



# A Collision of Vice and Virtue in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*: "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented" or a Fallen Angel

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## Abstract

Heralded as a sympathizer with the oppressed nineteenth century femininity, Thomas Hardy adopted an aggressive stance towards the institutionalized codes of the time particularly the ideal of femininity which results in presenting him as one of the promethean forerunners of "New Woman" fiction. His outspoken attitudes are tangible in his fictional prose where he valiantly tries to challenge the Victorian ideals of femininity. By creating non-conformist heroines, Hardy took the first step to move away from the constitutionalized codes of the time particularly on behalf of femininity. In effect, Hardy valiantly tries to challenge the Victorian ideological discourse of femininity through spotlighting on his fictional women's flaws which comes into conflict with the time's conception of a pure woman. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), as a typical example of his fiction, is representative of Hardy's vision towards the Victorian ideal of femininity through the "Fallen" Tess. This paper is an attempt to re-read Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* to explore the Victorian ideal conception of femininity first and, then, an attempt has been made to delineate the discrepancy between Hardy's perceptions of a "Fallen Woman" in contrast with the Victorian's. This paper, finally, concludes that although Hardy's genuine commiseration towards the "Fallen Woman" shows close affinity with the radical feminist notions of the day, Tess's sheer misery and her final tragic death in Stonehenge attest to Hardy's substantial contribution as a Victorian male novelist to the ideologies circulating at the time.

**Keywords:** The Victorian era, Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, New Woman, Fallen Woman

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 "An Angel in the House" vs. "A Fallen Woman:" the Victorian Institutional Discourses about Femininity

Both historical and literary textual evidences as well as the pictorial arts substantiated the rightness of the Victorian claim on imposing a strict dichotomy on femininity. Women were defined according to the Victorian common saying as the center of chastity. They were highly expected to preserve the nucleus of the society in general and the family in particular against the mundane world. More importantly, the women of the nineteenth century occupied a position of duality within the culture where they were defined as either Madonna or Magdalene, pure or impure. Similarly, Penny Boumelha confirms the fact that Victorian perception of femininity was widely-held as two separate groups: "the chaste and the depraved, the virgin and the whore" (1982, p. 11). This paper is an attempt to present the Victorian ideal conception of femininity first and, then, an attempt has been made to shed light on the Victorian critical stance towards the fallen woman as well as to depict Hardy's stance as a devoted practitioner or as a vehement opponent to those Victorian institutionalized discourses on femininity.

In the Victorian patriarchal ideology, men's roles were defined in the social sphere to manage the family unit, while, women were restricted within the chains of domestic sphere. Supportably, in Stubbs's perspective, the depiction of femininity seems to show close affinity with Richardson's *Pamela*; the prisoner of feeling and private life as well as a poor receiver of education. Ruskin's "of Queen's Gardens" (1864) gives moral and spiritual importance to this new idea of the home where

The man, in his rough work, in open world, must encounter all peril and trial; to him, therefore, must be the failure, the offence, the inevitable error; often he must be wounded,

or subdued, often misled; and always hardened. But he guards the woman from all this; within his house, as ruled by her, unless she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offence. This is the true nature of home—it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and cross the outer threshold, it ceases to be home; it is then only a part of that outer world which you have roofed over, and lighted fire in. but so far as it is a sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the heat watched over by household gods, before whose faces none may come but those whom they can receive with love, as far as it is this, and roof and fire are types only of a nobler shade and light, shade of the rock as in a weary land, and light of the Pharos in the stormy sea; so far it vindicates the name and fulfills the praise of Home (Cook and Wedderburn, 1905, p. 122).

Accordingly, a woman's identity was shaped within the safe domestic hearth to carry out her duties as the manager of the domesticity as well as man's welcomer to the domestic haven.

From a Victorian perspective, women's emotional fulfillment was also restricted to domesticity, performing their missions as comforting wives and caring mothers. In a sense, their domestic confinement would devalue any involvement with the outer world. Woman's role was described as "an angel in the house," "to keep the family true, redefined, affectionate, faithful, [which] is a grander task than to govern the state" (Harrison, 1891, p. 452). While keeping family in the Victorian ideal form meant the imprisonment of its central member, the wife and mother, as Harrison asserts

The true function of women [was] to educate not children only, but men, to train to a higher civilization not the rising generation but the actual society. And to do this by diffusing the spirit of affection, of self-restraint, self-sacrifice, fidelity and purity... as mother, as wife, as sister, as daughter, as friend, as nurse, as teacher, as servant, as counselor, as purifier, as example, in a word—as woman (ibid., p. 445).

