

Tribhuvan University

Unconventional Portrayal of Androgynous Characters in Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U.

**in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in English**

By

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Kamini Kumari Adhikari has completed her thesis entitled "Portrayal of Androgynous Characters in Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*". Kamini Kumari Adhikari has completed her thesis entitled "Unconventional Portrayal of Characters: A Study of Androgyny in Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*" under my supervision. She carried out her research from September 2019 to July 2020. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for viva voce.

Assist. Prof. Badri Prasad Acharya
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Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled “Unconventional Portrayal of Androgynous Characters in Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd*” Submitted to the Central This Thesis entitled “Unconventional Portrayal of Characters: A Study of Androgyny in Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd*” submitted to Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Kamini Kumari Adhikari has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Internal Examiner

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Unconventional Portrayal of -Characters: A Study of Androgyny in Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*

Abstract

In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the major characters offer idea of androgyny that Woolf exalts in *A Room of One's Own* (1929). This paper argues that Hardy does not rely on stereotypical gender differences and critiques the pitfall of gender and sexual condition in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Bathsheba Everdene and Gabriel Oak are androgynous characters and they subvert conventional gender roles. Hardy depicts an idea of androgyny throughout the acts of the major characters. Through dismantling the gender roles, the major characters assist to show strength of feminine as well as masculine qualities and a call for harmony in society. The present research tries to look at the novel in the light of Hardy's employment of unconventional portrait of man and woman, primarily Bathsheba and Gabriel, both as whole human being who seek balance as well as freedom. It relates to Hardy's quest for wholeness. Both Gabriel and Bathsheba represent gender roles which are changing. They depart from traditional gender roles through dismantling gender roles. It also presents societal change slowly and gradually. Male and female represent two side of organic unity as two sexes in a single mind. There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman. In this way, Hardy destabilizes Victorian notions of 'fixed gendered identity' which is expressed according to the biological appearance of male and female and 'superiority of masculinity' that is male dominated society, through the portrayal of androgynous characters.

Keywords: Androgyny, Gender Roles, Female Masculinity, Male Femininity, Victorian Values

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This paper analyzes Thomas Hardy's motive behind the portrayal of the major characters as androgynous in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Hardy offers the solution regarding the division between man and woman. The two major characters Bathsheba and Gabriel face different ups and downs and finally toward the end of the novel they get united. In particular, it explores the role of major characters Bathsheba Everden and Gabriel Oak, who have androgynous character traits, combination of both masculine and feminine attributes into a balanced form. In this novel Hardy establishes ideas which oppose the norms of the Victorian era. He creates ideal of social change and focuses his novel around a strong and independent woman and a calm man. Both these characters display traits that are not associated with their own particular sex and become androgynous individuals.

The term "androgyny" is derived from the Greek words 'andros' meaning man and 'gyny' meaning woman, referring to the combination of masculine and feminine characteristics. The androgynous ideal suggests that the relationship of opposite is more than the individual element the combination of masculine and feminine has more energizing power than the elements are separate from one another and unable to connect. To support my argument, I have used theoretical light of Virginia Woolf's notion of androgyny to critique conventional division between masculinity and femininity. 'Androgyny' as a tool is being implied to criticize the traditional notion of gender which separated male and female according to their biological appearance and establishes a new idea of gender as androgyny. The other theories like *Gender*

Trouble by Judith Butler, *Female Masculinity* by Judith Halberstam, and *Androgyny in Modern Literature* by Tracy Hargreaves, *The Masculinity Studies Reader* edited by Rachel Adams and David Savran are used as supportive tools. The tools which I have applied are relevant to my title and issue.

Tracy Hargreaves brings ideas of androgyny in her book *Androgyny in Modern Literature* from Plato's *Symposium*. The concept of androgyny was developed in ancient time by Plato in his book *Symposium*. Plato gives definition of androgyny as combination of both sexes, male and female. 'Androgyny' is an ancient Greek word in which 'andro' means male and 'gyn' refers to female. So that, androgynous peoples have masculine and feminine impulses, that are expressed by the same person as a single gender. That is why, person is liberated to express from confined boundary. Androgyny has double characteristics of male and female. Two sexes' characteristics are found in a single person. It gives liberation, freedom and boundary of

confinement.

On the surface, the novel appears to be a text driven by Victorian realism and love square but in deeper level it intends to blur the boundary of conventional gender roles. The description and action of the major characters interrogates the traditional description and action of male and female. In other words, their action subverts the conventional gender roles. Bathsheba Everden and Gabriel Oak possess the dual qualities of male and female. For instance, Bathsheba runs a farm, she rides horse, chooses life partner by her own and rescues the life of Gabriel from a room full of smoke. She is a kind of "woman hero" rather than "heroine" because she makes significant choices concerning her own destiny. In addition, Gabriel being a male character his first appearance is compared with rising moon but moon is usually compared with female. He is very calm and supporting male character of the novel.

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Whenever Bathsheba becomes frustrated, he provides sympathy to her and suggests her as necessary. His stability, eternality and feelings which is related to female principles presents his complete consciousness. Gabriel takes care of newborn lambs and one of the new born lambs revives in his warm lap which intends to show one of the major feminine quality “movement toward origin” which reflects that isolated from feminine sensibility, male assertiveness tends to be misuse. Combination of masculine and feminine characteristics of both these characters is the source of poly-gender in their behavior. Instead of presenting traditional gender roles, they are more inclined to demonstrate characteristics reminiscent of both.

