

Thomas Hardy and His Novels

Hardy in the present novel, *The Return of the Native* evokes the sense of social injustice towards women. Generally in his novels, sympathy for women is obvious. Although the critics take Hardy as a fatalistic novelist, he is not always so. He is a practical novelist as he presents the reality of society and human psychology. If we see the essence of the novel *The Return of the Native*, we can conclude Hardy's concern for the position and right of women. The critics take the domination of females as fatalistic or Victorianism but the reality is that Hardy indirectly accuses male discourses existing in the society.

Thomas Hardy is regarded as the propounding writer of Victorian period. Society is the main focus of Hardy. In his novels he has created a world of his own. Wessex is the main setting of his novels. He wrote in various themes but the role of fate is important in his novels. His next issue is the relationship between man and church so he is sometimes called 'churchy'. His important works are *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), *Jude the Obscure* (1895), *The Dynast* (1904-8), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* etc. His novels include a fictional world that lacks the comfortable shapes and counters of the old theology. In his novels the Church of England is observed as still firmly rooted in a rural society. In *Under the Greenwood Tree* we find his concern to the church activity. In the same way, in *Far From the Madding Crowd* he contrasts the design of the great medieval barn, in which the sheep-sheering takes place, with those of a church and a castle in that 'the purpose which had dictated its original erection was the same to which it was still applied'. At the opening of his last novel *Jude the Obscure*, the ancient temples of the Christian divinities has been replaced by a tall new building of modern Gothic design unfamiliar to English

worlds. Hardy's novels develop from relatively relaxed, straightforward expositions of tragedy, comedy, farce to what some might see as the over-complex stratification to his later work. His some novels are concerned with characters wrenched from their roots and from the communities which might have sustained, or at least tolerated, their distinctiveness. Hardy's dislocations are, however, far from simply related to character and environment. They have the narratological density which interfuses literary and biblical citation, scientific reference and allusion, philosophical speculation, superstitious hints in the stories and dark but tentative suggestions of genetic conditioning and animism. Hardy's discussion of sexuality and sexual morality scandalized the professional personalities of late Victorian England, including bishops. Hardy has raised gender issues too. His female characters are neither metropolitan bluestockings nor university educated campaigners. But they seem more determined and committed than his male characters. In short, his novels reflect Victorian society and its different aspects by presenting different events and characters. His novels can be taken to be a network of social discipline and female position there.

Hardy set his "Novels of Character and Environment," as he did most of his other novels, poems and short stories, around the market town of Dorchester ('Casterbridge'), near his boyhood home at Bock Hampton, on the edge of 'Egdon' Heath. Although both Anthony Trollope (1815-82) and George Eliot (1819-80) had used similar settings in their novels, Hardy's rural backdrop is neither romantic nor idealized. From the publication of his first novels Hardy's critics accused him of being overly pessimistic about humanity's place in the scheme of things. In 1901, Hardy expressed the notion that "non-rationality seems to be the [guiding] principle of the Universe." In all his fiction, chance is the incarnation of the blind forces

controlling human destiny," as Lord David Cecil remarks in *Hardy the Novelist*, p. 24-30. Ironically the blind forces of 'Hap' seem to favour certain characters while they relentlessly pursue those who deserve better, such as Tess, as well as those whose ends we might regard as proof of *Nemesis* or Poetic Justice (Sergeant Troy in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Lucetta in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and Alec in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*). An entry in Hardy's notebook dated April 1878 gives us a clue to the guiding principle behind his fiction, a plot, or tragedy should arise from the gradual closing in a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions, by reason of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said passions, prejudices, and ambitions.

In *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy*, Rosemarie Morgan provides an interesting footnote to Hardy's handling of *Nemesis* in *Tess*: Hardy's 'sadistic tale' does, of course, mete out punishment in equal measure: the fallen woman's true love is brought home from his 'Brazil' 'a mere yellow skeleton' condemned to live out his days with a 'spiritualized Tess' whom he may love but may not marry. (See 'The Deceased Wife's Sister Bill', which, after a lengthy passage through Parliament was finally passed in 1907 enabling the widowed partner to wed his sister-in-law. Angel could not, therefore, lawfully wed Tess's sister). These tremendous emotions experienced by Hardy's powerful and elemental characters are in contrast to the placid, accepting natures of the lesser mortals whom we meet in the taverns of Casterbridge, around bonfires, and harvesting in the fields. Critics generally feel that Hardy intends these rustics to be taken as "the symbol of the great majority of humdrum mortals," a chorus in the original Greek sense that "gives the reader a standard of normality by which he can gauge the . . . heights and depths to which the main characters rise and fall." Social gatherings such as the opening

bonfire in *The Return of the Native* (1878) and the planning of the Skimming ton in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, for example, suggest the choric scenes of Greek tragedy and more particularly of the commoners of Shakespearean drama. Like the great tragedies of fifth-century Athens and Elizabethan England, Hardy's Novels of Character and Environment convey a strong sense of fatalism, a view that in life human actions have been predetermined, either by the very nature of things, or by God, or by Fate. Hardy dramatized his conception of destiny in human affairs as the Imminent Will in his poetry, especially in his poetic drama of the Napoleonic wars, *The Dynasts*. By his emphasis on chance and circumstance in the plots of his stories Hardy consistently suggests that human will is not free but fettered. In both *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Under the Greenwood Tree*, for example, he employs chance coincidence as more than a mere device of plotting. Dick Dewey in *Under the Greenwood Tree* is called away to a friend's funeral on the same day that his beloved, Fancy Day, is to debut as the church organist, and Angel returns to Tess from Brazil and near-death after she has established a common-law marriage with Alec. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), Hardy seems to apply the concept of 'Fortune's False Wheel' (which Chaucer discusses at length in "The Monk's Tale" and to which Shakespeare alludes many times in *King Lear*) to the rise and fall of Michael Henchard: starting as a poor hay-trouser with a drinking problem, he renounces alcohol and works his way up to become the town's leading corn factor and mayor, only to undergo a startling series of reversals and end life an outcast.

Although *Far from the Madding Crowd* has some of the qualities of Shakespearean comedy, most of the Novels of Character and Environment (also known as "The Wessex Novels") such as *The Return of the Native* are tragic in their conception. The conclusion of the former, however, is not entirely happy, while the

latter's ending with the marriage of the enigmatic Diggory Venn and the pathetic Thomasin was the consequence of Hardy's modifying his original plan to satisfy the readers of his serial version.

This feeling of the constant attrition, and final obliteration, of the human shape and all human structures, permeates Hardy's work. Interviewed about Stonehenge he commented that "it is a matter of wonder that the erection has stood so long," adding however that "time nibbles year after year" at the structure (Tony Tanner, "Color and Movement in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*," *The Victorian Novel: Essays in Criticism* : 425). In contrast to 'grand' ruins both inanimate and human, a minor and more normative character such as publican of the Three Mariners, Mrs. Stannidge, has a more even life; yet is the jovial inn-keeper really more fortunate for not having been tested by experience? Hardy like Milton could "not praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue." In *The Return of the Native*, Hardy clarified the happy "blessings" of mediocrity. A well-proportioned mind is one which shows no particular bias; one of which we may safely say that it will never cause its owner to be confined as a madman . . . [or] to be applauded as a prophet

Like Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy attempted in his fiction to comment on the macrocosm of the human race through an intense study of a microcosm well known to him, the rural society of nineteenth-century 'Wessex', where, from time to time, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passion and closely-knit inter-dependence of the lives therein. (*Woodlanders*, I)

Despite an obvious fascination for those capable of powerful emotions and tragic fates, Hardy nevertheless expresses sympathy for the lower orders, then rapidly departing their ancestral cottages in search of a better standard of living in the "urban

roar" (to quote Hardy's lyric "Where the Picnic Was") of England's industrial cities. Hardy attempts to record such customs as the mumming (in *The Return of the Native*) and the skimmington (in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*), and such superstitions as the fetishistic wax doll (in *RoN*), for these folk-ways were being swiftly destroyed, along with the old folk-lore and orally-transmitted ballads and tales, by education, migration, and printed books and papers.

Complementing his minor roles as folklorist and anthropologist, Hardy was very much the social critic. In his fiction, not only natural forces (such as the adverse weather that assists in ruining Michael Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*) but also human society seems bent on crushing the sensitive and imaginative individual. Society inflicts its gratuitous suffering through exercising outworn conventions and superficial values, as well as through the new age's emphasis on efficiency. The "passionless permanence" of Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native* and the Roman antiquities of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* contrast with futile and pitifully brief human existence. In the novels of Thomas Hardy, time moves rhythmically, in seasons and ages, rather than mechanically, according to watch and even calendar.

As a realist, Hardy felt that art should describe and comment upon actual situations, such as the heavy lot of the rural laborers and the bleak lives of oppressed women. Though the Victorian reading public tolerated his depiction of the problems of modernity, it was less receptive to his religious skepticism and criticism of the divorce laws. His public and critics were especially offended by his frankness about relations between the sexes, particularly in his depicting the seduction of a village girl in *Tess*, and the sexual entrapment and child murders of *Jude*. The passages which so incensed the late Victorians the average twentieth-century reader is appropriate to miss because Hardy dealt with delicate matters obliquely. The modern reader

encounters the prostitutes of Casterbridge's Mixen Lane without recognizing them, and concludes somewhat after the 'Chase' scene in *Tess* that it was then and there that the rape occurred. In Hardy's novels female principals differ from one another far less than do his male principals. The temperamental capriciousness of such characters as Fancy Day, Eustacia Vye, and Bathsheba Everdene arises from an immediate and instinctive obedience to emotional impulse without sufficient corrective control of reason. Hardy's women rarely engage in such intellectual occupations as looking ahead. Of all Hardy's women, surely it is Tess who has won the greatest respect for her strength of character and struggle to be treated as an individual. As W. R. Herman notes, Tess rejects both the past and the future that threaten to "engulf" her in favor of "the eternal now" (*Explicator* 18, 3: item no. 16), but these inexorable forces close in on her nonetheless at Stonehenge, symbol of the ever-present past. Hardy's attitudes towards women were complex because of his own experiences. Certainly the latter stages of his own marriage to Emma Lavinia Gifford must have contributed much to his somewhat equivocal attitudes. On the one hand, Hardy praises female endurance, strength, passion, and sensitivity; on the other, he depicts women as meek, vain, plotting creatures of mercurial moods. As a young man, Hardy was easily infatuated, and easily wounded by rejection. Often he describes his bright and beautiful heroines, many drawn from such real-life figures as school-mistress Tryphena Sparks, at length: the blush of their cheeks, the arch of their eyebrows, their likeness to particular birds or flowers. Even modern female readers accept the truth of Hardy's female protagonists because, despite his implication that woman is the weaker sex, as Hardy remarked; "No woman can begrudge flattery."

Rarely do his minor female characters have either inner strength or spiritual power or physical beauty. He treats them with a fond irony, as with Bathsheba's maid

Liddy in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, with her "womanly dignity of a diminutive order." Although the old furmity vendor of *MoC*, androgynous or an "anti-woman" as she has been dubbed, appears on only a few occasions, Hardy treats her with the same respect and faithfulness of description that characterize his treatment of "Wide-Oh" (more properly, 'Conjurer Fall') in the same novel. Perhaps, as in *The Well-Beloved*, Hardy's chief female characters are based on the artist's personal conception of the feminine ideal. The quiet, shy, strong-minded, moral, and responsible Elizabeth-Jane of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* endures the trials of poverty, but is able to learn from bitter experience, even providing herself with an education in the classics, just as young Thomas Hardy, the former Dorchester architect's apprentice, had done. The independently-minded Bathsheba of *Far from the Madding Crowd* is, in contrast to Elizabeth-Jane, a non-conformist because she tries to run her own farm and manage men; yet Hardy has her act with a spontaneity of feeling and feel at times inferior to men. However, the novelist reveals his sensitivity towards the situation of women in his society by showing Bathsheba's all-too-modern conflict between the desire for marriage and that for individuality and independence.