In Stubbs's words, this angel-like image of women was preserved up to the industrial revolution in England; in the flow of industrialization the image of women as prisoners of life and feeling was fortified. In fact, women were excluded from the production market and were welcomed by a sweet vocation instead; the manager of the domestic hearth. The absolute exclusion of middle class women from any form of outer labor draws a boundary in the sexual hierarchy. Women were given the moral center role in the private sphere of the home and hearth to exercise their power far from the outside world; it is inevitable not to share Lynn Abrams' idea on the domestic sphere where it was embodied as a cultural expression of the female world, their fashions, etiquette, domestic furnishing, and social engagement.

More importantly, men's authority over women was commonly accepted where men had the most impregnable position in the family, and the whole familial affair was mapped out to satisfy men's taste. In the same way, Vicinus considered young ladies training "to have no options lest they seemed too formal and definite for a young man's taste" (1973, p. 48). Likewise, Sara Stickney Ellis gave her young readers this education in the art of submissiveness to their superior in sexual differences: "It is quite possible you may have more talent than your husband, with higher attainments, and you may also have been generally more admired; but this has nothing whatever to do with your position as a woman, which is, and must be, inferior to him as a man" (1842, p. 37). Besides, women were also conventionally introduced as the last thing civilized by men—fortifying men's authority on women (Chesterton, 1913). The current issues of the time, later, take the stereotypical notion of Victorian conception of femininity; "Angel in the House" and, its opposite counterpart, "Fallen Woman" which became the order of the day.

The Victorians' moral attitude towards femininity was, indeed, highly indebted to the Christian view of sex. They would lay value on a chaste woman who was supposed to consolidate the family unit by performing their conventional roles as faithful wives and devoted mothers. In parallel with the Christian conception of an ideal woman, the Victorians honored a proper young woman as the one who had the least smattering of sexuality. In effect, she was brought up as an innocent and sexually ignorant virgin let alone to experience any intercourses out of wedlock.

Women were also considered to have no sexual rights; they were doubly victims of idealization and particularly abuse—the double standard in sexual morality—which branded liberated women as "fallen." In fact, indulging in any pre-marital intercourse was utterly abhorred in the Victorian polite society and they were vehemently condemned as either ruined or fallen women. Resultantly, the society, vociferously, condemned women who lost or were suspected to lose their purity, disregarding the fact that whether it was done consciously or unconsciously. As a matter of fact, the introduction of fallen woman comes into conflict with the latter ideality of femininity. Society's condemnation would fall on the woman who lost or was suspected to lose her virginity and innocence, and there was no exception whether she was seduced, raped, or was a prostitute being, labeled impure by the society (Jafari, 2012). In reality, Victorians put their condemnation on natural law: "a woman is physically changed when she is no longer a virgin" (Mitchell, 1981, p. xv). Subsequently, an untainted woman had no future ahead of her: she would be looked down upon, considered as socially outcast, and pointed as a serious menace to those who were still pure. Sally Mitchell writes "a woman who falls from her purity can never return to ordinary society" (ibid., x). Since any pre-marital affair was shunned by the polite society of the time, the fallen women were degraded by the society and left behind without any familial and financial connections. Hence, women's moral lapses were not only judged according to the strict law of the time but to the Victorian ideals of femininity. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), for instance, crushed under the pressure of the society, Tess decides to find a job not only to be secured against the village gossip but to support her siblings' life

financially. Her past illicit experiences with Alec scar her for life to the extent where she welcomes the idea of seasonal laboring in Talbothays farm which was located “not remotely from some of the former estates of the D’Urbervilles” (TD, p. 154), where she eagerly sets for.

## 2. Discussion

### 2.1 “A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented” or “A Fallen Angel:” “The Woman I Have Been Loving Is Not You, Another Woman in Your Shape”

*In a letter to Roden Noel, dated May 17, 1892, Hardy wrote: “As if it mattered a straw whether I have, or have not, put too liberal a construction on the word “pure.” Reading over the story [Tess of the D’Urbervilles] after it was finished, the conviction was thrust upon me, without any straining or wish for it on my own part – rather, indeed, with some surprise – that the heroine [Tess] was essentially pure – purer than many a so-called unsullied virgin: therefore I called her so” (Hardy, Letters 267).*

