

**From 'Fallen woman' to 'New woman' in Victorian novels:  
Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Charlotte Bronte & Kate Chopin**



Inspiring Excellence

**Fatimah Binte Monir**

**ID: 13203006**

**Department of English and Humanities**

**December 2017**

**From 'Fallen woman' to 'New woman' in Victorian novels:  
Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Charlotte Bronte & Kate Chopin**

**A Thesis**

**Submitted to**

**The Department of English and Humanities**

**Of**

**BRAC University**

**By**

**Fatimah Binte Monir**

**ID: 13203006**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements**

**For the Degree of**

**Bachelor of Arts in English**

**December 2017**

## **Acknowledgements**

### ***In the Name of Allah the Most Gracious and Merciful***

This thesis marks the end of my last semester as an undergraduate student of the Department of English and Humanities at BRAC University. First of all I have to thank my Almighty Allah for giving me patience and confidence to complete my thesis. Then I would like to express my heartiest gratitude to my parents for whom I am here today. They are my strength and I know they are always there for me in any situation. I am really thankful to my supervisor Rukhsana Rahim Chowdhury who has given her precious suggestion and feedbacks. Her constant feedbacks motivated me to think critically and helped me to organize my thesis properly.

I am really grateful to Professor Firdous Azim, Chairperson of the department who encouraged me a lot for my thesis. Besides, I would like to thank my other respectable teachers Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam, Dr. Rifat Mahbub, Professor Dr. Samina Sultana and Nawshaba Ahmed. They are my source of motivation, confidence and they have guided me to achieve my academic achievements. Last but not the least I am happy to acknowledge my friends who have always encouraged me and showed their confidence to me.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	5
<b>Epigraph</b> .....	6
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	7
<b>Chapter 2: Depiction of ‘fallen woman’ in Charles Dickens’ <i>Oliver Twist</i> and Thomas Hardy’s <i>Tess of the D’Urbervilles</i></b> .....	16
<b>2.1: Charles Dickens and ‘fallen woman’ in his <i>Oliver Twist</i></b> .....	17
<b>2.2 Thomas Hardy and ‘fallen woman’ in his <i>Tess of the D’Urbervilles</i></b> .....	20
<b>2.3: Character Analysis: Nancy and Tess as ‘Fallen women’</b> .....	23
<b>Chapter 3: Depiction of ‘new woman’ in Charlotte Bronte’s <i>Jane Eyre</i> and Kate Chopin’s <i>The Awakening</i></b> .....	28
<b>3.1: Charlotte Bronte and ‘new woman’ in her <i>Jane Eyre</i></b> .....	30
<b>3.2: Kate Chopin and ‘new woman’ in her <i>The Awakening</i></b> .....	33
<b>3.3: Character Analysis: Jane Eyre and Edna Pontellier as ‘New women’</b> .....	36
<b>Chapter 4: Conclusion</b> .....	41
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	44

### **Abstract**

Pedagogical assumptions of feminism have made great strides over time and after passing through three waves have today reached a point where women can claim to have sovereign identities as members of a society independent of male support. Despite such progress, inherently patriarchal conventions are still the driving force behind the position of women in society. The Victorian age was the period of Queen Victoria from 22 June, 1837 till her death on 22 January, 1901. A series of changes took place in regards of social, political and moral aspects in this period. At the beginning of this period women's rights were very limited. They have no right to vote, right over wages and middle class women are expected to please their husbands, taking care of their children and managing household chores. They are treated as the product of pleasure by patriarchal society. This is the starter period of women's movement against their oppression. In the last few years of this period prejudicial laws have been abolished, feminist ideas spread among the educated middle class women and women's suffrage movement has acquired powerful direction.

The thesis will focus on two literary terms 'fallen woman' and 'new woman' with some selected Victorian novels which are *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte and *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin. The objective of this thesis is to look some of the female characters of the selected novels in respect of the chosen terms guided by the theories of Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf and to analyze the journey from 'fallen woman' to 'new woman'.

.

## **Epigraph**

“Woman is fine for her own satisfaction alone.

No man will admire her the more, no woman will like her the better for it.” — Jane Austen

## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

At the end of Romantic period, Victorian period started in 1837 and ended in 1901. Social, political and economical changes took place in this period. Though a large scale of changes was seen but there were still limited rights for women in this period. Women were expected to be beautiful, elegant and obedient. They were controlled by men and the society is named as 'patriarchal society'. Upper class women were expected to be highly educated and they spent most of their times in tea parties, knitting. They had many servants to look after them. Their duties were to give instructions to the servants properly and to train upper class young girls for becoming women like them. Middle class women were expected to please their husbands and take care of children and household chores. They had no right to think of their career and their womanhood was considered as domestic one who would confined themselves within the four walled house. Lower class women were worked in factory for the development of Industrial Revolution but they had no rights on their wages. They do not even get the equal wages like men. Their wages are taken by their father or husband. Besides, they were also bound to choose the path of prostitution due to extreme poverty. The condition of Victorian women is well portrayed in Coventry Patmore's "The Angel in the House". Coventry Patmore is a Victorian English poet, well known for his narrative poem "The Angel in the House", published in 1854. In "The Angel in the House", has been portrayed an ideal married life, Victorian marriage and as well as describes Victorian women as dedicated, submissive wife and mother who will serve unconditionally. He depicted the image of a Victorian woman who is expected to be passive, innocent, devoted, pious, attractive, self sacrificing and so on. He praised women but from a husband's point of view. According to him, women who can confine themselves within the four

walls of their house and who can consider their husbands and children only as their world are considered as 'angels'.

"The Angel in the House" helps to promote and popularize women's image as an angel, a passive, meek, charming, graceful, gentle, self sacrificing, pious and pure creature devoted and submissive to her husband. She is man's subordinate, entirely dependent on man. Her main role is to provide a place of renewal for man after their rigorous activities in the harsh, competitive and public sphere." (Gorham, 4)<sup>1</sup>

Mainly, patriarchal society is responsible for women's adversity in every period and still it is in force. This period is considered as arousal period for women because women's movement against their oppression begins from this time.

Women have taken up a large portion of the Victorian novels. The Victorian period is considered as the golden age for novels. Victorian novels portrays rapid change takes place in society and as well as displays different aspects like Industrial revolution, condition of England, fallen women, new women, science and technology, Bildungsroman, children's fiction, etc. Educated middle class people are the main readers of Victorian novels and these are very entertaining for them as novels are written with multiple themes. Throughout the entire Victorian period, novels have been developed with different forms. Victorian novels of crimes and criminals are portrayed by Newgate novels. These novels are popular from late 1820 until 1840 display criminals' life and their crimes and written with the references from biographies of criminals taken from "Newgate Calendars". Novels like *Jack Sheppard* (1839) by William

---

<sup>1</sup> Gorham, Deborah. *The Victorian girl and the feminine ideal*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982. Print. Pg:4