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The gender roles of this era can be understood from varied roles ascribed to the two genders, the male and the female. Patriarchal system was the norm and woman usually led a secluded, private life. A man, on the other hand, was supposed to have possessed all kinds of freedom and was usually the head of the family. He was considered as the protector, brave and hard working. But a woman was considered to be shy, weak, and emotional compared to men. She was supposed to be pure and quiet. The concept of ideal woman is one of the products of this era. The public and private spheres of this era justify the genders inequality. According to Alex Owen, “Despite the fact that gender categories are always open to contestation, and that there were underlying tensions in nineteenth century thinking about femininity, the idea of female power remained problematic for a Victorian ideology of womanhood which stressed a quite different ethic” (6). Though the fact presents that gender is open to ‘contestation’, there was conflict regarding the gender roles in the nineteenth century for femininity. Throughout the period womanhood was problematic, and it was under the pressure of Victorian ideology.

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In Victorian England, the sexuality of an individual was deeply connected

with the social life. The understanding was based on social convention and social roles, as it was creating psychological repression to women. Women were assigned the role of submission and this was constantly being executed by society in general, and as a consequence, women's access to public culture, education and leisure was very limited and subject to various controversies. According to Alex Owen, "The concept of womanly woman and her moral mission was very to most spiritual hearts" (8). The notion of female passivity, a negative attribute constructed in opposition to so called masculine power. Woman as an angelic creature whose rightful sphere of influence was home and domesticity. During the Victorian period the concept of physical gender role was much prominent, and identity was also related with it.

In addition, Victorian era due to change and development is called the 'century of hope'. A new order was being created in which all mankind was to inherit a life of greater freedom and greater potency for self-realization. Mary Poovey in *Uneven Developments: The Ideological work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* argues, "The Victorian period was both contested and always under construction; because it was always open to revision, dispute, and the emergence of oppositional formulation" (3). This period was under construction and society was moving towards change with multiple factors. In general, the factors regarding the shaping of mind (mental activity) of age are the doctrine of utilitarianism; the theory of evolution; and the third the newer idealism which owed its inspiration to the Kantian philosophy. These are the prominent factors for shaping Victorian mind.

The Victorian era saw an explosion in invention and technological change around the world and this fundamental change taking place in the world meant progress, and were source of hope. So, literature of this period is concerned with social changes as well as social reform. Lauren M.E. Goodlad argues that "Victorian

novelists strove to imagine an androgynous ethical standpoint that we have yet to realize” (223). Although, Victorian period in one hand was facing the discrimination regarding the male and female gender roles but in other hand the creative writers of this period were attempting to resolve the problem of gender discrimination through representation of androgynous character. For the majority of writers and thinkers, the prevalent inequality of Victorian society was a kind of illness and they saw it as their duty to speak out against the injustice.

The period from 1840 to 1850s provides a glimpse of the specific ways in which gender was simultaneously constructed, deployed and contested. Further Goodlad argues that “Yet mid Victorian literature is itself a rich site for a theory of androgynous ethical competence. Although major work of the period often sanctions or even sanctify separate spheres, they also cultivate potentially radicalizing gender experiment across a range of genres” (219). The mid-Victorian era witnessed many changes in society and culture as well. So, the literary creation of this era is also a rich site for many theories including theoretical notion on androgyny. The major works of Victorian era provide the notion of separate gender roles and experiments regarding gender roles. Major literary creation of mid-Victorian era targets towards the androgynous representation. However, the society was divided into two different spheres, regarding the duties of males and females. The literary writers were experimenting with gender roles beyond the boundaries.

The portrayal of Bathsheba and Gabriel and unity of feminine and masculine qualities in both of them proves Hardy’s attempt to imagine the society without gender discrimination; it is a call for the establishment of gender balanced society. There must be harmony between two characters traits (masculine and feminine) that is the main focus of the novel. Androgynous character is the embodiment of behavior

where positive traits of both male and female work harmoniously in a single individual. Hardy's female hero, Bathsheba Everdene disrupts the grand tradition of heroism. She is as energetic and active like male heroes who breaks traditional meek beautiful virgin heroines and who are obedient to men. She also challenges conventional heroism which has always valued only the males. She chooses the best human qualities from male and female domains and mocks the male heroes. Also, the male character Gabriel's action in the novel makes a departure from the notion of 'manly man'. He possesses the positive qualities of feminine characteristic and stays calm throughout the story of the novel. This feminine representation categorizes female quality for the ideal society. Gabriel idealizes the exalted feminine qualities such as love, unity, self-sacrifice and such qualities symbolically equalizes woman's position. It shows androgyny is the state of interconnection and egoless bliss. Androgyny and association appear here as an alternative way to symbolize a harmonized society.

Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* explicitly sheds light on the matter of gender role during the Victorian era. The plots of his novels revolve around female protagonists who are the victims of social norms. Regarding women, Hardy in his novel, refers to the differences that are gender based and are constructed. He satirizes that the submissive attitude of woman which is the important part of women's character are gender based rather than sex based. He critically depicts that we live in a gendered society which is male dominated, and women occupy secondary position.

