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***Misrepresentation of Woman in Selected Fictions
by Thomas Hardy and by Emile Zola:
Obiectification and Victimization***

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To Hiba
& Yasmine

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Abstract

The readers—mainly female readers-- are frequently enticed and entrapped by novels and whatever piece of writing whose title is a woman's name, subsequently the female character being the main protagonist. Books as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Nana*, *Madame de Bovary*, etc., are all the more alluring as they generally display a portrait of an ideal beauty surrounded by a halo. Enveloped in innocence, splendour and some other virtuous characteristics, these heroines rarely survive at the end of the narrative. Idealized and idolized, they are ensnared in the schema of *primordial types or archetypes*, then the process of sanctification turns out to be mere revilement disguised in misrepresentation.

Misrepresentation of woman in four novels written by the English author, Thomas Hardy and the French theorizer of literature, Emile Zola is the very subject of this dissertation. The novels I have chosen to deal with are *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *L'Assommoir* and *Thérèse Raquin* because they offer possibilities concerning the issue at stake. As a matter of fact, my purpose is to unearth the latent depreciation perpetrated against woman within these narratives, and remove the uncountable layers that cover the very misogynistic tones conveyed by each of the aforementioned books. My argument has been to show that Tess, Sue, Arabella, Gervaise and Thérèse suffer from objectification and victimization not only at the hands of their male counterparts, but above all at the hands of the narrator/author.

To attain the goal I have assigned to my dissertation, I have to resort to the archetypal literary criticism. This approach has proved to be the most suitable theory that is likely to help me to turn an apparent Hardyan and Zolaesque positive representation of woman into an established process of misrepresentation. In effect, however well-intentioned Hardy and Zola were, their portrayal of the female heroine is but another episode of the lifelong misrepresentation of woman in fiction.

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General Introduction

The objective of the following dissertation is to investigate the issue of mis/representation of woman “beyond the confines of one particular country”,¹ with reference to selected works by the British author Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) and by the French Emile Zola (1840-1902). The selected works under discussion are, respectively, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891), *Jude the Obscure* (1895), *L’Assommoir* (1877) and *Thérèse Raquin* (1867). Exploring how two writers belonging especially to two countries such as Britain and France contribute to the mis/representation of woman will undoubtedly constitute one of the many interesting facets of this topic. Some of the questions that I will endeavour to answer are the following: How did Hardy and Zola portray the female characters? What was their position in relation to the nineteenth-century global discourse about woman? It must be kept in mind that the racist and sexist terminology which dichotomizes mankind into ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’, the ‘Occidental’ and the ‘Oriental’, but most of all, ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’, was much heightened in the nineteenth century. It is enough to say that craniology--skull measurement--constituted the irrefutable proof whereby the inferiority of women and non-Western races was established.²

Scrutinizing the place of woman in art in general, and in literature in particular, cannot fail to take into account the fact that Western society and culture have always evolved around the ‘male’ as the norm and the pivotal point around which orbits the ‘female’. In her influential *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone de Beauvoir posits that:

humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being [...] She is defined and differentiated with

¹ Henry H.H. Remak, ‘Comparative Literature, Its Definition and Function’, in *Comparative Literature : Method and Perspective*, ed. Newton P. Stallknecht and Horst Frenz (Carbondale IL : Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), p.13.

² Joanna De Groot, ‘ ‘Sex’ and ‘Race’ : The Construction of Language and Image in the Nineteenth Century’, in *Sexuality and Subordination : Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Susan Mendus and Jane Randall (London : Routledge, 1989) , p.134.

reference to men and not he with reference to her; she is the inessential as opposed to the essential He is the Subject, he is the Absolute-She is the Other.³

Literature, science (social as well as natural) and literary criticism have often been activated to contribute to the consolidation of the patriarchal paradigm by empowering man at the expense of woman. Some literary theorists (Simone de Beauvoir, Helene Cixous, and Elaine Showalter, to name but a few) have drawn attention to the fact that even criticism, reading and interpretation from the feminine standpoint are generally doomed to be biased because they ineluctably spring from concepts elaborated by man. The issue of representation of woman in literary productions started to be questioned by critics--women in particular-- only in the 20th century by a certain Virginia Woolf with her *A Room of One's Own* (1928). Woolf was also one of the first feminist critics who saw a latent distinction between men and women in Hardy's characterization:

However loveable and charming Bathsheba may be, still she is weak; however stubborn and ill-guided Henchard may be, still he is strong. This is fundamental; this is the core of Hardy's vision, and draws from the deepest sources of his nature. The woman is the weaker and the fleshier, and she clings to the stronger and obscures his vision.⁴

Thus, literature in general, and the male-authored one in particular, has often complied with the mainstream cultural discourse about woman and very few individuals have challenged this situation. In truth, including female characters in one's literary works is by no means synonymous with any form of commitment to the cause, or appraisal of woman. Indeed, though they have always figured in epics, drama, poetry, novels, etc., in depicting the female character, the authors—men in general but also women—have tended to favour idealization and diabolization rather than neutral and unprejudiced characterization. The roles of Angel and she-devil, saint and harlot have been the sole ones assigned to woman throughout the

³ Quoted in Roger Webster, *Studying Literary Theory* (London : Arnold, 1996), p.74.

⁴ Quoted in Penny Boumelha, *Thomas Hardy and Women : Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form* (Brighton : The Harvester Press, 1982), p.2.

innumerable pages of literary productions wherein the essential and normative perspective has been mostly the masculine one at the expense of woman who has been utilized as the accessory *par excellence* and as what Luce Irigaray calls ‘a use-value of man’. In her famous *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, Margaret Fuller (1810-50) praises Socrates and Xenophane for not having depreciated woman, but highlights the conspicuous low and reducing position she (woman) holds in Plato’s mind, and his treatment of women in *The Republic* as property.⁵ Indeed, the general trend in “Western culture, going back to its first extant stories, has been toward the suppression of feminine values, and therefore feminine modes of thought and heroism.”⁶

With a few noteworthy exceptions; Christine de Pisan (*Cité des dames* 1405), Marie le Jars de Gournay (*Egalité des hommes et des femmes* 1622), François Poullain de la Barre, “the first writer in the French language to draw a link between patriarchy and the oppression of women”⁷, Mme La Fayette and Mary Sidney, woman’s representation in literature had been scarcely favourable before the centuries that preceded the important European Revolutions. Although Voltaire, Montesquieu and Diderot were more or less well-disposed towards woman, “no Enlightenment writer developed as far-reaching a feminist position as Poullain or even the less daring Marie de Gournay”,⁸ not even the iconoclastic Mary Wollstonecraft. As a matter of fact, “Neither the intellectual changes associated with the Renaissance and the Reformation eras nor the Scientific revolution of the seventeenth century had contributed to the re-evaluation of woman’s position.”⁹ Not considering William Thompson and John Stuart Mill in Britain, and Condorcet and Ernest Legouvé in France, most of the philosophers who enlightened Europe, Locke, Newton, Rousseau and Spinoza, to name but a few, ignored and

⁵ Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (New York : Oxford University Press, [1845]1994), p.66.

⁶ Meredith A. Powers, *The Heroine in Western Literature : The Archetype and her reemergence in Modern Prose* (Jefferson, NC : Mc farland, 1991), p.40.

⁷ Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1984), p.8.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ James F. Mcmillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914 : Gender, Society and Politics* (London : Routledge, 2000), p.4.

debased woman. It is clear from all this that woman has generally been employed and regarded as a scapegoat in all sorts of written works even in female-authored ones. Moreover, for many centuries representation and characterization of women in literature has been the hostage of the “‘either/or’ criteria for female identity: the popular angel/whore division.”¹⁰

It goes without saying that the major objective assigned to this dissertation is to give good grounds to the hypothesis of misrepresentation and the genuine processes of objectification and victimization, the Hardy central female characters Tess Durberfield, Sue Bridehead and Arabella Donn and the Zolaesque Gervaise Macquart and Thérèse Raquin endure. The task is doubtlessly arduous because it runs counter to the prevailing beliefs and comments which have underscored Hardy’s alleged alignment with the cause of woman; considering him as a proto-feminist, and the apparently favourable depiction of the woman by Zola. I am rather inclined to follow D.H.Lawrence’s well-known warning: “Never trust the artist, trust the tale”.

Review of the literature on Hardy and Zola

The review of the literature dealing with both writers reveals that Hardy’s works, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* in particular, have been accorded a considerable amount of interest. This concern has mainly been motivated precisely because of his characterization of woman. As far as my reading has allowed me, I have noticed that Zola on the whole and ‘his women’ in particular have received far less attention than Hardy. Most of the critics have focalized on Hardy’s *Tess* and *Jude*, while Zola’s *L’Assommoir* has been far much valued than the ‘minor’ novel *Thérèse Raquin* which has been almost forgotten by critics.

Some of the most representative--among the most accessible-- critics of Hardy focus on the female characters to the exclusion of the male ones. Such is the case of Pamela L.

¹⁰ Sarah Appleton Aguiar, *The Bitch is Back : Wicked Women in Literature* (Carbonale, IL : Southern University Press, 20001), p.14.

Jekel's *Thomas Hardy's Heroines: A Chorus of priorities* (1986) wherein the author views Hardy's delineation of woman in a positive way and sees in her the author's spokesperson whose voice echoes Hardy's own voice. Jekel holds that the Hardyan female character personifies Hardy in every aspect of his life; in his fears, his creed and anguish and is the translator of his personal opinion about philosophical, cultural, religious and artistic issues. Jekel does not see any discrepancy between Hardy's "fictional voice and the voice we hear from his letters, his prefaces, his notebooks, and even from the majority of his poems."¹¹ So, Tess epitomizes and endorses Hardy's values and views, and his "indictment of the prevailing view of women as sexual objects, of the deceit often used in marriage, of the destructiveness and lure of passion, and of the overestimation of virginity are all echoed by Tess's refusal to accept such terms."¹² Though apparently less endeared and less related to her creator than Tess, the same holds for Sue Bridehead who-according to Jekel- mirrors now and then the author's standpoint and betrays a certain resemblance with him through common artistic and theological beliefs.¹³

In *Patriarchy and Discontent* (2003), Joanna Devereux lays stress on Tess's and Sue's internalization of the patriarchal ideology. She points out that Tess's tragic plight is closely related to her confidence in a supposedly patriarchal heroism; she (Tess) contributes to the apology of the patriarchal system and thus becomes her first and foremost victimizer. As for Sue Bridehead, Devereux contends that she surrenders to the patriarchal ideology that she forcefully resists in the beginning and subsequently adopts this ideology just like Tess.¹⁴

Another outstanding specialist of Hardy is Penny Boumelha whose very influential *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form* (1982) has become the

¹¹ Pamela Jekel, *Thomas Hardy's Heroines : A Chorus of Priorities*, (Troy, NY : Whitston Publishing, 1986), p.3.

¹² Ibid., p.160.

¹³ Ibid., p.181.

¹⁴ Joanna Devereux, *Patriarchy and Its Discontents : Sexual Politics in Selected Novels and Stories of Thomas Hardy* (London/New York : Routledge, 2003), pp.114-125.

unavoidable reference for students as well as for specialists of Hardy. Boumelha underlines the crucial importance of Hardy's characterization of Tess whom, she states, combines the antipodal female heroines of Hardy's previous works. She (Tess) is "the young woman compromised and doomed by her own sexuality, either as victim or as *femme fatale* (Fanny Robin, for instance, or Lucetta Le Sueur), and the young woman poised at the moment of marriageability (Paula Power, or Elisabeth-Jane Newson)." ¹⁵ In quoting Boumelha, most critics underscore her innovative study of the role played by the mysterious and committed narrator of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* whom she charges with such attributes as authority, omniscience and impartiality; hence the "androgynous narrative mode that seeks to represent and explain the woman from within and without." ¹⁶

Worthy of notice is the case of Arabella Donn (the other woman of Jude) who is probably the least studied Hardyian female character though her role in *Jude the Obscure* is essential as well, at least in her relation to Jude. Shirley A. Stave and Arthur Mizner and a few others have accorded her some pages in their discussion of the Hardyian female character. Stave considers her as "one of the least nurturing women in all of Hardy's fiction", ¹⁷ and draws attention to the negative attributes with which the author has structured her, transforming her thus into the crude and bestial female who tempts Jude and prevents him from attaining his endeared ambition of becoming a knowing man. In addition to Shirley Stave's *The Decline of the Goddess* (1995), I shall rely on Kathleen Wall's *The Callisto Myth* (1988), Judith Mitchell's *The Stone and the Scorpion* (1994) and many others to substantiate my hypothesis. I shall also turn to D.H. Lawrence's *Study of Thomas Hardy* (1923) for a more comprehensive grasp of the three Hardyian 'women'. Though brief and seemingly less substantial than most of the other analyses, and probably owing to his being first and foremost

¹⁵ Penny Boumelha, op.cit., p.117.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.132.

¹⁷ Shirley A. Stave, *The decline of the Goddess : Nature, Culture, and Women in Thomas Hardy's Fiction* (Westport, CT : Greenwood Press, 1995), p.175.

a writer, Lawrence's interpretation of Tess, Sue and Arabella is more explicative and much more useful to me.

Emile Zola has received a considerable amount of criticism especially for his remarkable involvement in politics and literary theory through the tireless promotion and propagation of the principles of naturalism. Indeed, unlike Hardy's, Zola's female characters have been granted scant investigation, and the very few literary reviews devoted to Zola in English that I managed to find have been authored by critics and essayists as Naomi Schor in *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory, and French Realist Fiction* (1985), Janet Beizer in *Ventriloquized Bodies: narratives of Hysteria in the Nineteenth-century France* (1994) and Lillian Furst's article, *A Medical Reading of Gervaise in L'Assommoir* (1992). The latter sheds new light on the character of Gervaise by envisioning her from a medical point of view by scrutinizing the effects of her parents' flaws on her behaviour and life. Naomi Schor underlines a novelty about Zola's works, a novelty which is the fruit of the 1980s, that is to say, the intertwining of Zola's discussion of the 'Woman Question' with the critical assessment of his literary productions. Schor purposely compares Zola to Freud with whom he shares the deep-seated conviction that "woman is a 'Dark Continent'",¹⁸ while Janet Beizer considers that women in Zola's fiction are "sexually loose, verbally incontinent, given to lyrical flow and to emotional overflow, [...] are repeatedly represented as 'leaking vessels.'" ¹⁹

Like Arabella, Thérèse Raquin, the central female character of Zola's eponymous novel, has been entitled to rare operations of scanning and Denean Sharpley's *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French* (1999) stands as a salutary option for anyone who ventures to dissect the character of Thérèse. This author links

¹⁸ Naomi Schor, *Breaking the Chain : Women, Theory and French Realist Fiction* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1985), p.29.

¹⁹ Janet Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies : Narratives of Hyysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 1994), p.173.

Thérèse's conception to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' lettered men's concern with the nature of femininity; *Thérèse Raquin* assumedly subscribes to the prevailing fear/curiosity of the black and savage woman which led to the institution of a particular narrative and an imperialist discourse known as Africanism. Therefore, the creation/characterization of Thérèse echoed, and supported this discourse, and both her behaviour and downfall are supposedly due to her inherited pathologies. Sharpley brings into focus Zola's emphasis on Thérèse's mother's African blood which presumably motivates her incontinent sexual desire and her criminal demeanour.²⁰

Hypotheses and methodology

It must be said from the outset that the comparison envisaged herein is not solely for the sake of comparison. Otherwise, one should not expect to read a comparative study proper that deals with influence or literary affinities and dissimilarities. However, I shall not neglect the fact that some convergence in social, cultural and economic factors will be alluded to in order to substantiate the analogous mis/representation of woman by both authors. The comparison I intend to carry through is exclusively devoted to highlight the process of mis/representation of woman in the novels already mentioned. My comparison will underline the same cultural, economic and social aspects that are closely related to the 'Woman Question' through a particular emphasis on the depiction, the roles and the characterization of woman in the novels in question.

The principal hypothesis being the act of bringing out the latent effacement the Hardyan and Zolaesque principal female characters and, to a lesser degree, the other female figurants undergo. To put it another way, my major intention is to try to disclose the detrimental aspects of Hardy's and Zola's delineation and characterization of woman in their novels. As indicated, the comparison will be at the service of the topic, that is to say, I merely

²⁰ Denean Sharpley Whiting T. *Black venus : Sexual Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French* (Durham, NC : Duke University Press, 1999), pp.6-9.

intend to prove the truth of the fact that whatever the language used, whoever the writers may be and whichever their country is, woman is not 'faithfully presented' in Western literature and culture. Although not totally similar in the various cultural, political, economic and social revolutions they experienced, Britain and France, Hardy's and Zola's respective homelands, typify the Western culture and offer many a case of similitude with regard to the plight of woman. In fact, the plodding of woman in both countries has been subject to well-nigh identical factors. Therefore, I believe that the analogous results that would come out of my analysis of both writers' treatment of the female character will make the subject of the dissertation more conclusive.

As already announced, the prime objective of this dissertation is to establish that the female characters of both Hardy and Zola are victimized, i.e., they are first and mostly the victims of the authorial 'tutelage'. Therefore, I shall endeavour to demonstrate that the female protagonists in question are ensnared in an archetypal conception of woman; they are reduced to nonentities by being victimized, objectified, and subordinated to external as well as to internal forces. My argument is that the patent foregrounding of woman in the novels selected is not advantageous but rather far more damaging to the representation of woman in literature than it has been supposed. Naturally, the main target of my argument is the author whose deliberate subjection of the female characters to atavism and environment turns out to be more victimizing and more objectifying than it is assumed by readers as well as by critics.

To this end, I shall use to archetypal literary analysis or criticism, namely, Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*. The latter will be sustained and substantiated by Carl Gustav Jung's psychoanalytic theory of archetypes and some of its crucial concept such as *logos* and *eros*. Despite its difficulty, the archetypal theory has imposed itself because it has grown from the subject I deal with²¹ and has given me the very tools and arguments needed to attain the

²¹ See Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (London : Penguin Books, [1957] 1990), p.6.

chief objective of this dissertation. Archetypal criticism postulates that fiction is saturated with fundamental models of male and female characters, so it “takes the literary work out of its individual and conventional context and relates it to mankind in general”.²² Northrop Frye contends that the “structural principles of literature [...] are to be derived from archetypal [...] criticism, the only kinds to assume a larger context of literature as a whole.”²³ Accordingly, this methodology can underscore the very recurrent patterns Tess, Gervaise, Thérèse and Sue are subjected to.

As for Carl Gustav Jung’s psychological theory of archetypes, which Jung essentially owes to literature, namely, E.T.A. Hoffman’s *The Devil’s Elixirs* (1816), it polarizes man and woman respectively into logical/rational/thinking function against feeling/intuition one, and envisages woman only in relation to man, i.e., as the Other. Based on man, as Roberta K. Rigsby underlines, the “conventional Jungian model simply agrees with the stereotypes of masculine and feminine, benefiting men at the expense of women”.²⁴ Archetypes should not be confounded with stereotypes; unlike the former, the latter are neither variable nor subject to variation in perception. Archetypes refer to the original pattern which recurs throughout time and within individuals, but they are also related to atavistic elements and to an inherited mode of thought found in the Collective Unconscious which is shared by every individual be s/he a writer or not.

Archetypal literary criticism is centred on a detailed examination of literary works which aims at unearthing archetypes in the symbols and characters found in these literary works. Of course, Jung’s concept of archetype is not very clear; Jung himself and Jungians have admitted that this concept is neither easy to define nor easily graspable, therefore I shall neither overuse Jung’s concepts nor subject my hypothesis to them. However, I shall

²² Bettina L. Knapp, *A Jungian Approach to Literature* (Carbonale, IL : Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), p.x.

²³ Northrop Frye, *op.cit.*, p.134.

²⁴ Quoted in Sarah Appleton Aguiar, *op.cit.*, p.6.

also support my argumentation with the use of the terminology of such supporters of feminist revision of archetypal literary criticism as Sarah Appleton Aguiar, Meredith Powers and Katharine Rogers. These critics take possession of Jung's theory, dispute and question its male-centeredness and adapt it to the feminist contrapuntal portrayal and defence of woman. They essentially protest against Jung's erasure of "feminine archetypes as repository of power."²⁵

It remains to be seen whether the Hardy female characters, Tess, Sue and Arabella, and the Zolaesque, Gervaise and Thérèse can be categorized in the polarities wherein Jung has encapsulated both man and woman. Do they (the female characters in question) fit and comply with the debasing representation of woman purported in feminists' revision of archetypal literary criticism? It should be said that the choice of the novels to be analysed has not been embarrassing since *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, -- which Hardy called 'novels of Character and Environment'—*L'Assommoir* (the seventh volume of *Les Rougon-Macquart*) and *Thérèse Raquin* are well fitted for an appropriate study of novels in relation to the place of woman in literature. Both *Tess* and *L'Assommoir* constitute the best literary and commercial achievements of Hardy and Zola and also allegedly successful instances of the characterization of female characters. Besides, I have chosen to parallel Tess to Gervaise for other essential commonalities which will be discussed in the first chapter. Sue Bridehead and Arabella Donn are the main female characters of *Jude the Obscure* and both fascinate the male hero Jude, and prevent him from attaining his goals. They can also be equalled with Thérèse Raquin whom Zola experiments on and bestializes more than Nana (the most famous Zolaesque female heroine). So she (Thérèse) can somewhat be said to epitomize the nineteenth-century representation of woman in literature.

²⁵ Annis Pratt, *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, (Bloomington, IN : Indiana University Press, 1981), p.8.

I shall divide my dissertation into three chapters; two majors ones and one of lesser importance. The latter will be the first one and will deal with the historical and cultural background(s) in Britain and France. The second and third chapters will deal with the archetypal analysis of the novels in question, i.e., a close investigation and substantiation of the very issue of misrepresentation of the Hardyian and Zolaesque female characters, essentially the major ones. Rather than dealing with both authors' characters separately, I have opted for the difficult but interesting method of combining them. In this way, I have purposefully put together Tess and Gervaise in the second chapter, and Sue Bridehead, Arabella Donn and Thérèse Raquin in the third one. My choice will be better understood through the reading of the chapters referred to. They are equivalent and obviously of greater effect for the subject than the first chapter. It is worth underlining that I have also intentionally devoted more space for Sue than Arabella and Thérèse as I consider that Sue's characterization requires more attention and generates greater interest.

Chapter I: Historical background(s) on Both Sides of The Channel

Introduction

At first, I was “eager to separate history from fiction”,²⁶ and to content myself with few lines concerning the historical context(s) in which the novels under discussion were written and published, but I have ultimately decided to devote a whole (though short) chapter to the circumstances relevant to the period. Consequently, herein I cannot ignore historicism and the historical approach which postulates that “Art and history inflect each other in commemoration and elegy, hypothesis and vision, record and story.”²⁷

Indeed, though nominally categorized into trends; classicism, romanticism, realism, naturalism and so forth, literary works cannot fail to mirror the society wherein they come to life. As a result, one cannot undertake to study a literary artefact without skimming its historical and cultural backgrounds which is not necessarily synonymous with espousing Marxist criticism which “analyses literature in terms of the historical conditions which produce it.”²⁸ Be they Acts or Laws, inventions or discoveries, religious schisms or moral uniformity, the nineteenth-century events in Britain and France undoubtedly motivate, permeate and justify Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, and Zola’s *L’Assommoir* and *Thérèse Raquin*. “We shall miss a lot if we do not try to understand something of the economic, social and cultural context in which readers and writers lived their lives in the nineteenth century.”²⁹

Indeed, to question the way Thomas Hardy and Emile Zola mis/represent woman, one needs to examine the period wherein they lived, in particular the years that immediately preceded and followed the publication of the novels under study. The emphasis will

²⁶ Paul Hamilton, *Historicism*, (New York : Routledge, 2003), p.6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.8.

²⁸ Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (New York : Routledge, [1976] 2002), p.xi.

²⁹ Simon Eliot, ‘Books and Their Readers’, in *The Nineteenth Century Novel : Realisms*, ed. Delia Da Sousa Correa (New York : Routledge, 2001), p.5.

essentially be on crucial facts about woman's condition such as the laws and codes that directly affected them. The place of women in the authors' lives and major elements in these lives in question will also be discussed.

1-Cultural context(s)

The man makes history, the woman is history.
Oswald Spingler

Both Thomas Hardy and Emile Zola were born in 1840; this is by no means a cultural and a literary affinity, but naturalism is; philosophical and to some extent literary naturalism. To say that Zola's *L'Assommoir* and, to a lesser degree, *Thérèse Raquin* are definitely ingrained in naturalism is truistic. Mallarmé suggested that naturalism (literary naturalism) and Zola's literature and works were interdependent and closely related.³⁰ According to Zola himself, naturalism is "*Dans le roman [...] la continuelle compilation des documents humains, c'est l'humanité vue et peinte, résumée en des créations réelles et éternelles.*"³¹ As for Hardy, Ann L. Ardis suggests that *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is structured "as if it were a Zolaesque experimental novel, as if he (Hardy) were an experimentalist exhibiting his 'scientific' knowledge of all his characters in all their 'phases.'"³² Arthur Mizner, for his part, contends that *Jude the Obscure* is "a naturalistic novel."³³ In fact, both novels are, in Dorothy van Ghent's words "grounded deeply in a naturalistic premise."³⁴

This does not imply that Hardy expounded Zola's 'scientific realism'-- he rather opposed it with regard to his belief in art as a magnifier of reality--in the Victorian England wherein the French naturalistic movement had to face a fierce opposition from Georges Meredith, Henry James, Oscar Wilde and some other outstanding writers, but it merely refers

³⁰ Collette Becker, *Lire le réalisme et le naturalisme* (Paris : Dunod, 1998), p.3.

³¹ Quoted in Henri Mitterand, *Zola : L'histoire et la fiction*, (Paris, PUF, 1990), p.7.

³² Ann L. Ardis, *New Women, New Novels : Feminism and Early Modernism* (New Brunswick, NJ : Rutgers University Press, 1990), p.74.

³³ Arthur Mizner, 'Jude the Obscure as a Tragedy', in *Modern British Fiction*, ed. Mark Schorer, (New York : Oxford University Press, 1961), p.48.

³⁴ Dorothy Van Ghent, *On Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, in Mark Schorer, op.cit., p.43.

to the scientific spirit that was pervading every recess of nineteenth-century life. It should be noted that Zola's fiction was much publicized in Britain by Henry Vizetelly who was later prosecuted and imprisoned mainly for the publication of Zola's *La terre* (1887). I do not envisage this dissertation as a research into naturalism in the fiction of Hardy and Zola, my argument is rather to indicate that this movement constitutes a common occurrence between Hardy and Zola, and to underscore the verifiable facts that both novelists' works are informed with the ideas that lie beneath naturalism.

It goes without saying that the literature of naturalism mainly originated from the thought of the nineteenth-century European most eminent thinkers who had an unquestionable influence on Western culture in particular and on Hardy and Zola (in)directly. The theories and essays of these thinkers were particularly relevant to the period and were also quite innovative in that they dealt with issues closely involved with nature. Theories like: *Principle of Population* (1798) by Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), *Principles of Geology* (1830-32) by Charles Lyell (1795-1875), *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man and Selection in relation to Sex* (1871) by Charles Darwin (1809-1882), *First Principles* (1862) by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1853) and *Agnosticism* (1889) by Thomas H; Huxley (1825-1895), *History of English Literature* (1865) by Hippolyte A. Taine (1828-1893) and *The World as Will and Idea* (1818) by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and the like have been far-reaching for the Western world.

Taine's three famous principal elements that allegedly serve to elucidate any literary work, i.e., 'race', 'milieu' and 'moment' are widely encountered in Zola's fiction as well as in Hardy's. This triad forms determining factors, not in the lives of Hardy and Zola, but in the mis/representation of their female (male too) characters, essentially Tess Durbeyfield, Sue Bridehead, Gervaise Macquart and Thérèse Raquin. Indeed, the racial and atavistic parameters which link one generation with another, the environmental factor that weighs on

the characters in question and the moment that is subordinated to past traditions and present ones contribute much to the tragic fate of the women mentioned above. So according to Richard Burton:

Environment with Hardy is atmosphere, influence, often fate itself. Being a scientist in the cast of his intellect, although by temperament poet, he believes in environment as the shaping power conceived by Taine and Zola. It is this use of nature as a power upon people of deep, strong, simple character, showing the sweep of forces far more potent than the conventions of the polite world, which distinguishes Hardy's fiction.³⁵

The same obviously holds for Zola whose naturalistic manifesto theorized in his *The Experimental Novel* (*Le roman expérimental*) (1880) is a mere process of scientizing fiction through the transformation of the novel into "an epistemic discourse participating in common research with sciences such as medicine or biology."³⁶ Zola states it plainly in the essay mentioned above:

*Le romancier est fait d'un observateur et d'un expérimentateur. L'observateur chez lui donne les faits tels qu'il les a observés, pose le point de départ, établit le terrain solide sur lequel vont marcher les personnages et se développer les phénomènes. Puis l'expérimentateur paraît et institue l'expérience, je veux dire faire mouvoir les personnages dans une histoire particulière, pour y montrer que la succession des faits y sera telle que l'exige le déterminisme des phénomènes mis à l'étude.*³⁷

The same puppeteer and manipulative element, namely deterministic causes, preside over the destiny of Zola's and Hardy's characters.