Hardy put so much of himself into his fiction that it is hardly surprising he gave it up for poetry after the hostile reception of his last and greatest novels, *Tess* and *Jude*. It was his cynical pessimism and social realism rather than his sympathy with his largely female protagonists that led him into difficulties. Hardy's heroes, like Clym and Jude and Henchard, are able to struggle actively with their destiny, form plans for opposing it, try to hew out a recognized place in the world. The women in his novels have no such outlet, and this makes their situation more tragic. They are limited to a very few, easily recognizable social roles, and they are always subject to

sexual domination and destruction from men [Merryn Williams, *Thomas Hardy and Rural England* : 90-91]

The novel *The Return of the Native* has three components: The discourse, the male characters and the female characters. Of these three, the discourse is at the top. It has put males in the second position and females at last. The discourse seems to have a secret relationship with males so that it superiorizes males and inferiorizes females. The discourse and males have unique relationship. The discourses serve males and dominate females. Eustacia in the novel is the victim of discourse. In the society there are so many discourses that make males stronger as a result the females are dominated. Eustacia and Thomasin are the examples of such characters in the novel. They are submissive to the ideas of males. The males rule them directly or indirectly. My attempt in this research is to show how the males, discourses and females are associated in the society. This relationship is very complex. This complexity brings females in the margin and makes them helpless in front of males.

Discourse, Power and Social Discipline

Michael Foucault elaborates the concept of discourse power and truth. His work has been crucial to the development of a range of different theories which have been broadly grouped under the term 'discourse' theory. His writings are important not only because he elaborates distinctive conceptions of discourse in the different phases of writing, but also because he provides a vital conception between discourse analysis and the social sciences. In addition to articulating an important set of methodological guidelines for the conduct of discourse analysis, he puts forward a series of challenging substantive conclusions about the term discourse in not rooted within a large system of fully worked-out theoretical ideas, but is one element in Foucault's work. There are so many definitions of the term discourse, and so many modifications of the meaning of the term. One of the most productive ways of thinking about discourse is not as a group of signs or a stretch of text, but as 'practice that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972:49). In this sense, a discourse is something which produces something else (an utterance, a concept, an effect), rather than something which exists in and of itself and which can be analyzed in isolation. A discursive structure can be detected because of the systematicity of the ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving which are formed within a particular context and because of the effects of those ways of thinking and behaving.

Foucault's conceptions of discourse is paradoxical while it plays a central role in each of the different parts of his works, the concept remains frustratingly unclear. At one extreme, discourses are autonomous systems of rules that constitute objects, concepts, subjects and strategies, thereby governing the production of scientific statements. In this sense, they are 'a violence which we do things or a practice which

we impose on them' (Foucault 1981:67). Thus, Foucault substitutes for the enigmatic treasure of things anterior to discourse, the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse'. At the other extreme, as against this constitute view of discourse, Foucault (1979a:101-2) argue that discourses are 'tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations'. From this 'strategically' perspective discourses are the means for different forces to advance their interest and projects develop. Thus discourses are analytically distinct from practices, institutions and techniques, but both aspects are understood in relation to more important processes. Such as the invidious spread of 'bio-power' or 'the will to truth.' In terms of thinking about discourse as having effects, it is important to consider the factors of truth, power and knowledge, since it is because of these elements that discourse has effect. Truth, for Foucault is not something intrinsic to an utterance. Nor is it an ideal abstract quality to which human aspire, he sees truth as being something for the worldly and more negative:

Truth, therefore, is something which societies have to work to produce rather than something which appears in a transcendental way. Foucault analyses the labor which propel perform to exclude certain forms of knowledge from consideration as 'true'. Thus, discourses do not exist in a vacuum but are in constant conflict with other discourses and other social practices which inform them over questions of truth and authority. As Foucault puts it: 'I want to try to discover how this choice of truth, inside which we are caught but which are we ceaselessly renew, was made - but also how it was repeated, renewed and displaced'(Foucault1981:70)Thus Foucault is not interested in which discourse is a true or accurate representation of the 'real' in this case, whether alternative therapies work more effectively than conventional medicine; rather it is concerned with the mechanisms whereby one becomes produced as the

dominant discourse, which is supported by institutional funding, by the provision of the population as a whole, whereas the other is treated with suspicion and is sited both metaphorically and literally at the margins of society.

He provides an alternative set of guidelines for practicing the history of ideas; he accuses for the ways in which discourse is regulated and controlled in any given society; he elaborates a particular conception of science; and he puts forward a means of analyzing political discourse. His archaeology seeks to describe discursive regularities. Further more, rather than assuming the existence of an underlying coherence of discourse against which 'deep' contradictions and inconsistencies can be pinpointed and 'resolved'. Foucault proposes simply to describe them. Rather than viewing our knowledge of the physical universe continuously progressing towards complete understanding, Foucault envisages a more complex dialectic between continuity and discontinuity by not privileging either pole of the oppositions. He does so by stressing the interplay between discursive and non-discursive practices, and by rejecting the search for cultural continuities or possible causal mechanisms between the two orders. Instead, he tries 'to define specific forms of articulation' between different practices. (Foucault 1972:162)

Although Foucault notes with concern the proliferation of statements in the modern period, he stresses their essential rarity. This is because they are regulated by a complex system of formation rules: In every society the production of discourse is controlled, organized, redistributed, by a certain number of producers whose role is to ward off its power and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its materiality. (Foucault 1981:52) A set of mechanisms which are neither external nor internal to discourse, constrain the production of discourse by 'determining the condition of their application.' In this regard, Foucault (1981:61-2) focuses on the

complex requirements that must be fulfilled by ‘speaking subjects’ if they are to be taken seriously by communities, groups and ‘societies of discourse.’ Among these includes the various ‘gestures, behaviors, circumstances, and the whole set of signs which must accompany discourse,’ as well as the doctrines that are shared by groups of speakers and users of discourse. All these seemingly unimportant ‘background’ forces are vital for Foucault in explaining who is respected and approved of within a particular ‘discourse community.’

Foucault accepts that ideologies represent political interests; he does not argue that they are to be analyzed as opposed to, or even apart from, scientific discourse. According to Foucault, sciences and ideologies may have ideological expressions without necessarily compromising their claims to scientificity. In sum, ideologies are a particular sort of discursive practices in society.

While Foucault deals principally with scientific discourse, he does make some tentative remarks about the analysis of political discourse. The aim of his archaeology of ‘political discourse’ is ‘to show whether the political behavior of a society, a group, or a class is not shot through with a particular, describable discursive practice’ (Foucault 1972:194). This entails exploring the way in which the objects, denunciative modalities, concepts and strategies of ‘political activity’ are discursively constructed, and then articulated with specific forms of political ‘behavior, struggles, conflicts, decisions, and tactics.’ Taking an example of the development of a ‘revolutionary consciousness’, Foucault suggests rather cryptically that his archaeological approach would try to explain the formation of a discursive practice and a body of revolutionary knowledge that are expressed in behavior and strategies, which give rise to theory of society, and which operate the interference and mutual transformation of that behavior and those strategies (1972:195).

Foucault's (1991a:69) aim is to show how scientific discourse can become subject to political practice. He is also concerned to delineate the kinds of relationships that can be established between science and politics. He views that science is the foundation of all other discourses and practices (being the source of true knowledge). Foucault is concerned with the way in which political practices modify and transform the rules of r\formation of scientific discourse. This enables Foucault to describe a series of relationships between science and politics, to 'triangulate' the relationships between politics, science and other discourse in a given episteme and to chart the transpositions and interrelations between discourses.

Power is a key element in discussions of discourse. Foucault has been instrumental in the rethinking of models of power. Rather than simply assuming, as many liberal humanists have, that power is a possession (so that someone takes or seizes power from someone else) or that power is a violation of someone's rights (for example, the idea that power is simply preventing someone from doing what they want to do) or, as Marxist theorists have assumed, that power relations are determined by economic relations, Foucault has attempted to come to terms with the complexity of the range of practices which can be summed up under the term power. He is very critical of that he terms the 'repressive hypothesis' that power is simply about preventing someone from carrying out their wishes and limiting people's freedom. Foucault's analysis of power is that power is dispersed throughout social relations, that it produces possible forms of behaviors restricting behavior. This productive model of power is something useful, particularly when looking at ways of thinking about discourse.

Foucault argues for the imbrications' of power with knowledge so that all of the knowledge we have is the result or the effect of power struggle. This is best exemplified by Sara Mills:

What is studied in schools and universities is the result of struggles over whose version of events is sanctioned. Knowledge is often the product of the subjugation which subjects are constituted as subjugated; for example, when consulting a university library catalogue, if you search under the term 'women'. You will find a vast selection of books and articles discussing the oppression of women, the psychology of women, and the physical ailments that women suffer from, and so on. If you search under the term 'men' you will not find the same wealth of information. Similarly if you consult the catalogue again and look up 'India' or 'Africa' you will find that in the nineteenth century. The production of knowledge about these countries by British writers coincided with the period when there was the greatest degree of colonial involvement. (Discourse: 19)

Foucault has described the connection between the production of knowledge and power relations as 'power /knowledge'. Most theorist of power have seen individuals as oppressed by power relation, but Foucault sees them as the effects or instances of power relations.

Foucault is not interested in simply analyzing the discourse which is circulating in our society at present. What he wants us to see is the arbitrariness of this range of discourses, the strangeness of those discourses, in spite of their familiarity. He also wants to chart the development of certain discursive practices, so that we can see that, rather than being permanent, as their familiarity would suggest,

discourses are constantly changing and their origins can be traced to certain key shifts to history.

For Foucault, a discourse is not a set of utterance which is stable over time; he tries to work against the notions of progress and development which dominate many liberal ways of thinking. Instead of viewing history, for example, as a simple progression towards greater civilization or, as Marxists have done, as a series of class conflicts which lead to greater equality, Foucault has argued that history is discontinuous; there is not a seamless narrative which we can decipher underlying history as shifting and lurching in ways which are not entirely graspable by humans, and which are not entirely (or at all) within our control. He said in an interview: My problem has not at all been to say: there it is long discontinuity..... but to pose the question: how can it be that at certain moments and in certain orders of knowledge these sudden take-offs, these hastening of evolution, these transformations which do not correspond to the calm and continuous image that is ordinarily accepted (Foucault, 1979e 31).

Foucault explores how meanings are temporarily stabilized or regulated into a discourse. This ordering of meaning is achieved through the operation of power as social practice: “discourse constructs, defines and produces the objects of knowledge in an intelligible way while excluding other forms of reasoning as unintelligible”. The concept of discourse in the hands of Foucault involves the production of knowledge through language. That is, discourse gives meaning to material objects and social practices. Needless to say, material objects and social practices ‘exist’ outside of language. However, they are given meaning of ‘brought into view’ by language and are they discursively formed.

Discourses provide ways of talking about a particular topic with repeated motifs or cluster of ideas, practice and forms of knowledge across a range of activity. This phenomenon we may call a discursive formation. A discursive formation is a pattern of discursive events that brings into being a common object across a number of sites. They are regulated maps of meaning or ways of speaking through which objects and practices acquire meaning. In this context we can study the process by which discourses of madness acquire authority and truth at a given historical moment. In the same way, we can link discourses and power with the discourses of Victorian time. The discourses in Victorian time, supported males and inferiorized females.

