

THE WORLD OF WOMEN, LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN THOMAS HARDY'S THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

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ABSTRACT

Fundamentally, Hardy's approach in his novels is oriented around love and passionate feelings. The feelings most often dominate the protagonist and she/he becomes helpless because the main character is usually made up of weaker emotional fiber. Keeping this in view Hardy builds his stories around love, marriage, double moral standards, and the conflict between duty and desire. The plot of The Return of the Native has been constructed on similar lines so at the heart of the novel lay a love story, courtship, and marriage. The novel in its thematic and structural approach is conditional and much in keeping with the Victorian people's fascination with the theme of love and marriage. This novel describes the love and marriage choices. The conflicts that the characters face are not religious, philosophical, or intellectual; these are moral conflicts as they remain mired in marital choices. The significance of love and marriage in the novel is obvious from the fact that the story begins with the failure of a love marriage between Damon Wildeve and Thomasin Yeobright.

Key-words: Protagonist, Courtship, Marriage, Structural, Fascination, Mired, Marital

Introduction

Thomas Hardy was one of the greatest novelists and poets of the Victorian era. One of the most popular of Thomas Hardy's novels, *The Return of the Native*, was published in 1878. Since the Victorian era is considered the flowering age of the novel. Many of the finest English novelists wrote during this time and Thomas Hardy is one of them. Like other novels of Hardy, the setting of this novel is Egdon Heath, which he was part of and knew intimately. The Heath is not merely the background of the novel; it is present like a character, the ever-present and brooding presence of which is felt by everyone present around it. There is hardly any scene in the novel in which heath is not directly or indirectly present. It influences the life of the character to a considerable extent and shapes their destinies. Those who live on it are deeply in love with it or detest it and so accordingly their lives are deeply affected by it.

The reasons are kept purposefully blurred and ambiguous. The vain and beautiful heroine of the story, Eustacia Vye, who is a narcissist of the first degree, was taken to Heath many years ago to live with her grandfather, is exuberantly romantic passionate, and immature. Soon it is learned that she does not feel comfortable at the Heath and wants to escape from its inexorable clutches because she desires to live a life of luxury, comfort, and charm in the fashionable society of Paris. Denied of these pleasures she feels disgruntled with her habitat and pines day and night for something extraordinary to happen in her prosaic life. She has middle-class origin but aristocratic dreams, the "dreams of cosmopolitan pleasures" (Harvey 67). Clym Yeobright, a middle-class idealistic young man, returns home at the edge of Egdon Heath, with high ideas of changing the lives of the rustics by opening a school in the village. He faces stiff

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opposition from his mother, Mrs. Yeobright, in this regard but deciding against the desires of his aged mother, he lays the foundation of the educational project and works at it very hard. Whereas this desire of his is commendable, his utter disregard of the experienced suggestions of his mother makes us feel that he is more of an idealist, emotional and adamant sort of person who has little insight into the future and can put at stake anything for the materialization of his dream. He does so at the cost of giving up his reasonably good career as a jeweler's merchant in Paris. In the matter of his marriage again he goes contrary to his mother's advice and marries Eustacia Vye. The two, Eustacia and Clym, get married with divergent hopes for a future together, ignoring the basic realities of their respective natures, the consequence of which lead them to a tragic end: the death of Eustacia and the loneliness of Clym. During the narrative Clym gradually comes blind and Eustacia wrestles with her love for Clym and desires for an aristocratic lifestyle. Both remain eternally deprived of real happiness of life and sacrifice and suffer too much. Following Victorian novel tradition apart from the main storyline that spins around Clym and Eustacia, there are sub-plots in the story as well, such as Damon Wildeve, Eustacia's former lover, and Thomasin Yeobright, Clym's cousin who is a rational girl who falls victim to the vicious circumstances but at the end gets happily married to Diggory Venn. Diggory Venn, one of the sincerest creatures on the earth, is secretly in love with Thomasin and always becomes ready to protect and help her in odd circumstances. He is the representative of the true tradition of love and steadfastness. Redolent of traditional rustic professions, he is Heath's reddleman who travels with his van to sell the dye that people use to mark their sheep. He believes in steadfastness in love and remains faithful to Thomasin even when she is going to marry Wildeve, however, his sincerity and dedication in love bring fruit when Thomasin, after having been deceived by Wildeve, eventually recognizes his love and agrees to marry.

