believes that in time Lydgate has "learned the value of her opinion" (685). However, in close relation to Lydgate's increased income, she has become convinced of his talents. He, on the other hand, always regards himself as a failure. He dies of diphtheria at the age of fifty leaving Rosamond and their children "a heavy insurance" (685). Rosamond marries an elderly and wealthy physician and finally attains the material luxury she had dreamed of for years. She interprets her happiness as "a reward". Although the reason for this reward remains unarticulated, the narrator implies that she attributes it to her "patience with Tertius" (686).

Rosamond can be seen as the personification of that century of paradoxes and contradictions. While aspiring to create "accomplished females", a "perfect piece of womanhood", the attempt itself becomes the reason of disappointment because of its superficial, shallow construction of things such as manners and speech. In this sense, this is how marriage as an institution is emptied of meaning. The marriage of Rosamond and Lydgate raises the question of who, women or men, are more oppressed in such relationships.

2.4.3 Harriet Bulstrode

Harriet Bulstrode's reaction to disillusionment is remarkable in the sense that in the face of hardship and humiliation, she does not desert her husband. Unlike other female characters who fall out with their spouses gradually due to diverse expectations and personalities, Harriet, despite a sudden and terrible misfortune,

chooses to stay with her husband. Having learned the whole truth about Bulstrode's past, Harriet goes to meet Bulstrode for the first time after the revelation of the scandal:

> He dared not to look up at her. He sat with his eyes bent down, and as she went towards him she thought he looked smaller – he seemed so withered and shrunken. A movement of new compassion and old tenderness went through her like a great wave, and putting one hand on his which rested on the arm of the chair, and the other on his shoulder, she said, solemnly but kindly –
> 'Look up, Nicholas'
> ...He burst out crying and they cried together, she sitting at his side. They could not yet speak to each other of the shame which she was bearing with him, or of the acts which had brought it down on them. His confession was silent, and her promise of faithfulness was silent. (618)

The moment Harriet Bulstrode sees her husband in a "withered" and "shrunken" state, she feels her "compassion and tenderness" return all of a sudden (618). Without even mentioning the scandal, the two arrive at a reconciliation, both crying side by side. Harriet Bulstrode, in this way, demonstrates moral strength by standing by her husband. She is not blamed by the townspeople and what she does is courageous as well as consistent with her religious piety. In sharp contrast to Dorothea's pity for Casaubon, which she has to hide, Harriet and her husband share their sorrow and Bulstrode allows himself-even asks-to be pitied. This becomes a healthy platform for a new beginning.

In the Finale, the narrator makes a final comment about each woman; the most prominent of them is about Dorothea:

> Dorothea herself had no dreams of being praised above other women, feeling that there was always something better which she might have done, if she had only been better and known better. Still, she never repented that she had given up position and fortune to marry Will Ladislaw, and he would have held it the greatest shame as well as sorrow to him if she had repented. They were bound to each other by a love stronger than any impulses which could have marred it. (686)

By discovering mutual love, Dorothea goes at least one step beyond a loveless and sterile marriage. It is implied that "to be absorbed in the life of another" is an end for a girl like Dorothea. She has found such a probable end although she knows she has not achieved anything concrete yet. The idea of giving "wifely help" to a man of Parliament, who defends the truth and is "in the thick of a struggle against" wrongs, consoles Dorothea.

> Certainly those determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of a young and noble impulse struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion. For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it. A new Theresa will hardly have the opportunity of reforming a conventional life, any more than a new Antigone will spend her heroic piety in daring all for the sake of a brother's burial: the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is forever gone. But we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas, some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know. (688)

The conclusion is that in such a world where the time and place are different from St. Theresa's time, women, regardless of their high and noble ideals, have to lead "imperfect" lives. Although their aspirations are high and also morally noble, their decisions are doomed to be read as "error" and "illusion" because the vision of the society is narrow. For this reason, the narrator explains, to make a new "reform" or cause a big change to occur is harder than ever for new Theresas, today's women with high aspirations. In this sense, the novel implies that things might be different in different times.

In conclusion, it should be stated that the novel does not solely present women as victims of their circumstances; men also suffer from their personal weaknesses. Zelda Austen states that "though Eliot understood perfectly the limitations placed on women, her pity for both men and women in their suffering transcended anger" (561). Any possible anger that might be felt against men is negated by their own predicaments and sufferings. Similarly, Barbara Hardy asserts that "the more general and open statement glances at Lydgate, and at Bulstrode, Casaubon, and all the others, not merely at Dorothea's handicap as a woman....The heroines have this initial handicap, and it is very carefully pointed by generalized satire as by a pathetic individual appeal" (52). As the author also explains, the narrative takes hardships and dilemmas as its starting point, on an individual basis, and both men and women are presented as victims of society and circumstances. If there is something disastrous about the end of these female characters, especially in Dorothea's case, it is the everyday tragedies of women who feel a "faintness of the heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary" like Dorothea felt in marrying Casaubon (162).

> That tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the course of emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heartbeat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. (162)

Subsequently, although Eliot's characters' great schemes for producing "some far-resonant action" like Saint Theresa's, have collapsed, the narrative of the book shows her stance at viewing what we call tragic. For her, such unpleasant events are so "frequent" in everyday lives of people that they go beyond being "tragic", because we get used to them. Otherwise, every single heartbreak or disappointment would create the effect of "hearing the grass grow "or "a squirrel's heartbeat" and that would be unbearable (162) What can be called tragic here is only the "sharp effect of reality on the individual" and "it is every man's duty to find out as best he can the ways of this fate, and adapt his conduct to it" (Mansell 169).

Although women who aspire to higher ends in the novel cannot realize their dreams and their way is blocked by limited views and conclusions, still their ends show the author's stance; they at least arrive at a point of negotiation with their fates by being presented with a second chance to try to shape their lives. "Every limit is a beginning as well as an ending", states the narrator (683). Although it was not the targeted device of the liberation for women in the novel, especially for Dorothea, "marriage is still a great beginning" (683). Therefore, even though some of the characters are not provided with a blissful marriage, they are given a second chance despite their failures and flaws.

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

One of the most popular of Thomas Hardy's novels, *The Return of the Native*, was published in 1878. As indicated in the preface to his 1895 volume, the story was set in 1842-3 or 1847-8, the entire story covering just one year (Page 31). The setting of the novel is Egdon Heath, which he created in accordance with the details of the heath he had lived by. The heath itself is like a character, the gloomy and tragic presence of which is felt in almost every scene. Like a considerable number of Hardy novels, at the centre of *The Return of the Native* lies a love story, courtship and marriage. The characters are faced with a marital choice.

The story begins with the failure in the marriage ceremony of Damon Wildeve and Thomasin Yeobright. The reasons are blurred. Eustacia Vye, who was taken to the heath years ago to live with her grandfather, is the romantic heroine of the story. This middle-class girl, who hates life on the heath, "dreams of cosmopolitan pleasures" (Harvey 67). Clym Yeobright, an idealistic young man, returns to his hometown with the hopes of being of help to the public by founding a school. He gives up his career as a jeweller's merchant in Paris. The two, Eustacia and Cylm**,** get married with divergent prospects of a future together, the consequences of which lead them to a tragic end; the death of Eustacia and the solitariness of the blind Clym. There are subplots in the story as well, such as that of Damon Wildeve, who Eustacia loved formerly, and Thomasin Yeobright, who is a rational girl that succumbs to circumstances. Diggory Venn, the heath's reddleman who travels with his van to sell the dye people use to mark their sheep, is secretly in love with Thomasin, watches over her and tries to protect her. He and Thomasin marry at the end of the novel.

The Return of the Native has a place among other sensational novels of the 19th century like Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina.* The novel is exemplary in its presenting a wide range of topics such as sexual politics, vital decisions on marriage, and nature versus society debate, which will be discussed in the light of the interpretations of certain critics such as C. Sengupta, Hillel Matthew Daleski, Rosemarie Morgan, Merryn Williams and John Peck.

3.1 Female Subordination

In *The Return of the Native*, female subordination has a different form than the one in *Middlemarch* in view of the fact that the elements restricting the female characters are not various, or explicitly depicted. Both Eustacia Vye and Thomasin Yeobright are limited by their surroundings and people's opinions in some way. However, their attitudes towards these limitations reveal their dissimilarities. Therefore, the way they absorb or refuse to accept the preset roles and values given to women displays their personalities as well as offering the reader a chance for a comparison between the two.

3.1.1 Eustacia Vye

Eustacia Vye is a nineteen-year old, middle-class girl who is the daughter of a bandmaster from Corfu, brought to Egdon Heath and raised by her grandfather after the death of her father (70):

> But he did his best; made Budmouth permanently his home, took great trouble with the child's education, the expenses of which were defrayed by the grandfather, and throve as the chief local musician till her mother's death, when he left off thriving, drank, and died also. The girl was left to the care of her grandfather, who, since three of his ribs became broken in a shipwreck, had lived in this airy perch on Egdon, a spot which had taken his fancy because the house was to be had for next to nothing, and because a remote blue tinge on the horizon between the hills, visible from the cottage door, was traditionally believed to be the English Channel. (70)

It is made clear that Eustacia had a considerable amount of education due to her father's strenuous efforts. The grandfather seems to have bought the house especially because it was at a very low price. However, Egdon Heath is at the core of Eustacia's unhappiness and discontentment. She cannot understand "why a woman of this sort could live on Egdon Heath?" (70). Budmouth is where she was born and it was, to her, her "native place" (70). Eustacia thinks that Budmouth is a better place than Egdon Heath because it is a "fashionable seaside resort", a more modern place to live in (70). In contrast, she does not feel any sense of belonging to that heath. The narrative starts with a detailed description of it:

> A Saturday afternoon in November was approaching the time of twilight, and the vast tract of unenclosed wild known as Egdon Heath embrowned itself

> moment by moment. Overhead the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky was a tent which had the whole heath for its floor.
>
> The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half-an-hour to eve; it could in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread. (9)

The heath has an existence of its own: both independent and seemingly reflective of the moods of the people at times. Bonamy Dobree points out that "The plot...of *the Return of the Native* would not be what it is but for the character called Egdon Heath, which streaks the whole tale" (qtd. in Sengupta 36). The first time we are introduced to Eustacia Vye we see her as a figure standing on the heath:

> There the form stood, motionless as the hill beneath. Above the plain rose the hill, above the hill rose the barrow, above the barrow rose the figure. Above the figure was nothing that could be mapped elsewhere than on a celestial globe.
>
> Such a perfect, delicate, and necessary finish did the figure give to the dark pile of hills that it seemed to be the only obvious justification of their outline. Without it, there was the dome without the lantern; with it, the architectural demands of the mass were satisfied. The scene was strangely homogeneous. The vale, the upland, the barrow, and the figure above it, all of these amounted only to unity. Looking at this or that member of the group was not observing a complete thing, but a fraction of a thing. (17)

Ironically, given her dislike and rejection of it Eustacia is described as an indispensable part of the heath, without her existence, the heath seems to be lacking something; something is missing. She is "homogeneous" with the heath. Together with the heath, they form a "unity". Furthermore, "the heath is not only a metaphor for the cosmos, but it mirrors mankind's common internal chaos", states Daniel Schwarz (55). Throughout the novel, the heath is described as reflecting the inner feelings, confusion as well as the imminent bad fate of the characters.

> But celestial imperiousness, love, wrath, and fervour had proved to be somewhat thrown away on netherward Egdon. Her power was limited, and the consciousness of this limitation had biased her development. Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled thereto. Her appearance accorded well with this smouldering rebelliousness, and the shady splendour of her beauty was the real surface of the sad and stifled warmth within her. A true Tartarean dignity sat upon her brow, and not factitiously or with marks of constraint, for it had grown in her with years. (69)

For Eustacia, the heath is "her Hades"; her hell. In it she feels limited, and the awareness of such a limitation restricts her more, it blocks her way to a possible development. Her paradoxical relationship with the heath is renewed with the statement that although she has absorbed everything dark and negative about it since

she came here, still she does not desire to have any kind of reconciliation with her surroundings. Her looks comply with her rebellious nature. She is described in contrasts. Her beauty has a "shady splendour" but there is a "sad and stifled warmth" within her (69).

The antagonism between the heath and Eustacia can be attributed to the pattern of Thomas Hardy's fiction in which nature and society are portrayed in opposition. John Peck in *How to Study a Hardy Novel* mentions the presence of these two opponent forces in the writer's novels:

> In a Hardy novel you should always be able to find evidence of a society versus nature tension at the heart of the material...The first thing that might strike you is that Edgon Heath must in some way represent nature: even at the outset it seems reasonable to speculate that the order of society will be set against the untamed wildness of the heath. The characters who live here are likely to be caught between the pull of society and the pull of nature, including their own natures. (22)

Accordingly, Eustacia craves the social world and sees the heath as an obstacle to her freedom and to her chance to fulfil her cosmopolitan desires. The heath is presented as a representative part of the big wild nature over which humans have no control. It forms the scene and the ambiance of the story. Thus, it can be said that the characters are introduced and also treated in the context of such a milieu. The heath is an indispensable part of the characters' lives whether they like it or not, including Eustacia Vye. The heath itself is described as changeless and inviolable; it is the "great inviolate place" with "an ancient permanence" (12). "The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages and the people changed, yet Egdon remained" (12). In a way, its resistance to change as opposed to the growth and the development of the characters can be interpreted as an important part of the antagonistic relations between and uncontrollable change in the lives of the characters.

Eustacia is a beautiful woman and her beauty is mostly associated with a sense of dignity:

> That she was tall and straight in build, that she was lady-like in her movements, was all that could be learnt of her just now, her form being wrapped in a shawl folded in the old cornerwise fashion, and her head in a large handkerchief, a protection not superfluous at this hour and place. Her back was towards the wind, which blew from the north-west; but whether she had adopted that aspect

> because of the chilly gusts which played about her exceptional position, or because her interest lay in the south-east, did not at first appear. (55)

She is portrayed with a particular distinction of her own. Although she has been on the heath for many years, both her desires and her posture show that she does not belong to the heath, and she stands out among the heath people.

Eustacia is also a passionate woman; she is frequently described in sexual terms throughout the novel**.** An eroticized account is given of Eustacia. She is "full-limbed" (68), "with two matchless lips" (58). Pierre Dexideuil also states that "Hardy not only possessed the gift of divining souls. His heroines have a physical existence...and the links between their beauty and their character are forged by an artist eminently qualified to form creatures of flesh and blood, adjusted to the ends for which he strove" (108).

Eustacia is a girl of romantic aspirations. She craves to be loved passionately; this is one of the elements that shapes her character: "To be loved to madness – such was her great desire. Love was to her the one cordial which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than any particular lover" (71). Eustacia is in love with the idea of being in love. Rather than a particular person to love, she is obsessed with the state of being passionately and madly in love and to be loved in return. "Her loneliness deepened her desire. On Egdon, coldest and meanest kisses were at famine prices; and where was a mouth matching hers to be found?" (71). She does not see people of the heath as worthy of her consideration. She longs for more than what she has been given.

"Fidelity in love for fidelity's sake had less attraction for her than for most women: fidelity because of love's grip had much. A blaze of love, and extinction, was better than a lantern glimmer of the same which should last long years" (71). For Eustacia, faithfulness for its sake means a lack of passion. She prefers a temporary but strong "blaze of love" to a steady and loyal union of two people with a "glimmering" fire. "On this head she knew by prevision what most women learn only by experience: she had mentally walked around love, told the towers thereof, considered its palaces; and concluded that love was but a doleful joy. Yet, she desired it, as one in a desert would be thankful for brackish water" (72). Eustacia is aware of the possibility of

misery as an outcome of love; still, she yearns for such an experience. Even if it may have unhappy outcomes, she tries to find a certain kind of novelty.

> Thus she was a girl of some forwardness of mind; indeed, weighed in relation to her situation among the very rearward of thinkers, very original. Her instincts towards social nonconformity were at the root of this. In the matter of holidays her mood was that of horses who, when turned out to grass, enjoy looking upon their kind at work on the highway. She only valued rest to herself when it came in the midst of other people's labour. (72)

It is made clear by the narrator that Eustacia does not conform to the norms of the society. She is instinct-led and wants to act according to her deepest needs. The existence of others is a kind of intrusion in to her self-absorbed state of mind, which shows that she hates both the heath and its people.

> She had Pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries. Their light, as it came and went, and came again, was partially hampered by their oppressive lids and lashes; and of these the under lid was much fuller than it usually is with English women. This enabled her to indulge in reverie without seeming to do so: she might have been believed capable of sleeping without closing them up. Assuming that the souls of men and women are visible essences, you could fancy the colour of Eustacia's soul to be flame-like. The sparks from it that rose into her dark pupils gave the same impression. (68)

The rebellious impression in Eustacia's character is emphasized in her description with the words connoting darkness and mystery. Her association with darkness and nocturnal images also points to her isolation. She isolates herself from other people as she perceives herself the only person on the heath who is discontent with being there. The long walks Eustacia takes especially at night can also be interpreted as another example of her independent nature.