As a meliorist, Hardy put a great deal of effort in revising the Victorian expectations about femininity. In effect, Hardy’s heroines were no longer fettered to the domestic sphere, and their commitment to preserve the good qualities and virtues gradually faded away. Thus, Hardy started writing on taboo-breaking subjects which mostly lay considerable emphasis on femininity and sexuality, as commonly-dealt-with subjects of radical feminists, which became a target to fierce critics of the time. Hardy’s intensive studies introduced the tempted woman as new and pure that comes in vehement opposition to the Victorian common sense and closer to the radical feminist notions of the day. Resultantly, Hardy’s works have always the object of critics’ analytical eye to underline his undue attention to femininity and its relevant issues. For instance, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*’ subtitle “A Pure Woman Presented” captures the readers’ attention to the central character of the plot. Almost all of Hardy’s fictional prose before and after *A Laodicean* (1881), with the exception of *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), address women’s emotional tenor seriously, and minutely scrutinize their relationships with men. Hence, Thomas Hardy’s career—long interest in writing about femininity—which shows conceptual familiarity with the feminist trends of the time, bestowed a challenging contemporaneity upon the culturally established views on femininity. By the 1890s, Hardy was universally acknowledged as a novelist whose preoccupation with female characters and taboo issues of the time seemed against the decorum of the Victorians. For instance, Hardy’s vulgarity in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* did not seem pleasant with the conservative Victorian audience.

Hardy’s all-out effort to present a new aspect of femininity—particularly excluding them from the entrapped gender assumptions—and his underlying themes like the evolution and emergence of the New Woman and a sense of female empowerment present him as a universally acknowledged novelist standing up for women’s downtrodden rights both inside and outside the domestic haven. Hardy’s new notions of femininity brought a wide range of critics to put Hardy’s fiction at the fore, especially his last two polemical novels *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). The main body of criticism on Hardy’s fiction is the presence of romantic and sexual fascinations beyond the social boundaries of the time whereupon Boumelha tightly focuses on the “boundaries of social class or education, of age or wealth and of legal contracts” (p. xvii) in Hardy’s fiction. Almost all of Hardy’s female characters, except for Tess, undergo traumatic experience in their course of life while they are secured from failure (Kaloshev, 2012). Tess is the one who is doomed to ignominious failure; there is no choice to set her free from the fettering chains of the Victorian society.

*Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, Hardy’s twelfth novel, is typically representative of Hardy’s vision towards the Victorian ideal of femininity particularly the notion of impurity. Grant Allen, a prolific Canadian novelist and a successful upholder of New Woman fiction, praised *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* as a work “of which every young girl and married woman in England ought to be given a copy” (qtd. in Boumelha, 1982, p. xv). The plot of the novel revolves around the mishaps of a hapless daughter of a vain peddler and an inconsiderate mother who experiences pre-marital intercourse in her early teens by her fake cousin, Alec d’Urberville. Subsequently, the plot of the novel revolves around the sexual fall of a naïve teenage country girl who—in Victorian views of the sexes—deserves to lead a degrading life in the society. Tess’s fall is the momentous event in her life where later in the novel her life has been scared by this bitter pre-marital past affair. More daringly—in Penny Boumelha’s words—the plot of the novel “showed its fallen woman knowingly repeating that fall, leaving behind the threshing machines and Arctic birds of her life as an agricultural laborer for the cashmere and frills of boarding-house life as Alec’s mistress” (1982, p. xvii). Accordingly, Hardy’s sustained efforts in fiction to undermine the Victorian attitudes were thwarted by serious censorship. So as to gain the license to publish in the papers of the time, Hardy was obliged to come in terms with the publishers’ requirements. More accurately speaking, the first relationship between Tess and Alec, for the sake of Victorian magazine readers, was authorized in the framework of a marriage trial. Hence, In *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, Hardy expresses his genuine commiseration towards Tess particularly the seduction scene where Tess is described in the gentlest words: “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 to our sense of order” (TD, p. 82).

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* demonstrates the fall of a sixteen-year-old village girl who is brutally raped. In the Victorian viewpoint, a woman who would lose her chastity is no longer worthwhile and she will be denounced by the polite society. To be more precise, after her return from the manor of her bogus kinsfolk—"the event of Tess Durbeyfield's return from the manor of her bogus kinsfolk was rumored abroad" (*TD*, p. 95)—Tess soon realizes that her position is markedly different to the eyes of the villagers: "the people who had turned their heads turned them again as the service proceeded; and at last observing her they whispered to each other. She knew what their whispers were about, grew sick at heart, and felt that she could come to church no more" (*TD*, p. 96-7). To put it simply, participating in the rituals of the village, —for example her attendance in the church—Tess recognized that her present situation —as a fallen woman— appears to be quite different and she recognizes how a fallen woman must struggle in the society that has destroyed her, and overcome the social restrictions surrounding her. Since —in Irwing Howe's words (1967) —Tess "violates the standards and convention of her day," she behaves differently and, to the Victorian perspective, deserves to be treated so.

