

Received : 28 February 2024, Accepted: 31 March 2024

DOI:<https://doi.org/10.33282/rr.vx9i2.152>

Tess: A Postmodern Woman in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

HUNAR SHAH

Assistant Professor of English Government Degree College Jamrud District Khyber

Ph.D. (scholar) Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar

bathoorkhan12@gmail.com

MUHAMMAD ANSAR NASEER

ansarsarmadi@gmail.com

MARYAM MUNIR

PhD scholar at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar

mmaryammunir@gmail.com

SHAH ZAMIN

Assistant professor of English Government College Peshawar.

szameen82@gmail.com

FATEH KHAN

Assistant Professor Department of English Language & Literature (DELL) ILH Gomal

University D.I.Khan KP Pakistan

fateh.khan77@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article aims at analysing the main character Tess as a postmodern woman in Hardy's novel Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Hardy portrays Tess as a postmodern woman who rejects socially constructed values. Tess of the d'Urbervilles demonstrates a shift away from the strict Victorian norms towards a more nuanced and introspective narrative, hinting at the emergence of postmodern themes in literature. Tess suffers like a Victorian woman and grows into a postmodern woman. Tess is more postmodern than Victorian in the sense that she opposes Victorian chastity and virginity as social constructs. Tess believes what she believes

to be right, rejecting Victorian social norms. The proposed study is qualitative because postmodern theory is applied to the text, The novel is the main source of data collection. Secondary data sources include books and journal articles. Selected passages from the text are interpreted keeping in view postmodern theory to highlight Tess as postmodern woman. Research technique is interpretive content analysis. Research approach is inductive.

Key Words: postmodern woman, postmodern chastity, postmodern virginity, postmodernism

Introduction:

The term "postmodern man or woman" refers to individuals who exist in the postmodern era, which is characterized by a rejection of grand narratives, a focus on individualism, scepticism toward metanarratives, and an emphasis on fragmented and diverse perspectives. Postmodernism is a complex philosophical and cultural movement that emerges in the mid-20th century. Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, and Richard Rorty are some of the key figures associated with this movement. Lyotard is known for his work on the fragmentation of knowledge and the decline of grand narratives. He argues that in the postmodern era, traditional metanarratives that explain reality are no longer valid, leading to a diverse array of smaller narratives and viewpoints. Derrida is famous for his development of deconstruction, a method that challenges the binary oppositions in language. He emphasizes the inherent instability and ambiguity of meaning, suggesting that texts and concepts can be interpreted in multiple ways. Baudrillard explores the concept of hyperreality, where simulations and images become more real than the actual reality they represent. He analyses the impact of media, consumer culture, and technology to explore how we perceive and experience the world. Foucault focuses on power dynamics, knowledge, and how institutions control and shape society. He examines the ways in which

knowledge is produced, maintained, and used to exert control over individuals and populations. Rorty contributes to the movement by advocating for a pragmatic approach to philosophy. He critiques the pursuit of absolute truth and instead emphasizes the importance of conversation and the constant re-evaluation of beliefs.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles depicts the difficulties of a woman who is victimised by her surroundings and subjugated by cultural norms. It explores the moral intricacies, the effects of human behaviour, and the ingrained inequalities of Victorian society. The novel is still regarded as a classic piece of writing because of how well it captures the state of the human condition.

This article aims at investigating Tess as a postmodern woman in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. In the postmodern views of Lyotard, Derrida, Baudrillard, Foucault, and Rorty, the concept of the "postmodern woman" is seen as challenging traditional gender role and identity, navigating a complex web of cultural influences and power dynamics. These philosophers emphasize the fluidity of identity, the power of language in shaping reality, and the role of social structures in defining norms. From their perspectives, the postmodern woman navigates a world where truth is relative, meaning is constructed, and cultural context heavily influences understanding. Her identity and experiences are understood as fragmented, subject to multiple interpretations, and shaped by social constructs.

Literature Review:

Shehzad, Arshad, Roohi, & Parveen(2021) investigate to find out epiphanies that influence people to see the world. An epiphany is a sudden and profound realization or insight. It often involves a moment of clarity or understanding about a particular situation, problem, or aspect of life. By examining how epiphany functions as a psychological flash of insight to highlight the understanding and actions of Angel Clare, the study focuses on

Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The novel exhibits epiphanic revelation of reality to highlight theoretical understanding of epiphany. Angel Clare has an epiphany, which leads to his coming to terms with the reality of things. His epiphany plays a crucial role in shaping his personality; it not only helps him grasp things better and more clearly, but it also helps him decide how to proceed. He experiences a psychological flash of insight that changes the way he perceives reality. His vision of reality changes unexpectedly; what he previously perceived as filthy or immoral is no longer immoral.

