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Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Transitional Novel from Victorianism to Postmodernism

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Abstract

This article analyses Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* a transitional novel from Victorianism to Postmodernism. As *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is a transitional novel from Victorianism to Postmodernism, Tess grows into a postmodern woman who is not under the control of Angel Clare when her identity is questioned and her morality, loyalty and character are decimated. She decides to live an independent life. She is not dependent on him. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* demonstrates a shift away from the strict Victorian norms towards a more nuanced and introspective narrative, hinting at the emergence of postmodern themes in literature. Tess suffers like a Victorian woman and grows into a postmodern woman. This shows a transition from Victorianism to Postmodernism. This research is qualitative in nature. The novel is the first source of data collection. Books and research articles are secondary sources of data collection. Research approach is inductive. Research technique is interpretive content analysis.

Key words: Victorianism, Postmodernism, Victorian woman, Postmodern woman

Introduction

The transition from Victorianism to postmodernism represents a significant shift in cultural, social, artistic, and philosophical paradigms that occurred over several decades. It marks a transformation in the way people perceived the world and their place in it, as well as how they express themselves through literature, art, architecture, and other forms of creative expression. The transition from Victorianism to postmodernism was not sudden, but rather a gradual evolution.

As the 20th century progressed, social, political, and technological changes began to challenge the certainties and beliefs of the Victorian era. World Wars, rapid urbanization, scientific discoveries, and an increasing awareness of cultural diversity all contributed to a more fragmented and uncertain worldview. Postmodernism, as a reaction to these changes, seeks to explore and express the complexities of the modern condition by breaking away from the established norms of the Victorian period. The Victorian era, which spanned from the early to mid-19th century and early 20th century, was characterised by a set of values and beliefs that emphasised morality, tradition, industrialization, and a belief in progress. Postmodernism, on the other hand, emerges as a response and reaction to the modernist movement of the early 20th century, but it fully comes into its own in the mid to late 20th century. Postmodernism is an intellectual and artistic movement that is often characterised by a rejection of absolute truth, questioning of grand narratives, and a distrust of authority and established structures. Victorianism was marked by a belief in absolute truth and moral certainties. However, with the advent of the postmodern era, there is a growing scepticism towards the idea of objective truth and universal moral values. Postmodern thinkers emphasize the relativity of knowledge and the subjectivity of experience. Victorianism embraced grand narratives that explained progress of the world and development. Postmodernism rejects such meta-narratives, viewing them as oppressive and exclusionary. Instead, postmodern thinkers emphasise the diversity of experiences and the existence of multiple perspectives.

Postmodernism celebrates cultural diversity and promotes inclusivity. It questions the dominance of Western values and seeks to give voice to marginalised groups and non-Western cultures. Victorian literature and art often upheld serious moral and ethical values. In contrast, postmodern works challenge established norms and conventions. Postmodernism sees the rise of philosophical movements like deconstruction and post structuralism, which seek to challenge and analyse the underlying assumptions in language, culture, and power structures.

This research critiques Victorian morality and social norms while exploring more complex and ambiguous themes, which are characteristic of postmodern literature. Tess embodies a more realistic and flawed protagonist, moving away from idealised Victorian heroines, aligning with postmodern character portrayals. The novel questions traditional institutions and societal norms, reflecting the postmodern tendency to challenge established power structures. Ambiguity in moral judgments reflects the postmodern rejection of absolute truth, allowing readers to interpret the narrative in different ways. These elements demonstrate how *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* exhibits characteristics of both Victorian and postmodern literature, making it a transitional novel between the two literary periods. In terms of Victorianism, the novel addresses societal issues, class distinctions, and the plight of women during that time. Tess seems to be submissive to Angel Clare. A Victorian woman was supposed to be under the control of a man. She was deprived of her freedom. As a Victorian woman, she lives a life like Angel's slave. She obeys what Angel orders her to do and tells him, "I shan't do anything unless you order me to" (270). Tess's struggles and the moral judgment she faces reflect the Victorian emphasis on social conventions and the consequences of perceived immorality. However, the novel also exhibits postmodern elements. It challenges the notion of absolute truth and presents multiple perspectives on characters and events. As *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is a transitional novel from Victorianism to Postmodernism, Tess grows into a postmodern woman who is not under the control of Angel Clare when her identity is questioned and her morality, loyalty and character are decimated.

Literature Review

Peng (2021) investigates that freedom appears to be a mere fantasy for Tess in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, which is generally viewed as a reflection of Thomas Hardy's deterministic view of the universe. Determinism is the philosophical idea that every event, including human actions, is determined by preceding causes or natural laws. In other words, it suggests that the current state of the universe, along with the laws of nature, uniquely determines all future events. This concept raises questions about free will and the extent to which individuals have control over their actions and choices. Hardy seems to be influenced by the idea that human lives are shaped by external forces, such as social class and environment, rather than solely by individual choices. In his novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy portrays characters who struggle against fate and circumstances, often meeting tragic ends despite their efforts. His writing suggests a belief in the power of destiny and the limitations of human agency in the face of larger forces.

Node & Solanki (2020) interpret Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in light of the deconstruction theory of Jacques Derrida, and the theory of evolution advocated by Charles Darwin in his book *The Origin of Species*. Deconstruction theory, often associated with philosopher Jacques Derrida, challenges the idea of fixed meanings in language and texts. It suggests that language is inherently unstable and that words have multiple meanings. Deconstruction seeks to reveal contradictions and underlying assumptions in texts, highlighting how meanings can shift and unravel. *The Origin of Species* is a book written by Charles Darwin and was published in 1859. In this work, Darwin introduced his theory of natural selection as the mechanism for the process of evolution. The book laid out the idea that species change over time through the gradual accumulation of small variations, with those best adapted to their environment surviving and passing on their traits to the next generation. Tess is not able to adapt to her environment to pass on her traits to the next generation.