Harrison Ainsworth, *Catherine* (1839) by William Makepeace Thackeray are Newgate Victorian novels. The origin and popularity of mysterious and detective novels are found from this period. The world's best detective series *Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle published in this period through *A Study in Scarlet* in 1887. Besides *The Moonstone* (1868) by William Collins, *Bleak House* (1853) by Charles Dickens are also well known Victorian detective fictions. Historical novels are also popular in this age as it has glorious history behind and well known authors like Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Walter Pater have attempted at least one historical novel. *Henry Esmond* (1852) by William Makepeace Thackeray, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1857) by Charles Dickens, *Romola* (1863) by George Eliot are well known Victorian historical novels. Novels which are produced with the combination of realism and romance are sensation novels. Their popularity begins in between 1860 to 1870 and defined as novel with a secret. *The Women in White* (1860) by Wilkie Collins, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) by Margaret Elizabeth Braddon are some notable Victorian sensation novels. The term 'Bildungsroman' is first coined by philologist Karl Morgenstern in 1815 but popularly used from 1870. The Bildungsroman novels mainly focus on protagonists' cultural formation, psychological and moral growth from teenage age to adulthood. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) by Mark Twain, *Pharaoh* (1895) by Boleslaw Prus are notable Victorian Bildungsroman novel. Another form of Victorian novels is Gothic romance which is produced with the combination of romance, death and horror. It wants to grab the position of dominant genre but denied by some critics in this period. *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Bronte, *A long fatal love chase* (1866) by Louisa May Alcott are popular Victorian Gothic novels. This period also portrays some unique regions through novels which are known as the provincial and regional novels. These novels mainly focus on some distinctive characteristics like culture,

custom, dialect, history, landscape of a particular region. Thomas Hardy's novel can be considered as regional or provincial because he uses the elements in such a way which refers a certain region, West England. *Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) by Thomas Hardy is one of the significant regional novels. Novel on social problems is one of the remarkable forms of Victorian novels known as social novels. It includes social problems like discrimination among class, gender, or race. Besides, it displays consequences of Industrial revolution and condition of England. *Mary Barton* (1848) by Elizabeth Gaskell, *Shirley* (1849) by Charlotte Bronte, *Hard Times* (1854) by Charles Dickens are popular Victorian social novels. Children fiction plays an important role in Victorian society as it introduces children's education as mandatory and discourages child labor. Besides, fairy tales, folk tales and adventure novels are popular among Victorian children. *Tom Brown's School days* (1842) by Thomas Hughes, *Treasure Island* (1882) by Robert Louis Stevenson are well known Victorian Children fiction. Victorian period is a remarkable period for the development of science and technology and with this science fiction also grabs an important position in Victorian literature. Charles Darwin's *On the origin of species* (1859) is a well known book for Victorian science fiction. Women movement against their oppression begins in the last few years of Victorian period. New woman adds new dimension in the form of Victorian novels which focus on the transformed appearance of women. Popular Victorian New woman novels are *A Doll's House* (1879) by Henrik Ibsen, *The Awakening* (1899) by Kate Chopin, etc.

Many masterpieces have been produced by influential writers of the Victorian period. They have become famous throughout the ages and still they are popular among the readers. Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll, The Bronte sisters (Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, Anne Bronte), Elizabeth Gaskell, Robert Browning, George Eliot, Wilkie Collins,

Christina Rossetti, William Makepeace Thackeray, Elizabeth Barrette Browning, Alfred Tennyson, Oscar Wilde, Kate Chopin are well known writers of this period. Lewis Carroll which is his pen name is a Victorian English writer well known for children fiction and children fantasy. *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) are his famous writings. Elizabeth Gaskell is an English novelist, biographer and short story writer who is influenced by the writings of Jane Austen. She is popular ghost stories and interested to social historians and fiction lovers. *North and South* (1854), *Wives and Daughters* (1865) are her notable works. Robert Browning is an English poet and play writer, and as well as one of the leading poets of Victorian period for his dramatic monologue, social analysis, irony. He is mostly known for his short and epic poems. One of his well known epic poems is "The Ring and the Book" (1869) and his other popular poems are "My Last Duchess" (1842), "Home Thoughts from Abroad" (1845), "Fra Lippo Lippi" (1855), etc. His wife Elizabeth Barrette Browning is another renowned poet whose poems have helped in dissolution of child labor, slavery. Her notable poems are "The Cry of the Children" (1843), "How Do I Love Thee" (1845), etc. Wilkie Collins is another Victorian English novelist, play writer and short story writer who is famous for his sensation and modern detective fictions. Besides, he also has written on plight of women of his time and their social and domestic conditions. *The Woman in White* (1860), *Armadale* (1866), *The Law and the Lady* (1875) are some of his significant works. Mary Anne Evan whose pen name is George Eliot is an English novelist, journalist, poet of Victorian period. She chooses a male pen name because she wants to express herself and her thoughts and has wanted to present her works and claims strongly in front of male dominated society. *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Middlemarch* (1872), *Daniel Deronda* (1876) are her notable works. William Makepeace Thackeray is a British writer, novelist and as well as a successful satirist on society and parodist.

*Vanity Fair* (1848), *The Newcomes* (1855), *The Adventures of Phillip* (1862) are his noteworthy novels. Christina Rossetti is an English poet who is popular for her romantic, devotional and children's poetry. "Good Friday", "A Birthday", "Remember", "Twice" are her remarkable poetries. The Bronte sisters (Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte and Anne Bronte) were very popular in Victorian Period but they died in a very young age. Charlotte died at the age of 38, Emily at 30 and Anne at 29. Though they die in a very young age but they left their contributions in Victorian literature. They are remembered for their novels, poetries like Emily's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Anne's *Agnes Grey* (1846) and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848).

Most of the Victorian novels have been developed with the theme of industrialization, condition of England, gender, race, class discrimination and most significant is novels on 'fallen woman' and 'new woman'. Both the term are popularly appeared in this period. The term 'Fallen woman' is used for those women who lost their innocence, virginity, chastity. This term is known from long ago but mostly accessible from this period. Writers depict this term in their novels differently through female characters. Most of the writers exhibit the harsh, miserable conditions of women by depicting this term 'fallen woman'. There are some notable works produced in this period on 'fallen woman' are *Mary Barton* (1848) by Elizabeth Gaskell, *Armadale* (1866) by Wilkie Collins, *Adam Bede* (1859) by George Elliot, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) by Thomas Hardy, *Oliver Twist* (1839) and *David Copperfield* (1849) by Charles Dickens. In these mentioned novels some female characters are depicted as 'fallen woman'. There is Darwin theory which is appropriate and has traditional views with Victorian morality stating that men are born 'animals' and women are born 'angels'. Victorian society considers women as 'angels' which is widely displayed in Coventry Patmore's "The Angel in the

house” who are expected to stay in the house for pleasing their husbands, raising children and taking care of household chores.

In the last few years of this period the term ‘new woman’ is advent for feminist, educated, independent career oriented women. When the movement against women oppression begins, the term ‘new woman’ is coined by Sarah Grand in her article “The New Respect of Woman Question” in 1894. In Victorian times the representation of women was as imminent, passive, sensual, passionately. It is the time when it is first revealed that what women could do by Mary Wollstonecraft. Feminist scholars who fight for women’s social, political and economic rights have observed the earlier representations and concluded that the Victorian condition of women is mainly due to the dominant rules of patriarchal society. “The new woman, in the sense of the best woman, the flower of all the womanhood of past ages, has come to stay — if civilization is to endure. The sufferings of the past have but strengthened her, maternity has deepened her, education is broadening her — and she now knows that she must perfect herself if she would perfect the race, and leave her imprint upon immortality, through her offspring or her works.” (Cooley, 31)<sup>2</sup>. This explains that in the last few years of Victorian period women movement finds new directions for protesting against their oppression and they start to keep themselves away from male dominated society. Some of the notable novels on ‘New woman’ which are *Aurora Leigh* (1856) by Elizabeth Barrette, *Hedda Gabler* (1890) by Henrik Ibsen, *The case of Rebellious Susan* (1894) by Henry Arthur Jones, *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Bronte, *The Awakening* (1899) by Kate Chopin, etc.

---

<sup>2</sup> Cooley, Winnifred H. “The New Womanhood”, *Broadway Publishing Company*, 1904. Pdf. Pg: 31

In the light of these vast ranges of changes, the journey from 'fallen woman' to 'new woman' plays a significant role in the evolution of women both in society and in the literary world. Literary theories of Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf have been played an important role in the lives of 'fallen women' and 'new women'. Their ideologies are remarkable for the women of all period but it has been reflected mostly in the Victorian period.

