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THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDÉ I

FACULTY OF ARTS, LETTERS AND  
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POST GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR ARTS,  
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# ETHICAL DILEMMA: A STUDY OF THOMAS HARDY'S *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

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of a Master's Degree in English

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## **DEDICATION**

To my father, Ndong Godwin Tang

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## ABSTRACT

This study, entitled “Ethical Dilemma: A Study of Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*” is based on the hypothesis that in Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, whenever Tess and other characters are caught between two choices, they often choose transgressive ones, which regularly result in tragic ends. This dissertation argues that characters in the narrative are always placed in circumstances of uncertainty or perplexity, where it is never easy to make a choice, and most often than not, what they would naturally do goes against moral and social demands. The characters are, therefore, often in conflict with themselves and society. The study of Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* set out to analyse the dilemma and moral choices characters face throughout the novel. The study investigates the socio-cultural factors that contribute to the ethical dilemmas. Through the exploration of the Victorian era’s rigid social expectations, gender roles, class divisions, and how they shape characters’ ethical choices, the research sets out to examine the consequences of characters’ ethical choices, and its impacts on their lives as well as the lives of other characters around them. The critical tool used for the analysis of this research is Psychoanalysis. The choice of Psychoanalysis is relevant in that it allows readers to explore the psychological motivations and internal conflicts of the novel’s characters. Also, it permits us to examine the unconscious thoughts, feelings, and desires that determines the choices and destinies of the characters in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*. This investigation confirmed our hypothesis by the fact that most characters indeed tend to choose transgressive resolutions, when they are caught between two or more difficult situations.

## RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude, intitulée ‘‘Ethical Dilemma: A Study of Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*’’ est basée sur l’hypothèse que dans *Tess des D’Urbervilles*, chaque fois que les personnages sont pris entre deux choix, ils aboutissent souvent à des choix transgressifs, qui aboutissent régulièrement à des fins tragiques. Cette thèse soutient que les personnages du récit sont toujours placés dans des circonstances d’incertitude ou de perplexité, où il n’est jamais facile de faire un choix, et le plus souvent, ce qu’ils feraient naturellement va à l’encontre des exigences morales et sociales. Les personnages sont donc souvent en conflit avec eux-mêmes et avec la société. L’étude de Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* a entrepris d’analyser le dilemme et les choix moraux auxquels les personnages sont confrontés tout au long du roman. L’étude étudie les facteurs culturels et sociaux qui contribuent aux dilemmes éthiques, en explorant les attentes sociales rigides de l’époque victorienne, les rôles de genre, les divisions de classe et la façon dont ils façonnent les choix éthiques des personnages. La recherche vise également à examiner les conséquences des choix éthiques des personnages et leurs impacts sur leur vie ainsi que sur la vie des autres personnages qui les entourent. L’outil essentiel utilisé pour l’analyse de cette recherche est la psychanalyse. Le choix de la psychanalyse est pertinent en ce sens qu’il permet aux lecteurs d’explorer les motivations psychologiques et les conflits internes des personnages des romans. En outre, cela nous permet d’examiner les pensées, les sentiments et les désirs inconscients qui déterminent les choix et les destins des personnages de *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*. Cette enquête a confirmé notre hypothèse par le fait que les personnages ont en effet tendance à choisir des résolutions transgressifs, lorsqu’ils sont pris entre deux situations difficiles ou plus.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Victorian Europe, spanning from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century, was a period of significant social, cultural, and political changes. Harold Perkin, in *The Origins of Modern English Society*, elaborates on the social and economic changes that occurred in England during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Perkin, this era witnessed industrialization, urbanization and scientific advancements, along with the consolidation of colonial empires (4). These transformations brought about numerous ethical dilemmas that challenged the moral fabric of society and prompted intense debates on issues of social justice, gender inequality, imperialism, and scientific ethics.

One of the prominent cases of ethical dilemmas in Victorian Europe was the struggle for women's rights and prevailing gender inequality. Women faced limited opportunities for education, employment, and political participation, leading to the discussions of the ethics of gender roles and the need for women's emancipation. The writings of feminist thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft and the suffragette movement shed light on the ethical implications of denying women equal rights and opportunities. In her seminal work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft believed that women's lack of education and limited roles perpetuated ignorance and dependence, leading to a society that was less enlightened and progressive. She addressed the ethical implications of the double standards imposed on women in matters of morality and sexuality, highlighting the ethical dilemmas that arose from denying women equal rights, emphasizing the principles of justice, reason and equality (13).

The industrial revolution brought about significant wealth accumulation for the upper class, while the working class population faced exploitative working conditions and poverty. This disparity raised questions about social justice, economic fairness, and the ethics of capitalism. The works of social reformers like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels highlighted the moral dilemmas of class inequality and advocated labour rights and social reforms. In *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Tom Bottomore analyzes Marx's critique on capitalism, which is centered on the exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class. According to them,



capitalism perpetuated social inequality, alienation and class struggle. An ethical dilemma stemming from this analysis is the exploitation of labour. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels comment that “the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle (Bottomore, 75). This means that throughout history, under capitalism, workers have been alienated from the fruits of their labour, as they do not receive the full value of what they produce. This raises ethical questions about justice and dilemmas regarding the unjust distribution of resources and the responsibility of society to address poverty and inequality. On such occasions, the masses find themselves at the crossroads of rioting against unjust treatments, or silently succumbing to their minear jobs.

The colonial expansion and imperialism of Victorian Europe also posed issues about ethical dilemmas. The acquisition of colonies and the subjugation of indigenous populations raised moral questions about the treatment of the “other.” Debates on the ethics of empire-building, cultural assimilation, and the exploitation of resources and the labour in colonies emerged. Scholars like Edward Said in *Orientalism*, critically examined the ethical implications of colonialism and the construction of racial hierarchies. Said states that

*Eliot was not wrong in implying that by about 1830, German scholarship had fully attained in European pre-eminence. Yet at no time in German scholarship during the first two-thirds of the 19<sup>th</sup> century could a close partnership have developed between the orientalists and a protracted, sustained national interest in the orient. There was nothing in Germany to correspond to the Anglo-French presence in India, the Levant, and North Africa. (19)*

This quotation implies that the process of colonization involved the imposition of European norms and values onto the colonized cultures, resulting in a sense of cultural superiority and the denigration of Eastern cultures. This created a power dynamic where the colonizers justified their domination by portraying the colonized masses as inferior. Said contends that these distortions and biases shaped the western policies towards the East, as well as the academic and cultural representation of Eastern cultures. Orientalist scholarship, characterized by its paternalistic and Eurocentric perspective, further reinforced the power imbalance between the colonizers and the

colonized. The ethical dilemmas resulting from this process include the perpetuation of inequality, oppression, and the erasure of the voices and agency of the colonized.

Urbanization was another crucial aspect of the 19<sup>th</sup> century European transformation. As people migrated from rural areas to cities seeking employment opportunities, overcrowded living conditions, poverty and social inequality became widespread. In the novel *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens condemns England's industrialization and enslavement of the spirit. *Hard Times* reflects on the negative consequences of the people of Coketown. The ethical challenge lay in addressing the growing disparity between the privileged minority and the impoverished majority in crowded urban centers. Also, the rapid pace of urbanization presented significant public health challenges. Lack of proper sanitation, inadequate housing, and limited access to healthcare resulted in the spread of diseases and epidemics. The ethical dilemma involved finding a balance between the demands of economic progress, urban development, and the responsibilities towards public health and social well-being (Patricia E. Johnson: "*Hard Times* and the structure of Industrialism," 128).

On the one hand, Victorian England was a "tremendously exciting period with several literary, social and political movements. It was a time of prosperity and major reform. On the other hand, it was a period of contradictions (Viktoria, 1). Lang Viktoria explores ethical dilemmas of Victorian England in an article entitled; "Close your Eyes and Think of England. Ethics of Prudery: Moral Questions in Victorian England." Viktoria opines that the Victorian era was known for its strict moral codes and emphasis on sexual purity. Ethical dilemmas were bound to arise from the tension between societal expectations of modesty and personal autonomy. People faced conflicts between conforming to social standards and asserting their own desires and freedoms. Another potential aspect ethical dilemmas explored is the discrepancy between public morality and private behaviour. Victorians were often expected to uphold high moral standards publicly, while engaging in activities that contradicted those ideals behind closed doors, leading to issues of hypocrisy and the ethics of societal expectations. The ethical dilemmas didn't only dwell on the lives of the people, it extended to their art; the literature of the Victorian era.

The literature of the Victorian period reflects a range of ethical dilemmas that were prevalent during the era. It explores the moral complexities that arose from the stark social

divisions of the time. Charles Dickens's novels such as *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times*, and *Great Expectations*, delve into the ethical dilemmas related to social inequality, poverty, and the unjust treatment of the poor. He criticizes the social injustices of his time and emphasizes the moral duty of individuals and society to address these issues. George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and *Adam Bede*, engage with ethical dilemmas concerning moral choices, integrity, and personal responsibility. Her characters often face conflicts between duty and desire, wrestle with societal expectations and confront the consequences of their actions. According to Jesse Rosenthal in *Moralised Fables*, ethical dilemmas in Victorian literature stem from "when the English actually believe that they know "intuitively" what is good and evil, when they therefore suppose that they no longer require Christianity as the guarantee of morality, as we merely witness...that the origin of English morality has been forgotten" (1). In this regard, she believes that what Eliot, shows us about egoism and what Dickens reminds us about the dehumanizing effects of bureaucracy. Discussions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century literature, therefore, stresses the dominance of utilitarianism to such an extent that there seems to be little else on the ethical landscape (3). Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, explores the ethical dilemmas related to aesthetics, morality, and the pursuit of pleasure. This piece examines the consequences of indulgence, the conflict between art and morality, and the potentially corrupting influence of social expectations. The writings of these Victorian writers all tackle a common subject; ethical dilemma, which surfaced during the Victorian era as a result of social change, moral values and conventions, critique of society, psychological explorations, education and moral guidance.

Like other Victorian novelists, Thomas Hardy is well acquitted with the Victorian era's stark disparities. He openly expressed his disapproval of England's stringent marriage laws both in his public statements and fiction. In a magazine article titled, "The Anti-Marriage League" published in, Edinburgh, 1896, Hardy boldly asserts that these laws were responsible for the significant portion of community's unhappiness. He points out these disapprovals in *Jude the Obscure*, and in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, where the rigid social norms and moral standards result to ethical codes of conduct. Hardy's protagonists frequently experience the effects of "Fortune's False Wheel," an expression coined by Chaucer and frequently echoed by Shakespeare, which is a driving force posing ethical dilemmas. In his *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy presents tragic characters who struggle with their inner demons. His writings often critique societal hypocrisy and the often flawed standards imposed on individuals.

In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, he presents characters entangled in ethical implications, where their personal morals clash with societal expectations and prevailing double standards.

Ethical dilemmas weren't evident only in Hardy's writings, he faced a number of these dilemmas in his personal life as well. In his book, *A Complete Critical Guide to Thomas Hardy*, Geoffrey Harvey gives a detailed account of Thomas Hardy's life, some of which include the struggle between ethical choices. One notable incident in Hardy's life is his marriage to Emma Gifford. Overtime, their relationship deteriorates, and they become estranged. Hardy later falls in love with Florence Dugdale, an aspiring writer and actress, which presents him with a moral choice. Ultimately, Hardy decides not to divorce Emma, as divorce carried significant social stigma during the Victorian era. This decision causes internal conflict and becomes a significant source of dissatisfaction and unhappiness in his personal life. Additionally, Hardy faced ethical dilemmas related to the publication and reception of his works. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* were met with controversy and moral criticism due to their descriptions of sexuality, social issues, and the challenges to controversial morality. Hardy had to navigate the tension between his artistic integrity and the societal expectations and moral standards of his time.

Ethics plays a crucial role in shaping individual behaviour and social norms. In Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, ethics is woven intricately into the narrative, highlighting the consequences of ethical choices and the impacts of societal expectations. Throughout the narrative, Hardy presents a wide range of characters who grapple with ethical dilemmas and make choices that reflect their moral compass. Tess, as the central character is faced with numerous moral challenges, and her decisions shape the course of her life. The choices made by characters like Alec, Angel, and even Tess's parents, demonstrate the varying degrees of ethical awareness and the consequences that arise from their actions

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

In Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the characters are always placed in circumstances of uncertainty and perplexity, where it is never easy to make a choice. More often than not, what they would naturally do goes against social and moral demands. The characters are, therefore, often in conflict with themselves and with the society. This is to say that in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, characters' natural inclinations or desires run contrary to what society defines

as morally acceptable or socially proper. This creates a sense of inner conflict as these characters struggle to reconcile their own instincts and desires with expectations and judgments of the world around them. Furthermore, the conflicts faced by characters are not limited to external factors but also manifest as internal struggles. When Hardy presents characters in such morally complex situations, there is a need to explore limitations of societal conventions and traditional notions of right and wrong. These issues raised in this dissertation question the rigidity of societal expectations and empathize with the internal turmoil experienced by Tess when faced with conflicting values and desires.

### **Research Questions**

From the observations made above, the following research questions will be addressed:

- In what ways do characters in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* live at the crossroads?
- How do the characters manage dilemma situations?
- How do the characters solve the dilemma situations they find themselves in?

### **Hypothesis**

This research is based on the hypothesis that in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, whenever characters are caught between two or more choices, they generally resort to transgressive or morally questionable actions. The characters are fated to make wrong choices. This hypothesis leads to the analyses of characters' motivations to understand why they would choose transgressive actions and how these choices contribute to the overall ethical dilemmas present in the novel.

### **Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to explore the significance of characters' experiences at life's crossroads, where they are confronted with the difficulty in making right choices. It seeks to understand the transformative nature of these crossroad moments and the impact they have on the characters' lives. It also aims to delve into the dynamic relationship between characters' choices, the responsibilities they hold, and the larger societal and moral context in which these decisions are made. This study also sets out to examine the potential resolutions to the ethical dilemmas faced by the characters in the novel, by exploring the alternative paths they choose to resolve the often dilemma situations, and analyse the outcomes of these choices. By evaluating

the choices available to the characters and considering the ethical implications, it seeks to deepen our understanding of the complexities of decision-making in morally ambiguous situations and provide insights into the nature of human responsibility.

### **Significance of Study**

By studying the ethical dilemmas within *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, this dissertation contributes to the broader field of Hardy studies by providing a comprehensive analysis of the novels moral themes and ethical implications. It delves into the moral complexities, dilemmas, and the conflicts faced by characters, providing a deeper understanding of Hardy's explorations of human action. It expands the discourse on moral frameworks, ethical decision-making, and human condition in his writing, making a valuable contribution to the field of Hardy studies. This research also contributes to literary studies by exploring the ethical dimensions of the novel, providing critical analyses, contextual understanding, comparative study, and furthering critical discourse surrounding Thomas Hardy.

### **Research Motivation**

The complexities and nuances of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are captivating. They pave the way for moral and ethical explorations, societal critique, cultural relevance, historical context, and an academic curiosity. Our interest in the work was to examine the ethical implications and dilemmas present in the novel. Set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* provides a profound insight into social, political and economic conditions of Victorian England, which raises important questions about societal expectations, gender roles, social hierarchy, morality, and the consequences of one's actions. The research endeavor was motivated by these factors, which serve as a starting point for ethical discussions, and as well handles universal themes.

### **Scope of Work**

The exploration of Ethical Dilemma is exclusively devoted to Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Therefore, it does not claim to cover everything he has written. Whenever need arises, we shall consult from autobiographical and biographical sources, and evenly make use of wide range of findings closely linked to our area of study.

## Definition of Key Terms

For a better comprehension of the issues raised in this study, it is necessary to give a contextualised definition of the key terms used in this research. The major terms to be defined here are “Ethics”, “Dilemma”, and “Ethical Dilemma.”

The *Webster’s New World College Dictionary* defines ethics as a branch of philosophy that deals with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives of such actions. According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* ethics is the study of what is morally right and wrong, or a set of beliefs about what is morally right and wrong. The *Collins English Dictionary* terms ethics as the philosophical study of the moral value of human conduct and of the rules and principles that ought to govern it; moral philosophy. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* terms ethics as the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligations; a set of moral principles or values. As per the *Oxford English Dictionary*, ethics is defined as a branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles and values. These dictionaries have a commonality of the word “Ethics”, as they provide a consistent and agreed-upon understanding of the concept. This common understanding acts as a foundation for communication and facilitates mutual comprehension when discussing ethical matters.

Kraut and Richard, “Aristotle’s Ethics,” regard ethics as the study of virtues and moral character. According to them, Aristotle conceives of ethical theory as a field distinct from the theoretical sciences. Its methodology must match the subject matter- good action. Ethics is not just about following the rules or laws, but about cultivating good character traits and virtue. He believes that we study ethics in order to improve our lives, and therefore its principal concern is the nature of human well-being.

Martha Nussbaum, a contemporary philosopher has defined ethics in her works. Her approach to ethics is rooted in the Aristotelian tradition and focuses on the idea of human flourishing and capabilities. According to Nussbaum in Anders Burman and Synne Myreobe’s book, *Martha Nussbaum*, ethics is concerned with the question of how to lead a good life. Burman and Myreobe state that “a recurrent assumption in her (Nussbaum) works is that we have no option but to search for the criteria for the good life within the human realm itself, among our external norms and beliefs” (50). In Nussbaum’s view, one of the merits of

Aristotle's ethics is precisely that it refrains from positing any absolute values that would govern our lives from outside, so to speak (50).

M.H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* defines ethics as a concept related to the study of morality and moral principles in literature. In literary terms, ethics refers to the exploration and representation of moral values, ethical dilemmas, and the consequences on human actions within a work of literature. Literary ethics often involve the examination of ethical theories, moral philosophies, and ethical frameworks presented in a literary work. This can include the discussions about what is considered right or wrong, good or evil, just and unjust within the fictional universe created by the author.

In this work, ethics will refer to the moral principles and values explored throughout *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, which govern human behaviour. It examines concepts such as right and wrong, good and evil, fairness, justice, and virtue. Ethics in this work provides a framework for evaluating human actions and determining what is morally acceptable or unacceptable. It explores questions of individual and collective responsibility, the consequences of actions and the principles that guide decision making.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines dilemma as a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives, especially undesirable ones. The *American Heritage Dictionary* terms dilemma as a circumstance that requires a choice between options that are, or seem, equally unfavourable or mutually exclusive. The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines dilemmas as a situation in which one has to make a difficult choice between two or more things. The profound similarity of the above dilemma definitions suggest a consensus among these dictionaries regarding the meaning of the word having consistent definitions across multiple sources enhances the reliability and accuracy of the information provided.

Stan Crowder and Brent. E. Turvey, in their book, *Ethical Justice*, define an ethical dilemma as a type of ethical issue that arises when the available choices and obligations in a specific situation do not allow for an ethical outcome. In such instances, a choice or action is required and all the available alternatives violate an explicit ethical principle (5).



Frederic Reamer, in an article entitled, “Ethical Dilemmas and Confidentiality” states that an ethical dilemma occurs when a person encounters conflicts among values, duties, rights, and obligations. Ethical dilemmas occur when one cannot simply perform all the relevant prima facie duties; to perform one duty would require violation of another. One may have to choose between two incompatible but ordinarily appealing options or between two incompatible and ordinarily unappealing options. Either way, one has to sacrifice something (554).

### **Structure of the Work**

This dissertation comprises an Introduction, four chapters and a Conclusion. The Introduction consists of fundamental elements like the research problem, research questions, a hypothesis, research objectives, motivation, significance of study, a scope of study, a definition of key terms.

Chapter One entitled, “Theoretical Framework” and “Review of Literature” handles the theoretical framework chosen for this research, which is Freudian Psychoanalysis. It focuses on the definition, the development of the theory, and why it is deemed appropriate for this study. The second part dwells on the works of previous researchers on the novel under study.

Chapter Two, captioned “Life at the Crossroads” sets out to analyse the various dilemma situations which characters face at the crossroads of their journeys, which results in the conflict between failed aspirations and ethical crisis. This chapter explores the significance of characters’ experiences at these junctions, where they are confronted with the difficulty in making right choices. It seeks to understand the transformative nature of these dilemma situations and the impact they have on the characters’ lives.

Chapter Three, titled “Choices and Responsibilities” sets out to examine the various choices characters make in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, and the consequences of their choices. It provides a deeper understanding of the societal and cultural factors that shape and limit the characters’ choices and the consequences that follow suit. This involves exploring the role of gender, class, and societal expectations in influencing their decisions, as well as the consequences of conforming to or deviating from these norms.

Chapter Four entitled “Resolving Dilemma Situations” focuses on settling the various dilemma situations through transgression and obstinacy, which ultimately lead to characters’

entrapment. It examines the broader implication of characters' use of these tools, since they are seen as acts of defiance or rebellion against oppressive social norms. This chapter is concerned with the human desire to thrive amidst obstacles in society and contends that no matter the tools characters use in resolving their constant dilemma situations, they are bound to meet tragic ends.

The Conclusion summarizes the research findings, and validates the research hypothesis.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter consists of two major sections. The first section gives an account of the theoretical paradigm which has been used in the analysis of the novel under consideration. In this view, therefore, the section will explain Freudian psychoanalysis and its importance in the interpretation of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The second part of this chapter will review works which have been written on the novel under study in order to prove the novelty of the present research.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

Although a literary critical theory, psychoanalysis was a technique that was first experimented in medicine. The term Psychoanalysis is used to refer to many aspects of Sigmund Freud's work and research. He pioneered the field in the early 1890's, and initiated ground breaking theories about the foundation and functioning of the human mind. These ideas have had a profound influence on psychology and on the entire modern civilisation. Through these theories, he created a new type of psychological therapy, based on the patient talking about whatever was on their mind; memories, dreams, thoughts and feelings. Freud drew a distinction between the conscious and the unconscious thoughts, stating that the unconscious impulses drive the unconscious mind to control thoughts and actions.

Jo Nash, in an article entitled, “Psychoanalysis: A History of Freud’s Psychoanalytic theory”, suggests that Freud’s greatest impact on the world was his model of the human mind into three layers, each with their own roles and functions. The three different layers are; the Sub-conscious mind, the Conscious mind and the Unconscious mind. The sub-conscious mind consists of anything that could be brought into the conscious mind. It also acts as a guard, controlling the information that is allowed to enter into awareness. The conscious mind contains all the thoughts, memories, feelings, wishes of which we are aware at any given moment. This is the aspect of our mental processes that we can think and talk about rationally (Civitarese & Ferro, 24). This also includes our memory, which is not always part of consciousness, but can be retrieved easily and brought into awareness. The unconscious mind is a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges, and memories that are outside of our conscious awareness. The unconscious contains contents that may unacceptable or unpleasant, such as feelings of pain, anxiety, or conflict. According to Freud, thoughts and emotions outside of our awareness continue to exert an influence on our behaviour. The unconscious mind can be seen in what are known as the slips of the tongue, dreams, and irrational behaviour that motivates most of our actions. According to one of Freud’s significant works- *The Interpretation of Dreams*, dreams represent the unconscious mind’s attempt to resolve disputes or express wants that are not permitted in our waking thoughts. He believed that the sub-conscious mind served as a kind of guardian censor, which did not only allow benign thoughts to enter the conscious mind. Freud claimed that during dreams, the censoring is weakened, allowing for the visibility of prohibited desires to our sleeping minds, although under some kind of disguise.

Originally, Freud considered the three systems, conscious, sub-conscious and unconscious as major aspects of the mind. Later, he proposed a structured model of the mind and personality that better explained his original ideas about the conscious and unconscious processes. In his book *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, Charles Bressler, states that this model comprises of three elements; “The irrational, instinctual, unknown and unconscious part of the psyche Freud calls it the Id, and the rational, logical, waking part the Ego, the third, the Superego, acts like an internal censor, causing us to make moral judgments in the light of social pressures” (90). In a very general sense, the models represent biological, psychological, and social forces, respectively.

The Id operates at an unconscious level as the motor of our two main instinctual drives: Eros, or the survival instinct that drives us to engage in life-sustaining activities, and Thanatos, or the death instinct that drives destructive, aggressive, and violent behaviour. Irwin Sarason, in his book *Personality: An Objective Approach*, throws more light on the development of the Id, Ego and Superego. According to Sarason:

*The Id or Libido represents the total supply of psychic energy of the organism. In its original form, this energy stems from a composite of sexual and aggressive needs. By sexual needs Freud referred to the sum of the organism's pleasure seeking and erogenous strivings for bodily satisfaction: by aggressive impulses Freud meant the need to destroy objects... the energy of the Id may be expressed in a direct or raw form, as in the general excitement of the infant, or it may be attached to objects in the environment. (36)*

When sexual and aggressive impulses are expressed in a raw form, they are considered objectless energy. However, when these impulses are directed to a specific object, they are called cathected or directed energy. At birth, the psychic energy is believed to be objectless. However, as the child grows, they start to develop attachments to people and things in their environment. The process of investing psychic energy in aspects of the environment is called the establishment of the cathexes, according to Freud. Freud also believed that the sexual and aggressive impulses of infancy and childhood were devices used in understanding important aspects of personality. His primary focus was to explain why we sometimes think irrationally and act strangely. Since the Id emphasizes on the fact that a child is a pleasure-seeking organism unable to control impulses and only tenuously aware of its environment, Freud described the infant as adhering to a pleasure principle rather than a reality principle. An account for the development in an infant, of the capacity for adherence to a reality principle, leads to the development of the ego.