3.1.2 Thomasin Yeobright

Thomasin Yeobright is the niece of Mrs Yeobright and Clym Yeobright's cousin. She is a realistic and level-headed girl with modest expectations. We are introduced to Thomasin first when she is being taken home by Diggory Venn, the reddleman who loves her, after her failure to marry Damon Wildeve because of an "irregularity in the license" (43). Thomasin is a fragile yet gentle girl with a realistic vision of things. Although she has fallen in love with Damon Wildeve and desires to marry him, she is also aware of her aunt's disapproval of their union. She knows that Mrs.

Yeobright had forbidden the banns for their marriage, which is why she feels more ashamed in the presence of Mrs. Yeobright on her return:

> Thomasin looked as if quite overcome by her aunt's change of manner. 'It means just what it seems to mean: I am – not married,' she replied faintly. 'Excuse me – for humiliating you, aunt, by this mishap: I am sorry for it. But I cannot help it.'
> 'Me? Think of yourself first.'
> 'It was nobody's fault. When we got there the parson wouldn't marry us because of some trifling irregularity in the licence.'
> 'What irregularity?'
> 'I don't know. Mr. Wildeve can explain. I did not think when I went away this morning that I should come like this.' It being dark, Thomasin allowed her emotion to escape her by the silent way of tears, which could roll down her cheek unseen. (45)

Thomasin apologizes to Mrs. Yeobright because of this unexpected result that humiliates her aunt. Rather than grieving over her misfortune, she feels the pang of humiliating her aunt. On the other hand, she knows that she cannot help herself loving Damon and desiring to marry him. "I know how wrong it was of me to love him", she says to her aunt, yet she feels unable to give up on Damon. It is evident that Thomasin loves Damon, however, she is not a girl of passionate feelings like Eustacia. She is meek and sensible. Unlike Eustacia, she seems to keep in balance the passionate and rational sides of her character. Although she is aware of her feelings, she is fully conscious of her mistakes and the possible interpretations of the heath people, including her aunt, on her failed marriage.

Thomas Hardy does not put marriage at the end of his novel as a final resolution. Marriage for many characters starts at the beginning of his fiction, and thus presents a reversal of readers' expectations. Thus, the moment we are introduced to Thomasin, we are faced with her marital problems. As soon as she recovers from her disappointment about Damon, she and Mrs Yeobright go to meet Damon Wildeve. The conversation between Damon and Thomasin in private can be read as a reversal of romantic expectations:

> 'Damon, what do you mean to do about me?
> 'Do about you?'
> 'Yes. Those who don't like you whisper things which at moments make me doubt you. We mean to marry, I suppose, don't we?'
> 'Of course we do. We have only to go to Budmouth on Monday, and we marry at once.'

> ‘Then do let us go! – Oh, Damon, what you make me say!’ She hid her blushing face in her handkerchief. ‘Here am I, asking you to marry me; when by rights you ought to be on your knees imploring me, your cruel mistress, not to refuse you, and saying it would break your heart if I did. I used to think it would be pretty and sweet like that; but how different!’
> ‘Yes, real life is never at all like that.’ (46-47)

Thomasin is a naive girl with good intentions about people. Although it is made clear that Damon Wildeve has tricked her in this failed marriage experience with an irregularity in the marriage licence which he probably knew about, she still wants to trust him.

3.2 Expectations from Marriage

The characters’ expectations from marriage also reflect their expectations from life. The implication is given by the narrator that modest and sensible characters have moderate expectations whereas characters with illusions are vulnerable to disappointment. Eustacia Vye and Thomasin Yeobright have very different expectations from life, which is reflected on their expectations of marriage, too.

3.2.1 Eustacia Vye

Eustacia Vye retains certain fixed anticipations about marriage. Her romantic aspirations define her relationship with the men she establishes relationships with. Her strong desire to be loved to madness and live a passionate love is accompanied by the urge to get away from the heath and its people, which directs Eustacia to different affairs in the novel. The first time we see Eustacia, she is the figure who lights a fire on the heath as a signal. This signal is for Damon Wildeve, an engineer who “was brought up to be better things” but keeps an inn called “The Quiet Woman” (44). It is understood that Eustacia used to love Damon. He is depicted as a womanizer, a man who does not have any desire to get married but who pursues exciting love affairs with women:

> He was quite a young man...The grace of his movement was singular: it was the pantomimic expression of a lady-killing career. Next came into notice the more material qualities, among which was a profuse crop of hair impending over the top of his face, lending to his forehead the high-cornered outline of an Early Gothic shield; and a neck which was smooth and round as cylinder. The

> lower half of his figure was of light build. Altogether he was one in whom no man would have seen anything to admire, and in whom no woman would have seen anything to dislike. (45)

He is, thus, a young man with a graceful posture and expressions signifying some kind of danger for girls. It is implied that he is flirtatious and charming. His physical qualities suggest it too. He is depicted as a cunning man who vacillates between two women, and acts according to changing circumstances, which makes him an unreliable figure.

The impression is given that Damon uses Thomasin as a means to make Eustacia jealous. Having learned that the marriage failed, Eustacia sets a bonfire to draw Damon's attention and make him come to her:

> 'I have come,' said the man, who was no other than Wildeve. 'You give me no peace. Why do you not leave me alone? I have seen your bonfire all the evening.' The words were not without emotion, and retained their level tone by a careful equipoise between imminent extremes.
>
> At this unexpectedly repressing manner in her lover the girl seemed to repress herself also. 'Of course you have seen my fire,' she answered with languid calmness, artificially maintained. 'Why shouldn't I have a bonfire on the fifth of November, like other denizens of the heath?'
>
> 'I knew it was meant for me.'
>
> 'How did you know it? I have had no word with you since you chose her, and walked about with her, and deserted me entirely, as if I had never been yours'. (63)

The conversation reveals the previous affair of the couple. It also reveals that Eustacia is too proud to admit that she lit the fire for Damon. She looks agitated and tense but tries to suppress her feelings and remain calm. Eustacia became angry with Damon for choosing Thomasin, and deserting her. However, before long she admits that the news of the broken marriage made her believe that Damon remained "faithful" to her (64). Eustacia sees the prospect of a marriage between Thomasin and Damon as an "insult" to her for she sees Thomasin as her inferior and not a worthy match. She also knows perfectly well that Damon is not a man to marry. It is crucial to add that Eustacia has a self-centred way of interpreting things. She is so vain and self-confident that she makes mistaken inferences. Although Thomasin and Damon could not get married because of the licence problem, she reads the whole event as proof that Damon's love for her is stronger than that for Thomasin.

On the other hand, Eustacia knows that Damon is not the one who she has been looking for. Although she thinks that he has "wronged" her, she wants him back as there seems to be nothing and no one else around to be interested in. "Damon, you are not worthy of me: I see it, and yet I love you", she states (64). On Damon's departure, Eustacia's description by the narrator unveils her deeper thoughts and feelings about Damon:

> Eustacia sighed: it was no fragile maiden sigh, but a sigh which shook her like a shiver. Whenever a flash of reason darted like an electric light upon her lover – as it sometimes would – and showed his imperfections she shivered thus. But it was over in a second and she loved on. She knew that he trifled with her; but she loved on. She scattered the half-burnt brands, went indoors immediately, and up to her bedroom without a light. (67)

Eustacia is not always sensual and idealistic about love, she has also reason enough to distinguish between the good and the bad sides of things and people; at such a time, she inwardly knows that Damon is a man with imperfections. Another instant in her portrayal also exemplifies her lack of choice:

> And so we see our Eustacia – for she was not altogether unlovable – arriving at that stage of enlightenment which feels that nothing is worth while, and filling up the spare hours of her existence by idealising Wildeve for want of a better object. This was the sole reason of his ascendency: she knew it herself. At moments her pride rebelled against her passion for him, and she even had longed to be free. But there was only one circumstance which could dislodge him, and that was the advent of a greater man. (73)

Evidently, that Damon has a certain place in Eustacia's life and that he has gained importance and recognition in her world completely reside in the fact that she does not have a better man to replace him. Although she has high hopes, and considers herself different from the heath people, she is not unique in the sense that she also lays her hopes on the arrival of a man.

Eustacia longs for a glorious union. Her romantic ideals prevent her from valuing what she has, and direct her to higher demands about love and whom to marry. Even if she does not see someone particular in her surroundings as a future husband, her ideals have built the image of an ideal marriage in her imagination:

> Eustacia had got beyond the vision of some marriage of inexpressible glory; yet, though her emotions were in full vigour, she cared for no meaner union. Thus we see her in a strange state of isolation. To have lost the godlike conceit that we may do what we will, and not to have acquired a homely zest for doing what we can, shows a grandeur of mind that, though disappointed, forswears retreat. But, if congenial world is where doing means marrying and the

> commonwealth is one of hearts and hands, the same peril attends the condition. (73)

Therefore she has high hopes about marriage. However, in view of the fact that she needs the arrival, the "advent", of a man to fulfil her wishes in life, she fails to go beyond the ordinary expectations of a girl. In relation, it is also stated in the novel that "as far as social ethics were concerned Eustacia approached the savage state, though in emotion she was all the while an epicure. She had advanced to the secret recesses of sensuousness, yet had hardly crossed the threshold of conventionality" (96).

Since Eustacia is liable to have romantic visions about marriage, her imagination is easily triggered. One day, while the local workers are bringing together the furze-faggots and building them into a stack for Eusacia's grandfather Captain Vye, she overhears their conversation from the house (107). The conversation is about Clym Yeobrgiht, Mrs. Yeobright's son and Thomasin's cousin. She overhears that he has been working as a diamond merchant in Paris and is about to come back home. However, after the captain leaves, the conversation that goes on between the local farmers Humphrey and Sam affects Eustacia deeply. The two men think Eustacia and Clym would be a good match as a couple:

> 'I say, Sam,' observed Humphrey when the old man was gone, 'she and Clym Yeobright would make a very pretty pigeon pair – hey? If they wouldn't I'll be dazed! Both of one mind about niceties for certain, and learned in print, and always thinking about high doctrine – there couldn't be a better couple if they were made o'purpose. Clym's family is as good as hers. His father was a farmer, that's true; but his mother was a sort of lady, as we know. Nothing would please me better than to see them two man and wife.' (109)

Humphrey thinks that the two would be a good couple because both are educated and have a certain taste in things. Moreover, he thinks that they are suitable for each other in terms of their rank, too. This small coincidence creates many illusions in Eustacia's mind. Such a small remark has a shaping effect on her thoughts and actions.

> The subject of their discourse had been keenly interesting to her. A young and clever man was coming into that lonely heath from, of all contrasting places in the world, Paris. It was like a man coming from heaven. More singular still, the heathmen had instinctively coupled her and this man together in their minds as a pair born for each other.
>
> That five minutes of overhearing furnished Eustacia with visions enough to fill the whole blank afternoon. Such sudden alterations from mental vacuity do

> sometimes occur so quietly. She could never have believed in the morning that her colourless inner world would before night become as animated as water under a microscope, and that without the arrival of a single visitor. (116)

The topic of the farmers' conversation ignites the romantic fantasies in Eustacia's mind. An entirely new and bigger phase is opened before her. Without being aware, the men nourish the girl's deepest dreams about ideal love. She feels as if he was "coming from heaven" (110). Her "colourless" afternoon is "animated" all of a sudden. From this time on, Clym's arrival means everything to her. Now that her thoughts are directed towards Clym, even without seeing him, she decides to take a walk to Blooms-End, where he was born and where his mother still lives (110). "The scene of a daydream is sufficient for a pilgrimage at nineteen", states the narrator, ironically touching on Eustacia's fantasies that caught fire with a simple remark (111). Her fancifulness is the reason why she attributes numerous meanings to a single conversation about Clym. When she goes to the Yeobrights' house to see him coming and is suddenly greeted with a "Good Night" by him, she feels extremely excited (117):

> Was there anything in the voice of Mrs. Yeobright's son – for Clym it was – phenomenal as a sound? No: it was simply comprehensive. All emotional things were possible to the speaker of that good-night. Eustacia's imagination supplied the rest – except the solution to one riddle. What could the tastes of that man be who saw friendliness and geniality in these shaggy hills? (117)

Looking at things from her point of view, there is only one thing she cannot figure out and that is how a man like Clym Yeobright could see "friendliness and geniality" in that heath, and its people. To Eustacia, who has always been hateful towards the heath, it is incomprehensible how a man of such cosmopolitan experiences can find such things sympathetic.

Eustacia's grandfather knows very well that his granddaughter does not like anything or anybody related to the country life and that she dreams of urban life. When Eustacia asks him why they do not socialize with the Yeobrights, Captain Vye responds saying "But you would never have cared to go there, even if you might have, I am well sure" (117). When Eustacia, because of her heightened interest in Clym, cannot see his point, the grandfather says, "Your own tastes would find them far too countrified. They sit in the kitchen, drink mead and elder wine, and sand the floor to keep it clean. A sensible way of life; but how would you like it?" (117). Her

grandfather knows that Eustacia does not seek a modest life like that of the Yeobrights'. She would despise their "countrified" way of living. In fact, the tone of the narrative makes it clear that it is not surprising that Eustacia has not spent much time with these people before. In fact, the grandfather's reaction can be taken as a foreshadowing of the future events, which will be based on misevaluations.

Clym Yeobright becomes an object of fascination for Eustacia. Everything she does is either because of him or directed at him. She even sees him in a dream without even knowing his face (118). In accordance with her complicated thoughts and schemes, the dream is "elaborately developed, perplexing and exciting" too (118). It has many "ramifications", "fluctuations" and "much colour" (118). The narrator explains that for a girl like Eustacia who has high hopes but limited life experience, such a dream was a signal of "wonderful" connotations (118). Towards the end of the dream, Eustacia sees herself dancing with "a man in silver armour" (118). The moment she is about to see his face, she wakes up because of a cracking noise that comes from the window shutters. She associates the man with Clym, thinking that "'Twas meant for Mr. Yeobright!" (118). She vacillates between reason and emotion, as can be seen from the following description:

> The perfervid woman was by this time half in love with a vision. The fantastic nature of her passion, which lowered her as an intellect, raised her as a soul. If she had had a little more self-control she would have attenuated the emotion to nothing by sheer reasoning, and so have killed it off. If she had had a little less pride she might have gone and circumambulated the Yeobrights' premises at Blooms-End at any maidenly sacrifice until she had seen him. But Eustacia did neither of these things. She acted as the most exemplary might have acted, being so influenced; she took an airing twice or thrice a day upon the Egdon hills, and kept her eyes employed. (119)

Eustacia makes many attempts to encounter Clym. The more she is wrapped up in her emotional state, the less she reasons. The narrator suggests that if she had been more rational, she would have quit pursuing such romantic illusions long before they appeared. If she had been less proud, and therefore more courageous to show her interest, she would have gone to the house. Yet, Eustacia has the picture of an apparently unplanned meeting in her mind. That is why she keeps close to the house with the appearance of taking air.

Upon hearing a rumour that Clym is not going to stay long on Egdon Heath, she feels upset even though she knows it is only "natural" that a man "in the full swing of his activities in a great city" would not care much to "linger long on Egdon Heath" (120). After many failed attempts to see Clym, Eustacia finally schemes to see him another way. She learns from the local people that there will be a Christmas party in the Yeobrights' house, to celebrate Clym's presence (121). The locals will perform the traditional play called "mumming", and each local has a role. Thinking that such an opportunity will get her closer to Clym, she wants to take the part of Charley who is a young man working for Eustacia's grandfather and is also hopelessly in love with her. Charley is the Turkish Knight beaten by St. George in the play. Disguised as the knight, she plays his part in the party (134). This event becomes a means for her to see Clym clearly for the first time:

> To one of middle age the countenance was that of a young man, though a youth might hardly have seen any necessity for the term of immaturity. But it was really one of those faces which convey less the idea of so many years its age than of so much experience as its store. The number of their years may have adequately summed up Jared, Mahalaleel, and the rest of the antediluvians, but the age of a modern man is to be measured by the intensity of its history.
> Had Heaven preserved Yeobright from a wearing habit of meditation, people would have said 'A handsome man.' Had his brain unfolded under sharper contours they would have said 'A thoughtful man.' But an inner strenuousness was preying upon an outer symmetry, and they rated his look as singular. (137)

The first description of Clym is very important for even though he is a young man he has a countenance reflecting his long years of experience. He is depicted as the epitome of the modern man. Because a lot of things are going on in his mind, his good looks are unrecognized by many. Eustacia's first feelings in his presence are signs of love, she has already made up her mind to love him.

