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**The Representation of the 'New Woman' in Late Victorian  
Fiction: the Case of Grant Allen's *The Woman who did*  
(1895) and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895)**

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## **Abstract**

*This dissertation explores the issue of the New Woman in Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure and Grant Allen's novel The Woman who did, both first published in 1895. The intended purpose of this study is to put into implementation Frederic Jameson's theory The Political Unconscious that is explored in his theoretical book entitled The Political Unconscious: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act (1981). Our discussion shows how the Victorian Institution of Marriage, and Religion were harsh on the lives of the British people particularly women. We have demonstrated that a group called New Women emerged to oppose those imposed ideals. This group came into existence in order to gain their rights in all domains. Sue Bridehead in Thomas Hardy's novel Jude the Obscure and Herminia Barton in Grant Allen's the Woman who did are chosen to be New Women heroines whose attitudes towards marriage, education and religion seem to be in opposition. Accordingly, this work has shown that Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure and Grant Allen's the Woman Who did are socially symbolic acts.*

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to the members of my family as well as all my classmates and teachers of the Department of English.

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## **I)Introduction:**

The position of women during the Victorian period was considered to be different and inferior to that of men. They were subject to the authority of men and their status was the same as that of children. Women's counterparts including the fathers, brothers as well as husbands were their representatives in political, economic and social fields, and were in charge of their property. The Victorian woman "*would be stoical, motherly submissive and chaste*"<sup>1</sup>. During the Victorian era, women's concerns were only housekeeping, raising and educating children. Victorian women were also culturally controlled; their own culture is said to be inferior, and were denied any political or economic power. They were doubly victims of idealization and sexual abuse; victims since they were only subjects to the occupation of the household.

Initiated in the eighteenth century, influenced by such pioneer thinkers as Mary Astell (late 17<sup>th</sup>C), Mary Wollstonecraft (late 18<sup>th</sup>C), John Stuart Mill and Harriet Martineau later in the nineteenth century, the Women Movement began to gain prominence just when the term "New Woman" appeared. Change in gender roles is reflected in the literature produced at that period. Thus, a number of Victorian writers such as George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Grant Allen, and several others produced works that were seen as a criticism of, and opposition to, the Victorian imposed social ideals and values. Both Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895) and Grant Allen's *The Woman who Did* (1895) were seen at their publication as calling into question all what society imposed on people through the representation of the New Woman; also called "*the Odd Woman, the Wild Woman, and the superfluous Woman in English novels and periodicals of the 1880's and 1890's*"<sup>2</sup>. All of the female characters Thomas Hardy and Grant Allen introduced within these two novels are striving to get their emancipation politically, socially, economically, and sexually. The New Women were different from the Victorian women. The latter accepted and therefore adapted to the Victorian way of life. However, the former, appeared to be a

rebellious, striving group which reacted against the Victorian institution of marriage and religion which, according to them, needed to be reformed.

### **Review of the Literature:**

Thomas Hardy's last novel, *Jude the Obscure*, raised much controversy at its publication in 1895. The way the author dealt with controversial issues without taboos such as the institution of marriage was seen as immoral. The novel however became a classic in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, attracting the attention of a wide range of critics. Therefore, when Thomas Hardy set the task of writing the novel *Jude the Obscure*, he does not intend to attack marriage laws. As an illustration, Patricia Ingham, in her *Introduction to the Oxford Edition of the Novel* observes:

Hardy denied the novel was an attack on marriage laws and he was right to discard this superficial reading, but his assertion in the 1912 post-script that the general drift in relation to such laws was that the civil laws should only be the enunciation of the law of nature that is more problematic.<sup>3</sup>

Another critic is Aeron Matz who believes that “*the destructive energy of Jude the Obscure is aimed in many directions at the oppressive Victorian strictures of marriage, at the exclusion of the universities, at a society in which the lot of the poor is wretched*”<sup>4</sup>. In other terms, Matz conveys the idea that Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* is written as a criticism and reaction against the ways in which marriage is manipulated by the State during the Victorian times and against the fact that universities are only open to rich people. When Thomas Hardy first set to write the novel, he entitled it *the Simpletons* not *Jude the Obscure*, a version which narrates a different story. According to Patricia Ingham,

*Jude the Obscure*, Hardy's last novel, first appeared in a mangled serial form in European and American editions of Harper's New Monthly Magazine from November 1894 to December 1894. Its first printed title was *The Simpletons*, later changed to an earlier idea, *Hearts Insurgent*. In it Arabella does not seduce Jude, Jude and Sue never become lovers nor have children....<sup>5</sup>



The novel *Jude the Obscure* is in fact the modification of another story that has a different meaning. Several works produced by different writers reflect the growing opposition to the Church's imposed standards. *Jude the Obscure* is seen as the best example which portrays well that change and people started to raise many questions related to the existence of God and paradise. Angeliqe Richardson writes in Francis O'Gorman's book *A Concise Companion to the Victorian Novel* (2005):

The image of swifts finding a home in the church enacts a reciprocal relation between nature and God. In the century that followed, evolution would come to overshadow the church. By the time of *Jude the Obscure*, nature seems to lament the loss of God-paradise lost, again, but it soon resigned to its fall...*Jude the Obscure* struggles to resist this bleak view of existence through communitarian ideas which biology was capable of endorsing<sup>6</sup>.

This means that the novel *Jude the Obscure* was written at a time when religion witnessed change and revival was needed. At that period of time, people were aware of the unreal religious practices and therefore evolution overshadowed the church. Furthermore, at the time of *Jude the Obscure*'s publication, it was really perceived to be a threat to the lives of people since it shocked them by the controversial ideas it portrays. As an example, a reader from Australia, after reading the book, burned it down and sent back the ashes to Thomas Hardy. Robert C. Slack declares in his article, the *Text of Hardy's Jude the Obscure* (1957) that:

When Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* appeared in book form in November 1895, it shocked the reading public on both sides of the Atlantic. The bishop of Wakefield announced that he had burned the book; it was ordered to be withdrawn from Smith's Circulating Library; Hardy received it back as a pack of ashes from distant Australia<sup>7</sup>.

Like Thomas Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure*, Grant Allen's *The Woman who Did* (1895) also succeeded to entice considerable attention just after its publication in the year 1895. R. B. Kershner, Jr. in his book, *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature: Chronicles of Disorder* (1989) writes:

*The Woman Who Did* is a serious novel of inevitably prurient interest at that time; it presented a case for love without marriage and remained for years the most notorious example of the “advanced” or “daring” novel which should be kept from the hands of wives and children....<sup>8</sup>

The quote stresses on the fact that the novel was seen as a book that should be kept away from wives and children since it narrates a love affair between a man and a woman without a marriage contract; a practice that was forbidden by both state and religion during the Victorian time.

*The Woman who did* which depicts the sexual life of a female protagonist without taboos is not classified in the same category of literature as Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) or George Gissing’s *The Odd Woman* (1893). Nicolas Ruddick asserts in *The Woman Who Did, Grant Allen* (1985):

*The Woman who Did* is one of a group of novels by male (...) in which the sexual lives of female protagonists are depicted with new frankness. As an artistic achievement, however, Grant Allen’s novel is not in the same league as Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891) or *Jude the Obscure* (1895), George Gissing’s *The Odd Woman* (1893)...it offers to the reader today perhaps the most convenient entrée into the labyrinth of fin de siècle sexual politics<sup>9</sup>.

Grant Allen’s novella *the Woman who did* explores sexuality in a different way from Thomas Hardy’s works as well as George Gissing’s novel *the Odd Woman* (1893).

Furthermore, Nicolas Ruddick again considers the novel as being an odd, incompetent, and bizarre literary production that may render many conservative and progressive readers displeased, discouraged and disillusioned by the content of the story. According to him, the novel raises a storm of outrage in the Victorian readers, mostly those belonging to the upper class and bourgeoisie. He argues that “while “*The Woman who did*” is by no means an incompetent work of fiction; it is concise, dramatic and provocative. In 1895, the novel unsettled and displeased conservative and progressive readers”<sup>10</sup>.

That idea is supported by the reception of the novel by the suffragist Millicent Garrett Fawcett who considered *the Woman who did* as rather an opposition of the institution of marriage:

Some of my friends who have read the story tell me they look upon it as an elaborately worked-up satire: its supposed thesis being an attack on the institution of marriage and the family, it is really intended to support them, by showing the utter ruin an inevitable demoralization involved in the attempt to destroy them.....whatever its melodramatic absurdities and crudities, its author is in earnest; he really wishes to attack marriage.<sup>11</sup>

Readers of Grant Allen *the Woman who Did* declare that the story is a complete satire on the Victorian Institution of Marriage and family. This is well demonstrated through the theme of immorality that is increasingly explored within the novella.