Of color and working-class women who had to decide whether to fight against racism or classicism versus sexism—or prioritize The Victorian era seems like another world to us. Yet the late Victorians were very familiar with many of the things we use everyday. The one thing that was different was the place of women in society. There were of course perceptive women of independent original thought, but for the huge majority life was easier if they accepted that a woman's place was in the home. To lump all women of the Victorian era as one body would be wrong. The era spanned 64 years and changes in attitudes were gradually shifting as the century closed.

Whether or not one agrees with the facts today, the attitude of men toward women in the Victorian age was highlighted by Tennyson who wrote of women staying by the hearth with their needles whilst men wields a woman's qualities. The accepted reasoning was that the career for women was marriage. To get ready for courtship and marriage a girl was groomed like a racehorse. In addition to being able to sing, play an instrument and speak a little French or Italian, the qualities a young Victorian gentlewoman needed, were to be innocent, virtuous, biddable, dutiful and

be ignorant of intellectual opinion. Right - Taking tea wearing lavish Victorian gowns in 1854. Fashion history images we see today are usually of beautifully gowned women, yet many working women as opposed to ladies such as these wore rags. The dresses show typical excessive style elements such as V waists, layering of trims, bell sleeves and Whether married or single all Victorian women were expected to be weak and helpless, a fragile delicate flower incapable of making decisions beyond selecting the menu and ensuring her many children were taught moral values. A gentlewoman ensured that the home was a place of comfort for her husband and family from the stresses of Industrial Britain.

A woman's prime use was to bear a large family and maintain a smooth family atmosphere where a man need not bother himself about domestic matters. He assumed his house would run smoothly so he could get on with making money. In his book *The Cut of his Coat* published in 2006 Brent Shannon argues that middle-class men also participated vigorously in fashion and one can read the book review of feminists' view of law as valedictory of male privilege and power has changed little since the 19th century. Both Victorian feminists as well as 20th century contemporary feminists find the law as supportive of male domination. While in the Victorian era, laws were more open in presenting women as subjected to male supremacy in accordance with Victorian sentiment and family division of labor, contemporary feminists also find contemporary law based on the privilege given the male. Both Victorian and contemporary feminist criticisms of the law rely on the liberal political theory of philosophers such as John Stuart Mill and John Locke to criticize their respective situations of injustice created by the law. At the same time, however, they find this same theory establishing of the male supremacy in law that these feminists seek to change. Both contemporary and Victorian feminist criticism of the legal

theory supportive of the law find that by differentiating between a public sphere, i.e., work, commerce, industry and politics, and the private sphere which revolves around domesticity and the home, law reinforces the view of males as free, irresponsible, and autonomous, and of women as dependent and responsible for the essential work of rearing children and maintaining the private sphere of the home.

A Curse in Disguise as in today's society culturally held beliefs of idealized family life and structured gender roles worked against Victorian feminists' desire to change the way women were defined in society, especially according to law dealing with the relations between husband and wife in the domestic sphere of the family. For the Victorians the home exerted a distinct and unique impression on the psyche. As Mary Lyndon Shanley points out in her *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895*, "when most Victorians spoke or wrote about themselves, they testified to the importance of home and hearth in their constellation of values" (4). Shanley quotes John Ruskin, the author of "Of Queen's Garden," who in 1864 wrote, "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" (4). To the Victorians are attributable such sayings about the home as "Home, Sweet Home" and "East, West, home is best" (4-5). These testimonies of the home, which have spread worldwide, also carried messages regarding the role of women, "the sex" (101), as Victorians called them who were responsible for exerting the effort necessary for up keeping the idealized value of the home. These cultural verities emphasized the ideology of the home and how important it was to the Victorians to preserve the identity of the home even at the cost of demeaning any claim by adult women--daughters and wives-- to social and legal equality, individuality or rights independent of the men they were attached to. One of the challenges feminists faced in vying for

fairer laws governing the domestic sphere of the home than was the dismantling of this, comforting, yet also tyrannical view of the home as an island of tranquil harmony rather than a battlefield of wills between members of the family, especially husband and wife. Social sanctification of the home as a place of tranquility and obedience gave blessing to the patriarchal rule of the male head of the household to control the role of his spouse as well as set apart for himself the unpredictable, exciting, and valued world of war, friends, and commerce. Towards the end of maintaining an implicit division of labor between husband and wife in a marriage, Victorians gave prominence to liberal political theory that divided the world between the private and the public as well as emphasized the natural sex difference. Victorians felt that women had to remain in the realm of the private sphere because of their function in nature as child bearers and providers of care. This tacit division of labor helped to maintain women in their place outside of civic life. As Shanley points out, “Women’s proper functions were assigned by nature, and it was folly and hubris to try to alter them. ‘As Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson asserted in *The Evolution of Sex*, “What was decided among the prehistoric Protozoa, cannot be annulled by act of Parliament”” (6). Like their views of government formed on the basis of liberal political theorists such as Locke who had held that Nature was the realm out of which men evolved to become human, form societies, governments, social contracts and the state, Victorians believed that Natural law established ironclad identities that could not be toyed with by human legislators, nature’s minions. As Shanley writes, Liberal theorists since the seventeenth century had assumed that there was a natural division of labor between men and women. The presumed distinction between the “public” world of politics and law and the “private” world of the family and had been invoked by thinkers from John Locke onward to

exempt family relationships from the rules of justice that were to govern the public realm (4). It was these attitudes held by the legal establishment that Victorian feminists had to challenge and overturn in order to form the fairer society that they envisioned. Exploring the means by which Victorian feminists such as Barbara Leigh Smith, an early proponent of marriage reform, formed coalitions in Parliament by which fairer laws could be enacted to gain spousal equality is beyond the scope of this paper. It was attitudes based on the almost religious belief that gendered roles were given by nature rather than formed by culturally held attitudes of male superiority given in laws that provided significant obstacles Victorian feminists had to overcome in order to gain the spousal equality sought in marriage.

Laws, social practices, and economic structures which narrowed women's choices for meaningful roles in the society, compelled women to marry. Over 90% of women in Victorian England had married one time or another; this is why exploring the realm of marriage laws as a means for male domination over this large demographic of the female population proves suggestive of the patriarchal nature of Victorian society. Among the most repressive laws which subordinated women to men in marriage was the common law doctrine of coverture, which enacted into law what Victorians felt were roles ordained by the natural and theological order. For the Victorians, as God through marriage had made men and women "one body," the law had made husband and wife "one person" (Shanley 8). Once again Victorian sentiment exerted an implicit tyranny that had real world effects. Women as covered (from the French *couverte*) hidden or made secret from society as independent human beings through marriage could not sue or be sued unless husband was also party to the suit; they could not sign contracts unless her husband joined her; they could not make a valid will unless her husband consented to its provisions (Shanley 8). Through

this and other laws which turned over women's property to their husbands, women in this sense came to be seen as having suffered "civil death" through marriage.

According to a feminist pamphleteer, the common law with respect to married women, combined with the ecclesiastical doctrine that marriage was indissoluble, amounted to a 'nefarious custom' by which women when they were married were 'deprived of their money, goods, chattels, and condemned to prison for life'" (9). These rigid chains of marriage were reinforced in addition by the liberal political theory of the state that allowed male supremacy to reign supreme as the basis of justice in the private realm while only providing for a semblance of "equality" and "justice" in the public realm to those it considered men Civil Rights leaders in the United States in the 60's sought civil justice by appealing to justice and equality in the US Constitution which is based on the writings of liberal political thinkers such as Locke. So Victorian feminists, in order to acquire justice and equality utilized the ideals of equality and freedom contained in liberal political theory to demand spousal equality (12). This quest for spousal equality based on liberal political theory did not take into account inequality enforced by economic structures of capitalism or race. In basing their quests for equality on abstract liberal political theory, feminists left intact the structures accounting for inequality. While they achieved success, they were never able to attain full spousal equality with husbands. The use of liberal political thinking to attain equality continues to be a sore in feminist quests for equality in contemporary society.

Contemporary feminists generally agree that law is male. Judit Baer, author of *Our Lives Before the Law: Constructing a Feminist Jurisprudence*, includes several chapters on the subject of the male basis of the law, according to which women are seen as dependent and responsible for their plights according to legal language and

males are generally regarded as free and autonomous. While Victorian feminists may have only had inclinations toward this statement, contemporary feminists such as Baer are more emphatic of the need for a feminist jurisprudence. Feminists do disagree, however, on how to bring about a more equitable basis of law. The general consensus seems to be that the strategy of using liberal political theory demands revision as it often neglects the societal basis of inequality and is based on the very notion of independence and autonomy that feminists have sought to criticize as the model of law's male bias. Women have to be placed in their contexts of race and social class, all of which complicates attempting to attain equality based on abstractions such as humanity. As Baer writes: "Feminist jurists tend to overcorrect for the male bias of conventional jurisprudence, concentrating so hard on women that much of what affect women's lives goes unexamined. So nobody-the ancients, the liberals, the Marxists, or feminists-has yet to come up with a concept of what it means to be a human being, a man, or a woman which makes equality possible" (192).

Lastly, a source of inequality that lingers from Victorian feminism is the public private dichotomy. As Baer writes, Both character jurists and situation jurists have pointed out that the basis defect of liberal privacy doctrine is not its presumption of equality between relationships but the public-private distinction itself. Conventional theory divides life into 'spheres,' women are forced into one sphere, and the activities located in that sphere are devalued. Life in the private sphere makes women vulnerable to men's power (189). It seems that the public and private sphere distinction as set up by political theory that the Victorians sentimentalized into the ideology of the home is alive and well as a source of legal inequality for women today. Despite gains justice has not penetrated all areas of this sphere, hidden from public view, that women are said to occupy

During the Victorian era, and with men's help, women climbed onto the infamous pedestal of courtly love. The result was an "explosive increase in prostitution, an epidemic spread of venereal disease, and a morbid taste for masochism." (Sex in History, Reay Tannahill, p 347) In response to this, to "set society to rights," women demanded, and got, the vote. These were the early feminists. Punctilious, prudish, self-righteous and pure, they were as much cause as cure for the vice and intemperance that dismayed them so. It wasn't that they ascended the pedestal unassisted, for men were as culpable in this as they. (Sex in History, Reay Tannahill, p 349) Nor did all men consider women inferiors. While women entreated one another to treat "their husbands as a cross between God and Sir Galahad" (Sex in History, Reay Tannahill, p 349), there were men arguing in favor of women's superiority over man. Bachofen denied man's "natural" superiority over women, and claimed, with a wealth of historical and anthropological detail, that when humanity was still close to nature and maternity the only recognizable parental relationship, women had ruled, but that when the spirit conquered man took over. ... Only when agriculture developed, allowing even a small family to become self-sufficient through ownership of private property, did monogamy become the rule and woman subordinate to man. For the early feminists, this became an article of faith in their criticism of women's role in society. And among many, this sexist attitude still persists.

While unbiased observers know better than to believe either sex is superior to the other, many accept without question that men are solely responsible for humanity's wars. This may be mistaken, however, because it ignores the importance of war to the women's movement. Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*, which describes three stages in the history of women's literature, also proposes a

similar multi-part model of the growth of feminist theory. First, according to Showalter, comes an androgynist poetics. Next, a feminist critique and female Aesthetic, accompanied by gynocritics, follows, and these are closely pursued by gynesisic poststructuralist feminist criticism and gender theory. Androgynist poetics, having relations and perhaps roots in mid-Victorian women's writing of imitation, contends that the creative mind is sexless, and the very foundation of describing a female tradition in writing was sexist. Critics of this vein found gender as imprisoning, nor believed that gender had a bearing in the content of writing, which, according to Joyce Carol Oates is actually culture-determined. Imagination is too broad to be hemmed in by gender.