Das & Tripathi (2020) point out that female subjectivity is the understanding that one must forge one's own identity while challenging patriarchal social conventions. Through the characterization of his main character, "Tess," in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy reflects the Victorian era. "Purity" becomes a tool to highlight patriarchal hypocrisy in a society that judges women's character and values. It is based on their virginity and sexual preferences. This story seems to transcend dichotomy of purity and impurity to portray Tess as both pure and innocent according to the modern narrative that seeks to address her problems. This article explores Chris Weedon's conception of female subjectivity as reflected in her book *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (1987), which bears immense relevance even in the 21st century regarding women's predation. Chris Weedon, a cultural theorist, is known for her work on feminist theory and cultural studies. She discusses the conception of female subjectivity in her book *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Weedon emphasises that female subjectivity is not fixed or predetermined but rather shaped by social, cultural, and historical contexts. She argues that women's identities are constructed through discourses, power relations, and language, which influence how they perceive themselves and their roles in society. This approach challenges essentialist views of gender and highlights the complex and fluid nature of female subjectivity. Hardy characterises Tess

in such Victorian debate between women's "purity" and "fall" as more than just a mere object before patriarchal authority. This research intends to explore Chris Weedon's concept of female subjectivity. The proposed research is an attempt to analyse Tess's purity in postmodern perspective.

Chander (2020) explains that women have always been at the edge of patriarchal social structure. Men are at the centre and seek to monitor women's acts and behaviour. This marginalised and vulnerable status of women has endowed them with the attributes of the border, which is both inside and outside. Women are both within and outside the human border. They hold a place between men and patriarchal structure. This position of women that has caused patriarchy to consider them as either the "virgin mother" or as the "slut of Babylon". For the former case, the border is viewed as moral which is inside and thus attractive, while in the latter case, it is seen as turbulent and menacing. The novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is the story of Tess, who sees herself at the edge of oppressive social order. She is the object of male domination and suffers only because she is a woman. She shifts outside the boundaries of patriarchal symbolic order, when Alec seduces her against her will. Patriarchal socio-cultural structure does not acknowledge a woman having premarital sexual contact. Angel, her husband, who is also the component of the symbolic patriarchal order leaves her when he discovers her past. Even her child, along with drunkards and unbaptised babies, does not find a descent grave in the cemetery and is buried in an isolated corner.

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

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

One of the principal quality of Tess's character is her regard for her family. Like nature, she cares about her family. Nature is the mother of all human beings and all human beings love nature. All human beings are responsible for the destruction of nature. This care is unavoidable because she finds herself responsible for her family, particularly after her horse's accidental death. Tess wants to do everything for her family but unfortunately, her parents' misguidance drives her to the intense agony she faces, she is a striking contrast to her mother. Her mother uses her as a commodity to use her for financial benefits. Tess is not greedy like her mother. Such opposing point often leads Tess to an unknown future. Tess is very much like nature, and experiences mistreatment from human beings, just as human beings sometimes abuse nature. Tess is a natural component, which has the same attributes as nature has. She is delicate and beautiful. She has managed to triumph over her situations and she never gets trapped by nature. Nature acts to shield her. It is the influence and power of human law that holds her. Human beings like Alec and Angel deprive her of her happiness. Tess as nature self, seeks to jump back from every traumatic event in her life, but she loses every time due to the cruel treatment of humans.

Balinisteanu (2016) opines that the human body becomes fetish in a capitalist society, and the femme fatale is a representation of sexual fetishism in 19th-century literature. "Femme fatale" is a term used to describe a seductive and mysterious woman who often leads others, typically men, into dangerous or compromising situations. This archetype is commonly found in literature, film, and popular culture. Sexual fetishism is a sexual interest

or arousal in response to a specific object, body part, or situation that is not typically associated with sexual arousal. It is important to remember that fetishes are a normal variation of human sexuality, as long as they are consensual, legal, and do not harm anyone involved. The majority of authors who have written about this topic emphasise the display of power that the fetishized body imposes on those who desire it. Because of the bourgeoisie's hypocritical morality, society in the 19th century sought to hide sexuality, which was represented in various forms of prostitution. The relationship between the buyer and the purchaser is established by the female body that male consumers view as a fetish. All tiers of society are impacted by the forced or voluntary trading of young girls' bodies. Due to Hardy's relentless depiction of Tess' sexuality and the text's constant reiteration of the fact that her beauty and charms are not only tragic but also lethal, Tess' body turns into a fetish. The progressive revelation of this fatality improves her seductiveness and physicality while simultaneously raising the ultimate concern that her "bad blood," or bad relationship with Alec is something unpleasant or distressing for Victorian society." A fetish is a form of sexual desire or arousal that is typically focused on a specific object, body part, or activity that may not be conventionally associated with sexual attraction. Fetishes vary widely and can include objects like shoes, specific body parts like feet, or particular activities like bondage. It is important to note that fetishes are a natural part of human sexuality and are considered normal as long as they are consensual and do not harm anyone involved. Open communication and consent are crucial when exploring fetishes in a sexual context. As Tess's body turns into a fetish, it appeals to Alec's sexual desires.

The above discussed Literature Review on Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* shows a gap in its interpretation of postmodern aspects in the novel. The proposed study fills

this gap and is an attempt to analyse postmodern aspects of the novel. It interprets the protagonist's postmodern thoughts.

Research Methodology/ Theoretical Framework:

Research conducted in the field of literature is mainly interpretation and explanation and does not have a precise and definite method of collecting data. The data is typically available in this type of research in the form of books that are literary pieces. In the present study, the data is in the form of the text of the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The researcher has chosen the original text of the novel and then separated certain paragraphs, sentences and dialogues to analyse Tess as a postmodern woman. Researches in the field of literature generally follow qualitative research methods. Silverman (1993) claims that in research, there are two paradigms: the first qualitative and the second quantitative. The qualitative paradigm is qualitatively analysing, interpreting, discussing, explaining or describing the data. On the other hand, a relationship between two variables is seen in the quantitative paradigm, and the data is typically in the form of numbers.