Mary Wollstonecraft is an English writer and promoter of women's right who have written *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). In this book she displays the reasons behind falling woman, women's miserable condition and their inferior position in society. According to her, patriarchal society is responsible for women's sufferings as all the rights of women are restricted by it. They were not allowed to take education, to think of their career independently and even they didn't have any right to vote. Women were kept out of society and considered as inferior creature at that time. Wollstonecraft claims that education can give brightness in women's existence and can make her confident in every aspect of life. Men could easily use women like the way they want on Victorian period for which women are termed as 'Fallen woman'. That's why Wollstonecraft says it is necessary for women to take power over themselves as only it can bring freedom to them.

Virginia Woolf is an English writer and considered as one of the foremost modernists. *A Room of One's Own* (1929) is her extended essay where she shows how women's creativity can be widen up and for that what they have to do. Literally, in this essay Woolf suggests how 'new woman' should think of themselves. She stated that a 'New woman' must have financially established for fulfilling their dreams and a space of her own for revealing their creativity.

Hence, the aim of this thesis is to explore the two popularly developed terms of the Victorian period, 'Fallen woman' and 'New Woman' through some selected Victorian novels which are *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte and *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin. This thesis will also analyze the female characters from the selected novels in light of the theories of Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf and will show the progression from 'fallen woman' to 'new woman'.

## Chapter 2

### Depiction of 'fallen woman' in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Thomas Hardy's *Tess in the D'Urbervilles*

'Fallen woman', a literary term developed during the Victorian period, refers to a woman who loses her purity and innocence before marriage. During this era, privileges and rights of Victorian women were totally restricted by patriarchal society. They were considered as objects by the male-dominated society and their sexual experiences were only confined to marriage. A woman was labeled as a 'Fallen woman' following different situations. Some of them may be raped; some of them may have been forced to choose prostitution as their profession due to abject poverty, some may have had sex for one or more time outside their marriage. In fact, fallen women were different from one another as per their class, surroundings and socio economic conditions. Women from upper class or middle class may deliberately or mistakenly have had sex before marriage or had an affair behind their husbands' backs. On the other hand, Tate, McMillan and Woodworth (1997)<sup>3</sup> state in their journal that lower class women were as mostly forced into prostitution due to their poor economic condition or either victimized to rape or betrayal.

Influential Victorian novelists commented on various features of the Victorian society through their depiction of the 'fallen woman'. *Oliver Twist* (1838) and *David Copperfield* (1850) by Charles Dickens, *Mary Barton* (1848) by Elizabeth Gaskell, *Adam Bede* (1850) by George Eliot, *Alton Locke* (1850) by Charles Kingsley, *Lost and Saved* (1863) by Caroline Norton, *Rhoda Fleming* (1865) by George Meredith, *A Terrible Temptation* (1871) by Charles Reade, *The Fallen Leaves* (1879) by Wilkie Collins, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1890) by Thomas Hardy,

---

<sup>3</sup> Tate, McMillan, Woodworth. "CLASS TALK", *Journal of Basic Writing*, 16.1 (1997): 13–26. JSTOR, Web. 8 September 2017.



and *The Women Who Did* (1895) by Grant Allan are some well known Victorian novels on what the society deemed as the ‘fallen women’. However, although these novels depict ‘fallen woman’, the term was never directly mentioned in the fictions. Hence, they got popularity because their female characters bore the characteristics of ‘fallen woman’. Many researchers have showed these features in their research works. For example:

“The ‘fallen woman’ may make one mistake, be betrayed by trust or forced by violence, but her path may then lead to prostitution whether that of the street walker or the courtesan who sells herself to the highest bidder.” (Reynolds, 9)<sup>4</sup>.

Reynolds thus, asserts the features of ‘fallen woman’ and if we observe some of the female characters of the mentioned fictions then these features can be found within them. For instance, Tess in *Tess in the D’Urbervilles* and Nancy in *Oliver Twist* both were victims of patriarchal society. One was raped and another one was forced to choose prostitution and then they are labeled as ‘fallen woman’. This chapter will discuss two such labeled characters of two different novels – *Oliver Twist* and *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*.

## **2.1 Charles Dickens and ‘fallen woman’ in his *Oliver Twist* (1839)**

Charles Dickens is a renowned English Victorian writer, novelist and producer of world famous fictional characters. He was born on 7th February, 1812 and died on 9th June, 1870 at the age of 58. He started to write at the age of 20 and his first novel published in 1837 was *The Pickwick Papers*. After that no one could stop him, one after another remarkable works were produced by him and gradually he became famous. His remarkable works are *Great*

---

<sup>4</sup> Reynolds, Margaret. “Fallen Women And The Great Social Evil In Victorian Literature And Culture”,

*Department For Culture, Media and Sport*, 2016. Print. Pg: 9

*Expectations, Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, Hard Times, A Christmas Carol, A Tale of Two Cities, Dombey and Sons, Bleak House, Little Dorrit and Nicholas Nickleby.*

Dickens is not only a great novelist but also the creator of some renowned and unique characters. They are still remembered and are famous among his readers. John Forster (1847)<sup>5</sup> states in his book *The Life of Charles Dickens* that Dickens produces his fictional characters in such a way that they can explain themselves very well and that nobody is needed to narrate on behalf of them. Some of the well known characters from Dickens' works are Oliver Twist, Nancy, Artful Dodger from *Oliver Twist*; Uriah Heep, David Copperfield, Wilkins Micawber from *David Copperfield*, Scroogy, Tiny Tim from *Christmas Carol*, Esther Summerson, Richard Carstone from *Bleak House*, Pip, Miss Havisham, Estella from *Great Expectations*, Mr. Gradgrind, Sissy Jupe, Tom from *Hard Times* and many others. Dickens is a multitalented novelist and has contributed greatly to Victorian Literature. Dickens touches every form of Victorian novels from Industrial-novel *Hard Times* to the Newgate-novel *Oliver Twist* and Bildungsroman *David Copperfield*. Dickens, a social commenter and critic, uses several themes on his works. He mainly focuses on social changes, stratification, class discrimination, effects of Industrial Revolution and displays industrial society of Victorian period through an uncanny narrative device. After the advent of Industrial Revolution there is a great change takes place in society and Dickens depicts these changes with its disadvantages. Problems which arise for Industrial Revolution are child labor increases, creation of suppressive school, class discrimination, powerful role of money, etc.

The theme of industrialism plays a significant role in Dickens' productions but some other themes also lead his creations. "The great working town of Birmingham was the first

---

<sup>5</sup> Forster, John. "The Life of Charles Dickens", *Chapman and Hall*, 2: (1870). pdf.

representation of industrialism in Dickens' fiction but I am not at all suggesting that he formed a relatively cheerful view of industrialism, generalized in Birmingham" (Collins,655)<sup>6</sup>

Poverty, criminality, social and class discrimination, identity crisis and prostitution are seen in his *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and *Bleak House*. Other themes like love, family, dominant role of money, ethics and morality, modernity are observed in *Great Expectations*, *Dombey and Son* and *A Tale of two Cities*. Besides, philosophical viewpoints like rationality, utilitarianism, imagination, creativity come up in his works in *Hard Times*, *A Christmas Carol*. Dickens works on several themes but mainly he criticizes Victorian society in his creations.