> She had undoubtedly begun to love him. She loved him partly because he was exceptional in this scene, partly because she had from the first instinctively determined to love him, chiefly because she was in desperate need of loving somebody...Once let a maiden admit the possibility of her being stricken with love for some one at some hour and place, and the thing is as good as done. (141)

As stated before, Eustacia is irrational and romantic. Her nature causes her to make marriage plans without knowing Clym at all. Clym is at an extraordinary place in her mind because he does not belong to Egdon Heath. Besides, she is in absolute need of falling in love, no matter who the person is. "In love with love more than with him, she is predetermined to nourish passion for him and so fill up what has been eaten

out (Daleski 90). She is very subjective and one-sided in her definition of happiness. She disregards the fact that those on whom she lays her dreams have their own personalities and expectations from life. It is stated in the novel that "to escape was her great and immediate desire" and she is more than ready to justify any means to reach her end (144).

In accordance with her plan, then, Eustacia wants to eliminate any possible hindrances to their union. She feels jealous of Thomasin Yeobright who might make a good match with him. Looking at Diggory Venn, she thinks to herself:

> But in spite of possibilities it was not likely that Thomasin would accept this erratic young man while she had a cousin like Yeobright at her elbow, and Wildeve at the same time not absolutely indifferent. Eustacia was not long in guessing that poor Mrs. Yeobright, in her anxiety for her niece's future, had mentioned this lover to stimulate the zeal of the other. Eustacia was on the side of the Yeobrights now, and entered into the spirit of the aunt's desire. (148)

Eustacia has been thinking about the Yeobrights so much lately that she is quick to put herself in Mrs. Yeobright's shoes and to guess that Mrs. Yeobright, as a mother and a loving aunt would like to see Thomasin and Clym married. So as not to lose her chances with Clym, Eustacia resolves to break up her relationship with Damon Wildeve permanently and sends him a note to tell him that she will no longer see him (152).

The biggest reaction to a possible love affair between the two comes from Mrs. Yeobright, Clym's mother. Mrs. Yeobright is a strong-willed woman, and just as she was about Thomasin and her pre-marital problems, she is concerned about her son's future and does not want him to stay on the heath and ruin his future. She feels more uncomfortable especially when she guesses that Eustacia might be the cause of such an impediment:

> 'When I think of you and your new crotchets,' said Mrs. Yeobright, with some emphasis, 'I naturally don't feel so comfortable as I did a twelvemonth ago. It is incredible to me that a man accustomed to the attractive women of Paris and elsewhere should be so easily worked upon by a girl in a heath. You could just as well have walked another way'. (187)

Mrs. Yeobright thus indicates that she would be greatly opposed to any kind of affection between Eustacia and Clym. She believes that her son's delay in going back to Paris and his work is based on this relationship. At the same time, she refuses to believe that Eustacia has influenced him so much, and inwardly refuses to accept that

her son has already made the decision to stay on the heath, and his decision is in no way related to Eustacia.

Actually, Mrs. Yeobright cannot find a solid way to verify her objections to Eustacia. Her reasons are not well-grounded and, therefore, she is not persuasive enough to change Clym's mind about Eustacia. The narrator describes Mrs. Yeobright's situation as such:

> She had a singular insight to life, considering that she had never mixed with it. There are instances of persons who, without clear ideas of the things they criticise, have yet had clear ideas of the relations of those things. Blacklock, a poet blind from his birth, could describe visual objects with accuracy; Professor Sanderson, who was also blind, gave excellent lectures on colour, and taught others the theory of ideas which they had and he had not. In the social sphere these gifted ones are mostly women; they can watch a world which they never saw, and estimate forces of which they have only heard. We call it intuition. (188)

While defining Mrs. Yeobright's attitudes as a consequence of "intuition", the narrator's tone is ironic. He likens women like Mrs. Yeobright to blind poets or men of literature who could visualize images correctly although they had never seen the real world before. Likewise, Mrs. Yeobright, despite the fact that she lacks real life experience in many things, tries to channel people into her direction. She makes predictions about things she has not experienced perhaps because she was too cautious to act on her free will or even to listen to her own will. The narrator, then, makes an empathetic approach to her, observing that "the philosophy of her nature, and its limitation by circumstances, was almost written in her movements" (188). Thus, the narrowness of her philosophy of life, of her viewpoints and attitudes are all attributed to her lack of opportunities and social limitations. She has been brought up in such a social milieu.

The reason why Mrs. Yeobright dislikes the idea of Clym working in the jewellery trade is not the same as Clym's reasons for disliking his job. While Clym wants to pursue more idealistic targets by building a school or starting teaching, Mrs. Yeobright is concerned about his social prestige. This is why she thinks his previous job "was inadequate" for him (191). However, she is convinced that Eustacia is a worse prospect for her son and is determined to prevent Clym from being attached to her in any way:

> ‘How am I mistaken in her?’
> ‘She is lazy and dissatisfied. But that is not at all of it. Supposing her to be as good a woman as any you can find, which she certainly is not, why do you wish to connect yourself with anybody at present?’
> ‘Well, there are practical reasons,’ Clym began, and then almost broke off under an overpowering sense of the weight of argument which could be brought against his statement. ‘If I take a school an educated woman would be invaluable as a help to me’. (191)

Mrs. Yeobright’s observation about Eustacia’s idleness and discontentment is accurate. Eustacia is irresponsible. Unlike Eustacia’s romantic motives, Clym has “practical reasons” for marriage. He assumes that in his schooling plans Eustacia will be of real use because she is an educated woman. Hence, Clym’s primary purpose is not to get married but to find an intellectual companion who could be of assistance to him. Contrary to Mrs. Yeobright’s fears, it is not Eustacia that makes Clym stay there but it is his school project. Pierre Dexideuil comments on the differences of the expectations of the couple: “The young woman comes unconsciously to love the being who is destined to occupy the void within her soul, while Clym goes forth to find the companion who should become the help-mate he seeks in his projects of study and instruction. The preparation is, therefore, ideal, solitary, and imaginative” (73). The two are blind to each other’s particular expectations, so it seems inevitable that they will suffer the consequences of such “ideal”, “imaginative” preparations.

Even before the marriage, Eustacia is on the defense against any kind of opposition to their marriage, especially those that might come from Mrs. Yeobright. Although she wants to marry Clym and realize her dreams, she cannot help being cynical about people. In one of their meetings, she becomes suspicious of the future of their love:

> ‘Ah you don’t know. You have seen more than I, and have been into cities and among people that I have only heard of, and have lived more years than I; but yet I am older at this than you. I loved another man once, and now I love you’
> ...’But I do not think I shall be the one who wearies first. It will, I fear, end in this way: your mother will find out that you meet me, and she will influence you against me.’
> ... ‘You are desperate, full of fancies, and wilful; and you misunderstand...’ (195)

This conversation before their marriage is important in the sense that it displays the differences between the two. Eustacia is very much obsessed with the idea that Clym is a man of the city, urban life and cosmopolitan experiences and that he had an

active social life. The fact that he has more life experience than her creates a kind of awe in her. Eustacia also sees Mrs. Yeobright as an impediment to their marriage, with Clym fearing that she will "influence you against" her (195). From his response, it is understood that Clym clearly sees Eustacia's true nature; she is frantic, fanciful, and obstinate. Besides, she misreads people and situations because of strong feelings blinding her to reality. Even when he proposes to her, her answer makes it clear that she is more interested in the things that marriage will bring her than the idea of being married to the one she loves. "At present speak of Paris to me. Is there any place like it on earth?" (195). The more he tries to bring the subject back to their marriage, the more questions she asks about Paris. Also, when Eustacia implies that she has different dreams about their future saying that "you should do better things than this", Clym retorts. "You are ambitious, Eustacia –no, not exactly ambitious, luxurious. I ought to be of the same vein, to make you happy, I suppose. And yet, far from that, I could live and die in a hermitage here, with proper work to do" (197). Clym, in fact, senses the ambitious potentialities in Eustacia and that she has luxurious tastes, all of which are foreign to his character. He knows that it is difficult to make her happy unless one shares her worldview. The two have very contrasting expectations from life; as opposed to Eustacia who dreams of luxury and comfort in a big city, Clym, having experienced all these things before, is ready to spend his life in a hermitage. Eustacia's response can be seen as misleading in this sense:

> 'Don't mistake me, Clym: though I should like Paris, I love you for yourself alone. To be your wife and live in Paris would be heaven to me; but I would rather live with you in a hermitage here than not be yours at all. It is gain to me either way, and very great gain. There's my too candid confession". (197)

What she calls a "candid confession", however, is nothing but deceiving of herself and her husband-to-be. Since the primary reason for her attraction to him has been his urban experiences, she has mistaken selfish ambitions for love and tries to make Clym believe in such make-believe self-sacrificing affection. In this sense, she experiences both self-deception and deceives Clym. The narrator also reflects Eustacia's sneakiness about her plans for this marriage:

> Often at their meetings a word or a sigh would escape her. It meant that, though she made no conditions as to his return to the French capital, this was what she secretly longed for in the event of marriage; and it robbed him of many an otherwise pleasant hour. (199)

Such signs, then, can be taken as a foreshadowing of the differences between Clym and Eustacia; in terms of both their perspectives on life and expectations from marriage and their fatal consequences.

3.2.2 Thomasin Yeobright

Unlike Eustacia, Thomasin has modest expectations from marriage and even though she knows the frailties in her fiancé's personality she does not change her mind about marrying him. In one of the conversations between Mrs. Yeobright and Thomasin, it is possible to see her realistic approach: she tries to defend Damon, stating that he is not the kind of man Mrs. Yeobright and other people think him to be:

> 'Ah, you think, "That weak girl – how is she going to get a man to marry her when she chooses?" But let me tell you one thing, aunt: Mr. Wildeve is not a profligate man, any more than I am an improper woman. He has an unfortunate manner, and doesn't try to make people like him if they don't wish to do it of their own accord'. (113)

Thomasin is fully aware of how she is perceived by the heath people. She does not want to be pitied and seen as a "lost woman" (112). She wants to be understood and considered as a person with good intentions. She also knows that Damon is seen as a "profligate" and tries to protect him from public gossip, which would make them both unhappy if they married.

Moreover, Thomasin is not as enthusiastic as before about marrying Damon, which is also recognized by Mrs. Yeobright:

> 'I have long had a suspicion that your love for him has changed its colour since you have found him not to be the saint you thought him, and you act a part to me.'
> 'He wished to marry me, and I wish to marry him.'
> 'Now, I put it to you: would you at this present moment agree to be his wife if that had not happened to entangle you with him?'
> Thomasin looked into the tree and appeared much disturbed. 'Aunt,' she said presently, 'I have, I think, a right to refuse to answer that question'. (114)

Mrs. Yeobright is conscious of Thomasin's more sober feelings regarding Damon and a possible marriage with him. She also thinks that Thomasin is pursuing her idea of marriage with Damon just because she was entangled because of her promises to her aunt and also wants to put an end to gossip created by the previous failure. When

she asks if it is true or not, she is left without any response, which is confirmation of her suspicions.

3.3 Disillusionment in Marriage

In *The Return of the Native*, disillusionment becomes inevitable among couples either because of personal differences and the individuals' ignoring these dissimilarities with the hope of changing their partners in time, or because of their ignoring certain frailties which might lead to bigger problems later on. However, it should be stated here that Eustacia's illusions lead her to disillusionment. Thomasin Yeobright, on the other hand, is not completely responsible for her disappointment.

3.3.1 Eustacia Vye

Eustacia Vye and Clym Yeobright start to suffer from unhappiness a short while after their marriage. Both of them try to realize their own dreams ignoring those of the other. Even in their happy days, their union is described as living in a "monotony which was delightful to them" (235). The word "monotony" put by the narrator suggests boredom and repetitiveness existing in their marriage even in its early phase. However, this monotonousness is more painful for Eustacia than it is for Clym as she is the one who finds the heath boring and sees Clym as a means of escape from that provincial border beforehand.

> Now, Eustacia's dream had always been that, once married to Clym, she would have the power of inducing him to return to Paris. He had carefully withheld all promise to do so; but would he be proof against her coaxing and argument? She had calculated to such a degree on the probability of success that she had represented Paris, and not Budmouth, to her grandfather as in all likelihood of their future home. (236)

Although Eustacia's fixed fancy has been to move to Paris with Clym, she has never dared to openly present it to him before, but she has always thought of persuading him to do so after they are married. Despite the fact that she knows Clym makes no plans to live in Paris, to her grandfather Eustacia has reflected their plans as if they were about Paris. Eustacia's illusions are obvious, at this point that, although Clym

makes no promises about returning to Paris, she ignores the reality and continues believing her own imaginary construction of their future:

> In the quiet days since their marriage, when Yeobright had been poring over her lips, her eyes, and the lines of her face, she had mused and mused on the subject, even while in the act of returning his gaze; and now the sight of the books; indicating a future which was antagonistic to her dream, struck her with a positively painful jar. She was hoping for the time when, as the mistress of some pretty establishment, however small, in Paris, she would be passing her days on the skirts at least of the gay world, and catching stray wafts from those town pleasures she was so well fitted to enjoy. Yet Yeobright was as firm in the contrary intention as if the tendency of marriage were rather to develop the fantasies of young philanthropy than to sweep them away. (236)

Even at the most affectionate moments, Eustacia reflects on her own dreams. She is not honest about her deepest feelings and desires to her husband. Now the books that Clym reads for his teaching plans look like enemies impending and putting off the realization of her dreams. She prefers a life "on the skirts at least of the gay world" in Paris to the best way of living on the heath. Yet, to her dismay, Clym is determined to stay and build a new life there. This is the very reason why she "hesitates before sounding him on the subject" (237).

Eustacia Vye and Mrs. Yeobright are in enmity towards each other. When Mrs. Yeobright arrives and asks Eustacia about the money she gave to Christian Cantle to hand to both Thomasin and Clym, Eustacia becomes outraged (238). When she is asked whether the money has been given to her by Damon Wildeve, she misunderstands her intention. She becomes defensive and suspects that Mrs. Yeobright knows the past affair between Damon and her. Prejudices cause false actions on both sides; Mrs. Yeobright is not clear in conveying her message, neither is Eustacia without fault for reacting impulsively. Having given the account of what passed between her and Mrs. Yeobright to Clym later on, Eustacia finds an opportunity to revive her Paris plans:

> 'Yes, take me to Paris, and go on with your old occupations, Clym! I don't mind how humbly we live there at first, if it can only be Paris, and not Egdon Heath.'
> 'But I have quite given up that idea,' said Yeobright, with surprise. 'Surely I never led you to expect such a thing?'
> 'I own it. Yet there are thoughts which cannot be kept out of mind, and that one was mine. Must I not have a voice in the matter, now I am your wife and the sharer of your doom?'. (242)

When Eustacia brings forward the question of Paris, it surprises Clym for he has stated his plans clearly before. While Eustacia used to seem like accepting this before, now she is stronger in her demand thinking that now that she is his wife and "shares" his fate, she has the right to oppose to and change his plans. With this first and strong disagreement, it is proven how insincere Eustacia was with Clym before about her expectations. The narrator also describes the impression of such an unexpected revolt on Clym, saying: "It was the first time that he had confronted the fact of the indirectness of a woman's movement towards her desire" (243). Eustacia sees the quarrel as an opportunity to find a way to achive her dream; moving to the city.

Eustacia's fears, however, are awakened by the deterioration of Clym's sight due to excessive reading. He suffers from "acute inflammation":

> One week and another week wore on, and nothing seemed to lighten the gloom of the young couple. Dreadful imaginings occurred to Eutacia, but she carefully refrained from uttering them to her husband. Suppose he should become blind, or, at all events, never recover sufficient strength of sight to engage in an occupation which would be congenial to her feelings, and conduce to her removal from this lonely dwelling among the hills? That dream of beautiful Paris was not likely to cohere into substance in the presence of this misfortune. As day after day passed by, and he got no better, her mind ran more and more in this mournful groove, and she would go away from him into the garden and weep despairing tears. (244)

Eustacia is disappointed because she sees Clym's illness as a hindrance to her plans, imagining if he turns blind, all prospects would fail for them. She cries secretly and mourns over this misfortune. Eustacia's reaction confirms her selfish nature. Rather than despairing for her husband's health and psychological mood, she is absorbed in her own fears.

Things worsen for Eustacia when Clym tells her that he will do "furze-cutting" for a living because of his feeble sight. For Eustacia, his decision is disgraceful and she feels a "positive horror" whereas he feels "no absolute grief" in response (246). Eustacia finds it hard to recognize "this man from Paris" as the one who is now "disguised by his leather accoutrements" (247). One day, the tension between the two rises when Eustacia finds Clym singing while furze-cutting. The thing that pains her is how it is possible for him to feel content with what he is doing. "I would starve

rather than do it", she exclaims (248). Clym becomes conscious of her view on his job, that is, it is a "shameful labour", and she sees her union with him as her "worse luck" (249).