The ego is a modification of the Id that emerges as a result of the direct influence of the external world. It is the executive of the personality in the sense that it regulates libidinal drive energies so that satisfaction accords with the demands of reality. It is the centre of reason, reality-testing, and common sense, and has at its command a range of defensive stratagems that

can deflect, repress or transform the expression of unrealistic to forbidden driven energies. (Lapsley) The ego, as Sarason defines it, “is the gradual acquisition of skills and techniques for achieving one’s goals and satisfying one’s wishes within the bounds of the demands of reality”. (37) This implies that when we’re born, our desires (libidinal or Id impulses) are not connected to reality. But as we grow up, our ego develops and starts guiding our interactions with the world around us. The Ego helps us control and manage our impulses and desires, and connect them to things we want. This happens because the Ego develops in response to the challenges and risks we face as children. The Ego serves to explain that a child has to first experience danger, which will enable him to develop abilities and techniques for coping with it. According to Sarason:

*This ability of the ego to inhibit the expression of Id impulses is a prime characteristic of secondary process or reality oriented thinking. Secondary process thinking adheres to the reality principle just as primary process thinking adheres to the pleasure principle. A strongly developed ego allows for pleasure gratification if its attainment does not arouse intolerable anxiety. Thus a trip to the top of the Empire State Building might provide impulse gratification, but most individuals would deprive themselves of the trill of jumping off. (38)*

The quotation indicates that, it is a common occurrence for us to hold back from expressing our impulse, even when it is perfectly safe to do so. Interestingly, feelings of guilt can have the same effect as being in a dangerous situation when it comes to preventing us from acting on our impulses. Freud integrated this aspect of human behaviour into his framework through the concept of the superego.

The superego emerges as an idealized version of the ego. This happens when the child takes on the characteristics of their parental figures through introjection (the process by means of which a child comes to experience guilt and to adopt the moral and ethical code of the family and the society). (Sarason, 39) Unlike the Id, which seeks pleasure, and the ego, which follows the reality principle, the superego encourages the pursuit of lofty goals and perfection. According to Freud, the superego is an important part of his theory that represents the better aspects of man. As kids, we see these better qualities in our parents and look up to them with admiration and

fear. Later on, we internalize these qualities and make them part of ourselves. Freud believed that religion, morality, and social behaviour are also linked to the superego. For example, our desire for a caring and protective father can be traced back to our longing for a father figure during childhood. Therefore, the superego is a crucial part of the psyche that helps us strive for greatness. Freud was keen to point out that the superego is the part of the human psyche that expresses the higher nature of man, because it also implicated in a variety of pathological conditions. The superego can hinder our ability to recover from certain types of mental health issues. By failing to meet the high standards set by the superego, we end up punishing ourselves with prolonged suffering. This is the case with melancholia, where the superego appropriates the violence of aggressive instincts and directs them against the ego. In some cases, people with certain obsessive behaviours may also be influenced by the harsh criticisms of their conscience (Lapsley, 7).

Freud's focus of the unconscious led to his theory of the Oedipus complex. According to Freud, we all go through an Oral, Anal and Phallic stage in early life, which all overlap. In his book, introduction to psychology, Fernald explains that;

*The first task of any infant is to obtain food, and thus the first stage is called the Oral stage. If the breast or bottle is readily available at this time, it is speculated that the child is likely to develop trusting and basically optimistic attitudes. The basic requirements of human existence are regularly satisfied and a benign view of life emerges. On the other hand, if food is not available, feelings of uncertainty, mistrust, and pessimism are hypnotized as the likely outcomes. Furthermore, these early deprivations and conflicts are likely to be reflected later in the adult personality through the processes of unconscious motivations. (Fernald, 398)*

Our mouths develop into an erotic zone that makes us like sucking our tongues and later yet, kissing. When a youngster discovers the joys of defecation, they enter the second phase, also known as the *anal stage*, where the anus becomes the object of pleasure. Because the child has

grown cruel and is expelling and destroying through defecation, the anus turns into an erotogenic zone during this period. Here, the ego must respect the reality principle, not the pleasure principle. According to Freud, if this training is too harsh or too lenient, the resulting conflicts again are likely to have consequences later in life. The child also gains the ability to manage or control people by hiding faeces. In the last stage, the phallic stage, the child's sexual desires or libido is directed towards the genitals. Far more important for personality development, however, is an increasing awareness of the different sex roles of the parents and an emerging interest in the parents of the opposite sex. The Oedipus complex as per Freud, states that a child at approximately ages 3-5 forms in fantasy an intense love relationship with the parent of the opposite sex. The boy's fantasied relationship with his mother is known as the Oedipus complex, while the girl's wish to replace the mother is called the Elektra Complex.

In Bressler's *Literary Criticism*, the unresolved conflicts that leads to anything neurotic in Freud's opinion, are an example of literature. He thought that a piece of writing was the author's unconscious mind's outward manifestation. In order to reveal the author's hidden intentions, repressed wants, and wishes, psychoanalytic techniques must be used to the text, treating it like a dream. (93) A person's aspirations to suppress these unconscious thoughts and feelings lead to the Freudian concepts of defence mechanisms.

Many psychoanalytical popularizations falsely instil the idea that using defences is undesirable and even unacceptable. Additionally, a lot of people have come to the conclusion that using defence mechanisms is a sign of a mental disease. Both of them contradict a correct understanding of psychoanalytic theory. The idea makes the assumption that everyone, regardless of their degree of adjustment or personality integration, uses defence mechanisms. If this is the case, how do the concepts of defence and personality adjustment relate to one another? These are the two components to the response to this question.

In his book, *Personality: An Objective Approach*, Sarason states that, "although it would be an over simplification to say that there are "good" and "bad" defences, psychoanalysts argue that some defences lead to anxiety reduction at the expense of rather serious distortions of reality, whereas other defences lead to much more limited blurring of reality". A review of some of the mechanisms involved in the psychoanalytic interpretation of anxiety and defence will be taken under consideration.

Freud, according to Sarason, had put forth a theory called Repression, as one of the causes of anxiety. To a considerable influence, because of Vienna's culture around 1900, Freud came to realize that the problems and worries his patients displayed were brought on by the suppression of libidinal drives. Repression was thought to be the process by which these impulses were suppressed and kept out of consciousness. It was believed that anxiety was unavoidably brought on by tension caused by this challenging suppression of the drive from consciousness. The basic goal of psychoanalytic therapy then was to break through repression and reveal the suppressed libidinal desires. The fundamental distinctions of Freud's two theories of anxiety will become obvious after a review of his later anxiety theory. Based on his clinical experience with patients in the 1920's, Freud came to the conclusion that his original idea about the connection between anxiety and repression was incorrect. He gradually came to believe that anxiety was caused by intrapsyche conflict caused by the clash of libidinal impulses, superego demands and reality. Repression was now regarded to have the function of lowering anxiety and was no longer considered to be the root cause of anxiety. It was supposed that this repressive function was carried out by preventing anxious thoughts and impulses from entering consciousness.

There are two repressed mental contents, according to psychoanalysts; those that can be brought back to awareness through psychoanalytic treatment and those that cannot be. The former category of mental contents is known as "repression proper," and the latter is known as "after-expulsion." Obviously, it is challenging to imagine how repressed cognition that cannot be brought back into awareness could possibly be researched in any kind of impartial scientific way. In practical usage, both recoverable and non-recoverable psychological contents are referred to as repression. It is thought that the power of the initial cathaxes, the strength of the anticathaxes, and the degree of ego have a role in how easily repressed the material can come back into awareness.

The next Freudian defence mechanism is intellectualization. An adequate understanding of one's issues is a common result of intellectualization. A verbal study of the intellectualizer's personality and motivations may be presented in a convincing and well-informed manner. Intellectualization may be seen as an isolation from awareness of emotional reactions. The intellectualizer frequently makes an effort to rationalize his unusual impulses and beliefs. When



overused, intellectualization according to psychoanalysts, has a rigidifying impact on the person since the defence prevents the person from confronting the emotions and strivings that the underlying behaviour has.

When someone acts in a way that is completely at odds with what one would anticipate based on their impulses, Reaction formation is most certainly at play. As an illustration, because her bitterness cause her to worry, a mother who unintentionally harbours considerable hostility towards her child may choose to display the reverse of these feelings, which is excessive solitude and protective conduct, in order to deal with the impulses. Although the behaviour was the opposite of the impulses felt, Freud believed there may still be a subconscious, vicariously gratifying, impulse. Between Id and superego demands, reaction formation offers a compromise. But frequently, interpersonal connections suffer as a result of the price paid.

Psychoanalysts believe that Sublimation has some similarities to defence mechanisms in that it has the ability to reduce anxiety, although some debate over whether it is fair to consider it as a defence mechanism. When the most direct urge of pleasure is suppressed, sublimation occurs. To ease this dissatisfaction, satisfaction is sought through socially acceptable replacements. Instead of engaging in violent behaviour, a person with hostile tendencies can, for instance, express his rage by engaging in constructive literary intellectual and social criticism, as might be the case with some theatrical, music, and art critics. Sublimation can be seen as playing a significant role in the socialization process if one sees it as the progressive taming of unrestrained aggressive and sexual urges. Thus, intellectual and imaginative creativity may be viewed as classes of sublimated behaviours. Freud believed that by means of sublimation, the drives could be expressed but in ways that furthered the good of society (Sarason, 47).

A number of the defence mechanisms deduced from adult conduct appear to be quite similar to traits of young infant behaviour. For instance, a child who is terrified of a specific person, animal, or object may lessen his emotions of dread by acting as if the stimulus causing the fear is not actually there. In other words, the possibility of anxiety-induced objects being denied. Although prevalent in kids, and occasionally seen in all adults, this strategy of denial can become the main method of stress relief for certain individuals. *Denial* often refers to when someone disputes the existence of important environmental elements. Denial therefore, causes a

major distortion of reality and makes it possible for the person deploying the defense to effectively deal with the threat he is facing.

The mechanism of Projection is a defense tactic that shares immaturity related traits with denial. In contrast to denial, which primarily distorts outward reality, projection also distorts interior reality. In projection, personal traits or urges that make a person anxious and externalized by being attributed to others. For instance, the person who is uneasy due to his or her own aggressive inclinations towards things in the surrounding may lessen or worry by, in a sense, transferring their hatred to someone else. As a result of substantially distorting reality, a person who utilizes projection as their main form of coping may also produce new sources of worry, by making others angry by accusing them of having unwanted projected impulses.

Regression may be the most intense and disruptive of all the responses to fear and danger. According to Freud, regression is the process through which a person returns to reaction the pleasure patterns more typical of the previous developmental stage. One instance from infancy is common regression a kid expresses after the birth of a sibling. The regression may be concentrated in areas like self-feeding, peer relationships, and bowel and bladder control rather than necessarily involving behavioural deliberation in all domains of behaviour. The most dramatic examples of regression are probably found in adult patients in mental hospitals who have regressed to levels similar to those of children. Similar to denial and projection, regression distorts reality, and does not offer a foundation for anxiety management that is reasonable.

A profound insight that caused a fundamental shift in our understanding of the human psychology is the notion that there is a part of the human mind that is functioning at an unconscious level that contains memories, fears and desires that are influencing our day-to-day functioning in ways we are unaware of. The mind is frequently compared to an iceberg, with the conscious mind acting as only the tip. The concept of the unconscious was first proposed by Ancient Greek doctors, and Freud himself credited French psychologist Pierre Janet with establishing the ground work for his own studies. Yet, Freud undoubtedly made this idea more widely known and gave it a prominent place in psychology.

Although the theory of psychoanalysis was first introduced in medicine, literary critics since the 1920s have adapted it as a theoretical framework which could be used in the analysis and interpretation of literary texts. This is due to the assumptions that literary writers by their

very nature are neurotic animals, according to Northrop Frye in his book, *Anatomy of Criticism*. The psychoanalytic literary criticism approach involves using psychoanalytic theories to analyze the themes, characters, and symbols in literary works. For example, a psychoanalytic reading of Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* will explore the ways in which the characters' behaviours and relationships reflect unconscious desires and conflicts. Freud developed theories about the relationship between language, the unconscious, and human experience, which have influenced literary theory. These theories suggest that literary works can reveal the workings of the unconscious mind and the complexities of human experience. Also, many literary works explore psychoanalytic concepts such as repression, the Oedipus complex, and the uncanny.

Initially, psychoanalytic criticism was primarily directed to the author. Psychoanalytic critics held the belief that by gathering biographical information about an author; personal letters, lectures, and any other written documents, they could theoretically construct the author's personality with all its quirks, internal and external conflicts, and, most importantly, their neuroses. They, therefore, claimed that such a theory may shade light on the author's particular works by revealing any latent or hidden meanings. These critics believed that by learning more about the author, they might more accurately interpret the author's anon. Bressler states that, "central to psychoanalytic criticism is Freud's assumption that all artists, including authors, are neurotic. Unlike most other neurotics, however, the artist escapes many of the outward manifestations by finding in the act of creating his or her pathway back to saneness and wholeness" (Bressler, 94). Bressler adds that the main reason an author writes a novel, in Freud's opinion, is to state some hidden want, some forbidden wish that likely first appeared during the author's infancy and was promptly repressed and deposited in the unconscious. The literary work itself becomes the externalization of this suppressed longing. In fact, according to Freud, the literary work is the author's dream fantasy. Psychoanalytic critics contend that by applying the psychoanalytic procedures developed by Freud for dream therapy, we can reveal the underlying significance of the story's symbols and come to the valid understanding of the text.

In psychoanalysis, the text may, and should, be evaluated like a dream because Freud thought that a literary work was essentially just a dream fantasy created by the author. According to Freud, this therefore means that we must assume that the dream is a disguised wish. Also, Freud believed that every longing we have today has some connection to our early development.

Kendra Cherry in her book, *Everything Psychology* believes that when we were young, we yearned experience both sensual and emotional fulfilment. It is the recollection of these fulfilled childhood aspirations or dreams that creates a conducive environment for the fulfilment of our current aspirations. Therefore, all of our present desires are recreations of former infantile memories, which are dragged out of our unconscious and conscious states by sensations, emotions, and other aspects of the present.

In the book *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, Bressler states that;

*Like the dream analysts, the psychoanalytic critic believes that any author's story is a dream that on the surface level reveals only the manifest content of the tale. Hidden and censored throughout the story on various levels lies the latent content of the story, its real meaning or interpretation. More frequently than not, this latent content directly relates to some element and memory of the Oedipal phase of our development- the stage in child development when a child desires a sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex. By directly applying the techniques employed in Freudian dream analysis, the psychoanalytic critic believes the actual, uncensored wish can be brought to the surface, thereby revealing the story's true meaning. (Bressler, 95)*

This above quotation draws parallels between the work of dream analysts and psychoanalytic critics in the interpretation of stories. Both approaches suggest that the surface-level narrative of a story only scratches the surface of its true meaning. Beneath this surface, there lies a deeper meaning and hidden layer known as the latent content. The latent content holds the real interpretation or meaning of the story, and it is believed to be influenced by elements from our unconscious mind. According to the statement, psychoanalytic critics assert that the latent content of our story often relates to the oedipal phase of our development. In this context, the psychoanalytic critic examines the story for symbolic representations of these oedipal desires. They analyse the characters, their relationships, and the events in the story, searching for clues

that uncover unconscious desires or repressed memories related to the oedipal phase. These desires, though not censored or disguised in the story, provide insight into the author's psyche and their underlying motivations.

Psychoanalytic critics shifted their focus in the 1950's from formulating a theory based on the personality of the author to investigating the minds of the characters found in the author's writings. This shift was known as the Psycho Biographical Approach. The approach is a method used in literary analysis that combines psychological and biographical perspectives to understand the author's motivations and the characters' actions and motivations. It involves examining the author's personal experiences, beliefs, and the psychological factors and applying them to understand the text. An in-depth understanding and interpretation of a literary work resulted from such a viewpoint. The focus shifted to specific characters inside a text. Critics acknowledged that the author clearly had a specific personality in mind for each of his or her characters, but they also pointed out that the readers form their own opinions about each character's nature. So, it becomes very difficult to simply attribute a character's actions and motivations to an author's ideas. In the case of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, a psycho biographical approach could involve considering Thomas Hardy's upbringing, his views on class and gender, and the societal pressures he experienced, and how these influenced his portrayal of Tess and her moral predicament. The interpretation of the text now includes how readers interpret the individual characters. While the author develops a character, the reader recreates the same character by applying all of their prior experiences and knowledge to the text and the specific character. Therefore, the character simultaneously becomes a product of both the author and the reader. Thus, a psychoanalytic analysis of the author is required in order to interpret the story. Most psychoanalytic critics are aware that the reader has a significant impact on how a piece of work is interpreted, which is known as the Reader-Response criticism. Therefore, in order to interpret the works of another, it is crucial for us to understand who we are in the Freudian perspective and the context in which we live.

The theory of Psychoanalysis plays a vital role in reading Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* because it allows readers to explore the psychological motivations and internal conflicts of the novel's characters. Psychoanalysis is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the importance of unconscious thoughts, feelings and desires in shaping human behaviour. In *Tess of*

*the D'Urbervilles*, the main character, Tess, experiences a range of psychological conflicts and struggles, including guilt, shame and trauma resulting from her experiences of sexual assault and societal oppression. Through the psychoanalytic lens, readers can gain insights into the underlying causes of Tess's behaviour and the ways in which her experiences shape her choices and actions. Furthermore, psychoanalytic theory can shed light on the complex relationships between Tess and the male characters in the novel, such as Alec and Angel. By examining the unconscious desires and motivations of these characters, readers can gain a deeper understanding of their actions and the ways in which they contribute to the novel's themes of gender, sexuality, and power. The theory serves as a valuable framework for the analysis and complexities of the novel.

### **Literature Review**

The focus in this section is to review literature related to the text under study. According to John Creswell, a literature review creates an opportunity to persuade researchers to acknowledge that a topic is worthy of further investigation. Moreover, a good review strengthens a researcher's claims and gives them a chance to create new knowledge in support of other scholars. Also, it helps outline the objectives, goals and purpose of a research. Therefore, a researcher has to acknowledge that they have learnt from others and project how their research is a starting point for new ideas.

Mary Young, in her thesis, "*Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman, Faithfully Defended*," establishes as main goal, to debate and support Hardy's sub-title for *Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*. She regards the character Tess, as that of a virtuous woman in a despairing circumstance, to justify Hardy's opposing perspective of Tess. She is pure, and her integrity is illustrated by proving that she has genuine intentions, but is a victim of external influences. Tess is only making an effort to uphold the expectations of her society. Young states;

*It is Tess's heightened sense of responsibility lets her to believe that sacrifices are necessary and that she must be the one to make them. It is her parent's feckless attitude which forces Tess into the role of parent to her parents. As the eldest child of imprudent parents, Tess learns early that she*

*must be the responsible one. Tess picks her parents up from the tavern in the evening; she drives the cart when they are unable to do so. Her strong feelings of responsibility prohibit her from properly managing her burden guilt. (11)*

Young believes that throughout the story, Tess tries her hardest to live up to the obligations of being a good daughter, maiden bride, obedient wife and a morally impeccable woman. Though Tess's inability to realize these goals is due to society, she makes an effort to cover up for falling short of these principles by making her own judgment. Tess consciously intends to dismiss her shot at happiness in an effort to avoid falling short of society's expectations of a chaste wife. She constantly rejects Clare's proposals rather than gladly accepting the chance to wed him. She initially rejects him, then backs out of setting a date for the wedding, attempts to break the news of her past in a letter and makes a bid to let Clare go, perhaps the other dairymaids may want him. As is expected of the culture, she is not pure when she marries, thus, she must make these sacrifices. Young's thesis states that Tess wants to be truthful and honest, but Clare's persistent efforts eventually break through her barriers and she gives in to what she has wanted all along. It therefore, brings to light the question, why all these gender ideals cause Tess, and not Clare to feel guilty. Young states;

*At times, Tess does try to avoid her overwhelming feelings of responsibility. Because Tess's life vacillates so sharply between ecstasy and sorrow, she finds it natural to efface herself in an effort to avoid life and its accompanying pain. Tess becomes a puppet, who submits easily to the wills of others to avoid responsibility for her pleasures and sufferings: she is seduced by Alec, and, when she kills Alec, she only follows Clare's words to the letter, even after he has probably forgotten he has spoken them: "How can we live together when that man lives?"(13)*

From this quotation, it is evident that, Tess's decisions to worship Clare may have been influenced by class and gender roles. The critic argues that Tess uses the two priceless assets she embodies; her beauty and her life, as payment for her emotion of guilt. she attempts to save her

beauty for Clare by cutting her brows, bandaging her face like she has a toothache, and donning her harsh peasant's clothing, as she travels to Flint comb-Ash after being condemned by Clare. In an attempt to seduce him, she writes to him "I only like to have them because they belong to you, my dear, and that there may be at least one thing about me worth your having" (301). She practically gives her beauty to Alec, when it seems that Clare has lost interest in it, allowing him to dress her up like a doll. Clare, who never really got a good look at Tess, is aware that she fails to recognize her body as her own. "Tess has spiritually ceased to recognize the body before him as hers- allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction dissociated from its living will".

Rose Litwin in her Thesis, "Cultural Criticisms within Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*", holds that majority of Hardy's cultural contemporaries in England are harshly criticized in this book for their social, moral, ethical, political and religious beliefs. The claim that Tess is a "Pure Woman" in this book's subtitle is the clearest illustration of Hardy's cultural critique. Tess is a ruined lady and as such, is seen as an object that should be sold to the cheapest bidder under conventional Victorian standards. By glorifying Tess's chastity and goodness, despite the fact that she has engaged in fornication, Hardy is fundamentally breaking from these beliefs. Consequently, it is hardly unexpected that the novel received a bad response. It is widely known that this book sparked a ranging uproar. Litwin asserts that the novel's early 20<sup>th</sup> Century reviewers were right in pointing out that Hardy is opposing the norm that permits males to engage in sexual activities before marriage, but blames women for engaging into the very act, regardless of the conditions. Tess refused to give her consent for a sexual encounter, Alec sexually assaulted her, yet she is nonetheless stigmatized by society for bearing a child outside marriage, as a result of an assault. According to Litwin, this is one of Hardy's many critiques of the social mores and ideals of his period found in the literature of cultural criticisms. She quotes;

*I wish to argue that only by simultaneously considering all of Hardy's social commentary and value judgments within the novel one can fully understand the complex and detailed cultural criticism that Hardy raises about the bourgeois capitalist Victorian society in which he lived. Hardy constructed the novel so that in telling Tess's life story, the*



*legitimacy of the church, the legal system, capitalism, mechanization and the status of women were challenged. When explored as a whole, the novel's cultural criticisms harshly condemn the status quo of nearly every major societal institution. (5)*

The above quotation serves to report that the narrative's magnitude comes from Hardy's ability to critically examine a variety of cultural and intellectual norms without compromising the book's emotional portrayal of Tess's life or turning it into an overly dogmatic piece.

As per Litwin, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* contains a variety of cultural observations from Hardy that go beyond his disapproval of Victorian attitudes towards women and his outrage at the ruthless industrialization thrust of the "nouveau riche" capitalists that has destroyed the established pastoral craftsmanship society. Central characters like Tess and Alec portray these difficulties and Hardy's views towards them, but it is also the smaller character in Tess that highlights his cultural objections of Victorian Religious and Educational systems and its flaws. Other traces of Hardy's disdain for the institutionalized religion can be found all through the book. Parson Tringham is wholly accountable for the horrible circumstances that result in Alec's violation on Tess and their eventual passing because of his recklessness and false conviction when he informs Jack Durbeyfield of the Durbeyfield family's aristocratic history. It is clear that parson Tringham wants to amuse himself at Jack's expense. Jack is mocked when he is asked to lift his chin to get a better view of his profile. He then confirms that he has the very chin and nose of the D'Urbervilles. It is rather unnecessary to create such baseless awareness to Jack, but it is, however, too late; the harm has already been done. The parson conveys an awful degree of disregard for his congregations' welfare by offering ideas that are undoubtedly bad for Jack and his family.

Litwin makes a comparative study of Hardy and Marx and asserts that the two have a lot in common with regards their blame for mechanization of agricultural production and growth of capitalism. Marx and Hardy have remarkable similar views on how capitalism affects society's moral well-being in general, as can be shown by contrasting Hardy's Tess and Marx's writings. Throughout the latter part of 19<sup>th</sup> century England, Marx like Hardy, spoke especially of the "transformation of the rural work into a property less wage labourer" (Wotton 17). Marx claimed

that the development of English agriculture was the place where the hostile nature of capitalist manufacturing and accumulation asserted itself quite brutally. Hardy depicts the horrific conversion of the peasantry and autonomous pastoral craftsman class into working class who are crushed by capitalism in *Tess*, a work of fiction. Someone forced to labour with the machine is completely dehumanized. The affected workers are unable to move their heads away from the threshing machine. Even those who were the freshest amongst them started to grow withered and saucer-eyed. When Tess is eventually allowed to quit fuelling the harvesting machine, “her knees trembling so wretchedly with the shaking of the machine that she could scarcely walk” (407) she is almost paralyzed by the machine.

According to Litwin, Hardy thinks that 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain is experiencing a moral collapse as a result of technology. He describes the brutal physical abuse that the stonily capitalist Groby of the Flintcomb-Ash meted out to his workers, among them Tess. Tess and the other female employees face discrimination on the job since Groby understands that hiring women for jobs that they could easily accomplish as well as men, is lucrative due to the cheapness of female field labour. For performing the same job, women are not only rewarded less than their male coworkers, but they are as well verbally abused. In addition, Hardy attributes the growing bourgeois detachment from themselves to capitalism and technology.