Fong (2019) points out that Tess's life symbolises her loss and destruction like the flowers on her child's grave. Tess, who loses her child, requests permission from the local priest to give her baby a Christian burial. Thanks to the pride and foolishness of Tess's father when the child is ill, the baby Sorrow is falsely baptised and is thus not given proper service under the laws of the church as her father decides not to give permission to any priest to baptise the baby. So Tess decides to baptise her child herself. The priest is also not willing to baptise an illegitimate child. Tess requests the priest to tell her if her baptism of the child is the same as the priest himself does. They (Tess and priest) agree on the important point that her doing of baptismal performance is exactly the same as if he had done it on his own, and her child is safely placed in paradise. When the young mother pushes the priest to do it practically, he refuses to do. She needs to bury her child herself. In night time, Tess buries her child next to the graves of the unchristened with only a container of flowers and a wooden cross to mark the place.

Nuruzzaman (2017) investigates that Tess in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* has an intimate bond with nature. One observes the portrayal of her progressive development to live in nature's control. Her whole life is in nature's control. She struggles to change her life but nature acts against all her struggles. Her life depends on chances and coincidences. This forms her life and remains in close touch with nature at every stage of her life. Tess recognises

herself as a true part of nature and always finds herself in midst of nature. The cycle of seasons correlates with the vagaries of her life, and likewise the landscape corresponds secretly with critical events of her life. Winter represents her gloomy life and spring gives her hope.

Fatima (2016) points out that Tess's parents view her as a selling product as they want Tess to give them material benefits. Not only to claim kinship, but to ensure a better life for her entire family, they send Tess to d'Urbervilles. Her family focuses on the items, Tess can get. As a seller makes his product appealing to draw customers, Tess's mother dresses her in the same way before sending her to Trantridge. Her mother is convinced that Tess can boost her family's economic condition. Her mother clearly says "her face" when asked what is Tess's main weapon. Joan's comment suggests that she is using her daughter as a means to better her own economic standing. The family treats her as an item all through the novel. After being abused by Alec, she is rebuked by her mother when she returns home for why she comes back rather than standing in solidarity with her daughter.

Tumanov (2013) observes that males are classified into two types: the dad and the cad. The former group consists of men who want to live with families and avoid the risk of raising other males' offspring, whereas the latter group consists of men who prioritise short-term mating. The dad provides paternal care, whereas the cad values quantity over quality. Angel and Alec are assigned to the aforementioned categories. Angel wants to make Tess a part of her family and have a long-term mating relationship with her, whereas Alec enjoys sex with Tess for a short period of time so Alec is cad. Angel aspires to be a responsible husband who is dad, while Alec aspires to be a sexual lover and he is cad.

Mohammad & Khalis (2013) on the other hand opine that Tess is seductive when she has the opportunity to satisfy her various desires. She seduces Angel and Alec who fall in love with her, and they fall prey to the temptations she offers. This element of seduction and irresponsibility pushes Tess Durbeyfield's "blemished part" to the background. She is portrayed that Alec seduces her and Angel is attracted towards her. She has been depicted in her natural colours, as a self-aware individual. To those who judge and brand her according to conventional purity ideals, she is "a blemished woman", but otherwise she is a challenging "Seductive Eve". "Seductive Eve" is a literary term used to describe the character of Eve. It refers to her role in the narrative as a temptress who entices Adam to eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, leading to their expulsion from paradise. This term highlights her alluring and persuasive nature in the context of the fall of man. It seems that Tess is responsible for seducing two men (Alec and Angel). She is also responsible for their sufferings. A "blemished woman" is a woman who is marked and spoiled by a flaw or by multiple flaws. Tess has her own character flaws. She is responsible for her destruction. She is careless and trusts Alec blindly. She herself reveals her past to Angel. Due to Hardy's devotion to a living, breathing, and conscious woman, Tess is exempted from external criteria of judgement. She cannot be judged by the members of her society. Her love for life pulsates through her veins until she is captured and hanged, and blood becomes cold.

Shires (1999) points out that Hardy's portrayal of his characters is obviously stereotypical and non-stereotypical. Stereotypical characters are those that conform to widely held and simplified beliefs or traits associated with a particular group, often lacking depth or complexity. Non-stereotypical characters, on the other hand, break away from these preconceived notions and exhibit unique, multidimensional qualities that defy expectations. Creating non-stereotypical characters can lead to more diverse and authentic storytelling. In Tess of the d'Urbervilles, the character of Tess herself can be seen as both a stereotypical and non-stereotypical character. Stereotypically, she has the role of a "fallen woman" in Victorian literature due to her circumstances and choices. However, Tess also challenges stereotypes by showing complexity, resilience, and moral conflict. Characters like Alec d'Urberville and Angel Clare can also be seen as both conforming to and subverting certain stereotypes within the context of the novel. The character so stereotypically and non-stereotypically portrayed, is Alec who plays new roles as the story progresses. He becomes a seducer and a preacher. He seduces Tess and then preaches Christian teachings to enlighten people. Angel leaves Tess on the basis of her loss of virginity but he accepts Tess who is not virgin after a long separation from her.

The novel has been discussed from different perspectives as needed in the literature review. However, the researcher finds that Tess of the d'Urbervilles has not been reviewed from postmodernist perspectives which can explore Tess's character and the novel itself from a different angle. The proposed study fills this gap and is an attempt to analyse Victorian and Postmodern aspects of the novel. It interprets the protagonist's postmodern thoughts and her transformation from a Victorian woman to a postmodern woman.