By putting women in miserable condition, he indirectly targets the social set up that is in dire need of reformation and improvement. Poovey contends, "In the nineteenth century, the social construction of women became central tenet for the spate of writings . . . arguing that women had been oppressed and exploited by the

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patriarchal order of the society, which defined them other” (5). The portrayal of androgynous characters in Hardy’s novel not only attacks on the conventional gender roles but also assists to shape the Victorian mentality.

The division of the society into the two poles, regarding gender roles which Victorian society had created, seems to be blurred in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Bathsheba, being a female character occupies primary position in the novel; she is with all the characteristics of the emerging womanhood. She challenges the conventional feminine quality and threatens the masculinist ideology of womanhood. She is represented by Hardy as a proud, spirited and virile. Bathsheba’s female masculinity displays an unconventional performance of woman. While Judith Halberstam does not explicitly define female masculinity, it is understood as describing “women who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine” (xi). In short, Halberstam theorizes on females’ “masculinity without men”. Bathsheba’s agency is an expression of her female masculinity throughout the novel.

The present research intendeds to highlight some of the new ideas related to gender issues. It shows that the label of pessimism with reference to Hardy’s philosophy is an old cliché as tragedy in the world of Hardy is not the result of his pessimistic attitude rather than his environment which was full of pain and suffering that he depicted with empathic approach. Hardy is a modern novelist as he concentrates on the current issues such as gender, class, social and psychological disorders. According to Ruth “Thomas Hardy’s early novels show in embryo many of the characteristics to be found in the later masterpieces” (332). The conventional criticism highlights the negative aspects of Hardy’s art, whereas the present research deviates from the stereotypical criticism which restricted his approach to pessimism, fatalism, and atheism. Hardy’s creation is manifestation of his awareness of the

inequality and injustice against women.

The works of Thomas Hardy have been explicitly associated with matters of gender. This is because these works confront with the ideas about sexual differences that were influential in Hardy's own time, and because his vivid but strange representations of sexual desire have continually attracted the response of readers. Kristin Brady stated, "To study the changing response to gender in Hardy's published works from 1871 was to trace a fairly detailed history of the ways in which sexuality had been constructed within the British Isles and North America since the late Victorian period" (22). The work of Hardy presents not only the details of Victorian period but also sheds light on the concept and construction regarding sexuality of the contemporary period. To speak of the understanding about sexuality is to speak of gender, though sexuality may be seen to exist in the reality, the experience of sexuality is always mediated and produced by culture. Judith Butler also argues that "gender is the performance of sexuality within culture" (3). Gender is the social classification of male and female. Gendered notion refers to the inequalities between men and women. Kimmel explains, "Sex is male and female; gender is masculinity and femininity- what it means to be a man and woman" (31). The word gender is now being used sociologically or culturally. Gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, the ways society distinguishes men and women and assigns them social roles.

Gender is a vast subject of study. It is the matter of culture. Simone de Beauvoir remarks in *The Second Sex*, "One is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes a woman"(qtd. in Butler 48). For her gender is socially and culturally constructed. Woman becomes woman due to cultural compulsion of one but it does not come from sex. Gender is matter of social classification.

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It is the performance that determines gender. One of the major concerns of Hardy through this idea is that he attempts to/ step beyond his period. The use of 'androgynous characters' dismantles the hierarchy regarding gender roles. According to John Stuart Mill, "Androgyny also served to formulate a philosophy of history based on the ideas that humanity has been corrupted by immoral passions and that the highest characters have the duty to regenerate society by reeducating individuals and reforming social institutions" (633). Mill accepts the concept of androgyny circulating in the intellectual life of the time. For him the representation of androgyny as a 'highest character' assist to reform the corrupt social norms. Belief in androgyny is a basis for his principle of equality and justice in human relationships. The survival and marriage between Gabriel and Bathsheba towards the end of the novel demands the harmony in society

. William Mistichelli is one of the modern literary scholars who highlights the issue of androgyny in the article "Androgyny, Survival, and Fulfillment in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*". According to Mistichelli:

The relevance of sexual mixing and reversal is at the center of the novel's action and theme. Androgyny in its various manifestations colors the conflicts which arise among the major characters and contributes significantly to their resolution. The transference of sexual traits-the adoption by women of attitudes or roles commonly held to be exclusively male, or vice-versa-in one sense promises a greater share of creative power and self-determination. At the same time, because these choices run counter to that which is socially condoned, they pose a serious threat to those who engage in them. (54)

Mistichelli provides some insights related to theme and structure of the story.

Bathsheba's possession of male attribute and Gabriel's adaptation of female attribute

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according to textual attention and action is the representative of androgynous persons. The presence of both traits in an individual assists to redefine gender issues and dismantle the hierarchy regarding male and female. Along with the adaptation of opposite roles of gender there come lots of hurdles and problems for survival in society is one of the arguments of Mistichelli. He connects androgynous to survival in the society.

The pattern and references of the novel offer a profusion of meanings that discloses things that perfect rigidly conceptualized sexual boundaries. Bathsheba and Oak are not dominated by their sex rather they are flexible and accumulate according to situation. Hardy urges a return to the female principle, but not at the expense of the masculine mode of being. It also aims to attain a balance between the mind and the body. Androgyny is imagined as a seamless reconciliation of difference, while in *Far from the Madding Crowd* gender distinctions are maintained even as they intermix, implying the fundamental differences that alternate but cannot be transcended. The text associate to the contemporary society and the androgyny section of the novel examining obstacles encountered by Hardy who is conscious of the issue regarding gender.