### **Issue and Working Hypothesis:**

From all that has been said, one can argue that the two novels have been interpreted from different perspectives. However, as far as we know, no study on the representation of the New Woman in the two novels has been conducted so far. Sue Bridehead and Herminia Barton are the best examples that represent the ideals and characteristics of the New Woman. As it is already mentioned, both novels raised controversy after their publication. They were considered as an attack on the values that formed the foundations of Victorian morality. Among these values are: the Institution of Marriage, Education, and Religion. The female characters in both novels question these values. The question we will try to answer throughout this dissertation is: what was the aim of the two authors in introducing New Women heroines in their novels? Is it because they felt sympathy towards this movement or is it simply the reflection of the actual social changes that were taking place in late Victorian England? My assumption is that the two authors are only reflecting the social changes that were taking place during the Victorian England. My contention is that both *Jude the Obscure* and *the Woman who did* are allegorical and symbolic of the political unconscious of the Victorian Era.

To achieve my purpose, I will rely on Frederic Jameson's theoretical *The Political Unconscious; Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act (1981)* in which he claims the priority of

political interpretation of literary texts and considers narratives as the means through which we can have access to history.

### **Methodological Outline:**

Following IMRAD structure, I have divided my dissertation into four sections; Introduction, Methods and Materials, Results and Discussion. In the Introduction, I provided a general overview of gender roles during the Victorian time and the rise of the New Woman, a review of the literature about the two novels, before stating our thesis. In the Method and Materials section, I will first present Frederic Jameson's theory as exposed in *The Political Unconscious; Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (1981)*, then I will provide short biographies of the two authors, along with summaries of *The woman who did (1895)* and *Jude the Obscure (1895)* and a short survey of the conditions of women in late Victorian England. In the Results Section, I will reveal the findings of my research, centering on how both Thomas Hardy and Grant Allen uncovered the Political ideologies of the Victorian period.

The discussion section is divided into three parts devoted to the way three essential values of the Victorian era that were the target of the attacks of the New Women, are viewed. The first part is devoted to the way the Victorian patriarchal institution of marriage is viewed in the two novels. My analysis focuses on the two heroines, Sue Bridehead and Herminia Barton and their attitude towards marriage. The second part is concerned with their relation to education. As for the last part, it is devoted to religion during the Victorian era focusing mainly on explaining the views of the two heroines on religion.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Mary Lindon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage and the Law in Victorian England* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 189.

<sup>2</sup> Grant Allen, *the Woman Who Did* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1895), 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious; Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 04.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid. the Woman Who Did.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Angelique Richardson, *the Difference Between Human Beings; Biology in the Victorian Novel* in Francis O' Gorman, *A Concise Companion to the Victorian Novel* (USA: Library of Congress, 2005), 206-207.

<sup>7</sup> Rober.C. Slack, *The Text of Hardy's Jude the Obscure* (California: University of California Press, 4 (March. 1957), 01.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid Jameson., 05.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.,21.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.,42.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid., 04.*

## **II)Methods and Materials:**

### **i)Method:**

#### **Frederic Jameson's Theory of a Political Unconscious:**

In order to deal with the issue of “New Woman” in Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*; 1895 and Grant Allen’s *The Woman Who Did* (1895) I shall focus on Frederic Jameson’s theoretical work *The Political Unconscious; Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981) which I consider very appropriate to my research topic. To start with, Frederic Jameson is against the idea that literature can be put apart from its political context. He gives much prominence to the political interpretation of all kinds of literary and cultural texts produced by different writers during a particular period of time in a particular location. He focuses on the fact that interpretation is crucial to any reader to understand the meaning of literary text. He writes:

This book will argue the priority of the political interpretation of literary texts. It conceives of the political perspective not as some supplementary method, not as auxiliary to other interpretive methods current today, the psychoanalytic or the myth-critical, the stylistic, the ethical, the structural, but rather as an absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation.<sup>12</sup>

This type of interpretation is proposed as the analysis of the text which is, in turn, seen as the restructuration of prior historical and ideological ideas in forms of long texts. The latter must be seen as a “*central example of the way in which the cultural text is taken as an essentially allegorical model of society as a whole, its tokens and elements such as the literary “character” being read as figure for the various social classes and class fractions*”.<sup>13</sup> This means that any literary or cultural text that a reader may analyze and discuss is allegorical in the sense that it reflects all the elements and models of society during a particular period of time and is always seen as a parody, satire and irony of those models. In this case, the literary character can be

interpreted as being the most important element that highlights the different social classes and carrier of the author's ideology.

In fact, a literary text has something to do with reality which must not be outside or at distance of the text. This signifies that the literary text is important because it is the only means, after being interpreted through the use of various methods to get access to the social background and the ideologies that were dominant during a particular period of time. According to Frederic Jameson, in order to read literature as a symbolic act, we must always consider that we are seeking to find out resolutions to contradictions. The required methodology to have a text's contradictions may be considered as a test to demonstrate the exactness of the analysis. After allegorical interpretation of social facts, institutions and ideologies become visible and uncovered. Frederic Jameson claims:

All "interpretation" in the narrower sense demands the forcible or imperceptible transformation of a given text into an allegory of its particular master code "transcendental signified": the discredit into which interpretation has fallen is thus at one with the disrepute visited on allegory itself.<sup>14</sup>

This means that the intended purpose behind literary interpretation is to get the hidden or allegorical meaning of that text, and shows "*its metaphysical and ideological underpinnings*".<sup>15</sup>

Frederic Jameson in his *The Political Unconscious: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981) compares his theory of literary texts interpretation to Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis interpretations. He says that just as Freud, in his psychoanalysis of the unconscious side of human beings, uses the interpretation of dreams, lapses and imitation in order to uncover the reasons and the type of the illness, in the same way, the theorist interprets literary and cultural texts in order to have access to the ideologies and social forces of a particular time period. Those ideologies are, in fact, considered as a means of domination and

oppression on those who belonged to the lower classes. After the interpretation of the literary text, the work itself is shown as revolutionary against that domination.

## **ii) Materials:**

### **1. Allen's and Hardy's Biographies:**

#### **a. Grant Allen's Short Biography:**

Charles Grant Blairindie Allen was born in 1848 just outside Kingston, Ontario, a town that had served as the capital of the united colonies of the Upper and Lower Canada. His father, Joseph Antissell Allen, was a clergyman in the protestant church of Ireland. His mother, Charlotte, was from a wealthy Anglo-French Montreal family. When he was a child, he was educated by his father. As he became older, he took the path followed by many young intellectuals after the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origins of species* in 1859 and adopted socialism as the political system most likely to conduce to a human ethics in the evolutionary struggle for existence.

Though fascinated by religious beliefs, he was an atheist of supernaturalism. When he and his family moved on to Birmingham, England, he entered high school, and stayed in England when his family went back to Canada. He is a coherent thinker who despised muddle, hypocrisy, and cant. He was often earnest and preachy, but rarely did his didacticism completely override his ironic sense of humor. At his best, he is a merciless satirist of the Victorian tendency .

Grant Allen is a prolific writer of fiction. Among his works, we can mention *Philistia* (1884), *Strange Stories* (1884), *Babylon* (1885), *Flowers and Their Pedigrees* (1886), *The Devil's Die* (1888), *The White Man's Foot* (1888), *The Jaws of Death* (1889), *The Great Taboo*



(1891), *The British Barbarians* (1895) and *The Woman who did* (1895) along with several other novels and short stories.

Allen's attitude to the Sex Problem is formed from two quiet different influences. The first is the radical idealism of Percy Shelley whom Allen considered the greatest English poet. Shelley's sexual libertarianism, his refusal to accept any legal constraints in matters of love between man and woman underlay Allen's adherence to the idea of free union as a more moral arrangement than marriage. As Shelley had done, Allen takes every opportunity to lash out at the failings of English society and its culture; its insularity, intellectual timidity, and its hypocrisy. Still, essays such as "*the Girl of the Future*" (1890) and "*The New Hedonism*" (1894) are courageously important works for their time. The second and greater influence are evolutionary thought. He is more interested in Charles Darwin's works. As influences, Herbert and Shelley converge in Allen suggestions of the future disappearance of marriage.

Allen marries to two women and had one son. He died at his home in England. He died before finishing *Hilda Wade*. The novel's final episode, which he dictated to his friend, doctor and neighbor, from his bed, appeared under the appropriate title of *The Episode of the Dead Man Who Spoke* in the *Strand Magazine* in 1900.

#### **b. Thomas Hardy's Short Biography:**

Thomas Hardy was born in Higher Bockhampton, Dorset on June 2, 1840. His father is a builder in a small way of business, and he is educated locally and in Dorchester before being articulated to an architect. After sixteen years in that profession and the publication of his earliest novel *Desperate Remedies* (1871), he determined to make his career in literature, not, however, before his work as an architect has led to his meeting at St Julio in Cornwall, Emma Gifford.