The present study is an analysis of the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, so the researcher has applied a qualitative methodology. The first data collection source is text of the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The secondary sources are books, papers from research journals and internet pages related to the topic.

This research is an attempt to explore and critically analyse the novel *Tess the d'Urbervilles* from the postmodernist perspectives of Jean Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Richard Rorty.

Findings:

A woman who does not adhere to the ideas of chastity and purity is said to be postmodern. Hardy portrayed Tess as a postmodern woman who announced that she was not virgin on the wedding night. She began her life as if nothing had happened when Angel Clare ended his relationship with her. Despite her mother's advice not to tell about her past to Angel Clare, she revealed her past because she did not think that virginity existed. She buried her own child at the cemetery after having baptised. Like a male family member, she provided financial assistance for her family. Only Tess was able to pardon Angel Clare for his adulterous escapades that occurred before their wedding. Tess, a person of integrity and independence, decided to chart her own way in life. Therefore, she must accept the results of her decision. As a result, neither Hardy nor Tess herself would weaken her personality or compromise on important issues. When Angel Clare abandoned her, she had the faith of a great heroine. She was too proud to accept Alec's help. For several months, she resisted Alec's coercive influence. She was unable to submit to these pressures due to her own integrity. When Tess was leaving Angel Clare, she did not cry in front of him. She had the view that everyone was right and that no one could be wrong. Angel and Tess were both right. Tess as a postmodern woman did not voice her displeasure. Right and wrong were relative concepts to Tess. Hardy portrayed her as a postmodern woman who rejected the rigid social conventions of Victorian society which held that men were always pure, women were not.

A postmodern woman is a woman who believes she is on par with men. Tess supported her family and laboured for them much like a male family member would. Tess accepted postmodern assertion that there was no difference between men and women. There was no such a woman like Tess who could support her family through work in Victorian culture. Women were expected to stay in their houses while the male family members were in charge of providing livelihood. She demonstrated that she had the courage to care for her

family. She did not cry like a Victorian woman after being rejected by Victorian society, especially by Angel Clare, instead, she toiled hard to overthrow the system. Tess's portrayal was novel in Victorian society. Tess was an unsuitable figure in Victorian society. However, Tess was a member of that society and had to deal with the idea that Victorian society was evolving, much like postmodern.

Tess rejected both Victorian morality and irrational social conventions as a postmodern woman. She was the embodiment of human nature. She had the ability to travel through space and time. She was remarkably accurate in her portrayal of life. Tess assumed increased relevance in her respect for postmodern morals when compared to postmodern approach to life. She questioned the Victorian attempt at a centralized interpretation of reality. Tess's questions on Victorian social and moral beliefs were deconstructed as contradictory. She attempted to question the dominant ethical and social classification categories of her period in her own unique way. Hardy portrayed Tess in his novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as a postmodern woman in Victorian period.

Discussion:

Characteristic of a postmodern man or woman is a fragmented and hybrid identity. Baudrillard (1993) suggests that in the postmodern era, individuals are no longer confined to fixed categories or identities. They can freely navigate and adopt different roles, styles, and cultural influences, leading to a sense of fluidity and multiplicity in their identity formation. Tess is adamant that her name must not be associated with a man. A woman's husband was her identity in Victorian society. Without a man, a woman was nothing more than a commodity. Postmodernism liberates a woman from the expectations of Victorian society. Tess rejects Victorian identity of woman that her husband is the real identity of the woman.

A postmodern woman does not accept this kind of identity which is a social construct. She has her own identity as a woman. Identity is not fixed but fragmented and hybrid. Tess does not want her name to be associated with a male. She is happy to be called as Tess. She declares, “ Don’t call me Mrs. Clare, but Tess as before ”(Hardy,2008,p.332).

According to Lyotard (1984), postmodernism is defined by its incredulity towards grand narratives that claim to provide universal truth. Postmodern men and women are critical of overarching theories or ideologies that purport to explain the world, recognizing that knowledge is shaped by social, cultural, and historical contexts. They question the authority and objectivity of institutions, including academia and science, and acknowledge the influence of power structures on knowledge production (Foucault, 1972). Tess challenges the concept of Victorian virginity which is a social construct. This concept was taught to women to convey that men were powerful and women were the weakest creature. Victorian society followed that rule of virginity. But Tess rejects Victorian concept of virginity. She gives birth to a child without a proper marriage. She looks after her child without paying attention to the concept of virginity. She struggles to save the life of her illegitimate child. This is a change in Tess. She disregards all social laws in order to protect the child and “The baby’s offence against society in coming into the world was forgotten by the girl mother; her soul’s desire was to continue that offence by preserving the life of the child ”(Hardy, 2008,p.109).