Research Methodology/ Theoretical Framework

This qualitative study focuses on providing answers to the why and how questions to examine Victorian morality, chastity, and purity from a postmodern standpoint. Qualitative research emphasizes the subjective component of all knowledge and research, places a premium on holistic coherence, and disdains the idea that knowledge can be generalized because it is based on the fundamental relativism of all knowledge (Nunan, 1998).

The inductive methodology, which is closely related to qualitative research, is adopted by the researcher. It starts with developing research objectives and questions, which are then carefully examined to discover patterns through the process of critical observation, ultimately leading to a particular theory. It is essentially a data-driven methodology that starts without assumptions and forbids the researcher's cultural and intellectual prejudices from influencing the process of data collection and its interpretation, yet it has the potential to produce fresh research assumptions (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 30).

This exploratory study, which seeks to interpret *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* through the prisms of Victorianism and Postmodernism, uses interpretation as a method to arrive at conclusion. It has also taken a close look at earlier studies on the topic to identify any discrepancies in their conclusions and to establish the basis for the current investigation. The text of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, which has been in-depth examined for components of Victorianism and Postmodernism and interpreted in the context of the objectives of the study, serves as the main source for data gathering. The secondary sources considered in this study are pertinent books, research papers, and journal articles written by various authors.

Findings

The Victorian era was on the verge of transformation when Hardy was writing his novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. He wrote the novel to demonstrate to the world the transformation of Victorian society. His novel served as an example of how Victorian society gave way to postmodernism. Hardy portrayed Tess as a postmodern woman who rejected Victorian social conventions in the novel's subtitle. The novel's subtitle itself served as an example of how Victorian society was evolving. Hardy demonstrated to the Victorian community that Tess was pure and deserving of acceptance as a wife despite being raped. The dawn of science was upon the society, and was strongly influenced by Darwinism. His perspective was altered by Darwin's "theory of evolution", and he began to favour modern ideas. But his modern ideas did not help him to solve the problems of the Victorian society. He seemed to favour postmodern ideas as the best option for the transformation of the Victorian society. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* transformed the concept of Victorian society, marking a transition from Victorianism to Postmodernism. Hardy's transitional novel, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, introduced fresh concepts of chastity and purity. Hardy's opinions on Victorian social norms confused Victorian society as they were new and complex.

Hardy depicted Tess as a troubled individual in Victorian society, but his goal was to show her as a postmodern woman who underwent Victorian torments. Tess was a postmodern woman who rejected traditional morality. Hardy could not give Tess all the characteristics of a postmodern woman because he was living in Victorian society, which was progressively giving way to a modern and postmodern world. The subtitle of his novel indicated his goal to portray Tess as a postmodern woman. Tess was cleansed by Hardy as a postmodern woman whose ideas were novel to the society at large, notably to Angel Clare on the wedding night. Hardy cleansed Tess after mingling with Victorian torments of the age. After her breakup with Angel Clare, Tess displayed the postmodern quality of mustering the guts to face society by acting like a man who had the courage to do so. Tess had both an innate desire to enjoy herself and a contextual disinclination to do so. Tess was frequently portrayed as a haunted animal or a bird caught in a trap, yet neither of those descriptions accurately captured who she was. She possessed the ability to endure torture. She possessed both the mental and physical stamina to control herself bravely while remaining unbowed and unbroken. She was Hardy's finest achievement of a humble, peasant girl not just surrendering to the ongoing onslaughts of tragedy but also warding them off with composure, despite her pains and sufferings. She became a strong individual as a result of the prolonged pains and experiences of the world. Tess possessed capacity for adopting new ways of life. She endured suffering, yet she never lost courage. She faced bravely the brutality of men and frailty of love.

Tess a Tormented Woman

The term "ideal woman" may sound good, but it was actually limited. Women had no rights and were merely a men's possession, an object of their pleasure, their gratification and their violence. The ideal for true woman was a pure and chaste lady in Victorian era, with the sole objective of becoming quiet and subservient wife. In Victorian era women in their houses were called angels. They were meant to listen to their husbands and to contribute to their households and raise kids without any protest. In Victorian times, there was no such thing as a desire for divorce by a woman. A man might divorce his wife with ease, but a wife could not. Angel Clare responds in these words when Tess uses the term "divorce" for herself. "God heavens- how can you be so simple! How can I divorce you?" (Hardy, 2008, p.279). Two of the most important facets of a Victorian woman were deemed marriage and maternity. If woman could not become a mother, she was considered incompetent, insufficient, or somehow odd. A married woman was supposed to be a mother and the unmarried single woman was a pity (Abrams, 2001). As women were expected to remain at home and make it comfortable for their husbands, who were supposed to provide for them. Boys were brought up and taught to be primary breadwinner, and in order to get a good husband, girls were educated to be neat and clean, submissive and loyal. Angel receives Tess's letter pleading him for

assistance when she was at Flintcomb- Ash. If she cannot be his wife, she is willing to live with him as a servant. Tess begs Angel, "I would be content, ay, glad, to live with you as your servant, if I may not as your wife; so that I could only near you, and get glimpses of you, and think of you as mine" (Hardy, 2008, p. 431). Men were not the only ones to keep women subjugated. For girls, the same strict guidelines were set by their own mothers, who had been brought up in the same environment. This kind of structure was almost difficult to break away from, since it was imposed not only by the oppressors but by the oppressed. Women embraced and continued to impose this state.