When it comes to women, Hardy suffers from a sort of romantic clumsiness. Like so many of his characters within his works, he always feels he is missing something or someone. After he married Emma Gifford in 1874, his early fondness for his cousin Tryphena re-emerged. Later, as he became increasingly successful, he feels more and more embarrassed by his one beloved wife. Pete, a bibliographer, gives accounts of his cruelty; his forcing Emma to leave the table when he felt the conversation was beyond her, or going to ceremonies without letting her know. He also gives details of Hardy's first real attempt at an affair in a trip to Winchester; a veil was drawn at the fifteen minutes they spent alone in a railway compartment. His second marriage to Florence also proved problematic. His desire for his first wife produced the accomplished poems of 1912 and 1913. Later Florence found herself overlooked as Hardy started to develop a relationship with other girls.

In the 1912 General Preface to the collected Wessex edition of his work, Hardy divides his fiction into groups. He says that the first group is called "Novels of Character and Environment". He regards these novels as dealing with human concerns in the realist tradition. They include *Under The Greenwood Tree*, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Wood Landers*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *Wessex Tales* (short stories), and *Life Little Ironies*.

Hardy identifies a second group as "Romances and Fantasies". These include: *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *The Trumpet Major*, *Two on a Tower*, and A group of Noble Dames (short stories). He explains the third group including *Desperate Remedies*, *the Hand of Ethelberta*, *A Laodicean* and *A Changed Man*. This third class; Novels of Ingenuity, depends for their interest mainly on the incident themselves. They were also considered experimental.

## **2. Summaries of the two novels:**

### **a. Summary of Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did*:**

Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* centers around the story of the heroine, independent and intellectual Herminia Barton; the Cambridge well-formed and educated woman; raised in a religious family. Her father is a dean and a clergyman who respects the traditional Victorian values including politics and religion. As the story narrates, Herminia frees herself from the commands of her family by moving to London in order to live her own life that is centered on individuality and freedom. The principal factor which pushes her to leave her family is her father sermon about Truth. Right after listening to that sermon, she abruptly makes her mind to go anywhere to look for that 'Truth' that may, as she thinks, change her entire life.

When she reaches London, her friend Mrs. Dewsbury introduces her to a man of over thirty; Alan Merrick who works as a lawyer. We learn through their discussion that one pleases the other; and therefore Alan Merrick proposes her to marry him. She refuses any conventional marriage and prefers instead a love relationship based entirely on free union. As a result, in order to reach his desires, he accepts whatever Herminia suggests since he is more and more in love with her. When things are clarified between the two, they decide to leave London and move to Italy in order to live the rest of their life there together. A short time after being in Florence; Italy, Alan Merrick falls ill and dies of typhoid before their only daughter Dolores is born. Because the couple is not married legally, Herminia has no right to inherit Alan's money and property.

A short time after Alan's death, Herminia gives birth to a girl whom she calls Dolores. Having no friend and neighbor in Italy, Herminia has nowhere to go except going back to London. She returns to London because she thinks that she will be a role model for her only

daughter Dolores. She raises her daughter as a good mother refusing to offer her to be educated in her grandfather's household. As the story progresses, and as Dolores is getting older and mature, she turns out to be ashamed of her mother's free union with her father and therefore turns against Herminia. Meanwhile, Herminia decides to make a tremendous sacrifice to her daughter by committing suicide.

**b. Summary of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*:**

Thomas Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure* narrates the story of the protagonist Jude Fawley who is working as a village stonemason in England more particularly Wessex. He dreams of becoming a scholar at Christminster that is situated in Oxford. During his free time, he used to learn some Latin and Greek by himself. Before trying to enter university, he is haunted by the idea of marrying a superficial local girl Arabella Donn. Two years after their marriage, she abandons him while he abandons the classics.

After his separation from Arabella, Jude moves to Christminster to work there as a mason and to study alone in the hope to enter the university in the future. While being in that village, Jude meets and falls in love with his cousin Sue Bridehead; the girl he knows little from his aunt before he comes to Christminster. To help her find a job as a teacher at university, Jude introduces her to his previous schoolteacher Mr. Philottson, whom, as the story narrates, Sue marries. A short time after her marriage to the schoolteacher, she deserts him because she is unhappy with him physically; they seem to be unable to satisfy themselves sexually. In fact she is in love with Jude not her spouse perhaps because of the latter's age. She promptly quits her husband in order to spend the rest of her life with her beloved cousin Jude Fawley. Sue and Jude spend a great deal of time together without making love with each other. Both of them are afraid to get married because of their belief that their family had had tragic unions previously, and they consider the fact of being both from the same family might ruin their love. Jude eventually

persuades Sue to sleep with him and therefore, as years pass, give birth to two children. As the story narrates, after Jude and Sue gather together, they adopt a child who is the fruit of Jude's first marriage with Arabella, and whom Jude did not know before. He is named Jude and nicknamed "Little Father Time" because of his seriousness.

Jude and Sue have been much criticized for living together without marriage, especially after the birth of their two children. When Jude's employers discover Jude's truth, they dismiss and criticize him. Little Father Time comes to believe that he and the other two children are the result of the family's problems. He kills Jude's children and then commits suicide. He left a note that says: 'done because we are too many'.

Sue started to blame herself for Little Father Time's actions; thus she turns to the church that condemns her for all what she did and finally comes to believe that the children's deaths are Divine retribution for her relationship with Jude. Despite the fact that she is disillusioned by marrying Philotson, she comes to be convinced that she should never have deserted him. Arabella knows Sue's feelings and then tells Philotson all about Sue's thoughts. When he hears, he proposes to Sue to remarry her. This results in Sue leaving Jude in order to return to her previous husband Philotson. Jude becomes discouraged and devastated and remarries Arabella. After Jude's final visit to Sue in a freezing weather, he falls seriously sick and dies within the year.

### **3. The Condition of Women in Late Victorian England:**

In nineteenth century Britain, woman's general destinies and duties were being good wives and mothers. Before marriage, the woman was obliged to conform to the social norms including the fact that she should be virgin before marriage in order to be faithful to her husband as well as to the society. Woman's virginity and chastity were more important than her

personality and liberty. This means that her so called virginity belonged more to her husband than to herself. For instance, a woman who had lost her virginity out of wedlock was perceived as the “marginalized other” who was to threaten the family and society. After marriage, the lady or the wife became a professional housewife and mother, and being a female, she was supposed to stay at home where her main concern was to take care of the household and taking care of the children.

Coventry Patmore suggests in his poem *The Angel in the House (1854-1862)* that the role of the lady was idealized and represented the domestic ideal. Her life was centered upon the domestic duties of her home and family which was seen as the best place for a woman. The woman was born to spend all of her time in her household in order to take care of her husband and children, and was not granted opportunities to work outside. She had to make her home a comfortable, clean and tranquil refuge to the family. Since she did not work outside, her life generally depended upon the income of her father, and after her marriage, that of her husband. The proper Victorian lady was not allowed to perform professional and academic work because she was controlled by the society on the one hand and by her husband on the other. Men considered women as illiterate and inferior to them. In this respect, Sarah Grand writes in her essay entitled *The New Aspects of the Woman Question*:

Men deprived us of all proper education, and then jeered at us because of knowledge. They narrowed our outlook on life so that our view of it should be all distorted and then declared that our mistaken impression of it proved us to be senseless creatures.<sup>17</sup>

The quotation’s general idea is that men imposed their hegemony on women and thus mocked at them, considering them passive and inferior.

Victorian women were restricted their duties that they were in need to perform. Instead of being sent to schools to be educated, they could be found working additional hours in factories for low payments. In fact, all these roles were dictated by men who were responsible for

women's limitations and restrictions in all the fields. Kara L. Barrett Says: "*whatever their social rank, in the eyes of the law, women were second class citizens.*"<sup>16</sup> Working women in general in the Victorian society were hardly better than the pauper. In this regard, the working class women were more marginalized than the Victorian women who devoted most, if not all of their time to the house work.

## **Education**

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Victorian women started to be educated and trained for employment which resulted in a transformation in their everyday life. During the 1840s, small schools for women were opened; the Royal Commission on Secondary Education. In fact, the girls attending state schools were still receiving skills related to domestic practices, home management and everything related to the housework. On the other hand, schools headed by women provided different curriculum and skills similar to those taught to the boys. In fact, in the 1840s, two women Colleges were opened in Britain. In 1848, Queen's College was the first college to be run by Anglican men who were mainly concerned with the need to educate women, followed by the Ladies College, also known as Bedford School. The only distinction between the two colleges was that Queen's College was run by men who educated women while Bedford College was headed by women who educated other women. These women, in fact, were seen as non-conformists, who did not care for the Queen's college since they were not interested in religion.