The concept of a postmodern man or woman emerges from a diverse range of disciplines, including philosophy, literature, and cultural studies. Key figures such as Lyotard and Baudrillard have contributed to our understanding of the postmodern condition, which is characterized by scepticism toward metanarratives, a focus on fragmented perspectives, and the blurring of boundaries between reality and simulation. Cultural phenomena like consumer

society and postmodern art movements further illustrate the impact of postmodernism on contemporary society. Postmodernism emerged as an intellectual movement in response to a number of modernist ideas that were first during the Enlightenment. These include scientific positivism, the certainty of human progress, and the ability of human reason to address any fundamental reality of physical and social conditions and so render it possible for them to be subject to rational management (Boyne & Rattansi, 1990). Anyone whose thoughts incorporate most or all of postmodern characteristics is regarded as postmodern as Lawrence Kuznar labels (Kuznar, 2008,p.78).

Postmodern individuals exhibit a fragmented, sceptical, and reflexive worldview that challenges traditional norms and values (Harvey, 1989). They engage with cultural artefacts and ideas in a deconstructive and reconstructive manner, emphasizing the contingency and plurality of meaning (Derrida, 1967). A postmodern woman believes in fragmented social values. These values are not influenced by a society. Values are subjective and dependent on individual concept of reality. Reality is not a social construct which has fixed meanings. It has plurality of meanings. Victorian concept of social values is deconstructed. Victorians believed that women were not supposed to have extramarital relations. If a woman lost her virginity, she was considered fallen for the rest of her life. There were very strict rules for women to spend their lives. Their lives were monitored by strict Victorian rules. Tess challenges these strict rules which are only imposed on women. Only women are considered fallen and the same does not apply to men. Tess becomes pregnant before marriage and gives birth to a child. She forgets her past that her child is illegitimate. She wants to spend a normal life and rejects Victorian concepts of chastity and virginity. There is a ray of hope that she can spend a happy life. This hope comes from her inside and ignores the outside world. Tess still feels the warmth of a hopeful life within her. She can be content in a corner with no

memories of her past. She wants to deconstruct what happened in the past. Therefore, Tess tries “To escape the past and all that appertained thereto was to annihilate it, and to do that she would have to get away”(Hardy,2008,p.117).

Postmodern individuals embrace the fragmented nature of reality and resist attempts to create coherent, unified narratives. They appreciate the plurality of perspectives and recognize that there are multiple ways of interpreting and experiencing the world (Lyotard, 1984). This fragmentation is reflected in various domains, including literature, art, and architecture, where postmodernism celebrates eclecticism, pastiche, and hybridity (Jencks, 1991). Tess believes in fragmented nature of reality. She rejects Victorian reality of virginity that a woman should be virgin before marriage and no virginity for man. After the disclosure of her past relationship with Alec, Angel’s attitude towards Tess confirms once again the presence of double standards in Victorian society when it comes to men and women. The sharp turn of his feelings explores the rigid social norms. He feels fragmented by the knowledge and is unable to ask for any further explanation. He does not give her allowance so that she may relate how she was exploited. After Angel reveals about his short extramarital affair, Tess is encouraged to confess to her past troubles relating to Alec d’Urberville. He refuses her his forgiveness though Tess so willingly forgives him, even though Tess should not be blamed for what happened to her. Tess reveals her relationship with Alec at the same time as Angel Clare reveals his relationship with a girl. Tess forgives Angel Clare, but he does not. It is because Tess is not a Victorian woman anymore. Angel accepts that Tess is not virgin and informs Tess “ I repeat, the woman I have been loving is not you. Another woman in your shape”(Hardy, 2008,p.269). He seems to forget that he himself is not the same man after his own affair. He refuses to accept her and decides to abandon her, so he is completely entitled to judge her. Postmodern men and women are self-reflexive and aware of the

constructed nature of reality. They understand that language plays a crucial role in shaping meaning and knowledge (Derrida, 1967). As such there exists a 'fallen woman' but no 'fallen man'. Postmodern individuals question the notion of a fixed, stable self and instead embrace fluid identities that are contingent upon social and cultural contexts (Butler, 1990). Angel knows that Tess has rejected Victorian identity and accepted fluid identity which is not fixed. He knows that Tess does not believe in the constructed reality of Victorian society.

According to Baudrillard(1988), our world is made up of images, yet these images are merely simulations. A lot of people do not get the idea that we have entered a period in which the only source of truth is the consensus of values and that science is merely the label we give to particular modalities of explanation(Norris, 1990,p.169). Tess believes in the fragmented nature of values. There should be an acceptance of all values. Values are relative and every individual has a different concept of values. This difference should be accepted. There are no real values. We have the copies of all values what Baudrillard calls "Simulacra"(1988). There are no real values and there should be no search for real values. Tess advises Angel Clare not to place too much emphasis on virginity, chastity and purity. Many women have lost their virginity and their spouses have been unconcerned. Virginity and chastity are meaningless to her. Tess's notion of chastity lies in spirit, Angel's lies in flesh. There are values that are socially formed. How quickly he goes back on his word and refuses Tess his love and defence. Angel Clare explains that values vary from society to society. He directs Tess " Don't, Tess ; don't argue. Different societies, different manners"(Hardy, 2008,p.272). Baudrillard (1994) states that identities are no longer stable categories but rather become performative acts influenced by cultural and social factors.