What she called "love" for Clym also fades away gradually. Since her dreams are not fulfilled in this marriage, she feels regretful. Thus, her feelings for Clym are influenced by this misfortune equally:

> 'Yes, I fear, we are cooling – I see it as well as you,' she sighed mournfully. 'And how madly we loved two months ago! You were never tired of contemplating me, nor I of contemplating you. Who could have thought then that by this time my eyes would not seem so very bright to yours, nor your lips so very sweet to mine? Two months –is it possible? Yes, 'tis true'. (250)

Their love loses its strength out of diverging interests. Eustacia, as opposed to her previous fancies, is the one who gives up loving. At the core of this lies the frustration she experiences because of her unfulfilled hopes regarding Clym and her comfortable life due to his success. Clym interprets this new attitude of Eustacia as based on the thought that her "chances in life are ruined, by marrying in haste an unfortunate man" (250). He tries to explain to her that the city life she imagines is not as perfect as it seems. Based on his experiences he comes to realize that "the more I see of life the more do I perceive that there is nothing particularly great in its greatest walks, and therefore nothing particularly small in mine of furze-cutting" (250). However, both her values and inexperience prevent Eustacia from seeing the world through Clym's eyes. H. M. Daleski in *Thomas Hardy and Paradoxes of Love* talks about the failed marriage at the centre of the novel. "The figure is reinforced by the metaphorical blindness on both sides that marks the coming together of this mutual pair...Clym and Eustacia each see the other through the lens of immediate personal need. Eustacia's passion for Clym is the blindness of her need" (88). According to Daleski, then, the failure is almost inevitable because they see each other through each other's ideal images in their minds, not as they really are.

3.3.2 Thomasin Yeobright

Thomasin also suffers from unhappiness because of various reasons. However, hers is not an unexpected disillusionment. Damon Wildeve is already introduced as an

unreliable, flirtatious man. Besides, their marriage takes place more quickly than expected and Damon Wildeve wants to show his decision as a revenge on Eustacia who deserted him for Clym. Their marriage, therefore, is not one based on mutual love but a result of different strategies on the part of the man while it is an inevitable course of events for the woman.

Problems, therefore, arise quickly in their marriage due to lack of love and also lack of communication. Some time after their marriage, Mrs. Yeobright wants to know how Damon and Thomasin have been. She is worried about her and asks:

> 'Is he kind to you, Thomasin?' And Mrs. Yeobright observed her narrowly.
> 'Pretty fairly.'
> 'Is that honestly said?'
> 'Yes, aunt. I would tell you if I ought to complain to you about this, but I am not quite sure what to do. I want some money, you know, aunt – some to buy little things for myself – and he doesn't give me any. I don't like to ask him; and yet, perhaps, he doesn't give it me because he doesn't know. Ought I to mention it to him, aunt?'. (209)

It is clear in the conversation that Damon does not give any money to Thomasin for her to fulfil her needs. Still, she does not show any resentment. Besides, she tries to seem problem-free to her aunt. She even thinks innocently that it might be herself who makes the situation a problem with the possibility that Damon does not do it on purpose but is simply unaware. She asks her aunt's opinion on whether to tell her predicament to him or not. Unlike Eustacia, Thomasin is far from impulsive. Such an attitude is proof of her submissive, passive nature. This is the reason why Mrs. Yeobright wants to give Thomasin her share of the inheritance, which is fifty guineas through Christian Cantle, later on (216). It becomes obvious, then, that Damon ignores Thomasin and her needs a lot.

Moreover, their already mediocre marriage is shattered because of Damon's rekindled passion for Eustacia. On the day of the coincidental meeting between Eustacia and Damon, Diggory Venn goes to Thomasin's house to ask if Damon is home. Thomasin innocently answers, "Husbands will play the truant, you know. I wish you could tell me of some secret plan that would help me to keep him home at my will in the evenings' (261). When Diggory tells her that he saw Damon with "a beauty with a white face and a mane as black as night", "a shadow of sadness" passes her face (261). It is revealed that telling Thomasin he would go to buy a horse, she

met Eustacia at the dance. Although Thomasin has no bad intentions in revealing her dissatisfactions with her marriage, the joke she makes touches Diggory Venn for it is understood that most of the time Damon is absent and leaves Thomasin alone at home. When the meetings between Eustacia and Damon become more frequent, the lack of communication widens between the married couple even though they now have a little baby. One day, when Damon returns, having seen Eustacia and decided to help her escape, Thomasin asks him for the first time where he has been in an interrogative way:

> 'Damon, where have you been? I was getting quite frightened, and thought you had fallen into the river. I dislike being in the house by myself.'
> 'Frightened?' he said, touching her cheek as if she were some domestic animal. 'Why, I thought nothing could frighten you. It is that you are getting proud, I am sure, and don't like living here since we have risen above our business. Well, it is a tedious matter, this getting a new house...
> 'No – I don't mind waiting – I would rather stay here twelve months longer than run any risk with baby. But I don't like your vanishing so in the evenings. There's something on your mind – I know there is, Damon. You go about so gloomily, and look at the heath as if it were somebody's gaol instead of a nice wild place to walk in'. (340)

The conversation reveals that Damon does not respect his wife much, seeing and treating her like a "domestic animal" (340). As opposed to Eustacia, who wanders around the heath day and night, Thomasin is depicted as a domestic female figure. The discrepancy between the two is clear, yet Damon seems to treat each according to her own character; Eustacia is passionate and self-assertive whereas Thomasin is submissive and even hesitant in asking where Damon has been. Moreover, he interprets Thomasin's anxiety as pride for now they are going to be richer because of Damon's inheritance, and assumes that she wants to live in a better house. However, Thomasin is concerned about neither waiting nor a better house, she wants to know why he often disappears in the evenings. She sees that he is thoughtful, and goes to the heath every day. Another difference between Eustacia and Thomasin also becomes clear in this conversation as Thomasin likes the heath and perceives it as a "nice wild place to walk in" whereas Eustacia finds it unbearable. Thomasin says "I like what I was born to; I admire its grim and old face" (340). As mentioned before, Thomasin is at peace with both herself and her surroundings unlike Eustacia.

3.4 Reaction to Disillusionment

The female characters' reaction to disillusionment reveals their personal characteristics as well as their capabilities to see and understand their limitations and act in accordance. Both Eustacia Vye and Thomasin Yeobright encounter disillusionment or disappointment in some way. However, the ways they respond to misfortune are very different, which demonstrates their ability or inability to fit into the society and adapt to the changing circumstances.

3.4.1 Eustacia Vye

Eustacia's reaction to her unhappiness in marriage results in her gradual estrangement from her husband. Realizing that Clym will not provide her with the kind of life she dreamed of, she returns to her isolated state before her marriage. Seeing that "a man who has lived about the world, and speaks French, and knows the classics, and who is fit for what is so much better than this" is now a "poor fellow in brown leather" (in Clym's words), she loses her respect for her husband (251).

The first example of Eustacia's distancing herself is her wish to go to the "village picnic", "gypsying" at East Egdon, "to dance" (251). "Don't taunt me. But enough of this. I will not be depressed any more. I am going from home this afternoon, unless you greatly object" (251). She thinks to herself that they are "two wasted lives" with Clym. "And I am come to this! Will it drive me out of my mind?" (252). She wants to shake off her depression: "But I'll shake it off. Yes, I will shake it off! No one shall know my suffering. I'll be bitterly merry, and ironically gay, and I'll laugh in derision! And I'll begin by going to this dance on the green" (252). Now that she sees her unhappiness as an irreversible fate, she wants to be alone. The presence of Clym reminds her of her disillusionment. At the dance, Eustacia comes across Damon Wildeve (255). They dance together. Their dance rekindles the old feelings they felt for each other long ago:

> How near was she to Wildeve! It was terrible to think of. She could feel his breathing, and he, of course, could feel hers. How badly she had treated him! Yet, here they were treading one measure. The enchantment of the dance surprised her. A clear line of difference divided like a tangible fence her experience within this maze of motion from her experience without it. Her

> beginning to dance had been like a change of atmosphere; outside, she had been steeped in arctic frigidity by comparison with the tropical sensations here. (256)

The dance is described with sexual connotations. This meeting with Damon does not only soothe Eustacia as a change of atmosphere but it also gives her a chance of comparison between the two men. As the time passes, Eustacia confesses her unhappiness with Clym's profession. Damon understands her disappointment with the fact that Clym did not go back to Paris and take Eustacia with him. With this confirmation from Damon, she feels more devastated: "Images of a future never to be enjoyed, the revived sense of her bitter disappointment, the picture of the neighbours' suspended ridicule which was raised by Wildeve's words, had been too much for Eustacia's equanimity" (258). After this coincidental encounter they start to meet more often.

Eustacia's marriage suffers more with climactic events. One day, Mrs. Yeobright is "bitten by an adder", a poisonous snake, on her way back from the closed door where she came for a reconciliation. Also the fact that her walk was "exceptionally long" contributes to Mrs. Yeobright's death and she dies (296). Eustacia feels guilt ridden, yet, seeing Clym more conscience-stricken, who is unaware of the reality, makes her doubly uneasy. "Eustacia was always anxious to avoid the sight of her husband in such a state as this, which had become as dreadful to her as the trial scene was to Judas Isariot. It brought before her eyes the spectre of a worn-out woman knocking at a door which she would not open; and she shrank from contemplating it" (303-304).

After some time, Clym brings the pieces that led to his mother's death together and learns that Eustacia caused it (316). As a result, the two have a big argument. Clym now blames her for the death of his mother and his overall unhappiness: "There's reason for ghastliness Eustacia; you have held my happiness in the hollow of your hand, and like a devil you have dashed it down!" (318). Eustacia, as a response to Clym's fury, blurts out that she is already in a state as miserable as death itself in this marriage. Dave Chandra Jagdish describes Eutacia's character as of "revolt" (qtd in Sherrick 73). She is impulsive and imperious in her reactions to people.

Eustacia's reaction to disillusionment is at extremes most of the time because of her impulsive and melancholic nature. She is a girl of extreme, passionate feelings. When she is at her grandfather's house, she contemplates suicide. Seeing the group of pistols hanging near the head of her grandfather's bed, the idea comes to her mind: "If I could only do it!" she said. 'It would be doing much good to myself and all connected with me, and no harm to single one" (328). Gradually, she becomes more decisive and makes up her mind to kill herself. However, she recognizes that the pistols are gone because Charley, the local worker working for Captain Vye and is in love with Eustacia, locked them in the stable.

Eustacia's selfish nature is reflected on her attempts to escape the consequences of her marital choice which turned out to be unhappy. Therefore, her final resort becomes to elope with the help of Damon, knowing that he will inherit ten thousand pounds. When he asks how he can help her, her answer is by "getting away from here" (334). She wants him to take her to Budmouth without the knowledge of her grandfather and husband. This decision of Eustacia shows that she has no more expectations from her marriage. Rather than feeling guilty about the recent events, she is sorry for herself, considering her life "wasted". "The glory which had encircled him as her lover was departed now; yet some good simple quality of his would occasionally return to her memory and stir a momentary throb of hope that he would again present himself before her" (341). Now she feels as a "painful object, isolated and out of place" (341). This is why rather than trying to find a way to reconcile with Clym, she makes personal plans for the future.

The difference between husband and wife becomes clear at this point, too. For Clym, unlike Eustacia, misses her and wonders why she has not done anything so far to return to him. He decides to write a letter. However, the letter never reaches Eustacia for the grandfather does not give it to her first thinking that she is tired and later in the morning he realizes that she is gone. This incident is ironic as it shows that the husband and wife do not know each other very well and expect a sign from each other.

Eustacia is determined to escape the heath. She gives the sign to Damon for him to come and get her. When she leaves the house at night, all the signs of the gloomy weather give the impression of prognosticating the approaching tragic events:

> The gloom of the night was funereal; all nature seemed clothed in crape...The moon and stars were closed up by cloud and rain to the degree of extinction. It was a night which led the traveller's thoughts instinctively to dwell on nocturnal scenes of disaster in the chronicles of the world, on all that is terrible and dark in history and legend – the last plague of Egypt, the destruction of Sennacherib's host, the agony in Gethsamene. (345)

The biblical allusions in the description of the atmosphere accompanied by the gloomy thoughts of Eustacia imply a disastrous end. There is no light, the night is "funereal", and Eustacia has "dark" thoughts in her mind. It is implied by this narrative that what will follow will be unpleasant.

While waiting for a sign from Eustacia to return, Clym sees Thomasin, who comes to his door in panic having deduced from her husband's strange behaviour that Damon and Eustacia are about to elope together (350). Hearing the news, Clym heads to find the two. Later, Thomasin and Diggory Venn also join him. They hear the sound of water splashing with somebody's falling into it. Both Clym and Diggory jump into the water. It is discovered before long that Eustacia and Damon are dead. Clym is rescued by Diggory Venn. It remains unknown whether Eustacia's death was a suicide or an accident. Clym blames himself for the death of Eustacia as he did for his mother before: "This is the second woman I have killed this year. I was a great cause of my mother's death; and I am the chief cause of hers" (368). Clym fails to interpret the death of his wife, he never fully understands that Eustacia could never adapt to the life he wanted to live. The fate of the couple is tragic because they failed to answer each other's needs.

> Hers is essentially love's tragedy. Caught between the flaws of her own character, and those of Clym and his mother and in the mashes of mate, she comes to her ruin. But even after all this has been said, there is certain grandeur in her character. There is nothing mean or abject about her. Even in death there is an aura of dignity about her. (Sengupta 42)

C. Sengupta defines Eustacia's ruin as a love's tragedy. The main reason is that she has her tragic flaws such as her selfish, self-deceiving nature. The flaws in other people's character also accelerate her downfall. However, she is described with

dignity even in her death, which can be interpreted as the narrator's intention to create a kind of sympathy for Eustacia on the part of the reader.

3.4.2 Thomasin Yeobright

> Thomasin the "fair, sweet and honest" country girl is radically different from Hardy's earlier heroines. She makes no extravagant demands on life, like Eustacia, but is content to fulfil herself naturally as a wife and mother (significantly hers is almost the only marriage in the novels that produces a child). Her first mistaken marriage to Wildeve comes to an end without total disaster, leaving her free to marry Diggory Venn...Diggory Venn is like Gabriel in his qualities of resourcefulness, understanding of the natural environment and loyalty to a woman who does not love him until experience has taught her to value him better. (Williams 138)

As Merryn Williams also asserts, Thomasin is a humble girl with realistic expectations from life. She does not have dreams, the fulfilments of which are almost impossible. Thus, she does not get disillusioned. Although she knows the possible difficulties of a marriage with Damon, she wants to finish what she has started in the eyes of the heath people. She is also never impulsive towards Damon even though she is conscious of his mistreating her at times. Even when she gradually senses that Damon meets Eustacia at times, she never reacts aggressively but always passively and sensibly. The boldest moment for her in the novel is when she resorts to Clym in the middle of the night after she realizes that Damon and Eustacia are about to elope together. Before this, she tries to hide her knowledge about them from Clym, not only because of her pride but also for her thoughts of Clym's happiness.

Thomasin is a loyal wife. She is profoundly traumatized by her husband's sudden death. Although, Damon has mistreated her from the time of their premarital days to the time of his death, she accepts him as her husband with all his weaknesses. After his death, she moves to Clym's house to be able to endure her grief.

The narrative thus presents the marriage of Diggory and Thomasin as a reward for Thomasin's self-sacrifices, meekness and patience. Diggory Venn's loyal and persistent love for her also bears its fruits. He always stands by her whether she is married or not. He takes her from the failed marriage scene to her aunt Mrs. Yeobright, he lives like an invisible man who always tries to watch over and protect

Thomasin from any harm. He wins back the money that was supposed to be given to her by Damon, he always keeps an eye on Damon and Eustacia to prevent them from ruining Thoamsin's life and making her unhappy. This is why he tries to dissuade Eustacia from interfering in Damon's life again. He even accompanies her when she goes out to search for Damon and Eustacia at the night of their escape. Therefore, although he loves Thomasin very much, he always values Thomasin's interests above his own. After Damon's death, Thomasin, as well, cannot remain indifferent to Diggory's existence.

To Clym who thinks of proposing to her with a sense of duty for his mother's wish that they would be a suitable couple, Thomasin says that she could only be married to Diggory if she would marry again. Pratibha Tyagi in his *Treatment of Love in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* asserts that "Hardy conceives love as a destructive force. But, as a realist, he does not negate that love leads to happiness in a number of cases" (142). Such is the case of Thomasin and Diggory as they are happily married in spite of the destructive effects of love on Clym and Eustacia.