Most of the women who belonged to those Bedford Schools came from radical families who joined the Feminist Movement that was set to gain their rights. Later on, other schools known as North London Collegiate School and Cheltenham Ladies College opened. The latter was only designed to those who belonged to the higher social class. It was until the foundation of those colleges that women started to have opportunities to study medicine that was hitherto a

strictly male occupation. The Education Acts that were introduced in 1870 and 1878 provided obligatory education for girls. This was mainly in order to make the education received by boys parallel with that received by girls. Boys and girls should be mixed up within the same colleges so that to be equally educated. Victorian women, like men, started to be educated and became lawyers, teachers, doctors, vets, and therefore were given chances to work outside their homes. As a result, they were able to support themselves without the assistance of their fathers and husbands. The Married Women's Property Act of 1870 and 1882 granted them the right to own property of their own such as their jewelry, the money they gained and even their houses. It supports the idea that women have the right to own their property; the house, their jewels and money were no more at the hands of their husbands and fathers.

## **Religion**

In spite of the challenge of science, religion was still playing an important role in the lives of the British people during the Victorian England. In fact, The Victorian period was an age of the revival of religion. The religious revival concerned only the code of moral behavior that was known as Victorianism. However, the Victorian religious revival did not last long. The churches had lost a great number of people from the growing working class of the urban society.

In fact, during the nineteenth century, the Church of England was weakened and threatened. Therefore, a revival was needed in order to avoid problems. In 1833, the government issued a bill to abolish two archbishoprics and eight bishoprics in Ireland. John Keble; a religious man, responded to the government through a sermon in a church at Oxford University. The sermon was entitled *National Apostasy*. John Keble was sustained by three other English men; John Henry Newman, Harrell Froude and William Palmer. During the same year, these men started to advertize the Oxford Tracts that were known as *The Oxford Movement*.



*The Oxford Movement* was perceived as a revival and revision of Anglicanism. The adherents of the movement claimed the priority of the liberty of the individual to express his own beliefs in religion. They said that the Bible was in conflict with the established conclusions of science. Most of them rose against the non-conformist claim of teaching the Bible within School Boards without comment because they thought that the true faith was not in the Bible but rather in the living Jesus Christ himself.

The Anglican revival consisted of the growth of ritualism. The latter was the form that *The Oxford Movement* adopted, which included the change in architectural designs, styles of church's furniture, new modes of dress and use of ceremony. Among the changes they brought about are; mixing water with wine and lighting candles in the altar. The 1850s was a period of religious calm in which unquestioning religious people that consisted of clergymen and churchgoers were only concerned with the growth of Popery and ritualism and the continuous absence of the poor people from the churches. However, 1859 saw the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* that put into question the first chapters of *Genesis* and *The Existence of God*.

### **The Victorian Institution of Marriage:**

Many writers of that period produced works that highly portrayed the issue of marriage as a law. It was believed to be the only strong foundation and therefore the best way to reach happiness. John Maynard's book *Matrimony: or what Marriage Life is and How to Make the Best of it (1866)* is the best example which portrays the Victorian Institution of Marriage as a law. In his book he identifies marriage as the mingling of two persons of different sexes: male and female in order to demonstrate love to each other in accordance with a legal form. That marriage, according to him, is evident both from scripture and philosophy. First, from scripture, he wanted to mean that when the lord has created man out of the earth, he blessed him with a

suitable companion with whom he is to share his entire life. This companion is one woman only; Eve. The Lord had united these two sexes in the bond of marriage. It is in this way that the sexes; the husband and his wife are to be one flesh. Second, by philosophical aspect, he means that evidence which comes out of nature or constitution as formed by the creator.

With marriage man and woman, have been deeply impressed with the adaptation of their relationship to each other. In fact, man's need to woman is compared to his need for food in order to avoid the obstacles of life and to live in a perfect and prosperous life. According to John Maynard, philosophy tells us that this need is the result of the process produced by our mental and bodily actions. Human nature says that every man instinctively desires the enjoyment, the purest and supreme affection of his wife by the law of marriage. After the couple gets married to each other, they are one in affection, in object, and in aim.

During the Victorian Era, marriage was considered to be a law that must be obeyed by any given couple. That marriage, in fact, by its imposed rules, was perceived to be a burden more on woman than on man. The latter was the controller, the dominant, the oppressor, the active and the stronger, while the former was the weaker, the passive, the oppressed as well as the 'other' who must obey everything society in general and her husband in particular imposed on her. This means that woman's status was highly controlled by man. He was always given more rights than his wife. He was the dominant figure in the family and the only one who had the right to work outside the household, to hold political power, to own property; even the one of his wife and to have professional occupations in all the fields. Woman, on the other hand, was deprived political, social and economic rights. She was forced to stay at home where the only job is housekeeping. She was deprived of the right to be taught and educated at schools and to have access to work and to political affairs, and to own property.

## **The Rise of the New Woman**

The expression 'New Woman' came into existence at the end of the nineteenth century to refer to a new type, symbol, and figure of the feminist struggle. She appeared as an opposition to the male-dominated society that imposed its societal constraints. She was a symptom of the decline of the social values and chose independence from marriage and motherhood. The expression New Woman was first coined in 1894. It is taken from Sarah Grand essay *The New Aspect of the Woman Question*. It was first addressed by the British American writer Henry James to demonstrate the growth of a great number of feminist, educated, and independent career women in both Europe and the United States. The New Woman brought about the idea of equality between the sexes, man and woman, within a patriarchal society.

The New Woman would not accept the imposed social constraints and tyrannies, particularly those imposed on her sexual freedom. She would raise herself against any of the social institutions which may affect her own individuality and freedom. In so doing, some of them would give much importance to their sexual liberty considering that their love relationship with a man should be based on free love; i.e., without a marriage contract.

The New woman was influenced by such thinkers as Charles Darwin since the latter does not believe in the existence of god, John Stewart Mill and later on, Sigmund Freud. John Stuart Mill's book *the Subjection of Women (1869)* is one of the most important texts of liberal feminism of the nineteenth century England. It explores the issue of gender equality between men and women. Mill's main center of interest in the book is liberal feminism since he asserts that women must be liberated, freed and emancipated from patriarchal domination and oppression. He considers that it is that liberation which is the most fundamental principle for building a liberal and democratic society that will undoubtedly be based on harmony, support and equality in the political, economic, and religious fields. Mill was merely concerned with the

social problem of his time and focuses on social reform. He attentively strived for women's rights, women's suffrage, and women's equal access to education and profession.

Mill shared this concern and collaborated a lot with his friend Harriet Taylor, a liberal feminist, whom he married later. Taylor published anonymously *The Enfranchisement of Women*, in the Westminster Review in 1851. She focused in her book on the analysis of gender along with the equality between the two sexes, explaining the subordination of women by the economic dependence of women on men. She also asserted that gender division was socially organized rather than morally constructed. She gives arguments of how women were forced to accept men's imposition, and she employs liberal principles to support women's enfranchisement. According to her, the root of gender division was women's confinement to the scope of domestic marriage and motherhood as well as their exclusion from the public sphere.

The New Woman's primary concern was the emancipation of women and, as it is said before, equality between the two sexes in political, economic, social, and sexual concerns. She rose against all the restrictions the 'Victorian proper lady' imposed upon herself. Furthermore, the New Woman emphasized the hypocrisy of a double standard morality. The New Woman that emerged in the 1880s in both Britain and America was a middle class, youngish, single woman. She had some education; the fact that contributed to her self-supporting. The New Woman had the habit of dressing well, and because she did not belong to the marriage bargain in the same manner as the traditional young lady, she could choose to please herself about dress and partners. She was more than an ordinary woman; she felt free to ride a bicycle, smoke cigarettes, travel, and be sexually active. A man who asked for her might find her able to discuss issues of the day, and he always found her to be an appropriate partner and buddy rather than the woman who was sexually attractive. The New Woman was described as being an attractive, active, dynamic, and a little bit frightening human being; literate and wearing modern clothes.

## Endnotes

<sup>12</sup>Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1896), 199.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 200.

<sup>14</sup>Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious; Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 43.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Kara Barrett, 'Victorian Women and their Working Roles'. Phd diss., (State University of New York, Buffalo State College, 2013), 6.

<sup>17</sup>Sarah Grand. 'The New Aspects of the Woman Question'. *North American Review* 158 ( March , 1894): 272.

### III) Results and Discussion

In this part of my dissertation, I have centered my attention on the findings that my analysis has come to after having explored the issue of 'New Woman' within Thomas Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895) and Grant Allen's *the Woman who Did* (1895). Theoretically speaking, I provided the summary of Frederic Jameson's theory *the Political Unconscious; Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981). To make the study more clear, I have applied the theory on both novels' main heroines Sue Bridehead and Herminia Barton.