Dickens portrayed women in a very different way in his fictions. In Victorian society most of the women bore same characteristics but in his fictions they are shown oppositely. "To Dickens the female mind is incapable of logic, incapable of a plain sequence of thought, incapable of common sense. The 'heroines' are not women at all, but abstractions, idealizations of what women were wanted to be." (Manheim, 182)<sup>7</sup>

The mentioned quotation states that women have failed to use their intelligence, rather they act foolishly in society. In Dickens' *Great Expectations* he portrays females destructively. Victorian women are considered as the protector of males, they are expected to please their husbands but Joe, Miss Havisham, Estella are shown as the cause of male demolition. Besides, he also shows Victorian women as domestic worker, sexually pure and capable of sacrificing their wishes. Due to poverty, poor Victorian women become victims of men and society and were forced to choose prostitution as their profession for earning their livelihood. They are termed as Victorian 'fallen woman' and shown in Dickens' novels like *Bleak House*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*. He

---

<sup>6</sup> Collins, Philip. "Dickens and Industrialism", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 20.4(1980): 651–673. JSTOR, Web. 15 September 2017. Pg:655

<sup>7</sup> Manheim, Leonard F. "Florans and Doras: The Women in Dickens' Novels." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 7.2 (1965): 181–200. JSTOR, Web. 12 September 2017.Pg:182

criticized the brutality of Victorian society towards ‘fallen woman’ and his novel *Oliver Twist* is the best example of it. *Oliver Twist* is Dickens’ second novel published in 1839 where criminality, poverty, society and class are leading themes. Agnes and Nancy are shown as ‘fallen woman’ in *Oliver Twist* but Nancy is considered as the main character here. Nancy is mistress, from lower working class level and poverty forced her to choose prostitution. Though Nancy is a prostitute but she is good at heart, saves Oliver and support him in his hard times. Woman like Nancy is not acceptable in society as she is ‘fallen woman’ of society and this ignorance leads her to death. Dickens compares Nancy with ‘brass’, who is more mature, energetic, eligible, progressive than other sexually pure woman termed as ‘gold’. “Society values the angel - in- the house, but a woman like Nancy is much stronger of character and provides more practical service” (Ayres, 120)<sup>8</sup>.

## **2.2 Thomas Hardy and his portrayal of ‘fallen woman’ in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891)**

Thomas Hardy is an English poet, novelist and Victorian realist whose most of the novels and poetry were motivated by Romanticism. Hardy was born in 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1840 and died in 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1928 at the age of 87. From the first part of his career he has been written poetry and novels and till his death he wrote poetry. “The Darkling Thrush”, “Neutral Tones”, “The Ruined Maid”, “Wessex Heights” are some of his well known poems. Hardy’s first novel is *The Poor Man and The Lady* (1867) which remained unpublished as his publisher friend suggested him not to publish it. The novel contained issues which were politically debatable and could destroy his capability in future publication. Though he wrote poetry throughout his life, he produced of some great novels also.

---

<sup>8</sup> Ayres, Brenda. *Dissenting Women in Dickens’ Novels - The Subversion of Domestic Ideology, London: Greenwood press, 1998. Print. Pg:120*

Hardy brings varieties in characterization, settings, structures and writing style in his novels. His readers get an impression of variation after reading his fictions. His tone in poetry is a bit unromantic but he shows his creativity in expressing interesting feelings. Rural life, love for nature, global discrimination, abstract philosophy, earthy realism are the leading the leading themes in his poetry contains ethical viewpoints.

“By common consent the five greatest novels are *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Woodlanders*, and *Far from the Madding Crowd*, are yet very close to these in the matter of charm, beauty of description, character drawing, and fine artistry.” (Willcox, 428)<sup>9</sup>

Love, fate and chances are the dominant theme in Hardy's novel. In the matter of love in his novel he always leaves that issue in the hand of fate.

“His [Hardy's] fiction might be defined as an exploration of the varieties of mediated love. The third person standing between most inflames love and most successfully prevents the lover from reaching his goal.” (Herjog, 418)<sup>10</sup>

His three great novels *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Return of the Native* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* contain the theme of fate and chances. Meeting of Durbeyfield with Parson in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, marriage of Clym and Eustacia in *The Return of the Native* and Lucetta's love towards Hencard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* lead to the theme of fate and chances in his works. Other themes like love, free will, marriage, religion, dissatisfaction are seen in his other works like *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Woodlanders*, *Jude the Obscure* and many others.

---

<sup>9</sup> Willcox, Louise C. “Thomas Hardy”, *The North American Review*, 201.712 (1915): 423–429. Print. Pg:428

<sup>10</sup> Herjog, Tobey C. “THE GRAND DESIGN OF HARDY'S MAJOR NOVELS.” *Studies in the Novel*, 6.4 (1974): 418–438. JSTOR, Web. 25 September 2017. Pg:418

In Victorian society, women are always inferior to men as they live in male dominated society described by males. They are deprived from political, social and sexual rights. Having sex before marriage is a taboo for them and their sexuality is persevered only for their husband. Women are expected to be like a doll or showpiece of house who only increase the beauty and happiness of house as stated in Patmore's "The Angel in the House".

"With the advent of adulthood and a fully awakened sexual consciousness, every exploratory move towards self-discovery, self-realization and sexual understanding [by the female], meets with obstruction in a male-dominated world intent upon high ranking the docile woman over the daring, the meek over the assertive, the compliant over the self-determining, the submissive over the dynamic." (Patmore, 58)<sup>11</sup>

Hardy disagreed with this idea of Patmore and depicts both positions of women - inferior and superior in his novels. He completely opposes the idea of women's dependency on men in every aspect. He asserts equality between males and females. He denies the issue where Victorian women's sexuality is only preserved for their marriage and in the purpose of reproduction but not with interest.

Hardy presents females in his novels in a very different way but not with same characteristics. He differentiates among his female characters and makes them different from each other.

"Hardy redefines the role of women in his novels, focusing on sexuality. By emphasizing the physical aspect of femininity in his unorthodox representation of the sexual female, Hardy threatens the Victorian model of women." (Chattopadhyay, 25)<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Patmore, Coventry. "The Angel In the House" *Classic Poetry Series*, 2012. Print. Pg:58

<sup>12</sup> Chattopadhyay, Amrita. "Women in Victorian Society as Depicted in Thomas Hardy's Novels", *International Journal of Educational Planning & Administration*, 1.1 (2011): 23-28. Print. Pg: 25

For example, in his novel *The Return of the Native*, he shows women in both ways – inferior and superior. The main character Eustacia Vye is interested in excitement, adventures but the other women Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright are exactly foil to her. They are submissive and bear the ideal characteristics of Victorian women. In the beginning of *The Mayor of the Casterbridge*, Hardy displays the women as commodity for buying and selling. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, he portrays the heroine, Tess as ‘fallen woman’ who lost her chastity before marriage. After that she suffers a lot as society does not accept her but Hardy depicts her in such a way that at the end she fights with the society and learns to live her life. Hardy shows the anti feminist features and the conventions of Victorian women by portraying Tess. When Tess loses her innocence she is then immediately declared as ‘fallen woman’ by moral church but later she is observed as challenging the male dominated society and Victorian tradition for women.

### **2.3 Character Analysis: Nancy and Tess as ‘fallen women’**

Nancy is a fictional character of *Oliver Twist* created by Charles Dickens in 1839. She plays a leading role in *Oliver Twist*. She is Fagin’s mistress. Poverty and homelessness forced her to seek ways of surviving on her own and she turns to prostitute at the tender age of 16. At that time women had limited opportunity to take education and thus they were failed to build up their career. Women from lower class needed money for their survival but had no decent work to do and that’s why some of them embraced prostitution out of helplessness; Nancy is one of them. She is good at heart but society doesn’t accept her as she is considered to be a ‘fallen woman’ according to Victorian ideologies. She belongs to the lower class of society and that’s why she is forced to take up prostitution and even theft. She is the victim of patriarchal society and even of the environment she lives in. Though she is young at age but she has an old soul and is much mature compared to her age. She becomes a substitute mother for Oliver at a very young age and

sacrificed herself for saving him from Fagin's gang. She also protests for him and dares to shout at Fagin for the first time:

"I thieved for you when I was a child not half as old as [Oliver]. I have been in the same trade, and in the same service, for twelve years since; don't you know it? Speak out! don't you know it?" (Dickens, 182)<sup>13</sup>

Nancy belongs to Sikes who only uses her badly. Though she is aware that Sikes is an evil person but she is helpless as she has nowhere to go or live. He taunts her all the time by saying 'who' or 'what' she is, which indicates her as position as a prostitute. While saving Oliver from Fagin she has to give her life in Sikes' hand. After her death she doesn't get any recognition or attention for saving Oliver.