One encounters other deterministic elements and concepts such as Arthur Schopenhauer's concepts of pessimism and Will in Hardy's and in Zola's fiction likewise. The mutual attraction between Laurent and Thérèse are due to instinct rather than to emotions, and this was how Schopenhauer defined man/woman relationship. The Schopenhauerish

³⁵ Richard Burton, *Masters of the English Novel : A Study of Principles and Personalities*, (New York, Henry Holt, 1909), p.268.

³⁶ Allen Thiher, *Fiction Rivals Science : The French Novel from Balzac to Proust*, (Columbia, MO : University of Missouri Press, 2001), p.126.

³⁷ Quoted in Nadine Tourssel and Jacques Vassevière, *Littérature : Textes théoriques et Critiques*, (Paris : Nathan, 1994), p.161.

pessimism has equally been traced in Zola's *La Débâcle* and *L'Assommoir* by two English journals, *The Spectator* and *The Westminster Review*. Schopenhauer's influence is more important in Hardy's fiction; the latter's poetry and prose are traversed by a system of thoughts analogous to that of Schopenhauer which allegedly influenced Hardy's works from 1874 onwards. Roughly speaking, the theory of the Immanent Will philosophically expressed in Schopenhauer's writing assumes the form of prose and verse in Hardy's.

Naturalism, Schopenhauerism, Darwinism, Determinism, Genetics and numerous nineteenth-century ideologies and isms permeate the Hardyan and Zolaesque novels selected for this dissertation. These isms that saturate the novels in question assuredly have a hand in the process of misrepresentation of the aforementioned female characters. While Tess's "naturally bright intelligence had begun to admit the fatalistic convictions", ³⁸ Gervaise is steeped in "a Darwinian perspective in which the accident called life is elucidated as the product of micro-macro forces." ³⁹ In effect, naturalism has been particularly influenced by the principles and methodology of Darwinism.

Some of the most important implications of Darwin's evolutionary theory started to become patent in the relations between man and woman especially those figuring in fiction from the 1870s onwards. In fact, Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871) and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) have also brought into prominence sexual selection and segregation. For Darwin: "Man is more powerful in body and mind to woman, and in the savage state he keeps her in a far more abject state of bondage than does the male of any other animal; therefore it is not surprising that he should have gained the power of selection." ⁴⁰ Furthermore, Darwin argues that: "it is generally admitted that with woman the powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation, are more strongly marked than in man;

³⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, ed. Juliet Grindle and Simon Gatrell, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1988), p.202.

³⁹ Allen Thiher, op.cit., p.128.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots : Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.197.

but some, at least, of these faculties are characteristics of the lower races, and therefore of past and lower state of civilisation.”⁴¹

Though latent and disguised, the processes of depreciation and animalization of woman are recurrent in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *L'Assommoir* and *Thérèse Raquin*. Similar focus on the importance of the female irrationality and lack of decision permeates these novels. The secrets of naturalism or 'scientific realism' and its idiosyncrasies are supposedly revealed in Gervaise's story. Martin Turnell suggests that Gervaise's downfall and tragic end are triggered by the writer himself to prove that "the combination of a certain milieu and a certain heredity will produce the moral *déchéance* which is the theme of the book".⁴² Tess also owes her misfortune and decline to heredity and inheritance; a name handed down to her by her Norman ancestry. Through the tragedy of Tess, according to Michael Ragussis, Hardy is eager to demythologise the bourgeois novel through the reversal of the traditional plot from comedy to tragedy. Thus, instead of a plot wherein "the story of the child's happy discovery of his or her family inheritance", Tess "begins by discovering for Tess a lofty name and noble blood ends by showing these to be forms of disinheritance."⁴³

Hardy was admittedly fascinated by Darwin's theories; he read *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man* and was also acquainted earlier with the work of August Weismann (1835-1914). The latter was equally fascinated by Darwin, yet denied the prevailing idea of the inheritance of acquired traits. This theory which Darwin readily adopted, is also known as Lamarckism after the French biologist (one more naturalist) Jean Baptiste de Monet Lamarck (1744-1829). Lamarckism assumes that some traits such as: Gervaise's limp, Coupeau's surrender to drink, Thérèse's sexual potency, Tess's ancestral curse and Sue's anxiety are

⁴¹ Ibid., p.200.

⁴² Martin Turnell, *The Art of French Fiction : Prevost, Stendhal, Zola, Maupassant, Gide, Mauriac, Proust*, (New York : New Directions, 1959), p.151.

⁴³ Michael Ragussis, *Acts of Naming : The Family Plot in Fiction*, (New York : Oxford University Press, 1986), p.135.

inherited. Though Lamarckism is preponderant in the Zolaesque and Hardy novels chosen for the dissertation, there is no indication concerning Hardy's and Zola's acquaintance with Lamarck's works. Zola found the impetus and the base of the construction of the saga of the *Rougon-Macquart* in Dr Prosper Lucas's *Traité philosophique et physiologique de l'hérédité naturelle* (1847-1850), and in Valentine Magnan's *De l'alcoolisme* (1874).

Naturalism has often been likened with materialism and a similar influence of materialism (agnostic one) is found in both *Thérèse Raquin* and *Jude the Obscure* and to a lesser degree in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *L'Assommoir*. *Thérèse* and *Jude* are equally pervaded by the same darkness, hideousness and morbidity that characterises the gothic novel. Another crucial feature of the nineteenth-century period that overwhelms both novels is the rivalry between religion and science which is less traceable in *Thérèse Raquin*, but quite conspicuous in *Jude the Obscure*. Jude Fawley is at first attracted by religion, but afterwards he bitterly converts-like Hardy-into someone who admits that he cannot believe in the existence of something, i.e., God, that is not experienced or that is 'unknowable'. The term agnosticism was publicized in 1869 by a fervent expounder of Darwin's theory of evolution, T.H. Huxley. In France, agnosticism was closely linked to the positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) which impregnated the thoughts of Zola and his main inspirer, Claude Bernard, and also Hardy.⁴⁴

The English positivists are Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) whose influence on Sue Bridehead is also noticeable. In addition to the positivist/agnostic thought, *Jude* contains references to the Tractarian/ Oxford movement and its leader, John Henry Newman (1801-1890) and Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882) contribute to Jude's admiration for Christminster/Oxford. "How can you do otherwise than cling to a city in whose

⁴⁴ See Laura Otis, *Organic Memory : History and the Body in the Late Nineteenth & Early Twentieth Centuries*, (Lincoln, NE : University of Nebraska Press, 1994), p.161.

history such men as Newman, Pusey, Ward, Keble, loom so large!” he says to Sue.⁴⁵ It need be said that the Tractarian Movement dissented from the Anglican Church, which it aimed to harness to the universal Catholic Church. The religious schism and doubts were due to the puritan campaign for (re) christianizing Europe, but above all to the theories of Darwin, Lyell, Comte, and the numerous scientific inventions and discoveries that were revolutionizing Europe then. The battle opposing religion to science can be best exemplified by the unprecedented debate that took place at Oxford and opposed Huxley to Bishop Wilberforce.⁴⁶

2-Political, economic and social background(s)

There were the political revolutions proper and France and Zola witnessed no less than three major changes during the nineteenth century. First, there was the ‘Year of Revolutions’, i.e., 1848. The constitutional monarchy was overthrown and the Second Republic was instituted in France and on December 10th Louis-Napoleon won the elections. Italy, Hungary, and some other European countries were equally stirred by political turmoil, while Britain was spared despite the Chartist agitation that died out around that very year. In fact, Britain could glory in a political stability that had started three years before Thomas Hardy was born, in 1837 with the coronation of Victoria.

More than thirty years of Victoria’s reign had elapsed when Hardy published his *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*; the frivolity of the Regency Period was long forgotten, the revolution was no longer imminent and the prestige of the monarchy was reinstated. Furthermore, seriousness, individual and collective hardwork, a high sense of the family, but also religious doubt enhanced by the successive scientific inventions and discoveries prevailed over the country and subsequently became known as ‘Victorian values’. These values were mainly sustained by the Queen’s legendary probity, and her undisputed epitomization of the wifely and motherly virtues. She was so unquestionably loyal to her husband that long after his death

⁴⁵ See Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, ed. Patricia Ingham (Oxford : Oxford university Press, 1985), p.104.

⁴⁶ Geoffrey Harvey, *The Complete Guide to Thomas Hardy*, (New York : Routledge, 2003), pp.11-23-90

in 1861, she remained inconsolable. Allusions to those virtues in both *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are revelatory of their belonging to the Victorian mind.

Queen Victoria had no counterpart in France to stimulate and inspire *Thérèse Raquin* and *L'Assommoir*. However these books are not indifferent to the '*fait du prince*' as they deal with the French Second Empire; the complete title of the series of *Les Rougon-Macquart* being the 'natural and social history of a family under the second empire'. The French Second Empire began when Zola was twelve; on December 2nd (1852) when the Prince-President Louis-Napoleon became Napoleon III after the *coup d'état* of December 2nd (1851). Unlike economy which knew a certain growth, the political life was controlled and liberties restrained. "In order to vote you must now reside in a place for two years. Three millions of citizens are struck off the lists. I've been told that Bonaparte is really much annoyed at it, for he is attached to the people, and has proved it", ⁴⁷ says the republican Madinier who "admired the prince on account of his uncle, the great conqueror" whereas Bibi-the –Smoker believes that "that muff of a president looked juts like a police spy." ⁴⁸

The period was that of the heydays of the Industrial Revolution (1830-1870); progress was being made in the construction of trunk lines (railways, telephone), steam navigation was growing while was being created an ironclad navy and the Suez Canal built. Banks, department stores were created, bridges were built, the majority of the French towns were reconstructed, and Paris was spectacularly and colossally transformed by inspired architects as Haussmann. The French prosperity was shown up in the successive expositions held in 1855, 1867 and 1878. Nevertheless, as Albert Leon Guérard underlines "the Second Empire from beginning to end, form a period of reaction, characterized by pessimism and

⁴⁷ See Emile Zola, *The dram-Shop : L'Assommoir*, ed. Ernest A. Visetely, (New York : Marion, 1915), p.80.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

materialism.”⁴⁹ Indeed, the material development also generated the pessimistic mood which the young Zola mentioned in one of his letters to Jean Baptiste Baille, an ancient school friend of his:

In the crowds that surround me, I see not a single soul, but only prisons of clay; and my soul is smitten with despair at its immense solitude, and grows more and more sombre [...] Jostling against his fellows, but never knowing them save by the commonplace exchanges of commonplace conversation, is that not how man's life is passed [...] Man is alone, alone on earth. I repeat, shapes pass before our eyes, but every day shows me the vast desert in which each of us lives.⁵⁰

A similar discomfort due to materialism and the same ‘disease of modern life’ as Hardy called it recur in Victorian Britain and in *Tess* and *Jude* likewise. Hardy was only seven years old when the railways started to transfigure Dorchester. It was probably to absorb the shock that he created the imaginary and nostalgic world of Wessex as the setting of *Tess* and some other works and to praise the virtues of the immaculate rural world too. It has been suggested that the abuse and ravishment of Tess connotes the violence made to the old rural Britain by the rapid and efficient progress of the industrialization of the country.⁵¹ In fact, the beginning of the nineteenth century, Britain was strongly agricultural and rural, owned by an elite of landowners-even in 1879 about 50% of the country was the property of 500 landowners-protected by unpopular laws such as the Corn laws. British people did not yet know and see their country as they did it later with the democratization of the railways, merely because the man-animal link (*Tess* and the horse, *Prince*) was still topical.

The Industrial Revolution in Britain occurred earlier than in France, between 1780 and 1820, and when Hardy arrived in London in 1862, the capital-city was being transformed. The projects of constructing the Thames Embankment and the Charing Cross Railway Bridge,

⁴⁹ Albert Leon Guérard, *French Civilization in the Nineteenth Century : A Historical Introduction*, (New York : Century, 1914), p.143.

⁵⁰ Quoted in F.W.J. Hemmings, Emile Zola, (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1953), p.5.

⁵¹ See respectively Arnold Kettle quoted in Geoffrey Harvey, op.cit., p.175 and Kathleen Wall, *The Callisto Myth from Ovid to Atwood : Initiation and Rape in Literature*, (Kingston, Ont : McGill-Queen University Press, 1988), p.131.

“which Hardy observed from the window of his office in Adelphi Terrace”,⁵² were launched in 1863 while the construction of London Underground had been started in 1854. The streets of the capital were enlightened with electric lamps in 1878 and one year later, the first telephone exchanges started. By 1800, London was inhabited by 100,000 people and in 1891, twenty-three cities could boast to shelter hundreds of thousands inhabitants.

Europe of the nineteenth-century was becoming more and more urbanized, and the population growth was another consequence of the overall development. The urbanization of France was slower than that of Britain; in 1846, there were only thirteen cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants for eight (cities) in 1821. The major ones, Paris, Marseille and Lyon were respectively inhabited by, 1,054,000, 195,300 and 177,200 in the 1850s.⁵³ The uncontrolled population growth and its detrimental effects on the production of food constitute the core of Malthusianism, a revolutionary theory owed to another naturalist, the British economist and demographer Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) contained in his famous *An Essay on the Principles of Population* (1798). This theory postulates that if population growth goes beyond the available needs of that population, people will starve, so birth control is required. A particular allusion is made to this theory in *Tess*; Hardy steeped Tess in a Malthusian creed, she “felt quite a Malthusian towards her mother for thoughtlessly giving her so many little sisters and brothers, when it was such a trouble to nurse and provide for them.”⁵⁴ Malthus had warned against some probable disequilibrium between population growth and food production likely to generate misery and vice among mankind. As a matter of fact, Tess’s predicament and her tragic death are closely linked to the poverty of her family. Poverty and vice prevailed in the 1870s French society and also abound in Gervaise’s family wherein there are more takers than givers. The Irish potato famine of 1845 is an instance of imbalance between the number of consumers and consumables; it resulted in a great deal of victims and emigration

⁵² Geoffrey Harvey, op. cit. , p.13.

⁵³ Roger Price, *A Social History of Nineteenth-Century France*, (New York : Holmes&Meyer, 1987), p.84.

⁵⁴ See Thomas Hardy (*Tess*), op.cit. ,p. 40.

which diminished the European populations as exemplified by the Irish population that decreased from 8.2 million in 1841 to 6.5 million in 1851.⁵⁵

Population growth was enhanced by progress in sanitation and medicine. The discovery of ether and chloroform was beneficial to Queen Victoria who employed it in 1853 as an anesthetic at the birth of her eighth children. Following the epidemic of cholera of 1848, the necessity for a serious public health policy urged the British authorities to invest in public health and the Medical Act was adopted in 1858. In France, Louis Pasteur formulated his germ theory of disease, and his discoveries in the domain of bacteriology revealed the role of contagion and imposed the antiseptics and sterilization as imperative means of prevention. The stethoscope was invented in 1819 by René Laennec, while Claude Bernard, Zola's mentor, achieved major discoveries concerning the functions of the pancreas, the liver and the sympathetic nervous system. Hospitals were (re)constructed, laboratories were given more importance and research enhanced. From 1887 on, water was analysed after it had been established that it was linked to typhoid. It is worth underlining that it is typhoid which killed Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert in 1861.

Victoria was the most outstanding woman of the nineteenth century, yet another woman, of lesser fame, played a major role during the French Second Empire, namely, Eugénie, the spouse of Napoleon III and empress of France between 1853 and 1871. She mainly opposed the establishment of a democratic constitution, encouraged the Mexican expedition, persuaded her husband not to reduce the temporal authority of the Pope and encouraged the emperor to declare war to Prussia and thus, indirectly caused the fall of the Second Empire. Queen Victoria, by contrast, relied on her husband in the conduct of the affairs of the most powerful economy of the nineteenth-century world and biggest empire. In fact, both Britain and France acquired colonies in Africa and Asia which furthered their

⁵⁵ See Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, (Westport, CT : Greenwood Press, 1996), p.x.

development; they veered towards the ‘uncivilized’ countries and transferred their secular contest to other continents. A multitude of wars had opposed both countries, but they became allies in the Crimean War in 1854.

This war united them in the camp of the Ottoman Turkey that was opposed to Russia. It was the last war in which Britain was involved in the nineteenth century whereas France declared another war to Germany in 1870 which precipitated Napoleon III’s dethronement following his surrender. The Prussian soldiers overthrew the French Second Empire as their elders had destroyed the French Monarchy in 1792. As a result, the Parisians suffered from a four-month siege in winter; food lacked and people who could afford the price managed to survive by eating the bears and elephants found in the zoo, while the poor contented themselves with rats. Hence the dazzling propensity of the Parisians to indulge in “tippling, slothful habits during the German siege.”⁵⁶ Neither Zola nor Hardy took part in the Crimean War; Zola was exonerated because he was the only son of a widow. Unlike Zola, Hardy was less involved in politics; he seldom indulged in political issues notwithstanding his enrolment, after the manner of Kipling, Doyle, H.G. Wells and others, in the war propaganda Bureau during the First World War.

Zola’s involvement in public affairs is closely associated with his position in the Dreyfus Affair, but he also ran for the political post of sub-prefect in Aix and coveted the prefecture for the coming election. He worked as a secretary for Glais-Bizoin, a former deputy of the opposition in the Corps Legislatif and member of the Government of National Defence then. In fact, because of the war, Zola’s literary career was interrupted and he was impelled to earn his life otherwise. He was not so fond of politics and even loathed the politicians whom he addressed in these words:

A single page written by a great writer is of more importance to humanity than a whole year of your ant-hill scurryings. You are making history—true enough;

⁵⁶ See Emile Zola, *op.cit.*, p.vi.

but we are making it along with you and above you; for it is through us that history abides [...] This needs to be stated quite unequivocally: literature is on the heights, together with science; politics come afterward, at the very bottom, in what is relative among human activities.⁵⁷

Indeed, the world associates the Dreyfus Affair with the courageous position of Zola rather than with those who wished to sacrifice the captain Dreyfus. On January 13, 1898, the '*Lettre au President de la République*' worldly known as '*J'Accuse*' was published in the journal, *L'Aurore*. As a result, Zola was accused at his turn and judged on February 7th and on the 23rd he was convicted. But he fled to England where meanwhile, Thomas Hardy had his first volume of poetry, *Wessex Poems*, published.

One year later, he (Hardy) began his first series of war poems; the Boer war had just started while his relationship with Emma, his wife, had begun to worsen. It must be said that four years earlier, a crucial event had occurred in Hardy's literary career; he had abandoned writing prose works because of the harsh reception made to *Jude the Obscure*. By that time, bowdlerization had become a national reflex and though *Jude* and *Tess* had been expurgated from the 'anti-Victorian' passages, both novels were violently attacked. The prevailing prudery imposed on the publishers to force Hardy to purify some passages; about thirty cases of bowdlerizing affected the earlier chapter where Arabella figures. As for *Tess*, it had also been amended; it had been so much altered that critics and students are bewildered as to which edition one needs to turn to. Some critics parallel *Tess* to the text itself, that is to say, a palimpsest employed by Hardy to denounce the power of censorship exerted by the publishers and the circulating libraries.⁵⁸

The dreadful figures of Bowdler and Mrs Grundy accompanied the Victorian period and contributed to the sinister reputation of that era. The word bowdlerize made its entry into English in 1838, and was codified to refer to the process of expurgating a piece of writing

⁵⁷ F.W.J. Hemmings, op.cit., p.68.

⁵⁸ See the introductory notes of the versions of *Jude* and *Tess* employed herein.

from unsuitable passages and scenes that were likely to shock the reader. This form of censorship was due to Thomas Bowdler (1754-1825), a British doctor, philanthropist and writer who bowdlerized Shakespearian plays to adjust them to the needs of the family. Mrs Grundy, by contrast, is rather a fictitious character found in Thomas Morton's play *Speed the Plough* (1798) symbolized strict respectability and conformability to conventions. In the play, dame Ashfield always accords attention to what her neighbour, Mrs Grundy thinks of her behaviour. These two figures constituted key principles of the Victorian moral, cultural and literary life. Despite bowdlerizm and grundyism, the literary activities knew an extraordinary boom in novel writing; between the 1830s and the 1900s some 40,000 to 50,000 books were produced by 3,500 novelists. Publishers and circulating libraries (Mudie's) enjoyed an unprecedented success and instalments largely influenced the form as well as the content of the novels.⁵⁹

Edition in France was less prosperous than in Britain, but did exist and Zola started his literary career at Hachette's publishing house as a clerk. Later on, he joined the family of journalism and worked for *L'Événement* where he held a rubric called *Livres d'aujourd'hui et de demain*. Zola contributed a lot to newspapers; considering journalism "to be a lever of such power",⁶⁰ but also as a sounding board and a means of advertisement and he kept working for the press throughout his life. The period corresponded with the birth of the modern French press that was facilitated by the advances in printing, the use of telephone, the telegraph, the cheap paper and the introduction of advertising. The mass-media equally developed in Britain; the stereotyping process, the steam press, new papermaking machines, mechanized typesetting, cheaper ingredients etc., transformed the Victorians into consumers of newspapers, magazines and books.

⁵⁹ See Kenneth Womack, *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, (Westport, CT : Greenwood Press, 2002), pp.10-

⁶⁰ F.W.J. Hemmings, op.cit., p.15.

Not all the Victorians of course, because the working class had no access to schooling and was therefore excluded from education. About “90 per cent of the characters in the Victorian fiction [...] belong to the middle class and the gentry [...]”⁶¹ It is thus needless to say that Victorian literature was made by the middle class for the middle class. The plebeian in Britain as well as in France was not yet admitted to the joys and dividends of the progress generated by the Industrial Revolution. In Britain, the unfair repartition of wealth divided the country into what Benjamin Disraeli called ‘*Two Nations*’ (1845), the rich and the poor or, in Gaskell’s words, *The North and the South* (1855). Indeed, as already seen, 500 landowners held 50% of the country’s land and were sustained by laws such as the Corn Laws which enriched the rich, impoverished and starved the poor (the famine in Ireland).

So, the workers were excluded from the benefits of the First Reform Bill (1832) hence the Chartist movement (1837) whose name was due to the movement’s Charter of six (06) demands among which five, viz, votes for all men, the payment of MPs, voting by ballot, the abolition of the property qualification and constituencies according to the number of people, were accepted between 1860 and 1914. The second demand, i .e. annual elected parliament was rejected, nevertheless, the urban working class was enfranchised in 1867 whereas the rural one had to wait till 1884. It is worth underlining that the working and living conditions of the British workers were directly observed by Karl Marx (1818-83) and Friedrich Engels (1820-95), the leading fathers of the proletarian revolution who lived for some years in Britain.

In France too, the Marxists were attentive to the plight of the working class; they considered the upheaval of the Paris Commune as one of the inaugural combat of a long series of battles between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In fact, in France workers were not better than most Europeans ; poverty, drunkenness and political unrest were their essential lot

⁶¹ Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas : A Companion for the Modern Reader of the Victorian Literature*, (New York : Norton, 1973), p.33.

mainly in the cities as this was publicized for the first time in fiction by Zola in *L'Assommoir*. Besides, an article by the *Journal des demoiselles* of 1860 recounts the telling case of a lace worker who “without raising her head from her work, thirteen hours of work a day permitted her [...] to obtain bread and charcoal for herself and her child. That was all. For the rest, it was necessary, being widowed, to depend on public charity.”⁶² The progressive industrialization and mechanization of society did not affect trades as Gervaise’s laundry, Mme Raquin’s haberdashery and crafts as Coupeau’s zinc-work or Lantier’s hat making.

Stonemasons and architects like Jude Fawley were also spared by the turmoil of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. Unskilled workers as Tess Durbeyfield and Arabella Donn by contrast, had to perform whatever job they were given; milkmaid, pig-breeder and barmaid and were subsequently exposed to exploitation. Thus, after Angel had deserted her, Tess reluctantly joined the farm of the very man who had once assaulted her, and despite the law of 1847 which limited the number of working hours for children and women, she:

slaved in the morning frost and in the afternoon rains. When it was not swede-grubbing it was swede-trumming, in which process they sliced off the earth and fibres with a bill-hook before storing the roots for future use. At this occupation they could shelter themselves by a thatched hurdle if it rained; but if it was frosty even their thick gloves could not prevent the frozen masses they handled from biting their fingers.⁶³

In fact Tess and her friends had no other choice than bear the difficult working conditions, and accept all sorts of humiliations at the hands of the employers and their male colleagues. The trade unions were not firmly established so as to secure the rights of workers, though by the end of the century, the British workers could join the early trade unions and socialist societies such as: the Fabian society (G.B. Shaw), the Social Democratic Foundation and William Morris’s Socialist League. In France, although Napoleon III granted workers some

⁶² Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1984), p.25.

⁶³ Thomas Hardy (*Tess*), op.cit., p.279.

rights by the 1864 Law, the trade unions could legally exist only in 1884 thanks to the 'loi Waldeck-Rousseau'.

Unionism was far less important for Hardy than education; he was denied the joys of the university. Jude's failure to be admitted to Christminster –it must be said that the exclusion of the likes of Jude from university is one of the major themes of *Jude the Obscure*– is a transposition of the reality that Hardy and people not belonging to the gentry went through. Prestigious universities such as Oxford and Cambridge were hermetically closed for ordinary people as Jude who had to wait for the Education Act of 1870 to see state schools opened, but education became compulsory only in 1880 and free in 1890.

Free education in the French public primary schools became a reality on June 16th 1881, and primary education became compulsory in 1882. The Ecole Polytechnique, Ecole des Mines, Ecole Normale and other elitist schools were equally shut in the face of the plebeian. Zola failed in his studies and resentfully complained of the uselessness of the education he had received; "a little theory, no practical experience. What am I to do?"⁶⁴ he wrote to his friend, the famous painter Cezanne. Of course, none of the female characters of *L'Assommoir* and *Thérèse Raquin* holds a university degree and there are no references to the woman's education in these books, either. Hardy's 'women', mainly, Sue and Tess are learned women; Sue being far more learned than Jude and Phillotson and Tess can speak the Standard English.

3-Women in the nineteenth century⁶⁵

Though the sense of Britain was "exemplified by manliness [...] had its counterpart a sense of France as excessively feminine and as a country in which women had too much power",⁶⁶ the 'Woman Question' was much more advanced and feminism was much more animated in Britain than in France. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of*

⁶⁴ See F.W.J. Hemmings, op.cit., p. 7.

⁶⁵ I have purposefully chosen this subtitle with reference to Margaret Fuller's famous book.

⁶⁶ Barbara Caine, *English feminism, 1780-1980*, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1997), p.53.

Woman was re edited in 1890, the concept of ‘New Woman’ was introduced by Sarah Grand in 1894 and the term ‘feminist’ was first used in *The Westminster Review* in 1898. Some⁶⁷ have suggested that the advance of feminism in Britain was due to the celibacy of women. Marriage and celibacy were amongst the bad effects scientific, technological and industrial revolutions in Europe had on woman’s condition.

However, chastity in women, innocence, purity and other virtues were greatly valued and glorified in both countries during the nineteenth century because they “offered a greater security, an internalized security, in a world more vulnerable to political and economic disorder.”⁶⁸ As a result, the notions of public sphere vs. private sphere became the landmarks of the nineteenth century with regard to the condition of woman. Motherhood was so much encouraged and magnified in a sort of “female domestic heroism, an image of activity, strength, fortitude, and ethical maturity, of self-denial, purity and truth”⁶⁹ that the exclusion of woman from the public world became almost natural. In his famous *The Subjection of Women* (1869), John Stuart Mill reveals that:

The masters of women wanted more than simple obedience, and they turned the whole force of education to effect their purpose. All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will and government by self-control, but submission and yielding to the control of others.⁷⁰

Almost the same ‘syllabus’ was implemented by French authorities and Simone de Beauvoir highlights the predicament of the then French woman and states that:

She is taught that in order to please she must take an effort to please, she must make an object of herself; she must renounce her autonomy. She is treated like a living doll and she is denied freedom; thus a vicious circle is created; for the less she exerts her freedom to understand, grasp and discover the world around her, the less she will discover resources available to her and the less she will affirm herself as a subject.⁷¹

⁶⁷ See Claire Goldberg Moses, op.cit., p.23.

⁶⁸ Susan Mendus and Janet Randall, ed. *Sexuality and Subordination : Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth century*, (London : Routledge, 1989), p.7.

⁶⁹ See Barbaara Caine, op.cit., p.16.

⁷⁰ See Patricia A. McEachern, *Deprivation and Power : The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa in Nineteenth-Century French Literature*, (Westport, CT : Greenwood Press, 1998), p.16.