The Return of the Native, a masterpiece of Thomas Hardy, belongs to the same category of the sensational and romantic novel to which belong Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, and Charles Dickens *A Tale of Two Cities*. The novel is remarkable in terms of presenting a wide range of themes and topics such as gender, politics, sexual manipulation, the institutionalized nature of marriage, and the vital debate of the inter-relationship of individual and society. In the socio-political circumstances of the Victorian age, love and marriage assumed vital significance, and the interaction between man and woman happened mainly based on love and marriage. Because of the seminal role of love and marriage in the overall cultural ethos of the Victorian era, the present study focuses upon the factors that influenced love and marriage relationship between sexes.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

1. This research aims to demonstrate that love and marriage were the major components of the interaction between males and females in the Return of the Native and sincere and true love was considered the basic qualification for marriage.
2. The study illustrates that the heroine of The Return of the Native was subjugated, in the matters about love and marriage, to the world of ideas generated by the masculine world and there were double standards of morality for men and women that led to the suppression of women in the society.
3. The study also highlights that Eustacia Vye and Thomasin Yeobright, despite belonging to the same society, absorbed or refused to accept the predetermined roles for women in different ways. They behaved differently to the limitation imposed upon them by society and thus displayed their personalities.

Research Questions

1. How do love and marriage determine the destinies of the male and female protagonists in Return of The Native?

2. How are the female characters in *Return of The Native* deeply embedded in the socio-political circumstances of the Victorian era?
3. How do gender and sexual politics affect and reflect the lives of the female characters in the novel?

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant as it provides historically grounded information about the ways of women's lives in the 19th century, highlighting the sexual politics that operated through the motions of love and marriage and affected the destinies of the male and female. The study brings to light different roles that women were supposed to perform in the gendered society and how in case of failing to come up to the expectations of the normative values of the society they were subjected to derisive and denouncing the male gaze. It also signifies that sincerity and dedication in love were given great respect and an ideal marriage was the one that had the consent of the family and social conventions.

Literature Review

The novels of Thomas Hardy (1840-128), one of the most brilliant and prolific of the Victorian Novelists, show, according to David Daiches (2001, p.1073), "some disparity between genius and achievements" but his achievements are far greater than his failures. Hardy's irony is not directed as human egotism or the gulf between the real and imagined worth of a person, but it focuses on the very conditions of human existence which he found precarious. Setting his characters, of which there is God's plenty, in a particular southern corner of England which frequently appears in his novels and has come to be known as Wessex, a largely agricultural region, he conceived his characters as elemental figures whose passions, overriding and uncontrollable, were doomed to run the course that the human conditions set for them. These figures who, almost always appeared against the immemorial background of indifferent nature, fell victim to the relentless course of human destiny, acting out their generally tragic dramas with an enduring sense of dignity imposed on them by the circumstances in which they had to live and move. This is true in the case of *The Return of the Native* as well where the characters suffer a lot on account of their passions and the relentless working of fate, Hardy was neither a philosophical novelist nor a profound psychologist like George Eliot; his view of man as it appears in his novels is neither holy consistency nor profound in any great degree. Thomas Hardy's long literary career witnessed the most radical artistic transformations that heralded the birth of the modern era. In his lifetime (1840-1928), he saw the genre of Victorian novels flourishing and fading, giving way to the influential modernist movement that brought sweeping changes in the English literary landscape. With his aureate narrative style and profound sensitivity to the gender and class issues, he wrote with such relentless social realism, incisive criticism on inequality, and miserable subjection of the female gender to the powerful patriarchal institutions, that he, later on, came to be ranked as one of the prominent figures of the Victorian novel. In his novels, with strong rebellion against the crippling moral codes of the age, he raised a strong voice for social and sexual justice, emphasizing subjective morality rather than absolutist Christianity that had become an exploitative tool in the hands of the elitist. Though not a philosopher in the strict sense, his philosophy as it emerges from his humanitarian zeal and vision of gender equality as well as redemption from the confining strictures of Christianity, places him at odds with the Victorian socio-moral and religious ethos. However, his anticipation of a profoundly liberal and morally democratic society whose chief concern would be the assurance of human freedom without any suppression of their basic human instincts makes him one of the pioneers of modernism.