As a Victorian woman, Tess is portrayed as a product of her time, constrained by the social norms and expectations placed upon her during that era. She is depicted as a victim of circumstance, facing the consequences of her family's impoverished background and being taken advantage of by men in her life. Tess discourages Alec's relationship with her. Alec as a dominant member of the society who wants to get what he demands from Tess. Tess rejects all his demands. Alec calls Tess with bad names because he considers her inferior to him. Tess replies him "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for using such wicked words! Cried Tess with spirit. I don't like 'ee at all! I hate and detest you. I'll go back to mother, I will" (Hardy, 2008, p. 62). Tess could have retaliated by answering him in the same language, however she does not because she is not taught foul language, all she could do was to pose a harmless threat "go back to mother." Interestingly she does not say go back to father because she knows that her father, a man, will not be able to understand what she feels.

One aspect that characterizes Tess as a Victorian woman is the rigid moral code imposed upon women during that time. Victorian era was marked by strict notions of sexual morality and purity. However men were exempted from such humiliation. Tess's encounter with Alec d'Urberville, a wealthy and manipulative man, leads to her seduction and subsequent moral downfall. Tess realises the danger on the horse back with Alec. Alec's intentions are not good. He puts his horse on the direction that Tess is afraid of him. She requests Alec "Please set me down, and let me walk home" (Hardy, 2008, p. 83). Alec does not stop and informs her that "we are miles away from Trantridge" (Hardy, 2008, p. 83). Tess is aware that Alec treats her as a woman of no consequence and considers her his property. She knows that as a woman in Victorian society, she is always considered as weak and obedient. She tells Alec "Never mind that, she coaxed. Put me down, I beg you. I don't mind where it is; only let me get down, sir, please!" (Hardy, 2008, p. 83). Her language is full of humility and fear. She knows that harsh words or a strict tone will only arouse his anger as if she was challenging him. Hence "she coaxed", "I beg you" and "please". She emphasises her desire for pity and kindness.

Tess's experiences reflect the limited opportunities available to women in Victorian society. She faces economic hardships and must work in labour-intensive jobs, such as fieldwork, in order to support herself and her family as such she cannot afford to make Alec angry to deprive her of her job. This emphasizes the lack of independence and autonomy that women often had during that time, as their choices and opportunities were greatly limited compared to men. Tess tells her mother that she wants to work for the family to buy another horse as she is responsible for the horse's death. She is ready to work there but she adds that "I don't quite like Mr. d'Urberville being there" (Hardy, 2008, p. 51). Although she hints that Alec's presence makes her uncomfortable yet her mother does not offer her any advice. Furthermore, Tess's experiences also shed light on the issue of social class and its impact on Victorian women.

The novel explores the stark divide between the wealthy and the working class, and Tess's relationship with the d'Urbervilles highlights the power dynamics and the social inequalities prevalent during that era. Tess's mother reminds her that she is pretty and she can win Alec's heart, Tess smiles and replies, "I hope it is a chance for earning money. It is not other kind of chance" (Hardy, 2008, p. 51). Either her mother is manipulative or romantic that she cannot realise that there can be no "win his heart" or she is too naive herself that she fails to see the dire consequences of the "chance" that she wants her daughter to take. Hence her mother behaves like a typical Victorian woman who is not taught to be on guard, rather such women are mainly concerned to act politely.

As a Victorian woman, Tess dislikes all those who know about her past. She was raped by Alec in the past. She is afraid that her boss knows about her past. Therefore she is uncomfortable and reluctant to meet him and work as his employee. Woman was meant to be pure in the Victorian era, but man's purity was not the same. He was free to do what pleased him. Tess is a Victorian woman, yet she forgives Angel Clare for having an affair with a girl. However Tess is not pardoned for the same. She tells Angel Clare that "in the name of our love, forgive me! I have forgiven you for the same!" (Hardy, 2008 p. 268).

Unfortunately, marriage in the Victorian period was never an organisation in which all parties had equal rights. Women never really belonged to themselves, nor did their lives and bodies had sovereignty. While motherhood was held in high regard, it was uncommon for mothers to have the real right to make decisions about their children. The father was the head of the household. Women were regarded the property of their fathers prior to marriage

(Wojtczak,2014). Property was passed from their fathers to their husbands after marriage. They became their husband's property, along with everything else that they possessed. All their profits, their assets, even their body, belonged by law to their husbands, who were entitled to do whatever they wanted to do with it. When Alec discovers that Tess has become homeless, he offers to house her, her mother, and her siblings at his house in Trantridge. She responds when Alec inquires as to why she has become homeless. "Father's was the last life on the property, and when that dropped we had no further right to stay. Though we might, perhaps, have stayed as weekly tenants- if it had not been for me"(Hardy, 2008,p. 414).

Ruskin's view of a woman's position in society reflects the traditional Victorian bias and ignorance of women as weak, servile, and pure. A woman was guarded against all risk and threat by Victorian society(Ruskin,2006). For that reason, the failure of a woman was considered much worse than any of the failures and faults of her husband. The fact that Victorian culture was hypocritical and broken is fairly clear. While a woman's role as a domestic heroine was celebrated, even that small sphere, generously provided to women by proud and strong men, was in reality slighted. Women had no control over their lives, but with a smile, they were always supposed to survive against all odds. Even the shortcomings of their husbands would be assigned to women. They were accountable for their husbands' happiness and comfort, but their efforts were also taken for granted. For women who conformed, there was never really any bonus, but plenty of punishment for those who did not. In Victorian era, forgiveness was reserved for man. A woman who had lost her virginity was seen as a social pariah. Tess has lost her virginity and as a member of this society, Angel Clare remarks "O Tess, forgiveness does not apply to the case! You were one person; now you are another. My God- how can forgiveness meet such a grotesque"(Hardy, 2008,p.268). Hence the very identity of woman is shattered to pieces, annihilated from "one person" to "another". She is now considered "grotesque".