In his article, “An Analysis of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* from the Tragedy of Tess”, Zhen Chen affirms that in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, Hardy constructs a traditional female lead, which was quite the attributes of his setting and characters in his works. Tess is a young woman from the country who is kind, brave, naïve and poor. She ventures to challenge prejudices in the hope of making money from her art, but fate is not on her side as she is executed at the end, despite her too much sufferings. Taking into consideration that Tess lost her chastity and perpetrated a murderous act, Hardy argues on her behalf and sees her as a genuine and demure woman. Chen believes that Tess’s family’s poverty and conceit are the cause of her tragedy. While her father works as a hawker, he is inattentive, unambitious and obnoxious. Since the burden is more than any of them can carry, her parents hold on to wealthy relatives in the hopes that their financial condition will improve.

Chen comments on how capitalism was blooming in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The new industry also struck traditional farming practices. Due to the significant societal transformations,

numerous social contradictions emerged. Chen's article comments about *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, how Hardy outlines a handful of societal inconsistencies. The misfortune that befalls Tess is one of the results of societal tensions. The economic outlook serves as the cornerstone for everything else. The United Kingdom quickly evolved into a capitalist industrial nation throughout the Victorian era. The average person did not benefit from the social transformation though. Many farmers became workers because of the unfettered competition, yet the pay and surroundings were not suitable for farmers. Also, the sector for small business owners was being seized by the enormous manufacturing techniques. To this effect, Women and Children sorted to work hard in order to support their families. Tess's family for instance, have no land of their own, the horse is their lone valuable asset. Once the horse dies, there is nothing left for them but despair, which causes Tess to visit Alec's house and fall under his spell. Tess also undergoes a transformation from farmer to servant when she is made to work as a milking machine in a dairy farm and a woman who keeps chickens in Alec's home. She is at risk, since in Alec's home; she has a lower profile than he does as a worker. She cannot constantly make an income from it because milking is a temporal job. Hence, it is because modernization has turned farmers into workers, which has put them in poverty. The unfair regime is a further responsible factor that causes Tess's tragedy.

Ying Peng in an article, "Tess's Freedom in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*" studies the novel from the perspective of Jean Paul Sartre's concept of Existentialism. He believes that freedom appears to be a mere fantasy for Tess, which is generally viewed as a manifestation of Hardy's static perspective of the universe. Tess is free, however, according to Sartre's philosophical ideas on freedom, despite the inevitable process of nature and life's obstacles. The entire novel illustrates how Tess, aware of her position in life, tries very hard to go against the natural flow of things through constant choices. Peng observes that Hardy must have been a quasi-existentialist as early as 1990, although he provided no supporting details. A sequence of existentialism, which was primarily linked to Naturalism, is interwoven throughout *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and it appears that Hardy turned toward existentialism long before the term "existentialism" was conceived.

Peng holds that, Tess lineage gives her powerful emotions and an explosive temper, and her peasant mother is responsible for her attractive face and body. The reader's perception of

Tess as not having control over her destiny is strengthened by Hardy's allusion to destiny. She had planned to teach at school, but fate seemed to have different plans for her according to what is said. Although Hardy places a lot of natural laws in the book, his main concern is with his heroine as a person rather than with the relentless law acting through her. This is where Hardy excels over his contemporaries in that he leaves room for choice and action. Tess is up against an unconsciously occurring life process, yet she is not merely an inanimate object or machine. She strives to shape the unconscious nature using her will, emotion, and sense of values. Tess exhibits a dual awareness of her position in life: one of her power to choose freely, direct her actions, and affect other people and their decisions and what seems to be out of her reach, of the inevitable nature of life situations. The source of man's "nothingness of being" is man's existential folly, which are both a necessary precondition for human freedom and the actuality of man's existence. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* depicts a ridiculous universe in which Tess leads a fruitless existence and is the object of indifferent powers that constantly frustrate her goals and create a farce of her existence. The universe's tyranny at her desires and hostility to her will are what make them ridiculous.

John Alcorn, according to Peng claims that the "modern man's loss of contact with the physical world" and "the sense of estrangement and abstraction" are two themes throughout Hardy's novel. This detachment and Sartre's alienation which is self-estrangement is the same thing. This existential alienation can be understood as a void brought on by discontent with merely achieving something and the powerlessness that follows after a relationship breakdown has resulted as a sense of loneliness of the soul. Tess overtly feels cut off from her surroundings and the people that inhabit it. She yearns for the wholeness she seldom achieves, which causes her excessive emotional distress. Tess tries to rely on Angel Clare for her notion of what it means to be a human being so she won't be belittled to a striving enigma born to pain and suffering. She is connected to her surrounding in full recognition because of their bond. She is thrown into nothingness brought on by powerlessness when their relationship is destroyed because it is quite an uncompromising kind. Her realization that everything seems to be indifferent to her further confirms her sense of estrangement since no matter what "the trees are just green as before; the birds sing and the sun shines as clearly now as ever (101).

Qin Liu, in an article, “*Tess of the D’Urbervilles: A Suffering Daughter of Nature*” sets out to portray that Tess’s fate is significantly associated with the changing nature of the seasons. It can be said that Tess’s life began in spring, when she was full of energy and strength; it turned around for her in summer, when she experienced confusion and depression; it wasn’t harvest time for Tess in the fall, when her miserable life began; and it got worse *in* the winter, when Tess had to pay for all her wrong decisions. Lui believes that Tess is naturalized all through the book, and as the plot develops, her fate lines up with the changing of seasons. She also states that Tess is a long suffering woman in a patriarchal culture, which is unable to escape the male- dominated world; she can only find solace and consolation in nature. Tess set herself aside by having a keen awareness of the natural world. He drills the topic towards a feminist perspective by saying that *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* intends to provoke serious thought about the interrelationships between nature, women and men. Mankind, nature and women should all appreciate one another, it is desired.

Sufi Ikrima suggests in “Tess’s Fateful Life in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*” that the description of the occurrences that act as agents in Tess’s life is included in the examination of her predestined life. These incidents in turn determine the kind of life she may lead. The terms “incident” and “event” are used by the author in the context that an “incident” refers to a circumstance that, while unplanned and unintentional, is truly not all that significant, has a major influence on Tess. The word “event”, constantly alludes to a significant occurrence that is bound to happen to Tess. For instance, Ikrima holds that being sleepy is quite normal, especially at an hour when everyone and every other thing should be asleep. For Tess, however, such a natural event is probably fatal for her life and the result is unavoidable. When the family horse, their lone source of income dies, Tess must only then resolve to go off to Trantridge, where another tragic incident awaits her. Tess needed to stay awake because “Tess was not skilful in the management of a horse” (Hardy 34). Yet, nature is unaware of this, it only develops according to its own rules that two in the morning is typically a time to go relaxing rather than working, particularly with Tess, who has never made such a trip.

This sleepiness according to Ikrima is another factor that leads to the subsequent seduction scenario involving Tess. Her fatigue makes the situation seem to go on forever. When Tess accepts Alec’s offer to drive her home, she is so exhausted and sleepy that she is unaware

of the fact that Alec takes her off the Trantridge track and through a wood. Ikrima describes how much Tess is worn out:

*She was inexpressibly weary. She had risen at five o'clock every morning of that week, had been on foot the whole of each day, and on this evening had in addition walked three miles to Chaseborough, waited three hours for her neighbours without eating and drinking...she had then walked a mile of the way home, and had undergone the excitement of the quarrel, till...it was now nearly one o'clock (in the morning) (Hardy, 80).*

This quotation describes how exhausted Tess was, which gives Alec the opportunity to take advantage of this weakness. Tess can't be awake when Alec departs from her to find the right path back to Trantridge. She ends up having a child and must deal with her society's alienation and her husband's eventual departure.

Fate, as per Ikrima, is not the only factor that leads to Tess's demise. Time is also a significant tool that contributes to nature's plan in Tess's life. Alec's game of "the wrong man at the right time and the right man at the wrong time" has predetermined her tragic fate. When Tess first meets Alec, she is too young to realize his malice against her, since "whose reputation as a reckless gallant heart-breaker was beginning to spread beyond the immediate boundaries of Trantridge". (Hardy, 105) When Tess is no longer a simple girl, she encounters Angel, who describes her as "pure, and lovely, and of good report". (Hardy, 250) Time also keeps Tess from confessing when she still has the chance to do so. On the morning of her wedding she notices that her note to Clare hasn't been opened yet. Her plan is delayed by time until the night of the wedding when Clare as well confesses. Ironically, Clare leaves as a result of Tess's revelation.

Ikrima shares the view point that, indeed, Tess's unhappiness is being turned by social conventions, not the other way round. Kathy Newkirk, according to Ikrima states that women who had children out of marriage were amongst the despised members of society in Victorian times. Tess is a perfect example of such women. In order to avoid embarrassments over Tess's illegitimate child, her father bans visitors from entering their home to baptize the dying child.

The parson argues that he would carefully perform a Christian burial if only they were involved when the baby died, but he can't for few reasons.

Lucia Qureshi in an article, "Now all was Contrary to Her Expectations: Destruction Expectations in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*", sets out to analyse the destructive role that expectations play in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. She focuses on the night of their wedding, how the newlyweds disclose confessions that call into question the basic tenets of their union. Tess and Clare are compelled to adapt to these new conditions if they want their marriage to end because they both had idealized notions of each other. Tess embraces her views and requirements, in contrast to Clare who adopts restrictive constraints of conviction. She also extends this behaviour to her relationship with Alec d'Urberville. By doing this, Tess is able to account for the fluctuating and occasionally incompatible aspects of the identities of the other characters. When faced with circumstances out of her reach, she does not show herself the same respect. Rather, she initiates judgments about her actions that lead to unfair decisions and exaggerated self-expectations. Thus, critically analysing these instances highlight how inflexible expectations led to wrong choices.

Forrestine Keeler outlines in her Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Interpretations, Evaluations and Analyses since 1891* that, Tess was regarded as protest against both the rules of existence that could be controlled by man and those that could not by Sir William Watson in the London Academy. According to what he said, the main theme of the novel was the incessant punishment paid by the innocent for the wicked, the unsuspecting for the crafty, and the child for its father. The triumph of such evil according to Watson, led Hardy "to a scarcely suppressed declaration of rebellion against supermundane ordinance" that would order or allow such displays as he continued:

*The book may almost be said to resolve itself into a direct arraignment of the morality of this system of vicarious pain—a morality as he bitterly expressed it, may be good enough for divinities, but it "scorned by average human nature"... In one way or the other, this implicit protest against what he cannot be conceive to be maladministration of the laws of existence, the expostulation with "whatever god there be"*

*upon the ethics of their rule, is the burden of the whole strain". (15)*

According to Watson, no critic could fail to point out the persistency with which there ultimately smoulders and flames through the book Mr Hardy's passionate protest against the unequal justice meted by the society to the man and woman associated in the identical breach of moral law.

Human life, the opinion of Thomas Hardy, was too holy to be taken carelessly, according to Lionel Johnson, in his *The Art of Thomas Hardy*, the first critical examination of Hardy. He did feel, though, that occasionally his enthusiasm seemed to erupt in erratic terms that hindered the narrative without the basis of being sound reasoning. The novels that "vindicate the ways of God to man" are tiresome, Johnson said, "but fully are wearisome are those that vindicate the ways of man to God". According to Johnson, Tess had an excessive amount of "*insinuated argument*". Because the author had conveyed his own personal convictions in sarcasm and rage throughout the entire novel, he claimed that Tess alone could not be accepted for its basic pity and stirring passions. Tess was therefore "an indictment of justice, human and divine", in addition to being the chronicle of a woman's life "either the story should bear its own burden of spiritual sorrow, each calamity and woe crushing out of us all hope, by its own resistless weight; or the bitter sentences of comment should be lucid and cogent" (348).

Johnson criticized Hardy by not defining terms like nature, law, society, and justice. Johnson thought;

*Had Mr Hardy defined himself all commentary, and left the story to carry its own moral into our hearts, I doubt, whether we should all have received quite the same moral: to prevent any such "perverse" resistance to his intended morals, Mr Hardy has not denied himself the luxury, or perhaps the super fluity, of comments at once inartistic or obscure. The sincerity of the book is indubitable: but the passion of revolt has led the writer to renounce his impassive temper: and to encounter grave difficulties, in that departure from his wonted attitude towards art. (349)*



The above quotation suggests that Johnson contradicts Hardy's view of the world. Johnson holds that according to Hardy, the world was nothing more than a web of contradictions under a psychological phenomenon. Because the children suffer for their parents, and because Tess's fate was placed in the hands of justice that resulted in the supreme farce of brutal death, Johnson believed that Hardy's first cause was indifferent, if not downright evil.

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, according to Abercrombie in *Thomas Hardy*, 1912, showed more of Hardy's innermost feelings than any of his other books, with *Tess*, Hardy did not only objectively describe the conflict between humanity's individual ambitions and the "unconcerned current of existence", as he had done in prior works, but he also judged it. As far as it could be put forth, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* symbolized this primary working out conflict. It was developed simultaneously as an aesthetic statement about life and the author's perspective on his own assertion. The notion of the original sin which is "the fatal antinomy between man's nature and the divine impulse of the world", is one of the oldest and most tenacious of all doctrines. Although it is undoubtedly man's self-will that generates the antinomy, man was not punished in this modern interpretation for wilfully rebelling against the nature of the divine universe. The question 'did man make himself self-willed?' contains the answer to this seemingly paradoxical statement. Man's self-will served as the foundation of his personality, and without it, he ceased to be a human. His self-will appeared to always guarantee the success of some of his own initiatives, but it was constantly refuted. The atmosphere of *Tess* is infused with a furious outrage against the underlying injustice of man's existence, and that the sole outcome of self will for man is that the unceasing motion of fate becomes tyrannical anguish; his continuing existence is a misery without meaning and without conclusion.

In her article "George Eliot and Thomas Hardy: A Comparison", Wright Berle gives a brief description of Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Tess, the main protagonist in her opinion was to Hardy, "a creature formed for love and the gratification of love, forced by an inevitable and inexorable chain of circumstances into actions which have for centuries borne the disapprobation of the world." The intrinsic waywardness of women beneath all the bludgeoning of chance, was Hardy's central concept.

Along with describing Tess as a struggle of frailty and purity in the clutch of circumstances, Joseph Warren Beach says in "The Technique of Thomas Hardy", that Hardy's

melancholy reached its peak in Tess. With his longing tenderness, Hardy encircled human essence in Tess. Hardy wasn't just affected by Tess's problems. He took every chance he had to express sympathy to any being in his line of sight. He enjoyed writing about the small consolation that people found for stress and the bad weather. He elaborated on the comfort of alcohol more than once, saying that it creates an illusion of wellbeing for the present even while it simply contributes to worsen trouble as time goes by. Hardy also focused on how nature may soothe aching spirits in a healthier way. Beach writes on the comfort Tess experienced in nature:

*Hardy loves to think of Tess, in the time when she hid her shame, watching from under how few square yards of thatch, "winds, and snows, and rains, and gorgeous sunsets, and successive moons at their full". He loves to think of her as taking her solitary walk at the exact moment of evening "when the light and darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraint of day and the suspense of night neutralize each other leaving absolute mental liberty," when "the plight of being alive becomes attenuated to its least possible dimensions". And he must have taken a sad joy in her moment of satisfaction when she lay before day break upon the stone altar of Stonehenge... and lonely looking after my great happiness with nothing but the sky above my face. It seems as if there were no folk in the world but we two. (20)*

As per the quotation, Beach highlights Hardy's fascination with the character Tess, particularly during a time when she concealed her shame. Hardy romanticizes the moments when Tess makes solitary walks during the evening when the light and darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraints of day and the suspense of the night neutralize each other, leaving absolute mental liberty. Beach adds that through this beautiful description, we may almost forget about the suffering. The kindness endures despite the anger and outrage. And if we express how miserable it is to suffer we should immediately kneel in admiration. (20)

The Ethical concern of Victorian novels, according to McDowall in "Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study" vanished in Hardy's Tess because Hardy rejected the dualistic view of the

Victorians and accepted the idea that the world is one. One gets the impression that he must have had a subtle sense of what was fair and wrong in life; nonetheless, this really doesn't really come over in the novel. Hardy's rebellion itself was moral and often times Victorian in its downrightness, according to McDowall who claimed that the Victorian attitude was tiresome not because it was ethical "which all art that deals with life seriously must be in some ways" but rather because it constrained the moral reference. The general impact of *Tess* according to McDowall, is that art speaks in its own right there, from and to the imagination, and there it has an austerity of its own for the pressure of doom threatens the independence of his men and women more than any purely moral conflict could.

*Tess*, according to Holland was more of a "brief for the inexorableness of fate" than a tale that imparted a particular moral lesson, even though it was the author's to do so, given the subtitle "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented." It hurts more with the harsh reality of the facts as they have both been registered than with the hastily delivered so-called realism. Holland believes that even though Hardy seemed to imply occasionally throughout the narrative that *Tess's* troubles were caused by inheritance and what was often known as "the sins of the father", it was nearly difficult to view the books as a study of the effects of inherited causes. There isn't enough information about her predecessors' lives to assist one to track heredity as closely as one should, which would then require one to embrace the book's conclusion as both inevitable and explained by the principle of heredity.

An in-depth analysis of the above mentioned reviews of literature indicates that they are essential to our study. The assessment of the books, Theses and articles centre on what has been said by other researchers in regards with the analysis of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Some of the works are also inspired by social conventions that existed in 19<sup>th</sup> century England that are discussed in the book, which is pertinent to our topic in question. This research explores a specific aspect of the novel, namely the ethical dilemmas faced by the characters. While there may be other research works on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, this dissertation stands out by focusing specifically on ethical dilemmas. It delves deeper into the moral complexities within the story, examining the choices, actions, and consequences faced by the characters, and the ethical implications of their decisions. This Other critics have primarily focused on other aspects such as themes, characters, narrative structure, rather than ethical dilemmas specifically. *The next*

chapter will handle aspects of life at the crossroads and will show how the characters surmount the different barriers that are imposed on them by either society or their personal will.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LIFE AT THE CROSSROADS**

Crossroads, according to Gloria Anzaldua, in her book, *Borderlands- La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, refers to crucial points in decision making and identity formation for individuals who exist in these in-between spaces. They symbolize moments of transition, transformation, and potential growth. At the crossroads, individuals are faced with choices, challenges, and

opportunities that can shape their personal journeys. Complexities and conflicts arise at the crossroads. It is a place where cultures clash, traditions blend, and individuals confront the contradictions within themselves and in their communities. She highlights the importance of embracing and navigating the crossroads, as they offer the potential to create new understandings, dialogue, and transformation (195). In Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, characters constantly find themselves at significant junctions in their lives, where they must make critical decisions that eventually shape their destinies. This chapter comprises of two sections. The first section handles aspirations, and the second part handles ethical crises, which surface as a result of failed ambitions.

### **Aspirations**

Agnes Collard defines aspirations in her book, *Aspiration: The Agency of Becoming*, as the dynamic and transformative processes that involve individuals envisioning and striving towards desired futures (72). She argues that aspirations go beyond mere goals or ambitions, as they involve deep sense of possibility, self-awareness, and a commitment to personal development. Collard highlights the transformative power of aspirations, suggesting that they can shape a person's identity, values, and choices, enabling them to transcend their current circumstances and strive for a better future. She examines how societal factors such as class, gender norms, and cultural values can impact the formation and realization of aspirations (146). In his article "Toward a Psychology of Human Agency," Albert Bandura defines aspirations as an individuals' desired achievements, goals, or future outcomes that they strive for (164). Bandura suggests that individuals form aspirations based on their expectations about the outcomes or rewards associated with achieving particular goals. These outcomes expectations can shape the nature and the intensity of the aspirations individuals establish for themselves. Bandura highlights the importance of personal agency in shaping aspirations. Individuals with a sense of agency perceive themselves as active agents who can exert control over their actions and work towards their goals. This sense of agency contributes to the formation and pursuit of aspirations.

Aspirations can be defined as the hopes, dreams, and ambitions that characters have for their lives and futures. These aspirations can range from social, professional, financial, religious, political goals. Throughout Hardy's narrative in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, characters harbour

various desires and ambitions to achieving dreams, some of which are partially fulfilled, while a greater number remain unfulfilled. Many of Hardy's characters yearn for social mobility, they aspire to improve their social standing and escape their current circumstances. They desire a higher position in society, seeking upward mobility and the opportunities it may bring. These aspirations are evident in Hardy's novels like *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, where characters long for a better life beyond their current social limitations.

Tess, the novel's protagonist, desires upward social mobility. She recognizes the advantages that come with wealth and status, such as stability, security, and opportunities for personal growth and advancement. Driven by her newfound knowledge of her supposed connection to the influential D'Urberville family, Tess, hopes that by integrating herself into the world of the d'Urbervilles, she can escape the limitations of her humble background and secure a more comfortable and prosperous future. This highlights her hope for a better future and her willingness to pursue higher social status through association with the wealthier class.

In an article; "Fatalism views of Thomas Hardy in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*", Vitthal V. Parab comments that, "the story of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, happened during the late half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which saw a decline and destruction of the English peasantry and was an age of transition and great social upheavals" (214). Parab suggests that within this society, characters like Tess and others were bound to conform to the expectations imposed by the social hierarchy. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by numerous changes and challenges for the English peasantry. Industrialization was taking place, leading to the rapid growth of cities and the decline of agricultural communities. This shift meant that many workers were losing their traditional way of life, as their jobs and lands were taken over by large-scale industries. The destruction of the peasantry was a result of these economic changes. In this transition of social upheaval, individuals like Tess were faced with the pressure to adhere to the expectations of the existing social ladder.

Despite his immoral behaviour towards Tess, Alec seeks continuous validation and acceptance from society. He tries to adopt the manners of the upper class yet his actions are driven more by a desire for personal gain rather than the genuine social aspiration. One way to understand Alec's selfish desires is by examining his actions towards Tess. Throughout the novel, Alec takes advantage of Tess's vulnerable position as a lower-class woman and

manipulates her for his own pleasure. He seduces and ultimately rapes her, demonstrating a complete disregard for her feelings and well-being. This immoral behaviour reveals Alec's lack of genuine concern for society's moral values or the opinion of others. Instead, his actions are driven by selfish desires, lust, and a sense of entitlement, indicating that his attempts to gain social acceptance are merely superficial and insincere.

Unlike Alec, Angel Clare harbours outstanding social aspirations as seen in his pursuits for intellectual and social freedom. He comes from a respectable middle-class background and is well educated. However, he is disillusioned with the constraints of his social class and seeks a more meaningful and conventional life. He aspires to be an independent thinker and rejects the social status imposed upon him. Through these characters and their aspirations, Hardy explores the impact of social class and the limitations imposed on individuals. He highlights the challenges and consequences of pursuing social mobility and questions the fairness and authority of social hierarchies.

Professional aspirations stem from the very beginning of the novel, when the principal character, Tess, initially dreams of becoming a teacher, and envisions herself educating young children. She portrays a great deal of interest in her love for education and reads books when she is chanced. Tess sees teaching as a noble profession and hopes to make a positive impact on the lives of others through education. Later in the story, when Tess is a milkmaid at Talbothays dairy, she experiences a brief period of contentment and satisfaction with her work. She enjoys the physical labour, finding solace in the simplicity of her life as a dairy worker. Tess's professional aspirations however remain unfulfilled, and her story becomes a tragic exploitation of the limitations imposed on individuals by societal norms and gender roles.

Angel Clare, one of the main characters and Tess's love interest in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, has intellectually stimulating and ambitious career aspirations that differ significantly from those of his family members. His ambitions can be viewed through the psychoanalytic lens of the ego and superego. He desires the growth of intellectual and moral growth, wanting to be a gentleman farmer and make positive impact on society. His ego mediates between his desires for personal growth and the expectations placed upon him by society. Angel comes from a respectable and well-educated family, but he rejects their expectation and instead aspires to have a more unconventional and intellectually stimulating

career. Angel dreams of becoming a farmer in the New World, particularly in the British colonies of the America's, where he believes he can forge a new path and escape the constraints of traditional British society. He has a deep appreciation for nature and desires a simpler and more rustic lifestyle. Angel's goal is to establish a progressive and modern farm, employing modern agricultural methods and scientific principles.

Angel's aspirations are not solely limited to farming. He also wishes to combine his agricultural pursuits with intellectual pursuits, hoping to breach the gap between science and nature. He wants to engage the scientific experiments and observations while simultaneously working the land. He desires to challenge the prevailing agricultural practices of his time and contribute to the advancement of farming techniques. Angel's career ambitions reflect his progressive and forward thinking nature. He seeks to break away from the social norms and expectations that surround him, pursuing a path that combines the love for nature, intellectualism, and a desire for personal freedom. His presence at Talbothays is to mould himself and perfect the agricultural skills which he will use in England, when he is stable and has a family. He states his purpose to his father when he returns home, who encourages Angel, by assuring him that he has set aside a sum of money every year towards the purchase or lease of land for him someday.