In conclusion, then, it can be stated that Thomas Hardy deals with marriage as a dominant theme, and tries to depict the reasons which lead to happiness and also unhappiness in it. There are happy marriages as well as unhappy marriages. However, unhappy ones with tragic ends occupy more place in his works. Those patterns of marriage are more focused in his works perhaps because he considers them to be more exemplary and noteworthy in terms of their enlightening effect on the reader. Accordingly, Pratibha Tyagi talks about Hardy's approach to such instances of love and marriage:

> Hardy deals with tragic love in detail in his novels and shows that in certain cases something does happen in the life of the married couple, which results in misery and misfortune. Some lovers in his novels are happily married to the partners of their own choice and seem to be eminently suited to each other. But Hardy does not deal with their married life in detail. He allows them to be happily married at the end of his novels. Since he seems to have a pessimistic attitude towards life, some of the critics think that their happiness cannot last. But Hardy feels that instead of shutting one's eyes to suffering one should find out the cause of suffering and then try to remove it. (146)

Similar to Tyagi's comment, the marriages of Eustacia and Clym, and Thomasin and Damon are given with sharper focus than that of Thomasin and Diggory. Such an

attiude is attributed to his comparatively pessimistic view of human beings and life in general. However, such pessimism is not necessarily merely destructive in terms of the plotline. It is also a realistic approach in some way for it presents the problem or suffering and then leads his readers to explore the possibilities for removing it. As to Hardy's pessimism, the writer argues:

> As to pessimism my motto is, first correctly diagnose the complaint – in this case human ills – and ascertain the cause: then set about finding a remedy if one exists. The motto or practice of the optimists is: Blind the eyes to the real malady, and use empirical panaceas to suppress the symptoms. (Tyagi 146)

Thus, Hardy's main purpose in his novels is to expose the ills of human life and the shortcomings of social institutions. Although the couples suffer from misery and disillusionment, the potential solutions are offered to the reader. Rather than "closing the eyes" to the existing trouble, practical solutions are found through the sense of pity felt for the flaws and weaknesses of the characters.

Finally, it can be stated that the beginning and the ending of the novel are in close correlation in Hardy's novel, for the end fulfils the potentialities ironically implied at the beginning of the novel. Characters have illusions and personal weaknesses, they are led to disillusionment and suffering in the end. Daniel R. Schwarz explains it as such:

> The openings take the reader into a world where man's aspirations are blunted, as external circumstances connive with man's hidden flaws, and where the well-meaning characters rapidly discover that they live in a world in which things are quite likely to turn out badly. By 'fulfilling' the promise of the beginnings, the endings imply that the world in which men live is closed and invulnerable to essential change. The ingredients of the destruction of central characters are implicit in the novel's beginnings...Hardy's endings confirm rather than transfigure what precedes and reject the notion that experience brings wisdom and maturity. (64)

As the critic also suggests, characters, in the beginning, have certain hopes and expectations from life. Some characters fall short of happiness because they have veiled flaws and fail to adapt to the real world. Some, on the other hand, fail even though they have good intentions because this time the world itself is cruel and grim to let them live the way they want. There are coincidences and unalterable realities that hinder their happiness. It is also noteworthy that characters in the novel do not go through change in their perspectives of life despite the sufferings they have experienced. So, the fact that they have suffered does not make them more mature or

wise. Thus they cannot exist in such a world that they could not adapt themselves to. Then, it becomes understandable why the writer makes death the final fate for his women. Eustacia, thus, exemplifies such an end, as a personification of romantic ideals which failed to fit into the reality of life. She never becomes aware of her own weaknesses and becomes a victim of her irrational unfulfilled hopes. However, the fact that she is described with dignity even in her death can be taken as a commentary on the author's part; she had a dignified look so that she should also be understood within the boundaries of a tragic character, with her impulsive, selfish, and self-deceiving nature along with her incessant rejection of accepting her social surroundings. Likewise, Lois Groner Gadek in his *Tragic Potential and Narrative Perspective in Hardy's the Return of the Native* comments on the narrator's method, "When the narrator uses the closer, more sympathetic perspective, it is possible for the reader to respond to the predicaments and conflicts of the characters" (qtd in Sherrick 72). Therefore, although Eustacia's faults as a woman are presented by the narrator, still there is a sense of sympathy given to her as a human being.

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

Thomas Hardy's twelfth novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, was published in 1891. In the *Westminster Review*, the novel was called "one of the greatest novels of this century and the greatest since George Eliot died" (Page 412). Through the novel, the author challenged the sexual, patriarchal norms and comes up with a moral lesson by making the subtitle 'a pure woman'.

Tess Durbeyfield, the eldest daughter of the poor rural family in Marlott, joins the May Day with other village girls. Meanwhile, her father John Durbeyfield is informed that as a family they are the descendants of the Norman family of D'Urbervilles. Unaware that the name was bought by a merchant, Simon Stoke, Tess goes to get a job on the D'Urbervilles estate near Trantridge so as to repair the family's financial damage she caused by killing their horse, the Prince, accidentally. Alec Stoke D'Urbervilles, the "idle libertine" son of the family, is attracted to Tess and violates her one day in the woods. She has a baby called "Sorrow", who remains unbaptized by a vicar. She baptizes it herself, and the baby gets ill and dies. Having partially recovered, she starts working as a dairymaid at Talbothays farm where she encounters Angel Clare, the son of a vicar. They fall in love and Angel insists on their marrying. Despite her fears about the revelation of her past, after a while she agrees to marry him. Upon Angel's confession of a past affair in London, Tess feels courageous enough to mention hers. Unable to forgive her, and despite the fact that she forgave him, he deserts her. After a long wait, working on a farm to make a living, she decides to go to Angel's parents' house, where she overhears Angel's brothers speak ill of her. Having left their house, she comes across Alec D'Urberville, who tries to convince her that he has changed (he became a preacher). Having convinced her that Angel will not come back with the promise to take care of Tess's family after her father's death, Angel wins Tess back. When Angel returns to England, he has realized his mistake and is filled with regret that he abandoned Tess. He finds Tess in a boarding-house with Alec. Thinking that now it is too late and that she belongs to Alec, she sends Angel away. Upon his departure, she feels devastated and holds Alec responsible for the things she has been through, which causes her to kill him with a carving knife.

After the murder, she goes after Angel. When they meet, they run away and find a manor-house to shelter in. After a few days, they are discovered and Tess is arrested, tried and executed for Alec's murder.

The novel was an immediate success and received complimentary responses from both the public and literary critics. However, it was also criticized in terms of style and "the overt nature of his moral lesson" (Page 412). It can be said that this indicated the degree to which Hardy could go with regard to commenting on the conventions and fixed notions of his own era.

4.1 Female Subordination

Tess of the D'Urbervilles is a novel in which women suffer from inequalities when compared to men in various respects; however, the concept is mainly exemplified by the detailed portrayal of the protagonist of the novel, Tess Durbeyfield. Tess goes through different hardships because of the social conditions surrounding her, which were mainly defined by the patriarchal worldview. The first topic to be discussed, then, is the lack or rarity of opportunities presented to women in educational, vocational and social terms.

As Merryn Williams also states, "Tess Durbeyfield, over and above her qualities as a person, is portrayed as a representative of her class and her sex" (90). Tess is a "fine, handsome" working-class girl with an impoverished family living in the village of Marlott (20). Her father is a small dealer, and her mother is responsible for looking after six children, except for Tess. Thus, Tess's social circumstances can be said to be already defined by both her belonging to the working class and also by her being a girl. Therefore, it can be pointed out that her sex and social class are two inseparable components of her subordination.

Tess is an intelligent young girl who had "hoped to be a school teacher" because she was successful in school "but the fates seemed to decide otherwise" (54). She "had passed the sixth standard in the National school under a London-trained mistress, spoke two languages; the dialect at home, more or less; ordinary English abroad and to persons of quality" (27). Considering her family members who are quite ignorant,

Tess is exceptional for she has attended school till the sixth standard. Thus, it is understood that she had better potentialities like being a teacher by continuing her education, however, her responsibilities as her mother's best assistant, and as an income earner for the family, most probably restrained her from fulfilling her dreams. Moreover, she can speak two different dialects. Terrence Wright comments on this saying, "Tess stands at a transitional point in the nineteenth century. Her education to the Sixth Standard at school sets her apart from her largely uneducated mother" (1). Therefore, Tess's education demonstrates better educational opportunities for a working-class girl, and perhaps better awareness of the importance of education in the century. The difference between the mother and the daughter is emphasized with an analogy between two different ages:

> Between the mother, with her fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folk-lore, dialect, and orally transmitted ballads, and the daughter, with her trained national teachings and Standard knowledge under an infinitely Revised Code, there was a gap of two hundred years as ordinarily understood. When they were together the Jacobean and the Victorian ages were juxtaposed. (29)

The generation gap between the mother and the daughter is stressed through the differences in their learning; the mother has hearsay, superstitious knowledge of things, which is folkloric, orally transmitted, whereas the daughter has "trained national teachings" given with a certain "Revised code" (29). The breach between the two is likened to the combination of two different ages that have two hundred years between. Thus, while the considerable amount of education Tess has can be interpreted as a success in certain terms, it can also be disadvantageous for it would make her critical towards her family members and towards the insufficiency of their life standards. "Notably in *Tess* and *Jude*, education is usually shown as generating unhappiness, or at least serving to unsettle the placid acceptance of one's worldly lot, and to intrude disturbing ambiguities concerning the roles one is to play" (Page 56). Thus, Tess's philosophical way of looking at things, at times, can be attributed to her better learning, which makes her look at the state of her family from a distance and in an estranged, pitying way from time to time.

This point takes us to the responsibilities of Tess as a working-class family's daughter, which entraps her in certain obligations regardless of her own desires. "The Durbeyfields' domestic context makes Tess a girl-mother before she is forced and

becomes one" (Handley 17). As mentioned before, Tess has a "deputy-maternal" role in the house after her mother. She is the eldest daughter, and looks after her six siblings most of the time:

> All these young souls were passengers in the Durbeyfield ship—entirely dependent on the judgement of the two Durbeyfield adults for their pleasures, their necessities, their health, even their existence. If the heads of the Durbeyfield household chose to sail into difficulty, disaster, starvation, disease, degradation, death, thither were these half-dozen little captives under hatches compelled to sail with them – six helpless creatures, who had never been asked if they wished for life on any terms, much less if they wished for it on such hard conditions as were involved in being of the shiftless house of Durbeyfield. (30)

The paragraph describes the dependency of the small Durbeyfield children on the irresponsible parents; John and Joan Durbeyfield. The narrator, then, implicitly criticizes both; whatever difficulty they are to encounter in life such as "disaster, starvation, and disease", their children have to experience it with them because they are innocently compelled to them (30). These "six helpless creatures" came to the world, the narrator implies, without being asked, and they have to live under the protection of these two lazy people. It is the "Nature's holy plan", the narrator comments, meaning that the birth of these children into this particular house is nothing but fate itself. Therefore, Tess, more responsible than her parents, has the roles of a daughter, a sister, and mother automatically under these circumstances.

The same rule also applies to Tess in terms of her dependence on the social circumstances surrounding her. She does not have responsibilities only within the house but also outside it, as she is a girl belonging to the working-class. Kettle designates *Tess* as "*a roman à thèse* –a novel with a social or political message- and moral fable and looks at it as symbolizing the actual fate of millions of working-women" (qtd in Kanwar 173). Therefore, while Tess is seen as a representative of her class on the one hand, she is also a woman on whose experiences Fate has a crucial role. Throughout the novel, the theme of fate recurs and its consequences are seen in the individuals who are mostly bereft of individual choices. Merryn Williams comments on the impossibility of using free will on the part of Tess saying, "her destiny is not chosen but forced upon her by the circumstances which Hardy calls Fate" (91). Thus "Fate", as the narrator frequently emphasizes, shapes Tess's life, too.

A chain of unexpected events plays an important role in Tess's experiences of economic and social problems. Her father, John Durbeyfiled, hears from a parson the rumour that their family has an aristocratic background and the lineage goes back to the surname "D'Urbervilles" (13). The information turns out to be groundless later on; however, such knowledge creates many illusions in the minds of the irrational couple, John and Joan Durbeyfield. Tess's mother is quick at believing in the rumour:

> We've been found to be the greatest gentlefolk in the whole country—reaching all back long before Oliver Grumble's time—to the days of the Pagan Turks—with monuments and vaults and crests and 'scutheons, and the Lord knows what-all. In Saint Charles's days we was made knights o' the Royal Oak, our real name being D'Urberville...Don't that make your bosom plim? (27)

This groundless information seems to have ignited the persistent desire of the Durbeyfield couple to climb up the social ladder in some way. Her mother already believes in the story and gives an exaggerated account of it. She is excited at the news and expects Tess to be so, too. She even consults the *Compleat Fortune-Teller*, "an old thick volume" that she uses for guidance to learn what is going to happen (28). This is why Tess's father John also goes to the Rolliver's, the inn, to drink and celebrate.

When Tess decides to take the load of beehives to the market thinking that her father is too tired and drunk to do it, she does not know that the course of her journey with her younger brother Abraham will have a big impact on her future life. In the journey to the market, Abraham tells her of their parents' plans for using their so-called "relation to help" Tess "marry a gentleman" (36). Afterwards, on the way, both Tess and Abraham fall asleep and they have an accident, which results in the death of their horse, Prince. Tess blames herself for the accident, "'Tis all my doing—all mine!...No excuse for me—none. What will mother and father live on now?" (39). She holds herself responsible for the inevitable economic outcome of the accident that will, she thinks, put her family into trouble.

Consequently, Tess's strong sense of responsibility and the tendency to blame herself quickly make her accept her parents' fantasy-based plan to send her to the mansion of the D'Urbervilles. When Joan Durbeyfield offers her to go and make the acquaintance of Mrs. D'Urberville and ask for help from her, Tess is reproachful towards her mother's stratagem because she has "pride" in her nature that makes her

mother's calculations look trivial to her (41). "Well, as I killed the horse, mother,' she said mournfully, "I suppose I ought to do something. I don't mind going and seeing her. But you must leave it to me about asking for help. And don't go thinking about her making a match for me—it is silly" (42). So, Tess goes to a place she has never been before and where she knows nobody even though she has "distaste" of the idea because economic obligations remove her chance of using her free will to go or not to go.

> Tess is always conscious not only of what she has done but what she thinks she has done. Joan Durbeyfield plays on her daughter's susceptibility, and Tess's guilt makes her respond, despite her pride, to her mother's importunity. Joan's moral blackmail works despite the girl's dislike of being cast as a poor relation. Tess's pride is not of family: it is more of an individual texture, a consciousness of moral right and wrong which seems to be derived from her education, her imagination, elements of religion and the immediate degrading contrast produced by her family. (Handley 18)

As already mentioned, Tess's awareness of her social circumstances accompanied with her education makes her judgmental towards her mother and her irresponsibility in reproducing so many children. This is what is on her mind when she is on her way to the D'urberville mansion:

> As Tess grew older, and began to see how matters stood, she felt quite a Malthusian towards her mother for thoughtlessly giving her so many little sisters and brothers, when it was such a trouble to nurse and provide for them. Her mother's intelligence was of a happy child: Joan Durbeyfield was simply an additional one and that not the eldest, to her own family of waiters on Providence. (43)

Tess's feeling on her mother's reproducing so many children is likened to that of Thomas Malthus, a famous 19th century sociologist, who had theories on overpopulation. She is worried about her mother and also the children who need to be cared and provided for. It is obvious that being her mother Joan Durbeyfield does not share the awareness her daughter has for the children. Both her lack of education and her care-free nature can be attributed to this. She is a simpleminded woman. As stated before, Tess deals with both household chores and outdoor works. Tess does not only take care of her siblings but she also helps in "haymaking or harvesting on neighbouring farms; or, by preference in "milking or butter making processes, which she had learnt when her father had owned cows; being deft-fingered it was a kind of work which she excelled" (43).

It should be added at this point that the subordination of Tess as a woman representing a specific period of time is a topic integrated into the whole novel. So, having mentioned the general components of her subordination, the rest will be discussed in relation to her interactions with the men in her life.

4.2 Male Domination

Although Tess experiences the disadvantage of being a woman in many aspects of life, her being dominated by men in her life can be seen as another extension of the same topic, which needs to be dealt with separately. Tess's misery of being overpowered by the men in her life can be divided into two parts; her interactions with Alec d'Urberville and in terms of her relationship with Angel Clare. Both men exert power over Tess in different ways and do her injustice by ignoring her individuality. Tess's reactions to these wrongdoings are complementary to the narrative on these men. Therefore, they will be dealt with in an integrated way.