Furthermore, the historical movement in which Hardy wrote was not much progressive regarding the depiction of marriage and gender. His novels are about the incredibly simple, deprived and courageous women. The core of his novels in heroin's struggle for survival in the hostile world. Grace Wetzel, regarding the representation of 'androgyny' in the novel *Far from the Madding Crowd*, states:

From the opening of story, Bathsheba exhibits characteristic traditionally associated with masculinity. She dominates relationships, refuses to hire a male bailiff, and deploys enough acumen. Furthermore, she views femininity as an

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encumbrance. Confronted by her feelings for an unworthy man. Bathsheba's masculinity reaches its height during her fiery reproach of her maidservant Liddy, who responds by characterizing her mistress in androgynous term. (281)

Bathsheba is presented as an intellectual, daring, self-conscious and modern new woman. She possesses the masculine characteristics. The relationship she desires with men is friendship.

The combination of sexuality and masculine qualities in Bathsheba's character exemplifies a new characterization of woman. Hardy through the representation of female character challenges the Victorian idea of female purity. His fiction offers a great potential for an analysis of a gender framework in which women are the mediating link between men. According to Dana K. Kinnison "Bathsheba is characterized as 'Amazonian' a traditionally mythical figure and 'death dealing warrior'" (282). The Amazonian female represents energy and aggressive qualities. They blur the traditional boundaries of gender by pursuing the conventional male qualities. As Bathsheba's behavior signifies masculine behavior and secures the property inheritance from her uncle, she carries mythical association with Amazonian masculine women.

Though the novel depicts the combination of two gender attributes. Some critics shows the combination of two gender related to ambiguity of life regarding gender roles. According to Linda M. Shires, "From its publication, *Far from the Madding Crowd* generated, like other novels by Hardy, a paper trail on gender, sex, and power. But more than others, it encouraged comment and confusion about gender-both that of its author and that of its hero and heroine, Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba Everdene" (163). For Shires the present novel, unlike other novels of Hardy, depicts the issues related to gender, sex and power which is very common in

in his creation. However, for her the novel presents confusion regarding gender roles. Shires comments on *Far from the Madding Crowd* regarding the representation of male gaze. For her this novel “provides a perfect example of this fascination, and many readers have commented on the repetition of gazing. Gazing is most prominent in this novel when the male looks at the female, as in the inauguration of the story when Gabriel watches Bathsheba who is preening in a mirror” (167). Shires’s comment focuses on just male gaze and it represents the conventional masculine attributes of Victorian period. There is domination of just one value rather than equality.

Hardy expresses empathy regarding the treatment of women in contemporary society, who were subject to social and sexual vulnerability. According to Stephen Regan, “Thomas Hardy repeatedly shaped his characters and plots to show his sympathy with women and his awareness of the disadvantages society laid upon them” (344). Most of his fictions revolve around female protagonists. Hardy blames the contemporary society dominated by patriarchy and rigid rules. He also targets to combine the good qualities of male and female to break the rigid rules of society and dismantle the two different poles of gender. According to Kamen, “Hardy believes that gender is socially constructed, and it is manmade phenomenon. He also shows that the status of men and women in a society is culturally and socially determined” (166). In Victorian era the roles of two genders were determined by biology and such belief was prevalent in society. Though they were naturalized, Hardy promotes the idea that the different attributes of male and female are the products of culture rather than nature. Hardy revolts against such social norms and values and his novel deals with the struggle of women for survival. The female protagonist struggles against

patriarchal social order to become a whole person.

Throughout the novel the description of nature and of man within nature calls upon Hardy's quest for the harmony and his acute sensitivity. The valorization of natural world and its power suggests that nature does not create discrimination rather it is human society which creates discrimination. Though a human is born with both masculine and feminine qualities, the society defines it biologically. Hargreaves quotes Plato's *Symposium* that formerly human was only sex then divided in two in her book *Androgyny in Modern Literature*.

First then, human beings were formerly not divided into two sexes, male and female; there was also a third, common to both others, the name of which remains, though the sex itself has disappeared. The androgynous sex, both in appearance and in name, was common to both male and female; its name alone labours under a reproach. (15)

She argues that first there were only human beings and later they were divided in two sexes: males and females. Human being was as androgynous as third sex, common to both sexes. The name as it is has both features in appearance. They have feeling of double sexes and act like that. The combination of feminine and masculine in the performance is androgynous.

The title *Far from the Madding Crowd* is taken from an eighteenth-century poem by Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written on a Country Churchyard" and the line is like "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife." Here crowd is intended to indicate the country life. But Hardy's title is ironic: rather than depicting the stereotypes of pastoral calm, his novel uses those images as tool to portray the conflicting things of different life. The characters struggle to overpowering laws of nature and its creature. Hardy's novels are generally known as the novel of co-existence of characters and

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nature.