In an article, "Psycho-sexual Ambivalence in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Freudian Interpretation", Shaheen and Karim comment that;

*Hardy points out the role of cultural values in human suffering by illustrating the conflicts between instinctive as well as intellectual aspirations and diverse cultural taboos in T.D. The sublimity of human life lies in emotional, intellectual, and cultural aspirations. However, the cultural values, which have been formulated to safeguard human existence from the social and internal conflicts, posit a clash with the emotional and intellectual desires, thus, prompting a psychic ambivalence towards the cultural values and instinctive as well as intellectual predilections. Hardy has depicted this psychic ambivalence by presenting sexuality as the subject matter of this novel, which is considered taboo in cultural terms. He has illustrated the psychological aspects of the sexual instincts which are inherent in every human being.*



*However, human beings do not live in the state of nature. The cultural values, which educate human impulses, leave irremovable prints on an individual's ego or conscious self. The sexual instincts, which are erotic and uncontrollable in their nature, aim at the satisfaction of its stimuli, whereas the ego instincts, which are trained under the influence of social and intellectual ideals, strive for the preservation of the subject from both external and internal danger.*  
(732)

In this aspect, the ego's position in human personality becomes crucial because it is constantly at odds with the inner wants and moral sense. This quotation provides a psychoanalytic understanding of the tensions between the actual mechanisms of sexuality and the ego that encourage mental ambiguity and shows the significance of cultural values in the individual's sad fate.

The titular character, Tess, experiences financial hardship and desires financial stability throughout the narrative. At the beginning of the novel, Tess's family is impoverished and she hopes to improve their financial situation. When her father discovers their connection to the wealthy D'Urberville family, Tess is sent to claim kinship and seek assistance from the supposed relatives. It is her family's hope that Tess will secure financial support from the D'Urbervilles. Additionally, Tess is responsible for the demise of their family Horse-Prince, their lone source of income. On this account, Tess, guilty of this cause, sets out to liberate her family from the constraints of poverty. When Mrs Durbeyfield implores her to visit Mrs D'Urberville to claim kin, Tess mournfully replies; "I suppose I ought to do something. I don't mind going and seeing her, but you must leave it to me to ask for help (Hardy, 25). Despite her hard work and determination, Tess's aspirations are not driven by personal greed and materialism. She desires financial stability primarily for the sake of her family and to alleviate poverty from the family. She feels a sense of responsibility towards her parents and siblings and hopes to provide them with a better life. Unfortunately, Tess's encounter with the D'Urbervilles take a tragic turn when she becomes a victim of Alec d'Urberville's seduction and manipulation. This experience leads to her eventual downfall and prevents her from achieving the financial stability that she initially sought.

Furthermore, Mr and Mrs Durbeyfield, Tess's parents, have their own financial aspirations, albeit relatively modest ones. Their aspirations stem from their beliefs in their noble lineage and hope for a better social and economic standing. When Parson Tringham informs Mr Durbeyfield that he is the last surviving descendant of the ancient and noble D'Urberville family, Mr Durbeyfield becomes convinced that his newfound connection will bring about a change of their fortunes. He dreams of becoming a gentleman and acquiring wealth and social status. With this belief, the Durbeyfield's envision themselves as part of the upper class, escaping their current poverty and leading a more comfortable life.

Similarly, Mrs Durbeyfield embraces the idea of the noble lineage and the potential for improved circumstances. She encourages Tess to take advantage of the opportunity and secure financial stability for the family. However, their aspirations are ultimately dashed when it is revealed that the D'Urbervilles they sought were not the genuine noble family but rather common imposters. This revelation highlights the irony of their aspirations and their vulnerability to manipulation and disappointment. In summary, Mr and Mrs Durbeyfield's financial aspirations in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* revolve around their hope of improving their social and economic status through their newfound connection to the noble D'Urberville family. They anticipate financial support and a better life but are ultimately disillusioned when their aspirations prove to be based on false pretences.

The search for love and marriage are aspirations that hold a greater part of the narrative, since the principal characters look forward to finding themselves a favourable love match. Firstly, Angel, aspires to find true love and a deep emotional connection with a woman who shares his ideals and values. He is disillusioned with the superficiality and insecurity of the women he has met in society and hopes to find someone who is more genuine. As he works at Talbothays to educate himself in the working of a farm, he falls in love with an unpretentious dairymaid, Tess, whom he assumes to be the perfect woman for him. When Tess endlessly refuses his tutorship, he cannot help but fall for her gentle and courteous nature. He genuinely wished to marry a decent, hard-working woman who can assist him on his farm. Tess is an option that seems perfect to him. However, Lady Chant, a wonderful woman has already been chosen by his parents as his bride. He is dissatisfied with this decision, since on his farm, he doesn't need a frilly lady; he rather needs a wife who is prepared to put in some hours and tasks

for him. Since Lady Chant is chosen because of her Christian values, he persuades his parents that Tess, just like Lady Chant, attends church every Sunday and is a good Christian girl. Angel solely believes in Tess's purity and considers her a chaste and virtuous woman, whom he aspires to marry.

The Durbeyfield's aspire to live a life of ease and comfort, as they regard their daughter, Tess, as a means to achieve this end, hoping she will marry well and support them in their old age. This is the reason why the Durbeyfield's undergo a period of mental breakdown, when Tess's marriage is terminated. Their dreams won't come through without Tess marrying in a well-to-do family. Due to the failed marriage, Joan laments, wondering what people will say about her family. In this regard, their pursuit for social status and comfort ultimately contributes to Tess's tragic fate. Stine Jungerson, in a research paper; "Plotting the Romantic Notions of Love and Desires in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*," states that in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*;

*It is Mr and Mrs Durbeyfield's plotting of their life within the grand narrative of the newfound ancestry, their strong wish to move up to the social ladder that initiates and motivates the tragedy of Tess. The Durbeyfield's desire for a social standing drives the plot forward... When Tess inadvertently kills the family horse, prince, Joan ambitiously sends Tess to their rich kinship, the D'Urbervilles, in hope that she will restore the family's fortune. Here, in addition to ambition, the narrative desires similarly reflects the plot of romance in Tess. Joan is plotting her own romantic fairy-tale, as she desires the traditional romantic end for poor Tess's marriage. (25)*

According to the critic quoted above, the Durbeyfields desire to enjoy life's pleasures through the detriment of their daughter, without facing consequences. Jungerson adheres that, the Durbeyfield's desires for Tess's marriage can be classified as their own 'Romantic aspirations.'

In addition, Tess is driven by her sexual desires, which can be associated with the Id. She longs for love and passion, as seen in her relationships where her desires are impulsive 'primal, reflecting the Id's pursuit of pleasure. Tess aspires to lead a happy and fulfilling life, followed by a peaceful existence, love, and a secure family. Initially, her aspirations are simple and centered on her family's well-being. However, as the story progresses, she develops a romantic aspiration

for a better life with Angel Clare. She desires to marry an intellectual, idealistic, compassionate and sensitive man, who will love and respect her. Throughout the narrative, she seeks love and understanding from the men around her, especially Angel. Tess constantly denies herself the will to love, yet her subconscious mind wishes to find a man who will accept her entirely, but her conscious mind suppresses the feelings she harbours for her dream man. Angel Clare is indeed portrayed as a character with qualities that attract Tess and make her want to marry him.

Angel is well educated and possesses intellectual depth, he has received a Cambridge education, which sets him apart from the rural community in which Tess lives. Also, Angel is an idealistic character who holds strong moral principles and values, who is driven by the desire for justice and fairness. Tess is captivated by his idealism and integrity, seeing him as a contrast to the societal norms and hypocrisy she has encountered. Again, Angel shows compassion and sensitivity towards others, he displays kindness and understanding, which resonates with Tess. She appreciates his ability to empathize with others and finds comfort in his emotional support. Besides this, Angel challenges conventional gender roles and believes in the equality of men and women. He rejects societal expectations placed on women and appreciates Tess's independence and strength. Tess finds this trait liberating and empowering. Lastly, Angel shares Tess's deep appreciation for nature and the beauty of the country side. They find solace and connection in their shared love for the natural world, which strengthens their bond. Their relationship, however, faces numerous challenges and complexities throughout the novel, ultimately leading to tragic consequences.

Religious wise, Angel on the one hand desires to lead an authentic life. He intends to live a genuine life free from the constraints of societal expectations and the hypocrisies of his family's values. Angel also aspires to find true love and a partner who is pure and morally upright. He is critical of the hypocrisy of his family's religious beliefs and seeks to live a more honest and genuine life. While his brothers, Felix and Cuthbert, notice his social ineptness, he notices their growing mental limitations. Felix seems all church, while Cuthbert seems all college. His brothers assume that Angel has lost social taste and therefore entreat him to keep as much as possible in touch with moral ideals. When in fact, ironically, they are the "impeachable models who are turned out yearly by the lathe of a systematic tuition" (57). Angel intends to

break away from these conventions and focus on his parent's doctrine, though he thinks they are right in their practices but wrong in their want of sentiments.

Tess on the other hand tends to live a religious life based on society's expectations. When she goes to work at Dairyman Crick's farm, she is perceived by most of the workers, including Angel, as a pure and chaste woman. She manages to maintain this image everyone has of her. Her desire to live up to this religiously authentic life pushes her to reveal her past to Angel, despite her mother's objection. Also, society has placed a standard of traditional gender roles and expectations. The novel portrays the traditional gender roles and expectations of Victorian society where women were submissive to their roles as wives and mothers. The character of Tess is expected to conform to these gender expectations. This aspiration brings out the Freudian defence mechanism concept of Repression; the unconscious suppression of thoughts, desires and memories. She experiences repression as a result of societal expectations, guilt, and shame. She represses her traumatic experience with Alec d'Urberville, attempting to bury it deep within her unconscious. This leads to psychological turmoil and contributes to her ethical crisis throughout the novel.

Mary Young, in her thesis, "*Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Defended*," comments on Victorian society norms using Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. According to her, "Tess's effacing attitude is probably learned from her society, which praises the dutiful daughter, the obedient wife, the seen yet not heard child, and the meek woman. Acquiescence and submissive are traits valued in women. When Tess becomes the puppet she is again conforming to the ideals of her society" (14). Tess, therefore, aims for a religiously inclined life based on how society treats chaste women. The fault in trying to escape her past life to live a chaste and religious life lies in the fact that, no matter where or how far she goes to escape, she is always drawn back. Quoting from Young's Thesis, who admits that;

*Tess may have absorbed the tradition of sacrifice from her society's practice of Christianity. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, religion provides one of the very few possible paths to exaltation of women. This may occur, in part, because of the Victorian reverence of the Virgin Mary. Victorians praise the Virgin Mary for her Christian humility, her role of a mother and her selfless service. Victorian women who follow the ideal of Mary- chaste, gentle, and long- suffering, are*

*esteemed by their society. Though Tess cannot live up to the ideals of the Virgin Mary, she emulates Christ in her attempt to be self-sacrificing. The suffering that was seen as traditionally a woman's lot was justified as a woman's crown of thorns or her cross to bear. (6)*

This is to say that Tess may have internalized the concept of sacrifice from the Christian upbringing of society's views on woman. In the Victorian era, religion was one of the few avenues for a woman to achieve a higher status. The reverence of the Virgin Mary, who was seen as humble, maternal, and selfless, influenced Victorian women to aspire those qualities, including Tess.

Angel Clare's parents, Reverend James Clare and Mrs Clare, harbour strong religious aspirations, as seen in their devout and highly idealistic religious beliefs and principles. Reverend James Clare practices and preaches evangelical Christianity, he is deeply committed to his faith and beliefs in the importance of personal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. He holds strict moral standards, and he expects his children to adhere to them as well. Angel's parents emphasize the importance of purity and virtue, particularly in relation to sexual matters. They expect their children to maintain chastity until marriage and view sexual sins as grave transgressions against God's commandments. Reverend Clare is involved in missionary works and hopes to spread the Christian faith to other parts of the world. He encourages his children, to consider missionary work as a noble and fulfilling calling. They believe that Christianity should not be limited to personal salvation but should also lead in positive change in society. Angel's parents are critical of social injustices and advocate reforms that align with their religious values. Angel is influenced by his parent's religious aspirations, but he develops a more independent and liberal perspective as he grows older. He begins to question certain aspects of his parents' beliefs and seeks a more personal and individualistic understanding of faith. His evolving religious view greatly impacts his relationship with Tess and contributes to the conflicts and dilemmas he faces throughout the novel.

Political aspirations stem from the very beginning of the narrative, when Mr Durbeyfield yearns for social status, after being informed about their ancestry. Victorian societal norms played a great emphasis on class in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Due to the news parson Tringham reports, Jack, Tess's father, becomes obsessed about the information of his noble ancestry and

hopes to gain access to a higher social class through this supposed connection to the D'Urberville family. Prior to this information, he regarded himself as a simple hawker and mere haggler, but this information has obstructed his day-to-day life pattern. His ambitions of becoming a noble man leads him astray. The thirst for power extends to their daughter, Tess, as she aspires to improve her social and economic status. She desires to escape the poverty and hardship of her family and achieve a better life. Initially, her aspirations are focused on becoming a lady, which she believes will bring her happiness and security. This explains why later in the story, she accepts Alec's courtship and is later referred to as Lady D'Urberville. However, as the story progresses, her aspirations are shifted towards finding love and acceptance.

Also, Mrs D'Urberville, Alec's mother, represents the power aspirations of the aristocracy. She seeks to maintain and enhance her family's social standing through her son's actions. She manipulates Tess to ensure that Alec marries into a respectable family, thereby ensuring the continued influence and prestige of the D'Urberville name. Just like his mom, Alec d'Urberville represents the corrupting and destructive force of power. He is the member of the wealthy d'Urberville family and uses his position and wealth to exploit Tess. His power aspirations involve his thirst for power and control. He sees Tess as an object to be possessed, dominated upon and to be manipulated, which ultimately leads to her downfall. Angel Clare is the romantic interest of Tess and represents a different kind of power aspiration. He aspires to assert his independence and break away from the constraints of society and his upbringing. Throughout the novel, power aspirations are explored in relation to social class, gender, and morality.

Thomas Hardy's novels in general delve into the complexities of human relationships and the aspirations that individuals hold. Hardy's characters often face internal conflicts, societal pressures, and personal desires, which shape their relationships and aspirations. In many of Hardy's novels, characters are torn between their own aspirations and the expectations of society. They grapple with their desires for love, freedom, and independence, while also feeling the weight of societal norms. Their relationships, therefore, become battlegrounds for these internal and external conflicts. Hardy's exploration of aspirations is evident in *Far From the Madding Crowd*. The protagonist, Bathsheba Everdene, is an independent and ambitious woman

who inherits a farm. She struggles to navigate her relationships with three suitors, Gabriel Oak, William Boldwood, and Sergeant Troy. Bathsheba's aspirations of love, autonomy, and success are at odds with the expectations placed on her as a woman in a patriarchal society. Her choices and the consequences that follow reveal the complexities of human relationships and aspirations that drive them (Siahaan, 319).

In *The Mayor of Caster Bridge*, the protagonist, Michael Henchard, seeks redemption and social respectability after a series of rash decisions. He aspires to rebuild his life and reputation, but his flawed human relationships and a tragic twist of fate complicate his journey. Henchard's strained relationships with his daughter Elizabeth-Jane and his love interest, Lucetta Templeman, further highlight the intricacies of human relationships and the pursuit of aspirations (Ross Phillip, 38). Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure* explores the aspirations of the working class. Jude Fawley aspires to gain higher education and become a scholar, but societal barriers hinder his progress. His relationship with his wife Arabella Donn, and his cousin, Sue Bridehead, undergo tumultuous changes as they grapple with their own aspirations and societal expectations (73). The novel depicts the crushing weight of social constraints and the tragic consequences that arise when aspirations clash with reality.

These comparisons highlight the nuanced exploration of human relations and aspirations present during Hardy's era. His characters are driven by a desire for love, independence, success, and fulfilment, but they often face obstacles, internal conflicts, and societal pressures that complicate these aspirations. Through complex and compelling relationships, Hardy presents the complexities and tragedies that can arise when individuals confront their own desires and the expectations of the world around them.

### **Crisis Situations**

Crisis in Thomas Hardy's novel surface when individuals are faced with choices that may cause harm to others, and can result from a variety of factors, including unethical behaviours by individuals, conflicting ideas, lack of transparency, and failure to adhere to ethical standards and codes of conduct. As earlier mentioned, failure to achieve characters' ambitions results to ethical crisis. A study of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* discloses several ethical crisis, including issues of gender inequality, class prejudice, and sexual immorality.



A prominent case of an ethical crisis raised in the novel is the devastating effects of class prejudice. As an eldest daughter, Tess takes it as a responsibility to fulfil first born duties, by aspiring to set her family free, from the constraints of poverty. However, she is unable to escape her social status. She is constantly reminded of her inferiority and is denied opportunities that are available to those of social classes. The novel portrays the rigid class system of Victorian England and the limitations it placed on individuals, particularly those of the lower class. Tess aspires to achieve financial stability through hard work and determination. However, her aspirations are constantly thwarted by the prejudice and discrimination she undergoes from the upper class characters in the novel. An instance of class prejudice is highlighted when Tess is mishandled by the wealthy d'Urberville family. Alec, a member of this family, represents the oppressive force of male dominance. He uses his social status, wealth, and charm to manipulate Tess. He takes advantage of her vulnerability, naivety and innocence, leading to an unwanted pregnancy and downfall. Alec abandons Tess when she becomes pregnant, and she goes through the pain of being hassled by society for her actions alone. Throughout the novel, Alec asserts his authority over Tess, objectifying her as a sexual object and treating her as a possession rather than an equal human being. This is probably the reason why Tess chooses Angel, according to Young who states;

*...Of course, class and gender role might reasonably have a function in Tess's choice of Angel as an object of worship. Angel is male, well educated, and from a super social class. Perhaps it is natural that she looks up to, if not, worships Angel. Tess is an ambitious and intelligent girl, who is not content to repeat her mother's life. Tess has gone to school and done well, and might have become a teacher. For a girl who has been looking up to escape the confines of her class, Angel represents an opportunity to broaden her horizons. It is not peculiar that she turns him into a god and looks up to him for redemption. (8)*

This is to say that *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* outlines the injustice of a society that values individuals based on their social status, rather than their inherent worth and character. The narrative also examines the value of education and the opportunities it offers to people who are born into middle class and upper class families, underlining the fundamental disparities. In a

thesis, entitled “Cultural Criticisms within Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*,” Rose Litwin, states that it is ethically problematic when the text, uses;

*Tess’s relationship with Alec to expose the similarities and interconnections between a man’s physical and emotional oppression of a woman, on the one hand, and a more social class’s economic oppression and destruction of the weaker class on the other hand. Hardy’s Tess laments the destruction of the independent rural artisan class and blames nouveaux riche capitalists for this degradation. Hardy also raises questions about the injustice and inequality of a legal system, which finds Alec innocent of any wrong doing but sentences Tess to death. (2)*

This quotation holds that Alec’s sexual harassment and exploitation of Tess culminates in the rape. One of the reasons Alec is capable of raping Tess is that he sees her as a mere “cottage girl” who is “overly sensitive” (97). Alec is convinced that his gender and his superior wealth and social standing give him the right to have his way with her. In fact, he informs Tess that he has bought her a new horse just moments before he rapes her. The gift to the family is not charity, but Alec’s means of using financial power to enslave her. Tess immediately understands his tricks and tells him she wished he hadn’t. The Durbeyfield’s disparate and economic status gives Alec an upper hand to tamper with Tess. Hardy’s narrative makes it clear that Alec’s raping of Tess is meant to be understood within the overall historical context of the continued domination and victimization of women by men in positions of superior power, including Tess’s forbears (11).

Dianne E. McGee, in a thesis, titled “The Shattered Mirror: A Study of Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*,” comments on the state of Victorian society by stating that Hardy, clearly intended to raise the questions about the nature, source and consequence of the Victorian morality. The inequality of sexual relationships and double standard for sexual behaviour were definite problems in Victorian England. So, Tess happens to be Alec’s unwilling victim and thereafter is caught in the chains of inevitable events (11). Tess is blamed and shamed for her sexual encounters, particularly her rape by Alec, while the male characters who contribute to her suffering often escape accountability.

The feminist movement gained traction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, advocating women's rights and challenging gender inequality. Hardy, influenced by these emerging ideas, incorporated feminist themes and critiques of patriarchal systems in his work. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* portrays Tess as a complex and resilient female protagonist, whose experiences are emblematic of the restricted roles and societal limitations imposed on women during the era.

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, religion is explored as an ethical crises. Religion highlights the conflicts and shortcomings of religious institutions and beliefs. Religion is depicted in the novel through hypocrisy. Hardy portrays certain characters as hypocritical in their religious beliefs and practices. Alec d'Urberville claims to be a religious man but uses religion as a tool to manipulate and exploit Tess. His actions proclaim his proclaimed faith, exposing the hypocrisy of those who use religion for personal gain and power. As a result of failed aspirations and the desire to atone for his sins, he sorts to use religion. Angel Clare, who claims to come from a religious background and wishes to uphold the religious demands of purity and chastity, has been regarded by a number of critics as an extremely harsh and hypocritical character. James Hazen in an article, "Angel's Hellenism in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*" quotes Dorothy Van Ghent, as saying that;

*In his "conceited impotence" he manages to violate Tess more nastily than her sensual seducer. Angel, with all his emancipated ideas, is not merely a prig and a hypocrite but a snob as well... We do not say it, yet Clare's love was doubtless and ethereal to a fault, imaginative to impracticability. These remarks, tolerant and restrained, are characteristics of Hardy's commentary in the novel: He does not seem to regard Angel as "nasty" or "perverse" or even "conceited." (300)*

Hardy admits the fact that Angel is not all perfect as he seems to be. As the narrative continues, Hardy writes; "Clare has been harsh towards her; there is no doubt of it. Men are too often harsh with women they love or have loved; women with men. And yet these harshness are tendencies itself when compared with the universal harshness out of which they grow" (304).

Tess is a devout Christian who attends church on a regular basis at first. But, after being raped by Alec, she begins to question her faith. Tess receives neither forgiveness nor compassion after returning home, but just relentless accusation from the community. When her child is born,

she cannot receive a proper baptism. When the child dies, she is unable to have a religious funeral. Although Tess was denied for her child's burial and sworn she would never go to church again, religion has always bothered Tess. She encounters harsh judgment and condemnation from society due to her perceived moral transgressions. Religious-based moral standards impose a heavy burden on her, reflecting the narrow-mindedness and double standards prevalent in the society. The novel critiques the rigidity of religious norms that lead to unfair treatment of individuals who deviate from societal expectations.

Tess's experiences raise questions about the absence of divine intervention in the face of suffering and injustice. Despite her piety and earnest prayers, Tess is subjected to immense hardships, leading readers to contemplate the role of religion in providing solace and guidance in times of crisis. As Tess grapples with the consequences of her actions and the judgment of society, she experiences a loss of faith in traditional religious beliefs. She begins to question the fairness and validity of religious teachings, highlighting the internal struggle caused by conflicting moral values, and the crisis of fate that arises from societal condemnation.

Angel does not believe in God and does not wish to enter the church as his father demands. He influences Tess through their interactions, and his impact on Tess is totally revealed in chapter 46 through the conversation between Tess and Alec. "How can I pray for you," she said "when I am forbidden to believe that the great power who moves the world would his plans on my account? You really think that? Yes, I have been cured by the presumption of thinking otherwise... By my husband, if I must tell" (Hardy, 399). This is to say that Hardy abhors religion, regarding it as a lifeless affair.

However, throughout the novel, nature is presented as a powerful counterforce to organized religion. Hardy portrays natural landscapes as sources of spiritual guidance and solace for Tess, providing an alternative form of connection and meaning that contrasts with the dogmas of institutionalized religion. By depicting religion as an ethical crisis, Hardy raises thought-provoking questions about the limitations and shortcomings of religious institutions, and the impact of rigid moral codes on individuals' lives. Tess's journey in the context, becomes a critic of the societal and religious forces that contribute to her tragic fate.

Tess is a victim of the rigorous marriage law of the time, as well as religious ideals. People in the Victorian era were not resistant to the influence of social conventions and customs.

Marriage was viewed as God's gift to these noble people during the Victorian era. And divorce was not permitted by either Christianity or the law. The brutality of the law is another factor that contributes to Tess's tragedy. At the end of the novel, Angel Clare, who is repented from his cruelty, returns only to discover the awful reality. Tess becomes even more chaotic as he arrives. She stabs Alec and murders him after Angel has left. Hardy believes that marriage has been transformed into a combination of property and hypocrisy that improves and safeguards reputations.

Another important case of ethical crisis in the novel is based on the biased treatment of women in Victorian society. When the main character, Tess, strives to become a better version of herself: live a chaste and religious life, and to be free from the confines of society's expectations, she becomes a victim of the double standard that existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where women were held to a higher moral standard than men. Tess is judged harshly for her sexual transgressions, while her male counterpart is not held responsible for similar actions. Her tragic fate highlights the injustice and hypocrisy of the society she lives in. Negi Bora in an article entitled; "Victorian Ideals and Separate Spheres in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*", expatiates on why ambitions are unattainable where she sates;

*Women are considered as non-social entity, as they had no right to establish their individuality in men's world... Hardy's novels reflect the true picture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century society in which the position of women was as good as slaves. His heroines can also be called inferior males who are ruled by superior males... Women are enclosed within the four walls where their main job is satisfy men's physical hunger. Those who pleased men were physically called feminine and those who did not do the same were labelled as unfeminine and unnatural. (2)*

This is evidence that Tess can achieve little or nothing of her aspirations, because she is constantly oppressed by the power society has instilled in male characters. The inadequacies and ambiguities of Hardy's character Tess, makes her life tragic. In the novel, Hardy's handling of female characters in a brutal manner is blatantly illustrated. Society judges Tess based on her purity and chastity, perpetuating the idea that women's worth lies in their sexual virtue. The title *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is an inspiration from the main protagonist, Tess, and he portrays this

character as a victim of the Victorian patriarchal society. Correspondingly, Rogers and Katherine, in an article, “Women in Thomas Hardy” believe that Tess was poorly treated because of her gender. They admit;

*Distinguished among novelist by his almost universal sympathy, Thomas Hardy repeatedly shaped his characters and plots to show his sympathy with women and his awareness of the disadvantages society has laid upon them. He represented positively a strong unconventional woman like Bathsheba Everdene, who did not want to become a man's property as sweetheart or wife, and even one like Sue Bridehead, who consciously and totally rebelled against her sexual role. He devastatingly exposed male chauvinism in characters like Sergeant Troy, who assumes to use women's bodies and money, and Angel Clare, who excoriated the woman he was supposed to love because she did not fit his egocentric ideal of womanhood. (249)*

This quotation praises Hardy as a novelist who consistently expresses sympathy towards women, and outlines their struggles in society. Hardy's characters and plots are specifically shaped to highlight the disadvantages and injustices faced by women.