Though one of the master storytellers, he was not a cunning artist having the knack to transform his insights into the novel form so that the reader could feel the presence of the

kind of the elevating elimination that is usually specific to art. His prose, not to talk of his poetry, is often awkward, sometimes even ostentatious, less brilliant, and unequal. Yet what makes him one of the immortal storytellers of the English novel is his profound insights into human nature. *The Return Of The Native* (1878) is a brilliant and ambitious work. The representation of Egdon Heath, steep in history, highlighting both the cruel world of nature and the massive stage on which the dramas of human predicament have been played out since time immemorial, not only sets the tone for this tragic story of helpless human passions but also portrays a sinister and mysterious environment in which the human beings play only an insignificant part, unable to change the course of its history and will. It unfolds the drama of fulfillment and frustration, maternal love and strong romantic passions, a mysterious and paradoxical blend of selfishness and self-sacrifice, of philanthropy and hatred. Characters are strongly passionate, active, or passive, according to the dictates of their nature, but actions, as a rule, never bring the expected results or the intended desires, rather they always bring inexplicable disasters into the lives of those who have no control over their passions. The march of events that are plenteous in the novel, though continuously propelled and impacted by human will and desire, is finally at the mercy of impersonal logic of fact and chances. The forces of coincidence and chances which play a dark and violent role in thwarting the ambitious plans of the characters play havoc with their lives producing the results which were least expected by the perpetrators of these actions. The sinister and violent role and coincidence in Eustacia Vye's life not only keep her from achieving her cherished desires of sumptuous life in the metropolitan city of Paris but also cripple her idealistic intelligence. Similarly, the will and affections of Mrs. Yeobright, the weakness of Wildeve, the passionate idealism of Clym Yeobright become involved in a tragic pattern weaved by the vicious cycle of coincidences. Analyzed against the background of the mysterious Heath, the everyday rustic activities of the minor rural characters, and the lingering sense of history that looms large over the action, seem to reduce all life to a formula, a doom that is always impending but never final. The tragedy occurred; hopes are dashed; expectations and desires are crushed; self-knowledge comes at the heavy cost of bitter experience and tragic loss, but life never stops; it goes on and on with renewed knowledge of the cosmos. The atmosphere of exaggeration and redundant melodrama that mar the realism of the novel at places and can be crud enough, but the novel as a whole strikes the note of tragic grandeur and is redeemed by its epic tone, by the clear realization that here is a microcosm in which the humans, the environment, the feat, and the coincidences are woven into a tragic pattern. Among others, one of Hardy's most impressive qualities that lends his novels and air of vividness and truth is the characteristic of the combination of earthiness and visionary truth which animates *The Return of The Native* as well. Certainly not the best of his novels, *The Return of the Native* retains the elegance of vision and vividness of real and imaginative that makes it stand out as one of the finest Victorian novels conveying through its social realism a clear sighted glimpse of the social structures in which love, marriage, and sex gained a prominent position in the lives of the people.

Research Methodology

This research is qualitative research carried out within the framework of socialist Marxist Feminist theory, fiction, and history. It is an interpretation of the many-sided socialist Feminist and Marxist arguments made by Thomas Hardy in *The Return of the Native*. The socialist Marxist Feminist critical discussion of the ideas is supported by textual evidence. As the research by its very qualitative nature required intensive study of the text to figure out and collect relevant evidence to support my argument, I have deeply and analytically studied the text and marked the relevant portions. After many close readings and intensive study of the text, the relevant textual evidence was located, marked, and extracted. After the extraction of

the data, it was meticulously sorted out and carefully categorized. Finally, socialist Marxist and Feminist theories regarding the representation of Feminist and Marxist perspectives of the novel are applied to analyze the data to address my research questions. Finally, detailed conclusions are drawn from the critical discussions.

Analysis of the Return of the Native: The Politics of Love, Sex and Marriage in the Novel:

The sexual dichotomy and binarism defined the sexual politics of the 19th-century society in which female subordination was made to look like a normal affair. Women, being the constructs of the dominant masculine ideologies, seldom questioned the roles they were given to perform and the social philosophy they were made to conform to. The Return of the Native throws ample light on the binary nature of the sexual and marital relationship between the sexes. In such binaries, the women were always on the 'other side of the slash, assumed to not to have the intellectual and performative worth that males had, therefore, the subjection of women to subordinated roles was normative and unchallengeable. In The Return of the Native too, the female character like Thomasin and Eustacia are severely mired in the socio-political circumstances that surround them. Since ideologically inspired is the functioning of the institutions of the society, the women are more often than not are considered at par with their male counterparts. Both Eustacia and Thomasin are women with strongly marked individualities and hence they display divergent ways towards the limitation imposed upon them by society and behave in ways that communicate their unique identities.