Victorian society often held women to higher standards of morality and purity compared to men. Tess becomes a victim of double standards when her sexual history is scrutinized and condemned, while the men who exploit her face lesser consequences. Victorian women had limited opportunities for education and professional careers. Alec's mother offers Tess a job at her house. But as a Victorian woman, she is reluctant to join this job. It is ingrained by Victorian society in a girl not to leave her house. Tess tells her mother that " I would rather stay here with father and you"(Hardy, 2008,p.49). When her mother asks her the reason of not joining the job, Tess herself does not know the reason and tells her mother "I would not tell you why, mother, I don't quite know why"(Hardy, 2008,p.49). A Victorian woman was taught not to argue or reject anything. Tess only knows that as a Victorian woman, she must remain with her parents.

The topic of the fallen woman was often discussed in the literary works of Victorian writers in effort to stop this. All the women who failed, intentionally or not, were heavily punished for it. As a medium of influence, literature was used to hold young women, and they were often punished by literary works. Many, if not all, of the fallen women ended up tragically, either in jail or in a cemetery. It was often the tragic fate of a woman who deviated from the Victorian concept of true womanhood. Every person Tess encounters and every hour she spends give her another setback. Tess's life is filled with sadness. Her life, she says, is full of chance and coincidence but she yearns for a good chance to be happy and successful. She views "My life looks as if it had been wasted for want of chances!"(Hardy, 2008,p.148). Even those of whom writers were sympathetic, such as Tess of the d'Urbervilles, suffered and died.

Tess remembers her Victorian parents when she destroys her links with Angel Clare. She accepts herself and her actions. However, persuading her parents will be difficult. Her parents are firm believers in the notion that a woman cannot survive without her spouse. Divorce is a foreign idea to them. Tess is worried and "Her first thought was how would she be able to face her parents"(Hardy, 2008,p.299). Victorian law did not allow a woman to ask for divorce. It was considered a strange notion. When Tess asks for divorce, Angel Clare is surprised to tell "O Tess- you are too, too – childish- unformed – crude, I suppose ! I don't know what you are. You don't understand the law- you don't understand!"(Hardy, 2008,p.279).

In Victorian society, the term " Fallen Woman " referred to a variety of female identities. Prostitutes, unmarried women who had sexual intercourse with males, victims of seduction, adulteresses, and variably criminal lower-class women were all included (Anderson, 1993). The Victorians saw the fallen woman as a moral threat and a disease. Stigmatization socially distanced her from society, and she was physically removed from the view of respectable society, most frequently through death. While society saw these women as " fallen ", morally and socially abhorrent. The Victorian idea was that the fallen women lacked shame and modesty. They were victims of not just male dominance and seduction, but also of a social system that stigmatised and ostracized them as a result of their downfall. Angel rejects Tess on the basis of her tainted past. Angel has also his tainted past but he considers himself pure. Tess becomes a fallen woman and tells Angel "I will obey you like your wretched slave, even if it is to lie down and die"(Hardy, 2008,p.270).

Tess and Angel have been apart for eight months. Tess is not pure as Angel believes, therefore Angel has to break from her. For a Victorian woman, purity was essential. When a Victorian woman lost her virginity, she was thought to be useless. She was unfit to be a wife. Tess flees Marlott and is now homeless and penniless because Angel does not accept her as his wife. He rejects her on the basis that she is not virgin. Her situation is described as "Instead of a bride with boxes and trunks which others bore, we see her a lonely woman with a basket and a bundle in her own portage, as in an earlier time when she was not bride" (Hardy, 2008, p. 320). The fallen woman is depicted as being evaluated by society based on her sexual behaviour rather than her character or morals. While Tess's beautiful inner attributes of selflessness and innocence resemble those of the ideal woman, she is nevertheless judged on the basis of her lack of sexual purity. Tess gives birth to an illegitimate child after she is raped. The priest rejects her request to give her child a proper baptism. When her child dies, she is worried about her child's Christian burial. Tess is a woman "who mused on the christening a good deal, wondered if it were doctrinally sufficient to secure a Christian burial for the child" (Hardy, 2008, p. 113).

Tess, in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, embodies the ideal woman's inner virtues and is socially isolated. If a woman engaged in sexual misconduct, Victorians considered that prostitution would be the next logical step (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 19). There was no distinction between sexual lapse and sexual sale in the perspective of many middle-class Victorians (Morgenthauser, 2000, p. 130). A morally polluted woman was not only stigmatized, but she was also regarded as a disease and excluded from respectable society. Tess becomes pregnant after the rape scene. She gives birth to a child. Her child is not accepted by the society. Even the priest is not ready to baptise her child. When her child dies, Tess buries him in the remote corner of the graveyard with other unbaptised children. She is worried about her child's position after his death. She expresses her worries and "She thought of the child consigned to the nethermost corner of hell, as its double doom for lack of baptism and lack of legitimacy" (Hardy, 2008, p. 110).

It is the fact that her mother warns Tess against disclosing everything. Victorian women were taught from their young age to keep their thoughts, emotions, and most importantly, their desires hidden (Ruddick, 2001, p. 173). It is possible that concealing the truth from Angel Clare was simply a matter of conforming to Victorian expectations. Tess's mother is angry when she arrives at her parents' house. Her mother tells why she revealed her past to Angel. After her separation, her father begins to question her. Her parents do not welcome her because they are typical Victorian. Her parents do not accept her, so how she can be acceptable to others. It is the fact that "if her father doubted her a little, would not neighbours and acquaintance doubt her much? O, she could not live long at home!" (Hardy, 2008, p. 303).