However, from the 1970s on, most feminist critics reject the genderless mind, finding that the "imagination" cannot evade the conscious or unconscious structures of gender. Gender, it could be said, is part of that culture-determination which Oates says serves as inspiration. Such a position emphasizes "the impossibility of separating the imagination from a socially, sexually, and historically positioned self." This movement of thought allowed for a feminist critique as critics attacked the meaning of sexual difference in a patriarchal society/ideology. Images of male-wrought representations of women (stereotypes and exclusions) came under fire, as was the "division, oppression, inequality, [and] interiorized inferiority for women."

The female experience, then, began to take on positive affirmations. The Female Aesthetic arose expressing a unique female consciousness and a feminine tradition in literature -- as it celebrated an intuitive female approach in the interpretation of women's texts. It "spoke of a vanished nation, a lost motherland; of female vernacular or Mother Tongue; and of a powerful but neglected women's culture." Writers like Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson, emerging out of the

Victorian period and influenced by its writings were perhaps the first women to recognize this. In "Professions for Women," Woolf discusses how a woman writer seeks within herself "the pools, the depths, the dark places where the largest fish slumber," inevitably colliding against her own sexuality to confront "something about the body, about the passions."

The French feminists of the day discussed this Mother Tongue, calling it *l'écriture féminine*. Accessible to men and women alike, but representing "female sexual morphology," *l'écriture féminine* sought a way of writing which literally embodied the female, thereby fighting the "subordinating, linear style of classification or distinction." Showalter finds that whether this clitoral, vulval, vaginal, or uterine; whether centered on semiotic pulsions, childbearing, or jouissance, the feminist theorization of female sexuality/textuality, and its funky audacity in violating patriarchal taboos by unveiling the Medusa, is an exhilarating challenge to phallic discourse.

Lastly and most recently are developments of an over-arching gender theory, which considers gender, both male and female, as a social construction upon biological differences. Gender theory proposes to explore "ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system," and as many advantages, opening up the literary theory stage and bringing in questions of masculinity into feminist theory. Also, taking gender as a fundamental analytic category brings feminist criticism from the margin to the center, though risks depoliticizing the study of women.

In this intricate and carefully constructed study, Donald Hall examines the challenge of feminism to male hegemony during the tumultuous three decades of the mid-Victorian era (1840-1860) and explores a range of male responses of the time to the threat against patriarchy. The semantically charged title of his book implies two of

the main categories of response under scrutiny. Playing on dual meanings of "fixing," Hall maintains that Victorian men reacted to the troublesome attempts of the British feminists to unsettle fixed notions of gender roles primarily by "fixing patriarchy" in both the sense of working to "repair it" and to "set it firmly in place" (p. 31). His well chosen examples from the literature by male writers of the period serve to convincingly illustrate the dynamic interplay of the women's movement and the literary responses of reparation and retrenchment during this era of great social change.

Hall structures his study in three chronological divisions, using nonfiction to provide a social context and to frame his analysis of literary works. The first section deals with the 1840s, the decade in which the American feminist movement found an influential voice in Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* and the social discourse on women's rights and roles was also intensifying in Britain. Here Hall examines Charles Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Alfred Tennyson's *The Princess*, and two novels of Charles Kingsley, *Yeast* and *Alton Locke*. He points to Dickens's novel, published during the early years of the British women's movement, as exemplary of the attempt both to shore up and to correct the patriarchal system it portrays and presents Kingsley's activism on behalf of women's education and his positive depiction of women in his fiction as evidence of a rare mid-Victorian effort to negotiate between the camps warring over the "woman question." In his excellent exploration of *The Princess*, Hall very effectively highlights the conflict over the issue of vocalization--that is, whether women shall speak for themselves or be spoken for by men--by discussing this poem in which Tennyson takes up the subject of women's rights in connection with Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. This juxtaposition of Tennyson's voice with Fuller's proves to be a

persuasive technique for illustrating Hall's emphasis on the patriarchal strategy of "subsumption"--a defense mechanism through which males appropriate, modify, and reissue the words and ideas of women.

Part Two of the study treats the 1850s, a period of growing political activism for feminists in England during which the Women's Suffrage Petition (1851) was presented to the House of Lords. Within the cultural and political context of increasing feminist "contestation," Hall examines William Makepeace Thackeray's *The Newcomes*, Dickens's *Little Dorrit*, and Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. He finds that although Thackeray presents aggressive and competitively successful women characters (mainly as revealers of the rapacity of capitalism) and Dickens demonstrates in this novel a "laudable concern with male corruption" (p. 129), both novels ultimately work to reestablish patriarchy. Against the picture in these novels of at least some accommodation of changing ideas of gender, Hall counterpoises Hughes's novel, which he asserts is in its outright misogyny, a "marker of retrenchment" (p. 152).

In Part Three, focusing on the 1860s as a period of incremental progress for women, Hall nicely interweaves ideas from essays of the period with his exploration of the fiction... For example, Harriett Martineau's essay "Female Industry" (1859), introduces his treatment of Wilkie Collins's novels (*The Woman in White*, *Man and Wife*, and *Armdale*) as illustrative of positive changes in the depiction of women in fiction that mirrored the changing roles of women in the culture. Similarly, he opens his discussion of the politically astute women in Trollope's novels, particularly *Barchester Towers* and *The Prime Minister*, with an excerpt from Anne Isabella Robertson's lecture to the Irish National Society for Women's Suffrage (1872) in

which she proclaims a widening of the traditionally held "woman's sphere" into politics.

The final section also rounds out Hall's exploration of a Dickens novel from each of the three decades. His design in examining Dickens's work over time is calculated to demonstrate generally the evolution of discourse in response to social change and, in particular, to illustrate Dickens's various and somewhat incrementally accommodating responses to the steady "unfixing" of gender roles occurring in society. In *Great Expectations*, he finds evidence of accommodation in the novelist's complex depiction of "transgressive" women but of fearful resistance to female self-determination in Dickens's treatment of women acting together, in community. Hall links Dickens's anxiety over the idea of a community of women with the apprehension and anti-feminist oppression of a male-dominated system that produced the Contagious Diseases Acts, which made women suspected of being prostitutes subject to forced examination for venereal disease. While he lays his groundwork very carefully for drawing such a connection by emphasizing the interplay of social practice and literary forms, his assertion that several aspects of *Great Expectations* "enabled" the Contagious Diseases Acts seems to place a greater social burden on the novel than it was meant to bear.

Although the study concentrates on the mid-Victorian years, its discursive interrogation of gender conflict and of male strategies for preserving power illuminates the entire Victorian era (and beyond). In addition to incorporating the voices of British feminists of the nineteenth century, Hall draws extensively upon the work of twentieth-century feminists and theorists. The result is a book that is rich in feminist scholarship and insightful in its application of contemporary theory to History.

Feminist theories have emerged as early as 1792 (– 1920's) in such publications as "*The Changing Woman*", "*Am not I a Woman*", "*Speech after Arrest for Illegal Voting*", and so on. "*The Changing Woman*" is a Navajo Myth that gave credit to a woman who, in the end, populated the world. Footnote with citation. In 1851, Sojourner Truth addressed women's rights issues through her publication, "*Am not I a Woman.*" Sojourner Truth addressed the issues surrounding limited rights to women based on the flawed perceptions that men held of women. Truth argued that if a woman of color can perform tasks that were supposedly limited to men, then any woman of any color could perform those same tasks. After her arrest for illegally voting, Susan B. Anthony gave a speech within court in which she addressed the issues of language within the constitution documented in her publication, "*Speech after Arrest for Illegal voting*" in 1872. Anthony questioned the authoritative principles of the constitution and its male gendered language. She raised the question of why women should be punished under law but they cannot use the law for their own protection (women could not vote, own property, nor themselves in marriage). She also critiqued the constitution for its male gendered language and questioned why women should have to abide by laws that do not specify women. Although there were not any feminist terminologies based on their arguments, all of these women have founded a lexicon of debates that contribute to feminist theory. For example, Sojourner Truth raised the issue of the intersectionality debate and Susan B. Anthony raised the issue of the language debate.

Nancy Cott makes a distinction between *modern feminism* and its antecedents, particularly the struggle for suffrage. In the United States she places the turning point in the decades before and after women obtained the vote in 1920 (1910-1930). She argues that the prior *woman movement* was primarily about woman as a *universal*

entity, whereas over this 20 year period it transformed itself into one primarily concerned with social differentiation, attentive to *individuality* and diversity. New issues dealt more with woman's condition as a social construct, gender identity, and relationships within and between genders. Politically this represented a shift from an ideological alignment comfortable with the right, to one more radically associated with the left.

Susan Kingsley Kent says that Freudian patriarchy was responsible for the diminished profile of feminism in the inter-war years,^[14] others such as Juliet Mitchell consider this to be overly simplistic since Freudian theory is not wholly incompatible with feminism. Some feminist scholarship shifted away from the need to establish the origins of family, and towards analyzing the process of patriarchy.^[16] In the immediate postwar period, Simone de Beauvoir stood in opposition to an image of "the woman in the home". De Beauvoir provided an existentialist dimension to feminism with the publication of *Le Deuxième Sexe* (The Second Sex) in 1949.^[17] As the title implies, the starting point is the implicit inferiority of women, and the first question de Beauvoir asks is "what is a woman"?. Woman she realizes is always perceived of as "other", "*she is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her*". In this book and her essay, "*Woman: Myth & Reality*", de Beauvoir anticipates Betty Friedan in seeking to demythologise the male concept of woman. "*A myth invented by men to confine women to their oppressed`state. For women it is not a question of asserting themselves as women, but of becoming full-scale human beings.*" "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", or as Toril Moi puts it "a woman defines herself through the way she lives her embodied situation in the world, or in other words, through the way in which she makes something of what the world makes of her". Therefore, woman must regain subject,

to escape her defined role as "other", as a Cartesian point of departure.^[19] In her examination of myth, she appears as one who does not accept any special privileges for women. Ironically, feminist philosophers have had to extract de Beauvoir herself from out of the shadow of Jean-Paul Sartre to fully appreciate her.^[20] While more philosopher and novelist than activist, she did sign one of the *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes* manifestos.

The resurgence of feminist activism in the late 1960s was accompanied by an emerging literature of what might be considered female associated issues, such as concerns for the earth and spirituality, and environmental activism¹ This in turn created an atmosphere conducive to reigniting the study of and debate on matricentricity, as a rejection of determinism, such as Adrienne Rich^[21] and Marilyn French^[22] while for socialist feminists like Evelyn Reed,^[23] patriarchy held the properties of capitalism.

Elaine Showalter describes the development of Feminist theory as having a number of phases. The first she calls "feminist critique" - where the feminist reader examines the ideologies behind literary phenomena. The second Showalter calls "Gynocritics" - where the "woman is producer of textual meaning" including "the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career and literary history". The last phase she calls "gender theory" - where the "ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system" are explored.^[24] This model has been criticized by Toril Moi who sees it as an essentialist and deterministic model for female subjectivity. She also criticized it for not taking account of the situation for women outside the west. From the 1970s onwards, a psychoanalytical idea that has been arising in the field of French feminism has gained a decisive

influence on feminist theory. Feminist psychoanalysis deconstructed the phallic hypotheses regarding the Unconscious. Julia Kristeva, Bracha Ettinger and Luce Irigaray developed specific notions concerning unconscious sexual difference, the feminine and motherhood, with wide implications for film and literature analysis. There are a number of distinct feminist disciplines, in which experts in other areas apply feminist techniques and principles to their own fields. Additionally, these are also debates in which shape feminist theory and they can be applied interchangeably in the arguments of feminist theorists.