The postmodern man or woman grapples with the tension between individualism and the desire for social connection and belonging. As Bauman (2001) highlights, in the absence

of fixed social structures, individuals are left to navigate a "liquid love" where relationships are temporary and characterized by uncertainty. This fluidity can create a sense of isolation and disconnection, as individuals seek meaningful connections amidst the fragmentation of postmodern society. Tess's disclosure of her past reflects her belief in her innocence. She knows that she has been exploited and a victim of unfavourable circumstances. She is ready to forgive Angel for his weakness because she can understand human weakness whereas Angel's rejection of Tess reveals that he is a conformist of age-long traditions of society. As a Victorian representative he is ready to pass judgement on a woman misused but on the other hand takes his liberties for granted. Tess shows a postmodern attitude, he exhibits a Victorian one. Angel Clare claims that each society has its unique set of ideals. Tess explains her situation and informs Angel that she is rejected on the basis of only her past relationship with Alec. Tess believes in postmodern concept of "liquid love" and rejects Victorian concept of extramarital relationship. Only one act of her relationship with Alec does not mean that she is bad and cannot be accepted as a wife. She knows about so many cases in the world where both husband and wife live happily without any complaint. Tess tells Angel that purity is not meant only for woman. Tess has postmodern ideas here. She enlightens Angel and tells him "O Angel- my mother says that it sometimes so! She knows several cases where they worse than I, and the husband has not minded it much" (Hardy, 2008,p.272).

After her separation from Angel Clare, Tess lives with Alec though Angel has not divorced her. Angel Clare reminds her of Victorian morals, which state that a married woman cannot remarry. This act is ethical and moral to Tess. Postmodern individuals also display a heightened awareness of the constructed nature of reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that in the postmodern era, individuals recognize that social reality is a product of human interaction and interpretation. This understanding leads to deconstruction of

established categories and an emphasis on the power dynamics and discourses that shape our understanding of the world. Tess has the knowledge of Victorian morality but does not know what is right because she does not believe in right and wrong. Angel describes Tess's morality and tells Tess that she knows how to act as a woman "but has not a sense of what is morally right and proper weight with you?"(Hardy, 2008,p.370). He is trying to inform her of Victorian concept of right and wrong. But Tess believes in deconstruction of morality. There is nothing like right and wrong. Right and wrong are the concepts that a society constructs. Tess's concept of morality is based on postmodern concept of morality. She has her own concept of morality. She knows how to spend her life. She does not want other people to tell her what is right and what is wrong.

From the beginning, Tess's mother is supportive of her. She is upset with the situation in Tess's life, but she also supports her though she is not intelligent enough to teach her about the ways of the world. When she has a baby, she supports Tess and gives her advice not to tell Angel about her past relationship with Alec when she is about to marry Angel. Tess is prone to speaking her mind since she believes that everyone has the right to say or do what they want. Many postmodernists support polyvocality, which holds that there are various, genuine versions of reality or truth that may be understood from various angles. Scientific positivism is seen by postmodernists as an attempt to impose hegemonic values and political dominance on the world. Postmodernists believe that by contesting the legitimacy of anthropologists and other Western intellectuals, they are safeguarding the integrity of native cultures and empowering oppressed groups to stand up to their oppressors(Trigger,2006,pp.446-447). Tess adheres to a morality that is unconventional. She confides in Angel Clare about her past, and suffers greatly as a result. In a letter to Tess, her mother warns her about her habit not to reveal her past history. She advises " Many a woman-

some of the Highest in the land- have had a trouble in their time ; and why should you trumpet yours when others don't trumpet theirs?"(Hardy, 2008,p.226). Tess does not accept her mother's advice of what to do and what not to do. She believes in subjectivity of truth. She has her own idea of right and wrong. She rejects her mother's concept of right and wrong.

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

Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is a parody of Victorian culture. It is the portrayal of double standards, and the ease with which an innocent girl can become "a wicked woman". It demonstrates how easily society makes a scapegoat out of those who have no power to protect themselves. For women, the Victorian era was not a delightful period; they had to obey a strict set of rules to be followed and to be respected. The fragmentation of reality creates a sense of uncertainty and scepticism about truth, claims (Bauman, 1992). The

postmodern man or woman engages in critical reflection and interpretation, recognizing the constructed nature of reality and the multiplicity of perspectives. This requires a certain level of openness, tolerance, and reflexivity to navigate the complexities of postmodern world. Postmodernism questions the existence of a universal and objective reality. Lyotard (1984) argues that grand narratives, such as religion or science, are metanarratives that claim to provide universal truth but are inherently flawed. In the postmodern context, reality becomes a collection of multiple narratives, each influenced by subjective perspectives. This fragmentation of reality challenges the postmodern man or woman to navigate a world where diverse narratives coexist. Tess defies Victorian social conventions and thinks them to be obsolete. She informs Angel that she is not his property that he owns her at all times. She is not bound to wait for him. Tess informs Angel, " You didn't come back to me, and I was obliged to go back to him" (Hardy, 2008,p.448). Tess is free to make her choices which indicates that she has always been a free individual.