At that time, the French society witnessed alleged apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Paris (1830), La Salette (1846), Lourdes (1858) and Pontmain (1871). These phenomena reinforced the prevailing propensity for Mariolatry; obedience, purity, humility and indefectible wifehood which were the endeared virtues to be attained by woman. Mary/Madonna as the archetype of purity was also relished in Britain, but the figure of Magdalen as the epitome of the fallen woman equally haunted the British and French societies.

In Britain, Queen Victoria equally symbolised Coventry Patmore's and the Victorian's ideal of woman, *The Angel in the House*. When her husband died in 1861, the Queen became- as already referred to- a tearful widow and mourned him endlessly. However, she did not abdicate; she ruled over Britain so long that the British nineteenth-century period has become known as the Victorian era. Her position in respect to the 'Woman Question' can be somewhat illustrated by her view concerning the suffragettes whose struggle she regarded as a "mad wicked folly of Women's Rights, with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor, feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety."⁷² Besides, the term/concept of Victorianism has been adopted by lexicographers with reference to the conduct, taste and style of Victorians. It mainly symbolizes moral rectitude and chastity of which Patmore wrote: "The more I know of the English chastity the more it reminds me of that saint of whom I was reading the other day, in Butler's Lives, that he was so chaste that he could never remain in a room alone with his mother."⁷³ Nudity was banned everywhere; in art as well as in conjugal life. Despite the rivalry of science, religion's hold on society was still stronger, even dedicated agnostics such as Hardy/Jude could not totally reject

⁷¹ Ibid., p.17

⁷² Richard D. Altick, op.cit. , P.58.

⁷³ See Eric Trudgill, *Madonas and Magdalens : The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*, (New York : Holmes&Meir, 1976), p.3.

Christianity. References to theology and catechism abound in *Jude* as well as in *Tess*. In his *Madonnas and Magdalens* (1976), Eric Trudgill points out:

For lapsed Christians the purity of love could be a substitute for faith. For Orthodox Christians, on the other hand, it could be a much needed buttress for belief, an existential proof of the reality of God. The pure woman, the Angel in the House, was [...] not only an outlet for quasi-religious emotions, not only an assurance of the spirituality of man, but a symbolic confirmation of the truth of Christian faith, a foretaste and guarantee of heavenly love and peace.⁷⁴

Accordingly sexuality was muzzled and straitjacketed and Sue Bridehead's conduct is but a representative instance of the 'sexual education' given to women then. Marriage and prostitution were the major issues and events of the 1860s Victorian society; the Divorce Act of 1857 legalised the husband's superiority over his wife while the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1860 aimed at ghettoizing and controlling the prostitutes, and securing the married people from venereal diseases. The bonds of marriage were assumed to be the safest vehicle of the Victorian virtues, but they were also the target of some intellectuals and feminists who considered marriage as a legal form of prostitution

Prostitution was also a reality in France; nineteenth-century French husbands were equally favoured by The Napoleonic Civil Code (1804) mainly in case of divorce, but also in various situations such as family property and children's custody. Single women and widows were less ill-treated than married ones, yet the Code on the whole debased women, minored and imprisoned them in the patriarchal gaol for more than a century. Unmarried women had no right to act as witnesses to documents like certificates of birth, marriage and death. Even dead, a husband could limit his wife's parental rights over the children and if the widow contracted another marriage, she simply lost them. Purity and chastity for maidens and fidelity for married women, and infidelity on the part of men constituted what has become well-

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.28.

known in France as well as in Britain as the concept of double standards which also refers to Victorianism in its pejorative sense, i.e., hypocrisy and prudery and male sexual tyranny.

Women were 'protected' against all sorts of ills, even reading- romance fiction in particular- was considered as a serious threat for the morality of maidens as well as that of married women. The moralists endeavoured to preserve woman against any 'perversion' of the kind that would lead a woman to have extra-conjugal relationship like Emma Bovary. Bovarysme, after the name of Flaubert's well-known *Madame Bovary*, became synonymous of a situation in which middle-class woman projects her emotional and sexual frustrations on the female characters of fiction. For John Lyons, this "was a form of escapism, but this escapism was a sign that women refused to be constrained by their allotted roles as mothers, housekeepers and dutiful daughters."⁷⁵ Reading was at first a leisure activity for bourgeois women, and some of the acutest readers managed to become writers and to transform the art of writing novels, which was seen as a mere pastime, into a modern literary means of narration. Jane Austen, the Brontës, Elisabeth Gaskell and George Eliot in Britain, and Georges Sand and Mme de Staël in France thus succeeded to make serious inroads in the world of literary production.

Mme de Staël 's *Delphine* (1802), Sand's *Indiana* (1832), *Valentine* (1832) and *Lelia* (1833), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Shirley* (1849), but above all, *Villette* (1853), George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) are some of the nineteenth-century remarkable novels named after the female central character. However, the male-authored *Madame Bovary* (1857), *Nana* (1880) and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) have become far more famous than the female-authored ones. Zola's *Nana*-much more than *Thérèse Raquin*-and Hardy's *Tess* have become classics stirring up the curiosity and concern of feminist and non-feminist critics alike. Naturally, the critics have focused on the motivating elements behind the making of

⁷⁵ Martyn Lyons, *Readers and Society in Nineteenth-Century France, Workers, Women, Peasants*, (New York : Palgrave, 2001), p.87.

these novels, have striven to fathom these female characters and studied the authors' relationships with women to demystify Tess, Sue, Thérèse and Gervaise.

4-Hardy and Zola and women

Women were more important and more determining for Thomas Hardy than for Emile Zola. In fact, little is known about Zola's involvement with women merely because very few women peopled his life, while Hardy's interest in women has been largely publicized and closely related to his literary works. Zola's biographies are notably poor with details about his relationships with women because, apart from his mother and his two wives, very few women shared his existence. In effect, up to his twenty-first birthday, Zola indulged in erotic day-dreaming and platonic love-affairs. In 1866, he enjoyed such kind of evanescent relationships with a shop- assistant with whom he would exchange smiles morning and evening. He admitted that he fancifully played at endowing "her with any number of qualities, invent endless adventures, watch her and hear her talk through the prism of my imagination."⁷⁶

Hardy's life was overcrowded with women whose importance is unambiguously manifested in his fiction. He presumably took after his father (Thomas Hardy senior), an "easy-going, handsome and courteous man, popular with women," whose "marriage to Jemima was precipitated by her pregnancy."⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Jemima, Hardy's mother, was far more valuable and more important for the young Hardy. Besides, biographers have recorded that the young Hardy was particularly bewitched by ideal beauty found in girls like Tess, Elisabeth Bishop, Louiza Harding, Tryphena Sparks, Florence Henniker and many others. Like Jude, his alter ego, Thomas Hardy was "a man of too many passions."⁷⁸

In default of his own passions, Zola resorted to ideas and experiences of others to set his constructs about woman, and Jules Michelet (1798-1874) was known to be one of his

⁷⁶ See F.W.J. Hemmings, op.cit., p.4.

⁷⁷ Geoffrey Harvey, op.cit., p.6.

⁷⁸ See Thomas Hardy (*Jude*), op.cit., p.201.

favourite inspirers. As a matter of fact, he accorded so much importance to chastity that one cannot be dazzled by his declaration:

My own wish is that my bride comes to me straight from the hands of God; I should like her white, pure, not yet living, and I should awaken her. She would draw from me the breath of life, she would know no one but me, she would have no memories save those I gave her. She would be the fulfilment of that divine dream of a marriage of soul and body, eternal, drawing everything from itself.⁷⁹

Zola would have ‘enjoyed’ a lifelong celibacy if he had not met Alexandrine Gabrielle Meley whom he married in 1870 after a liaison of nearly four years. She cured him from his loneliness, but did not manage to inspire him with an idyllic love. Zola’s view about marriage is thus eloquently unfavourable; “a sick man, tossing in bed from one side to another without managing to find a comfortable position. Well, that sick man is humanity in wedlock”,⁸⁰ he declared to a German disciple. Though childless, the Zolas seldom went through a similar tension as that which occurred when Mme Zola learnt about her husband’s secret liaison with the family seamstress, Jeanne Rozerot. The latter bore Zola’s two children, Denise in 1889 and Jacques in 1892. Nevertheless, Zola’s marital life was far less unhappy than Hardy’s union with Emma Lavinia Gifford, which Michael Milgate considers “in some measure the calculated outcome of a conspiracy.”⁸¹

Indeed, Hardy’s first marriage was not as successful as both Hardy and Emma had wished it to be. They had met in 1870 at St Juliot where the young Hardy was sent by Hicks to restore a church—it must be reminded that Hardy had worked as an architect before his literary career was secured-- and met her again in 1871 and 1872, and in September 1874 they got married and went to Paris for the honeymoon. By and by, Hardy’s literary engagements and repute, his frequent absence from home, Emma’s eccentric religiosity and her bad relationship with her step-mother Jemima set them apart. By 1912, while Emma’s health worsened, Hardy enjoyed another liaison with Florence Dudgale, his secretary. Emma died in

⁷⁹ See F.W.J. Hemmings, *op.cit.*, p.141.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.144.

⁸¹ Geoffrey harvey, *op.cit.* , p.18.

November 1912, and two years later he married this very Florence and when he discovered Emma's diaries, his grief and guilt increased. It follows from the above that Hardy's involvement with women is much more important than that of Zola. Subsequently, the importance of female characters is far more stamped in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* than in *L'Assommoir* and *Thérèse Raquin*.

Conclusion

The causes and effects of the Industrial Revolution are well-nigh the same on both sides of the Channel. The scientific tide of changes swept both countries, and the social, the cultural and the literary life felt the same 'shock'. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *L'Assommoir* secured the same financial ease for Hardy and Zola, but the same denunciation was aroused by both novels. Both Hardy and Zola intended their novels to be moral books, but they were accused of obscenity and aroused vehement protests in France as well as in Britain. It must be reiterated that Zola's works—mainly *L'Assommoir*-- caused a trial and imprisonment to the English publisher Henry Vizetelly.

Before *L'Assommoir* was issued in its volume form in 1877, it went through serialization in *Le Bien Public*, but the vehement protest of the readers forced the editors to withdraw it and the last chapters were serialized in *La république des lettres*. The book was allegedly meant to denounce the harsh conditions of the masses through the representation of Gervaise's family as victimized by such social evils as drinking and sloth. As for *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, it first appeared in the form of weekly instalments in the pictorial paper *The Graphic* from July 4th to December 26th 1891 and was published in its volume form (three volumes) in December 1891 by Osgood McIlvaine &co. *Tess* is allegedly a transposition of a series of clashes between the fleshy and the spiritual, the natural and the social, the pagan and the Christian and the intellectual and the superstitious sides of human beings that affected Britain then.

Jude the Obscure, Thomas Hardy's last novel went through instalments and received numerous titles before the writer opted for its current and definitive title. The volume first saw light in 1895, and constant revisions and successive bowdlerization of the original text generated no less than five editions. This novel has generally been accepted as being a book that questions the marriage institution and the impossibility for a lower-class individual to attain such aims as sexual and social emancipation. It also deals with the impossibility for the plebeian to get access to university and to elitist schools. Besides, melancholy and pessimism are combined with external constraints to produce that universal wish 'not to be' which haunts the story from beginning to end. The same morbidity prevails in Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* which does not belong in the voluminous series of *Les Rougon-Macquart*. Initially baptized *Un mariage d'amour*, *Thérèse Raquin* was renamed and published in 1867. One cannot entrust the circumstances that saw the publication of this novel to appreciate it thoroughly despite the then materialistic trend that lies beneath it.

Chapter Two: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *L'Assommoir*

Tess and Gervaise: Two Goddesses in Decline

Character is fate
Novalis

The centrality of the female protagonists Tess Durbeyfield/d'Urberville and Gervaise Macquart, respectively, the prominent female character in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and Zola's *L'Assommoir* (*The Dram-Shop*), is remarkable in literature in general, and in nineteenth-century fiction in particular. Tess's name manifestly irradiates the whole novel, through the title, the title-page and the successive chapters of the book. Gervaise's name does not figure in the title, but is advantageously given at the outset as though the reader is already acquainted with her.

Gervaise and Tess have more similarities than differences and are unavoidable for anyone who wishes to examine the representation of woman in the fictions of Hardy and Zola. Both women go through a series of unfortunate circumstances; more downs than ups 'adorning' lives that end tragically. They are the central figures of what Frye considers low mimetic tragedy, domestic tragedy or simply pathos. Pathos, in Frye's words, "has a close relation to the sensational reflex of tears [...] presents its hero as isolated by a weakness which appeals to our sympathy because it is on our level of experience", and Tess as well as Gervaise belong to the "whole procession of pathetic female sacrifices."⁸² Tess and Gervaise are first and foremost scapegoats, i.e., victims that are seduced/raped, wedded, loved, abandoned, exploited and finally sacrificed. Their stories can be easily interchanged, the setting and the characters displaced and the authors confused.

L'Assommoir is, more than anything else, the tragedy of Gervaise, the female protagonist who is torn like Tess, between two men, a lover and a fallen husband and the pen

⁸² Northrop Frye, op.cit., p.38.

of the writer himself who “*avec une cruauté qui ne se relâche jamais ,[...] s’acharne sur son heroine, Gervaise, et ne l’abandonne que morte, après nous l’avoir montrée dans sa robe boueuse, en savattes, essayant vainement de se prostituer.*”⁸³ In effect, the authorial ‘cruelty’ towards Gervaise is subtly instilled into the majority of the other characters who seem to rejoice at her hardships.

If we rely on the title of Hardy’s novel, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, we are entitled to expect a record of heroic deeds of a woman whose pivotal role in the story should ineluctably invest her with the very attributes allotted to heroines. Nothing at all, Tess is from the outset burdened by a name, a knightly inherited name that triggers and precipitates a series of tragic occurrences that open on to her demise. The only joyful episodes imparted to Tess are ephemeral and evanescent instants of exultation immediately followed by Angel’s desertion to Brazil and ultimately, her legalized and ritual-like assassination at Stonehenge. Abused more than once, the ‘tractable’ Tess is put to the test and dragged through a set of adversities and ultimately “dies in order to become the apotheosis of purity [...] so that neither Angel's nor the narrator's love for her will be threatened by anything else she might say or do.”⁸⁴

The same holds for Gervaise whose apparent mission is to sustain the whole plot of *L’Assommoir* by being saddled with the role of the story’s main hero without taking advantage of this assumed strategic position. The same role is assigned to causality and inevitability so as to set in motion her predetermined downfall and tragic death. The industrious and thrifty couple constituted by Gervaise and Coupeau have their life turned upside down when the latter falls from a roof. And another fall, that of Tess’s family horse which dies and acts as the catalyst of an endless list of tragic and fatal events that ruin and reduce Tess’s life.

⁸³ Marc Bernard, *Zola*, (Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1988), p.43.

⁸⁴ AnnL. Ardis, op.cit., pp.78-79.

1-Setting and characters

Tess of the d'Urbervilles is almost a tale, a pathetic tale that does not end well. Strikingly simple and easily readable, it is divided into six sections and runs through more than 300 pages. Tess is a beautiful and delicate maiden on whom selfish parents, a fateful force impose a series of accidents/coincidences that lead to her being hanged for murder. Her cruel end is mainly due to two men, Alec d'Urberville/Stoke and Angel Clare who equally rape her and contribute, each in his own way, to her abiding victimization and demise. Alec's death and Tess's are tightly related to the accidental death of Prince, the Durbeyfields' horse and bread winner. Dorothy Van Ghent posits that "with this accident are concatenated in fatal union Tess's going to 'claim kin' of the d'Urbervilles and all the other links in her tragedy down to the murder of Alec."⁸⁵ Paula Alida Roy, for her part, suggests that "Hardy draws a causal link between Tess's biological charms and her destiny."⁸⁶

The causative element in Gervaise's pitiable destiny is neither a horse nor glamour; it is an *assommoir* that refers both to a tavern and to a still, i.e., an apparatus employed in distilling liquors. Thus, to the initial title: *La vie simple de Gervaise Macquart*, Zola substituted the metaphorical *L'Assommoir* because of its decisive ruinous role in the characters' lives as a whole and particularly in those of, Coupeau the zinc-worker, and Gervaise, the washerwoman who "shivered and moved away" (p.36) from it when she first saw it. By the end of the story, the distilling apparatus has ruined more than one; Coupeau, Gervaise, but also the little Lalie whose irredeemable drunkard of father succeeds in killing her after using up his own wife. The *assommoir* or bludgeon also reflects Gervaise's-the other characters too- Sisyphean struggle for a decent life and her constant resistance against privations of all sorts.

⁸⁵ Dorothy Van Ghent, op.cit., p.33.

⁸⁶ Paula Alida Roy, 'Agent or Victim : Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891). in *Women in Literature : Reading Through the Lens of Gender*, ed. Jerilyn Fisher and Ellen S. Siber (Westport, CT : Greenwood Press, 2003), p.277.

Divided into thirteen chapters running through more than three hundred pages, almost as many as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Zola's first successful novel, *L'Assommoir* runs through a succession of abodes where Gervaise leaves a part of herself; from the Hôtel Boncoeur, to her transient home in the Rue Neuve, to her laundryshop, to the sixth-floor and ultimately to Père Bru's hole. The novel's triangular/pyramidal frame illustrates Gervaise's moving upwards and downwards on the double-edged social ladder. The story begins with **Desertion**, that of Auguste Lantier, Gervaise's lover and the procreator of her two sons, who leaves them without the 'sou' after fifteen days of stay in Paris. The desertion of Lantier covers the inaugural chapter and is the cause of Gervaise's furious fight against Adele.

Like Gervaise's itinerary, that of Tess resembles an initiatory voyage through which she looks for herself. She departs from Marlott, to Tantridge, then Marlott, next, Talbothays, Flintcomb –Ash, Kingsbere, Sandbourne, Stonehenge and at last, Wintonchester. Theresa, archetypally 'the reaper' and 'the carrier of the corn', or diminutively Tess, is the eldest child (she has six brothers and sisters) of Jack and Joan Durbeyfield. Timid and impressive, fragile and strong, an infant and a woman, Tess is also both part of time and timelessness. At her first appearance in the 'club-walking' for the (Dionysian) May-Day festival with her friends and peers (the *nymphs*), Tess is depicted as "a fine and handsome girl" singularized by "a red ribbon in her hair" (p.20). From the beginning, one is inclined to rely on the novel's title and the title-page to infer that *Tess of d'Urbervilles* should be wholly dedicated to Tess.

The same effect is produced by the prioritization of Gervaise's apparition in *L'Assommoir*; however, the rest of the story is quite eloquent as for Gervaise's fate. Besides, one is tempted to say that *L'Assommoir* is misnamed; neither the eponymous tavern nor the still are preponderant in the novel. The original title, namely *La vie simple de Gervaise Macquart*, is not suitable either because Gervaise's life is not that simple. On her arrival to Paris, she "was only twenty-two. She was tall and rather slim, with delicate features already

worn, however, by the hardships of life” (p.7). She is “a pretty blonde, and but for her unfortunate leg she might have ranked with the comeliest” (p.126). Like Tess Durbeyfield, Gervaise Macquart owes much of her unpleasant life to the weight of atavism and parental irresponsibility. Gervaise’s parents were feeble and unaffectionate, unable to supply her with food, tenderness and love which are so necessary for building one’s personality and character. At the age of fourteen she becomes pregnant by the eighteen year-old Lantier. Later, they get another boy whom Lantier’s mother takes care of. The opening scene of *L’Assommoir* takes place in Paris, in the room of Gervaise where, like Penelope, she “had waited Lantier until two o’clock in the morning [...] desperately searching with her eyes every nook and dark recess for the father of her children. At last she had fallen asleep, stretched across the bed, feverish, and her cheeks bathing in tears” (p.1). And when she wakes, “stiff and sore, at about five o’clock, she burst into sobs, for Lantier had not returned” (Ibid).

The inaugural chapter is full of references to Gervaise’s sadness; “the young woman with tear-blurred eyes”, “clouded gaze”, “broke into a fresh fit of sobbing” (Ibid), etc. By the end of the first chapter, and the beginning of the second one, **Courtship**, Gervaise is ready to start a new life with another man, Coupeau whom she marries in the third chapter, **The Wedding**. They have a child and set for a joyful and sedentary life till the fatal accident of Coupeau. Before they resolve to unite their destinies, both Gervaise and Coupeau recall and invoke their parents’ defects as though they wanted to exorcise the evil spirit that haunts their lineage. It must be kept in mind that ancestry is as crucial in Tess’s destiny as it is in Gervaise’s; the author casts a spell on Gervaise by making of her a descendent of Antoine Macquart, and this impels her to experience the ancestral curse that condemns the whole lineage to go through subjugation to alcohol.

Tess owes her ‘knightly’ moral virtues, her pride and responsibility to her patrilineal lineage while her charms are supposedly transmitted to her by her mother. Truly, Tess’s

charms are her “mother’s gift, and therefore unknightly, unhistorical” (p.25) rivalling with the lofty, decayed and decaying name handed on to her through her father. Tess is also as remorseful as she is dignified, as a result, when the family horse dies--by a strange coincidence--the day she was to take the place of her weakened father, she yields to her mother’s unfailing request to go and claim kinship with the d’Urbervilles. Thus from the outset, pride, responsibility, but also dignity turn out to be ruinous. In addition to dignity, Tess is endowed with other masculine features such as physical and psychological strength which supposedly holds as a contrapuntal argument against the thorough patriarchal belief in woman’s weakness.

Tess’s strength not only alienates her from the other girls, but also denies her existence in reality and merely confines her in the limits of myth. She is “a fine picturesque girl” (p.21), with a lovable face, speaking eyes, fair cheeks, arched brows, well proportioned chin and throat, “all that was real vitality, real warmth, real incarnation [...] distracting, infatuating, maddening” (p.152). She masters the standard language and the local dialect, she can claim to be more or less emancipated, but she is also superstitious like the other girls. She is above all, according to Hardy’s will, a ‘pure woman’, frank, candid, a country girl who easily adheres to nature:

On these lonely hills and dales her quiescent glide was of a piece with the element she moved in. Her flexuous and stealthy figure became an integral part of the scene. At times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her till they seemed part of her own story.

(p.91)

Tess’s entanglement with nature is so crucial that it (nature) all too naturally contributes to her everlasting predicament.

Nature is almost absent from Gervaise’s environment which is a gothic-like urban setting. Gervaise easily adapts to her new life in town, but remains an ‘*ange du hameau*’ whose essential concern is her home which makes of her a faithful housewife and the mother

par excellence. Her life is hitherto framed according to the patriarchal creed; she stays at home while Lantier comes now and then, satisfies his needs (food, clothes, and sex) and leaves the house without warning. Gervaise is the nurturer and the giver; she acts as the *paterfamilias* while he indulges in extra marital flirts and acts as the patriarch. If she ever reproves his recurrent escapades, he threatens to return outside: “[...] he had already taken his hat from off the chest of drawers, but Gervaise threw herself before him, stammering: ‘No, no!’ Then she hushed the little ones’ sobs with her caresses, kissed their hair [...]” (p.7). In return, Lantier raises his fists to hit her. Such scenes directly recall the Jungian conception for which, Gervaise in particular and women in general “are either exterior containers for male projections or subordinate elements of the male personality. The feminine quality becomes a prized elixir sought and usurped by the male, to whom real, individual women are objects of use.”⁸⁷

Being also the favourite archetype of Zola and Carl Jung, Gervaise, The mother, gives far more than she takes. She is sympathetic and solicitous, endowed with “the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcends reason, any helpful instinct or impulse, all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility.”⁸⁸ Yet, she a mere mortal not a goddess and a lifelong personality as hers is doomed to fall tragically. We are still in the beginning of her tragedy, in the first phase which Northrop Frye considers as:

The one in which the central character is given the greatest dignity in contrast to the other characters, so that we get the perspective of a stag pulled down by wolves [...]the central and typical figure of this phase is the culminated woman, often the mother the legitimacy of whose child is suspected. A whole series of tragedies based on a Griselda figure belong here, stretching from the Senecan Octavia to Hardy’s Tess.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Annis Pratt, op.cit., p.8.

⁸⁸ Sarah Appleton Aguiar, op.cit., p.28.

⁸⁹ Northrop Frye, op.cit., p.219.

Tess, too, has an illegitimate child and experiences motherhood for very brief moments in addition to her motherly duties towards her brothers and sisters. However, she is, in Kathleen Wall's words, much more related to the Great Goddess, mainly through her deep-rootedness in the agricultural/natural world through her successive jobs as a poulterer in the poultry-farm of Mrs d'Urberville/Stoke, then as a milkmaid in Talbothays. Her connection with fowls, cows and pigeons also denotes a link with the Lady of the Beasts, an ancient aspect of the Great Goddess "entrusted with the care of captive young animals."⁹⁰ The scene that precedes the loss of her virginity is the same pattern of a 'nymph' Callisto/Tess dancing among other nymphs, isolated by Alec/Zeus; the same scene that recurs in its everlasting archetypal form. Tess is –like her *Ur-type* Callisto- dragged into the forest where her innocence, her passivity and generosity, the night, some unknown nebulosity and sleep seemingly ally with Alec in his ardent desire to deflower her.

2-The divided heroine(s)⁹¹

The Origins is the initial title of the first volume of the series *La fortune des Rougon* and it was manifestly and avowedly meant as a tribute to Darwin. Indeed it is plain that the pedigree is crucially important in *Les Rougon-Macquart*. For this reason, one cannot omit to mention Gervaise's ancestry already referred to. Her great grandfather was insane when he died and her grandmother, Adelaide, the originator of the Rougon-Macquart had always been regarded as an odd woman. She used up a husband after one year of marriage and took afterwards the drunken Antoine Macquart as her lover and they begot two children. From these two illegitimate children (a boy and a girl) descend the Macquarts while Adelaide's legitimate child, Pierre is the source of the Rougon line.

Gervaise's father is one of these illegitimate children, a lazy, selfish and harsh man at the hands of whom, she suffered many a trouble; being constantly humiliated and belittled

⁹⁰ Kathleen Wall, *The Callisto Myth from Ovid to Atwood : Initiation and Rape in Literature*, (Kingston, Ont : McGill-Queen University Press, 1988), p.121.

⁹¹ *The Divided Heroine* is used herein in reference to one of the books cited.

though she regularly brought home some money. Gervaise is forced to alienate her virginity to Lantier and as “Old Macquart was for ever knocking” her about, she “consented to come away with” Lantier (p.15). The young unmarried couple settles in Paris where they spend together “a fortnight of misery and quarrelling” (p.27). Afterwards, the licentious Lantier deserts the hearth and leaves behind him a young woman squarely deprived of the joys of maidenhood and plunged too soon in the exacting world of motherhood. Gervaise’s sole education amounts to what Rousseau advocates in *Emile* (1762):

Everything about a woman’s education should be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honoured by men, to raise them from boyhood, to take care of them as adults, to advise them, to console them, to make life pleasant and sweet for them: this is a woman’s duty at all times, and this is what she should be taught from early childhood.⁹²

Gervaise complies well with these principles; in addition to her three children, she has to mother and minister to her second man, Coupeau. In fact, when the latter had his unfortunate accident, he became lazy, fanciful and addicted to drink. When he returned home elevated and teasing her workwomen, Gervaise, gently expelled and “pushed him towards the room at the rear of the shop. Then Gervaise was heard taking his shoes off, undressing him, and maternally scolding him, while he continued wriggling and jesting with her” (p.138).

Tess, too, is not only indulgent with Angel and Alec but also often rebuked by them. In effect, one is struck by the antipodal features which pervade Tess and unnaturally converge to form her personality. She is Tess Durbeyfield and Theresa d’Urberville, “a peasant by position, not by nature” (p.229), otherwise, a combination of the ‘aristocratic’ attributes of strength, beauty, fineness of spirit and the ‘plebeian’ characteristics of fatality, humility, poverty, innocence, and so forth. She is at once a delicate girl and a hardened woman meant to harbour such conflictual elements as nature/society, instinctiveness/subjection to conventions, rebellion/obedience, etc. To put it simply, one of Hardy’s distinctive

⁹² Quoted in Patricia A. McEachern, op.cit., p.13.

characteristics in his construction of the character of Tess is the dichotomization of her whole being. This seems exactly done in accordance with Jung's notion of polarities which are the basic elements of the 'self-regulating system' which Jung calls the psyche. A system vacillating between reason and instinct, love and hate, conscious and unconscious and *animus* and *anima*.