During Victorian era, women were viewed inferior to men. They were unaware of their legal rights. Women were compelled to take care of their homes, and raise their children. All of the property was under the authority of their husbands. Victorian women's rights and privileges were severely restricted, both for unmarried and married women. They were subjected to a variety of verbal and physical abuse, and they did not have the legal right to divorce. Tess advises Angel to divorce her, but Angel says he cannot. She explains that she assumes he can dismiss her if he so desires. However, when Angel cannot divorce her due to the harsh law, then as a Victorian woman "I have no wish opposed to yours" (Hardy, 2008, p. 281).

Tess as a Postmodern Woman

A postmodern woman believes in fragmented social values. These values are not influenced by a society. Values are subjective and dependent on individual concept of reality. Reality is not a social construct which has fixed meanings. It has plurality of meanings. Victorian concept of social values is deconstructed. Victorians believed that women were not supposed to have extramarital relations. If a woman lost her virginity, she was considered fallen for the rest of her life. There were very strict rules for women to spend their lives. Their lives were monitored by strict Victorian rules. Tess challenges these strict rules which are only imposed on women. Only women are considered fallen and the same does not apply to men. Tess becomes pregnant before marriage and gives birth to a child. She forgets her past that her child is illegitimate. She wants to spend a normal life and rejects Victorian concepts of chastity and virginity. There is a ray of hope that she can spend a happy life. This hope comes from her inside and ignores the outside world. Tess still feels the warmth of a hopeful life within her. She can be content in a corner with no memories of her past. She wants to deconstruct what happened in the past. Therefore, Tess tries "To escape the past and all that appertained thereto was to annihilate it, and to do that she would have to get away" (Hardy, 2008, p. 117).

Tess believes in fragmented nature of reality. She rejects Victorian reality of virginity that a woman should be virgin before marriage and no virginity for man. After the disclosure of her past relationship with Alec, Angel's attitude towards Tess confirms once again the presence of double standards in Victorian society when it comes to men and women. The sharp turn of his feelings explores the rigid social norms. He feels fragmented by the knowledge and is unable to ask for any further explanation. He does not give her allowance so that she may relate

how she was exploited. After Angel reveals about his short extramarital affair, Tess is encouraged to confess to her past troubles relating to Alec d'Urberville. He refuses her his forgiveness though Tess so willingly forgives him, even though Tess should not be blamed for what happened to her. Tess reveals her relationship with Alec at the same time as Angel Clare reveals his relationship with a girl. Tess forgives Angel Clare, but he does not. It is because Tess is not a Victorian woman anymore. Angel accepts that Tess is not virgin and informs Tess "I repeat, the woman I have been loving is not you. Another woman in your shape" (Hardy, 2008, p.269). He seems to forget that he himself was not the same man after his own affair. He refuses to accept her and decides to abandon her, so he is completely entitled to judge her.

Values are relative and every individual has a different concept of values. This difference should be accepted. There are no real values. We have the copies of all values what Baudrillard calls "Simulacra" (1988). There are no real values and there should be no search for real values. Tess advises Angel Clare not to place too much emphasis on virginity, chastity and purity. Many women have lost their virginity and their spouses have been unconcerned. Virginity and chastity are meaningless to her. Tess's notion of chastity lies in spirit, Angel's lies in flesh. There are values that are socially formed. How quickly he goes back on his word and refuses Tess his love and defence. Angel Clare explains that values vary from society to society. He directs Tess "Don't, Tess ; don't argue. Different societies, different manners" (Hardy, 2008, p.272).

Tess believes in postmodern concept of "liquid love" and rejects Victorian concept of extramarital relationship. Only one act of her relationship with Alec does not mean that she is bad and cannot be accepted as a wife. She knows about so many cases in the world where both husband and wife live happily without any complaint. Tess tells Angel that purity is not meant only for woman. Tess has postmodern ideas here. She enlightens Angel and tells him "O Angel- my mother says that it sometimes so! She knows several cases where they worse than I, and the husband has not minded it much" (Hardy, 2008, p.272). Tess is one with whom one can sympathize and she is right. Angel and Alec are merely products of their time, and the victim of their time is Tess. It is noticed that the acts of Tess are never portrayed by the writer as those of an immoral woman. An act of despair is her arrangement with Alec. Tess stays true to Angel. She must do anything to provide food and shelter for her family. Hence, by deciding to live with Alec, she makes a great sacrifice. Her acts should be rejected from the perspective of Victorian culture, but the characters around Tess do not express those feelings. Most of the characters prove to be more forgiving and compassionate than Angel when it comes to Tess's actions.

Tess adheres to morality that is unconventional. She confides in Angel Clare about her past, and suffers greatly as a result. In a letter to Tess, her mother warns her about her habit not to reveal her past history. She advises "Many a woman- some of the Highest in the land- have had a trouble in their time ; and why should you trumpet yours when others don't trumpet theirs?" (Hardy, 2008, p.226). Tess does not accept her mother's advice of what to do and what not to do. She believes in subjectivity of truth. She has her own idea of right and wrong. She rejects her mother's concept of right and wrong. It is true that her mother and sisters support her after her separation from Angel. It is because they like Tess's approach towards life. When she begins living with Alec, her mother does not reject Tess. She is the one who tells Tess that it is not her fault what happened to her. Izz and Marian, both are in love with Angel, and have no negative feelings towards Tess when Angel decides to marry her. And when she is no longer in Angel's good graces, they do not turn against her. Alternatively they want to support her. Also the parents of Angel, devout and decent people, have a more forgiving viewpoint than Angel does on Tess's past. Their stance on the subject is somewhat different from Angel's. As such their attitude reveals that they are ready to understand Tess's situation. This changed attitude makes them look modern in their approach.