Nietzsche's arguments about language, society, and truth are perhaps where postmodern thought first emerged in the nineteenth century, paving the way for all subsequent postmodern and late modern critiques of the source of knowledge(Kuznar, 2008,p.78). According to Nietzsche, reality is nothing more than a moving object of metaphors and metonyms as Kuznar states. A collection of human relationships that has been artistically and rhetorically expanded, transferred, and embellished over time to make them seem substantial, authoritative, and obligatory to people. Truths are fantasies about which one has overlooked that this is what they are (Nietzsche,1954,pp.46-47). From Nietzsche to later postmodernists, trace this scepticism about truth and the relativism it generates. One of the most radical postmodernists, Jean Baudrillard, asserts that we must accept the second revolution of the twentieth century of postmodernity, which is the extensive process of the

deconstruction of meaning at par with the earlier destruction of appearances. Anyone who lives by meaning also dies by meaning (Ashley, 1990). Meanings are unstable and change with changing times. Tess has a unique perspective on Victorian morals. She does what she believes is right. There is nothing moral and for her “moral sorrows were passing away a fresh one arose on the natural side of her which knew no social law”(Hardy, 2008,p.109). Tess deconstructs the meaning of Victorian social norms. She has sceptical and relative approach towards social norms. She does not accept that social norms are fixed and those who deviate are considered violators. She does not live by meaning but unfortunately dies by meaning.

The definition of perfection is Tess. She is unpretentious, noble and loyal. In the end, all of those ideals do not save her because the men who are meant to protect her mistreat her. Her downfall shows how quickly the illusion of ideal femininity can be broken, especially in a world where women are automatically viewed as suspects. New active fictions with creative possibilities of challenge were seldom offered to Victorian women. The stories of discovery, travel, job, and exploration were tales of men. The sphere is expanded in Hardy’s Wessex universe, but retained well within the range of objectivity and possibility. Women work in both traditional and unconventional professions outside the home. Women travel far beyond neighbourhood unescorted, embark on enterprises of their own will and trigger relationships. They struggle, in other words, to shape lives with zeal and effort. The apparent reality is that the world was not friendly to women in Victorian society, they fought against all opposition. Hardy sets certain social and literary norms at risk that perpetuate the introduction of sexual amnesia in women in Victorian England based on tradition. Women have been held in denial about their own bodies since childhood to undergo puberty, defloration and sexual relations as a mystery. The physical fact of fatigue leaves women as it leaves men. Hardy’s women

struggle and labour. Hardy starts where most Victorian novelists have left off and provides a fitting place for the kind of new concept of a noble woman. In his novel *Tess of d'Urbervilles*, Hardy seems to depict Tess as having postmodern ideas. Tess does not believe in what Alec preaches after his conversion to become a true Christian. Tess is well aware that he preaches Christianity to impress people. Tess rejects his preaching of Christianity. Alec wants Tess to believe in what he preaches but Tess rejects all his beliefs. Therefore, Alec asks Tess, "you don't believe that you ought to preach my doctrine"(Hardy,2008,p.376).

One of the key challenges in life is the overwhelming abundance of choices and possibilities, leading to what Schwartz (2004) terms the "paradox of choice." The abundance of options can be paralyzing, making it difficult for individuals to commit to a particular identity or make decisions that align with their values and desires. Postmodernism holds that language, power, relationships, and incentives have a significant influence on the development of ideas and beliefs. Tess believes what she sees. Tess is not a believer in abstractions. What she sees is what she believes. She trusts what she can see with her own eyes. Many abstract notions were supposed to be believed in Victorian society, but Tess opposes this Victorian concept of abstract notions as they can be interpreted with diverse meanings. Postmodernists are sceptical of comprehensive definitions and exclusive accounts of any sequence of events. She does not live in the world of mere ideas and beliefs. The ideas that Victorian society has constructed to control women are meaningless to her. She rejects Victorian Christianity for its strict rules for women. Tess believes that Christianity only deprives women of their freedom and gives men their freedom. Tess is sceptical to say "I don't believe in anything supernatural"(Hardy,2008,p.375). The baptism of Tess's child in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* can be seen as a form of revolt against established religious, moral, and social norms. Tess names her child Sorrow and refuses to have him baptized in the

Christian tradition. This act challenges social expectations and reflects Tess's rejection of conventional morality imposed by religion.

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

Hardy's heroines are led more by instinct than moral questions (Bardy, 1999). Hardy's heroines are defined by a surrender to circumstances restricted by the play of instinct. They are never really bad but humans with human weaknesses and strengths. Indeed, it seems that this quality inside them, which prevents them from any high degree of goodness, is precisely what stops them from being really bad. They have instinctive reverence for themselves and instinctive purity of being true to themselves. One feels obligated to dwell on

these women's distinction(Cox,1970). At the same time, Hardy's fiction portrays and elicits sexual comments that are provocative. Hardy's fiction provides tremendous potential for an exploration of a gender system in which females are the mediating connection between males. In Hardy, pornographic relations are prevalent and little has been done with this complex topic (Cox, 1970). Tess believes that chastity and morality are relative. She deconstructs the Victorian view of chastity. Postmodernism supports the idea that there is nothing like morality and chastity. Chastity and morality are individual's relative ideas. Tess rejects Victorian concept of chastity for women. Chastity has no fixed meaning. As a postmodern woman, Tess questions, " Was once lost always lost really true of chastity? She would ask herself"(Hardy, 2008,p.117). It was the end of the Victorian period, and Hardy, though maintaining his own essentialist ideals seem to be torn between his desire to depict women as competent and intelligent. Hardy gives his woman a voice through his novel, expressing the anxiety and complexity of her shifting place in society. In terms of gender, postmodernism challenges essentialist notions and recognizes the performative nature of gender identities (Butler, 1990). Postmodern men and women question binary constructions and embrace fluidity and variability in gender expression (Halberstam, 1998).