Gervaise is also polarized, and before things start to turn upside down, she too, displays the traits of an *Amazon*. The latter is one of the major archetypes "whose positive powers are those of equality, particularly in feminine friendship and relations. She is possessed of a strong will and pride in accomplishments. She is loyal to those she cares for and to causes she deems worthy." ⁹³ Gervaise is equally "too sensitive and affectionate, and became attached to people who afterwards behaved badly to her" (p.33). From the apical seventh chapter on, **The Feast and the Skeleton** she becomes a different woman; enthusiastic before and totally indifferent after, dynamic and headstrong before the loss of her shop, and idle and unconcerned after. She is loyal to Coupeau her legal husband before and entirely submissive to Lantier after, abstinent and able to control herself and dignified and animalized afterwards. There is visibly irresoluteness and a trifle of versatility in her personality. In the light of this, one is forced to underscore that Zola's characterization of Gervaise subscribes to the Cartesian language of dualism prevailing in the nineteenth century. Duality is subsequently imposed on Gervaise as one of her essential features.

Tess likewise is twofold; indeed, another no less crucial division that permeates Tess is the antagonistic link between the intellect and the flesh. Placed and polarized between two men, she forcibly harbours their apparent opposing tempers; one, Alec, highly symbolizing the fleshy aspect whereas the intellectual facet befalls on Angel. D.H. Lawrence suggests that in "Alec d'Urberville there is good stuff gone wrong. Just as in Angel Clare, there is good

⁹³ Sarah Appleton Aguiar, op.cit., p.30.

stuff gone wrong in the other direction.”⁹⁴ Both men are what Jung considers as psychologically unhealthy individuals. The former has more of the *anima* than needed while the latter has far less than necessary to achieve the required equilibrium that can let them apprehend Tess as she truly is. It must be reminded that *anima* is, according to Jungians, the female contrasexual *aspect* or the female principle each man carries within him; “a minority of feminine or female genes” merely “a female in man”,⁹⁵ whereas, the masculine principle or *animus* is found in woman. Whenever one of these contrasexual aspects overfills an individual there results psychological unbalance.

Because she embodies and internalizes the inner and outer contradictions of Alec, the very male, virile and brutish and Angel the very refined and *cavalier* man, Tess becomes doubly unbalanced. And because it is impossible to conciliate these antipodal traits, she surrenders to self-effacement. In fact, Tess, as Daleski states, “does negate one part of herself when another (and opposite) part is uppermost.”⁹⁶ The impossibility to homogenize herself constitutes the core of her tragedy. Homogeneity seldom encapsulates her being; her soul and flesh scantily coexist in harmony as on that occasion in Talbothays while heavily sleeping and under the scrutiny of Angel who sees:

Her face was flushed with sleep, and her eyelids hung heavy over their pupils. The brim-fulness of her nature breathed from her. It was a moment when a woman’s soul is more incarnate than at any other time; when the most spiritual beauty bespeaks itself flesh; and sex takes the outside place in the presentation.
(p.172)

This sort of osmosis is extensively denied to Tess, and even her schooling contributes to widen the gap between her emancipated side and her superstitious one. She is quartered between her knowledge of the local language and the ‘Sixth Standard’ which she uses when

⁹⁴ D.H. Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.100.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Richard I ; Evans, *Conversations with Carl Jung and Reactions fom Ernest Jones*, (Princeton, NJ : Van Nostrand Company, 1964), p.54.

⁹⁶ H.M. Daleski, *The Divided Heroine : A Recurrent Pattern in Six English Novels*, (New York : Holmes&Meier, 1984), p.72.

she is with more educated people. Her bitter experience in the forest of Chaseborough grows into another chasm dividing her “personality thereafter from that previous self of hers who stepped from her mother’s door to try her fortune at Tantridge poultry-farm” (p.77) from **The Maiden to Maiden No More**.

The metamorphosis in Gervaise is rather behavioural; thrifty, prosperous and loathing every form of outer festive wedding when she finally accepts to marry Coupeau, she does not hesitate to spend her economies in a gargantuesque meal for the Saints’ Day a few years later. She is supposedly honest, however, she not only never manages to repay the 500 francs Goujet had lent her to set up her laundry-shop, but also borrows another sum to bury her step-mother ‘decently’, and is by the end unable to repay her debts. She is a modern archetype whose suffering typifies the suffering of the nineteenth century down trodden women. She is the representative of the working class and essentially the epitome of what Flora Tristan calls the ‘proletarians of the proletariat’, i.e., a good example of what the working class woman endured then.

Both Gervaise’s and Tess’s downfall is partly due to their economic failure which cannot be dissociated from the oppressive and uncompromising capitalist system of the nineteenth century in France and Britain. Once Coupeau surrenders to idleness after his accident, Gervaise is impelled to consider her business under another angle; she has to work for herself, for Coupeau and for the returnee and voracious Lantier too. Indeed, Lantier is greedy and rapacious, remorseless and irresponsible. He is a miniaturized De Morny, ‘*l’homme fort*’ of the nineteenth-century French society, a Don Juan, an epicure and “a sceptical, heartless, and unscrupulous man of pleasure”,⁹⁷ the very delegate of the patriarchal order and also the archetypal rogue. Though, he boastfully claims to demand “the abolition of privileges, titles, and monopolies [...] equality of salaries, division of profits, and the

⁹⁷ Albert Leon Guérard, op.cit., p.142.

glorification of the working class” (p.230), he does not inconvenience himself to eat up Gervaise’ shop and then Virginie’s, his former mistress’s sister. His Hardy counterpart is obviously Alec d’Urberville, a scoundrel of the same stamp.

Lantier and Coupeau grow violent and occasionally beat Gervaise and thus embody the very opposite of her former wish; “work in peace, always to have bread to eat, and a decent place to sleep in [...] I shouldn’t like to be beaten .And that’s all, you know, that’s all” (p.35). Of course, Gervaise’s words unveil one of the most hideous practices of the phallic order, namely, beating woman. So, she dreads to live again the violence her mother and other women experience at the hands of the husbands who repeat the same treatment of their fathers and forefathers.

Tess is not beaten, but ravished, and what happens to her that fateful and dark night is far more traumatic than any other form of violence. Besides, the actions and reactions of Tess and Alec, and the exact circumstances of the rape/seduction leave much to be desired. There are no clear-cut statements as to whether Tess is raped or seduced and consenting to her deflowering. Many a critic judges it necessary to devote whole chapters to this issue; some postulating that Hardy deliberately masks and obscures the scene of the sexual violence through his “veiled language.”⁹⁸ Verily, the rape is not represented in a textual form and Tess is denied any form of solacing disclosure or confession. In this way, Susan David Bernstein points up the “textual blankness of Tess’s rape” which is essentially due to “the rhetorical and ideological complications of representing sexual brutality toward women at the end of the nineteenth century.”⁹⁹

Even the author’s lexicon oscillates between allusions to Tess’s contribution to her defloration and Alec’s total responsibility. In effect, the depiction of Alec—though seemingly hostile--does not absolutely assert that he is a rapist. Furthermore, he is now and then thought

⁹⁸ Paula Alida Roy., op.cit., p.278.

⁹⁹ Susan David Bernstein, *Confessional Subjects : Revelation of Gender and Power in Victorian Literature and Culture*, (Chapel Hill, NC : University of North carolina Press, 1997), p.147.

to be her lover whom she abandons one month after the incident. Kucich sees in this technique of veiling such a decisive act as the seduction/rape a device whereby “Hardy’s prose constantly tantalizes the reader with what the narrative knows but will not tell and what it knowingly misrepresents or evades.”¹⁰⁰ Another instance of Hardy’s text’s instability is the amount of versions related to the incident of Chaseborough that were proposed by the various editions of the novel. Besides, Simon Gatrell draws a particular attention to the novel’s title page, *A pure Woman faithfully Presented by Thomas Hardy* and states that Tess “is the only novel about which it seems reasonable to say that Hardy’s initial creative impulse extended beyond the publication of the first edition.”¹⁰¹ This tragic process of doubling and duplicating Tess is paralleled by some critics to a form of dismembering. Dismembering Tess into woman-flesh and goddess is, according to Kathleen Wall, a remake of the “patriarchy’s fragmentation of the Great Mother (the archetype *par excellence*) herself. Such fragmentation also accounts for the polarity of Mary and Eve, of the whore and the saint, of the way woman has been defined for eons.”¹⁰²

3-Eroticizing the heroine(s)

Tess’s excitable heart beat against his by way of reply; and there they stood upon the red-brick floor of the entry, the sun slanting in by the window upon his back, as he held her tightly to his breast, upon her inclining face, upon the blue veins of her temple, upon her naked arm, and her neck, and into the depths of her hair. Having been lying down in her clothes she was warm as a sunned cat. At first she would not look straight up at him, but her eyes soon lifted, and his plumbed the deepness of...

(p.172)

The passage above belongs well and truly in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and the scene is assumedly one of the idyllic moments shared by Tess and Angel before their short-lived wedding. Manifestly, Tess’s presence in the novel is made more effective by her physical presence which matters more for the gaze of the implied male reader, the narrator and the

¹⁰⁰ John Kucich, *The Power of Lies : Transgression in Victorian Fiction*, (Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 1994), p.218.

¹⁰¹ See the introduction to Thomas Hardy (*Tess*) op.cit., p.xxviii.

¹⁰² Kathleen Wall, op.cit., p136.

author himself than her intellect. The portraying of Tess--it must be said--is almost entirely consecrated to a punctilious delineation of her body and physical charms. Unlike those dealing with her inner beauty, attributes related to her mensurations and fullness abound in the text. "She had an attribute which amounted to a disadvantage [...] it was this that caused Alec's eyes to rivet themselves upon her. It was a luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was" (p.45). Even her mastery of two variants of English is a favourable occasion to point to her "pouted-up deep red mouth to which this syllable (Ur) was native had hardly as yet settled into its definite shape, and her lower lip had a way of thrusting the middle of her top one upward, when they closed together after a word" (p.21).

The reader knows but little about the body of Gervaise. She is a good and plucky young woman with a no less conspicuous and significant trait. This particular trait is rather a bodily imperfection, a limp revealed to us in the initial chapter during her fight with Adèle, Lantier's girl. When Gervaise gets tired, the claudication shows more clearly. Then, limping with her right leg becomes more or less visible and if her pain surfaces, she grows neglectful as to how she walks. Apparently, this physical abnormality is assumed to arouse the reader's pity, however, Gervaise's lameness is considered by P.Carles and B. Desgranges as a rich sexual symbol that enhances the value of Gervaise's body and subtly eroticizes her:

*La claudication de Gervaise met en branle tout son corps, le déhanchement de la boiteuse revêt aux yeux d'un bourgeois du xixe siècle un caractère profondément sexuel [.] Chez Gervaise, l'indécence 'naturelle' de la démarche boiteuse constitue une véritable provocation sexuelle.*¹⁰³

In effect, one wonders what is the purpose of the emphatic depiction of "her fine arms, which were still young and fresh, and scarcely reddened at the elbows" (p.13). In point of fact, though latent and hardly appealing to the reader, Zola's eroticization of Gervaise is decisively real. Seen through the eyes of the author, Gervaise's physical existence amounts to her

¹⁰³ Quoted in Alain Pages, *Zola*, (Paris : Nathan, 1993), pp.72-3.

plumpness and one feels that there lurks authorial leisure and enjoyment in passages as the following:

She was squatting on the floor, in front of a basin, starching something. And on account of the heat she simply wore a white petticoat and a loose jacket, the sleeves of which were rolled up, showing her bare arms and neck. She looked quite rosy and was perspiring to such a degree that little locks of her fair, straying hair stuck to her skin.

(p.129)

Another illustration of Zola's concern with Gervaise's sexual 'attire' is the frequent use of references to her plumpness. Accordingly, he observes that "she had become quite plump, her fair shoulders had the gloss of silk and her neck was like a baby's with a dimple" (141). It follows from the above that the same "unwholesome and objectifying voyeurism"¹⁰⁴ haunts *L'Assommoir* as well as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

The eroticism which informs *Tess* does not entail that Tess and the other female characters are shown nude, but the suggestive implications of the male look is stronger than any stripteasing. Some (Helena Michie) even consider such scenes as pornographic.¹⁰⁵ In addition to the writer's own physical description of Tess, there is Angel's and Alec's recurrent emphasis on her body. The importance of gaze in *Tess* is hardly questionable, Hardy being the supreme gazer disguised intermittently as the male narrator, Angel and Alec. What is more, women are not granted the empathy found when dealing with the male heroes; "Never do women observe men in Hardy with the same transcendence of desire at stake", observes John Kucich. The latter and many of Hardy's biographers ascribe the "compulsive voyeurism" of the Hardyan narrator and male characters to the proper life of the author himself.¹⁰⁶

Kucich also emphasises the importance of scapegoating which informs *Tess* making of Tess the latent scapegoat whereas the patent one is Alec. He is also the one who pays more

¹⁰⁴ See Rosemarie Morgan, *Thomas Hardy*, in *Victorian Poetry*, (Journal, 2003).

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Judith Mitchell, *The Stone and the Scorpion : The Female Subject of desire in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Thomas and Hardy*, (Westport, CT : Greenwood Press, 1994), p.158.

¹⁰⁶ John Kucih, *The Power of Lies : Transgression in Victorian Fiction*, (Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 1994), pp.233-234.

attention to, appraises and dreads the sexual dimension of Tess; he subsequently tells her that it is “better [...] not to look too often on you. It might be dangerous” (p.301). One is forced to infer that sexually attractive women and women whose flesh is said to be envenomed are the ones who are mostly dreaded by the male; they are far more dangerous than the potion-makers who entice them with the love-potion. These women allegedly become more dreadful when they are as virtuous and as innocent as Tess. Alec sees her as a pure sexual creature whose irresistible charms destabilize him; he simply reproaches her for having “been the cause of my backsliding” (p.320). In sum, for Alec, Tess is not different from Medea and Circe, the archetypal seductresses who haunt the Western culture. Unfortunately, Tess is readily convinced that “in inhabiting the fleshy tabernacle with which nature has endowed her she was somehow doing wrong” (p.301). In reality, the supposed power lying in the seductive woman is but weakness in man, and Joan Ferrante suggests that attributing a bewitching might to the seductress is “a way [...] of rationalizing the vulnerability men felt. That is, rather than admit the weakness of lust in himself, he focused on the power that attracted him; if the power were magic, he was not responsible for giving in to it.”¹⁰⁷ In this way, Alec easily and naturally justifies the abandonment of his religiousness by the power Tess exerts on him.

In *L'Assommoir* the pressure is exerted by the hot and cosy atmosphere of the laundry-shop which suggests an erotic world similar to the Arabian hamam/harem wherein perspiring half naked women stroll about. Clémence, one of Gervaise's workers, finds occasions to display “her bare arms, her plump shoulders meanwhile almost bursting the straps of her chemise, which allowed a glimpse of her full bosom” (129). The laundry-shop is a propitious setting for scenes where the eroticization of Gervaise and the other women shows plainly:

The July nights were very hot, the shop door was left open. And as time went on, the women would unfasten their jackets, so as to be more at their ease. Their

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Margaret Hallissy,, *Venonemous Women : Fear of the Woman in Literature*, (Westport, CT : Greenwood Press, 1987), 79.

skins assumed a golden hue in the lamp- light, Gervaise especially; she had become quite plump her fair shoulders had the gloss of silk, and her neck was like a baby's, with a dimple which Gouget could have drawn from memory, he knew it so well.

(p.141)

In the seventh chapter, there is a similar erotic atmosphere released by the depiction of the pleasure of meat/flesh eating. In a style reminiscent of Rabelais, Zola deploys his energy and talent to delineate as cogently as can be done the copious dinner Gervaise offers to her friends and neighbours for the Saints' Day. Withal, Gervaise seemingly complies with the role of the complacent woman who is ready to excite the sexual appetite of the male. During one of her visits to her 'friend', Goujet, a colleague of his, Salted-Chops otherwise Drink-without Thirst starts to wriggle like a mere beast turning around the female prey and siding towards her while Goujet jealously reacts in an unusual way by displaying his maleness. Both engage in a muscular contest; so "they defied each other, stimulated by the presence of Gervaise" (p.155). It is clear from all this that Gervaise is probably not to say more overwhelmed and tragically structured than Tess; she is 'reaped' and raped before she ripens; and is cheated and seduced by Lantier "with all his talk of being her husband" (p.32).

Seduction, eroticization and deception are among the predominant aspects of *Tess* which Judith Mitchell regards as "surely one of the most erotic novels of the Victorian era."

¹⁰⁸ Mitchell lays stress on Hardy's "phallogentric reader-narrator dynamic"¹⁰⁹ and mentions the author's invitation for "male partnership on the part of the reader."¹¹⁰ She argues that Hardy's text is meant to be read by the reader 'as man', from a masculine standpoint hence the importance of eroticism in the novel. Indeed, voyeurism and eroticism prevail over the characterization of Tess, who, similarly to other Hardyan female characters, is presented first and foremost as an object of "erotic interest not only for" the male characters and "the implied

¹⁰⁸ Judith Mitchell, op.cit., p. 187.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.156.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

voyeur/reader”, but also for the author and his influential narrator. Consequently, Tess is valuable only in regard to the feelings and excitement she is to release in men.¹¹¹ Mitchell questions the pretence according to which Hardy is a ‘protofeminist’, and wonders whether he is not merely sexist. She admits that “Hardy’s ‘contrary vision’ is very successful indeed, making it extremely difficult for even the most rigorous feminist critics to elucidate the cause of their discomfort with his novels.”¹¹² It is clear from all this that the sexist tone of *Tess* is difficult to ignore.

4-Objectification and abstraction

Before she becomes overwhelmed with debts, Gervaise can glory in having enjoyed some prosperity, especially through the achievement of her endeared ambition of becoming the owner of a laundry shop. She receives some help from the friendly Goujet who is at once bewitched by an uncontrolled fascination for Gervaise who is also impressed by the cleanliness of the Goujets’ house. The Coupeaus’ home is enlivened by the birth of Nana and the savings of the family consequentially grow to reach as much as six hundred francs. Thus, she takes possession of the laundry and is so much satisfied that throughout “the neighbourhood, when people saw her pass in this wise, so nimble, so delighted that she no longer limped, they declared that she must have undergone some operation” (p.117). She grows emancipated and feels the “pride of a shopkeeper who has a bit of pavement belonging to her. The Rue de la Goutte-d’Or, the adjacent streets, indeed the whole neighbourhood seemed to be hers” (p.125).

Tess, by contrast, cannot claim to possess a shop or even a permanent job. She rather grotesquely sacrifices herself to her family by surrendering to Alec because of her needy family whose hardships force her to return to him later. First, she is the guardian and nurturer of the d’Urbervilles’s fowls then she moves to a dairy wherein she meets Angel Clare. Forced

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.155.

¹¹² Ibid., p.156.

to endorse her parents' claim for a far-off nostalgic family grandeur, and Angel's and the author's ideal of purity and innocence, Tess has scant resources to impose her own personality despite the writer's focus and appraisal of this very personality. The accident of the family horse Prince which throws her in the lap of the seductive and unscrupulous Alec, inaugurates a list of deceptive and painful events. She re-encounters the deceptive Angel who marries her to abandon her on their wedding day. She falls again in the hands of Alec who bribes her, and profits of her family's precarious condition to make of her his mistress and thus forces her to commit murder on him. She regains her beloved husband, Angel, but for transient instants.

It is worth underlining that a ceaseless process of abstraction is performed on Tess by most of the males who have some access to her existence; the author, the narrator, Alec and above all, Angel. The latter constantly regards her as an unearthly creature; he does not see a woman, but rather an image of woman. He manifestly behaves in this way in order to have her adhere to the very image of woman he cherishes. At the hands of the one man she deeply loves, i.e., Angel, Tess endures the most efficient process of effacement and (un)willingly becomes a mere icon. Her point of view is erased and her presence turns out to be spectral and as James Kincaid points out:

What disappears most emphatically in Tess is Tess...Tess's being...disappears into form; [...] her being is never more than the formulations of others and herself. Others objectify her by separating her into parts, only to submit these parts to a curious blurring process and then to eroticize this blur as a wonderfully malleable or chameleon image. Tess takes on any shape for those she meets, but it is a conveniently empty shape, ready to be filled in and then longed for.¹¹³

Tess, thus, becomes both the idol and the token of devotion thanks to which the idolaters, Angel, Alec and the narrator/author are sustained, but in so doing she grows depotentiated and bloodless.

Gervaise equally grows bloodless and enfeebled by the very men she fosters; she not only becomes a bodiless woman, but also a soulless one. She cannot and does not will to

¹¹³ Quoted in Judith Mitchell, *op.cit.*, p.180.

withstand the ludicrous misery which threatens her with Coupeau and Lantier, despite the constant deprivation of tenderness, love and confidence endured at the hands of her parents; the mother curing her with her liquor while the father ceaselessly debasing her, robbing her earnings but also any sense of self-worth, self-esteem and self-confidence. However, the stigmata of the parental abuse are reproduced later on by Gervaise on her daughter Nana. This tendency to subject one's children to the same cruel circumstances one experiences is part of what Leonard Shengold calls 'soul murder'.

It must be kept in mind that after the departure/desertion of Lantier, Gervaise subjects her life once more to the bonds of marriage and unites with the zinc-worker, Coupeau. She thus fails to the promise of not surrendering to men; "they won't catch me again for a long while" (p.30), and "she would rather be cut to pieces than in any way resume the old existence" (p.32) as she boastfully claimed before. She naturally starts another existence with Coupeau; they succeed to live ephemeral moments of happiness made of an ordinary (simple indeed) and carefree life. Gervaise works as a laundress at Mme Fauconnier's whereas Coupeau passes his time on the top of houses fixing zinc on the roofs. He brings his salary at home and never drinks. Thereafter, the industrious and thrifty couple becomes exemplary among the neighbours who respect them and search their company. Throughout the second, third, fourth and fifth chapters, Gervaise climbs the social ladder towards a respectable situation which culminates in the fifth chapter in the acquisition of the laundry already referred to. The newly comfortable situation of Gervaise 'widens' her home and her heart. it must be said that Gervaise's friendliness is the cause of her surrender to Lantier, Coupeau and Goujet likewise.

After her 'surrender' to Alec, Tess becomes an elusive character, "a mere vessel of emotions untinged by experience" (p.21). She shows no reluctance to the imminent operation of debilitation that threatens her at the hands of Angel. She even easily delivers her

whole being up to him and delights at the idea that he considers her as his absolute possession to dispose of as he wants. To put it simply, Tess devotes herself to the deification of Angel whom she protects against herself and whom she is ready to die for. Few instants before her demise, she still sees in him “all that was perfection, personally and mentally. He was still her Antinous, her Apollo even” (p.373). She mechanically and plainly surrenders to his ‘tutelary guidance’; adopts his manners, his language and thoughts and makes hers his likes and dislikes. The text/Tess accords a particular attention to the overwhelming devotion of Tess to Angel, her total subjection to his desires, her complete self-effacement before him. If she ever ventures to compare him with herself, she is spontaneously stricken by “her own modest standpoint and the unmeasurable, Andean attitude of his, she became quite dejected and disheartened [...]” (p.130). The nature of love she vows him is a heavenly one because to “her sublime truthfulness he was all that goodness could be—knew all that a guide, philosopher, and friend should know. She thought every line in the contour of his person the perfection of masculine beauty, his soul the soul of a saint, his intellect that of a seer (p.193). Moreover, in trying to escape this distracted form of veneration “she tried to pray to God, but it was her husband who really had her supplication,” (p.212). Her husband Angel to whom she declares allegiance and solemnly asserts that “I will obey you, like your wretched slave, even if you order me to lie down and die” (p.227). Thus, Hardy’s “interest in psychology can be seen to anticipate the insights”¹¹⁴ of Jung’s whose theory of archetypes regards Tess’s idolization of Angel as an unconscious recognition of him as the Hero.¹¹⁵

Gervaise, too regards Coupeau, and above all Lantier, as heroes; she ingests their whims and unprincipled principles, and conceives no other alternative for her miserable plight. Obviously, Gervaise is so malleable that “à force de sociabilité, finira par appartenir à

¹¹⁴ Stephen Regan , ‘Far From the Madding Crowd : Vision and Design’, in *The Nineteenth-Century Novel : Realisms*, ed. Delia Da Sousa Correa (New york : Routledge, 2001), p.308.

¹¹⁵ Sarah Appleton Aguiar, op.cit., p.16.

deux hommes sous le même toit, sans parler de ses sentiments pour Goujet”,¹¹⁶ and Lantier “seemed more at home than the zinc-worker himself” (p.268). Her dream of not being beaten is transformed into a nightmare because Coupeau and Lantier are not only thankless, but also ill-treat her and often vent their occasional anger on her. Lantier, in particular, is so ungrateful and Machiavellian that he only thinks “to take advantage of her misfortune!” (p.254). However, she manages to cope with her bigamous life and even justifies her conduct by Coupeau’s irresponsible capitulation to sloth, drunkenness and filth. She argues that Lantier is equally entitled to profit from the joys of husbandry: “Had she not borne him children long before she had ever met the zinc-worker? Well, then, in such circumstances no one had a right to cast stones on her. She claimed, in fact, that her conduct was simply in accord with the laws of nature” (p.259).

The same indulgence towards the male is found in *Tess* wherein the victim’s only prerogative is to pardon. Nevertheless, there is a reciprocal process of idealization between Tess and Angel which displayed at the very beginning of the narrative. It was during their fugacious meeting at the Cerealia (May-Day) Dance; they saw one another, but did not dance together and Angel “felt that she was hurt by his oversight. He wished that he had asked her; he wished that he had inquired her name. She was so modest, so expressive, she had looked so soft in her thin white gown that he felt he had acted stupidly” (p.23). Tess, for her part, declined the numerous partners who offered to dance with her because “they did not speak so nicely as the strange young man had done” (p.24). By idealizing and idolizing her, Angel, far more than Alec, constantly abstracts her by regarding her by and by as “a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature” (p.124), or bluntly as “a visionary essence of woman” (p.134) whom he selfishly compares to mythic figures and archetypes such Demeter and Artemis. Though she apparently rejects these names, Tess yields to exaltation and subsequently overlooks and

¹¹⁶ Alain Pages, op.cit., p.71.

denies her carnal/feminine side, detests her *anima* because Angel hates it. She also loathes and denies this Female Principle because Alec is able to have her assume it.

Although manifestly inclined to lustful pursuits and badly depicted by Hardy, Alec, according to D.H. Lawrence, appeals to the woman in Tess and realises her better than Angel.¹¹⁷ Alec also comprehends Angel far more than anyone else and believes that “he seems rather a mythological personage” (p.320). With Alec, Hardy has constructed what “is in all essentials the typical conventional seducer, wealthy, impudent”¹¹⁸ despite the ambiguity that surrounds his share as regards the rape of Tess. Rightly, some critics wonder whether Alec is a rapist or not, and Tess’s responsibility is seldom put forward to elucidate the crucial question of the seduction/rape. In effect, there is no clear indication as to Hardy’s presentation of Alec as a rapist; there are rather hints to Tess’s consent and surrender to him. Thus, even after the catastrophe which occurs “a Saturday in September” (p.65), she dwells with him as his mistress for a whole month and leaves only on “a Sunday morning in late October” (p.81). Besides, she does not react impetuously when Alec imputes his inability to resist to her being sexually attractive. Moreover, long after their rupture, and after his religious conversion/transfiguration, he still considers her as a temptress. One day while preaching, he sees her and the effect is felt “electric, far stronger than the effect of his presence upon her” (p.298). Alec’s sole ambition for Tess is her sexual enslavement: “I was your master once! I will be your master again. If you are any man’s wife you are mine” (p.321). For him, she is Venifica, the venomous woman, the enticing and serpentine female. He even wonders if there has ever been something like Tess’s “maddening mouth since Eve’s!” (p.313).

Like Tess, Gervaise is won back by her first seducer, Lantier; “though she knew him well [...] could read his very soul in his eyes, wherein she found a heap of things which made her shudder” (p.235). He even regains her through her own husband, Coupeau, whom he

¹¹⁷ D.H. Lawrence, op.cit., p.99.

¹¹⁸ Herbert B. Grimsditch, *Character and Environment in the Novels of Thomas Hardy*, (New York : Russel&Russel, 1962), pp, 16-17.

manages to lure with a false friendship. By and by he succeeds to be lodged by the Coupeaus, and become Gervaise's intrusive husband. From then onwards, Gervaise is compelled to sustain the whole household, her own children and two men who are childishy capricious and "would pester for her dainty dishes: she was to salt this, and not to salt that, say white and say black, nurse them, and make much of them in turn. At the week's end her brain was in a whirl, and her eyes like a lunatic's. Such an existence soon wears out a woman" (p.269). In insisting on Gervaise's commitment to her role of a careful mother, Zola inconspicuously subscribes to the western endeared figure of a Christ-like woman, a saint totally devoted to Mariolatry. Mariolatry was the nineteenth-century prevailing cult overwhelming woman and impelling her to behave like Marianne/Mary. As it has been mentioned earlier, Gervaise also functions as the archetypal Penelope.