Despite being set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* still resonates with contemporary society in many ways. The novel explores how Tess is treated differently and unjustly, due to her gender. Tess faces condemnation and judgment for her actions, while other characters, particularly men, are often given more leniency. This reflects the double standards that persist in society, where individuals are often held to different moral standards based on their gender or social status. The novel explores issues surrounding sexuality, consent, and victimisation. Also, Hardy's vivid description of nature and landscapes can be seen as a reminder of our connection to the environment. In today's world, where discussions about climate change and environmental conservation are critical, the novel's portrayal of nature serves as a reminder of our responsibility towards the natural world.

In their quest to accomplish their financial ambitions, the Durbeyfield's, coerce 16 year old Tess, to undergo a hideous journey, which ultimately lets her forgo her education in favour of her family. Tess is property to a patriarchal father, who has complete legal custody over his daughter. He is portrayed as a weak and irresponsible figure, unable to provide for his family. As

a result, he uses his illegitimate power to shift his obligations onto Tess. Her parents lure Alec, a rich and illicit man, using Tess's beauty and youth. She is served as a conduit for her parent's social and financial advancement. The Durbeyfield's quest in living up to standards of a rich life causes their ultimate downfall. This endless attempt to improve their social status to the detriment of their daughter's happiness raises important questions about the role of social class, in determining an individual's worth, and the inequity that arises from the system. The societal influence on family dynamics is emphasized, as the characters navigate the pressures of societal norms and conventions, the expectations placed upon individuals, particularly regarding marriage within family relationships.

Tess's struggle to escape from her past and find a suitable husband for herself stirs a crisis. She is judged by her past sexual encounter with Alec. Her relationships with Alec and Clare raises questions about the morality of sexual relationships outside marriage, particularly in a society where marriage was considered sacred and divorce not an option. It also outlines the consequences of going against society's expectations and harsh punishment that awaited those who went against those norms. This instance outlines the Freudian defence mechanism of Sublimation. This concept proposes that individuals redirect their repressed sexual or aggressive desires into socially acceptable outlets. Tess's struggles with aspects of ethical crisis stem from the repressed sexual desires and her conflicted feelings. As a result, she seeks solace in her relationship with Angel Clare, attempting to sublimate her desires in the context of a socially acceptable marriage. However, the sublimation fails to provide her true emotional fulfilment, leading to further crisis.

Hardy explores the social attitude towards sexual relationships out of marriage at the time, as hypocritical and oppressive. Tess is ostracized by society for something that was entirely out of her control, meanwhile Alec, who is responsible for the assault is left unpunished. Moreover, Angel on the one hand, has engaged in sexual relations outside marriage, yet he is able to abandon Tess and start a new life without facing consequences. Tess on the other hand is forced to bear the burden of her actions for the rest of her life. In "Victorian Ideals and Separate Spheres in *Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles*", Bora comments on the social structure of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as rotten:

*It was a phallogentric society with old beliefs, which maintained that purity characterizes the girls, whereas the men could have extra affairs out of wedlock. Angel subsided Alec's sin and the harm which he did to Tess... Angel harmed Tess more than Alec. He neglected her devotion, her single mindedness, her true love for him, her honesty and on the whole her spiritual chastity and decided to desert the innocent girl. His prompt and wrong decision had dire consequences in her later life which prompted the girl to become the mistress of her seducer and later his murderer. (4)*

As per the critic quoted above, Hardy navigates through the idea that morality is not always black and white. Tess's experiences with Alec and Angel are complicated, and it is difficult to assign clear cut moral judgment to her actions. While her encounter with Alec was not reciprocal, her relationship with Angel was, and she genuinely loved him. However, Angel's rigid moral code prevents him from accepting Tess's past, leading to her tragic end. The exploration of the morality of sexual relationships outside of marriage in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is complex and nuanced. While Hardy critiques the hypocrisy and oppression of society's attitude towards such relationships, he also acknowledges the complexity of individual experiences and the difficulty of making clear judgments.

During the Victorian era, strict codes of sexual morality were imposed, particularly on women. Hardy, known for his exploration of human relationships and sexuality, defied these norms in his writing. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* showcases the consequences of Victorian sexual double standards on the life of Tess, as she is both a victim of society's judgment and a product of her own desires and choices.

According to Young, "Tess, generally aspires to be a dutiful daughter, a good mother, a virginal bride, an obedient wife and a model mother... when Tess fails to achieve these goals, she takes upon herself suffering and sacrifice which she sees chiefly as a woman's burden to ease the burden of her guilt" (2). As a result of the constant unrequited love from those she loves, she begins to attempt self-destruction. Young quotes;

*The sacrifices Tess makes are in desire to please or benefit Angel. Like a nun who strives to make herself unattractive or a monk who dons rough horse-hair clothing as a penance of her sins, she destroys her beauty and puts on rough*



*peasant clothes so that no other man will find her attractive while Angel is gone... In killing Alec, Tess continuous to follow Angel's wishes because once Angel mentioned, "if he (Alec) were dead it might be different."*(2)

The critic quoted above holds that as a result of the constant unrequited love from those Tess loves, she begins to attempt self-destruction. In this quotation, Angel expresses his desire for Alec, Tess's seducer, to be dead. This statement foreshadows Alec's death, which hints on a potential turning point or change in their relationship, creating a suspense and anticipation for the reader. The irony lies in the fact that Tess eventually takes Angel's words literally and kills Alec, believing it will resolve the problems. However, this only leads to further complications and tragedy. The quote reveals Angel's internal conflict and reveals the inclination towards violence as a solution, showcasing the complexity of his character and his emotional turmoil.

Responsibility and accountability or justice and punishment are another pertinent aspect of ethical crisis that the novel handles. Although the characters are often held responsible for their deeds, the social structures that influence and limit their options are not. This raises moral concerns regarding the propriety of holding people accountable for the results of societal forces outside of their control. It also challenges the idea that justice is always served and raises important questions about the role of mercy and forgiveness, about the nature of punishment and whether it should be focused on retribution or rehabilitation. Tess is punished severely for her actions, even though she shows remorse and tries to make amends. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* highlights how the actions of individuals can have a profound impact on society and how society, in turn, can shape the actions of individuals.

Another striking case of crisis in the narrative is Mr Stroke's ability to effectively buy social standing when he pays for the d'Urbervilles surname, which belonged to the Wessex family that is now extinct. Hardy disagrees with Mr Strokes attempt to buy his family a new, and more respectable identity. Alec is frequently referred to as "spurious compounded of money" by the narrator. Ian Gregor, a critic of Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* has noted that Alec's world, the Stroke-D'Urberville reality, is inextricably linked to 19<sup>th</sup> century laissez faire capitalism (*The Novel as a Protest: Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 137). It is the victory of the individual bourgeois morality, what is known as the bourgeoisie. Alec's mother who is equally as bad as his father, keeps a flock of hens for fun. She demonstrates extreme affection for her

birds but complete disregard for others, especially the village families who are lower than her. Alec's parents tend to value possessions above their respect for human beings, and have drilled Alec to understand that money buys status.

The striking scene of Capitalism, exploitation and oppression on the Flintcomb-Ash farm is one of the highlights in the novel. We witness a vivid picture of labourers, especially women, who were heavily exploited with low wages, how they were maltreated, working under deplorable conditions. In this respects, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* highlights instances where scenes are given of the central character as a peasant worker under capitalist exploitation and oppression (Zhen Chen, 436). Tess's fate has a deep social origin, she is a victim of social oppression. The capitalist morality and religious as well as capitalist exploitation constitute the most important factors that determine Tess's inevitable tragedy.

Litwin in her thesis; "Cultural Criticism within Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*," comments that the passages throughout the text urge readers to see the exploitation of Tess and its aftermath as a symbol of the overall injustice and inequality of Victorian England's status quo. In order to achieve this goal, Hardy clearly establishes both the Tess's socioeconomic backgrounds. Tess's father is a haggler of eggs, dairy produce, and beehives. The Durbeyfield family's wagon and horse are crucial to their economic survival... when Tess visits the D'Urberville family, she is horrified. She does not acquiesce in Alec's desire that she be employed on his family's estate but instead looks for agricultural employment within her own village (9). Hardy's depiction of Alec's family embodies all that is wrong about the nouveau riche capitalist society: there, money and status are more valuable and significant than people. In the process of destroying Tess, Alec gradually destroys his own humanity. He undergoes what Karl Marx calls "human self-alienation. Alec feels satisfied and affirmed in his self-alienation, experiences the alienation as a sign of his own power, and possesses it in the appearance of human existence". This explains why Alec, the one who rapes Tess tells her that she is ill-used on the farm and rebukes her boss, farmer Groby, for verbally assaulting her. Alec's self-alienation is what prevents him from seeing the hypocrisy of his assertions.

Furthermore, Tess is a prime example of a victim of circumstances, as she is born into a poor family and goes through a number of challenges through the course of her life. She is raised in a devout Christian household and is taught to follow strict moral codes. But as she grows

older, Tess begins to question the morality of the society in which she lives. She struggles to reconcile her own desires and needs, the expectations of her family and community. Tess's sexuality is the central issue in the novel, for she is held responsible for the consequences of her actions, despite the fact that those actions are not entirely her fault. For instance, she is blamed for her sexual encounter with Alec, although he is the one who initiates the activity and takes advantage of her weakness. Tess is left with the burden of bearing a child who in turn ends up losing the child. Her father, who has been a part of this scheme rebukes the parson to baptize the poor baby, which permits Tess carry out the act with the help of her siblings. Tess is also blamed for her relationship with Angel, even though he ends up abandoning her. The punishment reflects the strict moral codes of the time, which placed a heavy emphasis on sexual purity, particularly for women. In exchange for her family's survival, Tess returns to Alec for help and becomes his mistress. Hardy abhors the fact that Victorian society gives Tess no choice and coerced her into that position. According to Johnathan Brown in *Village Life in England*, "it is this homeless despair of a family which has lots of rights and Independence in the village community that gives Tess finally into the invaders power" (97-98).

Society in the novel is revealed to be accountable for the behaviour of its individuals. The lives of those in the lower class are proven to be significantly influenced by the affluent and powerful members of the society, and this influence is frequently utilized to oppress and exploit the less fortunate people in society. The novel also emphasizes how society's conventions and beliefs may influence people's behaviour, frequently causing them to make bad decisions. The same social forces play a significant role in shaping Tess's character. As a poor working-class woman, she is wholly at the mercy of those around her who hold power and privilege. Her lack of a powerful background is highlighted when she is sent to work for the wealthy d'Urberville family and is subsequently coerced into having an affair with the son Alec. The power dynamics at play are evident, with Tess having no choice but to submit to his advances in order to provide for her family.

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* apparently was widely criticized after its publication in the mid 1890's. Probably because of the blatant truth revealed by Hardy about Victorian norms. McGee in an article, titled "The Shattered Mirror: A Study of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles*- A Terrible Sincerity", outlines that "Not only does Tess have a critical transitional position in

Hardy's writing, it is an incipiently modern novel in its articulation of individual struggle, its exposition of social values and its exploration of the connections between sexual and social connections" (7). She also argues that there is not a sense of ultimate rightness, and neither is there a sense of despair and powerlessness. "Although the human condition is certainly problematic in *Tess*, there is a vitality about the novel that, for Hardy, is connected with its Wessex roots...Hardy attempts to carry what is good, vital and pure about nature into the modern world." *Tess*, according to McGee presents the real reflection of the contradictions of the Victorian world and is certainly more interesting in its complexity; yet it is rather at odds with Hardy's moral tone (8). *Tess*'s eventual marriage to educated middle-class Angel Clare serves as a reminder of the rigid social structure that prevailed in Victorian England. The marriage is doomed from the start because of their socioeconomic variations, despite the fact that they love each other. *Tess* meets a horrible end because Angel is unable to fully comprehend or accept her past.

In the above chapter we set out to examine the notion of "crossroads" in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In the course of our analysis we realise that characters aspirations are not met. We also realise that these failed aspirations or ambitions give rise to ethical crises which leads to chaotic circumstances. In general, Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* investigates the difficult interplay between failed ambitions and societal responsibilities, which leads to ethical crisis. It also highlights the limitations and injustices of Victorian society, particularly for women and those who are marginalized by class status. The novel argues that society also has a duty to guarantee its inhabitants are treated justly and fairly, and that individuals are not solely accountable for their actions. It also examines several ethical issues that are prevalent in today's society and stands against societal norms and values, pinpointing the unfairness and ethical dilemmas that arise from these systems. It encourages readers to question their own beliefs and values, and to consider the ways in which they can work towards a more just and equitable society. The following chapter will look at the choices and the responsibilities of the characters and what these concepts lead to in the text under study in relation to our research endeavours.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CHOICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The previous chapter dealt with the concept of “Crossroads” which showed that when characters’ ambitions or aspirations are not met they resort to other measures which lead them into ethical crisis. This chapter examines the choices that are made by characters in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, and the profound responsibilities that follow suit. Set in Victorian England, the novel explores the themes of fate, morality, and societal expectations, highlighting the consequences of characters’ decisions and the burdens they must bear as a result. This chapter delves into the state of characters’ dilemma situations, and how their confused state often results to revenge and conflicts, ultimately driving the narrative forward.

#### **Dilemma**

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a dilemma refers to “a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives, especially equally undesirable

ones.” Philosopher Bernard Williams defines dilemma as “a situation where we face incompatible claims but cannot avoid having to act on one of them”. In his book *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Williams also explains dilemma as “a situation in which a person faces conflicting moral obligations, where no matter what choice they make, they will violate one moral principle” (138). Stanley Milgram, a social psychologist, examined the concept of moral dilemmas in his famous *Milgram Experiment*. He defined a dilemma as a situation where individuals must choose between obeying authority and violating their own moral principles. He explored how people respond to such conflicts between ethical values and external pressures; when faced with a dilemma, individuals must carefully weigh the considerations and strive to find a balance between ethical considerations (606). These critics provide different perspectives on dilemmas, emphasizing the challenges individuals face when having to choose between conflicting moral principles or undesirable options. Their insight sheds light on the complexities of ethical decision-making and the internal and external factors that influence our choices.

A dilemma can be defined as a situation where characters face conflicting choices or moral obligations. Hardy’s novel portrays its characters, as people who undergo dilemma situations throughout the narrative. They are constantly torn between societal expectations and their own desires, and the consequences of their actions. Their inability to take decisions for themselves, void of societal influence, creates a moral predicament for them, this is due to the fact that despite every effort they make their situations remain constant. The novel is set in a time when societal norms and moral values were rigidly defined, and the protagonist, Tess, is constantly struggling to find her place within this system. Thomas Hardy presents a vivid picture of the difficulties faced by a young woman caught in the midst of social and moral dysfunctions. The experiences of Tess reinvigorates the gender bias which had eaten into the fabric of the society. As a woman, Tess is forced to live by the dictates of the society with all the stereotypes implanted to limit her evolution in a society she is supposed to be part of and have equal opportunities like all.

One of the choices Tess battles with is her struggle with the concept of purity. She feels a sense of shame and guilt over the past events of her life, and the social stigma attached to these events is a heavy burden on her. She is caught between two worlds; that of her puritanical

upbringing and her own desires for her life. This conflict causes her to question her moral character and her place in society. She therefore finds solace in working. Bukhari contends that;

*A woman is a bearer of family honour. She is expected to embrace the highest ideals of modesty and morality. Any moral lapse or breach on her part entitles her to serve retribution from physical punishment to societal ostracism. Brady surveys Hardy's female characters. Commenting on the debate about Tess as a Fallen Woman, write that because Tess was considered physically impure, paradoxically, she was seen to be morally pure...she finds Tess possessing supremely moral traits of humanity and imagination who resists her reduction to a single ideological position. (38)*

From the above quotation, it is evident that the society has norms that become negative only when disrespected by women. According to the above statement women have as duty to bear the family's honour and if this is not done they are liable to multiple forms of punishment. Ironically, those who have imposed such values are the first to breach them. This only shows the limitations that gender has implanted on the part of the women who suffer on multiple fronts.

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* portrays a world that seems illogical, for characters like Tess, seen in the fact that she lives in a world that adds no purpose to her existence, which questions the existentialist view of essence and existence. The universe is depicted as absurd because it suppresses her aspirations and works against her will. For this reason, Tess is always placed in difficult situations where the choices she makes are often against social norms. Similar to the character of martyrdom in the Bible - Joan of Arc, Tess embodies characteristics which demonstrates why she is always amidst conflicting circumstances. From this biblical allusion Tess is likened to Joan of Arc who was renowned for her purity and righteousness. Like Joan, Tess embodies same qualities seen from the fact that despite facing numerous challenges and injustices throughout her life, she still thrives. Tess like Joan was persecuted, falsely accused, and ultimately executed for their beliefs. Similarly, Tess suffers unjust treatment from society, including the loss of her innocence, social ostracism, and the tragic consequences of her choices. Tess demonstrates remarkable moral strength and resilience in the face of adversity, akin to Joan of Arc's unwavering devotion to her course. Despite the difficult circumstances she endures,

Tess remains steadfast in defending her principles and preserving her integrity. Joan of Arc is often regarded as a sacrificial figure who endures suffering for a higher purpose, and Tess shares this sacrificial quality. Tess makes personal sacrifices accepting the consequences of her actions for the sake of her loved ones and a chance at redemption.

In “The Representation of Women in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*,” Hameed Shakury, states that Hardy attempts to portray a realistic portrait of women in the Victorian era during which women were striving to redefine their role in society by wanting to leave the home and sphere and go into the world of men through all the events and characters described in a certain way. Hardy supported the cause of equality they were battling for. He illustrated the damaging behaviour of men toward women wonderfully. “Hardy presents Tess as a confused woman in her emotions, her duties and her sense of self preservation. She is afraid to tell Alec that she has no attraction for him, so that she remains docile to all the circumstances that bring her to crucial moments in the novel” (92). In order to maintain a realistic portrait, Tess is unable to reveal her past to Angel Clare, the man she loves. Being a victim of rape by Alec d’Urberville, Tess fears that Angel will reject her for this cause. “In place of the excitement of her return, and the interest it had inspired, she saw before her a long and stony highway which she had to thread, without aid, and a little sympathy” (Hardy, 119). Tess is constantly threatened by her horrific past and the future that awaits her. However, she decides to tell him the truth, believing that honesty is the best policy. The choice has far-reaching consequences, as it leads to Angel’s rejection of her and sets in motion the tragic events that follow.

Equally, the novel suggests that individuals are often limited in their choices by the societal pressures and expectations that eventually shapes their lives. For instance, Tess’s choices are constrained by the social and economic disadvantages that she faces as a woman from a poor family, while Angel’s choices are limited by his own social and cultural background. She doesn’t act according to free will, but dances on the tune society has made her listen to. Social norms set by men have been changing, so are the roles and images of women. Women have no identity other than what men enjoin upon them. De Beauvoir contends that “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (*The Second Sex*, 273), which is her famous oft-quoted remark. Man does not regard a woman as an independent human being. She is defined and recognized in society through him and through whatever label he tags with her, she is an object, a thing, a commodity



that is given meaning by man. She is an object in the eyes of the subject. The dilemma of women is that they have many identities, thus their female body is moulded into different roles and images by society.

To back this assertion, Bukhari sheds more light in his thesis, “Tess as a Kaleidoscope of Socially Constructed Images in Tess of the D’Urbervilles.” He also believes that Tess suffers in the hands of social prescriptions and battles with her survival and identity on so many levels. The study presents the kinds of social roles and images which are imposed on her by others and society. The narrative also portrays the complex and difficult choices that individuals must make in the face of a dilemma situation, and underscores the importance of taking responsibility for the consequences of those choices. The same dilemma of the female body is highlighted by Kaja Silverman, who analyses the character of Tess and observes that “Tess is a surface upon which a pattern is imposed. Her figure is anchored by a mastering gaze” (“History, Figuration and Female Subjectivity in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, 8). Also, Mona Holmberg in her thesis, “Tess, a Victim of her Society” adds that Tess is a young and innocent countryside girl with a traditional way of speaking, and the school which represents the authority imposes rules concerning people talking in a different way. Tess is caught up in the middle, and has to learn the language of her masters to be able to succeed in life and get married, which is what is expected of her.

Unable to avoid the nuances of her status as an unchaste woman, Tess’s life becomes globed by recurring tragedies. Despite her intention to live in a secluded area as the dairy farm worker, Tess feels greatly in love with the farmer’s gentleman pupil, Angel Clare. She is troubled by their relationship because as an unchaste woman, she sees herself unworthy of his affection. She is caught up between two choices, whether to satisfy her conscience and reveal her past to him, or blindly follow her mother’s advice about not uttering a word about her past. “On the night of their wedding, Angel confesses to Tess that he had a prior sexual relationship with a stranger. Confident that he will sympathize with her experience with Alec, Tess tells Angel about her past” (311). At this juncture, she is left to bear the harsh responsibility of unveiling her past, something she was not compelled to do.

Peng in the article, “Tess’s Freedom in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*”, affirms that “Tess is conscious of her pain in the absurd universe, for she knows that her life is

meaningless and will eventually come to nothing. When Tess is still young, she begins to understand that the world she lives in is a blighted one” (4). Tess expresses a sense of despair and worthlessness, stating that her life seems to have been devoid of opportunities, resulting in a feeling of being insignificant. She compares herself to the Queen of Sheba, who, according to the Bible, was also a figure of limited worth and character. Peng continues that;

*She is conscious of the absurdity of the world she lives and of her ‘nothingness of being’ ... for naturalists, suffering and absurdity are not only inevitable, but also an indispensable part of human nature, constantly plunging man into despair. However, Sartre defines them as situations, as what man has encountered in his environment. To bravely commit oneself to life when its meaninglessness should invoke a suicidal despair is actually a mode of revolt and the beginning of freedom, just as Sartre suggests, “human life begins on the far side of despair.” (4)*

As evident from the above quotation, Tess’s self-consciousness of how absurd her universe is often leads to the tension between a struggle for survival and the desire for purity. Tess is from a poor background, and is forced to work as a milkmaid to support her family. Despite her poverty, she is portrayed as a poor and innocent character, with a strong sense of morality and a desire to do what is right. However, her purity is constantly threatened by the harsh realities of her life, including the sexual advances of men and the prejudice of society. One of the most significant examples of Tess’s struggle between purity and survival is her relationship with Alec, the wealthy landowner who seduces her. Despite her initial resistance, Tess eventually gives in to Alec’s advances, partly out of a sense of duty for financial security. However, the experience leaves her feeling tainted and impure, and she is haunted in guilt and shame. Throughout the novel, Tess’s struggle for purity is contrasted with the hypocrisy and moral corruption of the upper classes. The d’Urbervilles, who claim to be descended from an ancient noble family, are shown to be morally bankrupt and corrupt, while the working class characters like Tess are not genuine and honest.

Another choice Tess is faced with is whether or not to forgive Alec d’Urberville for his assault on her. After she becomes pregnant as a result of the assault, Alec offers to take care of her but she refuses and insists on returning home. Later when she is destitute and desperate, she

turns to Alec for help, and he takes her in and provides for her. Tess struggles with conflicting emotions towards Alec, both hating him for what he did to her and feeling grateful for his help. Eventually, she chooses to reject him once again and flees from him, which ultimately leads to her arrest and execution for Alec's murder.

Cairney in her thesis, "Recognizing Acquaintance Rape in Potentially Consensual Situations: A Re-examination of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*," expatiates on this point, adding that "Tess, convinced that she has again humiliated her family, gives them half of her money and leaves home. On the verge of poverty and starvation, Tess is forced to take a job, doing difficult field work for a cruel man who recognizes her as an acquaintance to Alec D'Urberville" (311). She continues to work with her cruel employer in the hope that Angel will return to her. After an unsuccessful attempt to get in touch with Angel's family to find out where he is, Tess returns and encounters Alec for the first time since leaving the slopes. Alec has supposedly renounced his evil ways to take up preaching. He criticizes Angel for abandoning her and offers to take her in for the harm he caused her. Tess is caught between returning to Alec or, basing herself on the hopes that Angel will one day return. As difficult as it is a choice to make, she will have to deal with the outcome, regardless of the situation she finds herself in.

Tess is caught at the crossroads of choosing to marry Alec or not; On the one hand, Alec is a wealthy and powerful man who can offer Tess financial security and social status, which is especially appealing to her as she comes from a poor family. She is conflicted about her feelings for him, she is drawn by his charisma and confused about the way he treats her. However, Tess is repulsed by the idea of being with Alec because he previously seduced her and caused her great emotional and psychological harm. Tess initially resists Alec's advances but eventually falls prey partly because of her family, and partly because of the hope that the relationship will provide her with a better life. However, after the relationship turns sour and she is left feeling used and degraded, she becomes increasingly conflicted about whether to marry Alec or not. Despite Alec's wealth and power, Tess ultimately decides that she cannot marry him because of her sense of moral responsibility and her desire to maintain her purity.