The postmodern woman is identified as an autonomous woman who is equal to man(Grand,2005). In the late 19th century, it was a matter of much concern and discussion in both England and United States. Grand does not free women from the burden of raising children, even though she discusses the double standards in the various social codes for men and women. She argues that it is the national responsibility of women to raise children who can be a credit to the heirs of the British empire. Hardy does not have a feminist agenda, like Grand, but rather an admiration for powerful women and a disdain for a society that wanted them to be small and quiet. Hardy lives there long enough to be immersed in Victorian

principles of social order, and in modern times he displays an awareness and comprehension of the increasing aspirations of human nature. According to Hutcheon(1995), the ironic separation between the two texts(classical and modern) enables the postmodern novel to be both historically self- reflective and outwardly directed to the original text. It is also necessary to take into account how this “ intertextual dialogue ” is achieved in a particular work by a particular author in order to expose the nature of this interaction(Eco,2006). At the time of Hardy’s birth, to uncover her ankles in public was considered licentious for a woman. As a postmodern woman, she is not afraid of Angel and faces him like a brave man. She is ready to accept any kind of physical punishment. She challenges Alec to “ whip me ,crush me; you need not mind those people under the rick! I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim- That’s the law”(Hardy, 2008,p. 388).

Hardy seems to support postmodern woman, and, Morgan (2003) states that the achievement of Hardy in his depiction of women lies unquestionably in his deep understanding of their dilemma and intelligence fully capable of demonstrating their abilities in a world unwilling to give them that right. Hardy is the first to understand the abilities of women. The postmodern concept of women contrasted with the then existing rules and standards of Victorian society, an uncertainty that resonates deeply within Hardy himself. The social element and tension between social norms and natural instincts are brought into question in his novel. Hardy’s protagonist, as a model of the postmodern woman, aims for something more, something beyond her means, by facing criticism of the society to live a life in accordance with natural instincts. Hardy’s postmodern traits are exemplified in Tess who desires more than joy and traditional concept of love. She needs unconditional love or acceptance which is unjustified in Victorian society. Hardy portrays his protagonist as capable and worthy. *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* describes the life of a beautiful girl from the rural

working class of England who knows how to live while still confined and according to Rousseau "in chains". When Angel discovers Tess in a rich district of Sandbourne, a resort town on the English channel, he is surprised to see Tess. She is well-dressed and attractive, and her hands are no longer red from hard work when he last saw her. She treats him coldly and tells him it is too late. She lives with Alec in a beautiful house. As Angel has abandoned her, she decides not to wait for Angel to come back as all the Victorian women used to do. Tess has changed from a Victorian woman to a postmodern woman who believes in subjective reality. When Angel sees this change in Tess, he is surprised to say, "I did not think of you- I did not see you as you were! He continued to plead. I have learnt to since, dearest Tessy mine!"(Hardy, 2008,p.440).

Derrida(1978) suggests that postmodernism introduces the concept of "deconstruction," which questions and destabilizes the certainties of religious texts and beliefs, emphasizing the fluidity and ambiguity inherent in religious discourse. This approach encourages a continual re-evaluation of religious meanings and interpretations. Tess is inspired by Angel's religious beliefs. Angel does not follow Bible what is literally described in it. Angel believes that there is more than what is literally conveyed to us through Bible. Tess follows Angel in her religious beliefs and explains his religious beliefs, "I looked at it in this way; what he believed, after inquiring deep into doctrines, was much more likely to be right than what I might believe, who hadn't looked into doctrines at all" (Hardy, 2008,p. 375). Hardy seems to convey that most of the Christians read Bible for its literal meaning and do not focus on its deep meaning. Therefore, they interpret Bible and Christianity in its literal meaning which is wrong. However, Hardy's treatment of such topics in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* varies substantially from his previous works (Ingham, 2003). Blake(1982) opines that Hardy sometimes portrays fragile, changeable and erroneous

female characters. Hardy is also alarmingly keen to make generalisations from woman to woman.

Since Tess regularly continues to violate social conventions, it can easily be observed that some find her behaviour to be abnormal. Alec chases Tess. But she is shocked to find that he has become a preacher. Alec informs Tess that it is his responsibility and desire to save people from God's wrath. Alec wears a mask of religion. He becomes a convert. Tess is aware of his religious mask. Alec tells Tess that he wants to save people from the danger which is near to come. He tells Tess that he wants to change minds of people to a right path. Tess inquires of Alec, "Have you saved yourself? Charity begins at home, they say"(Hardy, 2008,p. 360). Here Tess rejects preaching of Christians when they used it to deceive people.