Hardy's protagonist is only by gender a heroine. Conventional ideas that can be expected from heroin heroines as a woman who need saving from their savior, have become opposite for Bathsheba. By becoming her own hero, she becomes an androgyny. The eventual refusal to be stereotyped demonstrates how she is an androgynous character. Bathsheba refuses to follow all the conventions and creates her own identity. According to Sarah Nicholson:

As a writing subject Hardy projects himself onto his female characters, appropriating female subjectivity and performing fictive acts to construct examining genders which subvert cultural restrictions on existence and behavior. The effect which this has in Hardy's novels has been noted by others: for example, *Far from the Madding Crowd* points to an androgyny in narrative voice, which involves 'an attempt to make the central female characters the subjects of their own experience, rather than the instruments of a man's. (32)

Bathsheba, the central female character of the novel is beyond the other female characters. She is bold enough in tough situation. Hardy sees the necessity of freeing woman from the tyranny of contemporary repressive patriarchal society. Bathsheba faces many difficulties in her new way of life to a new state. Mistichelli defines Bathsheba, "just as Bathsheba is called both 'mate' and 'sir' so, too is she alludes to as Amazonian" (53). There are two qualities that strengthen Bathsheba's androgynous nature and help her claim to manliness: her chastity and her demand to be taken seriously as a farm owner. In scene after scene, Bathsheba proves herself better than her male counterparts and forces them to see her as she wishes to be seen, controlling not only the situation, but her own destiny. She identifies with the male aspects of being human. The reason for her identification with the masculine side of

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her psyche can be traced when she inherits her uncle's large farm, provides job to other male characters and runs the business in a proper way. As Halbestram argues that "When woman perform masculinity, they reveal it to artificial rather than immanent, which violets the dominant conception of masculinity in western culture as not a construction, but rather the thing itself" (27). Because gender is a process that is materialized on and through body, it is possible to unmake it and expose the ways in which it works to create cultural function of identity.

Bathsheba saves Gabriel's life by rescuing him from the smoky hut and assists him to welcome the new life. She is a good farmer and a very strong enough to struggle with problems and hurdles. Bathsheba also disrupts the grand tradition of heroism. She is as energetic and active like male hero, and destabilizes the notion of traditional meek beautiful virgin heroine who is not submissive to men. She also challenges conventional heroism which has always valued only the males. She chooses the best human qualities from male and female domains and mocks at gender-biased view of heroism.

Judith Halberstam's notion on female masculinity paves way to recognize the masculinity in more explicit way. In this regard, Halberstam claims:

'Heroic masculinity' depends absolutely on the subordination of alternative masculinities. I claim that far from being an imitation of maleness, female masculinity actually affords us glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity. In other word female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be real thing. (1)

Bathsheba's exhibition of half maleness and half femaleness in the novel represents the wholeness of society. Her heroic act of masculinity illuminates the idea of how masculinity is created in the society. The performance of masculinity by female

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character is framed as the 'rejected scraps of dominant masculinity' by society.

During the course of the story she acts much like a conventional male character. She inherits her uncle's farm and runs it properly. The other male character like Oak and Poorgrass work for her. Even for her marriage she chooses her life partner by herself. However, she becomes the victim of hyper-masculinity by Troy and Boldwood, she never give up hope and struggle to find further good things.

Bathsheba is ambitious, independent, headstrong, determined and free-spirited. From the very beginning, she makes it known that she could never become any man's property, and she never shows any interest in getting married. In fact, she once says, "Well what I mean is that I shouldn't mind being a bride at a wedding, if I could be one without having a husband. But since a woman can't show off in that way by herself, I shan't marry- at least yet" (33). She defies expectation for women during 1870s. As her this decision shows that she is aware that as a woman, getting married would be triumph in the eyes of society, but the idea of becoming property of a husband, to whom all of her possessions and assets would pass upon marriage, is unacceptable to her. She enjoys performing masculinity, there is power in masculinity, freedom that is unknown to woman of that time. She develops masculine qualities during this stage and in doing so she also develops self-maturity. Bathsheba disrupts the normal masculine-male and feminine-female separation because she is a beautiful woman who chooses to occupy traditionally male domains instead of marrying and relegating herself to the traditional duties of wife.

It is most appropriate that Bathsheba is a representative of male attribute because this novel presents various turn of the century attitude toward masculinity as well. Bathsheba's female masculinity displays an unconventional performance of woman. While Judith Halberstam describes "woman who feel themselves more

masculine than feminine” (xi). Masculinity, she says, is nothing more than “the social and cultural and indeed political expression of maleness” (1). In short, For Halberstam analyzes masculinity without men. Bathsheba’s agency is an expression of her female masculinity, her social cultural, and political power steams from her performance or female masculinity throughout the novel. Her this performance is a threat to patriarchy of Victorian England. The Victorians did not support female masculinity, gender was binary and ascribed to one sex, which was making patriarchy easy to suppress the woman. Masculine female implied woman seeking to be equal to men politically and socially, and if they succeeded, then patriarchy, which is based on the domination of woman by men, might collapse.

Bathsheba threatens patriarchy by performing female masculinity. She even experiences instances where her masculinity performance leads to her welcomed as a man. Her behavior is problematic because, masculinity, as Halberstam says, “inevitable conjures up notion of power and legitimacy and privilege and females are not allowed to access that power” (2). Bathsheba manage to obtain this power through her inheritance of property and money. Because of the sovereignty, she does not have problem performing masculinity. Bathsheba is skilled at managing her farm and employee. She is up before the workers in the morning and superintends the property at night. On market day, in arguing in price, “she held to her own firmly, as was natural in a dealer, and reduced theirs persistently” (71). She enjoys the power and freedom that masculinity grants her.