In the same critical vein, Boumelha recounts the plot of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as the entrapment and downfall of a woman due to her poverty and her sexual attractiveness disregarding the author's insistency on the novel's subtitle—"A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented by Thomas Hardy"— to underline Tess's purity and innate goodness. Conversely, Mrs. Oliphant, a notable antifeminist, lines up against them that, "we do not object to the defiant blazon of a Pure Woman, notwithstanding the early stain [Tess's rape]. But a Pure Woman is not betrayed into fine living and fine clothes as the mistress of her seducer [...] She would not have stabbed Mr. Alec D'Urberville [...] Whoever that person was who went straight from the endearments of Alec D'Urberville to those of the Clare Angel [...] shewas not Tess; neither was she a Pure Woman" (qtd. in Parker, 1992, p. 274). Similarly, in *Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class and Women's Reading*, Sally Mitchell concedes the point that while the woman's life has been ruined through the machinations of "some outside force—the husband, the seducer, the economic system, conventional prudery—" (1981, p. 13) Tess's soul remains pure. She is a victim and thus guiltless before God. But while such treatment removes the issue of "worthiness," and even comes as "progressive," it brings other problems. Namely, when the treatment of a woman's "fall" becomes a social deviation rather than a religious one, "it makes us see women as weaker vessels who must be protected, not as individuals who can be criticized for their efforts." (ibid) Such a presentation also poses a moral paradox where the innocent are punished—usually by death, as well as social ostracization. Thus, while "men may alter events; women are simply acted upon" (ibid). What *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* does offer is the aggregate of the development of a naïve young woman named Tess — along with the increased emphasis on her poverty, beauty, and good nature— accompanied by the narrative comments by its tight focus on her poverty, society's indifference, and unorthodox attitudes which transfer the image of her from a redeemed sinner to a victim who is sacrificed to greed and materialism. Correspondingly, in Hardy's mind set, although a fallen woman goes through the stage of purity to impurity, she should not be judged by her fall alone but by "her own intentions, nature and the circumstances that compelled her to be in this position" (Hooti, 2011, p. 2). Hardy confirms the fact that his non-conformist heroines, particularly Tess in this occasion, shook the most important foundation of Victorian tradition. He was aware of Tess's stance against her time but he insists on her attitudes, intentions, and reasons. Surprisingly, even after her fall, Tess is still related as "a field woman" who is still "pure and simple" (*TD*, p. 299); in a sense, Hardy does not judge Tess on the basis of her deed, but rather, he valued her based on her intentions and innate goodness i. e. As a pure woman whereof "her moral value having to be reckoned not by achievement but by tendency" (*TD*, p. 284).

Besides, Hardy touches the Victorian sensibility on the traditionally-accepted view on femininity that purity and virginity go hand in hand. Thereby, Hardy's promotion of this new concept is well-presented through the apt subtitle. In effect, in Hardy's perspective, Tess's purity lies in her innocence and sexual ignorance whereof Hardy was motivated to add the subtitle to the novel. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, for instance, if Angel Clare had not understood that virginity and purity are not compatible, Angel and Tess could have "flourished a legitimate companionship" (Mays, 2012).

Resultantly, when the book was publicly released, it inevitably provoked a stormy criticism. It posed a question whereof its audience was not able to call forth a satisfactory response to; a fallen woman like Tess, whose sexual and criminal guilt are glaringly obvious can be titled as a pure woman. Where in support of his creation of non-conformist heroine, in his preface to the novel, Hardy stands up for his heroine:

This novel being one wherein the great campaign of the heroine begins after an event in her experience which has usually been treated as fatal to her part of protagonist, or at least as the virtual ending of her enterprises and hopes, it was quite contrary to avowed conventions that the public should welcome the book, and agree with me in holding that there was something more to be said in fiction than had been said about the shaded side of a well-known catastrophe. (1994, p. 21)

Highlighting the constitutional significance of purity, the Victorians put no place for a fallen woman in society generally, and for Tess in particular, where she was fettered to the bedroom which "formed her retreat more continually than ever" (*TD*, p. 97) and she was obliged to lead a clandestine life where the only excursion for her was the pitch-dark night in the woods where "she seemed least solitary" (*TD*, p. 97). In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, after returning home, Tess's life is haunted by the shadow of her past sexual affair. Tess, no longer, belongs to the social community where she was designated to experience total resignation whereupon her presence was almost forgotten: "almost everybody thought she had gone away" (*TD*, p. 97).