In western thought bodies have been historically associated solely women whereas men have been associated with the mind. The notion of the body (and not the mind) being associated with women has served as a justification to deem women as property, objects, and exchangeable commodities (among men). For example, women's bodies have been objectified throughout history through the changing ideologies of fashion, diets, exercise programs, cosmetic surgery, etc. The race and class of women can be a determinate of whether one body will be treated as decoration and protected which is associated with middle or upper-class women's bodies. On the other hand, the other body is recognized for its use in labor and exploitation which is generally associated with women's bodies in the working-class or with women of color. Second-wave feminist activism has argued for reproductive rights and choice, women's health (movement), and lesbian rights (movement) which are also associated with this Bodies debate.

The generation and production of knowledge has been an important part of feminist theory. This debate proposes such questions as "Are there 'women's ways of knowing' and 'women's knowledge'?" And "How does the knowledge women produce about themselves differ from that produced by patriarchy?" (Bartowski and

Kolmar 2005, 45) Feminist theorists have also proposed the “feminist standpoint knowledge” which attempts to replace “the view from nowhere” with the model of knowing that expels the “view from women’s lives”. (Bartowski and Kolmar 2005, 45)

This debate can also be termed as intersectionality. This debate raises the issue of understanding the oppressive lives of women that are not only shaped by gender alone but by other elements as racism, classism, ageism, heterosexism, etc. One example of the concept of intersectionality can be seen through the Mary Ann Weathers’ publication, “An Argument for Black Women’s Liberation as a Revolutionary Force.” Mary Ann Weathers states that “black women, at least the Black women I have come in contact with in the movement, have been expending all their energies in “liberating” Black men (if you yourself are not free, how can you “liberate” someone else?)” Women of color were put in a position of choosing sides. White women wanted women of color and working-class women to become a part of the women’s movement over struggling with their men (working-class, poor, and men of color) against class oppression and racism in the Civil Rights Movement. This was a conflict for women and participate in the hierarchy. It did not help that the women’s movement was shaped primarily by white women during the first and second feminist waves and the issues surrounding women of color were not addressed. Contemporary feminist theory addresses such issues of intersectionality in such publications as “Age, Race, Sex, and Class” by Kimberlé Crenshaw.

In this debate, women writers have addressed the issues of masculinized writing through male gendered language that may not serve to accommodate the literary understanding of women’s lives. Such masculinized language that feminist theorists address is the use of, for example, “God the Father” which is looked upon as

a way of designating the sacred as solely men (or, in other words, biblical language glorifies men through all of the masculine pronouns like “he” and “him” and addressing God as a “He”). Feminist theorists attempt to reclaim and redefine women through re-structuring language. For example, feminist theorists have used the term “womyn” instead of “women” (which comes from the root term: “men”). Some feminist theorists find solace in changing titles of unisex jobs (for example, police officer versus policeman or mail carrier versus mailman). Some feminist theorists have reclaimed and redefined such words as “dyke” and “bitch”—and others have invested redefining knowledge into feminist dictionaries.

Feminist literary criticism is literary criticism informed by feminist theories or politics. Its history has been varied, from classic works of female authors such as George Eliot, Virginia Woolf,^[35] and Margaret Fuller to cutting-edge theoretical work in women's studies and gender studies by "third-wave" authors.

In the most general, feminist literary criticism before the 1970s was concerned with the politics of women's authorship and the representation of women's condition within literature.^[36] Since the arrival of more complex conceptions of gender and subjectivity, feminist literary criticism has taken a variety of new routes. It has considered gender in the terms of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, as part of the deconstruction of existing power relations. Feminist history refers to the re-reading and re-interpretation of history from a feminist perspective. It is not the same as the history of feminism, which outlines the origins and evolution of the feminist movement. It also differs from women's history, which focuses on the role of women in historical events. The goal of feminist history is to explore and illuminate the female viewpoint of history through rediscovery of female writers, artists,

philosophers, etc, in order to recover and demonstrate the significance of women's voices and choices in the past.

The Feminist philosophy refers to a philosophy approached from a feminist perspective. Feminist philosophy involves attempts to use methods of philosophy to further the cause of the feminist movements, it also tries to criticize and/or reevaluate the ideas of traditional philosophy from within a feminist view. There really is not a specific school for feminist philosophy like there have been in regard to other theories. Meaning, Feminist philosophers are just philosophers after all and can be found in the analytic and continental traditions, and the different viewpoints taken on philosophical issues with those traditions. Feminist philosophers, also have many different viewpoints taken on philosophical issues within those traditions. Feminist philosophers who are feminists can belong to many different varieties of feminism. The writings of Judith Butler, Rosi Braidotti, and Donna Haraway are most significant psychoanalytically informed influences on contemporary feminist philosophy. These women have been the main driving force behind the Feminism philosophy. Feminist sexology is an offshoot of traditional studies of that focuses on the intersectionality of sex and gender in relation to the sexual lives of women. Feminist sexology shares many principles with the wider field of sexology; in particular, it does not try to prescribe a certain path or "normality" for women's sexuality, but only observe and note the different and varied ways in which women express their sexuality. Looking at sexuality from a feminist point of view creates connections between the different aspects of a person's sexual life. Feminist economics broadly refers to a developing branch of that applies feminist insights and critiques to economics. Research under this heading is often interdisciplinary, critical, or It encompasses debates about the relationship between feminism and economics on many levels: from applying mainstream economic methods to under-researched "women's" areas, to questioning how values the reproductive sector, to deeply philosophical critiques of economic and methodology.

One prominent issue that feminist economists investigate is how the) does not adequately measure unpaid labor predominantly performed by women, such as housework,

childcare, and elder care a Feminist economists have also challenged and exposed the rhetorical approach of mainstream economics They have made critiques of many basic assumptions of mainstream economics, including the model. They have been instrumental in creating alternative models, such as the and incorporating gender into the analysis of economic data. Marilyn Power suggests that feminist economic methodology can be broken down into five categories. The study of feminist legal theory is a school thought based on the feminist view that law's treatment of women in relation to men has not been equal or fair. The goals of feminist legal theory as defined by leading theorist Claire Dalton, consist of understanding and exploring the female experience, figuring out if law and institutions oppose females, and figuring out what changes can be committed to. This is to be accomplished through studying the connections between the law and gender as well as applying feminist analysis to concrete areas of law. In short, in the Victorian period almost all the discourses were male. Males had exercised power in the society. So there was their domination against females. Many females were forced to live under male control. Male discourses were more powerful than any other discourses so females were forced to do what the males wanted them to do. They designed a typical Victorian woman.

The above discussion presents the relation of discourse and power. Discourses are of different types but the problem of these discourses is that almost all of them serve males. The history of discourse itself shows male dominance in it. Most of the famous critics and writers are males. It is obvious that males have created discourses for their interest. Some female critics are also there but their voice became very low. During Victorian period too, there were different discourses. Those discourses were created in the interest of males. They produced discourses instructing females to do and not to do different things. By using those discourses, the males dominated women in the society.

Power and Social Discipline in Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native*

How could there be any good in a woman everybody spoke ill of? In the most emotionally charged scene between husband and wife in Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* Clym Yeobright thus finally succumbs to the view of Eustacia Vye's identity that has been constructed by public surveillance and conjecture, a witch, a temptress and even a murderess by the voice of the social "every-body". Eustacia is liable to the terms of such judgment and the consequences of which are most obviously literalized in her suicide by drowning. Yet punishment itself also definitively shapes identity on Egdon Heath. The numerous forms of punishment applied to Eustacia stabbing, torture of her effigy, expulsion from her marriage serve to confirm social interpretation, unequivocally defining her as a witch, rebel, and in short, fallen insofar as it confirms the conclusions drawn by public speculation and gossip, punishment is shown to be inextricably linked to observation and utterance.

This tension in *The Return of the Native* between self-inflicted and socially-enacted discipline thus deserves examination. While critical attention has frequently been given to "that socially approved method of subordinating women: the inculcation of guilt" that Hardy's novels expose, the very way in which social discipline is applied is equally significant. *The Return of the Native* is particularly revealing in regards to Hardy's view of the capacity of speculation and blame to shape public identity and induce self destruction, Discussing Hardy's use of coincidence, Lawrence Jay Dessner cites T.S. Eliot's telling discernment of the intense preoccupation with punishment evident in Hardy's work. "to Eliot, Hardy seemed to be deliberately relieving some emotion of his own at the expense of the reader. It is a refined form of torture on the part of the writer, and a refined sort of self.

Yet the self-destructive function of this seemingly primitive enforces of social discipline-torture-points to an evolution toward a more subtle, yet potent, method of control in *The Return of the Native*. In "Observation and Domination in Hardy's *The Woodlanders*," a notably rare interpretation of Hardy that directly invokes Michel Foucault's theories of social discipline, Cates Baldrige observes that "In the world of *The Woodlanders* modernity arrives not amidst coal smoke or dragging a steam thresher, but rather emerges from optics-both moral and manufactured-whose very composition relentlessly transforms acts of seeing into projections of power." The traceable tension in *The Return of the Native* between primitive and modern forms of authority positions Foucault's theory of discipline as a fitting analogy by which this novel's preoccupation with surveillance, judgment, transgression, and retribution can be examined.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault's example of the quarantined town illustrates how, under conditions of isolation, surveillance and power operates. This enclosed segmented space, observed at every point in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead-all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism.

A self-contained social unit, Egdon exhibits the capacity for stringent control that is accessible through perpetual confinement and surveillance. Foucault's engagement of Bentham's structure of the panopticon in his analysis of a self-

regulatory society where "the gaze is alert everywhere" (p.195) demonstrates how such constant, ubiquitous observation is achieved:

At the periphery, an annular building; at the centre a tower...pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side the ring; the peripheral buildings is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other.

"By the effect of backlighting," Foucault continues, "one can observe from the tower ...small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible." Hardy's portrayal of the "watchful intentness" (p.4) of Egdon and its inhabitants demonstrates how a "faceless gaze ... transformed the whole social body into a field of perception" (p.214).

The Return of the Native exhibits an obsessive preoccupation" with what Foucault terms "constant visibility"; its emphasis on "the observer's eye," "surveying," and "spying" is ceaseless (pp. 138, 140, 53).

Although observation and voyeurism preoccupy Hardy's texts generally, Egdon's literal resemblance to the structure of the Panoptical is striking. Individuals often resemble prisoners in the Panopticon, appearing as silhouettes against a flame: Wildeve is seen as "a vast shadow, in which could be dimly traced portions of a masculine contour, blott[ing] half the ceiling" (p.39), and Hardy introduces Eustacia as a mysterious dark "from of "figure" (p.11). In the text's opening pages, the dancing furze-cutters with their "shadowy eye-sockets" and "dark wells" for nostrils are marked by "sooty shades" upon which "blots of shades" upon which "blots of shade and flakes of light ... changed shape and position endlessly" (p.15).