Postmodernists emphasize that all knowledge is mediated by culture and language, that all facts are merely interpretations, and that truth is not absolute but rather the creation of specific communities (Fiskin, 2011). Therefore, Tess's actions should not be judged too harshly, because her choices have been reduced, and her destiny depends on others. Tess's tranquillity, which she has experienced since the baptism, remains with her in the aftermath of the baby's death. Indeed, she thinks that her child's soul has been overstated. She is satisfied with her self-baptism of her child. She now has no apprehensions, reasoning that if Providence will not validate such an act, she does not value the kind of heaven lost by the irregularity for herself or her child. Tess is the woman "who mused on the christening a good deal, wondered if it were doctrinally sufficient to secure a Christian burial for the child" (Hardy, 2008, p.113). Tess rejects Christian rules that only a Parson has the authority to baptise her child. As a postmodern woman, she rejects Christianity for its strict rules which are only meant for women.

Meanings are unstable and change with changing times. Tess has a unique perspective on Victorian morals. She does what she believes is right. There is nothing moral and for her "moral sorrows were passing away a fresh one arose on the natural side of her which knew no social law" (Hardy, 2008, p.109). Tess deconstructs the meaning of Victorian social norms. She has sceptical and relative approach towards social norms. She does not accept that social norms are fixed and those who deviate are considered violators. She does not live by meaning but unfortunately dies by meaning.

In his novel *Tess of d'Urbervilles*, Hardy seems to depict Tess as having postmodern ideas. Tess does not believe in what Alec preaches after his conversion to become a true Christian. Tess is well aware that he preaches Christianity to impress people. Tess rejects his preaching of Christianity. Alec wants Tess to believe in what he preaches but Tess rejects all his beliefs. Therefore, Alec asks Tess, "you don't believe that you ought to preach my doctrine"(Hardy,2008,p.376).

The ideas that Victorian society has constructed to control women are meaningless to her. She rejects Victorian Christianity for its strict rules for women. Tess believes that Christianity only deprives women of their freedom and gives men their freedom. Tess is sceptical to say "I don't believe in anything supernatural"(Hardy,2008,p.375). The baptism of Tess's child in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* can be seen as a form of revolt against established religious, moral, and social norms. Tess names her child Sorrow and refuses to have him baptized in the Christian tradition. This act challenges social expectations and reflects Tess's rejection of conventional morality imposed by religion. It serves as a poignant commentary on the rigid moral standards of the time and Tess's unwillingness to conform to social norms that have caused her immense suffering.

Tess is encouraged and supported by her disobedience of Victorian ideals. Her passionate sexuality also results in her separation and, ultimately, her death from society. Perhaps Hardy's most difficult reaction to the Victorian duality was to give Tess the subtitle "A Pure Woman." For Tess bears a baby out of wedlock but she holds a respectable position, as such this title phrase caused a big controversy. On the basis of her moral incorporation, she cannot be pure. Independence and power distinguish Hardy's heroines from the Victorian heroine's previous definition. Tess does not believe that Victorian morality is the real morality. Tess's mother chastises her for disclosing her previous relationship with Alec to Angel. After they split up, she thinks Angel a good person. Tess does not believe in the concept of good and evil. She thinks that morality is relative. She claims that in telling Angel about her past, she did the right thing. There is nothing like right or wrong. She boldly reiterates, "If- if- it were to be done again- I should do the same" (Hardy, 2008,p.301). Her fidelity means being true to oneself and the others.

Postmodernism supports the idea that there is nothing like morality and chastity. Chastity and morality are individual's relative ideas. Tess rejects Victorian concept of chastity for women. Chastity has no fixed meaning. As a postmodern woman, Tess questions, "Was once lost always lost really true of chastity? She would ask herself"(Hardy, 2008,p.117). It was the end of the Victorian period, and Hardy, though maintaining his own essentialist ideals seem to be torn between his desire to depict women as competent and intelligent. Hardy gives his woman a voice through his novel, expressing the anxiety and complexity of her shifting place in society. In terms of gender, postmodernism challenges essentialist notions and recognizes the performative nature of gender identities (Butler, 1990). Postmodern men and women question binary constructions and embrace fluidity and variability in gender expression (Halberstam, 1998).

The tragic end of his novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* raises the question of Hardy's level of comfort with the postmodern figure he depicts in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, likely taking her down as a consequence and retribution for her ability to break the standards of free society. It is time to thrash the last of the wheat. Tess is stuck in a rut of drudgery when Alec admires her stylish attire. Tess gets irritated when she sees him because he refuses to leave. He has an evil eye on her all of the time. Because she is a forsaken wife, he offers to take her away and marry her. Tess smacks him in the face with the glove. It is heavy and thick, and it hits him square in the mouth. He quickly regains control and pulls his handkerchief from his pocket to dab his bleeding lips. Tess informs Alec that she is prepared to face whatever consequences as a result of this action. As a postmodern woman, she is not afraid of Angel and faces him like a brave man. She is ready to accept any kind of physical punishment. She challenges Alec to "whip me ,crush me; you need not mind those people under the rick! I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim- That's the law"(Hardy, 2008,p. 388).

The female protagonist of the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, discussing the evolution of the postmodern woman, reveals most clearly Hardy's personal philosophy that society can be changed by individual initiative, but that social constraints are also the cause of the destruction of humanity. Tess has a few days, but she does not want to go back to a life where she and Angel can build a future together. Angel believes that they have a future, but his belief is based on his ignorance of the chaos that surrounds them. Tess as a postmodern woman, is well aware of the chaos and there is nothing like permanent. She has no hope of a permanent bright future. Tess is not expecting to find the future, but when Angel proposes, she tells him, "why should we put an end to all that's sweet and lovely! She deprecated. What must come will come. And, looking through the shutter- chink : All is trouble outside there; inside here content" (Hardy, 2008,p. 455).