Additionally, the Victorians bestowed the fact that “a woman is physically changed when she is no longer a virgin” (Mitchell, 1981, p. xv). This statement is quite applicable to Tess’s situation where after the bitter event in the Chase—the oldest forest in England—she was alienated: “it is Tess Durbeyfield, otherwise d’Urberville, somewhat changed—the same, but not the same; at the present stage of her existence living as a stranger and an alien here, though it was no strange land that she was in” (*TD*, p. 101).

Moreover, in chapter XXXIV, the newly-wed pair—Angel and Tess—mutually consents to reveal their secret. The night of their marriage, accommodating in Tess’s ancestor house, Angel addresses Tess—“Do you remember what we said to each other this morning about telling our faults?” (*TD*, p. 242)—to let each other know their secret. When Angel’s seduction story in London with a woman, who was senior to him in age, finished, it was Tess’s turn to start: “O Angel—I am almost glad—because now *you* can forgive *me*! I have not made my confession. I have a confession, too—remember, I said so” (*TD*, p. 243). Forgiving Angel’s past illicit relationship, Tess—“jumped up joyfully at the hope” (*TD*, p. 243)—expected to be treated the same since their story was the same. Waiting impatiently to listen to Tess’s story, Angel addresses Tess to reveal her secret: “Now then for it, wicked little one.” (*TD*, p. 243)

Hearing Tess’s confession, Angel could no longer treat Tess like before, as she is now just a fallen woman in his eyes: “the woman I have been loving is not you, another woman in your shape” (*TD*, p. 248-9). Angel is represented as the victim of the Victorian social conventions where his potential happy marital life is at stake by the society’s codes of ethics. As the Victorian conventional expectancy in treating a fallen woman requires, Angel leaves Tess alone behind by deciding to set for Brazil. After Angel’s departure for Brazil, Tess’s situation becomes even worse. She loses her job at Talbothays since the work is seasonal. She finds, instead, a job at Flintcomb Ash where “she and other girls become fully proletarianized, working for wages in the hardest, most degrading conditions” (Kettle, 1962, p. 307).

Commonly thought, the fallen woman had only two plot shapes waiting for: either death, or redemption through self-sacrifice. In other words, the death of a fallen woman can carry moral implications which transcend her own case and affect society greatly. The story of Tess was fluctuating between these two molds where Tess’s feeling towards her illegitimate son—Sorrow—is of great significance first.

After the birth of her illegitimate son Sorrow, who was born in her illicit pre-marital relationship with Alec D’Urberville, Tess starts working in the farms to make money for her life and also her siblings’. So as to secure the family financially, Tess starts laboring in a farm: “Tess Durbeyfield had been one of the last to suspend her labors” (*TD*, p. 101). Additionally, she feels responsible towards her son as a mother which shows her efforts in seizing time from her dinner break—“As soon as her lunch was spread” (*TD*, p. 102)—to nurture him where she “unfastened her frock and began suckling the child” (*TD*, p. 102).

To the readers’ surprise, Tess’s feeling towards Sorrow does not move in consistency; “looking into the far distance dandled it with a gloomy indifference that was almost dislike; then all of a sudden she fell to violently kissing it some dozens of times, as if she could never leave off, the child crying at the vehemence of an onset which strangely combined passionateness with contempt” (*TD*, p. 102). Regarding the description of the scene, Boumelha asserts that “it showed a young woman whose feelings for her child were ambivalent, who sought recuperation rather than redemption, and was dared enough to imagine that she could recommence her life by concealing and gradually forgetting her past” (1982, p. xvii). Megan Deann Lease concedes the fact that Tess’s feeling towards her son seems indifferent where “the young mother sat it upright in her lap, and looking into the far distance dandled it with a gloomy indifference that was almost dislike” (*TD*, p. 102). To be more precise, Tess’s indifferent feeling towards her son is highlighting by the usage of the pronoun “it”, whereof Lease announces that “the use of the pronoun “it” shows Tess’s attitude of detachment to her child; the child is more like an object, a thing, to Tess” (2010, p. 40). Lease further advances Tess’s “gloomy indifference” and “dislike” which is shown in the fact that she does not even look at the child, but instead stares into the distance as if she wished to be far away from this scene.