Withal, Zola's friend and idol Jules Michelet's views about woman have seemingly inspired him in the characterization of Gervaise. Indeed, for Michelet woman does not do things like men; she "thinks, talks, and acts differently. Her tastes differ from ours. Her blood does not have the same flow as ours; sometimes it rushes forward like a shower from a storm. She does not breathe like us [...] she does not eat like us, not as much or the same foods."¹¹⁹ Really, Zola refuses to admit that his principal female character is powerful; "it was a mistake to think that she had a strong will. On the contrary she was weak, she let herself go wither she was pushed [...] Her dream was to live among respectable people, because bad company, said she, was like a blow from a bludgeon" (p. 41).

Tess, too, allows Alec to drive her wither he wishes; he blames her and suspects her of retaliation: "What a grand revenge you have taken! I saw you innocent, and I deceived you. Four years after, you find me a Christian enthusiast; you then work upon me, perhaps to my complete perdition!" (p.319) he says. Alec is successfully constructed as a detestable

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Claire Goldberg Moses, op.cit., p.160.

character who stains Hardy's pure woman, and he is allegedly to the antipodes of Angel. In fact, both are dismembered and unable to combine the Dionysian and the Apollonian facets of the individual. For an individual to attain harmony and balance, both the apollonian and Dionysian traits need to work in combination. But if these facets oppose, the process of individuation is jeopardized and the individual is annihilated. The Jungian concept of unbalance is thus imposed on Tess who expiates the absence of *anima* in Angel and the lack of *animus* in Alec and suffers from their inability to individuate.¹²⁰

Properly speaking, both men deny her womanhood and have her act according to their mood and desires. The very desires and feelings she has to arouse not only in them, but in the male reader, the narrator and the writer as well. Both Angel and Alec rape Tess; while the latter deflowers her physically, Angel assails her soul and rapes her morally and intellectually. Dreading the female principle she supposedly embodies, they burden her with their own defects and fantasies, nullify her humanness and (un)consciously destroy her. Though manifestly antipodal, Angel and Alec are but the two sides of the same coin; both are unable to integrate their *anima/animus*, and both embody the Victorian middle-class distrust, dread and fear of women.

The same holds for Gervaise and her men who are seemingly part of Zola's paramount enterprise of the experimental novel; they are also mere scapegoats used to prove the veracity of the literary theory Zola painstakingly promoted. In this way, Lillian Furst suggests that Zola made of Gervaise—just as Hardy did of Tess-- an archetype of the 'angel in the house'; an angel whose elemental tasks are:

to be essentially submissive, subservient to her husband, her lord and master, and fully committed to securing her family's well being and comfort through perfect household management. Her self-esteem was to stem from her willing self-sacrifice of her own desires to the weal of others. She was a "relative creature" existing only relative to her husband and children.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Bettina Knapp, op.cit., p.12.

¹²¹ Lillian R. Furst, *A Medical Reading of Gervaise in L'Assommoir*, (Journal Symposium, 1992), p.202.

Accordingly, Gervaise is the property of Lantier, Coupeau, her children and the author; she is naturally represented and seen through the eyes of Coupeau as a courageous, hard-working and motherly woman. Like Tess, she is deprived of strong will, she belittles and debases herself far more than the others do, and regards herself as a mere coin tossed up in the air and whose fall on heads or tails depends on chance. “She certainly thought herself strong-minded, and she wished to lead the life of a virtuous woman” (p.177), but the only act that is efficiently achieved by Gervaise is her abdication to gluttony and alcohol. She is utterly enslaved by passivity; she is so passive that throughout the novel, she is unable to utter the word ‘no’. Some critics have seen in Zola’s characterization of Gervaise Macquart a biased form of handling woman, and consider it “as facile pretensions, as misapprehensions, or even as a stance of convenience designed to enhance the attractiveness of his novels to a readership under the spell of science.”¹²²

In point of fact, neither Gervaise, nor her two lovers are designed to be the major characters of the novel; the pivotal character is alcohol whose potency and pre-eminence are undisputed throughout the whole story. Zola employs Gervaise as a ‘use-value’ and unlike Hardy and most of the poets who divinize their personages, he continuously animalizes them and subdues them to the meanest conditions of life for the sake of his own literary postulate. The misfortunes of Gervaise are assumedly a denunciation of the ruthless conditions in which evolved the nineteenth-century working class people, but they are rather an experiment that reinforces and solidifies the writer’s deep-seated belief in the place held by heredity in the life of people.

Hardy equally objectifies Tess and subjects her to harsh conditions, a merciless environment and the burden of heredity. Thus, in commenting the rape/seduction process, the ‘omniscient’ narrator merely enhances the rank of patriarchy and mentions an alleged

¹²² Ibid., p.203.

retribution of past sins by interrogatively alluding to a similar situation whereby “some of Tess’s mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time” (p.77). The narratorial/authorial phallogocentrism and obvious alignment with Angel --and even with Alec--is by no means open to question. Here and there Angel and Tess are “Adam and Eve [...] He little thought that the Magdalen might be at his side” (p.134). Manifestly meant to be the author’s ideologue and a vehicle of his philosophical convictions, Tess is, however, endowed with a shapeless consciousness, a wavering will, an overwhelming sense of guilt, morbid propensities to self-sacrifice, self-denial and moral self-flagellation. *Eros* is far more prominent than *Logos* in Tess, hence the relevance and resurgence of Jung’s postulate that “Eros is an expression of woman’s true nature, while their logos is often only a regrettable accident. It gives rise to misunderstandings and annoying interpretations.” ¹²³

Tess is always the object of prejudice and moral assessment, the author, the narrator, Angel, Alec, her family, society and Tess herself assess her own conduct. Her most powerful and most ruthless judges are the narrator, Alec and Angel whose conduct epitomizes the Victorian morality which coerces woman to honour the ideal of chastity and purity assigned to her. Paula Alida Roy suggests that in “patriarchal complicity with ‘the President of the Immortals’, Alec and Angel the men, with all the attitudes and privileges conferred upon them by their sex, embody fate for Tess, the woman.” ¹²⁴ She yields to the authority of Angel and is dramatically and willingly assimilated and phagocytized by the man who, in Van Ghent’s words, “will violate” her “more nastily than her sensual seducer: who but Hardy would have dared to give him the name Angel, and a harp too?” ¹²⁵ Besides, Tess is convinced that Angel’s sexlessness is chivalrous self-control and conformity to the gentlemanly code of honour. She probably ignores that gentlemanly manners undermine the phallocentric

¹²³ Quoted in Sarah Appleton Aguiar, op.cit., p.17.

¹²⁴ Paula Alida Roy, op.cit., p.279.

¹²⁵ Dorothy van Ghent, op.cit., p.36.

philosophy, and “if the extreme Cavalier type had never been produced, we should not have had the Puritan, the extreme correction”¹²⁶ which denies the female principle to the profit of the male principle. By apotheosizing Angel Clare and by showing little resistance to the dutiful share, her family and her two lovers choose for her, Tess internalizes and interiorizes the doctrine of the male. She espouses and admits Angel’s judgements of her, and adheres to his (patriarchal) ideology which is but “the patriarchal logical, Christian definition of a ‘pure woman’—a definition that Hardy (initially) clearly meant to contravene” in his novel.¹²⁷ By neutralizing Tess’s consciousness, Hardy obtains the exact opposite of the feminist siding, he and some critics believed, permeates *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*.

Like Tess, Gervaise is denied any psychological being; Zola gained the reputation of someone who: “*peint des personnages dénués de toute épaisseur psychologique; il ne s’intéresse qu’aux réactions physiologiques; il postule une continuité entre le corps et l’âme qui dégrade l’homme.*”¹²⁸ Gervaise is simply debased and enclosed in a troublesome situation which affords no ways of entry for rays of optimism. Gervaise’s name has nothing to do with any Roman or Greek goddess; no famous archetypal figure can readily be associated with it. Nonetheless, “*Zola cite assez rarement les héros des mythologies classiques, mais dans l’ombre de ses principaux personnages apparaissent indéniablement des figures qui appartiennent à la réserve intertextuelle des grands mythes [...]*”¹²⁹ Indeed, there is a slight connection between her story and drink that suggests bacchanalia, some reference to the Dionysian festivals and the continuous and gargantuan feasts held by Gervaise. Gervaise’s story is meant by Zola as a myth of the debasing surrender to decay and sloth which the inveterate ‘nature’ of drinking roots in humans like Gervaise and her crippled husband Coupeau. Gervaise conforms to the patriarchal endeared principle of family-ism and acts

¹²⁶ D.H. Lawrence, op.cit., p. 100.

¹²⁷ Kathleen Wall, op.cit., p.130.

¹²⁸ Alain Pages, op.cit., p.50.

¹²⁹ Henri Mitterand, op.cit., p.10.

according to one and the sole archetype of the mother. For this reason, assertions such as Krakowski's are thoroughly justifiable; for him "Zola's heroines are first and foremost physically and psychically mothers."¹³⁰

As superstitious as her mother, Gervaise rarely goes to see or fetch her husband, because she dreads that at her sight, he may get a shock and fall from the roof. But, her superstition soon becomes a reality and when she joins him at his work-for the second time-the dreadful accident occurs. Coupeau "fell. His body described a gentle curve, turned twice over on itself, and came smashing into the middle of the street with the dull thud of a bundle of clothes thrown from on high" (p.107). With the fall come the signs heralding the fall of the whole household; the first conjugal dispute occurs because of his rough treatment of his stepson, Etienne. Coupeau's mood grows irascible; nailed to his bed for some months, he curses fate and providence, but also his own father whose pattern he thinks is imposed on him, "fathers always had that stupid habit of making their children follow the same trade as themselves" (p.113). Henceforward, the couple of the Coupeaus starts to drift, Coupeau surrendering insidiously to idleness and drink whereas, sadness gradually regains Gervaise who turns to Goujet for solace.

Unlike Gervaise, Tess has no friend like Goujet to alleviate her pain; she is supposed to be as strong as a man and able to find relief in her own personality. An oddity of the text, one among others, is that on the one hand the authorial voice erases and omits Tess's consciousness while on the other; she is supposed to be morally strong. Is it pride, passivity and masochism that impel her to behave as she does with Alec after the abuse? Pregnant with his own baby, she keeps her pregnancy secret; she does nothing to take revenge and manages her illegitimate child alone, yet finds sufficient strength to accede to self-renewal. Passivity is, indeed, another fundamental element that participates in Tess's misfortunes; she passively lets

¹³⁰ Quoted in Naomi Schor, *op.cit.*, p.32.

her mother adorn her so as to promote her chances of charming Alec. She shows the same passivity when Angel rejects her after her disastrous confession of her unwanted liaison with Alec. Joanna Devereux believes that “the reason for Tess’ passive acceptance of her tragic role in the novel has to do with her tragically mistaken belief in the possibility of patriarchal heroism.”¹³¹ The very patriarchal heroism that she sees in Angel whom-as it has been mentioned earlier- she blindly perceives as a divinized man, he is simply “godlike in her eyes” (p.183).

From beginning to end, Angel and Alec efficiently contribute in the double process of construction/destruction of Tess, in addition to the narrator and the author who concur to the creation and definition of Tess’s fate and womanhood. The female archetypes are called in and she embarrassingly wavers between the saint and the harlot. Her task is a promethean one, it is a dilemma; “Alec perceives her as nothing but a sexual being; Angel refuses to acknowledge her sexuality and conceives of her as a replacement for the divine being in whom he no longer believes.”¹³² Hardy, like his male heroes, participates in this tutelary process of naming and unmaking of woman by asserting in the outset that Tess is a ‘pure woman’.

In urging her to claim her share in the name d’Urberville, her family is undoubtedly unable to envision the danger that undermines that name. Angel justly wonders why the parson has unearthed the pedigree of Tess’s family. However, he too takes part in the process of naming and renaming Tess; he obsessively strives to rename her so as to subject her reliably. He names her Artemis, Demeter and “other fanciful names half teasingly, which she does not like because she does not understand them. ‘Call me Tess,’ she would say askance” (p.135). Furthermore, he merely proposes that she adopts his name: “Now then, Mistress Theresa d’Urberville, I have you. Take my name, and so you will escape yours” (p.190). In

¹³¹ Joanna Devereux, op.cit., p.114.

¹³² Kathleen Wall, op.cit., p.136.

fact, Angel is, like Euripide's Hippolytus, an obsessive advocate of chastity repelled by sexuality, and like him, he reacts violently when his 'Artemis' Tess/Phaedra reveals her earlier sin.

Unlike Coupeau and Lantier who behave mercilessly with Gervaise, Goujet idolizes her so much that he wishes that all women were like her. But "All women are not like you Mme Coupeau. If they were, one would marry ten" (112), he acknowledges when she advises him to wed the lace-maker Mme Goujet covets. Unfortunately, Goujet's passion for Gervaise is painful for him and relieving for her; she is solaced to know that she is disinterestingly loved without being compelled to have the same feelings. In truth, the very man who honestly and sincerely loves Gervaise suffers more than the two others; Goujet neither defines Gervaise in manly terms nor imposes on her names he relishes. He loves her, listens to her and endures the painful jealousy that ought to be Coupeau's, while she seemingly toys with him and cares but little for his sentiments. Lantier plays with hers and connives with Virginie, his other flirt, to drive her out of her laundry-shop and house. This he does to the joy of Mme Lorilleux who calls Gervaise the 'hobblers'. Mme Lorilleux never fails to point to Gervaise's lameness and the hobblers "was the nickname which they ought to give to the young woman" (p.67) according to the Lorilleux. Mme Lorilleux pretends that Gervaise is responsible of her brother's predicament pretending that he "had been driven to drink by his depraved wife" (p.257). Mother Coupeau calls Gervaise "that hussy of a laundress" (p.256) whereas Coupeau and Lantier compete for the most efficient insults; "Coupeau, who was very full-mouthed, often treated her to some abominable language; Lantier, on the contrary, chose his insults, thinking of words no one else made use of, and which wounded her all the more" (p. 269).

Tess equally knows what it means to be insulted and depreciated, yet one of the most obvious instances of objectification that haunts her narrative is her self-flagellation, her self-victimization through self-effacement and self-abnegation. In fact, her pivotal role in the story

exposes her to assaults of the male and this turns out to be annihilation and self-abasement. “I feel what a nothing I am!” (p.107), she remarks and for her final appearance she is depicted as “like [...] a lesser creature than a woman” (p.328). Stave contends that Tess strives to “make it easy for Angel to feel absolved for any guilt for the destruction he wreaks upon her.”¹³³ However, “Nobody blamed Tess as she blamed herself” (p.38). Thus, she continually and masochistically sustains the ‘world’s opinion’ in her soul by imposing on herself guilt and anathema, and persuades herself of not being entitled to happiness. “Once victim, always victims: that’s the law” she resignedly admits (p.321). Furthermore, Tess rejects some feminine attributes as intimacy and secrecy and also distances the other milkmaids in Talbothays and treats them condescendingly. She holds that she is “more finely refined, better educated [...] more impassioned in nature, cleverer, more beautiful than they” (pp.141-150). Helen Cixous views such an attitude as “the greatest crime against woman. Insidiously, violently, they (men) have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their great strength against themselves.”¹³⁴ Tess does employ her strength against her own self and thus facilitates her victimization; she repudiates her female essence and adopts such phallogentric tenets as the one that considers woman as man’s property. Thus, when Angel belatedly arrives from Australia she admits that Alec “has won me back” (366).

Gervaise is equally persuaded that she is her men’s property; she grows accustomed to her two masters’ abuse and regards “with equanimity things that previously appalled her” (p.269). She is so exhausted, becoming progressively dehumanized that she is ready to surrender to ‘the never sober’ grave-digger, Old Bagouze. Her enemy of old, Virginie manages to down tread her, takes possession of her shop and succeeds to employ her as a charwoman who is to “perform a dirty, humble, menial duty” (p.348) in the very house where she had once been a mistress. Gervaise grows stouter than before, and her lameness worsens

¹³³ Shirley Stave, *op.cit.*, p.109.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Sarah Appleton Aguiar, *op.cit.*, p.114.

and she casts “aside all her old self-respect, coquetry, need of sentiment, propriety and politeness” to “become too bloated and flabby” (p.346).

Zola assumed his literary ambitions and avowedly asserted that: “it would be fine if you were to give yourself over to a work in which you’d put everything, beings, men, the whole immense ark [...] a world in which we would appear simply an accident, in which a passing dog [...] would be our complement .”¹³⁵ It goes without saying that among the characters of *L’Assommoir*, Gervaise is the one who endures the greatest deal of Zola’s experimentation. He extensively employs resources from medical books dealing with heredity and alcoholism, among other things, to support his characterization. The already mentioned Lilian R. Frust contends that in *L’Assommoir*, Zola brings into prominence some crucial medical phenomena later codified by specialists. She exemplifies with the conception of children during drunkenness which is likely to result in a disability for the foetus, hence the limp of Gervaise whose father was drunk when she had been conceived. In addition to the bodily defect, Zola saddles Gervaise with moral malformation closely related to the cause aforementioned and which is known as foetal alcohol effect. Consequently, she suffers from imperfections associated to the syndrome of foetal alcohol effect such as:

an impaired ability to learn, particularly to learn from mistakes so as not to repeat them; a certain impulsiveness and naivety; the tendency to live from moment to moment without envisaging either the larger picture of her life or the cause and effect relationship between her actions; the frequently cited ‘bad judgement’ that has less to do with intelligence than with the capacity logically to evaluate consequences; self-destructiveness in behaviour that has been described as ‘not protective, not health protective, not future protective.’¹³⁶

indeed, Gervaise is manifestly flanked with physical defects as well as psychological ones.

No obvious mental or bodily defect can be held responsible for Tess’s tragedy; but she is subjected to a succession of accidents/coincidences which inform the plot throughout the entire narrative. Seemingly puppeteering rather than weaving a role for his “pure woman”, the

¹³⁵ Allen Thiher, op.cit, p.128.

¹³⁶ Lilian R.Furst, op.cit., p126.

author heralds from the start the course of Tess's eventful life by arranging a painful and fugacious encounter between the maiden Tess Durbeyfield and the evanescent Angel Clare at the May-Dance. Tess was then really pure and ready to be seduced, but the author/coincidence pen their encounter long after at Talbothays, following a series of troubles and fatal accidents that determine the rest of her destiny. It is also coincidence which throws Tess into the snapdragon after the accidental death of Prince and the same coincidence assists Alec in his rape of Tess. Lack of coincidence impeaches Tess of acknowledging to Angel her 'sinful' dealings with Alec d'Urberville till it is too late. Dorothy Van Ghent mentions some critical discussions that bring into prominence Hardy's preponderating and exaggerative use of accidents and coincidence in structuring his narrative. Accordingly, she draws attention to the author's construction of Tess's destiny so as to conform to his "pessimistic" and "fatalistic" convictions.¹³⁷

Gervaise is not only subjected to two idle men, but is also ensnared in the vicissitude of coincidences, drink and sloth. In fact, following the loss of her shop and home, she walks on the path of Coupeau and begins her unavoidable addiction to alcohol. Embedded in logic whose driving force is heredity; she sinks unremittingly into the depths of human decadence. "On the days when there was no hope of anything she searched about with the dogs, to see what might be lying outside tradespeople's doors before the dustmen went by [...]" (p.367). Gervaise may be paralleled to the Christ if one infers some meaning from the number of guests who share the meal she has meticulously prepared; the likening cannot fail to take into account Gervaise abnegation and sacrifice. She, too, is a victim of internal as well as external forces.

Considering herself "very guilty, an object of horror and disgust" (p.258), and overwhelmed by her own family, her former friends and no longer appraised by Goujet,

¹³⁷ Dorothy Van Ghent, *op.cit.*, p.39.

Gervaise's slow descent into hell soon becomes part of her daily life. Disorder, indifference insidiously insinuate themselves into her rotting life. The laundress becomes a beggar and gets accustomed to dirt and takes to the filthy atmosphere that is invading her world. She develops a strange behaviour which is "to feel the house grow heavy and lifeless with sloth, was a voluptuous pleasure which intoxicated her" (p.265). Her masculine probity deserts her and she reaches the abyss of debasement. "[...] losing her skill, bungling her work to such an extent that her employer reduced her wages to forty sous a day" (p.303). Though she realises that "her misfortunes came from it" (p.384), Gervaise surrenders to the hideous still at Old Colombe's where she:

liked to go and fetch her husband at old Colombe's, in order to be treated; and she sat down there right willingly with none of that air of disgust which she had assumed on the first occasion. Nowadays she would drain her glass at a gulp, drag her elbows over the tables for hours, and only leave the place when her eyes were starting from the head".

(p.344)

Gervaise gives way and plunges into drinking which the narrator in *Jude the Obscure* calls: "the regular stereotyped resource of the despairing worthless" (p.70-1). Drinking, hunger, filth, cold and humiliation kill the woman whose only wish is to die in her bed at home. Gervaise cannot be a powerful character from beginning to end because this contradicts the archetypal representation of woman in male-authored fiction. Through Gervaise Zola mis/represented the everlasting depotentiated, and debased woman. The Zolaesque Gervaise is, in Henry James' words, "a lame washerwoman, loose and gluttonous, without will, without any principle of cohesion, the sport of every wind that assaults her exposed life, and who, rolling from one gross mistake to another, finds her end in misery, drink and despair."¹³⁸

Tess knows nothing about drinking; she is too delicate to give way to alcohol whatever the hardships encountered. Her delicacy supposedly participates in the verisimilitude of the

¹³⁸ Henry James, *The Future of the Novel : Essays on the Art of Fiction*, Ed. Leon Edel, (New York : Vintage Books, 1956), p.186.

character and the purity of the woman. Tess, it is true, is seemingly compassionately handled by Hardy who seemingly decries the weight of fate on her and even saddles the male characters, Alec and Angel with the whole responsibility of her sad lot, but she is to the last, the 'fair sufferer'. Straightjacketed in a set of overpowering natural and social attributes, a mixture of mythic and historical substance, and last but not least, coupling in her rural inertness with modern sense of self-determination, Tess is condemned to echo Hardy's own ache of modernity. In this wise, in a study dealing with the existentialist aspect of Hardy's personality, Franck Giordano cites one of Hardy's poems, *Tess's Lament* to highlight the parallel between the author (Hardy) and most of his character's concern with the morbid wish of not existing. "Speaking for a good number of Hardy's fictional major characters", Tess sights:

I cannot bear my fate as writ,
I'd have my life unbe;
Would turn my memory to a blot,
Make every relic of me rot,
My doings be as they were not,
And gone all trace of me! ¹³⁹

Giordano holds that Hardy's characters are inhabited by the recurrent wish to have their existence 'unbe'. They are self destructive personages drawn on the author's very experience whose "spring of vitality, never overflowing, seems early to have run dry." ¹⁴⁰ So, for Tess "birth itself was an ordeal of degrading personal compulsion whose gratuitousness nothing in the result seemed to justify, and at best could only palliate" (p.344). She pathetically admits: "I wish I had never been born—there or anywhere else" (p.81). How can we then explain Tess's and other Hardyan female characters's undeniable propensity to sacrifice themselves and accede to martyrdom unless by the author's own melancholy? Tess is forced to harbour

¹³⁹ See Frank R. Giordano Jr, *I'd Like to Have my Life Unbe : Thomas Hardy's Self-Destructive Characters*, (AI : University of Alabama Press, 1984), p.15.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.17.

the abiding battle between “life-affirming and life-denying elements.”¹⁴¹ A battle whose final outlet obviously and fatally inclines towards the denial of life; Tess’ life. Besides, the unhappy end of Tess seems closely linked to her purity which requires that she be hanged in Stonehenge on the altar of the male’s egoism. Without this purity, Tess’s tragic fate is incomplete, Angel’s self-fulfilment is not possible; his love for her and the narrator’s are neither contented nor assured. Gutierrez suggests that “the die is already cast for Tess by her seduction-rape by Alec.”¹⁴² And the initial scene constitutes according to Gutierrez, the culmination of Hardy’s reliance on determinism. Tess is predetermined to be the very scapegoat¹⁴³. The narrator/author, Angel and Alec project their own frustration and their psychological imbalance on Tess. Projection is, in Jung’s words, a “process whereby an unconscious quality or content of one’s own is perceived and reacted to in an outer object. To project, then, is to attribute or assign characteristics we love or hate onto others.”¹⁴⁴ Hardy’s own characteristics and evils are intermittently projected to and fro, so according to John Kucich, Hardy wittily cheats critics by obliterating his:

latent commitment to Victorian standards of honesty—which are as important to the Victorian ethical imagination as its more notorious sexual norms—may be seen as a central instance in which he perverts while preserving the basic symbolic structures of Victorian ethics, along with some of the misogynist genderings of virtue and vice that accompany them.¹⁴⁵

Tess is the essential scapegoat, the ‘woman who pays’ and endures all sorts of hardships and debasement at the hands of her counterparts, the narrator and her creator. Rosalind Miles suggests that Hardy deals like a lover with his fictional women, a lover who grows “too involved with his fictional creations; so that we feel that the blood that courses through the

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.159.

¹⁴² Donald Gutierrez, *The Dark and Light Gods : Essays on the Self in Modern Literature*, (Troy, NY : Whitston, 1987), p.28.

¹⁴³ Scapegoating is a process whereby a given community gets rid of its evils and sins by projecting them on a scapegoat which is sent into the wilderness.

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Bettina L. Knapp, *Women in the Nineteenth Century : A Jungian View*, (University park, PA : Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), p 1.

¹⁴⁵ John Kucich, op.cit., 204.

veins of his female characters is drawn straight from his own heart.”¹⁴⁶ Indeed, Hardy’s avowed infatuation with Tess is another recurrent pattern; another *Madame Bovary* and another archetypal Pygmalion’s Galatea. In other words, Hardy created his own Galatea and manipulates her according to his whims. Frye ascribes this sort of link between an author and his/her character to *displacement*, i.e., “the adaptation of myth and metaphor to canons of morality or plausibility.”¹⁴⁷ It is needless to say that archetypes mainly refer to myths and that the characters of fiction are mythemes. In this way, a displaced myth is a one that is converted into a mythic, a romantic and a realistic narrative.¹⁴⁸ A no less crucial reference to archetypes and atavism is found in the passages which are concerned with the “two full-size portraits” found in the mansion where Angel and Tess were to pass their wedding night. The portraits of ladies of the ancient d’Urberville family strike by their effect and by the resemblance with Tess whose “fine features were unquestionably traceable in these exaggerated forms” (p.215).

5-The Other women

L’Assommoir is much peopled with a multitude of female characters revolving around the principal character, Gervaise. Thus, there is Gervaise’s mother who is rather alluded to through her resemblance with Gervaise in their “mania for becoming attached to people” (p.33). In addition to the limp, Gervaise’s condition is a recurrence of many a pattern her mother went through; both have known what is being belaboured by one’s man, and by the end, Gervaise has been wont to liquors like her mother. Joan Durbeyfield, Tess’s mother is omnipresent and quite influential; she is the one who impels Tess to join the d’Urbervilles. Joan Durbeyfield is melomaniac, but she also relishes Rolliver’s Inn where she leisurely goes to fetch her husband. Mrs Durbeyfield is superstitious and not learned. She represents the ideal vehicle of the patriarchal creed, acting and reacting according to the prevailing

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Judith Mitchell, op.cit., 160.

¹⁴⁷ Northrop Frye, op.cit., p.365.

¹⁴⁸ G.Douglas Atkins, *Contemporary Literary Theory*. Ed. Laura Morrow, (Amherst, MA : University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), p.53.

paradigm. There are less important women in *Tess*; the girls/nymphs who dance with Tess at the May Dance, Mrs Clare, Angel's mother, Mrs d'Urberville, Alec's mother, Mrs Crick, the dairyman's wife and Liza-Lu, Tess's sister. Tess's friends in the dairy at Talbothays, Izz Huett, Marian and Retty Pridle who share the same "hopeless passion" for Angel Clare. "They writhed feverishly under the oppressiveness of an emotion thrust on them by cruel Nature's law" (p.149) and the narrator/author sympathetically regards them as "simple and innocent girls on whom the unhappiness of unrequited love had fallen" (p.220). They are a trifle gossipers, but far less than Zola's shrews essentially Mme Lorilleux, Gervaise's step-sister.

Mme Lorilleux's role is far more important than most of the other women's in *L'Assommoir*; her jealousy and wickedness are unrivalled. The first woman with whom Gervaise gets acquainted is Mme Boche, a stout doorkeeper and the gossip in chief. Virginie (later Mme Poisson) befriends Gervaise in order to take vengeance for a former dispute at Mme Fauconier's wash-house. Mme Fauconnier is Gervaise's first employer, her presence is evasive and she serves as a model for the industrious woman. Mme Lerat is Coupeau's other sister; she is kinder than Mme Lorilleux and more sociable. Their mother, Mother Coupeau spends the rest of her life ministered by Gervaise, but capriciously complains about her to her daughters.