Eustacia Vye, one of the immortal heroines of Thomas Hardy, is a nineteen-year-old middle-class girl of exceptional beauty and charm, who is a daughter of a bandmaster from Corfu. The death of her father when she is quite young, something frequently common to Hardy's heroines, brings her to the household of her grandfather at Egdon Heath which she finds stifling. Far from being happy at this place she feels it is repulsive, therefore, she wants to escape from this dreadful place. About her arrival on the Heath, Hardy writes:

"But he did his best; made Budmouth permanently his home, took great trouble with the child's education, the expenses of which were defrayed by the grandfather, and throve as the chief local musician till her mother's death, when he left off thriving, drank, and died also. The girl was left to the care of her grandfather, who, since three of his ribs became broken in a shipwreck, had lived in this airy perch on Egdon, a spot which had taken his fancy because the house was to be hard for next to nothing and because a remote blue tinge on the horizon between the hills, visible from the cottage door, was traditionally believed to be the English Channel."

The passage quoted above makes it clear that Eustacia has a considerable amount of education because of her father's ambitious efforts to adorn her life with education, and her grandfather had also done his best to give her comfort and happiness by buying a house, but Eustacia had always remained dissatisfied and out of touch with her present habitat, that is Egdon Heath, because she did not consider it her native place. Budmouth where she was born remained in her memories as her native place and she remained emotionally and psychologically attached to this place which was a "fashionable seaside resort", a place more akin to her dreams of a fashionable a modern place. Having no emotional connection with Egdon Heath, she does not feel any sense of belonging to that place, rather feels averse to it, and remains detached from its queer beauty which attracts her husband to a great deal. Hardy describes the beauty and eternity of Egdon Heath in glowing terms:

"A Saturday afternoon in November was approaching the time of twilight, and the vast tract of unenclosed wild known as Egdon Heath embrowned itself moment by moment. Overhead the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky was a tent that had the whole heath for its floor. The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half-an-hour to eve; it could

in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread.” The Heath has a life of its own like the living characters; it is painted as a living being having moods of its own that vary at times and reflect the varying moods of its inhabitants. Our first introduction to Eustacia Vey comes at a time when she is standing on the Heath, her figure defined by the habitat. Hardy enlivens the scene thus:

“There the form stood, motionless as the hill beneath. Above the plain rose the hill, above the hill, rose the barrow, above the barrow rose the figure. Above the figure was nothing that could be mapped elsewhere than on a celestial globe. Such a perfect, delicate, and necessary finish did the figure give to the dark pile of hills that it seemed to be the only obvious justification of their outline. Without it, there was the dome without the lantern; with it, the architectural demands of the mass were satisfied. The scene was strangely homogeneous. The vale, the upland, the barrow, and the figure above it, all amounted only to unity. Looking at this or that member of the group was not observing a complete thing, but a fraction of a thing.”

Though Eustacia dislikes heath to the core of her heart and intensely wishes to run away from this place, she has been described as an indispensable part of the place, as if she had no existence of her independent of the heath. For Eustacia living at heath is like being condemned to the darkest region of Hades, her life at this place is like confinement to nothing less than her punishment in hell. Her relationship to nature which is personified in the form of the heath is characteristic of Hardy’s depiction of antagonistic relations between man and nature in which the latter always thwarts man’s plans and ruins his life. John Peck aptly mentions the nature of antagonism between man and the forces of nature in his book *How to Study a Hardy Novel*:

“In Hardy’s novel, you should always be able to find evidence of society versus nature tension at the heart of the material...The first thing that might strike you is that Egdon Heath must in some way represent nature: even at the outset, it seems reasonable to speculate that the order of society will be set against the untamed wildness of the heath. The characters who live here are likely to be caught between the pull of society and the pull of nature, including their natures.”