It is important to note that, throughout the novel, there are many scenes featuring Bathsheba mounted on horse or a horse drawn vehicle. These scenes are very indicative of her gender performance. The horse is a symbol of masculinity and power throughout the novel. Oak’s interaction with Bathsheba in the scene where he

is informed the master of the farm is a woman, “where is your master the farmer? Asked Gabriel, kindling with the idea of getting employment that seemed to strike him now. Tisn’t a master; tis a mistress, shepherd. A woman farmer?” (38). It is the scene where her masculinity is emphasized, and her power is presented. In this scene she is in control. She is elevated above because she is the master. Society had inculcated women with the belief that a woman had no status except as a daughter or a wife. Despite all these things Bathsheba is a master which breaks the tradition of contemporary society.

Despite being biologically female, Bathsheba has male's quality as well. For her androgyny means rejecting societal definition of masculine and feminine boundary. Societal definition makes limited to gender in specifies works but protagonist rejects that definition and performance of male roles that makes her androgyny character. She does not limit earlier definition rather goes beyond in heroic action of discovery. So, she subverts traditional gender roles and establishes gender as androgynous. In third chapter Bathsheba is presented as riding horse, “she seated herself in the manner demanded by the saddle, though hardly expected of the woman, and trotted off in the direction of Tewnell Mill” (26). Her sitting on horseback during Victorian period was hardly expected by society. She rejects cultural inheritance restricted definition of womanliness. She fractured the social definition of woman. She is liberated woman.

Further when the discussion between Oak and Bathsheba take place in chapter xxix and Bathsheba says to Oak, “I wish you to go elsewhere, do not remain on this farm any longer. I don’t want you. I shall have no bailiff; I shall continue to be my own manager”(184). She becomes aggressive when Oak tries to convince her in the matter of Boldwood. Her attitude subverts the conventional, timid attitude of female

character. Bathsheba's performance with both masculinity and femininity to create a multilayered impression of character, yet she posed a particular challenge to the construction of maleness.

Her cross-gender performance violates a cultural taboo and shows that masculinity is not the exclusive property of biologically male bodies. By highlighting the instability of masculinity, Bathsheba problematizes the cultural myth that sex, defined as the biological differences between males and females, dictates gender, which refers to the cultural meanings that are assigned to sexed bodies. Carolyn Heilbrun, in *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, finds the concept of necessary for transforming rigid gender categories, "Androgyny suggests a spirit of reconciliation between the sexes; it suggests, further, a full range of experience open to individual who may, as women, be aggressive, as men, tender, it suggests a spectrum upon which human being choose their places without regard to propriety or custom" (44). The androgyny represents the ideal integration of masculine and feminine in the psyche of individual, a state called wholeness. It calls for the persons of both sexes to adopt the positive characteristics or attributes to the opposite sex.

The illustration manner of Hardy's female character Bathsheba is a protagonist of the novel because she propels the plot through her action. Living in the nineteenth century England she is able to be so impendent and the sign of her independence can be seen when she decides to ride the horse, 'like a man'. In the second chapter when Bathsheba says in the elder woman response of ridding horse without side saddle that "I can ride on the other: trust me" (24). This statement by Bathsheba shows her masculine traits within her. As Judith Halberstam insists that "Masculinity is multiple and that far from just being men, the idea of masculinity engages, infects, and shapes everyone" (14). Bathsheba performs masculine role

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which presents an alternative model of masculinity. It shifts our attention from a beautiful body to a virile body. Her masculine attitude is tempered by an awareness of the need to present herself as a relatively conventional masculine figure in Victorian social world. Bathsheba rejects her cultural inheritance along with its restrictive definition of 'womanliness', she certainly does not become a being who is biologically a part of male. Androgyny, for her, means finally refusing to be fractured by societal definition of what she, as a woman, should or should not be.

This demand of the concept of androgynous in Hardy's novel is not accidental rather it is intentional. According to Karen Kaivola:

This transformation of the androgynous ideal, which in the Romantic period had functioned as a symbol of unity, into a late Victorian period sign of cultural chaos demonstrates that, given certain historical and ideological pressures, the conceptual boundary between the androgyny and the hermaphrodite is fragile and unstable. Moreover, the fate of androgyny in the period of nineteenth century is not accident: it is intertwined with social processes. (241)

There was a chaos in Victorian society regarding the gender role. The gender polarity, in other words, discrimination regarding masculinity and femininity created a vast gap in the way of development. So, Hardy as a creative writer intends to provide a new way through the depiction of androgynous character. For a proper harmony between the sexes, this unity is important.

Far from the Madding Crowd begins with a description of farmer Gabriel Oak, a man just out of youth who established himself as a sheep farmer in the past years, putting all of his saving into livestock. One day he catches sight of a woman in a carriage and, while she thinks she is alone, he watches her admire herself in the

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mirror. This initial character sketch emphasizes the everyday nature of the world that Hardy is creating, one that will deal in grand question of fate, judgment, and morality. The holding of mirror confirms to stereotypes about woman's vanity.

The early pages of the novel serve as introduction of Oak and his meeting with Bathsheba Everdene and linking them to crucial aspects of male and female's roles. They constitute a rich example of Hardy's conception of the complex role whose vision plays in life and in society. The description of Oak's behavior, character and views contrasts with the conventional role of male. Hardy's representation of that appeal draws somewhat haphazardly on conflicting discourses of the feminine. The ability to combine masculine and feminine traits is contained within Oak and it can be glanced through the depiction in the novel, "Gabriel's face rising like the moon behind the hedge" (27). This feminine description of Oak indicates toward the combination of masculine and feminine traits. The novel reveals that it is easier for Hardy to imagine the dissolution of gender by challenging conventional gender roles.