There are many female characters in *L'Assommoir* whose apparitions are rare and fugacious such as Adèle, Virginie's sister and Lantier's mistress. Madame Gaudron, a client of Gervaise, Mlle Remanjou, Mme Vigouroux, the charcoal dealer and a plump woman. Gervaise's workwomen, Mme Putois and Mlle Clémence, Mme Goujet, and Mme Bijard and her daughter Lalie, the models of the beaten women. There is Nana who is granted a whole

chapter as a foretaste of the eponymous novel. All these women symbolise a particular archetype; each one performs a role that goes back to the first woman, Magna Mater.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

It is true that the effects of alcohol are felt more intensely in *L'Assommoir* than in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, yet the weight of heredity and economic hardships is equivalent in both novels. Tess and Gervaise are instinctually forced to reproduce ancestral sins and evils and their main function in the narrative is to be sacrificed. The two women are dispossessed of any form of resistance; speechless, frequently unconscious, passive and masochistic, they are endowed with the very attributes that enhance their submission. Whenever they show some virtue, this means that these virtues are female-like qualities condescendingly attributed by the phallic order. Neither Tess nor Gervaise are powerful women; their best attributes, delicacy, generosity, self-abnegation and sociability are detrimental and lethal. Tess and Gervaise are rather optical illusions nothing more. Both of them are assaulted many a time by men whose only wish is to take advantage of their sensuality.

Though Tess and Gervaise had a bitter experience with, respectively, Alec and Lantier and resolved to not renew any liaison with men, they succumb once again. There are also similar references in the *Tess* and *L'Assommoir* to both men as being the natural husbands of Tess and Gervaise. As already seen, Gervaise, but also Tess symbolize Penelope in her adherence to the prescribed role(s) the patriarchal system imposes on woman. Both women seem to behave according to the endeared doctrine of double spheres. Thus, while Gervaise is well and truly an obedient wife and mother, Tess acts as a dedicated mother for her family, her ephemeral child and her two 'rapers'. Both women show an ambivalence that is scantily graspable for even an acute reader.

¹⁴⁹ Yiannis Stamiris, *Main Currents in Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism : A Critical Study*, (Troy, NY : Whitston Publishing Company, 1986), p.127.

Chapter Two: *Jude the Obscure* and *Thérèse Raquin*

Sue, Arabella and Thérèse: Diabolizing the Woman

Introduction

The task will be somewhat delicate in this chapter as I shall deal with three characters instead of two. Indeed, in addition to Zola's Thérèse Raquin and Hardy's Sue Bridehead, I have resolved to throw some light on Arabella Donn, Jude Fawley's first wife. Unlike Thérèse and Sue, Arabella is a somewhat less important character; her secondary role both in Jude's life and in the plot is telling as to her being used by the author as a mere bait. Thérèse Raquin, by contrast, performs a major role in the eponymous novel, yet a role of a bloody woman who ruins two men and herself. The book aroused immediate public condemnation as well as literary animosity; the critic Louis Ulbach Ferragus simply labelled Zola "a miserable hysteric who entertains himself by writing pornography."¹⁵⁰ *Jude the Obscure* "possibly the grimmest English canonical novel of the nineteenth century"¹⁵¹ was equally accused of obscenity and renamed *Jude the Obscene*, and no doubt Arabella's 'performance' has a hand in the novel's libellous fortune. Carnal, inclined to follow her sexual impulse, Arabella passes for the very bitch. Although as cruel as Arabella, and more harmful for Jude than her and impeaching him likewise of attaining his intellectual aims, Sue is seemingly less loathed by the author.

As already seen, Sue voices Hardy's opinions while Arabella is seemingly at the antipodes of the author's *weltanschauung*. Arabella traverses the story licentiously in the same wise as Thérèse does, inspiring in the readers misogynistic feelings and enhancing in them the belief in the archetypal sinful woman. Sue, Arabella and Thérèse are assumedly seducers, victimizers and intriguers. Thérèse has her cousin and husband Camille murdered

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Denean Sharpley-Whiting T, op.cit., p. 77.

¹⁵¹ Shirley Stave, op.cit., 123.

by her lover Laurent whom she manages to transform into a sexual beast. But she is also a scapegoat, paying for the sin of her parents and the debility of her aunt and her son. Arabella is an unscrupulous woman, devoid of any consciousness and ready to any demeaning behaviour and concessions to get her way and achieve her modest ambitions. Sue, by contrast, has no ambitions and no motivations, and she transfers this to Jude, Phillotson and even to Little Father Time, Jude and Arabella's child.

1-Setting and characters

Yea, many be there that have run out of their
wits for women, and have become servants
for their sakes Many have also perished,
have erred and sinned for women....O ye
men, how can it be but women should be
strong seeing they do thus?.

Esdras

Hither and thither, one finds in Hardy's books epigraphs and citations that are very telling as regards his representation and viewpoint of woman. The misogynistic undertones of the citation he chose to open up *Jude the Obscure* cannot pass unnoticed, but does this apocryphal passage apply to Sue Bridehead and Arabella Donn? Katharine M. Rogers deems that Hardy's resort to this citation "is a broad hint that Jude's sufferings may be attributed to the ruinous influence of women, Arabella and Sue, on his life."¹⁵²

At the outset, one is acquainted with the type of woman Arabella and Thérèse are. They have in common the fact of sharing the ungrateful roles of the spiteful and malevolent woman; the very injurious archetype. They stand at the lowest extremity of the everlasting dichotomy that sentences woman either as a saint or a harlot; they are the witch (*medium*), but also the femme fatale (*Hetaera*). Arabella is the first woman encountered by the young and inexperienced Jude who "could not himself bear to hurt anything, [...] could scarcely bear to see trees cut down or lopped [...] he was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal

¹⁵² Katharine M ; Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate : A History of Misogyny in Literature*, (Seattle : University of Washington Press, 1968), p.13.

before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life” (p.11). A young man who wishes “If he could only prevent himself from growing up! He did not want to be a man” (p.13).

Moulded, like Arabella, exclusively out of flesh and senses, “a little too much flesh”¹⁵³ in Zola’s own words, Thérèse is the catalyst of a tragic intrigue in which a man, her cousin and husband Camille is drowned by her and her lover Laurent. But they are, at their turn, subsequently engulfed in a demoniac struggle against Camille’s ghost, against one another and against their own selves. Although not figuring in the series of the *Rougon-Macquart*, *Thérèse Raquin* is permeated with that sense of scientific version of fate, namely; heredity which can be translated in the Jungian conceptualization as “primordial images which emerge from the deepest layers of the unconscious, (...) found in myths, legends, literary works the world over and from immemorial time.”¹⁵⁴

The same scientific version of fate haunts the course of Sue Bridehead and Jude Fawley. I am inclined beforehand to state that the attribute of dismalness in which Hardy chose to encapsulate his central male character, is far more relevant to Sue Bridehead than to Jude. On November 7, 1895, *The Morning Post* issued a review of Thomas Hardy’s last novel, *Jude the Obscure* and the article mainly deals with Sue Bridehead, or without diminution, Susanna Florence Mary Bridehead. The article labels her a “strange and unnatural creature. A highly-strung, nervous, hysterical woman, who in the most tremendous crises of her life can quote poetry and prose as calmly as a lecturer, is distinctly abnormal.”¹⁵⁵ Jekel reports that such a female character is mainly able to:

disappoint a readership that demanded a happy ending to life and its fiction, but this conception of woman as complex, sexual, “dominating,” and “remorseless,” upset many a critic, male and female alike. In a predictable defense, Sue was called “strange and unnatural,” even “pathological.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Quoted in W.F.J. Hemmings, op.cit., pp.2-3.

¹⁵⁴ Bettina Knapp, *A Jungian Approach to Literature*, (Carbondale, IL : Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), p.xi.

¹⁵⁵ Pamela Jekel, op.cit., p.178.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p179.

Indeed, one feels bewildered by Sue's queer behaviour which lacks consistency and unity. She is not the pivotal character of the narrative, but it seems as though all the other characters—even Jude—are her mere satellites. The novel is framed like a self-seeking voyage undertaken by Jude, the hero whose various long halts at Marygreen, Christminster, Melchester, Shaston, Aldbrickham, and Christmisnter unfold what Hardy himself calls a series of unfulfilled aims. Apparently unambitious, Jude's cousin, Sue Bridehead fascinates him long before he meets her; she is altogether complex, strange and intellectual. She is brainy, familiar with Greek and Latin classics, a reader of Boccaccio, Gibbon, Sterne, Defoe, Fielding, Shakespeare, and the Bible and – by a bizarre irony of fate and coincidence -- the misogynistic Juvenal. Sue is not easily apprehended not to say strikingly puzzling for Jude, Phillotson and the reader. In short, she seems to comply with what Irving Howe considers as “the first major anticipation in the English novel of that profoundly affecting and troublesome creature: the modern girl.”¹⁵⁷

In terms of bodily depiction, Sue is the archetypal Victorian pathological woman; light and slight, “a slim and fragile being” (p.150), quite different from the plump Arabella. “She was so pretty that he (Jude) could not believe it possible that she belong to him” (p.89), but the most remarkable trait is her being “sustained and nourished by the rarefied life of books and art [...]”¹⁵⁸. Indeed, Sue is of the bookish kind, who takes “a walk into the country with a book in her hand” (p.94) and before sleeping “began reading a book [...] a volume of Gibbon” (p.96). She also recites verse and relishes at reading some poetry before she puts out the light. Books are by contrast abhorred by Arabella who does not figure in Pamela Jekel's seminal book consecrated to Hardy's heroines presumably because of her being a minor character. Her intrusion in Jude's life is coincidental, but irreverential; startling him with “a soft cold substance [...] flung at him” (p.35) disrupting his reverie wherein Euripides, Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius hold the lion's share. The thrower in question is:

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.181.

¹⁵⁸ D.H. Lawrence, op.cit., p.115.

A fine dark-eyed girl, not exactly handsome but capable of passing as such at a little distance, despite some coarseness of skin and fibre. She had a round and prominent bosom, full lips, rich teeth, and the rich complexion of a *cochin hen's* egg. She was a complete and *substantial female animal*-no more, no less.

(p.36)

The above description leaves no doubt as for the task allotted to her, i.e., incapacitate the male hero and conduct the vile enterprise of “attracting his attention from dreams” (Ibid). Some critics have drawn attention to the significance of Arabella’s act, arguing that rather than a sexual advance, it is a provocation and an allusion to sexual impotency. It is in John Sutherland’s words an “aggressive sexual taunting [...] which will reverberate through the lovers’ subsequent relationship until Arabella finally disposes of her thoroughly emasculated mate at Christminster.”¹⁵⁹ Unlike Sue who is thought to be “the perfect Victorian lady was construed as passionless”, Arabella manifestly holds the role of “the ‘low and vulgar’ Victorian woman [...] perceived as retaining the animal’s sexual voraciousness.”¹⁶⁰ The scrotum of a butchered barrow-pig constitutes Arabella’s calling card and Arthur Mizner remarks that she seldom appears-in the beginning of her encounter with Jude-“unaccompanied by pigs.”¹⁶¹ The allusion to the animalism of Arabella is also found in the job of her father, a pig-breeder. Moreover, when she came across Jude, she was washing pigs’ chitterlings by a stream with two other girls.

2-The tempters

Arabella and Thérèse are unequivocally steeped in instinctuality which is directly related to the burdensome heredity. In effect, it is worth underlining that heredity is also embodied by the instinct that Dr Edward Edinger likens to the archetype, postulating that an “instinct is a pattern of behaviour which is inborn and characteristic.”¹⁶² In *Conversations*

¹⁵⁹ John Sutherland, *The Literary Detective : 100 Puzzles in Classic Fiction*, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2000), p.223.

¹⁶⁰ Susan Mendus and Janet Randall, *Sexuality and Subordination : Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*, (London : Routledge, 1989), 9.

¹⁶¹ Arthur Mizner, op.cit., pp.54-55.

¹⁶² Quoted in Bettina Knapp (1984) op.cit., p.xi.

with *Carl Jung and Reactions from Ernest Jones*, Jung explicitly posits that: “It is quite certain, however, that man is born with a certain functioning, a certain way of functioning, a certain way of behaviour which is expressed in the form of archetypal images, or archetypal images.”¹⁶³ Indeed, instinctuality abounds in *Thérèse Raquin*, and Zola admits in the prefatory passage that: “*Thérèse et Laurent sont des brutes humaines, rien de plus. J’ai cherché à suivre pas à pas dans ces brutes le travail sourd des passions, les poussées de l’instinct*” (p.6) Again and again, heredity strikes another Zolaesque character; Thérèse declines because of the supposedly burden of her hot-blooded mother whose African origins partly justify, in Zola’s point of view, her tragic itinerary. At this juncture, the allusion to the oriental pedigree of Thérèse is no fortuitous. Indeed, the *mulatto* Thérèse allegedly commits adultery, murders her husband and subsequently falls in the underworld of Paris because she is overwhelmed by the “immorality and lascivious sensuality of the blacks that flowed in her veins.”¹⁶⁴

Almost deprived of instincts, Sue is rather endowed with an overburdensome reason; a *Logos* which is presumably related to the (patriarchal) Olympian religion, to civil laws, to rationalism and analytic thinking which are closely representative of the phallic order. She is irreligious and irrespective of the Scriptures which she freely alters by rearranging the chapters of the holy Book. As a result, Jude considers her “quite Voltairean” (p.157). She is extraordinarily filled with values unprecedented in woman, values such as free thinking, personal liberty and sexual freedom. She is delusively ambitious and seemingly longs to be independent after two years’ training at Melchester Normal School of teachers. But her very feminine attributes and her feminine principle, i.e., her sexuality which impedes her emancipation as well as Jude’s and Phillotson’s are consumed by her identification with the male principle. As a consequence, she is next to devoid of the sensuality, the glamour and the

¹⁶³ Quoted in Richard I. Evans, op.cit., p.47.

¹⁶⁴ Denean Sharpley-Whitting T, op.cit., p.76.

carnality found in ordinary woman. Her lack of sensuality causes her loss, that of Jude and that of Phillotson. Sue is overwhelmingly depotentiated by her *animus*, otherwise her ‘inner man’ or “the corresponding representative of the masculine contrasexual elements in the psychology of woman.”¹⁶⁵ She thoughtfully admits that her life:

has been entirely shaped by what people call a peculiarity in me. I have no fear of men as such, nor of their books. I have mixed with them—one or two of them particularly—almost as one of their sex. I mean I have not felt about them as most women are taught to feel—to be on their guard against attacks on their virtue; for no average man—no man short of sensual savage—will molest a woman by day or night, at home or abroad, unless she invites him.

(pp.152-3)

This being, it is evident that Hardy has his central female character avow her own queerness and alienation from the feminine world. Sue goes beyond a simple negation of her womanhood; she exculpates man from the supposedly victimization of woman. It is probable that nowhere does a Hardyan female character speak in favour of the patriarchal order like Sue does. She is convinced that “men—are so much better than women” (p.153). The other eccentricity confessed by Sue is her friendly and sexless intimacy with an undergraduate whose death is in a way incumbent upon her icy behaviour with him. Surely, her demeanour also distresses and depresses Jude who is unable to resist to her despite “her strange ways and unconsciousness of gender” (p.154).

Eccentricity and anguish equally pervade *Thérèse Raquin* wherein we are introduced into the narrative through a sort of “*corridor étroit et sombre*” (p.11) which heralds a submerging and horrifying background omnipresent throughout the narrative. Thérèse’s first appearance reveals a vampiric figure; “*un profil pale et grave de jeune femme. Ce profil sortait vaguement des ténèbres [...]*” (p.13). She is only two years old when her father, a certain army captain brings her and entrusts her to his sister Mme Raquin. The latter is husbandless and has a diseased son, Camille whom she often disputes to death. Camille is

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in Bettina Knapp, op.cit., (1987), p.xii.

feeble and consumes medicines rather than food. Therese, though very healthy, grows incapacitated by being subjected to the same treatment as her cousin; encaged in the same hot room and compelled to swallow the same drugs:

Pendant des heures, elle restait accroupie devant le feu, pensive, regardant les flammes de face, sans baisser les paupières. Cette vie forcée de convalescente la replia sur elle-même, elle prit l'habitude de parler à voix basse, de marcher sans faire de bruit, de rester muette et immobile sur une chaise, les yeux ouverts et vide de regards. Et lorsqu'elle levait un bras, lorsqu'elle avançait un pied, on sentait en elle des souplesses félines, des muscles courts et puissants, toute une énergie, toute une passion qui dormaient dans sa chair assoupie.

(p17)

Through the above passage one can anticipate the rest of the story; Zola lays queer stress on the unsustainable characteristics that ineluctably prepare the reader to discover a metamorphosed Thérèse. From a placid, tender and silent maiden, she becomes an insatiable sexual beast and an unscrupulous criminal. It must be born in mind that the nineteenth-century realist and naturalist novel propitiously sheltered the downfall of woman as a literary topic. The prostitute became an obsessive and central personage following the prevailing mind/matter division; “the man/animal distinction generated a picture of both women and men as potentially bestial. But, in so far as it urged the supremacy of rationality in the pursuit of perfection, it made women of necessity more akin to the animal than to the essentially human.”¹⁶⁶

Animalism and alcoholism are also closely connected with Arabella's personality. “Oh damn it all!” (p.64), she storms at Jude whose pity for the slaughtered pig discourages her; she shows less pity and more courage. In addition to her involvement in pig-breeding, she is also a barmaid. Thus, she is destined to be Jude's “two Arch Enemies [...] my weakness for women and my impulse to strong liquor” (p.373). Though he is sure that she “is not worth a great deal as a specimen of womankind,” (p.56), Jude does not succeed to contain her influence. Comparatively to most of Hardy's female characters, Arabella is exceptional with

¹⁶⁶ Susan Mendus and Janet randall, op.cit., p.10.

regard to the various virtues Hardy confers to Sue, Tess, Bathsheba and the others, but not to her. Her essential characteristic is her unrestrained sexuality which is both enlivened by natural pleasure and a “wicked heart” which rambles off whether she acquiesces or not (p.331). Arabella does not fit at all with the Victorian model of womanhood:

The woman who put soul over body [...] The genteel woman responded not to the lower senses of taste and smell but to the highest senses-sight and hearing-which were used for moral and aesthetic purposes. One of the most convincing demonstrations was a thin body—that is, a physique that symbolized rejection of all carnal appetites [...] Appetite, then, was a barometer of a woman’s moral state.¹⁶⁷

According to this social barometer, Arabella is amoral; she is plump, almost soulless and exactly the opposite of Sue. Her seduction of Jude is likened to the instinctual/archetypal seductive process by which a female animal entices the male; the “unvoiced call of woman to man, which was uttered very distinctly by Arabella’s personality, held Jude to the spot against his intention—almost against his will” (p.37). Of course, Jude is ‘bewitched’, he “gazed from her eyes to her mouth, thence to her bosom, and to her full round naked arms, wet, mottled with the chill of water, and firm as marble”, and he “felt himself drifting strangely” (p.38) though he “saw [...] with his intellectual eye” that Arabella is not vestal (p.39).

This fantastic portrayal of Arabella is doubtlessly directed to the implied male reader who is likely to succumb to the erotic allusions. Her personality is grounded on sex and the narrator warns us beforehand that she is absolutely moulded out of flesh, and Sue sees her as “a fleshy and coarse woman” (p.275). Because of her, Jude’s “intentions as to reading, working and learning which he had so precisely formulated [...] were suffering a curious collapse, he knew not how” (p.38). There lays the recurrent image of Eve the original and initial sinner, Eve whose sin is indefinitely reiterated by her daughters.

¹⁶⁷ See Patricia A. McEachern, op.cit., p.75.

Arabella is despised by Sue and condescendingly treated almost as Tess behaves with the other milkmaids at Talbothays. Indeed, Sue displays a contemptuous attitude towards Arabella and her gendered fellows; she treats her deprecatingly and calls her a “low passionate woman” (p.277). Practically, she shares and (un)willingly bespeaks Hardy’s own aversion for Arabella. She loathes Arabella’s sensuality and is unable to conceive any combination of flesh and spirit. As a result, she is quartered and forced to harbour a duality that obstructs her access to individuation. Sue endures the same process of idealization as Tess, at the hands of both the author, Phillotson and Jude. Hardy has Jude enamoured of her through the picture he religiously admires at Marygreen, “in a broad hat, with radiating folds under the brim like the rays of a halo” (p.78). He regards her as “a kindly star, an elevating power, a companion in Anglican worship, a tender friend” (p.91). He has a chance to meet her, but prefers to postpone the encounter and “kept watch over her, and liked to feel she was there. The consciousness of her living presence stimulated him, she remained more or less an ideal character, about whose form he began to weave curious and fantastic day-dreams” (pp.89-90).

When they meet at last, Sue pretends that “she had only just learnt by the merest accident that he was living in Christminster, and reproached him with not letting her know. They might have had such nice times together, she said, for she was thrown much upon herself, and had hardly any congenial friend” (p.100). Jude starts to fantasize about her and to fancy that with “Sue as companion he could have renounced his ambition with a smile. Without her it was inevitable that the reaction from the long strain to which he had subjected himself should affect him disastrously” (p.119). Jude ignores his aunt’s advice and clings to Sue who, in Aunt Drusilla’s words “could do things that only boys could do as a rule [...] hit and steer down the long slide on yonder pond, with her little curls blowing [...]” (p.115). Indeed, contrary to Jude’s expectations, Sue turns away and engages with Phillotson.

Thérèse secretly engages with Laurent the very male who is in a position to help her to individuate. Their mutual attraction becomes a series of rendez-vous which transform Thérèse into a transfigured person;

Au premier baiser, elle se révéla courtisane. Son corps inassouvie se jeta éperdument dans la volupté. Elle s'éveillait comme d'un songe, elle naissait à la passion. Elle passait des bras débiles de Camille dans les bras vigoureux de Laurent, et cette approche d'un homme puissant lui donnait une brusque secousse qui la tirait du sommeil de la chair. Tous ses instincts de femme nerveuse éclatèrent avec une violence inouïe; le sang de sa mère, ce sang africain qui lui brûlait les veines, se mit à couler, à battre furieusement dans son corps maigre, presque vierge encore. Elle s'étalait, elle s'offrait avec une impudeur souveraine. Et de la tête aux pieds de longs frissons l'agitaient.

(p.36)

The passage above focuses on Thérèse's voluptuousness, her uncontrolled/ uncontrollable warmth; she yields to caresses and surrenders to her instincts without any sense of measure. This erotic passage is akin to those found in *Tess* and *L'Assommoir*, exhibiting rapes. The language betrays a form of voyeurism that Zola shares with his British counterpart, Hardy. There is also a kind of exaggeration in the depiction of the scene through the focus on useless details. However, the emphasis on the instinctuality of the nervous woman and the African blood is not hypocrisy. Scenes such as the one referred to become the lot of the adulterous couple, Thérèse and Laurent. Their torrid liaison and the lack of freedom in their movements and transports of desire lead them to the dreadful idea of getting rid of Camille. Thérèse is the instigator of the murder while Laurent is the instrument in her hands. She uses him to satisfy her insatiable sexuality and to take revenge on her adoptive family for the long sequestration she had to go through during her endless stay with her aunt. It is likely that Zola, by freeing Thérèse from the claws of her relatives, also releases his own tools of experimentation and unbridles the dissector in him to check the accuracy of his scientific meditation. Simply put, he manifestly yearns to see and show the effect and importance of heredity in Thérèse's

liberal conduct on encountering Laurent. Besides, Hemmings argues that Zola's objective is to show the detrimental influence of woman's temperament on that of man.¹⁶⁸

Though she has never known a man other than her sexually impotent and crippled cousin, she naturally knows how to give and receive erotic pleasures, and by liberating her heart and body, she gets rid of her muteness and enclosure. Thérèse's demeanour is instinctual because these sexual practices need no training and the animals perform the same gestures without any form of learning. From the outset, Thérèse is animalized: "*Quand elle était seule, dans l'herbe, au bord de l'eau, elle se couchait à plat ventre comme une bête. Les yeux noirs et agrandis, le corps tordu, près de bondir. Et elle restait là [...] ne pensant à rien, mordue par le soleil, heureuse d'enfoncer ses doigts dans la terre.*" (p.18). Zola allegedly attacks the nineteenth-century model of woman (bourgeois) whose emblematic attribute, namely prudery smothered and devitalized women. However, through the role allotted to Thérèse, he assimilates her and her lover to ghosts, soulless people wherein he wishes to discover the beast. In the preface already referred to, he confesses that he threw Laurent and Thérèse in a dramatic situation in order to study their sensations and actions, and his goal was that of a scientist. He manages to make of Thérèse the representative of the hypocritical and deceitful woman, living a sinful adulterous life with Laurent unknown to Camille and to his mother.

Arabella, too, is "a scheming woman who wants nothing more than to rise socially and who has learned all the artifices associated with women in society to allow her to do so, down to her fake dimple and her artificial hair."¹⁶⁹ Unlike the pure Tess who 'proudly' hides her pregnancy from Alec, Arabella lies to Jude and claims to be pregnant when he tells her of his intended departure. She has an insightful understanding of "the powerlessness of the women in the Victorian society and her own drive for survival."¹⁷⁰ Jude's and Arabella's conjugal life marks time, they often quarrel and one "fine Sunday morning [...] pedestrians turned to

¹⁶⁸ F.W.J. Hemmings, op.cit., P.28.

¹⁶⁹ Shirley Stave, op.cit., p.128.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

stare at the extraordinary spectacle she now presented, bonnetless, her dishevelled hair blowing in the wind, her bodice apart” (pp.68-9). “Going to ill-use me on principle, as your father ill-used your mother, and your father’s sister ill-used her husband?” (Ibid) she unexpectedly and reproachfully tells Jude. Thus, from the mouth of his wife, Jude learns that he, too, reproduces the same ancestral course experienced by his father and forefathers and that he acts according to a model set long before. Living together becomes hellish to both of them, consequently, they have to part; and Arabella’s chooses to go with her parents to Australia without untying their bonds of marriage.

Arabella’s use of her sexual attraction is motivated by her endeared goal of attaining a respectable social status. In this way, she perfectly epitomizes the social Darwinian postulate which posits that one “acts alternately out of lust and a will to survive, and as a result appears less than human, devoid of the spirituality that would allow her to achieve wholeness.”¹⁷¹ Obviously, Jude is endowed with consciousness and is allowed a chance to consider his engagement with Arabella and persuades himself that the “great hitch” –Arabella at this juncture—“had nothing in common with the spirits and influences that had moved him hitherto [...] a woman for whom he had no respect and whose life had nothing in common with his own except locality” (p.41). Besides, the picture of Samson and Delilah is displayed twice before his eyes to produce a remorseful mood in him and to act both as an omen and a warner. As it has been suggested earlier, Jude is aware that Arabella is worthless, yet he abandons his “dreams about books, and degrees, and impossible fellowships, and all that” (p.55) to marry her and succumbs one more time by the end of the story and justifies the narrator’s calling Jude Arabella’s “shorn Samson” (p.399). It is clear from all this that unlike Sue, Arabella is the one who is to perform the ‘*sale besogne*’, i.e., to start Jude’s bewilderment and the one who gives him the finishing stroke. She is manifestly ‘freed’ from

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p.131.

the rational function, devoid of the *logos* principle and entirely bridled by the *Eros* wherewith she “reasserted her sway on his (Jude’s) soul” (p.45).

3-The (a)sexual woman

The very *Eros* which Jude desperately strives to detect and identify in Sue who, though a frail creature, endorses such features as authoritativeness, possessiveness and intellectualism. She is locked into a jail whose ruthless gaolers are sexual repression and overpowering guilt, ceaselessly supplied with pain and grievance and placing her at the precipice of madness. She is terrified by the idea of having sexual intercourse with Jude or Phillotson, and is equally haunted by the fear of sentimental commitment. She is unable to integrate her *anima* and constantly fights back. She battles against the inner appeal that springs from her and the outer one that arises from Jude and Phillotson. She leaves no room for the feminine principle which is phagocytized by the prevailing and prevalent functions of logic and rationality, namely, *Logos* the guiding principle. She strives to correspond with what Martha Vicinus describes in her *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* as:

The cornerstone of the Victorian society was the family; the perfect lady’s sole function was marriage and procreation (the two, needless to say, were considered as One). All her education was to bring out her “natural” submission to authority and innate maternal instincts.¹⁷²

As a matter of fact, Sue does her best, at her own expense, to live her matrimonial and mortifying life with the obnoxious Phillotson. And when she abandons him and joins Jude, she agrees to mother Little Father Time, the child Jude ‘receives’ from Arabella.