4.2.1 Alec d'Durberville and Tess

Tess's departure from home to Trantridge to meet the D'Urberville family, in a way, marks the beginning of a new phase in her life in which she will be dominated by men in different ways. She meets Alec D'Urberville. Alec is a young man about twenty-four years old and the son of a merchant called Simon Stoke (44). The consequences of this meeting, later in the novel, become more ironic because their conversation reveals that the surname "D'Urberville" does not belong to Alec's family because his father Simon Stoke bought it. His description portrays him both as a handsome man as well as a somewhat hideous figure bearing dangerous possibilities: "He had an almost swarthy complexion, with full lips, badly moulded, though red and smooth, above which was a well-groomed black moustache with curled points...Despite the touches of barbarism in his contours there was a singular force in the gentleman's face, and in his bold rolling eye" (45). So, it remains undecided whether the man is attractive or unappealing. The juxtaposition of his features' good ones as well as not-so-good ones gives this implication; "full lips", yet,

"badly moulded", "barbarism in his contours" as well as a "force", energy in his face (45). He has a dubious appearance. On her first introduction to Alec, Tess is portrayed as having "a luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was" (48). Although she is a girl of sixteen years old, the impression created on Alec by her appearance is that she is womanly; her physical appearance gives wrong connotations about her naivety and inexperience. Moreover, the narrator's comment is like a foreshadowing of approaching events that will befall Tess.

> In the ill-judged execution of the well-judged plan of things the call seldom produces the comer; the man to love rarely coincides with the hour for loving. Nature does not often say "See!" to her poor creature at a time when seeing can lead to happy doing; or reply "Here" to a body's cry of "Where?" till the hide-and-seek has become an irksome, outworn game....Enough that in the present case, as in millions, it was not the two halves of a perfect whole that confronted each other at the perfect moment: a missing counterpart wandered independently about the earth waiting in crass obtuseness till the late time came. (49)

The meeting of Alec and Tess is interpreted as" the ill-judged execution of the well-judged plan", meaning whereas God's plan is perfect, spotless, and problem-free, humans are imperfect and they are leading to failure in action. Likewise, Alec's existence in Tess's life is not an example of a perfect match, or they are not as like as two peas in a pod; Alec is not the one for her, or her soul mate either. The implicit reference to the second man that will enter into Tess's life is made here, Angel Clare. "The man to love" has not yet appeared, "Nature" does not present him easily to Tess, her "missing counterpart", Angel, wanders in the world in total ignorance of future events. It is unfortunate, as understood by the narrator's tone that he will not appear "till the late time came" (49). The sense of premonition is very common in the novel and the ironic tone is added here, too. The impressions of the meeting both on Tess is not very good. On her way to home, a thorn of the roses on her beast, "pricks her chin" when she looks downwards, which Tess herself interprets as an "ill-omen" (51). Tess's beauty and attractiveness is the reason of Alec's exploitation of her. Her beauty is doubly dangerous because she is a peasant girl and lacks any familial protection. Therefore, having found her very beautiful, Alec sets his eyes on Tess. Alec, faking Mrs D'Urbervilles' signature, sends Tess's home a letter in which Tess is offered the job of "tending her fowls" (51). Her family is only happy to send Tess,

as also articulated by her mother, it is a "fine chance for such a pretty maid" as Tess (53). They prepare her for Alec's arrival. Her mother, with her strong sense of propriety, advises Tess to "put your best side outward" (55). Even the children, influenced by the importance attributed to the subject by their parents, assume that their sister "is going to marry our gentleman-cousin, and wear fine cloze" (56). However, even Joan Durbeyfield has a hunch that "she could be deceived as to the meaning of this", [her plans], when she sees Alec at their house, "with a cigar between his teeth, wearing a dandy cap", as a "handsome horsey young buck" (57); however, her unsophisticated nature is consoled before long; she thinks that "if he don't marry her afore he will after" as to her he looks very much in love with Tess (58).

Alec d'Urberville thus changes Tess's destiny. Dale Kramer states that "Alec, in particular, the seducer and ruination of one of the nineteenth century's most popular female characters, stands in most readers' minds as the paradigm of the moustachioed swaggerer" (50). During her stay in Trantridge, he makes many advances towards Tess, showing his interest in her and expecting the same from her although he does not receive any affection in return. Mrs. d'Urberville is concerned more with her animals rather than Tess and her son. She seems to lead a solitary life in the house, her only companions being her fowls. She wants Tess "to whistle to her bullfinches" (66). Tess does not know how to do it, Alec teaches her: "She attempted to look reserved; her face put on a sculptural severity. But he persisted in his demand, and at last, to get rid of him, she did put up her lips as directed for producing a clear note; laughing distressfully, however, and then blushing with vexation, she had laughed" (67). The scene is frequently interpreted as having implicit sexual connotations, which is seen by Tess's realization of her sexuality and her distressful laughter that accompanies it.

> Her first day's experiences were fairly typical of those which followed through many succeeding days. A familiarity with Alec d'Urberville's presence –which that young man carefully cultivated in her by playful dialogue, and by jestingly, calling her his cousin when they were alone-removed much of her original shyness of him, without, however, implanting any feeling which could engender shyness of a new and tenderer kind. (68)

As time goes by, Tess becomes more familiar with Alec, yet it is understood that she still cannot get used to him and his manners. His "playful" dialogues, "jesting" attitudes take away her shyness but it does not necessarily make her love him. Whatever she does, she cannot feel affection towards Alec. Asha Kanwar states, "No doubt Alec is the archetypal Victorian villain with roots that can be traced back to the Morality plays" (175). Starting from their first meeting, all of Alec's attempts are directed at seducing Tess such as affixing flowers in her bosom and making her eat strawberries (47). Sengupta states concerning the tragic tone about the heroine that: "As a personal tragedy, Tess's tragedy is the tragedy of a strongly sexed woman who meets the wrong man at the wrong time" (126). Alec is the wrong man for Tess, as he will violate her sexually, and that he knows her before Angel does will be another damage of his existence in Tess's life.

In the course of the novel, it becomes clear that Alec is very persistent in pursuing a kind of affair with Tess, because he finds her sexually very attractive. He does not yield no matter how reserved she is and always finds a way to spend time with her. One day, Tess goes to the market, where coincidentally the local fair also takes place. She does not want him to take her home at first, planning to return with her friends. However, later it turns out that her friends are drunk and start offending her with the insinuations about Alec's special interest in her (76). This is why, when Alec arrives at the scene with his horse, she does not resist any more and lets him to take her away (77). Referring to the incident, wanting to win her favour, Alec says:

> "Neatly done, was it not?" dear Tess, "he said by and by.
> "Yes!" said she. "I am sure I ought to be much obliged to you."
> "And are you?"
> She did not reply.
> "Tess, why do you always dislike my kissing you?"
> "I suppose—because I don't love you". (78)

Tess does not love Alec, which is why even the sense of being grateful to him makes her irritated, she is both proud and unloving towards him, yet, he seems to ignore the fact, he wants Tess to see him, as he sees her, as sexually attractive. He easily utters "I love you" and that Tess is "the prettiest girl in the world" to him. He wants to "treat" her as "a lover" (79). Tess remains reserved towards such advances from Alec as she feels nothing for him. While they are still on the way, he cunningly tries to approach her by pretending to put his arm round her waist so as to warm her, she

pushes him, and he almost falls from the horse. He reacts, “What am I to be repulsed by a mere chit like you?” (79). Alec has a condescending approach towards Tess, calling her a “chit”.

Later on, because of the fog, they lose track of their way in an old wood called “The Chase” (80). Alec tells her that her family has a new horse now as well as Tess’s younger siblings who have toys. Tess is grateful in a “painful” way because she feels uncomfortable to be obliged to him. However, after a while, she falls asleep and Alec takes advantage of such an opportunity. It remains unclear whether Alec raped her or seduced her because the details are not given. It seems to be intentional on the part of the narrator who, rather than giving the particulars of the event, seems to draw the attention to the injustice done to a peasant girl, as a representative of so many girls who used to and still face similar acts of abuse by men:

> Where was Tess’s guardian Angel? Where was the Providence of her simple faith?...Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain our sense of order. One may, indeed, admit the possibility of a retribution lurking in the present catastrophe. Doubtless some of Tess d’Urberville’s mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time. But though to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children may be a morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature; and therefore does not mend the matter. (82)

The narrator manifests Tess’s defencelessness. At this moment of sexual abuse, she is too weak and incapable of guarding herself; she has “no guardian Angel” to protect her. Daleski interprets the description of the scene as evoking a rape for the “suggestions of violation are strong” (159). Tess is “a white muslin figure” that seems to be swallowed up in the “darkness” and the “blackness” that “rule everywhere around” (82). She is described as a “beautiful feminine tissue”, “practically blank as snow as yet,”, however; she is “doomed” to have “a coarse pattern” traced on it. It is also asked why such a “coarse”, vulgar act can “appropriate the finer thus,” can find its way. It is added with remorse that such ruthless acts have befallen on other peasant girls in the past, and “to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children” is a “morality” which should be “scorned”. However, the existence of those women does not justify what has happened to Tess, the wrong which was done

by a man. Merryn Williams in *Thomas Hardy and Rural England* asserts the frequency of such stories in rural tradition: "The seduction of village girls was a theme deeply rooted in rural tradition, going back as far as the very earliest ballads, yet in accordance with varying attitudes towards rural civilisation it was possible to treat this theme in widely differing ways" (Williams 79). So, in the case of Tess, Williams' interpretation is such: "Alec's behaviour is not a disgraceful secret from the community but something which he openly flaunts and in which it abets him. The community itself delivers Tess into his hands" (93). As a result, one can come up with a twofold explanation of what happens to Tess: what Alec does to her is extremely vulgar, however, when the circumstances that led Tess to Alec are considered, such as her economic concerns backed up with her family's fantasies of a marriage-especially those of her mother- she is simply pushed into Alec's arms, obliged to him, and left at his mercy. In another interpretation, Asha Kanwar explains that "At a symbolic level, Alec can be seen as representative of the *nouveou riche* "aristocracy," thus highlighting the fact of social mobility that had reduced Tess the daughter of a life-holder and trader, to the level of manual labour" (177). So, social and economic circumstances define Tess's place and experiences in the novel. Moreover, according to the fatalistic point of view in the narrative, her beauty can also be given as a complementary factor to account for Tess's fate, which is why the description of the scene ends with "It was to be" (83). Thus, the explanation is the Fate again. Tess's life seems to be determined by the economic and social anxieties peculiar to one's class accompanied by the fact that she is an enormously beautiful and attractive girl. Accordingly, Raymond Williams and Arnold Kettle's shared assumption is that:

> If Tess is seen as being the main victim, for both critics she still remains either a symbol of her class, or only one of a large section of society. But Tess may also be seen as a victim as member of a quite different societal group –that of her own sex, subjected to the ill treatment of and prejudices of a society whose values and assumptions are those of the opposite sex. (qtd in Wright 7)

Tess goes on staying at Trantridge for four more months after the incident takes place. It becomes clear in her depiction that she has changed since the experience. She is not the "simple" country girl she was before, her thoughts are inclined to be more complex and intricate now:

> It was beautiful from here; it was terribly beautiful to Tess to-day, for since her eyes fell upon it she had learnt that the serpent hisses where the birds sing, and her views of life had been totally changed for her by the lesson. Verily another girl than the simple one she had been at home was she who, bowed by thought, stood still here, and turned to look behind her. She could not bear to look forward into the Vale. (87)

Standing on the edge of the Vale where she arrived months ago, Tess feels the difference between now and then. Now she knows that the "serpent hisses where the birds sing", which can be read as a reference to the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve had learned life's "lesson" (87). It is implied that she now understands better that good things may reside along with the bad ones. She also senses now that the threat is sexual in some way. However, when it comes to practical knowledge, she knows nothing, which will be the cause of her return to her mother with reproach.

Tess decides to leave Trantridge after this period of time, and Alec tries to hinder her. However, this moment of conversation between the two reveals that Alec has failed to see and appreciate Tess's individuality up to now and has the same condescending attitude to her as before. Even when he implores her to stay, it is understood from his methods of persuasion that he does not know her as she really is. Upon Alec's question on why she came there for she did not want to be there or for love him, Tess responds in agreement that she never loved him or will do at any time and she adds that "I didn't understand your meaning till it was too late" (89). Tess knows Alec's real intention now. Alec answers "That's what every woman says" (89). Tess feels hurt and retorts as she rages against him, "Did it never strike your mind that what every woman says some women may feel?" (89). So by this "depersonalizing 'Everywoman' ascription", as Rosemarie Morgan puts it, Alec belittles Tess as well as ignoring her identity and categorizing her and putting her in one group of women who are "Eve-temptresses", yet act as if they were wronged (98). It also becomes obvious that Alec is not repentant for what he did. He offers Tess luxury and wealth: "I am ready to pay you the uttermost farthing. You know you need not work in the fields or dairies again. You know you may clothe yourself with the best, instead of in the bald plain way you have lately affected, as if you couldn't get a ribbon more than you earn" (89). When Tess keeps on rejecting anything material that might come from Alec, he scorns her again saying, "one would think you were a princess from your manner in addition to a true and original d'Urberville,–ha ha!" (89). Alec

cannot recognize Tess's dignity and pride, who he only perceives as an attractive peasant girl. Alec accepts that he is an immoral, villainous man. He admits "I was born bad, I live bad and I will die bad" (89). He is in full knowledge of his exploitation of Tess.

At this point, it is important to touch on Tess's thoughts on marriage in general. Tess's expectations or rather lack of expectations of marriage become the factors that make her a unique girl in a social milieu where marriage is the ultimate target to be reached by girls. Tess, although sexually abused by Alec d'Urberville, does not want to marry him. Such an act could clear her name according to the fixed social morals of the society mostly represented by women like her mother, Joan Durbeyfield. Joan Durbeyfield is frustrated because her daughter returns home, sexually abused, and without any prospects of marriage (93). Tess has never contemplated such a thing because she does not have any practical pursuits like her family does. Besides, she hates Alec:

> He *marry* her! On matrimony he had never once said a word. And what if he had? How a convulsive snatching at social salvation might have impelled her to answer him she could not say. But her poor foolish mother little knew her present feeling towards this man...She had never wholly cared for him, she did not at all care for him now. She had dreaded him, winced before him, succumbed to adroit advantages he took of her helplessness... (93-94)

Tess's thoughts show that the topic of marriage has never been articulated, however, even if it had happened, she would not have accepted to marry Alec because she feels no affection for him. Besides, she detests him. She clearly sees her ignorant mother's anxieties. However, this does not change her view that so as to have "salvation", to be cleared in public view, she cannot say "yes" to the man who took advantage of her "helplessness" (93-94). Therefore, rather than trying to turn the situation into a social advantage, Tess chooses to remain unmarried, which makes her more the victim and even heroic in a sense because she acts with naivety rather than in a cunning way.

The lack of wise and guiding parents makes Tess more defenceless and open to exploitation. This can be understood when she criticizes her mother for not warning her beforehand against dangers that may come from men:

> ‘How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house four months ago. Why didn’t you tell me there was danger in men-folk? Why didn’t you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hands against, because they read novels...but I never had the chance o’ learning in that way, and you did not help me!’ (94)

Tess blames her mother because she has had to learn by experience what her mother did not teach her by warnings. Only four months ago, she was a child. However, now she feels as if she grew up because she lacked the proper parenting and learned everything on her own, like a motherless child. She knows the difference of “ladies” for they learn by reading novels, however, Tess was in want of guidance.

Another result of Alec d’Urberville’s sexual exploitation of Tess is the illegitimate child she conceives. After some time of depression and seclusion Tess goes out resolved “to undertake outdoor work in her native village” (101). However, “her baby had not been baptized” and the very fact makes her uneasy that if her baby boy dies, there will be “no salvation” for him (105). She decides to baptize the baby herself, naming him “Sorrow” (107) by making her own little sisters and brothers witnesses of the baptism. The next morning when the baby dies, she buries him herself. Rosemarie Morgan comments on the baptism scene, in which Tess herself is described as a “girl-mother” (107):

> Tess is described as she would appear through the eyes of a small child. This perspective is important to Hardy’s emphasis here upon innocence. Tess’s defiant act of baptising her illegitimate child, seen through the eyes of a small child, is the purest act of grace and loving-kindness Whether or not Christian orthodoxy would deem her act sacrilegious, is to Hardy irrelevant. The relevance simply lies in innocence speaking to innocence, child-mother to child-son, before an audience of innocent children. (100)

Tess’s juvenility is emphasized once more. Hardy emphasizes Tess’s innocence and purity frequently in the novel. Baptizing her child, she herself is only a child, who did not have a chance to make her own choices in life. What Hardy tries to assert is that the fact that she is the mother of an illegitimate child does not take away from her innocence and innate virtue. Whether her way of baptizing the child is acceptable according to the religious doctrines or not is not of interest to the writer. Tess is depicted as the embodiment of innocence itself.

Patricia Ingham states that the narrator wishes to insist on the recognition of individuality as she changes from a simple girl to a complex woman, ‘whom the

turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralise'. Yet, tha narrator goes on further: 'But for the world's opinion those experiences would have been simply a liberal education' (qtd in Widdowson 83).