From a critical standpoint, Alec is compared to the serpent and Tess to Eve who is easily seduced because of her desire for social mobility, commenting that a serpent springs into Eve's consciousness, so does Alec into Tess's (Bukhari, 118). But as time passes, Alec tries to

dominate her, by depriving her of her pride in nobility and beauty and shape her into compliance with his desire” (40). She recognizes that being with Alec would mean sacrificing her own values and betraying her own self. She ultimately chooses to follow conscience, because she is confused about his intentions and struggles to understand his nature, even though it means giving up the material benefits that Alec could provide. In this way, this dilemma highlights the tension between the desire for material security and the desire for personal integrity and moral purity. The novel suggests that true happiness and fulfilment can only be achieved by staying true to oneself and one’s values, even if it means sacrificing short-term gains or enduring hardship.

There is a drastic comparison of Tess and Eve from the Bible, which highlights a biblical allusion. This association serves to highlight the parallels between Tess’s experiences and the biblical story of Adam and Eve. Eve is traditionally seen as the original sinner who brings about the fall of humanity through her disobedience. Similarly, Tess is depicted as a figure who, through her actions and choices, becomes burdened with guilt and consequences. This parallel underscores the idea of Tess’s actions as being pivotal in her own tragic story. Both Eve and Tess are portrayed as women who succumb to temptation and desire, leading to repercussions. They are seen as individuals drawn to forbidden fruit, with their reactions having far reaching consequences. This comparison reflects society’s attitude towards women’s sexuality and the moral judgments imposed on them. Eve is often regarded as a victim of the manipulative serpent, while Tess falls prey to the predatory nature of Alec d’Urberville. These male characters exploit the vulnerability and innocence of the women, leading to their downfall. The comparison highlights the predatory nature of patriarchal figures and the power dynamics at play. Just as Eve’s act of disobedience leads to her loss of innocence in the Garden of Eden, Tess’s experiences result in her loss of purity and the erosion of her naivety. The comparison between both female characters also touch the theme of redemption and salvation. Just as Eve’s actions lead to the promise of salvation through Jesus in Christian theology, Tess’s story raises questions regarding the possibilities of redemption and forgiveness for her perceived sins. By comparing these two characters, Hardy delves into themes of morality, temptation, and the burdens placed on women within a patriarchal society. Through these connections, readers are allowed to reflect on the wider implications of Tess’s experiences.

Shakury believes that Tess is confused by the mix signals she gets from the two men in her life; Alec and Angel. According to him, Tess was enticed by Alec because of her fascination, which keeps him coming back to her till he briefly wins her again. Although Tess and Angel subsequently fall in love based on other attributes, their initial attraction to one another is physical. Tess's love for Angel changes once he leaves for Brazil. She exhibits her love for Angel with complete determination and self-denial just like every other Victorian heroine would. She adored him because he appears to be a divine being. She stays away from other admirers, wraps her face with bandages and shaves her brows. When she seems ugly, she says; "O no--- I don't care! I'll always be ugly now, because Angel is not here, and I have nobody to take care of me. My husband that was gone away, and never will love me anymore; but I love him just the same, and hate all other men, and like to make 'em think scornfully of me!" (Hardy, 275).

Tess's ethical principle is destroyed by Angel's return, and her rage at Alec's betrayal grows to the point where she kills Alec to show Angel that she loves him and not her seducer, telling Angel that she was unable to bear his not loving her. She asks Angel to affirm that he loves her, now that she has killed Alec. She deems it necessary to kill Alec because Angel once mentioned that Alec has been her husband in Nature and not him, before departing from her. She is now convinced that they can live happily since the main person obstructing their love is gone. Shaheen and Karim in their article, "Psycho-sexual Ambivalence in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Freudian Interpretation" consider,

*Tess's tragedy in the ambivalent presentation of her sexuality. Tess's circumstances, pride, and sexuality play an important role in her "confused surrender" to Alec, who, being a perfect manipulator, numbs her assertion and resistance for the time being and succeeds. According to them, Tess has been seduced. However, such an outlook reduces the greatness of Tess's character. Tess's sexual misadventure can be properly understood in the mechanism of sexual instincts and the cultural presentation of sexuality which presents sexuality as a taboo. Tess a scapegoat whose tragedy is due to the ambivalent social attitude towards sexuality which was unnatural and harmful. They also consider ancestral pride and recklessness as important aspects of Tess's*

*downfall in this novel. In this regard, Shaheen and Karim seem to focus on the less important factors in the search for Tess's tragic flaw. (732)*

Both critics imply that Tess is the victim of social and internal forces. She is viewed through her sensuality. She gets a tragic end in the assertion of her internal being. Tess's dilemma reaches its peak when she realizes she will never be able to escape her past. She is unable to come to terms with the fact that society views her as impure, and feels that she is unable to overcome the constraints placed upon her. The novel ends tragically with Tess's execution, reinforcing the idea that for Tess and others like her, there was no escaping the fate that society had on them. She is placed in a complex situation, one that is tied up with the guilt of shame she feels about her past. She is haunted by the fear that she will never be able to escape the consequences of her actions. Her greatest dilemma is exacerbated by the fact that she is living in a society that judges women harshly for any perceived transgression of moral boundaries. She knows that her past will be held against her, and that she will never be able to fully escape the stigma of being a "fallen woman".

As a result, she is plagued with a feeling of guilt, shame, and self-doubt. She worries that she is unworthy of love and that she will never be able to find the happiness she deserves and desires. This crisis of confidence leads her to question her own identity and her place in the world, and she fights to come to terms with the mistakes of her past and the limitations they place on her future. Ultimately, Tess's dilemma is a deeply personal one that reflects on the social and cultural pressures faced by women in Victorian England. Her will to reconcile her desire for happiness with the demands of society that judges her harshly is a poignant and powerful commentary on the limitations placed on women's autonomy during this time period. Tess feels entitled and accountable for sins she hasn't committed. Tess feels immense shame and guilt over her past life and the revelation of it in front of Angel and his family is something too much for her to bear.

Alongside Tess's Choices, Angel Clare's choices and subsequent responsibilities also have a significant consequence. His decision to marry Tess despite knowing her past is driven by his idealistic notions of purity and virtue. However, when he discovers Tess's history, he succumbs to societal expectations and abandons her and seeks solace in a remote farming community in Brazil. Angel's choice to prioritize societal norms over his love for Tess in a

lifetime of regret and a deep sense of responsibility for the pain he has caused. Each of these choices has a significant consequence for Angel, both in terms of personal happiness and his social standing. The novel adheres that individuals have a responsibility to consider the consequences of their decisions, and take full responsibility for the outcome of their decisions. For instance, when Tess kills Alec, she must confront the moral and legal consequences of her actions, even though they were driven by her sense of outrage and desire to revenge.

In an article, “Thomas Hardy: A Torchbearer of Feminism Representing Sufferings of Victorian Era Women”, Stephen John states that; “Victorian women were disadvantaged socially, politically and economically. In each sphere of life, they were deprived. Thomas Hardy had depicted the deprivations, sufferings and miseries of women through Tess. He connected one incident with another so realistically that a reader could have a whole picture of Victorian society in his mind” (58). After learning about Tess’s past, Angel Clare faces several dilemmas in the novel that challenge his values, beliefs and sense of self. These dilemma situations stem from the clash between his idealistic views on love and marriage, and the reality of Tess’s situation.

One of the dilemmas that Angel faces is whether he should continue loving Tess despite her past. He is torn between his deep feelings for Tess and his belief that he should only be with a woman who fits his ideal of purity and innocence. This internal conflict creates a great deal of emotional turmoil for Clare, as he struggles to reconcile his desire for Tess with his sense of moral obligation. Another instance of dilemma in the text is seen when he faces the difficulty as to whether to forgive Tess about her past. Bukhari believes that “For Angel, Tess is innocent and purity incarnated. He wraps her in different images but the real Tess is always obscured under them. Sometimes, she is the image of a goddess and at other times she has nothing ethereal about her. She is a woman of flesh and blood, with real warmth, real vitality and real incarnation” (40). He is initially horrified by what she has told him and feels betrayed by her failure to live up to his expectations.

Sivandipour in an article, “Analysing Hardy’s Portrayal of Tess through Christian feminism” discusses that;

*Initially, Hardy portrays Angel as a true lover who very deep inside loves Tess, and cannot ignore his feelings towards her and marry Mary Chant (a devoted virgin, who is suggested by Angel’s parents). Angel thinks it is not necessary to*

*be a faithful Christian as Mary but at the end, he himself ignores all his feelings towards Tess and this is ironic because of the Christian perceptions.*  
(1527)

Although Tess is first seen by Angel as a very honest girl who can be accepted for who she is, in the end, it is Angel who loses sight of Tess's true purity and honesty and ignores her because of his religious prejudices. However, he later comes to understand that Tess is a victim of circumstance and her actions were not entirely her own fault. This realization forces Angel to confront his own biases and prejudices. As he comes to see Tess in a more sympathetic light. Shaheen and Karim, quote that;

*Hardy's chief concerns as a psychological novelist are psychological inhibitions and internal sexual conflicts. These concerns make his characters modern in spirit and ideas. Analysis of Angel's character is based on his conflicts between reason and emotion and instinctive drives and intellect. These conflicting views keep him in a conflict between asceticism and sensuousness. Sumner finds many similarities between Freud and Hardy as both were interested in similar kinds of psychological issues. Angel's rejection of Tess, his idealisation, and his reaction to that rejection are some examples of these similarities. However, WE did not consider the role of instincts in Tess's sexual relationship with Alec and the cultural values of the taboo of virginity. We consider Angel's rejection of Tess a neurotic act, however, Angel's overvaluation of Tess and the lack of sensual current in his sensuality are important factors that display the working of ego instincts.* (733)

Clare is faced with the dilemma of how to reconcile his love for Tess with his sense of duty to his family and society. He is aware of the fact that his decision to marry Tess will be met with disapproval from his family and could jeopardize his future prospects. However, he could choose to marry Tess, regardless of class expectations and upbringing. By hiding Tess from his family when he returns home without her, he is able to avoid the judgment and disapproval of his family and society while still being with the woman he loves. Clare's decision to hide Tess has significant consequences for their relationship. Tess feels isolated and abandoned, and begins to question Clare's love for her. She also feels guilty for making him to go against his family's



wishes and fears that she is not good enough for him. This leads to a breakdown in their relationship and ultimately contributes to the tragic ending of the novel. His dilemmas in the novel highlight the complexities of love, morality, and social expectations in Victorian England, and the challenges faced by individuals who must navigate these competing demands.

Again, Tess initially conceals her identity as a D'Urberville from Angel due to social inferiority, fear of rejection, and a desire for love. Tess comes from a humble background and believes that her aristocratic lineage, tainted as it may be, will elevate her status in Angel's eyes. She hopes that by presenting herself as a simple milkmaid, she can avoid judgment and prejudice associated with her impoverished background. Moreover, Angel holds strong moral ideals and stands against the decadence of the upper class. By hiding her true identity, she believes she can win Angel's affection based on her merits, rather than rely on her family lineage. Tess's decision to continue using the name Durbeyfield after learning about her connection to the D'Urbervilles reflects her conflicted feelings about her heritage. She is deeply aware of the class divisions and prejudices that separate her from the wealthy and powerful D'Urbervilles, and she is apprehensive that revealing her true identity will only lead to disappointment and disillusionment. Furthermore, her use of the Durbeyfield name is tied with her sense of identity and self-worth. She sees herself as a simple country girl and this name reflects a sense of simplicity and humanity. By contrast, the name D'Urberville represents a more complex and ambiguous identity, one that is both noble and tainted by the sins of the past. In this way, Tess's use of the name Durbeyfield reflects her desire to hold onto a sense of self that is grounded in her own experiences and values, rather than in the expectations and judgments of others. Hardy employs foreshadowing to hint at future events in the story. The recurring presence of the ancient D'Urberville family crest foreshadows the destructive influence they will have on Tess's life. Similarly, the mention of the "three-leaved grass" in Tess's family history foreshadows the tragic events that will occur later.

However, as the novel progresses, Tess eventually reveals her identity as a D'Urberville to Angel due to guilt. She realizes that a genuine relationship cannot be built on lies and deception. The weight of her secret becomes unbearable, thus revealing the truth. Throughout their relationship, Tess battles with feelings of unworthiness and guilt, and is afraid that her past and her social status will prevent Angel from truly loving and accepting her. This revelation is

also motivated by desperation and a sense of fate. She reaches a point where she feels trapped and believes that her destiny is predetermined. She believes that her fate as a D'Urberville is inescapable and, revealing her identity becomes a way to confront her past and accept the consequences that come with it. In this way, her decisions to reveal herself as a D'Urberville is not only an act of courage and vulnerability, but also an act of integrity and morality. Unfortunately, Angel's reaction to this revelation is not what she had hoped for, and it eventually leads to her tragic end in the novel. Despite her willingness to be honest with him, Angel is unable to fully accept this past and her connection to the D'Urberville family, and this ultimately drives wedge between them.

Alec, the antagonist in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is torn between his desire for Tess and his own selfish impulses. He is aware of the fact that she is not in love with him, and that their relationship is solely based on coercion and manipulation, but he cannot help his own desires and is willing to do whatever it takes to possess her. At the beginning of the novel, he is portrayed as a wealthy and entitled young man who takes advantage of her, a poor country girl who is working on his family's estate. Alec seduces her despite her protest and takes advantage of her sexuality. Bukhari also adds that;

*The Victorian society of 19<sup>th</sup> century was prominent for its two most sensitive areas; its changing ideas of social classes in Victorian England and the issues of the poor condition of low-class women. On the social level, Victorian society is a male chauvinistic society where males hold the key positions in the social and political institutions and formulate social and moral laws to control the lives of women and children.*  
(39)

However, as the narrative progresses, Alec begins to experience conflicting emotions towards Tess and his actions. On the one hand, Alec desires to own Tess, but on the other hand, he begins to feel guilty and remorseful for the way he has treated her. He battles with his feelings towards Tess and his own moral conscience, which leads him to act in unpredictable ways. At some instance in the novel, Alec becomes a preacher and tries to redeem himself for his past actions. He believes that he can make up for his sins by devoting his life to God and helping others.

However, he finds out that he cannot escape his past and his feelings towards Tess, which continue to haunt him. He experiences a ton of Dilemmas and confusions as he struggles to navigate his doings and come to terms with his actions towards Tess and find a way to redeem himself.

Again, Alec does seem to experience a degree of remorse for his actions towards Tess, but it is unclear if his remorsefulness is genuine or merely a result of his guilt and desire to manipulate Tess and himself. After raping Tess, Alec initially tries to make amends by offering to marry her. Later when they both meet again, he becomes obsessed with her and attempts to win her over. However, Alec's conversion to Christianity is shallow and hypocritical. He continues to be selfish and manipulative, and his preaching is more about impressing others than genuinely seeking redemption. When Tess rejects him again and chooses to be with Angel instead, Alec becomes enraged and attempts to ruin her life. Cairney supports the view that Alec is in a situation of dilemma when she says; "Alec, who had since given up his evil ways to become a preacher, is unable to contain his lust for Tess and abandons his new found religion in pursuit of her" (312). He is merely confused about his sense of direction and a possibility that he is simply trying to manipulate Tess once more.

The novel presents a series of dilemmas that make it impossible for Tess to make a right choice. She kills Alec after he reappears in her life, and tries to take the thought of her husband Angel, away from her. Tess had married Angel believing that she could start a new life with him, but her past with Alec continues to haunt her. When Alec resurfaces, Tess is faced with a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, she still feels he could support her a great deal, so she is tempted to return to him. On the other hand, she loves Angel and does not want to betray him. Additionally, Tess knows that if she returns to Alec, her past will continue to haunt her and she will never be able to escape it. When Alec tried to convince Tess to return to him, she initially resists. However, when he persists and tries to force her to go with him, she becomes desperate. She sees no way out of her dilemma and believes that the only way to escape Alec's grasp and protect her marriage with Angel is to kill Alec. Tess kills Alec in a moment of desperation and despair, hoping that she will finally put an end to her past so as to start a new life with Angel. However, this act eventually leads to her arrest, trial and execution, and the novel ends tragically with her death.

Another aspect of dilemma in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* arises from the conflict between her desires to be honest with her fear of being rejected by Angel Clare, the man she loves. Tess has a dark past, having been raped by Alec, whom she kills. Tess knows her past could potentially ruin her happy life with Angel if he were to find out. She struggles with whether or not to reveal the truth to him, as she wants their relationship to build on honesty, but at the same time fears that he will not be able to accept her once he uncovers the truth. Tess's dilemma is also complicated by the fact that Angel comes from a very different background than she does, and he has certain ideals and expectations of the women he loves. He has expressed a desire for purity and innocence in a partner, and Tess knows that her past does not fit with his ideal. These factors contribute to Tess's inner turmoil as she struggles with her decision of whether or not to reveal her past to Angel.

### **Dilemma and Revenge**

While the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy deals primarily with the ethical struggles of the main character, Tess, it also explores dilemma and revenge. In the novel, Tess is the victim of the actions of others, and she is forced to grapple with the force of physical ethical dilemmas. Meanwhile other characters in the novel face their own dilemmas as they seek revenge for perceived wrongs.

One of the clearest examples of revenge in the novel is Alec's comeback into Tess's life. Considering the fact that she was sexually assaulted, bore a child and suffered all the negative consequences on her own, Alec dares to surface one more time in her life and attempts to take advantage of her once more. She takes this return of Alec into her life to revenge on her past and present suffering and her mental, physical social trauma, caused by society. In order to peacefully avenge her suffering, she decides to kill Alec. Another reason for which Tess kills Alec is that he tries to force her to return to him and leave her husband, Angel. Also, Alec persists and becomes aggressive, threatening Tess and trying to force her to return to him. In a moment of desperation, Tess sees no way out of this difficult situation but to end his life. She is however unable to escape her actions as she is executed. Shakury observes that;

*From the very beginning of the novel, we can find traces of the impact of the patriarchal culture on Hardy and his portrayal of women as being less intelligent. Tess is shown as inferior to the men in her life. Constantly*

*contributing to her own misfortune. She impulsively and senselessly murders Alec... the image of Tess is radical. She is increasingly aggressive; she has some acts against society. Tess is the first woman of the Wessex tales to strike out against a man she hates. Her retaliation, like her behaviour, is prompted by blind impulse, not creative, intellectual sense of obligation to herself. (92)*

The killing of Alec is a tragic and desperate act that highlights the complexity of Tess's character and the difficult circumstances she faced in the novel.

Correspondingly, incidents of rape in Victorian society, as Cairney contends, "generally went unrecognized and, therefore, unpunished because the requirements of proving rape evolve from 'the judicial imposition of male standard of conducts-school boy rules.' Standards of conduct that do not incorporate women's sense of consent, force, or violation to prevent certain rapes from being perceived by the law, the victim or society as a legally provable rape" (316). On this account, Tess is triggered by the difficult fact that the law can't take her stance, and decides to act on her impulses.

Coupled with rage from characters' behaviours, the novel also portrays the ways in which societal norms and expectations can lead individuals to seek revenge against those who wronged them. For instance, Angel Clare's rejection of Tess after learning about her past with Alec can be seen as a form of retaliation, and he punishes her for something that was not entirely within her control. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, society's expectations and values often push individuals to seek revenge in the face of injustice and suffering. The novel paints a society in which class and gender roles are strictly defined, and those who do not conform to these norms are punished or ostracized. It is a symbol of the growing disgust and disillusionment with the stereotypical Victorian perceptions of women. For example; Tess's reputation is ruined when she becomes pregnant out of wedlock, despite the fact that she was raped by Alec D'Urberville. Society's condemnation of her actions and the stigma attached to her situation make it difficult for Tess to find work or social acceptance, leading her to become increasingly isolated and desperate, which leads to wrong decision-making. Through the book, Hardy expresses his opposition to people who trespassed on the aspirations and lives of women in the Victorian era. He illustrates the worth of all women via the character of Tess, as well as the sufferings that results when society stands in the way of women's sincere goal. Shakury buttresses this point by further stating that;

*In creating Tess, Hardy strongly protests against the harsh and unfair treatment of Victorian society for women. He blames society for Tess's dissatisfaction and tragedy, and she is free from any blame. as Jane Thomas asserts, "Hardy recognized women's physical, mental and emotional susceptibility to convention and their consequent capitulation in the face of apparently overwhelming social pressures. Tess is a symbol of an old-age wrong, a tragedy of women, and of nature and of society. Angel Clare represents the harsh reaction of society against her. (94)*

This quotation suggests that Hardy acknowledges and highlights the vulnerability of the woman in Victorian society. He recognizes that women faced immense pressure to conform to societal expectations, which often resulted in their unhappiness and ultimate downfall. Tess here represents the struggles that woman faced in the society that disregarded their needs and desires. The quotation mirrors Hardy's criticisms of the oppressive treatment of Victorian women.

Rape profoundly alters women's sense of themselves and the world around them" which gives Tess enough reason to rebel. The consequences of rape are no less tragic to a poor family girl. In addition to producing drastic changes in the victim's personality, rape causes victims to reorder their lives. This phenomenon holds true for Tess. She noticeably perceives the rape as a painful strand which twists through every aspect of her life. Shaheen and Karim hold that Tess's rape or seduction has remained a great puzzle for the critics due to the ambivalent nature of the event and Tess's confusing situation. They highlight that;

*Amid this ambivalent situation, Hardy has portrayed the psychology of feelings and has highlighted Tess's conflicting emotions who was inexperienced to tackle such situations. To consider Tess's sexual experience with Alec as rape or seduction would leave her no substantial place in the novel. The right approach is to locate her in the conflict between sexual instincts and ego instincts. It is this ambivalence which Hardy wants to point out in this critical position of Tess's life. Though Tess does not feel comfortable with Alec and repels him, yet she also appears to have some attraction towards him. Her ego instincts want her to avoid him and she feels guilty in giving him any response but her sexual feelings are motivated by his flirtation and advancements. In the*

*Chase scene, she is presented in a complete ambivalent situation. Not only is her emotional state vague, the scenery, as well as the commentary, is also ambivalent. The following conversation with Alec points out this ambivalent nature of things, “Tess, why do you always dislike my kissing you? I suppose — because I don’t love you. You are quite sure? I am angry with you sometimes!” (Hardy, 85). It is obvious that she does not give any straightforward answer to Alec, rather responds to his advancements. Similarly, she does not offer any precise resistance to the clasping of his arm around her. (737)*

The above quotation suggests that Tess is a complex character who experiences conflicting emotions and struggles to navigate through challenging situations. While Tess may be seen as a victim of sexual abuse by Alec, categorizing her experience purely as rape or seduction would oversimplify her character and her place in the novel. Instead, the quotation argues that it is necessary to understand Tess’s psychological state and the conflicting instincts that influence her actions. Tess is portrayed as inexperienced in dealing with such circumstances, which adds to her internal conflict. She feels repelled by Alec but also undergoes some form of attraction towards him. This ambivalence is crucial for Hardy to navigate the complexities of Tess’s life and to explore the internal struggles she faces. Despite feeling uncomfortable and guilty about Alec’s advances, Tess’s sexual instincts are also aroused by his flirting. This creates a tension within her, with her ego instincts pushing her to avoid him, while her sexual desires are motivated by his advances. This underscores the importance of understanding her psychology and the conflicting instincts that drive her actions.

In *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy delves into the ethical crisis surrounding rape, it explores the devastating consequences of sexual violence on Tess’s life, and exposes the injustice and societal attitudes surrounding this form of abuse. Violation of consent is prevalent when Tess’s rape is concerned. Tess’s violation of her bodily autonomy and the absence of her consent emphasize the ethical dilemma surrounding consent and the importance of respecting boundaries. The novel highlights the devastating impact of non-consensual acts. After the assault, Tess faces victim-blaming and societal stigma. Many characters and society itself blame Tess for her perceived involvement in the incident, reinforcing the unethical tendency to shift

blame onto the victim rather than holding the perpetrator accountable. This highlights the unjust attitudes prevalent in the society depicted in the novel. The incident of rape also exposes the power dynamics between men and women in a patriarchal society. Alec, as a wealthy and influential man, takes advantage of his position to exert sexual control over Tess. The novel questions the ethical implications of unequal power dynamics and the abuse that can arise from them. The rape incident leaves long-lasting psychological and emotional scars on Tess. She experiences feelings of shame, guilt, and worthlessness, struggling to cope with the trauma inflicted upon her.

The portrayal of these consequences shed light on the profound impact of rape on the victims' wellbeing and highlights the ethical responsibility society has towards supporting survivors. The novel raises questions about the ethical need for justice and accountability in cases of sexual violence. Tess's desire for justice is thwarted further underscoring the crisis surrounding the lack of legal and social mechanisms to address and rectify such acts. By presenting rape as an ethical crisis, Hardy confronts societal norms, exposes the injustices faced by victims and raises awareness about the urgent need for change. Through Tess's experiences, he invites readers to challenge victim-blaming mentalities and critically examine the moral and ethical dimensions surrounding sexual violence.