Hardy argues favorably for the fallen woman where upon his fictional fallen women were depicted as being outside the parameters of English respectability. He supports the idea that a fallen woman can be redeemed if society gives her a chance. Formalizing his thoughts, Hardy provided an opportunity for Tess to legalize her fall through the marriage trial with Angel Clare. Despite her futile effort to let Angel know about her past illicit sexual relationship, Tess finally consents to marry him. But it does not last long that her honest confession of her past ruins her present happiness. Like his other contemporaries, Thomas Hardy as a male Victorian novelist was inevitably affected by the dominant circulating ideology of his time. Reined by the strict codes of morality of the time, Hardy’s non-conformist Tess in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* is designated to abject misery. Hence, the Victorian doctrine ordains that Tess’s fall ends in death. Noticeably, all of Hardy’s non-conformist characters like Fanny Robin in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Melia in “The Ruined Maid,” and Tess in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* are all introduced as social deviants who undergo marital experiences outside wedlock. To be more precise, Tess’s pre-marital affair with Alec outside wedlock marks her as a fallen woman who no longer deserves a normal life in the society despite its writer’s effort to convey that purity and virginity do not go hand in hand. Although Tess is in the threshold of starting a happy marital life—the one that she does not deserve from a Victorian perspective—with Angel the Victorian reigning ideological discourse; where she was stigmatized as a fallen woman; pushes her into sheer misery and her final tragic death in Stonehenge.

### 3. Conclusion

Overall, the Victorian middle class expectations of femininity were culturally set up. A woman’s identity as well as her emotional fulfillment was restricted to domesticity so as to carry out her duties as comforting wives and caring mothers

at the service of satisfying males' taste. Highly indebted to the Christian view of femininity, women were highly expected to preserve the nucleus of the society in general and the family in particular against the mundane world. To be more precise, the eighteenth century ideology of "an Angel in the House" –immortalizing in Coventry Patmore's verse— honored women's status as the chaste consolidation of society in general and family in particular.

Besides, through the skewed lens of Victorian social acceptability, there was a clear-cut distinction between a fallen woman and a respectable one. In the Victorian patriarchal society, women's moral lapses were severely censured and they were expelled from the respectable English society of the day. In effect, women were debarred to experience any experiences out of wedlock. Subsequently, a woman who lost her virginity or was suspected to lose was blemished as either ruined or fallen woman and, unquestionably, known as a serious menace posed to the morality of the society and those who were still pure. In reality, in Victorian polite society a fallen woman was stigmatized and socially degraded and left behind without any familial and financial connections disregarding the fact that whether it is done consciously or unconsciously.

Hardy, as one of the pioneer New Woman novelists of his time, express eloquently the inner conflicts and sexual feeling of women which was repeatedly denied to them for almost a century. Thomas Hardy adopted an aggressive stance towards the institutionalized codes of the time particularly the ideal of femininity which was the fulcrum of most of his studies. Repeatedly emphasized Hardy's fiction is very much a product of his uncompromising vision of life, particularly femininity in this study, in the Victorian society. Hence, Hardy was daring enough to use his literary skills to undermine Victorian values by, vociferously, challenging norms and criteria. In effect, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy's presentation of the non-conformist Tess, particularly by introducing her as "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented", challenges the strict codes of the Victorian ideological discourses on femininity. In reality, Hardy made his voice heard through creating the unconventionally non-conformist Tess which cost at the price of threatening the Victorian sensibilities. As a matter of fact, Hardy was in pursuit of widening his audiences' eyes to observe the ruthless society's injustice and inequalities imposing on femininity and its subsequent aftermath. His outspoken attitudes are tangible in the novel where he valiantly tries to challenge the Victorian ideals of femininity through the characterization of Tess and the tight focus upon her purity. By creating the fallen Tess, Hardy took the first step to move away from the constitutionalized codes of the time particularly on women's advantage. To be more precise, Hardy's presentation of Tess was not just a peasant girl but rather a Madonna-like figure who was designated to suffer. Meanwhile, Tess's pre-marital affair outside wedlock marked her as a fallen woman who no longer deserves a normal life in the Victorian society and is doomed to ignominious failure in the course of her life. Hence forth, in parallel with the Victorian conservative view of sex, Tess's total resignation, social pariah, and her final tragic death at Stonehenge attest to Hardy's substantial contribution as a Victorian male novelist to the ideologies circulating at the time.

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