Visibly, Sue is desexualized and desexualizing; she cannot conceive of any relationship based on carnal love, but unfailingly sees in men father-like protectors whom she repugnantly rejects as lovers. Though she allegedly abhors her fleshy side and shuns sexual affairs, she (un)willingly allures men and stirs their sexual appetite mainly by this very

¹⁷² Quoted in Patricia A. McEachern, op.cit., p.14.

reluctance and resistance. She rejects Jude's kisses and often shifts in her conversations with him to intellectual subjects to avoid emotional and physical ones, yet she naturally excites him and manages to reignite the burning fire that uses up his heart. One day she tells him: "You mustn't love me. You are to like me" (p.161) and the next morning she writes to him: "If you want to love me, Jude, you may: I don't mind it at all; and I'll never say again that you mustn't!" (Ibid). She wishes to keep him by her side, but yearns to desexualize him and dispossess him of his physicalness. That Sue fits the role of a representative of the Victorian perverted view of woman is doubtless; she has a versatile mind, self-hatred and an obsessive shame of her own physicality. She loathes all that is flesh and sex and strives to immunize Jude against what she considers as a moral threat. Withal, she wants her relationship with Jude to be one of lovers meeting only by day in accordance with the habits typical of the Victorian sexuality. As already seen, Sue imposes her mental volte-face on Jude and constantly blows hot and cold. She rejects and rebuffs him when they are together and afterwards sends him a message begging: "Forgive me for my petulance yesterday! I was horrid to you; I know it, and I feel perfectly miserable at my horridness. It was so dear of you not to be angry! Jude, please still keep me as your friend and associate, with all my faults. I'll try not to be like it again" (p.164). Rather than discouraging him, these tricks encourage Jude though she continuously behaves likewise.

Thérèse is as tantalizing as Sue; she manages to associate Laurent in the havoc that befalls Mme Raquin's home. The outwardly placid, palely white and exteriorly indifferent Thérèse proves to be monstrous. Her apparent smooth and fleshy envelop covers an ardent interior and a perverse and bestial sexuality. Her aunt knows about her "supreme coolness, a seeming tranquillity that hid terrible fits of passion" (p.72). Denean Sharpely talks of an "emotionless mask [...] sex in motion, a passionate and exotic feline, alienated from her

cloistering milieu.”¹⁷³ One may say that *animus* is decisive in Thérèse; she conspires and calculates her harmful deed and manipulates her lover, Laurent to attain her goal. She is endowed with a powerful capacity to subdue her mood, yielding to her aunt’s desire, and passivating herself to the utmost. In this way, she ‘naturally’ obeys her aunt and becomes the wife of Camille whose senses are still those of a child.

Though she shields herself in indifference, Thérèse cannot individuate herself because neither her female principle nor the male one in her can emancipate in the suffocating atmosphere wherein she dwells with her cadaverous cousin/husband and his hen-like mother. Her individuation is to come from one of the usual guest the Raquins receive on Thursday evening, the already referred to Laurent. For Thérèse, Laurent is an unexpected encounter; the man has the necessary features to create the very balance that lacks in her. With “*La nature sanguine de ce garçon, sa voix pleine, ses rires gras, les senteurs acres et puissantes qui s’échappaient de sa personne*” (p.31) Thérèse can wake from her torpor. At last, she is able to unbridle her emotions and desires and comply with the recurrent image of the “brutal *filles*, without a conscience or a soul, with nothing but devouring appetites and impudence.”¹⁷⁴ She is representative of a class of women whose essential attribute is their downfall. As Mitterand puts it, “*La fille déchue est un archetypé de ses (Zola) tous premiers récits.*”¹⁷⁵

Arabella, too, is a ‘*filles déchues*’ who is delineated as a soulless and unconscious woman. As a matter of fact, the author invests “all the things confronting” Jude with “a general consciousness” (p.45), but not Arabella. However, what is represented in the story of Samson, already referred to, in *Jude the Obscure* and in most male-authored works, is the wickedness of the woman, Delilah/Arabella, her falsity rather than the hero’s “mental and moral weakness.”¹⁷⁶ No more useful for the plot, Arabella disappears from Jude’s life and

¹⁷³ Denean Sharpley-Whitting T, op.cit., p.79.

¹⁷⁴ Henry James, op.cit., pp.xv-xvi.

¹⁷⁵ Henri Mitterand, op.cit., p33.

¹⁷⁶ Katharine Rogers, op.cit., p.5.

from the narrative till almost the end. Back from her 'exile', she meets again her former husband, Jude in a tavern where he regularly comes to "drown his misery in alcohol" (p.183) as a sequel to his complicated liaison with Sue. Arabella convinces him without difficulty to meet again and spend a night together in an inn at Aldbrickham.

She disappears and reappears again some months later to have Jude take in custody Little Father Time, "a boy born of our (Arabella and Jude) marriage, eight months before I left you" (p.287), she tells Jude. Although, Jude accepts to free her and lets her marry Cartlett, Arabella is seized by a ferocious jealousy when she comes across the unwedded couple, Jude and Sue. The narrator admits that Arabella has a "sharpened vision" (p.307); she can discern (intuitively) that Jude is bewitched by Sue. She is thus inclined to think that she (Sue) neglects him and does not "care for him quite as much as he does for her. She's not a particular warm-hearted creature to my thinking, though she cares for him pretty middling much—as much as she's able to; and he could make her heart ache a bit if he liked to try—which he's too simple to do" (Ibid). In addition to her acute sense of observation, Arabella deploys other 'womanish' characteristics, that is to say, she is a tireless gossip, a quarrelsome bitch¹⁷⁷, but also a very sociable person.

Sue is far less sociable than Arabella, her personality is so much overburdened with psychological intricacies that she turns out to be a fastidious and discouraging character; she is an imbalanced character. Of the two, Sue is more embedded in tragedy than Jude because she is forced to respond to both the sexual and spiritual expectations of her male suitors. Jude cannot assert firmly that he understands her; she is far much nicer in her letters than when she stands before him. The most sympathetic reader is likely to consider Sue wearisome; the author's innovative characterization of Sue as a modern (new) woman collides with some facts sprinkled throughout the text. He (the author) constantly toys with her mind and

¹⁷⁷ Sarah Appleton Aguiar contends that it was Shakespeare and Hobbes who deflected the word bitch from its original meaning to connote bad woman.

feelings, and makes her shift from one extreme to another; from rebellion against the conventional society to a total and frightful submission and surrender to it. She confesses that she is “called Mrs Richard Phillotson, living a calm wedded life with my counterpart of that name. But I am not really Mrs Richard Phillotson, but a woman tossed about, all alone, with aberrant passions, and unaccountable antipathies” (pp.215-6).

Though elusive and unsoundable, Sue symbolizes in the mind of Jude the perfect companion and lover. In a way, he mythicizes her and elevates her to the stature of an angel and “a phantasmal, bodiless creature” (p.272). He purposefully and unconsciously confuses her with Christminster, the unrivalled city of knowledge. He grows “surrounded by her influence all day, walking past the spots she frequented [...] To be sure she was almost an ideality to him still [...] Thus he went on adoring her, fearing to realise that it was human perversity” (p.99). Far more than mere idealization, Sue is sanctified and shut up in an iconic realm. At any rate and whatever she does, Sue is deified by Jude and is from the onset canonized and forced to remain so till the end of the novel. Even after she marries his former teacher and hero, Richard Phillotson, he sees her “so ethereal a creature that her spirit could be seen through her limbs, he felt heartily ashamed of his earthliness in spending the hours he had spent in Arabella’s company” (p.195).

However, he can see that Sue has “liquid, untranslatable eyes, that combined, [...] keenness with tenderness, and mystery with both,” (p.90) and after three years of ‘natural marriage’¹⁷⁸ sanctioned by the birth of children he seems unable to demystify her. Furthermore, he blames himself and pathetically admits that he wronged and tainted her; “You were a distinct type—a refined creature, intended by nature to be left intact. But I couldn’t have left you alone!” (p.362). It must be pointed out that Hardy veils Sue’s encounter with Jude in the same wise as he veils Tess’s defloration at the hands of Alec in the forest of

¹⁷⁸ Natural marriage refers to a free (Owenite or Saint Simonian) union as opposed to a legal marriage which conforms to customs, rites, beliefs, laws, etc. The former is supposed to be a marriage of minds whereas the latter is a marriage of flesh.

Chaseborough. It is the hero who 'knows' his female counterpart; the latter is known and spoken about and as Jude says it: "I can see through your feathers, my poor little bird" (p.221). Thus, as Powers puts it, "Woman, in the picture language of mythology represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know."¹⁷⁹

In *Thérèse Raquin*, the hero is Laurent; an animalized man; tall, athletic and embodying virility itself, and the machismo Thérèse's breed requires. The very characterization of Laurent gives to understand that Zola adheres to the nineteenth century's racial classification according to physical traits which is known as craniology. Laurent's low forehead, his red lips, his full neck and his hot-bloodedness suggest a biased portrayal aiming at presenting him as an emotionless and unreasonable man appropriate to the lustful Thérèse. Both are ready to seize any casual opportunity to quench their bondless sexual appetites even at the expense of a murder. Together they form what Zola meant to be "two disorderly, dangerous bodies (the one a product of miscegenation cloaked in whiteness, thus carrying the disease of perverse sexuality; the other, a vulgar peasant attempting to transcend class boundaries), disastrously fated, destroy the monotony of bourgeois order."¹⁸⁰ Like his mistress, Laurent is also transmuted;

Il aurait ri aux éclats, un an auparavant si on lui avait dit qu'il serait l'esclave d'une femme, au point de compromettre ses tranquillités. Le sourd travail des desirs s'était opéré en lui, à son insu, et avait fini par le jeter, pieds et poings liés, aux caresses fauves de Thérèse.[...] Il ne s'appartenait plus, sa maîtresse, avec ses souplesses de chatte, ses flexibilités nerveuses, s'était glissée peu à peu dans chacune des fibres de son corps. Il avait besoin de cette femme pour vivre comme on a besoin de boire et de manger;

(p46)

In addition to her skill in conspiring, Thérèse is endowed with the ability to bewitch the man; she is the witch, Circe the sorceress who detains the male and has him achieve her desires even though it is by murdering of Camille. Once the latter is dead, the two bloody lovers, i.e., Thérèse and Laurent, think that the obstacle is no longer in a position to threaten their torrid

¹⁷⁹ Meredith A. Powers, op.cit., p.131.

¹⁸⁰ Denean Sharpley-Whitting T, op.cit., p.93.

liaison. Nevertheless, Camille's ghost begins to haunt them; their life worsens day after day and they are unable to tolerate one another despite their legal marriage. Their existence becomes nightmarish just as their sleep is always peopled with the same nightmare wherein they see Camille everywhere. They feel the same anguish, the same fear and both desperately strive to excite their of-old passion; "*Ils se mirent à chercher désespérément en eux un peu de cette passion qui les brulait jadis*" (p.108).

The fire of jealousy starts to devour Sue's and Arabella's heart. They meet twice; once when Little Father Time is brought to Jude and three years later at Kennetbridge's spring fair. Arabella has by that time become a widow and a church goer, whereas Sue and Jude, the 'supersensitive couple' has grown impoverished and homeless. Arabella is a convert like Alec d'Urberville and both turn their back on their newly acquired faith as soon as their former lover appears. In this way, Arabella Cartlett decides to stop spreading the Gospel at the moment she sees the silhouette of her former husband.

- 'He's more mine than hers!' She burst out. 'What right has she to him, I should like to know, I'd take him from her if I could!'

- 'Fie Abby! And your husband only six weeks gone! Pray against it!'

- 'Be damned if I do! Feelings are feelings! I won't be a creeping hypocrite any longer—so there!'

(p.332)

having said this, Arabella throws the remaining religious tracts and resolves to be as natural as possible. Indeed, she has nothing to do with insincere behaviours that pervert woman's nature and veil her veritable character. It is worth to underline that the Victorian moralists believed that they were immunized against passions and instincts that they attributed to the lower class.

As for women, they were the *object* of more or less permanent disapproval, first for the irritation and affront occasioned by their very presence.[...] Loitering in the street, on the other hand, hanging about for too long or without an obvious errand, was seen as unnatural, since female activity was firmly centred on the world of the interior.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Françoise Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the Time of Victoria : Sexuality, Class, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century*, (London : Verso, 1991),. p10.

Arabella cannot comply with the double standards; she is not a woman to stay at home and wait for her husband. She needs to be indoors as well as outdoors, breathe the fresh air, see the world outside. Nevertheless, the author has her come across the wounded Phillotson, and even makes her advocate bonding woman with the ties of marriage in her castigation of Sue's desertion of the conjugal home:

But you shouldn't have let her escape. That's the only way with these fanciful women that chaw high—innocent or guilty. She'd have come round in time. We all do! Custom does it! It's all the same in the end!...you were too quick with her. I shouldn't have let her go! I should have kept her chained on—her spirit for liking would have been broke soon enough! There's nothing like bondage and a stone-deaf taskmaster for taming us women. Besides you've the laws on your side

(p. 335).

Whether she adheres to her own words or not is quite difficult to say, because Arabella indubitably yearns to regain Jude. She probably spits her jealousy and hatred for Sue rather than solace Phillotson; she merely and cruelly stirs up his unhealed wound. Knowing Hardy for delegating his voice to his female characters, one wonders whether Arabella voices his own opinion about women and their duties. Is Arabella's view ingrained in the tough patriarchal ideology and removed from the natural world as Sue is? She certainly cares but little about people's opinion, she is not easily constrained and she shows no respect for laws and traditions complying with them only to attain her goals. Arabella seemingly covers herself with falsity and artifices and unscrupulously resorts to all means that would secure her. She marries Jude by tricking him and abandons him as well as her child to join her lover miles away.

For quite different and unfathomable reasons, Sue indulges too soon in marriage and with a man as old as her father. She thus becomes the female monster that neither Jude nor Phillotson manage to possess, but are rather bound and bridled by her. Though an enthusiastic reader and advocate of J.S. Mill whose motto as regards marriage is that it is doomed to fail if

the spouses are not alike in intellects¹⁸², Sue marries the antiquated Phillotson but is unable to adjust her heart to her conventional wedding with him. As it has been said earlier, Joanna Devereux compares Tess to Sue in their surrender to “the dominant patriarchal belief system that ultimately destroys them.”¹⁸³

Sue grows an extremist; at the very beginning of *Jude the Obscure* we discover a rebellious Sue who rejects both Jude and Phillotson and the system they represent. Her conception of male/female relationships and marriage and her erudition place her in the status of the modern woman. She promisingly defies the orthodox views about faith and marriage by asserting her right to self-determination. She cites Mill to support her belief in the vanity of living a conjugal life seated on a “sordid contract, based on material convenience in householding, rating, and taxing, and the inheritance of land and money by children,” (p.220) and she vehemently disbelieves in a union dictated by an ideological system. Because she has taken the wrong path in marrying Phillotson, she envisages for the future “to be allowed to undo what (her marriage) one has done so ignorantly” (p.226).

She also rejects Jude’s offer of marriage, claiming that their disinterested relationship may change provided that he engages to cherish her “under a government stamp” (p.271). Furthermore, she theorizes about love and pretends that it “is as culpable to bind yourself to love always as to believe a creed always, and as silly to vow always to like a particular food or drink” (p.234). She disputes Humboldt’s conception of human development and simply proposes that “Domestic laws should be made according to temperaments” (p.233). However, her modern and ‘unorthodox’ view in respect of marriage collides against the factual married ceremony with Phillotson wherein she is forced to ask her cousin to give her away though she holds that it is “very humiliating that a giver-away should be required at all” (p.177). She resignedly admits that her “bridegroom chooses me of his own will and pleasure; but I don’t

¹⁸² Patricia Thompson, *The Victorian Heroine : A changing Ideal, 1837-1873*, (London : Oxford University Press, 1956), p.103.

¹⁸³ Joanna devereux, op.cit., p.121.

choose him. Somebody gives me to him, like a she-ass or she-goat, or any other domestic animal” (Ibid). For her, legal marriage is a “hopelessly vulgar institution” (p.285). It need be said that Angel Clare, Sue and her mentor, J.S Mill rejected sexuality because of a “natural and unavoidable consequence” of their philosophical (utilitarian) education.¹⁸⁴ It is must be born in mind that Thomas Hardy willingly and legally married twice in his life.

Much of the narrative deals with Sue’s ambiguous relationships with Jude and Phillotson; she toys with them by refusing to consummate either of her two marriages. She presumably does so with both men to challenge the patriarchal and masculinist ideology. Though she is engaged to marry Phillotson “two years hence” (p.138), she sends a passionate letter to Jude asking him to come to Melchester to solace her. Jude is conscious that “Sue’s conduct was one lovely conundrum;” (p.141), but cannot resist her. She never fails to be cynical and cruel with him as for instance, when the guards of the train put them together in the same compartment as two lovers should be and she atrociously says: “That’s a good intention wasted” (p.141). He plainly sees that “that epicene of tenderness of hers was too harrowing” and wonders whether this is not what “had broken the heart of the poor leader-writer; and was he to be the next?” (p.159), yet he cannot perceive her all too clear whimsicality. In fact, apart from Phillotson’s friend, Gillingham who can see that Sue is “a tantalizing, capricious little woman [...]” (p.265) neither Jude nor Phillotson are able to discern Sue’s idiosyncracies.

Thérèse, too, is tantalizing and tantalized by another passion which is a reciprocal hatred for Laurent with whom she constantly quarrels:

-C’est toi qui as tué Camille, répéta Thérèse avec une obstination désespérée qui faisait perdre la tête à Laurent.
-Non, c’est toi, je te dis que c’est toi [...] Comment, malheureuse tu ne te rappelles rien! Tu t’es livrée à moi comme une fille, là, dans la chambre de ton mari[...]
(p.155)

¹⁸⁴ Susan Mendus, ‘The marriage of True Minds : the Ideal of Marriage in the Philosophy of John Stuart Mill’, in *Sexuality and Subordination : Interdisciplinary Studies in Gender in the Nineteenth century*, ed. Susan mendus and Janet Randall (London : Routledge, 1989), p.179.

These scenes have become part of their daily life; the former passionate lovers tear one another apart till their salutary death which delivers them from the poisonous lot which is theirs after the murder of Camille. Like Venifica, the archetypal potion maker, Thérèse drags Laurent in a collective suicide; *“prit le verre, le vida à moitié et le tendit à Laurent qui l’acheva d’un trait. Ce fut un éclair. Ils tombèrent l’un sur l’autre, foudroyés, trouvant enfin une consolation dans la mort”* (p.182). Before she decides to poison herself, Thérèse is experimented as a prostitute; *“Elle s’était en vain trainée dans tous les hôtels garnis du Quartier Latin, elle avait en vain mené une vie sale et tapageuse. Ses nerfs étaient brisés; la débauche, les plaisirs physiques ne lui donnaient plus des secousses assez violentes pour lui procurer l’oubli”* (p.177).

Prostitution, filth and sloth are the lot of Thérèse as well as Gervaise. It is as though Zola could not depict or write about a woman without throwing her in these extremely debasing situations. Thérèse is negative from beginning to end and often lacks the verisimilitude required by the naturalistic school. By way of illustration, according to Sainte-Beuve, the melancholy description of the Passage du Pont-Neuf at the beginning of the narrative is fallacious because the street is not that black. Zola admitted his fault, but argued that places often espouse the mood of their inhabitants.¹⁸⁵ Nonetheless, the inhabitants of the Passage were joyful till the turning point of Camille’s murder. It is clear from all this that the process of characterization of Thérèse Raquin is not disinterested. According to Denean Sharpley, it allowed Zola to combine “two feared, desired bodies of the nineteenth-century literary and social imagination: the black female body and the prostitute body” simply by toying with the prevailing discourses dealing with gender, race, sexuality, etc.¹⁸⁶

Arabella is equally tempted by potion-making and is well acquainted with Vipert, the ‘herbalist’ whom she meets again at the Great Wessex Agricultural Show together with her

¹⁸⁵ See W.F.J. Hemmings, op.cit., p.32.

¹⁸⁶ Denean Sharpley, op.cit., p.85.

friend and accomplice Anny. They engage in a libelling conversation whose focal point is the couple formed by Jude and Sue equally present at the Show:

-‘She’s pretty, isn’t she?’

-‘Yes—nothing to complain of; or jump at. Not much to depend on, though; a slim fidgety little thing like that.’

(p.308)

At this juncture, it is needless to say who says what; the words bespeak their sayers. In effect, Arabella yearns to regain Jude and manages to trick him again by misusing his kindness. She manages to get him drunk and to force him to marry her while he is not aware of his actions. Jude is shorn like Samson by a woman, however he is indifferent to what befalls him. At this level, one wonders what benefit Arabella gets from marrying a decadent man as Jude. Besides, she does not hesitate to abandon her dying man and take pleasure with other males. It is worth underlining that the fact highlighted by some critics concerning the striking resemblance between *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* goes beyond mere features found hither and thither. In fact, the likeness affects the characters who can be easily interchanged; Tess becoming Jude, Angel in the disguise of Sue and Alec in that of Arabella.¹⁸⁷ The latter harbours Alec’s lust, his artificiality, his cunning and the same moral emptiness. She equally goes through a transient and ephemeral conversion to Evangelicalism like Alec. Alec stands for the very villain, the rascal and the rogue in *Tess* whereas in *Jude* this role befalls on Arabella Donn.

As already seen, Arabella is the *femme fatale* who thwarts the young, ingenuous and idealistic Jude Fawley and hampers him from attaining his endeared ambition of accessing to Christminster. Arabella’s earthiness frustrates Jude and supposedly isolates him from his books, and he complainingly claims to abhor his companionship with her because she impressively urges him to get rid of his “stupid books”. Stave concludes her study of Arabella by observing that the potential archetype which befalls on Arabella is that of “an archetype of

¹⁸⁷ See D.H.Lawrence, op.cit., p101.

anything, it is the kind of modern woman who grabs what pleasure she can while remaining emotionally uncommitted, constantly struggling to survive in a devoid world.”¹⁸⁸ *Jude the Obscure* is woven in such a way that Arabella and Phillotson pass for the least admirable characters not to say the most detestable of the book. Arabella is denied the task of rearing her own offspring, and herein the allusion to her being the archetypal devouring mother is quite perceptible. Though she is neither motherless nor fatherless and cannot be said to suffer from any parental ill-treatment in her childhood, Arabella is unable to assume her motherhood and believes it to be “such a terrible tragic thing to bring beings into the world so-presumptuous—that” (p.328). Moreover, she wonders whether she is entitled to have children. Because she shows a sense of practicality and a tendency for self-sufficiency, by having her sell Jude’s own portrait at the auction before she departs to Australia, the author kills the wifely tender affection which links her to Jude.

She is neither Christian nor pagan and is equally uprooted from the natural world. Besides, she is excluded from the mythic dimension which is the lot of Tess, Sue and so many other Hardy female characters. In point of fact, Arabella is rather straightforward, frank and does not get tied up in the very feminine behaviour which dictates overflowing emotions and weakness. She is physically strong, sufficiently strong to bear the frail Jude when he gets drunk and requires her help to join his bedroom. Unlike Sue whose acceptance of wedlock is rather linked to her psychological confusion, Arabella takes up marriage selfishly and a trifle innocently. In fact, Arabella as well as Sue, often act as the *Hetaera* in her wicked aspect; “unable to make any permanent commitment to her own attitudes or to an actual relationship but may instead have to lead a life of emotional wanderings and merely tentative attachments.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Shirley Stave, op.cit., p132.

¹⁸⁹ See Sarah Appleton Aguiar, op.cit., p.29.

However, Arabella is probably the true woman in *Jude the Obscure*; the one who “remained unswervable female, she never truckled to the male idea, but was self-responsible without fear”, she has a “great moral force of character. Her coarseness seems to me exaggerated to make the moralist’s case good against her”, says D.H.Lawrence.¹⁹⁰ Arabella is far more useful and helpful to Jude than Sue; she manages to individuate him and have him gain his manhood. Lawrence justifiably draws attention to the harmful attitude of Hardy towards Arabella;

He is, however, more contemptuous in his personal attitude to the woman than to the man. He insists that she is a pig-killer’s daughter; he insists that she drags Jude into pig killing: he lays stress on her false tail of hair. That is not the point at all. This is only Hardy’s bad art. He, himself as an artist, manages in the whole picture of Arabella almost to make insignificant in her these pig-sticking false hair crudities. But he must have his personal revenge on her, for her coarseness, which offends him, because he is something of an Angel Clare.¹⁹¹

Indeed, Arabella is the female character who can be said to be to some extent authentic. She is jealous, but naturally jealous, not like Sue who exacerbates Jude’s pain at the reappearance of Arabella who indirectly compels her to do so to hold him tight. Both women are jealous, but Sue’s jealousy is somehow unnatural and corrupt.

-‘But you can go and see her to-morrow, Jude! Don’t go now Jude!’ came in plaintive accents from the doorway. ‘O it is only to entrap you, I know it is, as she did before! Don’t, don’t go, dear! She is such a low passionate woman—I can see it in her shape, and hear it in her voice!’

-‘But I shall go,’ said Jude. Don’t attempt to detain me, Sue. God knows I love her little enough now, but I don’t want to be cruel to her.’ He turned to the stairs.

-‘But she’s not your wife!’ cried Sue distractedly. And I...’

-‘And you are not either, dear, yet,’ said Jude.

(pp. 277-278)

Far more than Arabella, Sue succeeds in averting Jude definitively from his aspirations for apostleship. He subsequently decides to throw away his books and live according to her whims. Although she upsets the course of their lives, neither Jude nor Phillotson can send Sue back. In spite of her being the cause of his dismissal, Phillotson is ready to renew with Sue

¹⁹⁰ D.H. Lawrence, op.cit., p.106.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.101.

notwithstanding the fact that she cannot endure him, and even feels an extreme aversion for him. “Sue, do you wish to make it up and stay? I’ll forgive and condone everything”, he pitifully tells her when she resolves to leave him (p.263). He waits three years before Sue comes back following the death of her children by Jude. And then, she “was no longer the same as in the independent days when her intellect played like lambent lightning over conventions and formalities” (p.363).

4-Sue the obscure

One is forced to admit that Hardy’s melancholy and his penchant for self-destructiveness overburden Sue, Jude and Tess likewise. Like Angel, Sue hesitates to consummate her marriage with both Phillotson and Jude for no cogent reason. This amounts to a perversion; she is masculine and always tries to restrain herself and containing her emotions. She adopts the male paradigm and relishes at reading male-authored books that advocate patriarchy. Paradoxically, she forcefully resists the hideous virgin/whore dichotomy that was prevailing in men’s mind as well as in women’s, so she keeps braving both religion and morality, stubbornly refusing to play the prescribed role of a woman till the moment of the tragic loss of her children. The cruelty of the event overpowers her and transforms her into a glaringly submissive, superstitious and obedient wife. She is convinced that the children’s death is incumbent upon her adulterous life. As a result, she punishes herself by rejoining the ‘repugnant’ Phillotson and she mortifyingly yields to what she had abhorred of old. She resigns herself to assume her role of wife in its full sense. She gets rid of her perpetual longing for childhood and acquiesces to share Phillotson’s bed though she prefers to hide in the closet or take risks by jumping from the window to avoid his touch.

Hardy thus confines Sue in a difficult psychological role whereby the self is dangerously riveted to two antipodal ideological positions; moving from an outermost propensity for independence and her ephemeral companionship with Jude to a timid state of

traditionalism, capitulation to Christianity and Phillotson. She is also imprisoned in that morbid concern for what society thinks and says of her and she readily internalizes the system of thoughts that she breathlessly resists. Sue fails to cling to her initial posture of a new and modern woman and simply fails to fulfil her promising enterprise of emancipation.

Sue is as divided as Tess; she is “sophisticated in many things [...] a child in others” (p.254). She believes that the best way to express her womanhood is through the repression of her sexuality, but in doing so she also represses her very feminineness. She is fundamentally opposed to the institution of marriage, yet enchains herself with a man as old as her late father. On the one hand she studiously complies with the Victorian (patriarchal) values, on the other she spontaneously denounces them and instinctually resists them. She accepts to be Phillotson’s wife, yet does not hesitate to endanger her life by jumping from the window because she naturally cannot stand him. A dual personality who is unable to cohere neither with her own self nor with Jude and Phillotson who justifiably blames her for the irregularity of her sentiments (p.232). She constantly rejects Jude’s advances to her, yet when he alludes to renew with Arabella she hoists a would be dishonesty on Jude’s part, interrogating him if “what you used to tell me (his love) is still true—I mean if it were then true” (p.222).