Not surprisingly Eustacia longs for a brilliant life of pomp and show, of luxury and lavish pleasures, the social world where she is noticed, appreciated and sought after, and made to feel an important figure, but on the contrary, what she meets on the heath is sheer frustration. The biggest impediment in the way of her achieving perfect happiness and longed for cosmopolitan pleasures is Egdon Heath. In Hardy’s novel, there is something always ominous, beyond human control and authority that plays havoc in human life without discriminating the good and the bad. The *Return of the Native* is no exception to these rules as also Egdon Heath represents an overwhelming aspect of wild nature that desolates the human projects ruthlessly. Eustacia’s beauty is her priceless asset but at the same time, it is the same beauty that leads her life to a tragic end. Conscious of her irresistible charm she grows vain and arrogant and does not stick to one man in the matters of love and marriage. What is important to her more than anything else is her dream of a pleasant life, and this dream originates from her consciousness of being extraordinarily charming. Hardy delineates her beauty:

“That she was tall and straight in build, that she was lady-like in her movements, was all that could be learned of her just now, her form being wrapped in a shawl folded in the old cornerwise fashion, and her head in a large handkerchief, protection not superfluous at this hour and place. Her back was towards the wind, which blew from the north-west; but whether

she had adopted that aspect because of the chilly gusts which played about her exceptional position, or because her interest lay in the south-east, did not at first appear.”

Hardy's female protagonists are creatures of strong emotions, Eustacia is also one such heroine who has been presented as a passionate woman; passions are not divorced from sexuality and it is always the sexual politics that determine the social behaviors of the male and female towards each other. With a distinct penchant for the sexualized depiction of female characters, Hardy presents Eustacia in eroticized terms. She is “full limbed” (68) implying her voluptuousness, and “with two matchless lips” (58) that paint her in terms of a physically attractive girl. Romance is part and parcel of Eustacia's life and is defining the future of her life. She not only loves Clym and then Wildeve passionately but also likes to be loved in the same passionate manner. Her character and destiny are vividly shaped by this feature of her life. Hardy describes this defining feature of her life:

“To be loved to madness-such was her great desire. Love was to her the one cordial which could drive away from the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed too long for the abstraction called passionate love more than any particular lover” (71).

Love permeates her body and soul and conditions her thinking. She just cannot keep apart the idea of love from her being. She loves the idea of love. Her life rotates around the idea of loving and being loved in return, and she remains obsessed with the desire of being madly loved. Nothing less than intense love can satisfy her craving. Because of compulsive life at heath and lack of responsive love from the unworthy people of heath, she remains in hallo of brooding gloom. Hardy presents her view of love:

“Fidelity in love for fidelity's sake had less attraction of her than for most women: fidelity because of love's grip had much. A blaze of love, and extinction, was better than a lantern glimmer of the same which should last long years” (71).

Eustacia is aware of the painful reality that love brings in its wake the misery but she cannot hold herself from undergoing such an experience. More than the outcome of love she is intrigued by the idea of thrill in love, so she thinks against the possibility of coming to a miserable end, and tries to find a certain kind of pleasure and novelty in the experience of falling in love. She had a powerful streak to defy the social conventions and go against the rules society had prescribed for women. She possesses an inexhaustible fund of emotions and feels compelled by her strong emotions to act according to her needs, therefore, she disregards any gender-based social structures that define males and females according to their genetic makeup and assign them the duties accordingly. She is rebellious both against the social norms and conventional ways of looking at the female figure. Hardy has particularly exercised these strong features of her personality by using the imagery of darkness and mystery while portraying her character. Her rebellious nature inevitably isolates her from other people as well as from the place she lives, inducing in her the thoughts of escape from there. Her inner thoughts, as they are conveyed to us by the narrator, also demonstrate her isolation through independent nature, for example, her long walks at night through light on her fearless nature and an independent will that dares to do what she thinks.

She entertains high hopes about marriage and has rosy anticipations about marital relationships. Her relationship with the men is based upon her romantic aspirations and her notion of giving a new orientation to her life through the agency of love based on marriage. Her unalterable desire of escaping from heath is deeply linked with the idea of a passionate love affair and an urge to transcend the world of ordinary men and women leads her to different love affairs in the novel. She is not the sort of woman who would waste away her life waiting for the good times, instead, she takes drastic steps to transform her life through such steps that may disgrace her in the eyes of the public. Our first encounter with her confirms her to be a woman of instinctive love. She appears as a figure who lights a fire on

the heath as a signal of love for her lover Damon Wildeve, a faithless lover, an engineer who once had great prospects of doing better things, but now runs an inn called “the quiet woman”. There are strong suggestions that Eustacia was in love with Wildeve. He is a sort of person for whom marriage is a gallows and he would not stick to one woman instead he pursues exciting love affairs with women and prefers to remain in love rather than solemnize the love into marriage. Hardy gives a brief sketch of his personality and nature:

“He was quite a young man...The grace of his movement was singular: it was the pantomimic expression of a lady-killing career. Next came into notice the more material qualities, among which was a profuse crop of hair impending over the top of his face, lending to his forehead the high-cornered outline of an Early Gothic shield; and a neck which was smooth and round as cylinder. The lower half of his figure was of the light build. Altogether he was one in whom no man would have seen anything to admire, and in whom no woman would have seen anything to dislike.”