Similarly, Angel Clare's rejection of Tess when he learns about her past is one of the factors that prompts her to execute her revenge. The novel suggests that societal expectations and values can lead individuals to be more constructive in ways of responding to the wrongs that they experience. For example, when Angel abandons Tess and goes to Brazil, he suffers greatly and begins to feel bitter and resentful towards Tess for ruining his life. Also, when Tess discovers that Alec has returned to her life and is trying to manipulate her once again, she feels a sense of anger and outrage that drives her to murder him. Revenge here is closely tied to social expectations and values that shape characters' actions and motivations. The novels suggests that the strict enforcement of social norms and the harsh treatments of those who fail to conform can create a culture of revenge and retaliation, in which individuals feel driven to seek revenge against those who have wronged them in order to restore their sense of honour and dignity. Morgan, observes and lays emphasis on the scathing revelations Tess, as a 19<sup>th</sup> century female



undergoes. In her article, “Repression and Expression of Sexuality in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*” She states that;

*The society Tess faces is a dehumanizing agrarian society where the human relationships have been cruelly distorted with the advent of mechanized agriculture. The society determines the worth of a woman by the double-standard of sexuality and morality. The sexual fall of a woman is judged by the society as something unpardonable. The so-called ‘purity’ is demanded only from women and men are never asked to keep their purity... Hardy has defended the innocence and purity of Tess while exposing the spurious sexual morality and aggressive sexuality of the patriarchal society... in Tess, Hardy directly comes to present a woman who openly comes to clash with male-dominated society. Being unaware of the crooked ways of masculinist society, Tess apparently falls from her so-called purity. But her unintentional fall cannot undermine her indomitable spirit and courage. (152)*

According to the critic quoted above, false moral codes fail to crush Tess’s brave soul as she struggles to redefine her individuality in a new way. Yet, the inevitable forces of society oppose her attempts to fit in, and her past follows her wherever she goes. Taking control of the church rituals and the law, she attacks the exclusive worldview of a male dominated society. Tess’s personality achieves an unusual combination of sexuality and spirituality while remaining aggressive. When she finally exerts herself and murders a sexual degrader, society labels her as a murderess. And then hangs her. Tess chooses death over compromising with society’s discriminatory values.

In addition, the novel explores the theme of revenge through the characters of the D’Urberville family who seek to take advantage of Tess and her family of their own benefits. While the D’Urbervilles do not engage in overt acts of retaliation, their exploitation of Tess and her family can be seen as a form of revenge against the lower classes. First and foremost, their use of their supposed lineage and status to lure Tess into working for them. When Tess’s father John learns that he is one of the distant relative of the D’Urbervilles, he sends Tess to work for them in the hopes that she will be able to secure some financial assistance for the family. Once Tess arrives at the D’Urberville estate, she realizes that the claims to nobility are largely false,

and that they are actually quite impoverished themselves. Later in the novel, Tess is in a dire financial condition, Alec reappears and offers her a job and a place to stay, but only on the condition that she becomes his mistress. When Tess refuses, Alec forces her to accept his help anyway and then uses her continued dependence on him to try to manipulate her into a sexual relationship. On account of these various interactions, the D'Urbervilles use their supposed wealth and status to manipulate and control Tess, taking advantage of her and her family's desperation for financial support. In doing so, they exemplify the ways in which the upper classes can exploit and prey upon those who are less fortunate than themselves. Parab, supports this claim in "Fatalism Views of Thomas Hardy in Tess's Tragedy." According to him;

*The striking scene of capitalist exploitation and oppression on the Flintcomb-Ash farm is one of the highlights in the novel, for here as rarely elsewhere in English fiction do we witness a vivid picture of how women labours were especially heavily exploited, with their lower wages but no lighter work, in addition to this, they were blatantly insulted as well as maltreated with harsh words and orders. (214)*

This quotation highlights the significance of oppression and exploitation lower class characters undergo. This inequality in compensation and workload reflects the systematic discrimination and oppression faced by women in the workforce of Victorian society.

When Tess sets foot in the D'Urberville estate, Mrs D'Urberville Alec's mother treats her with disdain and condescension. She is a proud and snobbish woman who looks down upon Tess because of her humble origins and working class background. She becomes even more hostile towards Tess when she finds out she was seduced by her son, she blames Tess for leading Alec astray and accuses her of being a shameless and immoral woman. Tess is reflection of social and class stratifications that existed in Victorian England, where people were often judged based on their birth and background rather than character and actions. "Alec, the hypocrite monstrous ghost of the modern Victorian age" as Stephen John addresses him, exploits, mistreats and dominates Tess during her services. "This cruel master wanted Tess to stay submissive to him as he was her master, and could do whatever he wanted." "You shall be made sorry for that! Unless, that is, you agree willingly to let me do it again and no handkerchief" (Hardy, 65). "Alec calls her 'hussy' to convince her that she is not innocent, and this is because he knows her

as a fragile girl who is doomed to be neglected and misused. That is why he swears at her and curses her, and his only reaction to her anger is his heartily laughter.” Sivandipour in “Analysing Hardy’s Portrayal of Tess through Christian Feminism”, suggests that Alec’s actions towards Tess all imply that he regards her as a weak and frail person who has no other options, so she caves and he continues as he wishes (1530).

### **The Conflicts Dilemma Situations produce**

In *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, dilemma situations give rise to profound conflicts, as characters struggle to navigate through a series of moral predicaments and ongoing choices. The conflicts emerge from a clash between societal expectations, personal desires, and the challenging circumstances in which the characters are. Through an examination of specific dilemma instances, we delve into the profound moral tension that plagues Tess, and other characters, that ultimately shape their destinies and reflecting the broader societal themes and complexities of Hardy’s work.

Throughout the novel, the titular character, Tess, encounters dilemmas that force her to weigh conflicting values, expectations, and desires. From her strained relationship with her impoverished family to her encounters with Alec, and later, her love for Angel Clare, Tess finds herself at the crossroads of profound choices, each with its own set of consequences. The conflicts arising from these dilemmas propel the narrative forward, raising questions about personal ethics, societal norms, and the role of fate in shaping Tess’s life. A major conflict arises when Tess is forced to choose between her desire for love and her sense of duty and morality. She falls in love with Angel Clare, but feels guilty about her past experiences with Alec. Tess is torn between revealing her past to Angel, which would risk losing him, or keeping silent and continuing under false pretences. The dilemma creates an internal conflict for Tess and leads to her tension in her relationship with Angel.

Furthermore, the conflicts in Tess’s dilemma are not only internal but also external. Victorian society places stringent expectations on women’s virtue, purity, and obedience to societal norms. This conflict between Tess’s personal desires and social constraints imposed on her creates immense tension within her character. As she grapples with her own moral compass, Tess must navigate the external pressures to conform, adding further complexity to her dilemma-ridden journey. Tess is judged harshly for her past experiences with Alec and is ostracized by

many members of her community. She is forced to navigate this conflict by trying to reconcile her own desires with society's expectations of her, which creates tension and anxiety for her. Chen Zhen conforms to Tess's conflict with society in the article – "Tess in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles." It outlines;

*Victorian society exacerbates an age-old harsh and hypocritical definitions of virtue and exhortations for maidens to conform." As the sacrifice of ethical prejudice, Tess is victimized by Victorian society, whose law she is driven to break and from whose moral codes she is alienated. Tess's behavior deviates from conventional Victorian norms, which regard her as an intruder into the society and offender against the socially accepted moral standards and conduct norms. (37)*

This quotation implies that the Victorian definition of virtue for young maidens can be regarded as hypocritical due to its contradictions and double standards. This era placed a heavy emphasis on female purity, modesty, and obedience, defining these qualities as the epitome of true virtue. However, the definition often imposed unrealistic and restrictive expectations on young women while disregarding the actions and behaviours of the male counterparts. In the Victorian era, young maidens were expected to embody the ideals of chastity and moral rectitude. They were encouraged to maintain their virginity until marriage, with their worth often tied to their sexual purity. Any deviation from these expectations, even if coerced or non-consensual, was met with harsh judgment and condemnation. Yet, the same standards were not applied to men, who were often accused or even rewarded for their sexual exploits and extramarital affairs. This unequal treatment reflects a societal imbalance of power and the enforcement of gender roles that reinforced male dominance and control over women. Moreover, the Victorian definition of virtue focused primarily on outward appearances and societal expectations, neglecting the inner lives and desires of women. Maidens were expected to suppress their own ambitions and aspirations in favour of fulfilling the domestic and submissive roles assigned to them. Their worth was often measured by their ability to serve and please others, particularly their male counterparts. This emphasis on self-sacrifice and the submissiveness limited women's agency and autonomy, depriving them of the opportunity to pursue their own passions and goals. This highlights conflicts between societal judgment and personal growth. Similarly, James Hazen sees Tess as

the “martyrdom of the natural self under the pressure of Victorian social and moral attitudes as embodied in Angel Clare” (*Tess of the D’Urbervilles* and *Antigone*, 210).

Additionally, dilemma situations in Hardy’s narrative lead to a conflict between love and duty. Tess experiences conflicts arising from her relationship with Alec d’Urberville and Angel Clare. She struggles to navigate her feelings of love and responsibility towards her family while also seeking personal happiness and fulfilment. At times, she is torn between accomplishing her duty towards her loved ones and pursuing her own desires. This sense of responsibility ends up pushing her to make wrong choices that lead to her downfall. Tess’s fate highlights the importance of making choices and taking responsibility for one’s actions. This results to a conflict between fate and free will. Tess grapples with the belief in her own agency versus the idea of being subjected to the whims and caprices of fate. She questions whether her life’s trajectory is predetermined or if she has the power to shape her own destiny, leading to an internal conflict characterized by hope, doubt, and a search for autonomy.

Again, there is a conflict between Tess’s desire for autonomy and her dependence on men. She is often at the mercy of men in her life, including her father, Alec and Angel. She struggles to assert herself and make her own decisions, leading to feelings of powerlessness and frustration. This conflict is most evident in Tess’s relationship with Angel, in which she is torn between her desire to be loved and her desire to be independent.

*Remember, my lady, I was your master once; I will be your master again.”*  
(Hardy, 321) *In a society where men enjoy superiority and privilege, women are no doubt living at the mercy of men. They must submit to men’s will, otherwise they will be punished by the social law and tortured by public opinions... Her life journey starts from Jack’s glory dream, experiences Alec’s physical invasion, Groby’s insult and Angel’s spiritual penalty, and ends as a murderer. (Zhen, 38)*

This quotation underscores the power dynamics and gender inequality prevalent in the society depicted in the novel. It highlights that men have inherent superiority and privilege over women, suggesting that women are at the mercy of men and are expected to submit to their will. The phrase “I was your master once; I will be your master again” implies a sense of ownership over women, reinforcing the idea of male dominance and authority. Tess, at some instance is regarded

as a feminist, who struggles to break free from men's shackles all through her life. Her tragedy is a branch of conflicts between males and females, in which females are always sacrificed.

In addition to Tess, several characters in the narrative face their share of dilemma situations that ultimately lead to crises and internal conflicts. Angel Clare, for example, is a complex character who wrestles with his own internal conflicts and moral dilemmas. Angel faces a crisis of conscience when he discovers the truth about Tess's past, and struggles to reconcile his idealized image of her with the societal expectations of purity. Angel's conflicting emotions lead to a crisis of faith, as he questions his own values and struggles with forgiveness and acceptance. Alec d'Urberville represents the character whose moral dilemmas stem from a lack of personal integrity. He is torn between his desire for Tess and the societal norms he outwardly disregards. Alec's actions lead to a crisis of morality and a loss of control, eventually contributing to his tragic events in the novel. Joan Durbeyfield, Tess's mother, battles with her role as a parent and the choices she made regarding Tess's future. Joan's internal conflicts reflect the societal pressures placed upon women during her era, and the difficult decisions they had to make for their children's well-being. Tess's father John Durbeyfield, experiences conflicts related to his own sense of identity and social standing. He wrestles with his new found status as a descendant of the noble D'Urberville family, culminating in a crisis when he realizes the consequences of his actions and the impact on his daughter's life.

In conclusion, it is worthy of note that characters' journeys in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are marked by a series of choices that have far reaching consequences and burdensome responsibilities. Throughout the novel, Tess, Angel, and Alec, take pivotal decisions that not only impact their own lives but also those around them. The consequences of their choices are far-reaching, leading to a series of events that shape the trajectories of other characters' lives. These characters' dilemmas and subsequent crisis contribute to the overall narrative and themes of the novel. Their internal conflicts reflect the societal pressures, moral ambiguities, adding depth and complexity to Thomas Hardy's exploration of human nature and the human condition. Through an exploration of characters choices and responsibilities, this research serves to shed more light on the profound impact of decision making and the complex interplay between personal agency, societal norms, and the consequences of one's actions. The research also serves as a reminder that even seemingly insignificant choices can have profound

and lasting effects, shaping the course of one's life and those around them. The next chapter will focus on resolving dilemma situations. It will show how the characters use transgressive and obstinate measures to resolve their dilemma situations.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESOLVING DILEMMA SITUATIONS

In the previous chapter we had as purpose to analyse the dilemma situations that characters undergo in Hardy's work. The present chapter is divided into two sections. The first part of the chapter focusses on Transgression. Transgression here is used as a tool in solving dilemma issues, through breaking societal norms in Hardy's narrative. It explores how Tess and other characters in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are affected by societal conventions, moral boundaries, and can be considered as a central theme, with characters facing dilemmas and having to confront the repercussions of their choices. From a Freudian perspective, this chapter is concerned with the human desire to thrive amidst the obstacles in the society. The second part of the chapter focusses on obstinacy, which empowers characters to challenge societal norms and assert their own identity, enabling them to navigate the dilemmas they face and find a sense of solution. It is important to note that while transgression and obstinacy contribute to characters' personal growth, and aim at resolving dilemma situations, they do not always lead to ideal resolutions in the novel. Hardy explores the complexities of morality, societal expectations, and the limitations imposed on individuals, often resulting in tragic outcomes.

#### **Transgression**

Michel Foucault, a prominent philosopher and social theorist, explored the concept of transgression in his book, *Preface to Transgression*. He viewed transgression as a subversive act that challenges and surpasses established norms, rules, and boundaries of society. According to Foucault, transgression entails going beyond the limits imposed by power structures, exposing their inherent fragility and demonstrating the potential for alternate modes of existence (509). John Armitage in an article entitled "The Pursuit of Luxury as an Act of Transgression: Bataille, Sovereignty, Desire", defines transgression according to George Bataille, the French philosopher and writer, who saw transgressive acts as a means of breaking a taboo and crossing socially sanctioned boundaries. According to Armitage, Bataille believed that transgression involves a radical form of excess, often associated with violence, eroticism, and the exploration of the



darker aspects of human nature. “Transgression is employed to denote a violation, as of a law, or to the exceeding of due bounds or limits and so by extension to individual human breaches of a law” (2). Armitage adds that “Bataille and Foucault share the supposition that transgression has an active, determining effect upon ideas of evil, approaches to madness, and the experience of depravity and danger in everyday lives riven with lawlessness and negation” (3).

These definitions highlight transgression as a concept that involves crossing boundaries and challenging societal norms, ranging from power structures and rules to taboos and conventional requirements. These definitions provide a profound insight into the concept of transgression, and why it was chosen as a tool to resolve dilemma in this research. Transgression in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, therefore, refers to the act of committing and violating or breaking a rule, law, or moral principle. It is an action that goes beyond established norms, often resulting in negative consequences. It often involves the exploration of the forbidden or marginalized aspects of human existence and has been the subject of extensive analysis and debate within literary and cultural studies. In literature, transgression can be a central theme, with characters facing dilemmas and having to deal with the outcome.

Transgression in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* can be related to Freudian psychoanalysis through the exploration of repressed desires, guilt, and the subconscious mind. One of the key concepts in Freudian psychoanalysis is the idea of the unconscious mind, which includes repressed thoughts, desires, and memories. In *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, the principal character, Tess, experiences a dilemma of self-worth and stigmatization, due to Alec’s sexual transgressions on her and the societal condemnation that follows. Throughout the novel, Tess faces stigmatization and judgment from society due to her past experiences. The societal pressure leads her to question her own self-worth and struggle with feelings of abandonment. Moreover, Alec refers to her as “no more than an insignificant creature to toy with and dismiss” (Hardy, 130). Her resolution lies in challenging the oppressive societal norms that attempt to define her worth. These repressed emotions and desires can be seen as elements of Tess’s unconscious mind, which eventually manifest in her psychological and emotional struggles. At certain points in the novel, Hardy delves into the characters’ thoughts and inner monologues, giving the reader insight into their emotions and motivations. This stream of consciousness technique helps to create a more intimate and realistic portrayal of the characters. Freud would argue that Tess’s

repressed desires and guilt influence her thoughts, behaviours, and interactions with others. However, Tess gradually learns to rise above society's expectations and judgment, recognizing her own intrinsic value and reclaiming her identity. Ismael Issany, in his thesis; "Bursting out of the Corset: Physical Mobility as Social Transgression and Subversion in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*," comments that;

*Generally no matter what place the individual woman is shown to occupy in the novel of the time, traditional image of women focus on the domestic and sexual roles. Victorian novels are closely bound up with hegemonic perspectives of women. They confine women to the private and domestic world where emotions and personal relationships are the very core of their experience. Women in the typical Victorian novel are mere captives of feelings and private life of their roles are limited to a narrow range of 'types' like the virgin heroine or the innocent maiden...these over-simplified ideas of women served to limit women's notions of themselves and their possibilities. (5)*

Hardy makes an effort to depict women's disempowerment in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in relation to societal practices that are based on gender inequality. The Victorian ideal womanhood is embodied in the worship of a maiden who is affectionate but not passionate. Victorian women were generally expected to exhibit warm feelings of compassion and feelings of care, worry, and loyalty, but never sexual passion or desire. Those who dared to refute this doctrine through their actions were punished severely. They were considered as guilty and shameless objects. They became known as fallen women, whose sexuality was seen to have corrupted the social order of the day. Thus, "fallen women" were subjected to oppression by the violent stereotypes imposed upon them. They were viewed as outcasts who disobeyed social conventions. The causes of women breaking social norms were not taken into consideration. It appears that little or nothing was made to understand the circumstances that led them to break accepted norms and rules. However, it is evident through the character of Tess that she was made to break the accepted social norms of her time. Issany continues by admitting that;

*Hardy does not conform to the conventions of his age in his presentation of Tess. Tess is far removed from the typically passive, submissive and selfless fictional woman of the earlier decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in many ways. Not*

*only does she struggle to maintain her independence and autonomy, thereby defying the codes of behaviour prescribed for the 19<sup>th</sup> century female population as a whole, but Tess also deviates from established religious codes of conduct. The baptism scene is a clear example of such a transgression on the heroine's part. (23)*

As per the critic mentioned above, Christian orthodoxy holds that Tess is violating the law when she assumes the role of the minister's position and designs her own type of baptism for her child who was born out of wedlock. When observed from a different viewpoint, this irrational act can be seen as fierce determination to proclaim her existence. And in the novel's concluding chapter "Fulfilment" as the title suggests, Tess murders Alec, who relentlessly pursues and puts pressure on her, defying social norms and the law.

From a reader response point of view, Tess is not to be blamed for her loss of faith. Tess experiences a gradual erosion of her religious faith. Her exposure to hardship, injustices, and personal tragedies shakes her belief in a benevolent and just higher power. As her circumstances worsen, Tess questions the fairness of the world and the efficiency of divine intervention, leading her to distance herself from traditional Christian beliefs. Tess often relies on her own conscience and personal sense of morality rather than adhering strictly to religious doctrines. She makes decisions based on compassion, empathy, and her own moral compass rather than blindly following the strict rules organized by religion. This deviation from religious orthodoxy underscores the novel's exploration of individual ethics and the complexities of human morality. According to Robert Schweik, in an article- "Moral Response in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*", Tess might have been considered solid, yet, she embodies characters traits of a morally inclined individual. He says that;

*The "very meaning" of Tess of the D'Urbervilles, J.O. Bailey has recently observed is that "Tess, though impure in act, was a pure woman in the tendencies of her mind and heart." Equally explicit generalization about the ethical implications of the novel have been expressed by earlier commentators- that Hardy's defence of Tess was a "frank appeal to the law of nature," for example, or that Hardy was preaching a "superior moral law" through the mouth of repentant Angel Clare... Hardy insisted that the novel was an*

*“impression,” scattered through it are pages which can be read almost as though they were abstract propositions in ethics. (14)*

This quotation suggests that the novel challenges traditional notions of purity and virtue by presenting Tess as a morally pure individual despite her impure actions. It highlights the idea that Tess’s true character lies in the tendencies of her mind and heart, rather than in her specific actions. This quotation also implies that Hardy purposefully included scattered impressions and sections within the novel that can be read as abstract propositions in ethics. Hardy seeks to provoke moral reflections and debates through the ethical implications he presents throughout the book.

Priyanka Singh, in an article entitled, “Tracing Paradigm Shift in Hardy’s Tess”, holds similar views with Issany, about Tess’s act of transgression as far as Christianity is concerned. According to her, the society designates a special area for “fallen women” and denies them the right to take part in social activities. The church’s refusal to baptize Tess’s baby and, subsequently, its opposition to a Christian funeral, both reflect the harshness of society. Hardy makes fun of the fabricated concepts of piety held by clerics by suing Tess’s status. When her child is denied a Christian burial, she admits that she detests hypocrites and turns her back against Christianity. Irving Howe, explains Tess’s revolution as “what Tess is saying is that a man so seemingly deserves neither human affection nor religious respect” (421). Hardy criticizes the hollow values of the bourgeois middle class rather than succumbing to the false practices of the society. While Tess is baptizing her child, he perceives a divine personage in her. Her action supports the feminist agenda that undercuts the time’s social standards. Additionally, Tess’s class does not view her freedom to wander across the fields, regular works and commitment, or acceptance of her illegitimate child as an abnormality. As obvious as it may seem, the idea of purity or virginity is mocked because Tess’s emotional connection to her kid during the harvest scene is never considered a conflicting act. It is ironic how she is viewed as a mother carrying out her maternal responsibilities. Hardy employs irony to highlight the tragic nature of Tess’s story. The discrepancy between Tess’s pure and virtuous character and the cruel fate she encounters creates a sense of irony that underscores the injustices she faces.

In *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, Tess’s act of baptizing her child can be seen as a transgression within the context of the societal and religious norms of the time. Firstly, it implies

that she has acknowledged the child's conception outside of marriage. The act of baptism signifies her acceptance of her child's existence, which implies her acceptance of the circumstances in which the child was conceived. During the Victorian era, having a child out of wedlock was considered a moral transgression and viewed as a violation of societal expectations around sexual purity and marital sanctity. Tess baptizing her child without the presence of a clergyman or official religious ceremony can be seen as a deviation from the established religious practices and authorities. This act challenges the religious institutions' control over matters of baptism and implies a personal agency in matters of spirituality, which goes against the accepted norms of the time. The act also questions the legitimacy of societal judgment. By baptizing her child, Tess demonstrates her refusal to accept the negative societal labelling and condemnation placed upon unwed mothers and their children. It signifies a form of resistance against moral judgments and expectations imposed on her. The act is also interpreted as a statement of love, acceptance, and the recognition of her child's humanity. By seeking baptism, she affirms her child's worth and spiritual connection, asserting their right to exist within the framework of religious recognition.

Freudian psychoanalysis suggests that human behaviour is driven by unconscious, sexual and aggressive instincts. The primary transgression in the novel revolves around Tess's sexual encounters with Alec d'Urberville and her subsequent affair with Angel Clare can be viewed through this lens. As a young and innocent girl, Tess falls victim to Alec's seduction, resulting in her loss of virginity. This goes against societal norms and moral codes of the time, leading to significant consequences for Tess. Tess's actions are partly influenced by her unconscious desires and drives, which she may not fully understand and acknowledge. As a result, she confronts the double standard imposed on women, particularly regarding sexuality. Tess experiences victim-blaming and harsh judgment when her past is revealed, while the men involved face minimal consequences for their actions. The disparity reveals the hypocrisy ingrained in societies treatment of women and highlights the need for a more equitable and just system that holds all accountable regardless of gender. Her resolution lies in challenging the oppressive societal norms that attempt to define her worth. Lee Chuska, in a dissertation, "The Re-emergence of the Sensational Novel", contends that;

*Throughout the story, Tess repeats the pattern of moving from the hopefulness and effort towards happiness. Her knowledge about self and order grows, but it is not cumulative; it is repetitive. This pattern is Hardy's interpretation of life and the ultimate effect of what one learns through experiencing life, human existence amounts to a chain of attempts to gain happiness, which ends only in death. Repetition will continue as one lives. Tess breaks this pattern when she learns that in order to be happy, she must deal with a certain set of conditions... In killing Alec, she has overcome the obstacle to her happiness, but the consequence of this will be her own death. (186)*

In line with Chuska, Tess uses transgression as a means of survival within an oppressive society that condemns her self-worth. In order to escape the shackles of the dilemma situation she finds herself in when Alec d'Urberville is concerned, she chooses to terminate his life, which is an act against the moral conducts of her era. This act of transgression however leads to her ultimate downfall. Correspondingly, Tess uses transgression as a means of survival by killing Alec. Throughout the novel, Tess is faced with numerous obstacles and injustices that threaten her well-being and happiness. Alec, who takes advantage of Tess and sexually assaults her, represents one of these obstacles. By killing Alec, Tess is able to reclaim control over her own life and protect herself from harm. This act of transgression can be seen as a desperate but necessary action for her survival. Again, Tess may also perceive her actions as a way to regain her dignity and seek justice for the wrongs done to her. However, it is important to note that Tess's decision to kill Alec also has severe consequences for her own life. She becomes a fugitive and faces tremendous guilt and societal judgment. This highlights the complications and sacrifices involved in Tess's pursuit of survival and justice.