"In *Tess of the D'urbervilles*, Hardy creates a world in which mankind seems to be devolving morally. For Hardy, Tess is immune to conventional moral judgements because her motives are beyond reproach", states Daniel Schwarz (61). The interpretation in the light of Tess's relationship with Alec also reminds of the sexual double standards the society had regarding sexual purity. While women were considered to have experienced "sexual fall" and lost their purity after such sexual incidents, men remained untainted (Watt 7). In this case, too, Tess's case fits into the convention of "the fallen woman" according to the society's sexual hypocrisy whereas Alec remains unpolluted. George Watt refers to Tess's social and economic circumstances making her return to Alec later in the novel, and criticizes the reviewers of the time calling it "immoral" for Tess to return to the person who "ruined her" (149). For Watt, such people forget "to think that she has the weight of an ineffective mother to consider, along with vulnerable siblings and potential starvation. The century-long misconception moves within the text of the review-it is impossible for virtue to be found in a fallen woman" (149).

4.2.2 Angel Clare and Tess

The male domination Tess experiences does not end with Alec d'Urberville but continues with the new man introduced to her life, Angel Clare. Although the reasons and the outline of the hegemony of the man over the woman show differences, nothing much changes in practical terms as Tess is to suffer again. In fact, Tess met Angel Clare before at the May-Day dance when he with his two brothers were passing by, and unlike them, he joined the girls' dance enthusiastically. Tess was "reproachful" for he did not invite her to dance but another girl, he noticed her only when he was leaving the scene. Thus, Tess recognizes Angel quickly. "He wore the ordinary white pinner and leather leggings of a dairy-farmer when milking, and his boots were clogged with the mulch of the yard; but this was all his local livery. Beneath it was something educated, reserved, subtle, sad, differing" (127). What

Tess sees is an intelligent, sophisticated man of deep thoughts under the plain clothes of a rural worker. Angel is mainly characterized by his unconventional attitude towards the fixed and predetermined concepts in life and his idealism in general. He is a parson's son, Reverend Mr. Clare at Emminster (129). Like his brothers, Clare was also educated to be a clergyman. However, he does not want to pursue a life in the church after getting schooled in Cambridge but to be knowledgeable in agriculture. This is why Angel is also in Talbothays as "a six-months' pupil" (130). Alec recognizes silent Tess's presence one day when she talks about bodies and souls. Her opinion that souls go out of bodies when they die draws Alec's attention to her. Such an interesting and intelligent remark from a simple country girl seems to surprise him. His first impression of Tess is ironic: "What a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature that milkmaid is", he says to himself (132). The feeling created on Angel is ironic in the sense that Tess is not a virgin anymore, but she looks like one to him. Such a beginning gives the sense that Angel, as a man with an idealistic outlook on life and people, will fall in love with his own vision of her, this "daughter of Nature" (136).

Actually Angel is attracted to Tess not only because of her beauty and purity but also because of her additional qualities of deep feeling, and a philosophical view on life such as her interpretation of the trees as having "inquisitive eyes" asking "why do ye trouble me?" To her, life is very "fierce and cruel" (140). She envies him for the fact that he can "drive all such fancy away" with his "music" as Angel plays the harp. She has very pessimistic views on life. "He was surprised to find this young woman – who though but a milkmaid had just that touch of rarity about her which might make her the envied of her housemates –shaping such imaginings" (140). He finds it hard to understand how a *simple* country girl could be so pessimistic. However, this becomes one of the key moments that Angel becomes more interested in her. "My life", she says, "looks as if it had been wasted for want of chances! When I see what you know, what you have read and seen, and thought, I feel what a nothing I am! I am like the poor Queen of Sheba who lived in the Bible" There is no more spirit in me!" (141). Tess perceives herself as very unfortunate. She humbly compares herself with Angel; next to a man of education like him, she sees herself as nothing, she feels no enthusiasm for anything (141). Tess, to whom Angel proposes to help in

teaching topics, such as history, she answers that the answers to her questions are not found in books (142). Angel interprets these comments as emotional and spiritual intensity in Tess.

As time goes on, Angel and Tess fall in love. For the first time in her life Tess is happy, she is in love and is loved in return. She is in a new surrounding independent of her dark past and has a job as a milkmaid. However, the way Angel loves and perceives Tess can be interpreted as males' implicit exertion of power over women as he labels her with certain names of deities and goddesses:

> It was then, as has been said, that she impressed him most deeply. 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—which she did not like because she did not understand them.
> "Call me Tess," she would say askance; and he did. (146)

Rather than trying to see Tess as she really is, it is obvious that Angel has an idealized version of her in his mind. He calls her "Demeter", "Artemis", the names of the Greek goddesses whom Tess knows nothing about. Here, we see Angel's religious idealization of nature and Tess. She has a religious intensity in his eyes. He associates the two. Tess cannot be sure of his real meaning in giving her such names, yet, she feels uncomfortable. Even though she does not understand it, she resists being idealized. She wants to be seen as an ordinary human being, not as an extraordinary or ethereal being. Rosemarie Morgan comments on Angel's fallacy:

> Re-naming, like wrong-naming, stirs a startling, if fleeting, non-recognition of self; and even if Tess had understood Angel's fanciful names she would have liked them no better for condensing her "into one typical form"; just as she had earlier balked at Alec's depersonalizing 'Everywoman' ascription...Repudiating pseudonymity, she seeks at once to 'cleanse' him of his illusive vision of her and to resist his appropriation, by renaming, of her person. (103)

By renaming Tess, Angel is unaware that he ignores her real self, her identity and individuality just as Alec did when he likened her to "every woman", but defines her through stereotypical conceptions. Tess, by rejecting any kind of pseudonyms given by Angel, desires to clean him of his illusions about her, which would prevent him from knowing the real Tess.

Although Tess wants Angel to know the real her, she is also afraid of the revelation of her past to him because she feels guilty. As the love between them grows, Tess

becomes more uncomfortable. She is afraid of the possibility that her past will ruin their relationship. She is so self-accusatory that she considers herself unworthy of having Angel. The other dairy-maids Marian, Izz, and Retty are also in love with him and there is an unending rivalry among them for Angel. They all dream of getting married to him (152). Tess is not like them. Having become more determined after her past with Alec that she will not get married, the fear in her gets bigger for she is also aware of Angel's special interest in her. However, because of her uneasy conscience, she feels the need to praise her closest friends Retty and Izz to Angel.

> "Don't they look pretty!" she said.
> Who?"
> "Izzy Huett and Retty."
> Tess had moodily decided that either of these maidens would make a good farmer's wife, and that she ought to recommend them, and obscure her own wretched charms..."Marry one of them, if you really do want a dairy woman and not a lady; and don't think of marrying me". (156)

Tess is self-sacrificing. Although she loves Angel much, she believes inwardly that those "maiden" girls deserve Angel better than she does. They are pretty, naive girls with almost no experience of life and pain, unlike her, who has a dark past she tries to hide from people. Thus, all through their courtship, Tess is in complete agony and pain, she feels guilty and blames herself, which can be interpreted as her internalization of the male-dominant world's unspoken rules about chastity. Although Tess is unique and proud in character and this is what is reflected to Angel, too, she has the tendency to see herself responsible for the misfortunate consequences.

However, Tess's attempts to avoid Angel are useless because he sees her as "better than" any girl and cannot get her out of his mind. His love for her is so strong that he does not give up on her. One day, when they are both milking cows, Angel, overwhelmed by his feelings for her, approaches Tess and embraces her. He almost kisses her but gives up so as not to offend her: "I ought to have asked. I—did not know what I was doing. I do not mean it as a liberty. I am devoted to you, Tessy, dearest, in all sincerity!" (166). Angel professes his love to Tess. After this incident, Angel disappears for a few days and goes home so as to ponder on his feelings about her:

> Despite his heterodoxy, faults, and weaknesses, Clare was a man with a conscience. Tess was no insignificant creature to toy with and dismiss; but a woman living her precious life—a life which, to herself, who endured and enjoyed it, possessed as great a dimension as the life of the mightiest to himself. (172)

Angel has his suspicions about religion, however, he is described as a man "with a conscience", which would not let him pass time with Tess without serious intentions. Although the paragraph is about Angel's intense feelings towards her which he himself considers to be sincere, his categorization of women into two distinct groups as "insignificant creatures to toy with and dismiss" and women living their "precious" lives is a sign of hypocrisy in his character. He thinks he should marry Tess because she is a girl *to be married*. Angel's view is ironic as well as its being hypocritical because he still does not know the woman he wants to get married to truly, the consequences of which will disclose the double standards in his mind later on.

In his defence of Tess to persuade his family that she is an eligible girl, Angel reflects the stereotypical notions in his mind again: "She is a lady in character...She'll be apt pupil enough, as you would say if you knew her. She's brim-full-of poetry—actualized poetry, if I may use the expression. She *lives* what paper-poets only write...And she is an unimpeachable Christian, I am sure; perhaps of the very tribe, genus, and species you desire to propagate" (182). Angel praises Tess, and sees her as "a lady"; he tells his view to his parents so that they will not worry about the class difference between Angel and Tess. To him, she is "poetry", which is a quite passive picture of her. He sees her as an object of art, not as a flesh and blood person. He has, in this sense, a very abstract way of perceiving Tess. Besides, he stresses her religious intensity so as to appeal to his father.

When it comes to marrying Angel, Tess's inclinations are different for she loves him dearly. However, she cannot find the courage to risk the possibility of unveiling her past to him. The mentioning of the topic revives her past with Alec which makes her more convinced that "It can't be" (191). However, Angel finally persuades her to marry him:

> "You will—you do say it, I know. You will be mine for ever and ever." He clasped her close and kissed her.

> "Yes." She had no sooner said than she burst into a dry hard sobbing so violent that it seemed to rend her. Tess was not a hysterical girl by any means, and he was surprised.
> ..."I mean—I cry because I have broken down my vow! I said I would die unmarried."
> "But if you love me, you would love me to be your husband?"
> "Yes, yes, yes, But O, I sometimes wish I had never been born!". (208)

Even when she accepts Angel's offer, Tess is frightened. She is both happy and very pessimistic at the same time. Her hysterical cry and statements such as "I wish I had never been born" puzzle Angel, however, he attributes such responses to "the dallying of coyness" (192).

At this point, it is also important to refer to Joan Durbeyfield's letter to her daughter in which she warns her daughter strongly not to mention her past with Alec to Angel, by no means. She explains that "Many a woman, some of the highest in the Land, have had Trouble in their time" (210). She also thinks that "why should" Tess "Trumpet" hers "when others don't Trumpet theirs?" (210). Her mother, as expected of a practical woman like her, wants Tess to remain silent supporting her view by saying that many women have experienced things similar to Tess's story before, yet, one need not "trumpet" it, meaning she should not announce it, which would be foolish when many keep such experiences a secret. Doubtlessly, Tess's mother's attitude is morally dubious, however, in her perception of things, it is practically the best idea.

The male domination over women becomes more apparent as a theme after Angel and Tess marry. They retire to the old d'Urberville mansion, where they plan to spend a few days. The chain of unfortunate events takes start with the news from the dairy farm that reaches them. It is about Marian and Retty who were also in love with Angel. Tess and Angel learn that Marian became an alcoholic while Retty attempted suicide (240). Tess is deeply affected by this incident and it leads her to new qualms of conscience:

> This incident had turned the scale for her. They were simple and innocent girls on whom the unhappiness of unrequited love had fallen: they had deserved better at the hands of fate. She had deserved worse; yet she was the chosen one. It was wicked of her to take all without paying. She would pay to the uttermost farthing: she would tell there and then. This final determination she came to while she looked into the fire, he holding her (241).

The incident of the girls hurts Tess very much and leads her to self-reproach. She pities them because she thinks that they had innocent, unrequited love for Angel. The theme of fate is repeated again here and it is said that they "deserved better" (241). Yet, Tess thinks she did not. She believes such happiness acquired so easily is like taking "all without paying" (241). Yet, she would be ready to pay everything if she could. Graham Handley comments, saying: "Marian, Izz, and Retty also pay in different kind. So intent is Hardy on demonstrating the subordination of women and their consequent emotional suffering that he has all three milkmaids in love with Angel (87).

The news about the girls indirectly plays an important role in the ruin of Tess and Angel's honeymoon because it reminds Angel of Tess' mentioning of a confession on the morning of their wedding. He wants to make a confession to Tess (242). While he makes his confession, Angel becomes completely conservative in his tone, which can be sensed through his statements such as "I admired spotlessness, even though I could lay no claim to it, and hated impurity, as I hope I do now" (242). Although he cannot claim to be completely pure himself of all sins and wrongdoings, Angel expects purity and "spotlessness" in everything he sees, which is an attitude that demonstrates his hypocrisy. It becomes apparent that he is not the man he has presented himself to be. Going on with his discussion, he states that "I myself fell", by which he means his corruption. Before long, it becomes obvious that Angel had an affair with a woman older than himself in London (243). He asks to be forgiven by Tess, which she gladly does. Daleski talks about Angel's hypocrisy:

> Angel is presented (initially, at any rate) as playing the part of the decent honourable man to Alec's libertine, but, unlike predecessors, he is, interestingly, not a sexual inncocent. He, like Tess, has a sexual history (which makes of course, for the great irony of the confession scene). (165)

Thus, it becomes evident that Angel is hypocritical. Besides, as opposed to Tess who would like to tell him about her past honestly, Angel puts off telling his own affair until after their marriage for fear of losing Tess. This explanation encourages Tess to give an account of her own story. However, she cannot receive the response she has given to him: "O Tess, forgiveness does not apply to the case. You were one person: now you are another. My god—how can forgiveness meet such a grotesque—

prestidigitation as that!" (248). Angel cannot forgive Tess, and believes that her situation is beyond forgiveness.

> Angel Clare, sensitive and idealistic, would seem to be the complete opposite of Alec, but his behaviour when Tess tells her secret is all too clear a demonstration that chauvinism is not confined to the predatory male. In a sense, Angel's fault is that, while social conditioning teaches Alec that women are frail, and where possible to be taken advantage of, in the case of the parson's son it has convinced him that women are ideals of purity. When this ideal is punctured, it is too much for him to accept. (Wright 7)

Angel is disillusioned because he has idealized her in his mind so far, which prevented him from seeing the real her. The fact his view of her changes suddenly and completely is an indication of his double standards. While he has a very similar past, he cannot bear the idea that another man possessed her. To Angel, "the woman I have been loving is not you!" (248). Now that he knows that Tess is not a "maiden", a virgin, she looks as if she were somebody else. Angel, in this way, contradicts with himself or with his own previous self.

In this respect, Tess's honesty becomes her destruction. That she has been always sincere and honest turns out to be disadvantageous for her. Dale Kramer states that "Tess is in abject self-denial and prostration. Her guilt makes her say that she will not follow him but she follows him outside" (98). Tess's reaction is very submissive in the face of Angel's cold stance. Her statements show that having already felt guilty for a long time; she accepts Angel's accusing remarks more readily: "Angel, am I too wicked for you and me to live together?" she implores and "will you not forgive me?" she asks waiting to be forgiven. Her asking for forgiveness is ironic in the sense that the difference between her situation and of Angel is that Angel chose to do what he did whereas Tess had it done to her, she has fallen victim to another man's momentary pleasure. This does not only point at Angel's double standards concerning morality as well as Tess's internalization of the male-dominant perspective categorizing women according to their sexuality. However, this does not make Tess a shallow character for she is clever enough to perceive if Angel really loves her "very self", how can it be that the knowledge of something about her could change his "love" for her so much or make her "another woman" in his eyes (248-249). The moral tone added in this scene is important for it is implicitly put as a question concerning what the real definition of purity is or whether or not women

can be defined by their sexuality. Rosemarie Morgan reminds us: "To Alec, she is Everywoman and Eve-temptress. To Angel, predictably, she is first stereotypical Goddess and later stereotypical fallen woman: 'ill', 'unformed', and 'crude'" (98). Therefore, Angel mentally defines Tess with two extreme classifications; she is either a goddess or a fallen woman. Thus, Angel, seeing both the world and the people with the abstractions of his idealism, fails to recognize Tess as a human being, just as she really is. Patricia Ingham comments on this limited perception in Angel's mind: "The only conclusion that the categories of his language allow him to draw is that if she is not 'pure' then she is a fallen woman" (qtd. in Widdowson 82). The emptiness of Angel's attempts to categorize Tess is given in ironic tones with Angel's "stupefied" state when he looks at Tess the next day after the secret is unveiled: "Nature, in her fantastic trickery, had set such a seal of maidenhood upon Tess's countenance that he gazed at her with a stupefied air" (257). The irony is the implicit question asking what the real tool to know one's purity and innocence is.