Kitton (1899)<sup>14</sup> claims Dickens' portrayal of Nancy is ugly and dismissive. It is partially correct as Dickens shows Nancy as a thief and prostitute who drinks heavily.

"The girl's life had been squandered in the streets, and the most noisome of the stews and dens of London....." (Dickens, 157)<sup>15</sup>

Dickens awfully depicts Nancy in front of his readers is seen in this quote. Here, by addressing Nancy he said that girls' lives are wastages of streets and they have no morality in them. Nancy may be portrayed by Dickens badly but she is exceptional to the readers.

Nancy is a goodhearted person and her humanity replaces her 'evil deeds'. As she involves herself in prostitution, society doesn't value her humanity, rather they rebuke her. Victorian patriarchal society termed women like Nancy as 'fallen woman' as they lose their innocence. Though Nancy does not willingly lose her innocence, society taunts and hates her constantly after doing good deeds also.

---

<sup>13</sup> Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2014. Print. Pg:182

<sup>14</sup> Kitton, Frederick G. "Dickens and His Illustrators (2nd ed)", *London: George Redway*, 1899. Print.

<sup>15</sup> Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2014. Print. Pg:157



Tess Durbeyfield is another fictional character of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* created by Thomas Hardy in 1891. She is the protagonist of the novel. Tess is a young girl of 16 from a very poor family. When her family has discovered that they are from decent of D'Urbervilles family, they send Tess in search of work there out of greed. There she met Alec D'Urbervilles who is from higher class of the society. He was always looking for a chance to get intimate with Tess and praised her for grabbing her attention.

"Well, my big Beauty, what can I do for you?" said he, coming forward." (Hardy, 99)<sup>16</sup>

At last when he got that chance he seduced and raped Tess. Tess was completely unaware of this matter and gave birth to a male child but the child died in infancy. After that she had to leave home in search of work. There she met Angel with whom she falls in love and they got married. Angel was unaware of Tess' past but when he came to know that he did not able to accept Tess and they split up. Here, it is observed that as Tess lost her innocence when she is raped by Alec. Though she didn't know anything on rape but she is marked as 'fallen woman' by the society. We get proof of this when Tess is forced to leave her home, after she gives birth to a son, in fear of her society people and after her marriage with Angel when he couldn't accept her knowing her past. Tess is termed as 'fallen woman' in the society but it is her family's mistake, especially her mother is partially responsible for this. Her duty to make her daughter aware of these adultery issues and she could have alerted about her how she should protect herself. That's why Tess blamed her mother for her rape and said – "Why didn't you tell me there was danger? Why didn't you warn me? Ladies know what to guard against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance of discovering in that way; and you did not help me!" (Hardy, 147)<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Hardy, Thomas. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2014. Print. Pg:99

<sup>17</sup> Hardy, Thomas. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2014. Print. Pg:147

Hardy declared Tess as 'pure' but he is failed to explain it in his novel for which she is marked as 'fallen woman' by some analyzers in their researches.

".....a conflict exists between Hardy's claims as narrator, and the power of his natural imagery. Hardy's overt narrative impulse to declare Tess' innocence is immediately undercut by his narrative descriptions which mark her as 'fallen'." (Parker, 277)<sup>18</sup>

In this chapter, it is seen that two characters from two different novels are termed as 'fallen woman' and they are Nancy from *Oliver Twist* and Tess Durbeyfield from *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. They both are of same age i.e. 16 years old and from lower class of society. They are very kind hearted and struggles throughout their life for earning their livelihood. Both of them are termed as 'fallen woman' from different perspectives and backgrounds. Nancy is a prostitute and she is forced to choose this path as she is an orphan and nobody is there to support her. Therefore, prostitution makes her 'fallen'. On the other hand, though Tess has a family to support but she is also termed as 'fallen woman' here. It is because rape makes her 'fallen' of which she is completely unaware and her family is partially responsible for this as they don't alert her to protect her innocence.

Nancy and Tess both are labeled as 'fallen woman' out of their helplessness and for lack of power. Mary Wollstonecraft, an English writer and philosopher has been suggested these helpless and powerless women to keep power over themselves in her book *A Vindication of Rights of Women*.

"This is the very point I aim at. I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves." (Wollstonecraft, Ch:4)<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Parker, Lynn. "PURE WOMAN AND TRAGIC HEROINE? CONFLICTING MYTHS IN HARDY'S 'TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES'", *Studies in the Novel*, 24.3 (1992): 273–281. JSTOR, Web. 10 October 2017. Pg:277

<sup>19</sup> Wollstonecraft, Mary. "*A Vindication of Rights of Women*", Ed. Deidre Sauna Lynch, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009. Print.

Here, she claims that it is good for women to dress nicely but it cannot bring them any power or rights. It is not her intention to put women over men but she wants women to be independent for developing their minds and logical knowledge. Besides, she also wants woman to be strong enough for protecting their own respect and chastity.

*A Vindication of Rights of Woman* is a book by Mary Wollstonecraft published in 1792 which is a response to those social, educational and political theorists who believe that women should not have education.

“The passion from which Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of Rights of Woman* was founded on her experiences of inequality as a young woman in a patriarchal society.” (Rothschild, 71)<sup>20</sup>

Through in this essay she tries to control the ways by which women’s capability is rejected. She repeatedly says and suggests her female readers to take education which can be the only path of their independence and they can acquire power over themselves.

Wollstonecraft’s theory is significant for the ‘fallen woman’ of Victorian period. The discussed characters Nancy and Tess are the victims of Victorian patriarchal society. In relation to this theory they are considered as products for pleasure only and that’s why Wollstonecraft suggests them to keep control over themselves so that male dominated society cannot abuse them.

---

<sup>20</sup> Rothschild, Ann S. “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: A reflection of the tension between conformity and rebellion in the life and times of Mary Wollstonecraft”, *University of South Florida*, 2009. Print. Pg:71

### Chapter 3

#### Depiction of 'new woman' in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*

During the last years of Victorian period it was observed that a great change was occurring in women's sexuality and in their rights in the Victorian society. This led to the emergence of 'new woman'. At the beginning of Victorian era women's rights were restricted by male dominated society. They had no rights to take education, no right to vote, couldn't think of their career and had to dependent on males only. They were expected to stay at home and took care of household chores but in the last few years of Victorian period, women became conscious about their rights and position. They began to rebel against the oppressions of patriarchal society and movement for suffrage got a new path then. ".....one can say that the roots of New Woman can be found in the organized movement of feminists of 19<sup>th</sup> century who raised the woman's issues in public debates, in print media and during election rallies." (Mahajan and Randhawa, 2)<sup>21</sup>

This signifies that the 'new woman' originated after the beginning of the movements against patriarchal society.

'New woman' drives away the restricted rules of male dominated society. Improvements took place in women's education, career, sexuality and social assumptions after the advent of 'new woman'. They started to take education, build their career and participate in social and cultural activities. Some researchers claim that educated women not only develop their career but also they can contribute greatly to their family and can upgrade the life of their husbands and

---

<sup>21</sup> Mahajan, Randhawa. "Emergence of 'New Woman': A Study of Origin of the Phrase in the West from Historical Perspective", IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science, 21.3 (2016): 1-4. Pg: 2

children. “.....and the sacred duties of wife and mother will be all the more honorably performed, as sons’ husbands’ characters improve.” (Grand, 274)<sup>22</sup>

Thus, Grand claims that ‘new woman’ would not ignore their duties as wife or mother rather an educated woman can be a good mother or wife and can run her family wisely. Educated ‘new woman’ held a precious and valuable position in the society. Therefore, education played significant role in their life which brings them to opportunities.