In the first part of my Discussion section, I have noticed that both Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895) and Grant Allen's *The Woman who did* (1895) belong to the same literature written, with the same language, in the same period that is the Victorian period; both of them share the some similarities. Within this chapter, we presented Sue Bridehead's and Herminia Barton's revolutionary attitudes towards the Victorian Institution of Marriage. I have also come to the outcome that both novels explore the same marriage issue that was dominant during the reign of Queen Victoria. Both writers; Thomas Hardy and Grant Allen are for the fact that women should be free to express their sexuality and therefore establish their own way of life. It is in this way that women are to be as equal as men in all the domains. Accordingly, in their novels, they introduced the female characters Sue Bridehead and Herminia Barton who are described as being New Women who rose against the Victorian institution of marriage. In doing this, they sought change in terms of their sexual needs.

In the second chapter of my Discussion section, I have remarked that both Thomas Hardy and Grant Allen support the idea that women should be educated, literate and intellectual human beings just as men were during Queen Victoria's reign. The main proof is their focus on educated female characters in most of their works as it is the case in their novels *Jude the Obscure*, and *The Woman Who Did* (1895). Therefore, both Sue Brideshead and Herminia

Barton are represented as educated New Women instead of being referred to as illiterate and uneducated heroines.

In the third and last part of my Discussion section, I have reached the result that both the authors are against the imposed religious beliefs of that time period, especially on the lives of women who must follow what religion dictates to them. This is well apparent since Thomas Hardy and Grant Allen succeed in introducing the female characters Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* and Herminia Barton in *The Woman who Did* as completely antireligious characters; they completely ignore the idea of the teachings of religion. They dared to adopt some principles that were forbidden by the Bible; among these we have the introduction of Free Love.

As a whole, I may say that my research topic has reached the conclusion that Sue Bridehead and Herminia Barton's ideas and attitudes towards the Victorian patriarchal principles and standards including marriage, education and religion are proved to be different, in opposition and revolutionary. These attitudes in fact are considered as the features of the New Woman. Accordingly, this new woman movement comes into existence in order to get rights in all the fields and thus be as equal as men in terms of sexuality, education and religious practices.

## 1) The Representation of the Institution of Marriage in the Two Novels

In the first part of the Discussion section, we will provide a detailed analysis of the female heroine characters namely Sue Bridehead in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and Herminia Barton of Grant Allen's *The Woman who Did* (1895) in relation to the Victorian institution of marriage. The analysis is destined to demonstrate the different ways both Sue Bridehead and Herminia Barton view the Victorian marriage and their attitudes towards it. The purpose of the present part is to analyze both *Jude the Obscure* and *The Woman Who Did* focusing on Sue Bridehead's and Herminia Barton's views on marriage which is in perfect agreement with the New Women's attitude. Both novels can be interpreted as socially symbolic acts of the political unconscious of the period when the works were produced. Through both heroines' different behaviors, it will be clear that the Victorian marriage institution is an ideology that reflects the political unconscious of the period.

### a. Marriage in *The Woman Who Did* (1895):

In Grant Allen's novel *The Woman Who Did*, Herminia Barton is the heroine. She is the focus of interest in the whole story. Grant Allen selects Herminia who represents the characteristics of the New Woman. She is described as being different in the society where she lives in many ways; she is a free woman, the fact that is revealed from the very beginning of the story when the author writes:

But it was her face particularly that struck Alan Merrick at first sight that face was above all things the face of a free woman. Something so frank and fearless shone in Herminia's glance, as her eye met his, that Alan who respected human freedom above all other qualities in man or woman, was taken on the spot by its perfect air of untrammelled liberty...she was beautiful still with the first flush of health and strength and womanhood in a free and vigorous English girl's body.<sup>1</sup>

As the quotation suggests, Herminia Barton seems to be an independent woman whose freedom is morally and physically appreciated. She is independent since she decides to untie her relations



from her family's imposed commands and advice. Instead, Herminia Barton prefers to live a life of her own based on freedom and individuality which are limited by the capitalist society's laws. In fact, she belongs to middle class society where she challenges the crudities of the upper bourgeoisie group that was mainly held by a patriarch. In this context, the critic Frederic Jameson says in his book *The Political Unconscious*: "...the tendential law of social life under capitalism maims our existence as individual subjects and paralyses our thinking about time and change just as surely as it alienates us from our speech itself"<sup>2</sup>. This means that capitalism restricts the individual particularly woman and prevents her from evolving in her social sphere through proclaiming her rights as a social subject.

In fact, what makes Herminia a free woman is her father's sermons about truth. After listening to one of these sermons, she comes to believe in the truth of being a free woman who has the right to say, do and accept or refuse anything she sees worth to be done. She is convinced that she must seek the truth and not to rest until she reaches it. In this context, she asserts "*we must dig for it; we must grope after it*"<sup>3</sup>. She believes that once the truth is reached, it will emancipate her from "*social and moral slaveries*"<sup>4</sup>.

Herminia Barton is beautiful, highborn, well educated, self-supporting, the best example of the New Woman and a perfect instance of Social-Darwinian fitness to survive. Through her introduction of free union, she wants to initiate women's emancipation by revealing that it is possible for women to love outside the strict institution of marriage; and the best example of this is her free love relationship with Allen Merrick in which they violate marriage legal union. In fact, Herminia believes that love is a personal privacy and she does not embrace a marriage in which she has to sacrifice her true self in order to practice her social role as a wife and a mother. As it is already mentioned that Herminia is an instance of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer's ideas about the evolution of social organism; she believes in the fact that human beings change

and evolve as time passes. Therefore, for her, she must strive to face that change that will in turn bring women's rights.

In order to be autonomous, she goes to Girton College and succeeds to raise herself relying upon none but herself. Once in Girton, she works as a teacher in order to gain her living. She discovers that the freedom offered there was purely intellectual; her own interest is not political equality as in social equality. She sees herself as part of an ideological group opposed to the illiterate group. She belongs to an educated middle class. She is an individual who is free to do everything she wants since there exists a realm of freedom; the thing that is considered to be an obligation to human beings. She recognizes the importance of it in their lives and considers it the only way to withdraw from society's laws and constraints. Accordingly, Frederic Jameson asserts:

...Sheltered from the omnipresence of history and the implacable influence of the social, there already exists a realm of freedom...is only to strengthen the grip of necessity over all such blind zones in which the individual, a merely psychological, project of salvation. The only effective liberation from such constraints begins with the recognition that there is nothing that is not social and historical, indeed, that everything is "in the last analysis political."<sup>5</sup>

Herminia, just like other Victorian women, actually welcome and enjoy sexual activity. When Mrs. Dewsbury convinces Herminia to go in for Mr. Alan Merrick, she abruptly replies that she does not want to "*go in for anybody*"<sup>6</sup>. By this, she does not mean that she will never fall in love; she will, but never get married legally. She is a New Woman who believes in free union when it comes to love between a man and a woman. Free union was a means of accommodating sexual relations with fairness to both sexes and with a more permanent relation than traditional marriage. She is, in fact, against marriage contract. Herminia Barton argues:

I deny and decline those terrors, they are part and parcel of a system of slavery...I will not palter and palter with the unholy even though you go to a registry office and get rid

as far as you can of every relic of the sacerdotal and sacramental idea. Yet the marriage itself is still an assertion of man's supremacy over woman. It ties her for him for life, it ignores her individuality, it compelled her to promise what no human heart can be sure of performing; for you can contract to do or not to do, easily enough, but contract to feel or not to feel absurdity.<sup>7</sup>

This shows clearly that Herminia rejects the terror of legal marriage on grounds that are partly feminist. In this case the author compares marriage to slavery that is apparent in the couple; the husband being the master, and the wife, being the slave. The latter always being tied to his master through obedience and acceptance of everything he imposes on his so called slave. As a result, the woman loses her freedom and individuality.

Few years later, after Alan's death, Herminia is obliged to come back to London. There, she is severely hit by poverty that she must think of all the means necessary to earn her living. Being educated, she works as a journalist; she devotes almost all her time to write her own life experiences in the form of a book in order to sell it to the editors in return of a particular sum of money. In fact, she does not accept others' commands and advice. For instance, she ultimately refuses the demands of Alan's father when he asks her to let her daughter Dolores live with him and thus support her financially. Furthermore, Herminia is described as being a strong and free mother who follows every rule necessary to educate her lonely daughter, Dolores. She decides to educate her herself without the assistance of others; Dolores' grandfather who wants to raise her. She even refuses his money. She is a true mother because, after Alan's death, and being alone without any partner, she tries all the means to find a job.

As a matter of fact, Herminia Barton is the oppressed who finds it necessary to revolt against the oppressor, the Victorian society with all the constraints it imposes on individuals, in order to gain her rights comprising her freedom in the political, social, economic and religious fields. In this case, Frederic Jameson in his *The Political Unconscious; literature as a Symbolic Act* says:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles; freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes.<sup>8</sup>

In society, there is always a clash between the dominant and the dominated, the rich and the poor or the oppressor and oppressed. In this case, Herminia refuses to submit to the laws imposed by the patriarchal system. This means that the individual in general and Herminia Barton in particular, being a member of the upper middle class that is dominated by the members of the bourgeoisie class, intends to struggle against the oppressor; the society in order to gain political, social, economic and sexual rights. This fight, in fact is aimed to reconstruct a society that is in evolution.