Gabriel Oak is one of the major characters, a skillful, hardworking, and honest young farmer in Hardy's novel *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Oak is the first of several suitors for the beautiful but seemingly capricious Bathsheba Everdene. Though Bathsheba rejects his love, he remains loyal to her and toward the end of the story both get married. Oak is portrayed to the reader as a heroic character in different ways. In chapter one, there is no action. Alternatively, in the first paragraph, there is description of Oak, which mainly focuses on his broad smile. Hardy portrays Oak, "When Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun" (13). His smile is compared as 'like the

rudimentary sketch of the rising sun'. This immediately implies that he is cheerful, good-natured character. Gabriel is a real 'man of the ground,' he is kind, strong, responsible and loyal. At the same time he is prudent and persistent in his decisions and actions. At all points, he is a virtuous person.

Sometimes Oak seems too shy, modest, and constantly obsessed with the idea that he should not take much space, and therefore he tries not to attract attention and walks not so much as slouching, but slightly pulling his head in the shoulder: "Oak walked unassumingly, and with a faintly perceptible bent, yet distinct from a bowing of the shoulders" (15). Gabriel Oak, the embodiment of resilience and reliability, is deeply popular and truly national character. His poverty is compensated by the fervent devotion to work and craftsmanship. He pays debt for sheep which reflects his obsession and risk-taking ability. There is sympathy between Gabriel and Everdene. A young man loves Everdene and is devoted to her with all his heart. Nevertheless, Oak being in sincerely in love, does not turn into a rag and does not lose respect for himself. James M. Welsh sketches the character of Oak:

It is a freedom that sets Gabriel Oak apart from such men as Farmer Boldwood and Frank Troy throughout most of the novel. Oak is also in harmony with Nature, as Troy is not. That is why Nature conspires against Troy's attempt to pay a natural tribute to his dead wife in chapter 46. Oak is stoic in the novel, whose strength of character eclipses the obsession and anxieties of the other men in Bathsheba's life. Troy is brought in the novel to test Oak's Stoicism, and Boldwood's weakness is a measure of Oak's strength. He seems to be a paradigm of a man in harmony with his world, one who is able to rise above 'the madding crowd's ignoble strife. (83)

The surname of the character may refer to wood as Oak is strong and durable which may represent his strength and durability. This is stressing the positive quality of

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Oak's character. Unlike other single men in novel, Oak does not spend all his days moping around and wishing he had someone to be with. Instead, he just tends to his business as a farmer as well as he can.

The thing that characterizes Gabriel most consistently in this book that is his quiet and dignified behavior and way he goes about life. No matter how many terrible things happen to him the calmness allows him to appreciate a lot of things in his life more than any other characters of the novel. For example, "Being a man not without frequent consciousness that there was some charm in this life he led, he stood still after looking at the sky as a useful instrument, and regarded it in an appreciative spirit, as a work of art superlatively beautiful" (19). He may just be a farmer and shepherd, but Oak still appreciates the fact that his work keeps him in connection with nature. Even when Gabriel's sheep fall off a cliff and lead him into total bankruptcy, he just draws strength from his experiences and keeps pushing onward.

If there is one thing that really sets Oak apart from other characters in this novel, it is his loyalty to Bathsheba Everdene. Even when Bathsheba rejects his first marriage proposal, he claims, "I shall do nothing in this life, one thing certain that is, love you, and long for you, and keep waiting you till I die" (65). Unlike Troy and Boldwood, Oak is not one to keep irritating Bathsheba with proposal until she relents. He has much dignity to that short of thing, and besides, he does not want Bathsheba to marry him if she does not love him. Oak holds both himself and others to high moral standards, and reversal of fortune over the course of the novel, and he takes his work very seriously.

In chapter two, Gabriel shows his consideration towards others and animals. He takes a newborn lamb into his sheep hut to warm it up before taking it is back to the mother. Hardy depicts this situation as "He returned to the hut, bringing in his arms a

new – born lamb, consisting of four legs large enough for a full-grown sheep, united by a seemingly inconsiderable membrane about half the substance of the legs collectively, which constituted the animal's entire body just as present" (21). In the mid of the second chapter this action of holding the new- born lamb challenges the convention heroic qualities regarding male and provide a glance of hidden feminine traits within him. Though he is the hero of the novel, he blurs the traditional gender role by keeping the feminine quality within him. Unlike traditional hero who represents all the things related to hyper-masculinity, Hardy portrays Oak with combination of both masculine and feminine traits. Rachel Adams and David Savran in the text *The Masculine Studies Reader* argue, "The majority of men are also far behind the masculine ideal and that all human individuals, as a result of their bisexual disposition and of cross inheritance, combine in themselves both masculine and feminine characteristic, so that pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical construction of uncertain content" (20). The idea of masculinity and femininity are social construction and the growing knowledge of gender theorizes it as the uncertain content and all humans contains both the qualities by birth. The combination of masculine and feminine attributes creates a better human being and this idea is proved by Hardy by presenting his major characters in androgynous form.