Simultaneously to the social changes, ‘new woman’ occupied a powerful position in Victorian literature as well. After the advent of this term, new woman became the main character of several Victorian fictions. They were depicted as modern women and were mostly created by female novelists. The novelists showed ‘new woman’ through the heroines of the novel who usually rebels against Victorian traditional rules of patriarchal society and confronted the unconventional constitution for women stated in Patmore’s “The Angel in the House”.

“The New Woman novels [...] were much more directly linked to contemporary controversies surrounding the Woman Question, and to the various discourses within which they were produced and mediated. Many of the New Woman novelists were also prominent contributors to the debates on ‘woman’ in the newspaper and periodical press, and the New Woman fiction was sometimes reviewed alongside sociological and other polemical works, as if it were part of a seamless discourse on the Woman Question.” (Pykett, 7)<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Grand, Sarah. “The New Aspect of the Woman Question”, *The North American Review*, 158.448 (1894): 270–276. JSTOR, Web. 4 October 2017. Pg:274

<sup>23</sup> Pykett, Lyn. “The “Improper” Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing”, *London: Routledge*, 1992. Print. Pg:7

Here, Pykett asserts that the problems and challenges which were faced by new women were exactly displayed in ‘new woman’ novels but these works were sometimes considered as critics and controversial.

Women writers depict ‘new woman’ in their fictions more than male writers. *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Bronte, *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) by Mary Elizabeth, *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) by Sarah Grand, *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) by Mona Caird, *Paula* (1896) by Annie Sophie Cory, *The Awakening* (1899) by Kate Chopin are some notable Victorian novels on ‘new woman’. However, this chapter will discuss two ‘new women’ of two different novels – Jane of *Jane Eyre* and Edna of *The Awakening*.

### **3.1 Charlotte Bronte and ‘new woman’ in her *Jane Eyre* (1847)**

Charlotte Bronte is a well known English novelist, poet and the eldest of the Bronte sisters. She was born on 21 April, 1816 and died on 31 March, 1855. She is well known for her novels and her earlier writings were published under the pen name Currer Bell. She died at the age of 38 but within this short time she had produced some remarkable works which are considered masterpieces even in today’s world. Her first work was published in 1846 and was a joint collection of poems by her and her other sisters, and was named “Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell”. Ellis Bell and Acton Bell are the pen names of her other two sisters. Some of her noteworthy novels are *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Shirley* (1849), *Villette* (1853), *The Professor* (1857), it was published after her death. Besides, she also wrote some beautiful poems like “Evening Solace”, “Life”, “Passion”, “Regret”, “The Letter”, “The Wife’s Will”, etc. However, throughout her working life, she has been faced conflicts in between her domestic duties and career as it is claimed in a biographical work, addressing her and all women –

“A woman's principal work in life is hardly left to her own choice, nor can she drop the domestic charges devolving on her as an individual for the exercise of the most splendid talents that were ever bestowed. And yet she must not shrink from the extra responsibility implied by the very fact of her possessing such talents.” (Gaskell, 238)<sup>24</sup>

Bronte has worked on with several themes which included isolation, nature, time and space, human life, morality in her poems. She is however well known for her novels where she used some unique themes like social position, search for family, gender inequality are the major themes of *Jane Eyre* and philosophical aspects, gender roles, suppressions, the major themes for *Villette*. On the other hand, in *The Professor*, extreme patriotism and religious aspects are shown as its main themes. As Dutta(2003) states – “Independence is a keynote in her thinking about her own life and the life of all unmarried women; it is also a central theme in all her novels” (2312)<sup>25</sup>

Women are the main concern in Bronte’s novels. She has displayed her heroines as extraordinary human beings who are submissive, pretty and homely yet intelligent and rebellious against oppression when needed. The heroines in *Shirley* and *Villette* are independent, confident young women and they are very much aware of their rights. At the beginning of *Shirley*, Caroline was suffered from identity crisis but after struggling a lot she realized her identity. On the other hand, Lucy in *Villette* directly proclaimed her independence and shared her experiences of independence. “When I looked, my inner self moved; my spirit shook it’s always fettered wings half lose; I had a sudden feeling as if I.....,were at last about to taste life; in that morning my soul grew as fast as Jonah’s gourd. (Bronte, 230)<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Gaskell, Elizabeth C. “The Life of Charlotte Bronte”, 2: (1857). pdf. Pg:238

<sup>25</sup> Dutta, Sangeeta. “Charlotte Bronte and the Woman Question”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26.40 (1991): 2311–2316. JSTOR, Web. 5 October 2017. Pg:2312

<sup>26</sup> Bronte, Charlotte. *Villette*, Delphine Lettau, Charles Franks and Distributed Proofreaders, 2013. pdf. Pg:230

Bronte presented women uniquely and in a new form in her novels. Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is considered as notable one where the heroine, Jane is considered as 'new woman' by many researchers. It is because the characteristics of 'new woman' matched with her. Jane is an educated, self dependent and confident woman. She is humble, submissive but rebelled where oppression took place. During conversation with her friend Helen, Jane states that - "If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people.....would never feel afraid and so they would never alter, but would grow worse and worse." (Bronte, 76)<sup>27</sup> She said this when Helen informed her about Christian ideologies that one should be affectionate both with his or her friend and enemy. Jane opposed Helen's ideology and suggested through the mentioned verse. Whenever Jane felt suppressed or being abused she immediately fights against it. It is seen many times in the novel. Her protests against domination make her unique and different from other woman. Firstly, when she is tortured by her aunt Mrs. Reed and her family, she protested and mentioned to her aunt - "I am not your dear; I cannot lie down: send me to school soon, Mrs. Reed, for I hate to live here." (Bronte, 47)<sup>28</sup> Again, at the time of her marriage with Mr. Rochester when she came to know that he is a married man then Mr. Rochester offered her for being his mistress. Jane feels insulted and mentioned to Mr. Rochester that - "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! - I have as much soul as you, - and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you." (Bronte,336)<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2013. Print pg:76

<sup>28</sup> Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2013. Print pg:47

<sup>29</sup> Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2013. Print pg:336



Lastly, when St. John Rivers proposed her for marriage and assert him at missionary. She feels abused and thought that John only wants her as companion but not as wife. Realizing this she immediately left him and Thornfield, her working place.

All these prove that Jane is a defendant woman who is much aware about her rights and fought against the conventional thoughts of male dominated society. Jane may be an ordinary and simple girl but she has self respect and wants to establish her own identity. This is the feature of 'new woman' depicted by Bronte through her heroine Jane.

“Charlotte Bronte gives us a devastating picture of the ordinary, unmarried, un- moneyed woman in her novels and the confusions and ambivalences confronted in the search for identity.....through *Jane Eyre*” (Dutta, 2311)<sup>30</sup>

### **3.2 Kate Chopin and 'new woman' in her *The Awakening* (1899)**

Kate Chopin is an American short story writer and novelist considered as pioneer and feminist writer by some scholars. She was born on 8 February, 1850 and died on 22 August, 1904. From 1890 she began her writing career through articles, short stories and also by translating works of other authors. She is mainly renowned for her short stories but she also wrote two novels which are famous among her readers. “At the Cadian Ball”, “The Story of an Hour”, “The Storm”, “A Respectable Woman”, “The Kiss”, “The Unexpected” are some of her notable short stories. She has written only two novels which are *At Fault* (1890) and *The Awakening* (1899).