**b. Marriage in *Jude the Obscure* (1895):**

Hardy's heroine Sue Bridehead in his novel *Jude The Obscure* (1985) is unique because she is different from other female protagonists marked in previous novels, yet the sense of marriage is vehicled by the heroine Sue Bridehead as an oppressed woman who seeks sex emancipation. Indeed, Sue's behavior justifies that she belongs to the category called "the New Woman". Furthermore, she shows a form of revolt against the Victorian institution of marriage because it sets restrictions on woman. Unlike other women, Sue is not afraid of men and their books. When sue Bridehead tells Jude that he can love her, she does not entirely mean that they can be lovers but rather love "just out of charity"<sup>9</sup>. In fact, she is unable to get married with Jude because she believes that cousins should not marry with each other. She claims: "And then we are cousins, and it is bad for cousins to marry"<sup>10</sup>. When she takes the decision of marrying Richard Phillotson, she tells Jude to give her to Phillotson.

Like Herminia Barton, Sue Bridehead believes that marriage equals slavery. She says in her letter to Jude: “According to the ceremony there printed; my bridegroom chooses me of his own will and pleasure; but I don’t choose him. Somebody GIVES me to him, like a she-ass or a she-goat, or other domestic animal”<sup>11</sup>. This means that, for Sue, marriage has something to do with men’s domination over women since it is up to the bridegroom to choose his bride just as one chooses to buy an animal in the market. There is always that domination of men over women.

In addition, like Herminia Barton of *The Woman who Did*, Sue Bridehead succeeds in mocking the Victorian institution of marriage when she and Jude enter the church before she gets married to Richard Phillotson. Once in the church, she and Jude ironically behave as a true couple does. As the story progresses, after some weeks of Sue’s marriage with Phillotson, there seems that she regrets of behaving in such a way and says: “perhaps I ought not to have married”<sup>13</sup>. For her, she is still Miss Sue Bridehead and not Mrs. Richard Phillotson since she doesn’t seem to live a happy life with her husband. She declares, “I’m called Mrs. Richard Phillotson, living a calm wedded life with my counterpart of that name. But I am not really Mrs. Richard Phillotson, but a woman tossed about, all alone, with aberrant passions, and uncountable antipathies”<sup>14</sup>. As the quotation reveals, Sue is supposed to live a happy life with her husband after marriage, but it is not the case; she is described as a disillusioned and lonely woman and still calls herself Miss Susana Sue Bridehead. Accordingly, she believes that marriage

is only a sordid contract based on material convenience in house holding, rating, and taxing and the inheritance of land and money by children, making it necessary that the male parent should be known [...] which it seems to be – why surely a person may say, even proclaim upon the housetops, that it hurts and grieves him or her?”<sup>15</sup>.

That is, a marriage contract is established just in order to gain property and money. It is, in fact, based on the material needs of human beings, though it hurts him or her. Sue Bridehead accepts

to marry Phillotson because he offers her opportunities to be one of the students in the training schools. In other words, she considers it a reward for everything Phillotson does for her in order to help her. However, she does not love Phillotson and says: *“that though I like Mr. Phillotson as a friend, I don’t like him... it is a torture to me to live with him as a husband. There, now I have let it out. I couldn’t help it, although I have been pretending I’m happy.”*<sup>16</sup>.

This means that when Sue lives with Phillotson, she does not owe him what a wife owes her husband. She always considers him more as a friend than a husband, and she is unable to offer him love. In this respect, she intends not to share any love with her husband; Richard Phillotson, since she does not have any feeling towards him as a lover. This is apparent when she spends one night in a large clothes-closet instead of sharing the same bed with him. She prefers living away from him. “Richard”, she says; *“would you mind my living away from you ?”*<sup>17</sup>. In asking him such question she wants to break down the laws and get rid of him. She says:

Why can’t we agree to free each other? We made the compact, and surely we can conceal it...not legally of course; but we can morally, especially as no new interests, in the shape of children, have arisen to be looked after. Then we might be friends, and live without pain to either. Oh, Richard, be my friend and have a pity! We shall both be dead in a few years, and then what will it matter to anybody that you relieved me from constraint for a little while?”<sup>18</sup>.

Sue wants to free herself from marriage through breaking the compact morally. After being emancipated, they can be friends and thus live a peaceful life without any problem between them. As the story goes on, it is shown that Sue is not merely against marriage but rather strive to get emancipated in terms of her sex. She is, in fact, against the sexual intercourse with her husband Phillotson. She thinks that she is free to choose whether to make it or not. This is well explained when she, after Phillotson accidentally enters her room, dares to jump out of a window, fearing that her husband is to force her to make love with him. In this case, Sue prefers death than doing the sexual intercourse with the person she does not love. The New Woman Sue Bridehead does not cease struggling against the constraints of the Victorian marriage she

considers as being slavery in which one is the dominant and the other is the victim, innocent and the dominated. The latter's life is always tied to the dominant. For Sue, a woman is the slave of a husband; that's why she must free herself from such a prison and live as she chooses not as another person chooses.

To finish with, both Sue Bridehead and Herminia Barton are two female characters introduced by both writers to show the revolutions made by some Victorian women against the imposed Victorian marriage law that is too strict to their private lives. They revolted simply because they wanted sexual autonomy and the equality between both sexes. However, that revolution is without success since the end of the two novels is revealed to be a tragic end. Both Sue and Herminia wanted to get their freedom in all the domains especially in terms of their life.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Grant Allen, *the Woman Who Did* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1895), 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious; Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 04.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, *the Woman Who Did*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* ., *The Political Unconscious* 04- 05.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, *the Woman Who Did* 21.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 04.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1896), 199.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.



## 2) The Representation of Education in the Two Novels

The second part of the Discussion is devoted to the analysis of the female principal characters Sue Bridehead and Herminia Barton, focusing our attention on how women during the Victorian era did get their educational rights. The aim of the analysis is to show that women were educated and therefore became intellectuals capable of supporting themselves. Through the two heroines' behavior, it is apparent that education during the Victorian era was a controversial issue revealing the different ideologies in conflict.

### a. The Theme of Education in *The Woman who Did* (1895):

Grant Allen made of his heroine, Herminia Barton, an educated New Woman in his story *The Woman Who Did* (1895). From the very start of the book, she is described as very different from the Victorian women who conformed to the Victorian laws and principles. In other terms, unlike the illiterate women, Herminia is literate and full of knowledge. She is able to support herself by teaching and “*doing hack-work for newspaper*”<sup>1</sup>. She is determined to carry on her school work and never give up till the end. The narrator asserts: “*therefore she would continue her schoolwork with her pupils as long as the school would allow her; and when that becomes impossible, would fall back upon literature*”<sup>2</sup>. To be more explicit, Herminia Barton works as a teacher in one of the Bower Lane schools as Carlyle Place Girl's school is designed for teaching and educating the girls of the village so that to be literate and therefore emancipated.

Herminia Barton is clearly a product of the changes in the Victorian educational system of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These transformations can be traced back to the 1840's when small schools for women were opened in order to teach and educate them to become professionals, capable of doing not only the housework but also working as teachers, doctors and lawyers outside their home. In this context, Cedric Watts asserts in his article *Hardy's Sue Bridehead and the 'New Woman'* (1993):

As Mill noted in his *The Subjection of Women* (1869), already women were organized to demand equality in admission to the professions. In London, Queen's College and Bedford College admitted women in 1848 and 1849 respectively, producing the first generation of highly woman teachers. Soon, women entered the North London Collegiate (1850), Cheltenham Ladies College (1854), and Girton, Cambridge (1869)<sup>1</sup>.

The head-mistress of the school is Miss Smith Waters from Cambridge. She is so happy and proud of Herminia since the latter is so competent, clever, and doing so appropriately her job. Accordingly, Herminia is an example of those schools that were headed by women whose main program is not different from that taught to the boys. As an illustration from the novel, as it is already mentioned, the school where she works as a training teacher is headed by a woman; Miss. Smith Waters and was designed to the girls only. These girls were being taught curriculums related not to the teachings concerning domestic practices, house management and work, but rather to programs that consist of learning to become teachers, doctors, engineers, vets, nurses and adherents in the political affairs. In fact, Herminia witnessed the opening of a college in 1840s known as Bedford College. The latter was run by women who did not give a great deal of importance to religious faith and teachings. They were called the non-conformist women. Most of them were partly from families that were members of the Feminist Movement that aimed to gain liberal rights in all the domains.