While these latter figures precisely resemble Foucault's; prisoners in the Panopticon, their literal activity-celebrating Guy Fawkes Day-situates them firmly in the realm of primitive ritual. Foucault's delineation of the social evolution of punishment in *Discipline and Punish* equally applies to the collision in Hardy's text between ritualized, traditional disciplinary methods and self-rendered punishment, the mark of modern social discipline. Foucault illustrates how this subtle methodology, whereby an individual exerts authority upon him-or herself through self-regulation, has evolved from more traditional forms of punishment, namely public humiliation and torture. Emphasizing its dependency on spectacle, Foucault terms this traditional form of discipline a "liturgy of punishment"; "It must mark the victim: it is intended, either by the scar it leaves on the body, or by the spectacle that accompanies it, to brand the victim with infamy, torture, traces around or, rather, on the very body of the condemned man signs that must not be effaced; men will remember public exhibition, the pillory, torture, and pain duly observed" (p. 34). Social discipline that would be everywhere and always alert, is "running through society without interruption in space or time" (p. 209).

According to Foucault, the internalization of power relations cultivated by the Panopticon makes such constant "visibility ... a trap" (p.200). The Panopticon "induc[es] in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (p. 201). As Foucault argues this structure ensures "that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers; Power should be visible and unverifiable." This subtle yet constant of power ultimately facilitates the internalization and operation of authority by the individual.

This essay shall demonstrate that both forms of social authority operate in *The Return of the Native*, and that both are bound up in Eustacia Vye's life and death. Eustacia's suicide particularly exemplifies the destruction enabled by internalized social judgment, as well as the text's preoccupation with physical suffering. That the spectacle offered by the body of the condemned coincides, in Hardy's text, with the operation of internalized authority indicates how the body is itself a sign, a manifestation of the power operating within this structure. Yet this juxtaposition also illustrates how Egdon is representative of a primitive society on the verge of modernity, one in which more modern methods of judgment and punishment finally prove more devastating in their capacity for emotional and physical destruction.

Since the internalization of patriarchal dictates for behavior most significantly affects the women in the text and works primarily to promote middle class value systems, an application of Foucault's analysis of the "condemned man" (p.34, italics added) to *The Return of the Native* must be inflected in order to consider Hardy's preoccupation with the roles of class, and gender in relation to the exercise of authority. Taken up by the middle class, lower class speculation and gossip provide the ammunition for definitively destructive judgment. Most useful is an examination of the novel's depiction of the often annihilative consequences that result from the control and operation of power accessed through those issues fundamental to Foucault's understanding of discipline: surveillance, torture and the internalization of social judgment.

Most problematic for the inhabitants of Egdon Heath is the threat Eustacia poses to the community's traditional power relations. "Not equipped for the conventional world," She defies those classifications that underpins Egdon society. The text's opening chapters, for example, portray the power transferring both age and

class that Eustacia seemingly exercises over three men: she reigns as "absolute queen" over her grandfather, over her grandfather, over Johnny (her 'little slave') and over Wildeve, who goes to Eustacia in "obedience to her call" (p. 56,61). Foucault describes how the "mechanisms of power...are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him" (p. 199). As an outsider, "a lonesome dark eyed creature ...that some say is a witch" (p.47), Eustacia stands as this figure of threatening abnormality who the people of Egdon must label in order to control.

While positioned as the central object of observation, Eustacia herself continually adopts a "spying attitude" (p.53). In the course of the novel, for example, she peers through a telescope (p. 52), eavesdrops beneath a chimney (p.105), and peeks through a hole (p. 123). In fact, we initially find her not in the periphery of the Panopticon, but high atop the heath, as if in the Panopticon's observatory tower: "Had the reddleman been watching he might have recognized her as the woman who had first stood there so singularly, and vanished at the approach of strangers. She ascended to her old position at the top ... There she stood still, around her stretching the vast night atmosphere" (p. 50). This image of Eustacia represents her aim to usurp a position of power and to orchestrate, through surveillance, the events that go on below. Eustacia's attempt to occupy a sphere of "higher" authority, a place of monitoring and control reserved for men. Renders her disruptive to the social framework of Egdon Heath, and thereby establishes her as a marginal figure who must, through adequate discipline, be appropriately realigned within this framework.

If, as Foucault suggests, the "mechanisms of power" encourage the branding of the abnormal individual, *The Return of the Native* emphasizes the link between the operation of these mechanisms and both class and gender in its representations of Eustacia's social transgressions. Her participation as a mummer, for example, takes

Eustacia far beyond the bounds of social normalcy since, as such, she takes part in the "traditional pastime" (p. 122) of lower-class individuals with whom she would never otherwise associate. Other than Charley, "the other mummers have never spoken to [her] in their lives" (p.125). In fact, "of mummers and mumming Eustacia had the greatest contempt" (p. 122). Her sensitivity to the codes of propriety attached to these class distinctions marks Eustacia's behavior as a conscious act of defiance.

Eustacia's complicity in her social decline is connected to her sexual degradation. "Changed in sex, brilliant in colors', and armed from top to toe" (p.128) when posing as the Turkish Knight, Eustacia crosses the limits of gender which, in a society dependent on surveillance, must be maintained by such external markers as clothing. Although she usurps the phallic armaments of male power- "sword and staff" (p.26) – this sequence reveals more about the limitations of Eustacia's power than its extent. Her dressing in "by's clothes" (p. 125) is ironically juxtaposed with the pseudo-prostitution scene in which she permits Charley to hold her hand in exchange for his assistance with her plan. Eustacia can only obtain the means for increased latitude and access to Clym that the guise of the mumming costume will provide by first offering her body in exchange. Even the scope of Eustacia's liberty as a mummer is highly questionable. Although she hopes that this temporary transgression will facilitate her relationship with Clym, Eustacia soon realizes that the power she sought is entirely elusive. Dressing as a man conceals the allure of her attractive physicality, now that "the power of her face [was] all lost, the charm of her motions all discussed, the fascinations of her coquetry denied existence" (p.144). Notably, Clym seeks to reestablish those gender categories that Eustacia has disrupted, asking, "Are you a woman?" (p.145). Over the course of the text, the categories he will apply to her-

wife, mistress, witch, murderess-will increase in their capacity to limit, and even destroy identity.

Gender indeed has significant implications for the external construction of identity and for the application of judgment and punishment, which most often diverges along gender lines. The narrator describes Wildeve, for example, as "one in whom no man would have seen anything to admire, and in whom no woman would have seen anything to dislike" (p.40). Direct commentary by the people of Egdon also provides a microcosmic view of the debate that will culminate in the conflict between Clym and Mrs. Yeobright regarding Eustacia. It is significant that, particularly at the beginning of the novel, the negative portrayal of Eustacia is rendered primarily by the women of Egdon Heath, a pattern that continues throughout the novel. A brief exchange between Susan Nunsuch and Humphrey illustrates the gendered nature of this debate:

"She is very strange in her ways, living up there by herself, and such things please her," said Susan "She's a well-favored maid enough," said Humphrey the furze-cutter; "especially when she's got one of her dandy gowns on." (p.27) Timothy and Grandfer Cante perpetuate the division between that "some say" (p.47) and what men think about Eustacia. Timothy doubts that he "ever should call a fine young woman such a name" as witch, and Grandfer would "be very glad to ask her in wedlock, if she'd has [him], and take the risk of her wild dark eyes ill-wishing [him]" (p.48). What men see as erotic mystery in Eustacia, female observers perceive as the dangerous power of a "witch" (p.47).

Although posited in contrasting terms, both these gendered attitudes are derived from superficial judgments based only on Eustacia's external appearance and discernible behavior. Anticipation the expulsion and ruin that will befall Eustachian,

Thomason's disgrace and marriage to Wild eve likewise illustrates the terms of judgment that apply specifically to women in this society and of the extensive system of regulatory surveillance at work therein. While picking apples (a symbolically appropriate activity for a disgraced woman), Thomasin offers an astute treatise on the degraded state of the "fallen" woman that illustrate how, as with Eustacia in the mumming sequence, degradation in terms of class necessarily accompanies a woman's perceived sexual transgression. "I am a warning to others, just as thieves, and drunkards, and gamblers are ... what a class to belong to! Do I really belong to them- its absurd! ... Yet why, aunt, does everybody keep on making me think that I do, the way they behave towards me? Why don't people judge me by my acts? Now look at me as I kneel here, picking up these apples-do I look like a lost woman? ... I wish all good women as good as I!"(p.111) Relegated to the company of lower - class pariahs, Thomasin stands as a living marker of the consequences of what is deemed reproachable female behavior. As a result, she exhibits a scopophobic fear of "being stared at " since the "air is full of story " regarding her apparent jilting by Wildeve (pp. 111,113) . Mrs. Yeobright explains in reply that "Strangers don't see you as I do..... They judge from false report " (p.111) Yet Mrs. Yeobright does not condemn these false reports and, when later giving Clym her opinion of Eustacia, she is quick to subscribes to the views put forth by such rumor:' I have never heard that she is of any use to herself or to other people . Good girls don't get treated as witches even on Egdon" (p. 180). Like Thomasin's. Eustacia's public identity is a construct derived not from culpable action that can be traced to her own behavior, but from public report, opinion, and gossip. Such speculation carries with it significant implications for the fate of its object since, as Patricia Meyer Specks writes, gossip's

"purposefully malicious" nature has the capacity for "sowing the insinuations which generate tragedy."

Public identity, particularly women's - Thomasin as fallen, Eustacia as witch - thus complies with strict categorization based on inescapable observation and judgment. Confined within these categories and living in virtual exile where "the gaze is alert everywhere" (Foucault, p. 195), Eustacia finds Egdon Heath a "jail" (p.180). The continual references to Eustacia as a prisoner subject to ceaseless surveillance illustrate how on Egdon, "The panoptic schema spread through the social body.... to become a generalized function" (Foucault, p.207). Constantly the target of this pervasive network of surveillance and suspicion, like Foucault's prisoner, Eustacia "is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (Foucault, p. 200)

Although wildeve, rather than Eustacia, is the primary target of his observation, Diggory venn is particularly complicit in Egdon's regulatory structure. Significantly, his position as a lower - class oddity - a reddleman grants him much opportunity for covert surveillance. Yet Diggory's "Well to - do air.... suggested that he was not poor for his degree. The natural query of an observer would have been, why should such a promising being as this have hidden his prepossessing exterior by adopting that singular occupation ?" (p.8). The answer seemingly lies in the mobility and concealment that such an "isolated" (p.75) occupation affords him. Despite his lower- class status, Diggory's not only vacillates between classes, but between modes of existence: "He was one of a class rapidly becoming extinct in Wessex, filling at present in the rural world the place which, during the last century, the dodo occupied in the world of animals. He is a curious, interesting, and nearly perished link between

obsolete forms of life and those which generally prevail" (pp.7-8). As such, Diggory embodies the text's more general preoccupation with how lower - class surveillance operates largely in service of middle - class orthodoxy. Diggory's oscillation leads us to consider the text's own movement from lower - class conjecture to the more destructive judgment of the middle class in relation to the primitive and modern methods of discipline at work therein.

Despite its structural and functional resemblance to the panopticon, the Egdon community in *The Return of the Native* also relies on primitive methods of regulation. According to Foucault, traditional modes of discipline and diction back before the inquisition depended upon the spectacle of punishment. Hardy's depiction of Egdon points to the survival of such primitive forms of correction on the Heath. Indeed, Egdon is a particularly rich manifestation of Hardy's fascination with a traditional society on the verge of modernity. On Egdon, late nineteenth - century ideas embodied in Clym's Parisian socialism collide with the primitive: Guy Fawkes day rituals, rituals, furze cutting, medieval Christian mythology (Saint George conquering the Turkish Knight). Similarly, in *The Return of the Native*. Modern methods of regulatory surveillance coexist with more primitive methods of social control. In their resemblance to methods of torture traditionally enacted on witches, the punitive measures applied to Eustacia particularly illustrate, in addition to its panoptic regulatory structure, Egdon's primitive disciplinary underpinnings.