Kate was very casual and confident enough to talk about the sensitive issues like women's independence, their thoughts on their career and their sexual desires. She was one of the powerful writers of her time and her writings were unconventional. She bravely went against the

---

<sup>30</sup> Dutta, Sangeeta. “Charlotte Bronte and the Woman Question”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26.40 (1991): 2311–2316. JSTOR, Web. 5 October 2017. Pg:2311

conventions of patriarchal society which were forcefully imposed on women and proposed for women's social, economic and political equality through her fictions. Chopin's themes in her short stories are women centered; her fictions are on their independence, identity, love, sexual desires, perspectives of society and their contributions. She adopted all her ideas and thoughts in her remarkable novel *The Awakening* where she displayed the mentioned sensitive issues through her heroine. *The Awakening* is Chopin's famous novel considered as feminist literature, published in 1899.

Edna Pontellier is the protagonist and the heroine of *The Awakening*. Chopin presented her in a very informal way whose attitude is completely different from other married women and mothers. ".....its author's unconventional treatment of her heroine. Having created a female character who casts of her obligations to husband and children, commit adultery with one man and plans to do so with another, Chopin refused to deplore this violation of social taboos....." (Tompkins, 22)<sup>31</sup>

From this only quotation readers can easily get a complete picture of Edna. At that time this unusual behavior of Edna made Chopin's novel a debatable one. She wanted to depict 'new woman' through Edna by opposing social norms and Later on Chopin's heroine Edna was established as 'new woman'. In the novel Edna's transformation as a 'new woman' and her 'awakening' takes place in three significant events. Firstly, her baptismal swim in the ocean helped her to realize her existence and position in the society. "A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body

---

<sup>31</sup> Tompkins, Jane P. "'The Awakening': An Evaluation." *Feminist Studies*, 3.3/4 (1976): 22–29. JSTOR, Web. 10 October 2017. Pg:22

and her soul. She grew daring reckless, overestimating her strength. She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before.” (Chopin,36)<sup>32</sup>

Edna gets energy from swimming in the ocean. For the first time she discovers herself in a new way and realizes that she has to go far away from here where no woman had gone till today. Here, her awakening takes place through her voice of joy. Mainly, ocean and swimming play a significant role in Edna’s awakening; many researchers have claimed this in their researches. “Edna’s success in swimming as evidence of ‘real changes in her behavior and understanding. Her shout fuses body and consciousness.’ The characterization of the sea through repeated images of physical sensuality defines Edna’s awakening.” (Williams, 60)<sup>33</sup>

Edna’s second awakening takes place when she realizes that she becomes a puppet to her husband. She has to abide by all his orders and has no freedom to express her wishes. So, she decides to protest against it and that begins when she refuses him to go inside the house. When her husband Leonce ordered her to come inside the house then in reply she protested and said - “Leonce, go to bed,” she said. “I mean to stay out of here. I don't wish to go in, and I don't intend to. Don't speak to me like that again; I shall not answer you.” (Chopin, 48)<sup>34</sup>

At the end, Edna realized that it is her children who take possession over her and decided to leave home. Victorian women are expected to take care of household chores and looking after their children only. Chopin wants women to come out from this idea which she shows through

---

<sup>32</sup> Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*, Bonson Books. 2010. Print. Pg:36

<sup>33</sup> Williams. Chriatina. R. “Reading Beyond Modern Feminism: Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*.” *The Ostwald Review: An International Journal of Undergraduate Research and Criticism in the Discipline of English*. 10.1(2008):53 – 65. n.d. Web. 18 October 2017. Pg:60

<sup>34</sup> Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*, Bonson Books. 2010. Print. Pg:48

Edna. Edna thinks that it is nature that gives all responsibilities of children to mothers but not fathers. If men can build up their career and become successful in life then why cannot women? She also has the right to think of herself and her career. Why will children be the obstacles in her path?

“... she realized at that the day would come when he, too, and the thought of him would melt out of her existence, leaving her alone. The children appeared before her like antagonist who had overcome her; who had overpower and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days.” (Chopin, 115)<sup>35</sup>

Finally, Edna realized that husband and children cannot be her support for the whole life, she has to do something and must be concentrated on her career so that she could support herself. Edna's awakening took place by these three important events which changed her life and makes her aware of her career. So, after her rebirth as a new woman she left her home and started to live alone in a rented house by earning through painting. Edna's awakening developed her artistic mind and helped her to free from confined life.

### **3.3 Character Analysis: Jane Eyre and Edna Pontellier as 'new women'**

Jane Eyre is a fictional character by Charlotte Bronte in 1847. She was an orphan and rebellious from her childhood. She was reared up by her aunt but her family hated Jane and treated her badly. She was a naïve child but her cousin's torture forced her to be rebellious. When she opposed against her cousin then her tortured her brutally and after that she requested

---

<sup>35</sup> Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*, Bonson Books. 2010. Print. Pg:115

to her aunt to send her in orphanage school. Before going to school, Jane vented all her anger to her aunt and said –

“I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to see you when I am grown up; and if anyone asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty.”  
(Bronte, 58)<sup>36</sup>

From the beginning part of the novel we came to know that Jane was a rebellious child in her childhood. After that, she has been struggled all her life for establishing her own identity. She completed her studies and joined as teacher in a school. From there she has been got another job as a tutor of Mr. Rochester’s daughter and there she fall in love with him. She decided to marry Mr. Rochester but on the wedding day she came to know that he is a married man. Mr. Rochester requested her to stay with him as mistress but she did not agree and left him. Again, she got another job at St. John River’s house who was her cousin. Mr. River proposed Jane for marrying him as he needed a helper who could assist him in India, his working place. This proposal was also denied by Jane as she knew that Mr. River only wants to use him as mistress rather than wife. “.....the plot starts from a situation of suffering, proceeds with the heroine falling in love, a false love led by passions, and concludes with the failure of these relations based on senses and a new relation issued on new grounds, where the woman has a new place and a new voice.” (Celebe, 256)<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2013. Print. Pg: 58

<sup>37</sup> Celebe, Barbara D. “The struggle for woman’s place and voice in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and George Sand’s *Indiana*”, *International Journal of Literature and Arts*, 2.6 (2014): 252–257. Print. Pg:256

Jane had to go through with many difficulties and struggles in her life but at the end she has been succeeded by maintaining her self esteem. In the concluded part of the novel it is seen that Jane got married with Mr. Rochester when she has been realized that he is her true love. She married him when she has been understood that Mr. Rochester needed her badly; she allowed him to depend on her but she did not dependent on him ever.

“Although she chooses to devote herself to Rochester, she is not dependent on him and her choice is free. Not only is she free, but in her own eyes she is eventually his equal; ‘equal- as we are!’ she cries (Jane Eyre, p. 34), when they finally come together.” (Al Haj, 99)<sup>38</sup>

Bronte wants women to show their talents and allowed them to spread in the society. Through Jane, Bronte wants to encourage women to build up their own career and create a stable identity for her.