Before Herminia gets acquainted with Alan, things seem to be normal and clear; however, after, things started to change for the worse. Because of her principle of "Free Union", she is obliged to desert her teaching since she is afraid that Miss Smith Waters will discover the truth and thus people will gossip their story. She finds it necessary to absent herself from the class. In fact, her leaving the school is referred to when she writes a letter to Smith Waters proving her retreat from that school. While staying in Perugia, Italy, with her lover Alan Merrick, she gives birth to a girl Dolores. When the latter gets old enough, Herminia sends her to school to be taught and educated.

Being hit by poverty after the death of Allen Merrick, she and her daughter Dolores are in need of financial support. She writes and produces articles and reviews which narrate her own experiences and sufferings in life. In fact, she is talented with the capacity of writing the English language effectively; the thing that gives her the opportunity to offer everything she writes to reviewers so that to be advertised in newspapers and magazines, in return of being paid sums of money she needs to spend with Dolores. The kind of literature Herminia writes is full of pessimism and disillusionment. The Narrator says:

After a time, in the intervals between doing her journalistic work and Nursing Alan's baby, Herminia found leisure to write a novel. It was seriously meant of course, but still it was a novel. That is every woman's native idea of literature. It reflects the relatively larger part which the social life plays in the existence of women<sup>4</sup>.

Herminia finds leisure when she sets herself the task of writing her story in the form of a novel that reflects her social life. In fact, the story she writes is a despairing one that embodies her experiences, injustices, sufferings and "*sentiments of a martyred woman*"<sup>5</sup>. After she finished writing the novel, she quickly sends it to a publisher so that to earn money and support herself financially. The book is described by editors and readers as being "*a very advanced women's novel*"<sup>6</sup>. This does not mean that the book proves success but rather failure since it is viewed as a dull, poisonous and dangerous for its tragedy and the absence of morality. Some people said that, "*This book seems to be a book with a teaching not thoroughly banal, like the novels-with- a purpose after which we flock; so we'll give it a wide berth*"<sup>7</sup>. This means that the book is not like the other books which have convincing purposes. The readers don't give the novel much importance considering it nonsense. Accordingly the narrator argues:

Her kind of journalism was so commonplace and so anonymous that she was spared the worst insult of seeing her hack-work publicly criticized as though it offered some adequate reflection of the mind that produces it instead of being merely an index of taste in the minds of those for whose use it was intended. So she lives for years as a machine for the production of articles and reviews and a devoted mother to little developing Dolly<sup>8</sup>.

Thus though Herminia's writings are publicly and negatively criticized, she succeeds to support her daughter Dolores thanks to her ability of writing, so she does not cease writing a manuscript that she posts to a weekly paper after being finished.

**b. The Theme of Education in *Jude the Obscure* (1895):**

In the novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895), Thomas Hardy introduces the female character Sue Bridehead as being an educated woman who is different from the other Victorian women who are described to be uneducated and illiterate. She is described as being "*the proto-feminist; the young woman who is educated, intelligent, emancipated in ideas and in morality*"<sup>9</sup>. Since her childhood, Sue attended school so that to be an intellectual and have chances to get a better occupation to support herself. Accordingly, in order to get a work as a teacher, we are informed that she must pass an examination in order to enter a training college. The narrator asserts: "*she evidently wrote with anxiety, and told very little about her own doings, more than that she has passed some sort of examination for a Queen's Scholarship to enter a training college at Melchester to complete herself for the vocation she had chosen*"<sup>10</sup>.

In fact, she seems to be pleased for having come to that training school. She declares: "*well, I am rather glad I come to this training school, after all. See, how independent I shall be after the two years of training*".<sup>11</sup> For her, being free and independent is better than anything else in her life. She believes that independence is the only way to reach happiness and progress in the professional side of anybody's life. Cedric Watts asserts in his article *Hardy's Sue Bridehead and the 'New Woman'* (1993):

Sue Bridehead offers a clear instance of a new enlightenment linked to educational opportunity. She is naturally intelligent and interested in ideas; since leaving school she has been further educated by contact with the student at London with whom she (to his frustration) lived in celibate companionship; before meeting Jude, she has taught for two years in the city; and, after meeting Phillotson, she wins a Queen's scholarship to attend the Training College at Melchester and qualify fully for a career as a teacher<sup>12</sup>.

Cedric Watts insists on the fact that Sue Bridehead is the best example of ‘the New Women’ who has the chance to be educated and emancipated, a woman capable of working as a skilled teacher.

By work, she is able to support herself by herself without relying on anybody. Being competent, she is able to work as a well-trained- teacher at that Manchester Training School which gathers “*the daughters of mechanics, curates, surgeons, shopkeepers, farmers, dairymen, soldiers, sailors and villagers*”<sup>13</sup>. Sue easily gets access to that school partly because she is an intellectual who knows: “*most of the Greek and Latin classics through translations, and other books too*”<sup>14</sup>. She says: “*I read Lempriere, Catallus, Martial, Juvenal, Lucian, Beaumont and Fletcher, Boccaccio, Scarron, De Brontame, Sterne, Defoe, Smollet, Fielding, Shakespeare, the Bible and other such.*”<sup>15</sup>

It is important to mention that the purpose of Sue Bridehead being in Christminster is to get as much knowledge as possible. She declares that she does not like Christminster except “*its intellectual side*”<sup>16</sup>, and she is against the medievalism and the old traditions and culture of that village. Furthermore, after marrying Richard Phillotson, and with the assistance of her cousin Jude Fawley, she gets the chance to work as an assistant teacher in Mr. Phillotson’s school. As the story progresses, we are informed that Sue, after reading John Stuart Mill’s works on the subjection of women, is much inspired from his ideas that consists of freedom, individuality, and equality between the sexes.

As a conclusion, we may say that both Thomas Hardy and Grant Allen are revolutionary through their works in the sense that they choose to introduce educated, intellectual and professional female characters instead of illiterate and uneducated ones. This means that both writers support the equality between men and women in terms of education and profession.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Grant Allen, *the Woman Who Did* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1895), 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>3</sup>CedericWatts. '*Hardy's Sue Bridehead and the New Woman*'. Berghahn Books (1993), 153-155.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.,*the Woman Who Did*72.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.,*Hardy's Sue Bridehead* 152.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1896),182..

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid; *Hardy's Sue Bridehead* , 151.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.,*Jude the Obscure*167.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 178.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 178-179.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 180.

### 3) The Representation of Religion in the Two Novels

The third part of our discussion section highlights the theme of religion that is well explored within both Thomas Hardy's work *Jude The Obscure* and Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895). We will demonstrate that the heroines of both novels; Sue Bridehead and Herminia Barton are described to have critical ideas and attitudes towards religion during the Victorian era. Both novels can be interpreted as socially symbolic acts as Jameson would say. The two heroines' attitude reflects the growing skepticism towards religion during the late Victorian era.

#### a. Religion in *Jude the Obscure* (1895):

Thomas Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895) can be interpreted as a critique and an opposition to Religion during the Victorian times. Hardy was much influenced by the English Church. This is very clear since he introduces Sue Bridehead whose immoral behavior suggests that she does not obey all what religion dictates. In fact, religion insists on the necessity and importance of the marriage contract when it comes to a love affair between a man and woman. With that contract, in fact, the couple may be united eternally together and therefore live a better life based on love, happiness, and success. The Bible states that women must willingly or unwillingly be bound to men thanks to that marriage contract which is based on the fact that a man needs a woman on his side and vice versa, and the man controls her and she must obey what her husband tells her to do since she made an oath during marriage.

Religion considers those who deviate from the religious principles as being sinful and immoral and therefore outcasts from society. Sue Bridehead is portrayed as a 'New Woman' whose ideas and attitude towards religion are different. She does not put into practice the Victorian conventional religious practices by her insistence on freedom, individuality and the emancipation of women. She is highly influenced by John Stuart Mill's works specifically *the*

*Subjection of Woman (1869)*, which is explicitly referred to in the novel, and Herbert Spencer's *Social Darwinism*.

From the readings and different interpretations of *Jude the Obscure*, it is apparent that Sue Bridehead's attitude towards religion is a mockery. For instance, she accepts to marry Richard Phillotson despite the fact that he is older than her, and that she does not offer him any love. After their marriage, she does not even share bed with him since she does not give any importance to that union. She prefers divorce rather than living with Richard. She considers marriage as slavery and thus she is against it, since, as Sue thinks, a woman is always viewed as being a slave who must always serve his master.

When the idea of marrying her cousin Jude Fawley comes to her mind, she and Jude change their minds, believing that they ought not accept to do that sordid marriage contract, and instead decide to adopt free love. In fact, they visit both the registry office and the church where they are to be eternally tied to each other through that contract. The story shows that both of them do not like the places and therefore think it better not to marry. Sue Bridehead says:

The general question is not our business, and why should we plague ourselves about it? However different our reasons are, we come to the same conclusion; that for us particular two, an irrevocable oath is risky. Then Jude let us go home without killing our dream!<sup>1</sup>

This means that Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead think that they will kill their dream if they accept to put into practice that marriage contract which they think is a risk for their future life, the dream being to live in a peaceful way. By doing that, Sue dares to reject the religious beliefs.