The scene wherein Eustacia becomes the object of Susan Nunsuch's "long stocking - needle" anticipates the tension between modern and primitive punishment that will develop more explicitly in the course of the text. Christian's report "about a witch " illustrates the superstitious nature of Susan's violent treatment of Eustacia: "She's waited for this chance for weeks, so as to draw her blood, and put an end to the

bewitching of Susan's children that has been carried on so long. Sue followed her into church, sat next to her, and as soon as she could find a chance in went the stocking -needle into my lady's arm" (p.179). Susan's pricking of Eustacia aptly invokes the "old test or trials - ordeals, judicial duels, judgments of God" (Foucault, p.40) that characterized traditional, confession - seeking forms of discipline and punishment. In her attempt to draw blood and, therefore, the capacity for evil from Eustacia, Sue enacts "a physical challenge that must define the truth. In the practice if torture, pain, confrontation and truth were bound together: they worked together on the....body" (Foucault, p.41).Significantly, this act occurs in church, the communal locus of morality and the chief location for "seeing and being seen" (Return, p.120). When Eustacia earlier "betakes herself to scrutinize the person of a native son" (i.e., Clym) in church, she is disappointed. Instead, their meeting must be deferred until that time when Eustacia is fixed as the subject of judgment and punishment during her encounter with Susan Nunsuch. Susan's treatment of the effigy of Eustacia on the night of Eustacia's death exemplifies the text's preoccupation with the collision between physical punishment and modern vigilance's more subtle, effective destruction of the spirit. Significantly, Susan's creation and piercing of a wax figure of Eustacia is juxtaposed with Eustacia's telling last words, "a frenzy of bitter revolt."

How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me ! . . . I do not deserved lot ! . . . I was capable of much: but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all! (p.359)

Yet it is Susan, hardly a representative of heaven, who repeats the Lord's prayer backwards, and who devises a torture " calculated to bring powerlessness atrophy and

annihilation" upon Eustacia. Having fashioned a wax form in Eustacia's image, She took a paper of pins. . . These she began to thrust into the image in all directions. with apparently excruciating energy. Probably as many as fifty were thus inserted, some in the head of the wax model, some into the shoulders, some into the trunk, some upwards through the soles of the feet till the figure was completely permeated with pins . . . [Then] seizing with the tongs the image that she had made of Eustacia she held it in the heat, and watched it as it began to waste slowly away.(Pp. 360-61)

Susan's torture of the Eustacia effigy symbolizes those emotional tortures against which Eustacia despairingly protests. Yet Eustacia's power is considered so threatening that she must be eradicated, in both body and spirit. Judgment and punishment thus represent a purgation of those forces that threaten to disrupt social order. In the Foucauldian view, with which Mrs. Yeobright agrees, "one could not be the object of suspicion and be completely innocent" (Foucault, p.42). Indeed, the witch - trial representation of society's treatment of Eustacia does not remove her complicity in her own incrimination. Rather, the public spectacle surrounding Eustacia's physical punishment, together, as we will see, with her confession, necessarily implicates her as the "herald of [her] own condemnation" (Foucault, p.43).

From the judicial torture to the execution, the body has produced and reproduced the truth of the crime - or rather it constitutes the element which, through a whole set of rituals and trials, confesses that the crime took place, admits that the accused did indeed commit it, shows that he bore it inscribed in himself and on himself, supports the operation of punishment and manifests its effects in the most striking way. The body, several times tortured, provides the synthesis of the reality of the deeds and the truth of the investigation, of the documents of the case and the

statements of the criminal, of the crime and the punishment. (Foucault, p.47) Thus, from the pricking of her arm in church to her very drowning, Eustacia's body provides the textual, incriminating evidence of the capacity for destruction which she has long been charged to possess.

Significantly, the physical subjection of Eustacia's body typically renders her a penetrable and, thus, an approachable object for men. While the piercing of her effigy/ body anticipates an event - her suicide - that will bring all the men in the novel running to her, the drawing of Eustacia's blood and the public confirmation of her status as a witch, along with report of her "beauty" (p.180), ironically intrigue Clym. The needle itself stands as a phallic foreshadowing of the union between Clym and Eustacia, which is aptly anticipated, then, in terms of violence and destruction. While Clym condemns Susan's treatment of Eustacia as a "cruel shame" (p.181), he does not denounce the terms of the judgment applied to her, but employs them, inquiring after the "young witch - lady" with slight amusement. Ultimately, the appropriation of this judgment by such representatives of middle - class morality as Mrs. Yeobright and Clym will have the most detrimental consequences for Eustacia.

"The man from Paris" (p.253), Clym initially represents a means of escape for Eustacia. Ironically, he becomes increasingly complicit in her confinement on Egdon, "her Hades" (p.64). The isolation of their home temporarily removes Eustacia from constant observation by the people of Egdon. Yet Eustacia becomes increasingly "supervised. . . by [this] sequestered and observed solitude" (Foucault, p.201) as Clym, despite his physical blindness, assumes the role as her chief observer. Clym's literal blindness aptly coincides with their marriage; when his understanding of her should be made clearer by their intimacy, it becomes increasingly clouded and leaves Eustacia increasingly frustrated. "Must I not have a voice in the matter, now I am

your wife, and the sharer of your doom?" (p.249), she demands when Clym rejects her wish to go to Paris. Although his association with Paris may mark Clym as a figure of enlightenment, his "return" to his native Egdon represents his regression to its strictly codified patriarchal morality. While judgment of Eustacia is delivered initially by the women of Egdon, it culminates in Clym's unequivocal condemnation of her upon discovering her actions on the day of his mother's death: "May all murderesses get the torment they deserve" (p.327).

The events surrounding Mrs. Yeobright's death indicate the extent to which judgment and surveillance are linked to physical punishment in this novel, and are at the root of its tragedy. Had she not seen Eustacia's "face at a window" (p.288) when her knock at Clym and Eustacia's door went unanswered, Mrs. Yeobright would have been unable to implicate Eustacia. Significantly, the means of Mrs. Yeobright's death - a snake bite- points to the breakdown of Clym and Eustacia's marriage, the destruction of their "Eden"(p.241). Framed in an allusion to "Aeneas with his father" (p.296), Clym's carrying of his injured mother likewise places their relationship in the context of a society of the verge of collapse (Troy). While the snake bite may represent Eustacia's destructive capacities, it also seems symbolic of the mental poison (that is, her "wicked opinions" [p.248] of Eustacia) that has possessed Mrs. Yeobright, and therefore, the entire social body. Ironically, like Eustacia, Mrs. Yeobright is subject to physical torment that is grounded in primitive, mythic symbolism. As a woman, she can only give voice to the dictates of Egdon's patriarchal orthodoxy for so long. Her death thus aptly effects the transference of this charge to her son who, as the rightful representative of middle- class social normalcy, takes up the position of Eustacia's moral nemesis.

Relegation Eustacia to the category of “Clym defines her in legal terms and, in doing so, invokes not only accusation, but also the confirmation of guilt and the inherent necessity of retribution. The subsequent dialogue wherein Clym accuses Eustacia of the “crime” of murder shows, in its court - room style verbal barrage, the voice of what Foucault would term the “administrative machine” (p.213) in action: “Tell me now, where is he who was with you on the afternoon of the thirty - first of August? Under the bed? Up the chimney?” A shudder came over her, and shook the light fabric of her night-dress throughout. “I do not remember dates so exactly,”

The day I mean, ”Said Yeobright, his voice growing louder and harsher, “was the day you shut the door against my mother and killed her.-o, it is too much - too bad! You shut the door - you looked out the widow upon her - you had a man in the house with you - you sent her away to die - The inhumanity - the treachery - I will not touch you -stand away from me - and confess every word!” (Pp.329-31)

Positioning himself as moral detective, judge, and jury, Clym assumes his mother's place of judgment in relation to Eustacia. During this quasi - legal assault Clym removes himself from Eustacia and their marriage, his refusal to “touch” her abrogating her physical and legal status as his wife. Significantly, Clym's charge against Eustacia coincides with his classification of her as a fallen woman and her designation as a member of the lowest of classes. No longer considering her a “cultivated woman” (p.146), Clym now indicts Eustacia as a prostitute.” I shall no doubt be gratified by learning in good time what a well - finished a full - blown adept in a certain trade my lady is” (Pp.331-32). Finding herself indefensible, Eustacia is directly exiled from the domestic sphere, ¹⁰ while Clym realigns himself with the sphere from which she was always exiled that of moral vigilance.

Although initially she “remains doggedly silent” and refuses to confess, Eustacia ultimately admits to “the extent of [her] crime” (p.334). “I confess that I - willfully did not undo the door the first time she knocked - but- I should have unfastened it the second - if I had not thought you had gone to do it yourself Best natures commit bad faults sometimes, don't they -” (p. 333). Eustacia’s articulation of her culpability finally confirms Clym's limited view of her admission of guilt not only establishes her as deserving of the further physical torture that will befall her, but also indicates the extent to which she is complicit in it. According to Foucault, the confession “transcended all other evidence; an element in the calculation of the truth, it was also the act by which the accused accepted the charge and recognized its truth” (p.38). Eustacia thus becomes the bearer of her own condemnation and, as her suicide will so plainly show, the embodiment of Foucault's idea of a modern subject who renders her own punishment.

This movement from external accusation to the internalized bearing of guilt is conspicuous elsewhere in Hardy's texts. In *Jude the Obscure*, for example, Sue Bridehead finds a similar form of humiliation and torture a rightful end for herself: “Self - renunciation - that's everything! I cannot humiliate myself too much. I should like to prick myself all over with pins and bleed out the badness in me.” Sue proceeds to “bleed out [her] badness” by returning to Phillotson; her former husband, and submitting to the terms that, in their previous marriage, she entirely rejected: those of the body. Sue's self - derision draws attention to Hardy's preoccupation with the torture of the body as a means of self- inflicted purification, which likewise functions as a form of social control. Indeed, in *The Return of the Native* Eustacia's self destruction most obviously mark this transition from externally enacted punishment to that which is actively rendered by its female recipient.

The image on the Egdon inn sign of “the Quiet Woman, the figure of a matron carrying her head under her arm” (p. 39) points to the physical torment that Eustacia undergoes throughout *The Return of the Native*. Yet this image also emblemizes the psychological machinations endured by Foucault's criminal who, as a result, ultimately becomes the bearer of his own punishment: “He who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (p.202). Since it is gendered female, however, Hardy's image of the Quiet Woman draws specific attention to how women in particular come to render their own punishment, itself a manifestation of internalized social judgment. Thus, at the heart of the community, and likewise the novel as a whole, is the image of women “disruptive potentiality put to rest [as] she obligingly carries her own severed head”

On Egdon women's “disruptive potentiality” is most clearly linked to their marital relationships. Marriage serves as a trial-by-fire of conventional womanhood. Although Thomasin voices her dissatisfaction with society's categorization of her, she is publicly quick to accept the blame assigned to her when her initial marriage attempt with wildeve fails. She first petitions her aunt, “Excuse me- for humiliating you, aunt, by this mishap” (p. 38), from further detracting from her family's “credit” (p.158): “I belong to one man. Nothing can alter that. And that man I must marry, for my pride's sake” (p.111). Thomasin thus exemplifies the operation of the “atomization of power” (Foucault, p.202) within Egdon's social network. Unlike Thomasin's, however, Eustacia's self - regulation does not merely take the form of censure and submission, but rather effects her utter eradication.