Since Tess regularly continues to violate social conventions, it can easily be observed that some find her behaviour to be abnormal. Alec chases Tess. But she is shocked to find that he has become a preacher. Alec informs Tess that it is his responsibility and desire to save people from God's wrath. Alec wears a mask of religion. He becomes a convert. Tess is aware of his religious mask. Alec tells Tess that he wants to save people from the danger which

is near to come. He tells Tess that he wants to change minds of people to a right path. Tess inquires of Alec, "Have you saved yourself? Charity begins at home, they say" (Hardy, 2008, p. 360). Here Tess rejects preaching of Christians when they used it to deceive people.

Alec d'Urberville sees Tess as an ordinary woman who, to Angel, represents a divine version of her sex (Morgan, 1988, p. 98). However, Tess needs to be loved by herself and not by the idea that is imprinted on her by others. Postmodern individuals tend to reject the notion of fixed identities and instead embrace fluidity and multiplicity (Bauman, 1992). They view knowledge and truth as socially constructed and contingent upon cultural, historical, and individual contexts (Foucault, 1972). Tess has her own identity. She does not accept that husband is the real identity of a married woman. She believes in the free status of woman. When she is asked to tell her husband's name, she replies, "do not ask what I do not wish to tell" (Hardy, 2008, p. 371). She does not believe in dominant discourse of man as a husband who is the real identity of a woman. Therefore, she does not want to tell that Angel is her husband. Consequently, postmodern men and women often adopt an ironic and sceptical stance towards authority and dominant discourses (Jameson, 1991). Therefore, it can be argued that Angel misunderstands Tess from the start by perceiving her as a form of divine woman. However, Angel abuses Tess and therefore victimizes her by not accepting her for what she really is (Grayson, 1991, pp. 132-133).

Tess believes in postmodern concept of marriage as a postmodern woman. What is significant is the continuous use of comparison by Hardy, which shows that Angel and Alec are, in fact, one and the same representative of Victorian nature of man. Tess has changed herself after her separation from Angel. She accepts this change and tells Angel to come and see this change in her. She writes a letter to Angel and invites him to see this change. She addresses him "Dear, if you would only be a little more conceited, and believe in yourself so far as to see that you were strong enough to work this change in me, you would perhaps be in a mind to come to me" (Hardy, 2008, p. 393).

The most pure act of grace and loving kindness is the act of Tess baptising her child (Morgan, 1988). It is argued that it is her maternal position to prove herself as a mother and the fact that she seems more or less unorthodox. Instead, the concept possessed by Hardy in his novel seems to seriously challenge the prevalent Victorian paradigm of families with their patriarchal heads and mothers who sacrifice themselves. There are no rooms for the homeless Durbeyfields when they arrive in the outskirts of Kingsbere. They take refuge at the d'Urbervilles' tomb, despite Alec's offer to look after Joan and the children. In these words, Tess chastises him. "Go away, she murmured" (Hardy, 2008, p. 425). Tess seems to be a postmodern woman who is independent and gives command. She is able to live without the support of a man.

It was not appropriate for women, however, to show signs of sexual desire in Victorian society. Therefore, it was often assumed that emotional and passionate women were immoral. Alec tells Tess that she is tempting him to sin and requests to make a solemn pledge not to lead him astray. This shows Victorian double standard of morality. Alec has tempted and made Tess astray. He blames this on Tess. Alec labels Tess as unbeliever and warns her, "I am sorry you are not a believer, he continued; that some unbeliever should have got hold of you and unsettled your mind" (Hardy, 2008, p. 364). Tess is not an unbeliever but a postmodern woman who believes in what she sees and feels.

By recognizing the constructed nature of knowledge and the diversity of perspectives, postmodern woman navigates a world that is characterized by uncertainty and complexity. The concept of a postmodern man or woman reflects the transformative impact of postmodern thought on identity and reality. In a fluid and fragmented world. They are ready to embrace the freedom to redefine themselves while navigating a multiplicity of narratives. By accepting these postmodern challenges, Tess has developed a postmodern understanding, having a sense of agency and adaptability. She accepts these challenges and becomes a postmodern woman. As a postmodern woman, she describes herself as "yes, perhaps I am capricious" (Hardy, 2008, p. 232).

In Thomas Hardy's novel, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the character of Tess Durbeyfield is interpreted through a postmodern lens. Postmodernism challenges traditional narratives and explores themes of fragmentation, deconstruction, and the blurring of boundaries between reality and fiction. This is an attempt to analyse Tess as a postmodern character, focusing on her fragmented identity, her rejection of Victorian Christianity and sexuality, and her position as a symbol of cultural and historical dislocation. Angel rejects Tess as his wife because she has lost her virginity. Tess is not virgin as Angel believes. A man who lived in Victorian society believed in virginity of woman. Tess disassociates herself from Victorian concept of virginity. She does not want to live with Angel as his wife and announces "I don't belong to you anymore" (Hardy, 2008, p. 269).

Analysing *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* from a postmodern perspective reveals the novel's engagement with postmodern themes and concerns. Tess's fragmented identity, her rejection of metanarrative, her belief in hyperreality and her symbolic representation of cultural and historical dislocation all contribute to the postmodern reading of the character. Through this analysis, the novel emerges as a work that challenges traditional narrative

forms and explores the complexities of identity and society in the postmodern era. In a postmodern context, the character of Tess in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is a complex figure challenging traditional notions of identity, truth, and morality. Tess as a postmodern woman is despised by Angel as she is not virgin according to Angel's concept of virginity. Angel rejects her as his wife by calling her "a guilty woman in the guise of an innocent one" (Hardy, 2008, p.269).

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