Having found out that nothing will change Angel's changed perspective of her, there comes a sort of listlessness to Tess. After too much tension, she gets almost dull to feel anything when Angel becomes estranged from her: "Having nothing more to fear, having scarce anything to hope, for that he would relent there seemed no promise whatever, she lay down dully. When sorrow ceases to be speculative sleep sees her opportunity" (253). "The lonely Tess" forgets her existence as she has nothing more to fear, because her worst fear has been realized.

Angel, who finds it hard to get over the shock, has to deal with Tess's unfolding of the past, and decides to leave, telling her that he will try to accept her past. He leaves her at a point close to her village. Tess sees it as her "punishment" and does not stop him.

> If Tess had been artful, had she made a scene, fainted, wept hysterically, in that lonely lane, notwithstanding the fury of fastidiousness with which he was possessed he would probably not have withstood her. But her mood of long-suffering made his way easy for him, and she herself was his best advocate, Pride, too, entered into her submission—which perhaps was a symptom of that reckless acquiescence in chance too apparent in the whole D'Urberville family—and the many effective chords which she could have stirred by an appeal were left untouched. (272)

The possibility is mentioned by the narrator that if Tess had "made a scene", cried "hysterically" and implored Angel to stay, most probably he could not have "withstood" and stayed. However, Tess also inwardly blames herself and suffers more strongly than Angel does. This again can be reflected as her internalization of the injustice made to her, she holds herself responsible and she is Angel's "best advocate". Dale Kramer considers this moment as "a crucial event of her life" saying, "because Angel – although thinking himself an enlightened man who has rejected society, sophistication, religious hypocrisy, and materialism for a rural retreat – is so conventional concerning sex that he cannot bear to live in the same country with Tess and her still-living former lover" (4).

Kathleen Blake states on Angel's abandonment of Tess: "Angel's penchant for generalization intensifies, and he casts the fallen Tess as the typical peasant woman and representative of decadent family...Angel typecasts Tess in terms of class, family, nature, and sex, but sexual typing exercises the most powerful sway" (697). Tess is, then, categorized by her husband. When Angel learns about Tess's past affair with Alec d'Urberville, "the lady in nature" image of Tess in his mind is shattered. Now he sees her as "an unapprehending peasant woman", "the belated seedling of an effete aristocracy," implying the so-called connection between the d'Urbervilles and the Durbeyfield family (252). All these show Angel's new condescending look on Tess just because he now knows that Tess is not the "pure", "spotless" girl of his previous imaginings. Likewise; Geoffrey Harvey refers to the domination Tess is imposed to by both Alec and Angel:

> Both Alec and Angel regard her as an object of desire, and she becomes their victim, violated by Alec and later abandoned by her husband. Alec assumes her compliance in a sexual relationship, equating her with other country conquests, while Angel fits her into his Romantic preconceptions of nature. It is Angel's crude application to Tess of the hypocritical Victorian double standard of sexual morality that reengages Tess in a fresh cycle of suffering on the bleak upland farnm at Flinth-Comb Ash , leading to her re-encounter with Alec and to his murder (83).

Thus, according to Harvey's explanation, it can be stated that males create a kind of vicious circle with their male double standards, in which they ironically become both the cause and also the result of the downfall they cause the heroine.

The differences between the personalities of the mother and her daughter become apparent again when Tess reveals to her mother that she told Angel about her past. The mother calls her daughter "poor little fool" for what she has done (275). Philip Mallet describes Tess's mother as "a feckless woman, but not an unloving mother" and "guided by pragmatism" in her relationship with her daughter (188). Tess, however, is honest and lacks any kind of scheme which would save her socially, as also pointed by the narrator before. Her answer is an evidence of this: "If it were to be done again—I should do the same. I could not—I dared not—so sin—against him!" (276). Tess is "pure" in heart not to "sin against" Angel by hiding the truth, she would tell him the truth even if she had to do it again.

Tess is not independent in her responses to the events and perhaps this is why she always tends to be self-reproachful in relation to the unfortunate incidents which are generally out of her control. Graham Handley comments on this incessant self-guilt on the part of Tess:

> We have seen that Tess's short journey through life consists of a series of payments: she pays for her own sense of guilt over the death of Prince, for the loss of innocence and of her child, for the loss of her own peace of mind and social and moral respectability. Throughout her relationship with Angel she pays the price of her secret, and she pays beyond suffering for the revelation of that secret on her wedding night. She pays in toil and tribulation at Flinthcomb-Ash, with humility and pride when she visits Angel's parents but fails to see them. (86)

Tess's strong sense of responsibility, thus, results in her nonstop self-accusations. Likewise, although Angel leaves Tess some money to use in his absence, Tess is in financial hardship. she starts working on different dairy farms. As well as hiding her own monetary problems, she sends her family money when they need it. However, when her father dies and the family remains homeless, she again self-sacrifices herself by yielding to Alec, who promises to provide for her family. When Angel returns from Brazil, having decided to forgive Tess, she is devastated as she has already returned to Alec, and "it is too late" for them to reunite (400). Angel has come to self-recognition, which is understood by his answer "I did not see you as you were" (400). Angel is repentant for the injustice he has done to her. The effect of this atonement on Tess is hate towards Alec, who told her that Angel would never come back:

> I hate him now, because he told me a lie—that you would not come back again; and you *have* come! These clothes are what he's put upon me: I didn't care what he did wi' me!...He had been as husband to me: you never had! But will you go away Angel, please, and never come any more? (401)

Tess blames Alec and shows him as the reason of her present state. However, she also adds that Alec "had been a husband" to her whereas Angel abandoned her. This incident leads to the climax of the narrative because Tess, blaming Alec, kills him. She runs back to Angel asking for forgiveness again, saying that she has killed Alec. The two escape and spend a few days together until she is arrested and executed. Likewise, until the moment she is arrested she is consumed with remorse and self-reproach again.

> 'It is as it should be," she murmured. 'Angel, I am almost glad—yes, glad! This happiness could not have lasted. It was too much. I have had enough and now I shall not live for you to despise me'. She stood up, shook herself and went forward, neither of the men having moved.
> 'I am ready', she said quietly. (418)

Angel and Tess could have escaped together, yet Tess decides to remain, which shows her acceptance of her fate. She feels glad for what is inevitable is going to take place. It is again obvious that and "nobody blamed her as she blamed herself" (131). She is her own biggest critic in this sense.

The fulfilment phase of events is crucial in the sense that it is the only moment when Tess acts with free will, which is the complete opposite of her "lack of will", and "fatal indecision in great moments" (Handley 96). Up to this moment, her lack of independence in her actions made her vulnerable to sexual abuse, abandonment by her husband, financial and spiritual suffering. Rosemarie Morgan also states on Thomas Hardy's implicit messages through his character:

> Hardy retains, then, for Tess, with her emotional generosity, sexual vitality, and moral strength, the capacity to rise above her fall and, ultimately, to redeem the man who, bearing the values and sexual prejudices and double-standards of the society, fails to rise above them in the hour of need. (109)

Rosemarie Morgan comments on the complexity of Tess as a female character. She is drawn as a sexually vital character as well as a morally strong character. The existence of both qualities in a woman is quite exceptional for the society of that time. However, according to Morgan, what Thomas Hardy intends to do is to show the capacity of the heroine's perseverance despite the prejudices and double-standards she faces and her achievement of superiority over male figures who failed to rise

above the fixed standards of society. This can be interpreted as his commentary on the woman's stance in the society and the shaky and questionable ground of moral and sexual prejudices. Robert C. Schweik, on the other hand, attributes Hardy's defence of Tess to her "frank appeal to the law of nature" (14) which depicts her as a woman closer to nature than society, which explains her natural, sexual descriptions in the novel. To conclude, then, it can be asserted that *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and its protagonist exemplify the underprivileged state of being both an attractive and a working-class woman in the then society. Already belonging to the disadvantageous social group with economic and social (class) burdens, Tess as a woman, rarely uses her own free will and therefore is dominated either by the male figures in her life and also by familial burdens, which leave her almost no place to decide and act. Thus, she becomes a victim rather than an agent in her own fate. She suffers from the double standards of the society regarding morality, and specifically sexual purity. George Watt also states:

> The shadows which help to destroy Tess are familial, social, and national, but there is a universal power which is larger than these. It is this larger shadow which moves over Tess, and it is the spirit which takes the novel out of the tradition of all the other fallen-women fiction, and puts the work to twentieth century. (165)

Although the character is victimized and marginalized in society due to the fixed notions about sexual morality, the undertone of the story indicates that what the writer actually does is to subvert the dominant values of his time in his fiction. The writer achieves this through his depiction of Tess as a "pure" woman: although she is "impure" in body, she is pure in mind and heart; she is a woman with good intentions and a strong sense of responsibility towards the people she loves. Thus, although the narrative is pessimistic throughout the novel and a tragic end is created for the protagonist, Tess's catastrophic end can be taken as a weapon of the author to make a social commentary on the injustices imposed on women in the society because Tess arouses the emotions of pity and fear.

CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to reach a representation of 19th century women in fiction through an analysis of the depictions of women in three novels by two different novelists; George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In the first chapter, a historical context was given so as to present the social and historical framework of the century that shaped the novelists' worldviews and their works. The sequence of historical events, starting with the Enlightenment views, going on with the French Revolution and shifting to the Industrial Revolution, were explained in the light of their effects on the society as well as on women specifically. After examining the fixed notions of the time regarding marriage and specific gender roles, the gradual amelioration of the legal rights for women were discussed. Finally, the novelists' biographies and their central themes were presented as an introductory unit.

In the second chapter, the female characters in *Middlemarch* were studied. Dorothea Brooke, Rosamond Vincy, Celia Brooke, Mary Garth, and Harriet Bulstrode were analysed with regard to their subordination in a male-dominated society, their expectations from marriage, their disillusionment or happiness in marriage, and lastly their reaction to marriage which reveal these women's stance against the compelling circumstances as well as the writer's treatment of the conclusion of the novel as a final commentary on the woman question. The writer achives this aim by showing that the time and place the characters live in are different and lacking in certain possibilities for women. The realistic ones adapt to the changing circumstances more easily. Despite the disappointment caused by the difference between imagination and reality, however, Dorothea and Rosamond start over again.

In the third chapter, the female characters in *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy were analyzed. Eustacia Vye and Thomasin Yeobright are the central female figures of the novel, representing two different depictions of women in terms of their characters and attitudes in relation to marriage, their expectations as well as their reaction to disillusionment.

In the fourth and the last chapter, women in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* were the focus of discussion. As marriage does not lie at the centre of the novel and the protagonist's story has a different pattern than the previous novels, Tess Durbeyfield was analyzed in terms of her subordination in terms of social and economic aspects, the male domination exerted on her, and her attitude towards the unfortunate events she experiences. Joan Durbeyfield, Tess's mother Joan Durbeyfield was also discussed-though not separately but in relation to Tess- in terms of her interference with Tess's prospects, especially of marriage.

All three novels were examined separately so as to avoid any kind of overlapping; however, it is significant, at this point, to come up with some comparative comments on the similar and different aspects of the novels in terms of their writers and the female characters they created.

Both Thomas Hardy and George Eliot were inspired by the conditions and problems of their society and, presented their works as tools of criticism on social and moral problems faced by people in general and especially encountered by women. Kristin Brady emphasizes issues of gender as a common topic in Thomas Hardy's works; "From their first publication, the works of Thomas Hardy have been explicitly and obsessively associated with matters of gender" (93). Likewise, George Eliot also put women at the centre of many of her novels.

Accordingly, they both deal with themes and topics related to women, the most important of which is marriage. A recurrent theme of 19th century novels, marriage is also at the centre of the novels of both Hardy and Eliot. However, both writers are considered to be modern in style as they do not present marriage as a resolution at the end of their novels but put it in the middle, or even at the beginning of their narratives. Considering that all these three novels were written at the time of literary maturity of these writers, it can be said that they both have a new-fangled approach towards the theme of marriage. This means that by placing marriage early in the story, they create a space for their characters to see the results of their decisions and choices. How they differ from the conventional forms of narrative in the novels is that marriage is no longer the ultimate bliss to be reached. In all the novels analysed

in the thesis, most marriages result in disillusionment because the characters either have illusions about their partners or build wrong assumptions regarding the roles of husband and wife. It is implied that marriage does not always connote happiness, besides, as an example of a social institution, it can be imperfect. Dorothea, Rosamond, Eustacia, and Tess all fail in their marriages and suffer the consequences of their choices afterwards. Dorothea suffers from her idealization of Casaubon. Rosamond's and Eustacia's romantic illusions are not actualized. Tess is abandoned by her husband due to the sexual double standards of a male-dominated society.

Both writers bring forth the issues related to women and women's subordination such as economic, social, and vocational anxieties and impossibilities. They present women from all social classes, Dorothea and Celia are almost aristocratic, Rosamond and Eustacia are middle-class girls, Tess belongs to the working class. Both writers transcend gender stereotypes with their active, assertive, self-determined women in their novels. On the other hand, they have also submissive characters as well as realistic ones who try to be happy with what they have. Some women have internalized the male view and act in accordance by manipulating those rules to adjust them to themselves such as Rosamond, or those who keep blaming themselves for what they are not responsible for, like Tess. Another group of women reject the limitations imposed upon them in some way even if they cannot completely manage to do so, like Eustacia. The end is fatal for them. Some women know that they have to tolerate the boundaries in exchange of a worthy cause, like Dorothea.

Social class is also important in both novelists' works. There are the depictions of female characters from different social classes and their aspirations to move up the social ladder through marriage such as we see in the character of Rosamond Vincy. In Thomas Hardy, specifically there are marriages between different classes. The marriage of Angel and Tess can be an example of this.

Morality is a subject matter for both George Eliot and Thomas Hardy. However, there are differences in their handling of the topic. The morality in George Eliot's work in general involves the individual moral choices of the characters vacillating between duty and self-indulgence. Thomas Hardy's treatment of morality, on the

other hand, is rather sexual morality. Thomas Hardy is very much involved in describing "the Nature of Woman" (Brady 100), which is described as "amoral" (Brady 96). So, Hardy has characters who are "female" rather than "feminine", because they are close to nature, they are described with "absence of moral feeling" (96). To Hardy, they are not "fallen women" but "amoral women". Another topic added to this is sexuality in the novels. As Judith Mitchell also suggests in *The Stone and the Scorpion*, "*Middlemarch*, in particular, seems to be a novel about manners and morals rather than erotic relationships ,which is quite unlike Thomas Hardy, who characterizes his female heroines by their sexuality and fleshly existence" (122). Therefore, another discrepancy between the novels of the two authors is the existence or lack of erotic depictions or implications. It should also be added, however, that, Hardy also makes use of sexuality and sexual topics in order to display the men's moral and immoral behaviours, and the sexual double standards of the society.

Finally, the biggest ground of comparison between the two authors is their philosophy of life reflected in their works. It is true that both Hardy and Eliot saw and reflected the lack of opportunities in the characters' social surroundings no matter how hard they tried to find one. This indicates the authors' pessimism and distrust of the existence of a benevolent world and society. However, while George Eliot had still some hope, Hardy strengthened his pessimistic stance by victimizing his characters. Nevertheless, from another point of view, both authors can be considered as novelists beyond their time. Eliot's talent lies in the fact that she tried to cross gender boundaries by giving her female characters a second chance, an opportunity to escape suffering and build a second life regardless of their mistakes and misfortunes. Hardy, on the other hand, still arouses interest in readers because although he seemed to victimize his characters by death, he actually created a striking end for his female characters which would make them memorable and universal, and help the writer make his criticism on social taboos and restrictions. In this way, he could make sure his message would be received.

> In the intervening generation the world of George Eliot, in which really guilty individuals can still escape the worst punishments, has darkened into the world of Hardy, in which an essentially innocent girl can be hanged. In this process the values of a whole society have been radically called into question. George Eliot saw the problem mainly in terms of individual moral choices, against a

> background which was relatively static. Margaret Woods in the next generation portrayed a society which was much more inclined to force people's actions and pressurise them into stereotypes alien to their real personality – but with less insistence on human strength and purity. Hardy *mourns* Tess, and this is new. (Williams 99)

Therefore, it is possible to say that although both writers put forward the economic, social, educational, and moral limitations women encounter in the 19th century, their attitudes show slight differences. While George Eliot chooses to clear the way for her heroines even if the social circumstances are cruel, Thomas Hardy creates rather tragic ends for his heroines, yet by sympathizing with them he tries to make his readers see the futility of certain social and moral taboos. In Thomas Hardy's novels, the word "tragic" usually connotes a kind of destruction, an end; whereas in an Eliot novel, tragedy is the "sharp effect of reality on the individual" and "it is every man's duty to find out as best he can the ways of this fate, and adapt his conduct to it" (Mansell 169). Although, then, both writers depicted the women in their works with good reflections of the time on their qualities, in terms of appealing conclusions they created, these novels still spark today's readers' interest.

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