As a female protagonist of the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, women were not allowed to find any place in Victorian society outside their status of a chaste wife, a mother or a sister, and any woman left by her husband or without her children. After losing her virginity, Tess becomes a fallen woman. The double standard of society of the nineteenth century assigns a submissive sexual role to women and at the same time holds them responsible for any sexual behaviour. By focusing on the topic of women's sexuality, Hardy seems to deconstruct the idea of " pure woman " in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Tess is considered responsible for her seduction, not Alec, who seduces her because he is a man. Hardy, however, aims to illustrate the unforgiving and pitiful judgments that society imposes on the nineteenth century woman by stressing the innocence of Tess. The nineteenth-century period is remembered for its facetious approach to sexuality, the dual ideals of morality, and women's oppressed role. Consequently, the age of the nineteenth century is marked by the twentieth century as the age of dictatorship. It was assumed, because of the double standard, the sexuality in men was an instinctive trait. It was not appropriate for women, however, to

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

Conclusion:

This research critiqued Victorian morality and social norms while exploring more complex and ambiguous themes, which are characteristic of postmodern literature. Tess embodied a more realistic and flawed protagonist, moving away from idealised Victorian heroines, aligning with postmodern character portrayals. The novel questioned traditional institutions and social norms, reflecting the postmodern tendency to challenge established power structures. Ambiguity in moral judgments reflected the postmodern rejection of absolute truth, allowing readers to interpret the narrative in different ways. These elements demonstrated how *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* exhibited characteristics of both Victorian and postmodern literature, making it a transitional novel between the two literary periods. In terms of Victorianism, the novel addressed social issues, class distinctions, and the plight of women during that time. Tess seemed to be submissive to Angel Clare. A Victorian woman was supposed to be under the control of a man. She was deprived of her freedom. However, the novel also exhibited postmodern elements. It challenged the notion of absolute truth and presented multiple perspectives on characters and events. As *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is a transitional novel from Victorianism to Postmodernism, Tess grew into a postmodern woman

who was not under the control of Angel Clare when her identity was questioned and her morality, loyalty and character were decimated.

References:

Ashley, D.(1990). *Habermas and the project of modernity*. In Bryan Turner (ed.), *theories of modernity and postmodernity* . London: SAGE.

Balinisteanu, C. (2016). The fabrication of Tess of the d'Urbervilles as femme fatale. *Limbaj si Context*, 8(1/2), 67.

Bauman, Z. (2001). *Liquid modernity*. Wiley.

Brady, K.(1999). *Thomas Hardy and matter of gender*. Dale Kramer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.95.

Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press.

Baudrillard, J. (1993). *Simulacra and simulation*. University of Michigan Press.

Bauman, Z. (1992). *Intimations of postmodernity*. Routledge.

Boyne,R.& Rattansi, A.(1990). *The theory and politics of postmodernism: By way of an introduction in Roy Boyne and Ali Rattansi (eds), postmodernism and society (pp.1-45)*. London: Macmillan Education LTD.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

Baudrillard, J.(1988). *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press.

Blake,K.(1982).Hardy on knowing a woman. *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*,22(4), 689-705.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Anchor Books.

Chander, D.A.(2020). The exploited woman in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles
Studies in Indian Place Names , 40(71), 2702-2711.

Cox, R.G. (1970). *Thomas Hardy: The critical heritage*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul,
p.106.

Das, C., & Tripathi, P.(2020). Female subjectivity within and beyond purity: Reading
Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles. *A Peer- Review and Bi-Annual Journal*,
16(1).

Derrida, J.(1978). *Writing and Difference* (A.Bass, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. (1967). *Of grammatology*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Derrida, J. (1967). *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*.The
Johns Hopkins University Press.

Eco, W.(2006). *Open work*. Petersburg : Symposium.

Fisken, T.(2011). The sceptical proletariat: The politics of hauntology in the communist
manifesto. *Global Discourse*, 2(2),17-31.

Foucault, M.(1972). *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Pantheon Books.

Grand, S.(2005). *The new woman as an imperialist feminist*. Columbus: Ohio State
University Press.

Halberstam, J. (1998). *Female masculinity*. Duke University Press.

Hutcheon, L. (1995). *A poetics of postmodernism . History, theory, fiction*. New York;
London Routledge: Univer. Print. House.

Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the origins of cultural
change*. Blackwell.

Ingham, P.(2003). *Authors in context: Thomas Hardy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Jencks, C. (1991). *The language of post-modern architecture*. Academy Editions.
- Kuznar, L.(2008). *Reclaiming a scientific Anthropology*. Lanham, MD: Altamira.
- Lyotard ,J.F.(1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A report on Knowledge* . Press of the University of Minnesota.
- Morgan, R.(2003). *Introduction, Far From The Madding Crowd*. New York: Penguin.
- Nuruzzaman, M. (2017). Tess in Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles : The other self of nature. *A Journal of English Studies*, 8, 153-159.
- Norris, C.(1990). *What's wrong with postmodernism*. England: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Nietzsche, F.(1954). *On truth and lie in an extra moral sense*. In W. Kaufmann (ed. And trans.) *The portable Nietzsche (pp.42-47)*. New York: Penguin.
- Shehzad, Arshad, Roohi, & Parveen (2021). Epiphanic revelation of reality in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(08), 5150-5158.
- Silverman, H.J. (1993). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analysing talk, text interaction*. London: Sage Publications.
- Schwarz, D.R.(1979). *Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas Hardy*. Ed. Dale Kramer. New York Barnes,17-35.
- Trigger, B.G.(2006). *A history of Archaeological thought. 2nd Ed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.