In part three chapter IV, Thomas Hardy introduces the New Woman heroine, Sue Bridehead, as the very one opposed to religion. She is very influenced by a friend of hers she gets acquainted with at Christminster. This man, in fact, helps her a great deal in making of her



an intellectual and irreligious woman just as he is described to be. In her conversation with Jude she argues:

“Jude”, she said brightly, when he had finished and come back to her, will you let me make you a New Testament, like the one I made for myself at Christminster? “I altered my old one by cutting up all the Epistles and the Gospels into separate BROCHURES, and rearranging them in chronological order as written, beginning the book with Thessalonians, following on with the Epistles and putting the gospels much further on. Then I have the volume rebound. My university friend Mr....but never mind his name, poor boy...said it was an excellent idea. I know that reading it afterwards made it twice as interesting as before, and twice as understandable.”<sup>2</sup>

To be more clear, Sue Bridehead is against religion since she dares deconstruct the Bible and remake it in her own way by cutting it into tiny pieces and rearranging them in chronological order. Frederic Jameson asserts in his *The Political Unconscious*:

for the dynamic of rationalization (...) is a complex one in which the traditional or “natural” unities, social forms, human relations, cultural events, even religious systems, are systematically broken up in order to be reconstructed more efficiently, in the form of new post-natural processes or mechanism; but in which at the same time, these now isolated broken bits and pieces of the older unities acquire a certain autonomy of their own...<sup>3</sup>

Frederic Jameson wants to convey here the fact that the social norms and forms including the religious teachings are broken and deconstructed in order to be reconstructed and therefore will have the true meaning and efficiency. This is what Jameson calls the ‘dynamic of rationalization’.

Actually, Sue Bridehead is one of the female characters who witnessed the religious revival in the late nineteenth century England. She saw the appearance of many scientists and theorists who were completely against the teachings of religion of that time. As instances, there were the appearance of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer’s *The Origins of the Species* and Renan’s *Vie de Jésus (1863)*. Such writers dared to put into question the Bible’s teachings and the existence of God that were uncovered to be false. Sue, being an intellectual who is much

influenced by such thinkers, believes the same way as they do; she is free to express her feelings towards religion.

**b. Religion in *The Woman who Did*:**

In Grant Allen's novel *The Woman who Did* (1895), the heroine Herminia Barton is revealed to be one of the characters whose view upon religion and personal life is quiet immoral since she sticks to her quest to maintain the notion of free love or free union; sexual relations without marriage contract, that is, for her, the product of society.

Frederic Jameson asserts in his book *The Political Unconscious* (1981): "*The illusions of religion were to be read as the complement of a positive social functionality, and decoded as the figure and the projection of an essentially human energy...Religion is thus here the distorted or the symbolic coming to consciousness of itself...*"<sup>4</sup>. Jameson means that the falseness of religion is to be interpreted as the wholeness of the functionality of society which considers it as an important human energy. This is well applicable to the Heroine Herminia Barton of *The Woman Who Did* since she considers religion as a distorted and false embodiment of society. This is demonstrated when she adopts a principle that is completely forbidden by religion; the adoption of free union.

Free union, as it was known during the Victorian era, is strictly forbidden by religion. Since Herminia adopts it, she is considered as an immoral outcast by society. She does not even care to attend the church. The narrator asserts: "*though to be sure it had already struck the minds of Bower Lane that Herminia never went "to church or chapel"; and when people kept themselves adrift from church or chapel, why, what sort of morality can you reasonably expect of them?*"<sup>5</sup>. Herminia Barton shows the same disdain towards marriage. She declares:

Now, \_ I \_ have the rare chance of acting otherwise; I can show the world from the very first that I act from principle and from principle only. I can say to it in effect, 'see, here is the man of my choice, the man I love, truly, and purely, the man anyone of you would willingly have seen offering himself in lawful marriage to your own daughters. If I

would, I might go the beaten way you prescribe, and marry him legally. But of my own free will I disdain that degradation, I choose rather to be free. No fear of your scorn, no dread of your bigotry, no shrinking at your cruelty, shall prevent me from following the thorny path I know to be the right one. I seek no temporal end. I will not prove false to the future of my kind in order to protect myself from your hateful indignities. I know on what vile foundations your temple of wedlock is based and built, what pitiable victims languish and die in its sickening vaults; and I will not consent to enter it<sup>6</sup>.

Herminia Barton stresses the fact that she has the right to behave as she wants. For her, she can choose to live with the man she loves 'truly' and 'purely' but never marry him legally. Rather, she prefers freedom and autonomy when it comes to her love affair. This is mainly because she considers marriage as degradation and an illness which is the cause of women's sufferings.

It is very important to state that Herminia Barton is one of the characters who is described to be very much influenced by the theorists and evolutionists Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. Since she makes her quest for free love without marriage contract, it is apparent that she considers it a social project. As an illustration from the novel, in the middle of the story, when Allen Merrick asked her for marriage, she refuses his proposal and tells him instead how free love can be the best revolutionary instance for future women. In her opinion, sexual revolution will automatically result in a progressive evolution for men and women in particular and society in general.

Despite the fact that Herminia belongs to the family of a clergyman of the English Church; the Dean of Dunwich, she does not want to rely on any person; even her father, because she thinks that it is that dependence which helps men impose their social laws on women. She prefers being free and independent from them. Herminia Barton does not believe in the religious teachings of the English Church when she embarks into a free love relationship with Alan Merrick whom she loves. She unites herself with him without signing that marriage contract that she considers nothing more than a barbaric practice done only in order to facilitate domination

and oppression. In addition, after the union, she gives birth to an illegitimate girl since her relationship with Alan Merrick is exceptional and forbidden.

As a conclusion, we may say that both Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895) and Grant Allen *the Woman who Did* (1895) illustrate well the issues of religion during the Victorian period. Both their female characters; Sue Bridehead and Herminia Barton are described to have defiant attitudes towards the imposed religious beliefs. Their 'immoral' behavior shows that they strive for changes and reforms in religion. The 'immoral attitude is one among the features of the "New Woman"'.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1896), 266.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>3</sup> Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 47-48.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>5</sup> Grant Allen, *the Woman Who Did* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1895), 78-79.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47.

#### **IV) Conclusion**

Throughout this dissertation, we have tried to explore the representation of the 'New Woman' in two novels from the late Victorian era, Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* relying on Frederic Jameson's theory of the Political Unconscious, that is, looking at the two works as socially symbolic acts. Our analysis has shown that both Thomas Hardy and Grant Allen can be qualified as feminist writers since they wrote novels, where they uncover the political, economic and social issues concerning women. Borrowing the term Allegorical Interpretation, we have tried to argue that both novels are allegorically written by the two authors. Allegorically since the novels interpreted the different political ideologies of the Victorian era. We have supported this research by grounding the novels in the historical context in which they were written.

Our analysis has come to the conclusion that both Thomas Hardy and Grant Allen were eye witnesses of an era where the Victorian conservative forces were challenged by the growing progressive movements. Their works, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Woman Who did*, can be seen as contributions to a literary and cultural revolution in which they viewed marriage, religion, education and politics in a way that challenged the views of those who conformed to the strict Victorian standards. Both were written to call into question all what society imposed. In fact, they can be seen as the reflection of the actual social changes that took place in late Victorian period. Thus, the female characters the two authors introduced, Sue Bridehead and Herminia Barton, within the two novel are perfect examples of the image of the 'New Women' since, being educated, they are aware of everything bad that had negative impact on their lives. They think that it is high time to rise and revolt against the imposed rules and adopt instead those of their own; free union, and think they are free to choose whether to practice religion or not. Accordingly, Sue and Herminia are against anything related to religion and Anglicanism since

the teachings of the former limited their lives through the focus on the fact that women must only stick to their household works that consists of cleaning the house and raising the children.

Thomas Hardy and Grant Allen seem to go hand in hand with feminism since they supported the fact that women should be equal with men, and therefore gender differences should be overpassed; there must be no distinction between the two sexes in all the fields. In addition to this, both authors, in writing such revolutionary literary novels, and the introduction of the term 'New Woman' within, want to suggest to all women a path to follow in order to free themselves from the evils of society and those of patriarchy and from sexual oppression and thus free themselves economically, physically, and spiritually.

Last but not least, we can also sum up by stating that in spite of the great amount of criticism they have attracted so far, Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and Grant Allen's *The Woman Who did* (1895), have not yet been fully explored. For example, it would be interesting to explore the two authors treatment of tragedy in the two works since the two books have unhappy endings.

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