Taher Badinjki, in an article titled, "*Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Hardy's Nonconformist Views and Challenge of the Prevailing Social and Moral Ideology*", holds a similar view about Tess's transgression to seek happiness. He holds that;

*Tess's killing of Alec at the end of the book seems to be motivated by more than one reason. Alec is the villain of an unjust world. Like Caker in Dombey and Son, he gets fat on the sins and exploitation of others, and has behind him a series of crimes and manipulation which obviously have done him no*

*appreciable harm. He is spare the world's reproaches and punishment, and is through Tess that he pays his retribution for blundering selfishly across the lives of those beneath him. (1356)*

Badinjki believes that the second and more obvious motive for the murder is Alec's reappearance symbolising to a barrier of her relationship with Angel Clare. In order to return to Angel, she kills Alec. As a form of victory, Tess tells Angel, "He has come between us and ruined us, now he can never do it anymore." (Hardy, 318) Following Alec's murder, Tess and Angel have a brief and blissful honeymoon away from society's ambiguous standards of judgment and arbitrary classification. However, the same unjust laws that previously condemned Tess and compelled her to seek justice on her own now condemn her to death for the very crime they had forced her to commit. Tess is void of human forgiveness. No one is present to support her and lend a hand when she is in need.

Again, in a culture where men have privilege and supremacy, women are at the mercy of men. They must submit to the will of men or suffer the repercussions of social norms and public opinion. Tess is put in a vulnerable position by her mother's plan to marry her off in order to support the household, and she falls prey to her mother's deception. Joan's opportunism completely creates an unfavourable situation for Tess and places Tess in Alec d'Urbervilles hands. Alec does not acknowledge his sin while sexually abusing Tess and invading her space in order to violate her virginity. Rather, he accuses Tess of luring him in with her beauty. The law neither condemns nor punishes Alec. We notice that sin causes suffering for the sinner. However, Alec, who commits the sin becomes a preacher rather than getting punished. Why can't the innocent have the same rights as other members of the society if a sinner can become a saint? The male perpetrator faces no repercussions, but the female offender faces prejudice and judgment from society, while the male perpetrator expounds on God's judgment. Moreover, Hardy uses repetition to emphasize certain ideas or themes throughout the novel. The phrase "poor Tess" is repeated multiple times, highlighting the unfairness and hardship she faces. The repetition of the phrase "it was to be" throughout the novel reinforces the idea of fate and inevitability.

Hardy examines the intricate relationship between love and morality. One of the key transgressions in the novel is Tess's premarital sexual encounter with Alec, which leads to an

illegitimate child. This challenges societal norms and moral expectations of Victorian society which upholds ideals of purity and chastity. Through this lens, Hardy challenges the rigid moral framework that dictates Tess's fate and suggests that love and morality are not any compatible. Tess's love for Angel, her husband, is genuine and pure, yet her past transgression becomes an insurmountable obstacle in their relationship. This highlights the conflict between personal emotions and societal judgments. Furthermore, these subsequent actions, such as her murder of Alec, can be seen as a transgression driven by her love for her family and her desire to protect them. While other actions may be morally questionable, they are driven by a sense of love and responsibility. Hardy forces the reader to question whether love can justify transgressions against societal norms and values. In exploring dilemma of love and morality through transgression, Hardy suggests that societal expectations and moral judgments can be restrictive and oppressive. Hardy Portrays Tess as a victim of circumstances, challenging the idea that transgression should define a person's worth. Through Tess's experiences, Hardy critiques the moral rigidity of Victorian society and calls for a more compassionate understanding of human nature.

Guilt is another significant aspect related to both the novel and Freudian psychoanalysis. In Freud's theory, guilt arises from the superego, which represents the internalized moral standard and societal expectations. Tess's guilt and self-blame can be seen as a manifestation of her own superego, influenced by society's condemnation of her actions. Freud would suggest that Tess's guilt stems from her internalized moral values and societal expectations, leading to her psychological distress and self-punishment. After Tess falls in love with Angel Clare, she faces the dilemma of whether to reveal her past history with Alec d'Urberville. She struggles with guilt and shame, apprehensive of rejection from Angel. Ultimately, she conceals her past, leading to a breakdown in their relationship later on. To resolve this dilemma, Tess could have chosen to be honest with Angel from the start, trusting in love and understanding. Honesty might have allowed them to work through their issues together and build a stronger foundation of trust. Earlier in the novel, Tess is faced with the dilemma of whether to honour her responsibility towards her impoverished family or pursue personal happiness. She ultimately decides to go to Trantridge, hoping to secure financial stability for her family. However, this decision leads to her encounter with Alec, which sets in motion a chain of tragic events. To resolve this dilemma, Tess could have explored alternative options to support her family without compromising her wellbeing, such as seeking employment or discussing the situation openly with her parents.



Tess's defiance of societal expectations is evident from the start. As a woman from a patriarchal society of Victorian England, she refuses to conform to the traditional gender roles imposed upon her. Instead, Tess asserts her independence by actively pursuing her desires and aspirations, even if they contradict social norms. For instance, her decision to work outside of home and support her family challenges the conventional notion of women solely domestic beings. In order to navigate societal pressure, she relies on her inner strength and determination, remains true to her beliefs, even in the face of criticism and opposition. She finds support and solidarity in other-minded individuals who also challenge traditional gender roles. As she grapples with the consequences of her actions, she seeks to find a self-worth and reclaim her agency. However, despite her efforts, Tess's transgression ultimately leads to a tragic fate, highlighting the unforgiving nature of society and the limitations placed on individuals.

Hardy skilfully portrays Tess as a complex character who defies gender stereotypes prevalent in her era. She embodies strength, resilience, and determination, characteristics typically associated with masculinity. She challenges the notion that women are inherently weak and need protection, showcasing her ability to navigate a hostile world independently. Singh, in "Tracing Paradigm shift in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*" holds that Tess's ability to be responsible of her family, agriculture farm and market transactions places her in direct competition with a male, since such role playing is appropriate to them. Physical strength, far sightedness are the characteristics peculiar to men. But when these characteristics are attributed to women, one is able to identify with the fact that a female in no manner inferior to her male counterpart. By doing so, she breaks free from the constraints placed upon her by society, highlighting the need for gender equality. By so doing, she asserts herself and proves her capabilities, thus breaking free from the confines of predefined gender roles. Tess faces a moral dilemma after the murder of Alec d'Urberville. She considers killing him to protect herself and prevent further harm. However, she eventually decides against it, partly due to her societal norms. In this case, Tess's dilemma is resolved by her adherence to her personal values and her rejection of violence as a solution.

Furthermore, Tess undergoes a dilemma of social class. Born into a poor family, she discovers her aristocratic heritage as a D'Urberville. This revelation puts Tess at odd with her social class identity. Her dilemma arises from the choice to embrace her newfound status, or

remain true to her humble origins. Ultimately, Tess rejects the superficial allure of her noble origins, embracing her true identity amidst the judgment of societal expectations. Her choices result in experiences of injustice, which are emblematic of the broader systematic issues prevalent in her society. From her mistreatment from the aristocratic d'Urberville family to her coerced relationship with Alec, Tess endures a series of unjust circumstances. Her resilience amidst these challenges inspires others to question and challenge the oppressive norms that restrict women's freedom and agency. The upper class men she encounters like Alec and Angel Clare, view her as an object of desire rather than an equal. Her acts of transgressions, go against societal expectations, which involves challenging the notion of class superiority and rejecting the idea that her worth should be determined solely by lineage. Thus, Tess becomes a symbol of hope for those who seek to dismantle the injustices perpetuated by oppressive societal structures

Nature is a prominent element in the novel that serves as a backdrop to various transgressions. Tess's work at the dairy as a maid connects her to the natural world, which contrasts with the corrupting influence of society. The encroachment of industrialization and modernization upon the rural landscape represents a transgression against the natural order. This is evident through the destruction of the harmonious balance between nature and humanity, the loss of traditional values, and the degradation of the individual. Hardy's vivid description brings the settings to life, whether it is the lush landscapes of rural England or the gloomy atmosphere of the agricultural communities. Through the rich and detailed descriptions, he creates a strong sense of place and mood. Hardy uses vivid and detailed imagery to paint a picture in the reader's mind. He describes the natural landscape of Wessex with great detail, creating a sense of place and atmosphere. The description of the "cool, moist surfaces" of the dairy at Talbothays evokes a sense of tranquillity and escape.

Industrialization and modernization disrupt the delicate equilibrium between nature and humanity. The introduction of machinery and factories into the rural landscape leads to the exploitation of natural resources, resulting to environmental degradation. The idyllic countryside becomes marred by smokestacks, pollution, and the destruction of scenic beauty. This shift represents a disharmony between the humans and the natural surroundings, highlighting the disregard of the inherent beauty and value of the natural world. Furthermore, the encroachment of industrialization and modernization in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* signifies the erosion of

traditional values that have been associated with rural life. As society becomes increasingly industrialized, traditional customs, beliefs, and practices are discarded in favour of efficiency and profit. The close-knit communities that once fostered a sense of belonging and solidarity are replaced by an impersonal and fragmented society. This loss of communal ties signifies a disruption of the natural order of things, as individuals become disengaged from their roots and disconnected from the rhythms of rural life.

In the narrative, characters like Tess are forced to abandon their rural existence and confront the harsh realities of urban life. The transition from the simplicity and purity of the countryside to the complexities of moral ambiguities of the city leaves the individual vulnerable and susceptible to corruption. Tess, for instance, experiences a profound transformation when exposed to the urban vices and societal pressures. This degradation of the individual further emphasizes the violation of the natural order, as individuals are stripped of their innocence and authenticity. Hardy draws a contrast between Marlott, Tess's birth place and Talbothays, to Flintcomb-Ash. An imagery is captured from Hardy's description of Marlott, as a village of Blackmoor, a four hour's drive from London and its beautiful area with always green grass fields and a clear and constantly flowing spring. Marlott on the one hand is a symbol of Tess's innocence and youth. Talbothays is situated in the diaries where milk and butter is constantly produced. Flintcomb-Ash on the other hand is the backdrop of Tess's despair and hopelessness. As a result of machinery, the winter she spends there is harsh, the air is cold and dry. Unlike Marlott and Talbothays, the roads are dusty and filled with fallow. The mornings are frosty and afternoons rainy. This setting highlights the loss of rural life. Industrialization brought about significant changes in the countryside, leading to the displacement of rural communities and the destruction of traditional agrarian practices. Here, Hardy juxtaposes the rural simplicity of Tess's home in Marlott with the opulence and decadence of the d'Urberville mansion, emphasizing the clash between Tess's humble origins and her aspirations for a better life. Hardy also makes extensive use of symbolism throughout the novel. For example, the recurring motif of nature and its connection to Tess's fate reflects the novel's themes of fate, innocence, and the destructive forces of society.

Another unique function of Hardy's setting in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is its portrayal of the old traditional ways and the strength of the forces which are destroying them. In order to

prevent a further degradation of the society, Angel Clare uses transgression as a means to restore the natural order of things. He rejects the traditional and materialistic values of his family in favor of a more simple and natural lifestyle. By choosing to work as a farmer, instead of pursuing a career in the emerging industrial sector, Angel symbolizes a resistance to the encroachment of modernity on a rural landscape. Again, Tess can be seen as a symbol of the natural order being disrupted by industrialization. Her purity and connection to the land are contrasted with the degradation she experiences through her encounters with the modern world. Through these characters' actions and experiences, Thomas Hardy highlights the importance of preserving and protecting the natural environment in the face of industrialization.

Tess's acts of transgression are primarily driven by her desire to break free from the oppressive social norms and expectations that confine her. She defines the conventional Victorian morality by engaging in a romantic relationship with Alec, an act that ultimately leads to her downfall. This transgression can be seen as an attempt to escape her impoverished background and gain social mobility. Similarly, Tess's relationship with Angel Clare, her true love, can be viewed as an act of transgression against societal conventions, as she is already considered impure due to her prior relationship with Alec. Throughout her acts of transgression, she seeks to challenge and subvert the societal constraints that limit her opportunities and happiness. For example, when she refuses to marry Alec, despite the fact that it would have provided financial security for her and her family, Tess demonstrates her determination to follow her own moral compass and reject a life of being controlled by others. This act of defiance not only allows her to escape an abusive relationship, but it also sets her on a path towards self-discovery and personal growth. However, the consequences of her actions highlight the limitations of transgression as a tool to solving her dilemma situations. While Tess's acts of transgression momentarily provide her with a sense of empowerment, they ultimately lead to her downfall and reinforce the oppressive social structures that restrict her.

There are a number of instances where Angel's acts of transgression play a significant role in resolving various dilemma issues. When Tess confesses about her past to Angel with Alec, it creates a dilemma for Angel. He is torn between his love for Tess and societal expectations of purity and innocence. His transgression comes in the form of his own confession to Tess about his own past, where he admits to having had a relationship with a woman older

than him. This revelation resolves the dilemma as it establishes a sense of equality amongst them. After their initial confession and understanding, Angel proposes to Tess. However, his dilemma arises when he realizes that Tess's confession has made him doubt his moral principles and expectations. He struggles with the idea of marrying a woman with a "tainted" past. Ultimately his transgression comes in a form of a proposal, where he decides to marry Tess despite his doubts and societal judgment. Another dilemma surfaces when Tess murders Alec. He is caught up with his love for Tess and his moral obligation to report the crime, yet, he decides to keep the secret and protect her even though it goes against principles. This resolves his dilemma, demonstrating his love and acceptance of her, regardless of her past. The novel highlights the need for a broader societal change and a re-evaluation of oppressive norms rather than relying solely on individual acts of transgression to address complex dilemmas.

### **Obstinacy**

Obstinacy in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is portrayed through an adamant attitude of behavioural aspects. It is often seen as a negative trait, characterized by a refusal to change one's beliefs, opinions, or actions, even in the face of evidence or rational arguments. Though used as a tool by characters in Hardy's narrative to resolve dilemma situations, it may be viewed as a hindrance to personal growth, intellectual development, and the pursuit of truth. Through a reading of Thomas Hardy's novel, characters exhibit a degree of obstinacy in their actions and decisions. Tess for example, is portrayed as a headstrong and determined individual who often refuses to conform to societal expectations. Her obstinacy is particularly evident in her refusal to be defined by her circumstances or the judgment imposed on her. Despite the societal pressure and moral dilemmas she faces, Tess remains steadfast in her pursuit of personal agency and happiness.

In Freudian psychoanalysis, obstinacy is linked to the concept of the "ego" and its defence mechanisms. In Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Tess exhibits obstinacy in her refusal to fully acknowledge or confront the consequences of her actions. This can be seen as a defence mechanism employed by her ego to protect her from feelings of guilt, shame, or anxiety. Freudian psychoanalysis suggests that obstinacy may arise from unconscious desires and conflicts within Tess's psyche. By exploring the character through Tess from a Freudian lens,

one can gain insight into the psychological complexities and motivations driving her actions throughout the novel.

In Hardy's works, the concept of obstinacy refers to the resistance or refusal to yield or give in to external pressures or circumstances. It is often portrayed in his characters as a stubborn determination to hold onto one's beliefs, desires, or principles despite adversity. Hardy's characters, particularly in his novels such as *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*, often exhibit obstinacy in the face of conventional values. They defy social assumptions and rebel against constraints of their environment, often leading to their downfall. Through a reading of Thomas Hardy's novel, characters exhibit a degree of obstinacy in their actions and decisions. Tess for example, is portrayed as a headstrong and determined individual who often refuses to conform to societal expectations. Her obstinacy is particularly evident in her refusal to be defined by her circumstances or the judgment imposed on her. Despite the societal pressure and moral dilemmas she faces, Tess remains steadfast in her pursuit of happiness. Hardy's portrayal of obstinacy is not always portrayed as negative. On the one hand, it can be seen as a sign of resilience and strength, as his characters stand firm in their convictions and refuse to be swayed by external forces. On the other hand, obstinacy can also lead to tragic turnouts. Characters like Michael Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* or Jude Fawley of *Jude the Obscure* exhibit stubbornness that eventually brings about their downfall. In the preface to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy discusses the theme of obstinacy as a driving force in Tess's character. He suggests that Tess's persistent refusal to accept her fate and her determination to preserve her own dignity ultimately leads to her tragic downfall. Their refusal to adapt or compromise with their circumstances leads to their own undoing. In this sense, obstinacy aside being a tool to resolve dilemma situations in Hardy's works can also be seen as a symbol of individuality and a critique of societal pressures to conform.

Obstinacy is exhibited through Tess's refusal to accept societal expectations and norms. Throughout the novel, Tess challenges the rigid Victorian moral code and refuses to conform to the prescribed roles of women in that era. This empowers her to assert individuality and make choices that deviate from traditional paths. For example, when faced with the social stigma associated with being an unwed mother, Tess refuses to adhere to shame and chooses to embrace her child, regardless of society's disapproval. This allows her to prioritize her personal integrity

over societal conventions and judgments. When Tess faces the dilemma where she is torn between revealing her past and risking Angel's rejections, Tess chooses to be honest, even though it may jeopardize their relationship. Her obstinacy in remaining true to herself and refusing to compromise her integrity ultimately leads to the resolution of this dilemma, as it forces Angel to confront his own prejudices and accept Tess for who she truly is.

Linda M. Shires, a prominent critic, has commented on the concept of obstinacy in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in an article entitled, "The Radical Aesthetics of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*." She argues that Tess's obstinacy is not merely a stubborn resistance to societal expectations, but rather a manifestation of her fierce individuality and autonomy. According to her, Tess's obstinacy represents a refusal to conform to a rigid social order that seeks to control and limit her growth (151). Penny Boumhella in the article, *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form*, emphasizes how Tess's obstinacy in pursuing her desires despite social norms ultimately leads to her tragic fate. He points that obstinacy highlights the conflict between individual desires and social conventions (64).

Alec's obstinacy stems from a sense of entitlement and a desire to possess Tess as an object of his desire. He believes that he can win her over through persistence, despite her clear rejection. In contrast, Tess's obstinacy arises from a deep-rooted commitment to her values and principles. She refuses to compromise her integrity and remains steadfast in her refusal to submit to Alec's advances. This difference in motivation and underlying beliefs creates a power dynamic between the two characters. Alec sees Tess as a conquest and believes that he can assert control over her. This dynamic is further fuelled by societal standards that uphold male dominance and allow Alec to believe that he has the right to pursue Tess despite her objections. However, Tess's unwavering resistance disrupts Alec's sense of control and highlights the injustices perpetrated by societal standards. Her refusal to be victimized and her determination to stay true to herself ultimately forces Alec to confront the consequences of his actions. Tess faces a dilemma when she discovers she is with child. Despite societal expectations and pressure to marry the father of her child, she refuses to give in and assertively rejects his advances. Her obstinacy in refusing to succumb to his power dynamic contributes to the resolution of this dilemma by allowing her to maintain control over her fate.

Furthermore, Tess's act of obstinacy is displayed in her refusal to be victimized by circumstances beyond her control. Throughout the novel, Tess finds herself entangled in tragic events that threaten her happiness and future. However, she steadily refuses to be defeated by these circumstances. Instead, she displays an unwavering will to fight for her own happiness and pursue her dreams. This decision is exemplified in her decision to leave her home and her family. By refusing to be a passive victim, Tess empowers herself and takes control over her destiny. However, it is important to note that Tess's obstinacy is not always beneficial. At times, her stubbornness leads to a negative consequence and exacerbates her predicaments. Her refusal to cave in to societal expectations may isolate her from supportive networks and force her to shoulder burdens alone. Additionally, her relentless pursuit of independence sometimes blinds her to alternative solutions or compromises that could have potentially alleviated her hardships. Tess's obstinacy serves as a double-edged sword, providing her with strength and determination but also sometimes hindering her ability to find easier resolutions. Boumelha, in her essay "Tess and the subject of sexual violence," explores the concept of obstinacy in relation to Tess's response to the sexual violence she experiences. According to her, Tess's refusal to be defined by her victimhood and her determination to protect her own sense of self-worth demonstrate her obstinate nature. As a result, she can solve the dilemma of whether or not to forgive Alec for defying her youth.

In Hardy's novel, Angel Clare showcases his ability to resolve dilemma situations through the use of obstinacy. Throughout the narrative, Angel is faced with various moral dilemmas and conflicting emotions, yet he remains steadfast in his beliefs and principles. An instance where Angel's acts of obstinacy plays a significant role is his relationship with Tess. Despite being deeply infatuated with her, Angel struggles with his own internal conflicts about societal expectations and his own ideals of purity and morality. Initially, he abandons Tess. However, he refuses to let society's judgment dictate his actions and instead chooses to stand by Tess, believing in her inherent goodness and forgiveness. Tess's beauty and purity should be a source of joy, ironically, they bring her pain and suffering. Additionally, her marriage to Angel Clare, which is supposed to be her chance at happiness and redemption, only leads to more tragedy.



Angel's acts of obstinacy also comes into play when it comes to his family and their expectations of him. Born into a privileged and conservative family, Angel is expected to uphold certain traditional values and marry within his social class. Yet, when faced with the choice between conforming to his family's expectations and following his heart, Angel chooses the latter. His obstinacy allows him to defy societal conventions and marry Tess, despite the potential backlash and disapproval from his family and society.

Again, obstinacy is evident in Angel's pursuit of his dreams and aspirations. He desires to become a farmer and lead a simple, rural life. Despite the opportunities that come his way, including inheriting his family's estate and pursuing a career as a clergyman, Angel remains obstinate in his determination to follow his passion for farming. He rejects the allure of wealth and status, choosing instead to embrace a simpler and more fulfilling lifestyle. Through his obstinacy, Angel Clare embraces the importance of staying true to oneself and one's convictions. He refuses to compromise his integrity and abandon his principles, even in the face of challenging circumstances. His unwavering determination permits him to navigate through the dilemmas and obstacles in his life, ultimately leading to resolution and personal growth.

In addition, the consequence of Joan's obstinate insistence on sending Tess to claim kinship with the d'Urbervilles greatly impacts Tess's overall well-being and future prospects. Her obstinate behaviour leads to misunderstandings and conflicts with Tess. Rather than listen to her daughter's point of view or recognize the consequences of their actions, Joan remains steadfast in her stubbornness. This creates a sense of frustration and resentment in Tess, as she feels unheard and unfairly blamed for their shared predicaments. Furthermore, Joan's obstinate behaviour prevents any meaningful resolution or growth for both characters. Without acknowledging their mistakes or taking steps to rectify them, Joan and Tess remain trapped in a cycle of miscommunication and strained relations. This hinders their ability to overcome their challenges and move forward as individuals or as a family. Joan uses obstinacy to resolve dilemma situations by refusing to accept her responsibility and would rather place them on others. This can be seen when she uncovers Tess's pregnancy. Instead of admitting her role in Tess's predicament or offer support, Joan insists that it is entirely Alec's fault and refuses to hold Tess accountable for her actions. By stubbornly refusing to see things from a different perspective, Joan attempts to absolve herself of any guilt and avoid facing the outcome of Tess's

situation. This obstinate situation leads to further harm, as it prevents any meaningful resolution or growth for the characters involved.

In conclusion, the various ways obstinacy is used to resolve dilemma situations in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* illuminate the complexity of the human spirit. Tess's obstinacy empowers her to challenge societal conventions, reclaim her agency, and refuse to be victimized by circumstances. While her obstinate nature may not always lead to favourable outcomes, it undeniably shapes her journey and allows her to forge a unique path. Ultimately Tess's obstinacy showcases the indomitable spirit of a woman determined to control her own destiny. This adds the depth and beauty to the narrative, allowing the reader to immerse themselves in the emotional journey of the characters. Hardy's aspects of style contribute to the overall impact of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. His careful attention to detail and his ability to evoke the powerful emotions through his writing makes the novel a compelling work of literature.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

In this study, we set out to analyze the ethical choices and dilemmas faced by characters throughout the novel. We sought to investigate the social and cultural factors that contribute to the ethical dilemmas in the novel, through exploring the Victorian era's rigid social expectations, gender roles, and class divisions, and how they shape the characters' moral dilemmas. We also examined the consequences of the characters' ethical choices, and its impacts on their lives. In the introduction, we situated the work within its historical context, stated the research problem, research questions, hypothesis, research objectives, motivation, significance of the study, and the scope of the study. We also defined the key terms used in the research and ended with the structure of the work.

In chapter one, entitled "Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature," we focused on the theoretical framework that was chosen for this study which was Psychoanalysis. We used Psychoanalysis to explore the psychological motivations and internal conflicts of the novel's characters. In the second part of this chapter, we reviewed critical works that are relevant to the novel under study.

In chapter two, captioned "Life at the Crossroads," we analyzed the various dilemma situations characters face at the crossroads of their journeys, and examined the critical decisions these characters make at the crossroads, which leads to aspirations. We also threw light on the ethical crisis that surfaced as a result of unattained aspirations, societal restrictions and personal circumstances.

In chapter three, entitled "Choices and Responsibilities," we analyzed the various choices characters make in the narrative and its ultimate responsibilities that shape their lives. We expatiated on how these choices often lead to significant consequences like moral dilemmas, revenge and conflicts.

In chapter four, entitled “Resolving Dilemma Situations,” we demonstrated how characters often find themselves caught up in dilemma situations, torn between societal expectations and personal desires, and how the characters use two potential strategies; Transgression and Obstinacy, to resolve these dilemma issues. By exploring the complexities of transgression and obstinacy, the novel encourages readers to reflect on the choices and responsibilities individuals face in dilemma situations.

The exploration of ethical dilemma in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* is a driving force that captivates researchers and provokes introspection. The ethical dilemma presented in the novel resonates deeply with readers due to their universal nature. The aspirations of the characters, the crisis they face as a result of unattained aspirations, and their quest to resolve dilemmas, serve as a poignant reminder of the intricacies of moral decision-making.

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