Throughout the Victorian period the superiority of masculinity and inferiority of femininity was a very prominent thing. On the one hand, males were related to public sphere and females were related to private sphere. But Hardy gives importance to both masculine and feminine qualities and through it he calls for harmony in society. The calm and charming personality of Oak presents a balance. As balance is one of the important features of androgynous character, in this regard Kathryn Pauly Morgan quotes Heilbrun "Androgyny . . . is a human condition in which one behaves

in such a way as to indicate a balance of those characteristics as we have labelled “masculine”: rationality, aggressiveness, courage, energy and those we have labelled “feminine”: gentleness, patience, passivity, intuitiveness” (248). Oak’s action sheds light on this major quality of androgynous character. Androgyny is positively valued trait and demands the combination of both masculine and feminine positively valued traits. Society has labeled some qualities as masculine and some others as feminine and the individual who combines both these labeled qualities is called androgyny. Oak and Bathsheba both combine these labeled qualities and blur the traditional label regarding physical role.

Hardy depicts Oak as caretaker and giver of life. Oak nurses the newborn sheep with great care, which shed light upon his feminine attribute. He maintains the androgyny extends beyond the physical to include the physical and the cosmic in its fullest expression. Hardy in second chapter presents Oak as:

The lamb revived by the warmth, began to bleat, and the sound entered Gabriel’s ears and brain with an instant meaning, as expected sounds will. Passing from the profoundest sleep to the most alert wakefulness with the same ease that had accompanied the reverse operation, he looked at his watch and found that the hour hand -hand had shifted again, put on his hat, took the lamb in his arm, and carried it into the darkness. After placing the little creature with its mother he stood and carefully examined the sky. (22)

This passage is noteworthy for the recognition of androgynous characteristic in male character Gabriel Oak. The emphasis is on the display of personality liberated by sex-role stereotype. For a fully effective and healthy human functioning, both masculinity and femininity must temper by each other, and the two must be integrated into a more balanced form. According to Morgan, “Androgyny is selective ideal, the

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components of which are all positive in value, held together in a kind of balanced personality which is responsive to varying the situations. Androgyny represents ideal mental health” (252). As Oak performs femininity for presenting the wholeness within him and both masculinity and femininity are found in him in a balanced form. He does not detach himself from feminine quality and he acts according to the situation performs the role. His performance represents his ‘ideal mental health’. It is most appropriate that Oak is androgynous because *Far from the Madding Crowd* presents several of the attitudes toward androgynous characteristic.

According to Helen Hacker, men are now expected to demonstrate the manipulative skill in interpersonal relations formerly reserved for women under the heading of institution, charm, tact, coquetry, womanly wiles, et cetera. They are asked to bring patience, understanding, and gentleness to their human dealings. Yet with regard to women they must still be sturdy oaks” (104). Hacker presents the fact that masculinity exists as a symbol of power in man-woman relation. She describes the possible range of masculine type which is more restricted than feminine type and intends to depict that both masculine and feminine are important. Gabriel’s feminine attribute is beyond the power of masculinity and it is much open than masculinity. The combination of labeled feminine attributes such as humble, gentle, thoughtfulness, empathy, patience, institution, vulnerability and careful nature makes Gabriel much liberal than a masculine character.

Throughout the story Gabriel stays calm and supports Bathsheba. There are other male characters in the novel like Troy and Boldwood but they become the victim of rigid hyper-masculinity. There is no flexibility in their attribute and as a result they lose their life. Males who are successful by traditional male standards do not develop important human qualities, such as intimacy or institution. The other

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female character Fanny is bound within the conventional female role and in the middle of the story lose her life. She does not dare to challenge the conventional role and dies. Troy, Boldwood and Fanny all these characters do not go beyond the stereotype of physical role and due to rigidity within them they die. In Victorian fiction these deaths are symbolic. They represent the punishment, initially social and ultimately divine, which awaits the one who break the commonly accepted sexual codes of conduct.

In addition, Bathsheba and Gabriel are flexible in their behavior and challenge the conventional gender role and their bonding toward the end of the story presents highest form of love as well. In "Androgyny in the Novel of Jack London" Clarice Stash states that, "Women and men can, when both have developed 'mature' or androgynous qualities, share in relationship that is the highest form of love, the mate-comradeship" (132). One should allow all potentialities going beyond that is appropriate to one's gender role. The narrow definition of masculinity and femininity repress important aspects of personality. The concept of androgynous is very revolutionary concept which includes masculine and feminine attributes in an individual to create complete human. However, in stereotypical concept, it had made division in human being and raised a boundary within masculine and feminine qualities and this gave birth to an incomplete human being. Hardy's novel illustrates the concept of androgynous and the combination of positive qualities of masculinity and femininity for the production of complete human being.

In short, Hardy has presented the idea that the conventional gender roles and rigidity toward ones gender according to biological appearance is not appropriate. The combination of masculinity and femininity in a single human being makes a human complete. Even though people may define masculine and feminine as polar opposites,

but one should allow all potentialities to be a better human being without thinking about one's appropriate gender role. The existing system of Victorian era's gender role prevented the development of androgyny and prevents both inner security and a sense of self-worth. Opposing a world that produces hierarchy and unevenness, Bathsheba and Gabriel are another set of possibilities to replace those that had conditioned the society. Both characters are free to embrace the qualities of both genders within themselves. In this way, they become perfect androgyny.

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