Eustacia's failure to conform to the expectations of womanhood leads her to an end so contrary to that of Thomasin. Thomasin marries, not once, but twice, and gives birth to a child, thereby reconfirming her place within the status quo. Significantly, her second marriage is to Diggory Venn, the novel's covert moral watchdog. Throwing off the lower-class stigma attached to the reddleman's position; Diggory appears before Thomasin toward the novel's close, "exhibiting the strangely altered hue of an ordinary Christian countenanceRed, and all approach to red, was carefully excluded from every article of clothes upon him" (p.388). His union with Thomasin thus marks the restoration of Egdon society to conventional middle-class values. Eustacia, in contrast, finds marriage disappointingly constrictive and spurns her connection to her husband's family. What ultimately distinguishes her from Thomasin is her refusal to submit to the judgment applied to her:

O, you are too relentless-there's a limit to the cruelty of savages! I have held out too long- but you crush me down. I beg for mercy-I cannot bear this any longer-it is inhuman to go farther with this ! If I had-killed your- mother with my own hand-I should not deserve such a scourging to the bone as this. (p.334)

Although she recognizes that she is "to blame" for the death of Clym's mother and that, as a result, "there is evil in store for her" (p.307), Eustacia cannot finally accept the judgment given her and, apparently, seeks escape in death. Not surprisingly, Eustacia's suicide has elicited varied critical responses. In her analysis of this issue, Dixie, Lee Larson concludes that "For Eustacia, drowning is more the means of ending an enforced compromise with life than anything else."¹³ Jennifer Gribble views Eustacia as a ritual victim, "but insists that "Hardy's narrative refused to take sides or assign blame."¹⁴ Penny Boumelha exhibits skepticism about the nature of

Eustacia's demise, comparing Emma Bovary's fate to "Hedda Gabler's suicide and Eustacia's Death." Hary," she continues, 'veils this in an ambiguity similar to that which surrounds the rape or seduction to Tess, and individual moral responsibility that a tradition of moralistic criticism might otherwise press upon the text" (p.56). In considering Hardy's intentions, Rosemarie Morgan submits that he "cannot permit her simply to drown. The skies must break and the Barrow must seek to draw her back to itself. Her death must become a victory over life-a mortal life that had, to her, been empty of significance and purpose."¹⁶

How then are readers to interpret her suicide? Is Eustacia finally free from the internalization of social judgment? Is her death, as Morgan suggests, "a victory over life"? in the portrayal of her suicide, Hardy depicts, in overwhelmingly negative terms, the destructive capacities of a community that cannot tolerate individuals-particularly women-who transgress social dictates for behavior. Finding herself in a state where she entirely without autonomy. Insofar as she subjects herself to death, she admits herself to be deserving of punishment. Thus, her suicide suggests that Egdon's social disciplinary strength is so pervasive; its control sp absolute, that those individuals who resist its authority will ultimately acquiesces to it, even it to do so. They must eliminate their conscious resistance to it by eradication their physicality. Eustacia can only finally be subsumed within this social structure when utterly deprived of her power to resist it , when, as a dead body bereft of mental cognition, she can "obligingly" carry her head under her arm.

While throughout the text she seemingly resists those labels applied to her, telling Clym, fro example, "your mother will influence you too much; I shall not be judged fairly it will get afloat that I am not a good girl, and the witch story will be added to make me blacker" (p.208), Eustacia ultimately realigns herself with the

views of Egdon society. This realignment aptly takes the form of self-objectification.; "To have lost is less disturbing than to wonder if we may possibly have won; and Eustacia could now, like other people at such a stage, take a standing-point outside herself, observe herself as a disinterested spectator, and think what a sport for Heaven this woman Eustacia was" (pp.343-44). Standing outside herself and observing herself in the third person, Eustacia actively reinscribes herself with Egdon's panoptic structure. This movement marks Eustacia's internalization of the social norms aligned with Egdon surveillance; it is those the very moment at which her former defiance gives way to complicity in her imminent demise. Furthermore, the event that directly follows this detachment of identity appropriately anticipates the form that her tragic end will take: "While she stood she heard a sound. It was a splash of a stone in the pond" (p.344). Eustacia's death ironically reproduces that auditory image which, both here and throughout the text, facilitates her covert, socially disruptive encounters with Wildeve: the sound of something being dropped into a pool. At the point of her death, however, Eustacia's submission to society's judgment of her necessarily distorts the pool a "boiling hole" (p.375). Analogous to Eustacia's willful passion, the witch's own menacing equipage-her cauldron-aptly becomes the mechanism of her destruction. While she herself is silenced, the very form of her suicide articulates the extent of Eustacia's complicity in her punishment.

Despite the novel's preoccupation with surveillance, it denies the reader visual access to the final deliverance of this judgment. The precise moment of Eustacia's death. Hardy instead focuses on her "cold form, which was all that remained of the desperate and unfortunate Eustacia" (p.377). Instead of seeing her actively choosing death, the reader sees only her passive corpse. What was perceived as threatening sexual power in life is all but removed in the angelic spectacle of her dead body, the

image of which sharply contrasts with the dangerous, dark obscurity that surrounded Eustacia's living being. Her "reign" over three male observers is inverted; Clym, Charley, and Venn can now comfortably view Eustacia at close proximity:

They stood silently looking upon Eustacia, who as she lay there still in death eclipsed all her living phases. Pallor did not include all the quality of her complexion of her finely carved mouth was pleasant-as if a sense of dignity had just compelled her to leave off speaking. Eternal rigidity had seized upon it in a momentary transition between fervor and resignation. Her black hair was looser now than either of them had ever seen it before, and surrounded her brow like a forest. The stateliness of look which had been almost too marked for a dweller in a country domicile at last found an artistically happy background. (p.381).

The intense irony of the "happy background" encompassing Eustacia in death emphasizes the dreadful conditions of her life. Hardy here conveys the double-bind of Eustacia's existence: only death can restore her to innocence. Insofar as drowning represents the traditional test applied to a witch (if guilty, she would float and escape death), it is the instrument of Eustacia's vindication. Furthermore, the need of Eustacia's body for a more aesthetically suitable "background" marks her body as a part of a larger cultural myosin object art, a lifeless spectacle for viewing.

The positioning of a woman's dead body as material evidence that serves to incriminate the living and vindicate the dead is not unique to *The Return of the Native*; its appearance elsewhere is consistent with Hardy's use of the female body as a sign to be interpreted through close observation. In *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, of example, only in death is Elfirde's fickleness for the death of her son. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, the sight of Fanny and wife; corpse drive Troy to invert the application of the titles of mistress and wife; in his eyes and, significantly, at his word, Bathsheba is fallen and Fanny is elevated to the position of his wife.¹⁷ Similarly, the discovery of Mrs. Yeobright's dead body

leads Clym to indict Eustacia as a “murderess,” while the sight of Eustacia’s corpse leads him to her absolution: “She 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” (p. 381). While her corporeal end provides the definitive evidence of Eustacia’s guilt and submission to punishment, it simultaneously restores her to innocence through the transformation of her corpse into a vision of submissive beauty.

Eustacia’s drowning thus situates her as a spectacle to be gazed at, “a figure or representation that in part always reflects and sustains the narcissism of the viewer.” Indeed, her death invokes acclaimed contemporary works of art and literature, particularly those which eroticized the drowning suicides of famous heroines such as Millais’ *Ophelia* (1852) and Tennyson’s “*The Lady of Shalott*” (1832). While giving space to the tragic lives of women, such works simultaneously hold up the body of the silent, powerless, but beautiful woman as a spectacle for as a spectacle for detailed observation and a source of erotic pleasure, Eustacia’s attitude toward the world- “I am weary of it, weary” (p.340)- also invokes the refrain of Tennyson’s *Mariana*” (1830),¹⁹ a poem which likewise depicts a lone, imprisoned woman who, deserted by her lover, wishes death upon herself. Tennyson’s narratives offer fitting parallels for the life of such a woman as Eustacia whose, but of public oral tradition,”²¹ Indeed, Hardy makes this distinction explicit: “The story of the deaths of Eustacia and Wildeve was told throughout Egdon, and far beyond, for many weeks and mouths. All the know incidents of their love were enlarged, distorted, touched up, and modified, till the original reality bore but a slight resemblance to the counterfeit presentation by surrounding tongues” (*Return*, p. 385). Eustacia’s position as a lifeless text that can be reviewed and rewritten according to the whims of Egdon “tongues” confirms her reinscription within this society that she so defied and, in doing so, ensures the eradication of her identity. Eustacia becomes the victim of social discourses.]

Conclusion

The Return of the Native thus returns us to where we began, with Egdon's preoccupation with conjectural narrative at the fore. Through his focus on the construction and subsequent demise of Eustacia's identity, Hardy exposes and condemns the destructive power of such restrictive "disciplinary mechanisms" (Foucault, p. 209). Ironically, however, by enacting her own death, Eustacia subjects herself in perpetuity to those tortures from which she sought escape in life: surveillance, and physical punishment. The spectacle of self-inflicted torture, Eustacia's suicide conflates the traditional and modern methods of discipline that operate in constant tension throughout the text. The extent of her internalization of social judgment demands that she die not merely a defiant object of surveillance and censure. Rather, as the bearer of her own punishment, Eustacia, finally renders herself an erotic spectacle entirely submissive to ocular penetration and, thus, to social control.

The positioning of a woman's dead body as material evidence that serves to incriminate the living and vindicate the dead is not unique to *The Return of the Native*; its appearance elsewhere is consistent with Hardy's use of the female body as a sign to be interpreted through close observation. In *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, of example, only in death is Elfirde's fickleness for the death of her son. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, the sight of Fanny and wife; corpse drive Troy to invert the application of the titles of mistress and wife; in his eyes and, significantly, at his word, Bathsheba is fallen and Fanny is elevated to the position of his wife.¹⁷ Similarly, the discovery of Mrs. Yeobright's dead body leads Clym to indict Eustacia as a "murderess," while the sight of Eustacia's corpse leads him to her absolution: "She is the second woman I have killed this year. I was a great cause of my mother's

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The novel in this way deals with the situation of women in Victorian period. Women were guided by the discourse of society and its various discourses. *The Return of the Native* returns us to where we began, with Egdon's preoccupation with conjectural narrative at the fore. Through his focus on the construction and subsequent demise of Eustacia's identity, Hardy exposes and condemns the destructive power of such restrictive "disciplinary mechanisms" (Foucault, p. 209). Ironically, however, by enacting her own death, Eustacia subjects herself in perpetuity to those tortures from which she sought escape in life: surveillance, and physical punishment. The spectacle of self-inflicted torture, Eustacia's suicide conflates the traditional and modern methods of discipline that operate in constant tension throughout the text. The extent of her internalization of social judgment demands that she die not merely a defiant object of surveillance and censure. Rather, as the bearer of her own punishment, Eustacia, finally renders herself an erotic spectacle entirely submissive to ocular penetration and, thus, to social control.

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The society observes women as the puppets in males' hand. Hardy is fatalistic in his ideas but his fatalism is centered on women most. For the domination of women the society has created discourses. Whatever discourses exist in the society are male made and male serving. Females are the victims in the novel. Eustacia is at the centre. She tries to adjust herself in the society in many ways but she fails. Her attempts to find alternatives go useless. The more she tries alternatives the more problems she finds. She has been entangled in the maze of discourses. She could have protested if she was a modern woman but as a Victorian woman she has nothing to do. She is a passive sufferer. She commits suicide at the end of novel. She is forced to do it. It is due to the power of discourses existing in her time. Her discipline is to suffer and obey whatever discourses ask her to execute.

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