The second part of Sue’s sentence is a telling instance of her duality; as though realising that her words bind her to Jude, she appeals for the past tense to distance him. Sue endures throughout the story a process of dismemberment and disembodiment that is illustrated by “her colossal inconsistency” (p.182). She is stoic, morbidly contaminated by the same pessimism that is instilled into Jude and Tess. She is alienated from the community and is supposedly hostile to the prevailing masculinist paradigm. However, she spreads its culture through her job of teacher-- the very means of preaching the patriarchal ideology-- which she performs far much better than Phillotson. Indeed she is a teacher, that is to say, someone who

transmits and works to “inculcate the children with the values and culture of the Victorian society.”¹⁹²

She also retains and implements the Victorian moral lessons and this is best exemplified in her assault on Arabella for her basic sexuality. She attacks Arabella and assesses her behaviour in male terms. Her very complexity lies in such facts as that of accepting and endorsing the patriarchal culture’s value while she continuously criticizes these values. Sue’s inconsistency goes back to her infancy when she painfully fluctuated between a strong desire of playing with the boys and the duty of behaving like a girl. Not rooted in myths as Tess, Sue’s only grandeur regarding myth concerns her being categorized as a new woman. In effect, Hardy “intends Sue to be perceived not as a timeless figure from myth, but rather as a modern woman very much caught up in the time in which she lives.”¹⁹³

Sue is also an epitome of the Victorian ideal of woman by her delicate and small ‘proportions’ which enhance her attractiveness rather than lessen it. Withal, she is neither physically nor psychologically strong despite the allusion to her competing with boys in her childhood. Stave suggests that Sue’s conversion “from a tomboy to madwoman/martyr is psychologically explanatory given her brilliance but also her acceptance of her culture’s encoded messages about the status of women.”¹⁹⁴ Thus, Hardy unites in Sue an abiding conflictual couple of man and a woman; an androgynous character whose enculturation/denaturalization harms both Sue herself and every man who ventures to fall in love with her. She is subjected to enculturation and alienation to such an extent that besides her dismalness, her impressive unnaturalness, she is flawed with sadomasochism. Quite incapable of penetrating Sue’s mind, Jude wonders whether she is not “so perverse that she wilfully gave herself and him pain for the odd and mournful luxury of practising long-suffering in her own person, and of being touched with tender pity for him [...]” (pp.181-2).

¹⁹² Shirley Stave, *op.cit.*, p.134.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.133.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.135.

Later on, at the death of Aunt Drusilla, because she has impulsively indulged in an unpremeditated long and close kiss, she lets compunction envelop her and subsequently utters her sadistic penchant: “I won’t write to him any more [...] to impress him with my dignity! And I hope it will hurt very much [...] He ‘ll suffer then with suspense” (p.229).

Another way of torturing herself is to consider herself responsible for the death of the children. Therefore, she admits that: “We must conform! All the ancient wrath of the power above us has been vented upon us, his poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!” (p.361). It must be kept in mind that both Tess and Sue similarly blame themselves; Sue intermittently talks of her fault and punishes herself more than others do. Self-chastisement, self-abasement, self-condemnation, self-contempt, self-contradiction, self-denial, self-renunciation, self-loathing, etc., are the lot of both female characters. “I wish my every fearless word and thought could be rooted out of my history. Self-renunciation—that’s everything! I cannot humiliate myself too much. I should like to prick myself all over with pins and bleed out the badness that’s in me” (p.364) Sue resentfully confesses to Jude following the death of the children.

Another form of suffering Sue perpetrates against herself is through yielding to what she abhors; having sex with Phillotson. This is an act that she believes to be her penance, despite what she calls “a physical objection” (p.221). When Jude comes to see her for the last time, she admits her success in subjecting her body to Phillotson. Stave argues that this sort of self-deprecatory behaviour is “the product of a culture alienated from nature, along with her ready acceptance of the values of that culture, have led to a moment that Sue shared with many of her Victorian sisters, when the joy of sexuality is reduced to duty, humiliation, and punishment.”¹⁹⁵ Besides, Stave quotes Fraser Harrison whose study of Victorian sexuality reveals that for the majority of women “copulation, if not the entire sexual function, remained

¹⁹⁵ Shirley Stave, op.cit., p.138.

either a non-existent concept or a nebulous target for unresolved, uniformed speculation, until the moment of the wedding night.”¹⁹⁶ One wonders whether Thomas Hardy did not get wind of the situation of Marie Stopes, an educated woman (a zoologist and a botanist) who spent six months without consummating her marriage and was completely unaware of the importance of this fact. Another no less edifying instance of Sue’s self-flagellation is her confession to Phillotson of her meeting with Jude for the sake of begging both his punishment and pardon. This almost falls in sadomasochist pornography disguised in a sexist manipulation of the female body, the female consciousness and entity for the sake of conventions. Before the children perish, Hardy displays an emancipated woman; freed from the yoke of conformism, but one who is enslaved by the scholastic institution. Once her children die she is totally depotentiated and confesses: “I am getting as superstitious as a savage! [...] I am cowed into submission. I have no more fighting strength left; no more enterprize. I am beaten, beaten!” (p.361). The final tragedy that befell her children accelerates her internalization of the patriarchal order.

In assigning to Sue the weighty role of the new woman, Hardy entraps his central female character in the risky posture of a “direct threat to classic Victorian definitions of femininity.”¹⁹⁷ The new woman was represented in numerous and different ways by the Victorians; she was either asexual, masculine and intellectual as Sue or very emotive and sexually greedy, belonging to the free love movement or to the campaigners for the reform of marriage. Jil Larson disapproves of Hardy’s overemphasis on the emotional aspect in woman and the importance accorded to “the idea that the New-Woman’s intellect becomes a weapon she turns against men as a means of defending herself against patriarchal injustice and freeing herself from constraints.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Jil Larson, *Ethics and Narrative in the English Novel*, (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.45.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., pp.56-57.

Sue, if anything, may be categorized in the group of bitches which Sarah Appleton Aguiar recorded as a *Hetaera* almost similar to Tess; responding to the characteristic of Aphrodite, Circe and Mary Magdalene. She can also be considered as the muse of Jude, his companion, and the seductress who impeaches him from self-fulfilment. Sue and the *Hetaera* are both “identified with the masculine through her attachment to her father’s anima.”¹⁹⁹ However, Sue is also partly an *Amazon* who is recognizable to her being a “sexless wise woman [...] she is primarily an independent woman.”²⁰⁰ The *Amazon* is also known for overlooking the feminine aspect of her psyche and automatically abuts to the repression of her sexuality. Thus, in ignoring her very femininity, she grows unwomanly in the eyes of men who try to avoid her, but cling to her and end dramatically by committing suicide like Jude or by being at bay like Phillotson.

The fact that Sue harbours features of the *Hetaera* as well as those of the *Amazon* is a proof positive of the complex character Hardy created. Jude is the hero, yet it is the central female character, viz, Sue who attracts the critiques and antipathy of the scholars and the readers. Some see in her traits those of Hardy’s first wife Emma who had tried to have the novel banned presumably because of the resemblance she found in it. Like Sue, Emma proved at the beginning of her life to be independent of religious weight, yet little by little surrendered to the constraints of morality and let her conjugal life fall under the overwhelming ‘should-nots of piety’. Jude occasionally seizes that “under the affectation of independent views” Sue is “as enslaved to the social code as any woman” (p.253). From a liberal woman at the outset of the novel, Sue is transformed--by the author--to a remorseful and guilty woman whose major principles are self-abnegation, auto-flagellation and self – victimization. Sue endorses this process of self-flagellation by desperately crying her guilt and bewilderment in harsh terms “Our life has been a vain attempt at self-delight. But self-

¹⁹⁹ Sarah Appleton Aguiar, op.cit., p.29.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

abnegation is the higher road. We should mortify the flesh—the terrible flesh—the curse of Adam! [...] We ought to be continually sacrificing ourselves on the altar of duty” (p.363). Ultimately, she abandons Jude and rejoins Phillotson in a way that alludes to a suicide. Jekel rightly wonders: “Is Sue a victim of society’s view of woman as evil; does she carry a real guilt inside her of her own; or does she represent Hardy’s view of women in general?”²⁰¹ Once again, one is forced to draw attention to the attitude adopted by the author towards his female character, namely, Sue whom he places far off more than Jude. In this way, whereas for Sue the focus is laid on her flippancy, nervousness and quickness, Jude is seen through his physicalness, slowness and earthiness.²⁰²

Sue differs from the other Hardyan female characters in many domains; she is next to cut off the natural world and unable to seize the charms and secrecies of nature within herself and without. Being an ‘urban’ character in particular and raised in an artificial family deeply rooted in the Christian traditions, she can hardly suspect the magnificence of natural and instinctive joys though she is as fond of pigeons and pets as Jude. Jude insightfully sees that though she is “a countrygirl at bottom, a latter girlhood of some years in London, and a womanhood here, had taken all rawness out of her” (p.90). The fact, already mentioned, that Sue is neither Christian nor pagan needs further comments. In effect, while some Hardyan central female characters, Tess in particular, are wholeheartedly pagan, Sue’s paganism seems rather an artifice which she feels necessary to melt into her intellectualism. In reality, it is difficult to say whether Sue is pagan or Christian; though she rejects all form of faith and superstition, she ascribes the death of her children to some angered divinity. Besides, she becomes totally transformed by this death and becomes a zealous supporter of religion.

As indicated, Sue succeeds to frighten all those who approach her; Jude, Phillotson, the readers and the author himself who seems incapable of control over his own creation not

²⁰¹ Pamela Jekel, *op.cit.*, p. 181.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p.182.

to say delights in her demeanour. W.D.Howells suggests that the “wretched Sue who spoils his (Jude) life and her own, helplessly, inevitably, is the kind of fool who finds the fool in the poet and prophet so often, and brings him to naught. She is not less a fool than Arabella herself.”²⁰³ Judith Mitchell, for her part, contends that *Jude* is less erotic than *Tess*, but more painful and unabashedly male-centred.²⁰⁴ She also cites Katharine Rogers who argues that Sue, “is Hardy’s major contribution to feminism and the expression of his doubts about it.”²⁰⁵

In addition to Mitchell and Rogers, many a critic focused on the numerous contradictions that characterize Sue; ascetic/hedonist, liberated/repressed, advanced/infantile, passionate/sexless, conventional/unconventional.²⁰⁶ According to Mitchell, Sue is the specific and idiosyncratic product of Hardy’s imagination, and his inability to envisage a woman embodying both the intellectual and the sensual. Through the character of Sue, he initiates a new way of portraying woman so as to content the masculinist system without discontenting the feminists.²⁰⁷ Besides, one may point out that the language Hardy uses whenever he deals with Sue. His lexicon betrays his belittlement of Sue through the frequent recourse to words and phrases as: ‘little’, her diminutive name Sue, her manner which is “that of a scared child” (p.178), “her mouth shapes itself like that of a child about to give way to grief” (p.298), Jude who “presses her little face against his breast as if she were an infant” (p.364),etc.

This repeated process of depreciation of the woman in *Jude* is, in Mitchell’s words, a method of rendering Sue powerless and impotent and one that allows the author “to maintain his own conservative notions of gender politics”. Further more, she suggests that when Sue admittedly tells Jude that woman reacts and responds to sexual advances and does not instigate them, “she not only voices the received wisdom of the mid-nineteenth century

²⁰³ W.D. Howells, *Criticism and Fiction, and Other Essays*, (New York : New York University Press, 1959), p.151.

²⁰⁴ Judith Mitchell, op.cit., p.198.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

patriarchy, but she also reveals the limits of Hardy's ability to imagine a desiring adult female subjectivity."²⁰⁸ Once again, Sue echoes and contributes to the deprecation and depreciation of woman; she admits her own impulsiveness and avows to Jude that she feels she "shouldn't have been provided with attractiveness unless it were meant to be exercised. Some women's love of being loved is insatiable; and so, often, is their love of loving [...]" (p.214). This being said, Sue's adherence to the patriarchal order she allegedly opposes cannot be questioned; she goes as far as to endorse the male's paradigm and admit that men "are so much better than women" (p.153).

Sue is equally utterly objectified; we know about her feelings and thoughts through what the other characters observe and through the authorial employment of the device of direct speech. It need be said that the neglect of the free indirect speech concerning Sue and its use with Jude is another proof of Hardy's biased depiction of woman. Sue is at the service of Jude whose male point of view is blatantly favoured. He is seen from within while Sue is seen from without. Hardy deliberately enigmatizes Sue and enhances the mystery that surrounds her, and in so doing manages to create a curiosity which frightens and bewitches the other male characters, the narrator and the readers. Phillotson wittily confesses that Sue's "feeling for him (Jude) is a riddle to me—and to him too, I think—possibly to herself. She is one of the oddest creatures I ever met" (p.240).

Though it seems that the novel secures a major role to Sue, the story refractorily evolves around Jude Fawley who is the essential element to which are related Sue Bridehead and the animalized Arabella Donn. In this connection, Penny Boumelha points to the objectification and instrumentation of Sue by Hardy. He "subjects her sexuality to [...] ironies", she "is forced to a confused and confusing situation in which she wishes at one and the same time to assert her right to non-sexual love and her right to a non-marital sexual

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p.202.

liaison”.²⁰⁹ Indeed, the narrative voice is seemingly aligned with the male standpoint; it relates Jude’s sorrowful impotency to Sue’s proclivity for self –assertion, and regards her deeds as inconsequent. Sue is at the centre of the acutest tragedy of the novel, but we hardly know about her own point of view; she is spoken about, shown and interpreted by the other characters. Hardy’s portrayal of Sue is far from being real. Jil Larson contends that like the other Victorian new women, Sue is contradictorily portrayed; “she was sometimes stereotyped as intellectual, masculine, and asexual, other times as sexually voracious and unable to control her emotions.”²¹⁰ Sue pays for her intellectualism which traumatizes her and darkens her mind rather than enlightens it. Some critics see in the epigraph of the novel, ‘the letter killeth’, a denunciation of marriage and Jude’s failure to possess knowledge and it is this pursuit of knowledge that kills him at last. Can’t we consider ‘the letter killeth’ as an allusion to Sue’s death as a female because of her excessive commitment with intellectualism and morality? Sue considers her return to Phillotson and her desertion of Jude as her moral duty, but she knows that it is but self-chastisement and self-denial. Jude has the word:

she was once a woman whose intellect was to mine like a star to a benzoline lamp: who saw all my superstitions as cobwebs that she could brush away with a word. Then bitter affliction came to us, and her intellect broke, and she veered round to darkness. Strange difference of sex, that time and circumstance, which enlarge the views of most men, narrow the views of women almost invariably.
(p.422)

Jude regretfully expresses his, but also the author’s bias and frustrations for Sue’s deeds. In fact, any reader however lucid s/he is, is likely to throw the book from the fifth chapter of Part six on, and loath women after he reads *Jude the Obscure* simply because Sue’s role in the whole story appeals to misogynistic reactions.

The same inclination for self-destruction which haunts *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* cling to Jude and Sue. Considering the death of her children and her subsequent revengeful

²⁰⁹ Penny Boumelha, op.cit., p.143.

²¹⁰ Jil Larson, op.cit., p45.

estrangement from Jude, Sue may thus be likened to Medea. Nonetheless, Hardy is not Euripides and unlike Medea who fights back and exercises her chthonic²¹¹ power, Sue abdicates and burst inwards. Is Sue that very new woman critics claimed to be? As regards her ‘supposedly’ disengagement from the religious bonds, Sue prefigures and ushers the modern woman, however, her inability to attain the endeared stage of individuation contradicts her being a modern woman.

Sue is the very archetype that comes, not from the past, but from the future, i.e., a futuristic archetype. A by-product of the industrial and urban revolutions that swept the nineteenth –century Europe. One may think that Sue is “obstinate, harping on principles, laying down the law, dogmatic, world-reforming, theoretic, word-mongering, and domineering.”²¹² In this case she is an *animus-possessed woman*, but Sue has not maintained the same attitude throughout the story because she is neither at ease with her *animus* nor with her *anima*. Jude, but above all Hardy, put the crucial question: “Is it that women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?” (p.228).

D.H.Lawrence suggests that “Sue belonged with Tess, to the old woman-type of witch or prophetess, which adhered to the male principle, and destroyed the female.”²¹³ *Jude the Obscure* closes with a telling scene in which woman, Arabella judges another woman and asserts that Sue “[...]’s never found peace since she left his (Jude) arms, and never will again till she’s as he is now (dead)” (p.431). Quite rightly, Lawrence posits that Sue denies her womanhood; “she is yet no woman at all, nor male, she is almost neuter [...] She was Sue Bridehead, something very particular.”²¹⁴

²¹¹ An adjective employed for the (matriarchal) religion that preceeded the Olympian (patriarchal) religion.

²¹² See Sarah Appleton Aguiar, op.cit., p.18.

²¹³ D.H. Lawrence, op.cit., p.108.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 122.

5-The other women (bis)

The female viewpoint is erased and even the interventions of Aunt Drusilla and the widow Edlin is there merely to consolidate the mainstream phallic order. Drusilla is Jude's only family and the memory of the Fawleys. She ceaselessly warns her nephew and dissuades him from taking his cousin's civility for something else and be cautious because "If she's townish and wanton it med bring'ee to ruin" (p.114). She is a baker and an Evangelical who echoes and re-echoes Sue's tragic encounter with Jude.

Mrs Edlin plays the role of the judge and advisor who assists Sue and strives to impeach her from doing wrong to herself and Jude. She does her best to have Sue act according to her natural inclinations; telling her:

- 'I don't think you ought to force your nature. No woman ought to be expected to.'
- 'It is my duty, I will drink the cup to the dregs!'

(p.416)

She also echoes plainly one of the main themes of the novel, that is to say, she advocates natural marriages and warns Phillotson that his union with Sue should not occur because Sue "is forcing herself to it" (p.387). In addition to Aunt Drusilla and Mrs Edlin, there is the stern Miss Fontover, and Sue's co-student at the training School at Melchester. Some of these girls "would not mind risking punishment" for the pleasure of going through Sue's experience with Jude. The narrator pities them for:

Their tender feminine faces upturned to the flaring gas-jets which at intervals
Stretched down the long dormitories, every face bearing the legend of the
Weaker upon it, as the penalty of the sex wherein they were moulded, which by
no opposite exertion of their willing hearts and abilities could be made strong
while the inexorable laws of nature remain what they are.

(pp. 145-6)

It is not easy to decide whether the passage above is favourable or unfavourable for the girls in question. At any rate, such is the position adopted by the author with the other female characters.

Conclusion

Sue, Arabella and Thérèse are encompassed in their overwhelming *animus*; all three women manifest man-like behaviours, and a brutality that outwit and dazzle their companions, Jude and Laurent. Unlike Sue, Arabella and Thérèse display a bestialized sexuality whereby they shackle the male. As far as Sue and Arabella are concerned, one can say, in Powers' words, that they are mere props and functionaries as had been before them Psyche, Daphne, Callisto, etc., in the service of the hero.²¹⁵ *Jude the Obscure* turns to be a trial of Sue and Arabella, and Hardy's characterization of Sue is successful as far as she has grown fastidious, horrid and loathsome for the implied male reader. The nightmarish silhouettes of Thérèse, Arabella and Sue fade and disappear from the reader's mind short after s/he drops the book. Because there is fortunately nothing akin to them, though Arabella is more or less a likely character to be encountered in real life. In fact, "it is easier to imagine such a woman out of one's desires (or fears) than to find her in reality."²¹⁶

Thérèse Raquin is also a trial of the female principle; very few readers can drop the book and fancy that its story is a mere scientific tentative ventured by Zola. The book is rather an uncompleted and unsubstantial treaty than a literary production. Jude deems Sue's marriage as a 'fanatic prostitution'; Tess, Gervaise, Sue, Arabella and Thérèse prostitute themselves each in the way the patriarchal order, but also Hardy and Zola, imposed on them. Thérèse is not less lucky than Gervaise as both ended up *fille de joie*, addicted to drink; roaming in the dire streets of Paris in search of an opportune client.

²¹⁵ Meredith A. Powers, op.cit., p4.

²¹⁶ D.H. Lawrence, op.cit., p107.

General Conclusion

This dissertation has dealt with the problematic of misrepresentation of woman in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, and Zola's *L'Assommoir* and *Thérèse Raquin* through a comparative approach based on affinities closely related to the issue at stake. I can now unshackle the word misrepresentation from the slash which has secured me from overtly siding with the victims of this misrepresentation. Indeed, it is well and truly a question of misrepresentation and biased depiction. The essential objective has been to fathom and highlight the latent processes of objectification and victimization which constitute an unquestionable evidence of misrepresentation of woman in the fiction of both Hardy and Zola. The very process of misrepresentation is essentially patent in the authorial resort to the recurrent use of the Darwinian family plot whose essential trait is the transmission of atavistic flaws through the matrilineal/patrilineal thread. The curse of the family lurks in Tess's destiny, in Gervaise's, in Sue's and in Thérèse's too. These 'heroines' are primarily crushed by some ruinous atavistic flaws which determine the lot that is theirs; it is a knightly name for Tess, an incurable addiction to alcohol for Gervaise, incapacity to enjoy happiness for Sue and a sexually murdering personality for Thérèse.

From end to end, I have cautiously refrained from identifying Tess, Gervaise, Sue, Arabella and Thérèse with heroines because none of them is a heroine *stricto sensu*. Western culture assumes the Classical mythology and the Bible as its sole cultural heritage. For this heritage, heroism is an outgrowth of divinity, hence the exclusion of woman from its realm. A common instance of the negation of heroism for woman is the recurrent pattern of rape; Apollo's rape of the river nymph, Daphne. Daphne's reaction, i.e., her escape and disguise into a laurel tree has not been recorded as a heroic deed, but rather as a magic, mysterious and bewitching one. Daphne becomes a tree, Tess is 'legally' sacrificed on the symbolic site of Stonehenge, Gervaise dies as a miserable woman committing suicide while Sue kills herself

otherwise by abdicating to mortifying conventions. The version of each of these women's story has not reached us; we are rather told about their mis/fortunes through a masculine standpoint which is (un)voluntarily impregnated with the abiding phallic paradigm.

As far as the comparison between Thomas Hardy and Emile Zola is concerned regarding their involvement in the woman issue through their portrayal of woman, I have tried to underline the many similarities existing between both writers. In this way, it has been suggested that one can easily interchange the characters and settings without affecting neither the theme developed nor the discourse deployed by these authors. Woman representation suffers in both novelists' fiction from an utter idealization and a noticeable depreciation. In fact, the women depicted in the four novels under study do not represent woman as she wishes to be, but woman as man wants her to be. That is to say, the image Tess, Gervaise, Sue, Arabella and Thérèse offered the reader is not the veritable image of woman, but the very projection of what the writers in question love or hate. They are fictitious and imaginary characters invented to excoriate the unbalanced Thomas Hardy and Emile Zola from the various troubles and frustrations they endured at the hands of 'real' women.

Though seemingly placed at the centre of the narrative, none of the female characters under discussion is the pivot of her story; they are related to the male characters and dependent on them. They are passive, speechless, unprincipled and devoid of consciousness. None of them has the right to define herself according to the very necessities of mankind and none of them manages to shape herself into an individual. In effect, Tess, Gervaise, Sue, Arabella and Thérèse are not depicted as autonomus beings, but are named, defined and (de)constructed by man. They are seldom the subject, but rather the object and they are first and foremost intuitive beings, relying on *Eros* more than on *Logos*-excepting Sue- which is supposedly less developed in them than in man.

Now and then, my dissertation may sound slightly too much centred on the Hardy women; this is true to a certain extent merely because my dissertation is one of English literature. I have also granted the lion's share to Tess, Gervaise and Sue by contrast with Arabella and Thérèse. Needless to say that I proceeded in this way because the authorial patriarchal tones are conspicuous regarding Thérèse and Arabella while they are insidious in the portrayal of Tess, Gervaise and Sue. In fact, I have intuitively followed Hardy's and Zola's framework, and attributed to each female character the role that is hers in the novel so as to highlight the very act of misrepresentation they endure.

Sue Bridehead encapsulates so many 'real' women with different personalities in her own that she has become next to a nonentity. Her narrative is discouraging and disgusting, she can raise no sympathy despite Hardy endeavours. The same holds for Tess whose purity is hardly imaginable in the real world. The tragedy of Tess, Sue, Gervaise, Arabella and Thérèse is the tragedy of the lifelong construction of an order exclusively founded on the male. It is based on the tragic neglect, debasement and permanent victimization of one half of humanity by another half. Tess is a modest maiden and some (people) would say a 'wicked' temptress, whereas Sue is a school-marm doubled of an (un)willing seducer. The role of temptress is of course manifestly bestowed upon Arabella and Thérèse who lure the male heroes and deprive them of their nobility. As for Gervaise, she is rather an unfaithful wife who plays the role she is attributed by the society and the author. Are they real women or mere copies of the archetypes, Eve, Magna Mater, Demeter, Mary Magdalene, Madonna, the Muse, the Amazon, the Siren, the sexless Wise Woman, or a patchwork of all the mythic women? It may happen that the same person (woman) encompasses features of all these types, hence the difficulty to assert which category suits each female character. In which group shall I put Tess, Sue, Gervaise, etc.? Women rarely escape the sentence that condemns them to be bitches because

in every case this title is allotted to them even when they comply with the patriarchal ideology and do what they are supposed to do.

Both Hardy and Zola sacrificed their central female characters for the sake of readership and *Tess* as well as *L'Assommoir* are equally encapsulated in self-censorship; Hardy censored his work to subscribe to the prevailing Victorian mores, whereas Zola bowdlerized his by omitting any trace of political dimension. The persona of Gervaise is full of contradictions and the same oppressive contradictions pervade *Tess*, Sue and Gervaise. They harbour the same lethal duality and inarticulateness. The influence of the nineteenth-century's scientific trends on the female characters at issue is conspicuous ; *Tess* is a trifle Malthusian, while Sue is at the same time progressive, Scopenhauerish, atheist and superstitious while Gervaise and Thérèse are simply Zola's guinea-pigs. Of course, Arabella and Thérèse, but also, *Tess*, Gervaise and Sue mirror the influence of the nineteenth-century outstanding theories on heredity and evolution. It follows from all this that the novels in question can easily be considered as palimpsests.

That Hardy and Zola have not unanimously been laden with misogyny is not that surprising; while it is expressed directly by some writers, misogyny is often concealed in a form of idealization of woman. Hardy need not overtly show his dread of women because his male characters, Alec d'Urberville and Angel Clare echo it. Phillotson's friend and colleague Gillingham's represents another sounding board for Hardy which allows him to question the possibility for woman to be "intrinsically a good woman" (p.242). In his characterization and depiction of Arabella Donn, Hardy, however, seems unable to hide the disdainful attitude he shows towards some type of woman. The same contempt and indifference is displayed by Zola in *Thérèse Raquin*; Thérèse is handled violently from the onset to the end. She embodies the primordial sinner, Eve. Laurent, Thérèse's accomplice is by no means responsible of the murder of Camille and the chaos that ensues; he is a mere scapegoat, an instrument in the

hand of the venomous Thérèse. One feels that she is responsible for all the murders that have been known by mankind. Thérèse is certainly not a heroine in the traditional patriarchal sense of the word.

To highlight this ‘uncontrollable’ process of misrepresentation of woman, I have opted for the no less difficult archetypal literary criticism and somewhat relied on the Jungian concept of archetype. The archetypes, the benevolent as well as the malevolent ones are based on the primal female figures that people the Classical mythology and the Bible whose everlasting influence in Western culture is evident. If the narrative displays patent or allusive similarities with past myths, legends or real stories then we are in front of recurrent images, i.e., archetypes. The novels put under scrutiny abound with references and allusions to goddesses and mythological beings. It must be said that the theory of archetype is not so far from the raging debate over cloning. For the patriarchal order cloning women has always existed.

I shall not conclude this dissertation without insisting on the apparent inconclusiveness of the methodology I had to follow to crystallize the very issue I have undertaken to tackle, misrepresentation of woman in the fiction of Thomas Hardy and Emile Zola. However, I shall confess that though the theory of archetypal criticism is double (unless multi) edged; it may lead to a total miscomprehension as it may lead to a total confusion, it has afforded me many an efficient source to nurture my dissertation. The four novels analysed so far should perhaps fit better in the category of the sensation novel whose essential themes are sex, intrigues and crimes. *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure* and *L’Assommoir* have become very popular, but they are also as imbibed in the realm of rape, sex and crime as is the less popular *Thérèse Raquin*. As it has been previously suggested through the tragic fate of Tess, Gervaise, Sue, but also Arabella’s and Thérèse’s, the same rape is being perpetrated against women by men/gods who disguise in authors, readers, churchmen, etc. I have tried

throughout this dissertation to give good grounds for the process of misrepresentation of woman in the novels referred to and by misrepresentation, I mean victimization, objectification, depreciation, deprecation, etc., of woman. To misrepresent woman is to transfigure her and travesty her reality through a focus on defects at the expense of virtues. Misrepresent woman is transform woman into a man by magnifying her animus; it is to have her internalize the patriarchal creed. Misrepresent a woman is the impossibility for man--entirely involved in the patriarchal system—to represent woman faithfully. In the end and though not recommended, I cannot help making mine Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*'s words to conclude my dissertation: “the cleverest, the acutest men are often under an illusion about women: they do not read them in a true light: they misapprehend them, both for good and evil: their good woman is a queer thing, half doll, half angel; their bad woman almost always a fiend”.

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