The passage clearly illustrates that Wildeve is a graceful person having a certain air of danger about his personality for girls. He is flirtatious and a womanizer by nature and does not hesitate from shifting his love from one to another woman when he is sick of a person. He is both cunning and charming and wavers continuously between Eustacia and Thomasin to win their hearts, but once he succeeds in trapping either of these girls, he shifts his attentions for one or the other reason which makes him a highly fickle person. His unreliability, however, is countered by his elegant looks that help him to beguile his real intentions. Behind the façade of handsomeness, he carries a capricious heart. He does not even budge from using one girl for making the other jealous. Eustacia, having learned the failure of Wildeve’s marriage with Thomasin, feels tempted to renew her romantic affair with him, and sets a bone fire as a token to call him to her. There is, however, another side of her character: she is not all the time emotional and has her moments of reason as well in which she demonstrates a discerning attitude towards people; at such time she does not fail to recognize that Wildeve is a man with many drawbacks, his inconstant nature being the most fatal one. The reason why she continues to think of marrying him is that she does not have any other better choice than him. Had she had some better person in her life to replace Wildeve, she would have taken no time to abandon Wildeve because in her moments of peaceful mind when she reviews her relationship with him she feels disillusioned but for the lack of better choice she beguiles herself by imagining a better future with him. Paradoxically she thinks herself better than and different from the inhabitants of the heath, she is not unique in the sense that she also entertains high hopes about her future on the arrival of a man on the heath. Her imagination of glorious life and perfect union with a future husband keeps her from valuing what she has and directs her gaze to higher skies where ideal love and marriage wait for her. Even when she perpetually fails to find someone superb around her for marriage, her imagination roams about building the image of an ideal marriage.

Conclusion

In the light of the comprehensive discussion focusing upon the politics of love, marriage, and sex in the Victorian age as it has been realistically captured by Thomas Hardy in his entire fiction and especially in *Return of The Native*, it is fairly clear that the love and the romantic ideas associated with the institution of marriage were the driving force behind the relationship between men and women in the Victorian era. Hardy’s representation of the various characters in the novel, particularly female characters, centers on the socially mediated ideology of love and the way it defined the emotional life of the people. Marriage was the ultimate end of love and the women aspired to be married to some eligible husband the major if not the sole criteria for which was social agreeability, and the financial strength of the lover, though the place of belonging also played a major role in the selection of the

spouse. Conventional and male-dominated, as the Victorian society was, treated the male and female moralities on quite different lines: a male was licensed to indulge in all sorts of moral corruption with little or no chances of being tainted for such acts of liberal morality while women were strictly forbidden to indulge in such activities and love, though, it was believed to be a perfect human passion and the privilege of both the sexes, was appropriated by male and the women was supposed to behave coyly in this matter, not taking initiative rather simply conforming to the male-dominated social order. Strict categorization of the male and female spheres of action and responsibility necessitated for women to accord superiority to males and live her life in their subordination. Hardy highlights, among other things, the world of Love, marriage, and sex in the novel and points out how in the society deeply mired in gender politics the fair sex was not considered at par with the hard sex and was, thus, mostly deprived of their social, personal and political rights that drove the women to idealize a rosy future with the husband for which, however, they had to heavily depend upon the patriarchy. As a perfect representation of the socio-cultural trends of the society, the novel can be said to be the literary documentation of the rites, norms, and trends of the Victorian society in which marriage was the sure means of living a secure life for women, however, some ambitious and strongly individual women like Eustacia, feeling deeply agitated at their restricted life, failed to live a life of their own because of the restrictive societal norms and patriarchal dictates. While there is no denying the fact that Hardy holds responsible women as well for their tragedies when they succumb to their destructive passions, it is largely true that this is the orthodox morality of the society that keeps the women from realizing their fullest potential and they remain mired in the whirlpool of patriarchal values.

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