Edna Pontellier is a fictional character by Kate Chopin in *The Awakening*. Edna is discussed here as an imaginary ‘new woman’. Edna Pontellier was a married woman, wife of Leonce Pontellier and mother of two children. Like Jane, Edna also wanted to create her own identity and not interested depending on her family. She was always confused with her identity; sometimes was known for her husband or sometimes for her children. She was only recognized as wife and mother but not something else like an artist or a singer. “Edna is fighting against the societal and natural structures of motherhood that force her to be defined by her title as wife of Leonce

---

<sup>38</sup> Al-Haj, Ali. “The Depiction of True and Pure Love in Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre”, *English Language and Literature Studies*, 5.1 (2015): 97–101. Print. Pg:99

Pontellier and mother of Raoul and Etienne Pontellier, instead of being her own, self-defined individual.” (Kaplun, 1)<sup>39</sup>

At the beginning of the novel, Chopin has been displayed Edna as an ideal housewife but gradually Chopin elevated awakening within Edna. She got inspiration from Mademoiselle Reisz, a piano player and untraditional woman encouraged her to show off her talents to the world. After that, while swimming she has been got a spiritual energy and began to discover a completely transformed personality within her. Gradually, she got the courage to protest against the dominance of her husband over her and also started to ignore her children, considering them as obstacles in her path of career. “.....the idea that her thoughts up until this moment of music have all been leading to the realization of her own freedom and where her happiness lies. This musical experience encourages her to finally swim for the first time which leads to her powerful first awakening.” (Montashery, 148)<sup>40</sup>

Thus, it can be concluded that Jane and Edna are epitome of ‘new woman’ as they display desires to create their own identity and dislike depending on others. For this they had to go through many hurdles and had to fight with social norms. Both of them were very much interested to lead an independent life which was impossible without money. As a result, they have been built up their own career. Hence, they reflect the ideology of Virginia Woolf. “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.” (Woolf, 4)<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Kaplun, Megan P. "Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*: Struggle Against Society and Nature", *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse* 4.7 (2012): 1–2. Print. Pg:1

<sup>40</sup> Montashery, Iraj. “Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*’ and the Exploration of Feminie desire and Expressions”, *Journal of Comparative Literature and Culture (JCLC)*, 2.3 (2013): 147–149. Print. Pg:148

<sup>41</sup> Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One’s Own*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. 2015. Print. Pg:4

Woolf was an English writer and modernist asserted in her book *A Room of One's Own* that a woman has to construct her career for earning money with which they can lead an independent life. She has been given more importance to it rather than women's right to vote. Her theory suggests women should not be dependent on their husbands or family and for that they have to earn money. Besides she also suggested them for having a space or a room of her own so that their artistic mind can be developed spontaneously. Her concept of women's own money and room are interconnected to each another. She said that a woman must have her own room or space as according to her it is related to women's economic independence. If a woman can earn well then she can easily create a space for her without other's help. Here, 'money' signifies women's freedom or independence and 'room' signifies a space for women where she can think about herself and can give some thoughts on her wishes. For example, we see that Jane in *Jane Eyre* did not have to depend on others for her livelihood as she earned for her own and money has been created a space for her which assisted to take her own decision. On the other hand, Edna in *The Awakening* also made her own money as an artist and with that earning she was succeeded to take a room rent where she build up her career through painting and got chance to shape her dreams.

This chapter shows the two different writers' depiction of 'new woman' through the heroines in their novels. The rights for Victorian women were very limited and the writers just wanted to come out of the confined norms of society. That is why they depicted their heroines as 'new woman' who are out of all conventional rules of society. Bronte and Chopin demonstrated it to all women that they do not need to be enclosed within a four walled house and waste their life by doing only domestic works only through their fictions. They have given women hope to aspire more and be creators of more than just a family life.



## Chapter4

### Conclusion

Early Victorian women were completely under the control of a patriarchal society and were not generally allowed to enjoy the same rights and privileges accorded to men. During the latter half of the era, their lives started to change gradually. This later period saw a significant change taking place in Victorian society. Women were now more aware of their subject positions and became vocal against their suppression. The condition of women as portrayed in literature of the Victorian period is explored in this thesis through the analysis of four novels. The study observed the emergence of two kinds of women in Victorian novels - 'fallen women' and 'new women'.

The selected novels of the thesis show that women had very limited rights and had to depend on men for every aspect of their lives in the Victorian period. Men imposed their authoritative regulations on them and thus women became the victims to the male dominated society. Some of them were raped, deceived, sold and forced to choose prostitution. All of these victimized women lost their innocence and were known as 'fallen woman'. Eventually, gradual changes started to take place in the Victorian society after the emergence of feminist theories of Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf and some others, who suggested that females take control of their lives, earn their own living and create a space of their own where nobody could enter or destroy her dreams. This alternate version of Victorian women marked the 'new woman'. Hence, women have been depicted both as subordinates and as superior to men in Victorian literature.

The early Victorian literature has depicted the 'fallen woman' as invariably helpless creatures. Whenever they lost their innocence, they were completely rejected by society and as a result they had to embrace death. Nancy from *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens is the best

example of this. She had to die at the end of the novel out of helplessness. Moreover, Dickens portrayed Nancy as a minor character in 1837 and even as character she received a very little respect. However, Tess in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was presented as heroine by Hardy in 1891. The gap of years between these two creations made one great change in portrayal of 'fallen woman' that made Tess as a more important character than Nancy in the novel. Nancy and Tess both lost their innocence at an early age while Nancy had to die because she had no other way to live and Tess survived long enough to punish her rapist, Alec. Thus, it is observed that the shortcomings in women which helped to create 'fallen woman' were beginning to shift to eventually become the strengths for 'new woman'. Hence, this started the turn of event that began the 'new woman'.

Jane of *Jane Eyre* and Edna of *The Awakening* are important examples of 'new woman'. They pitched up from where Tess left off, demonstrating strengths to make a living for them to continue to survive. Charlotte Bronte presented Jane as an economically independent woman who would never be dependent on others for her living though she is homely. She wanted to get married to the one who would be equal to her and would not become an obstacle in her path of independence. Similarly, Kate Chopin showed Edna as a unique heroine, who was economically independent, has created a space for the development of her career, and had come out of the boundaries of conventional married life to established relations with other men. This depicts the journey made by women within the Victorian period from being dependent on men to becoming completely independent. Thus, they have created a life for themselves protesting against male patriarchy and giving importance to their rights and dreams.

To conclude, Victorian literature has shown both forms of women as Victorian period gave birth to them. In that light, the aim of this thesis has been to show the portrayal of these

forms, 'fallen woman' and 'new woman', to highlight how women's miserable condition have turned into their strengths leading them to the path of a better life. This revolution still plays an important role in the lives of women all over the world giving them strength to be the 'new woman' and not be labeled with the curse of 'fallen woman' again.

## Works Cited

- Al-Haj, Ali. "The Depiction of True and Pure Love in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*", *English Language and Literature Studies*, 5.1 (2015): 97–101. Print.
- Ayres, Brenda. *Dissenting Women in Dickens' Novels - The Subversion of Domestic Ideology*, London: Greenwood press, 1998. Print.
- Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2013. Print.
- Bronte, Charlotte. *Villette*, Delphine Lettau, Charles Franks and Distributed Proofreaders, 2013. pdf.
- Celebe, Barbara D. "The struggle for woman's place and voice in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and George Sand's *Indiana*", *International Journal of Literature and Arts*, 2.6 (2014): 252–257. Print.
- "CHARLES DICKENS". *The Journal of Education*, 75.2 (1912): 39–47. JSTORE, Web. 12 September 2017.  
 <<[www.jstor.org/stable/42819392](http://www.jstor.org/stable/42819392).>>
- Chattopadhyay, Amrita. "Women in Victorian Society as Depicted in Thomas Hardy's Novels", *International Journal of Educational Planning & Administration*, 1.1 (2011): 23–28. Print.
- Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*, Bonson Books. 2010. Print.
- Collins, Philip. "Dickens and Industrialism", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 20.4(1980): 651–673. JSTOR, Web. 15 September 2017.  
 <<[www.jstor.org/stable/450376](http://www.jstor.org/stable/450376).>>
- Cooley, Winnifred H. "The New Womanhood", *Broadway Publishing Company*, 1904. pdf.
- Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2014. Print.

Dutta, Sangeeta. "Charlotte Bronte and the Woman Question", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26.40 (1991): 2311–2316. JSTOR, Web. 5 October 2017.

<<[www.jstor.org/stable/41625509](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41625509).>>

Forster, John. "The Life of Charles Dickens", *Chapman and Hall*, 2: (1870). pdf.

Gaskell, Elizabeth C. "The Life of Charlotte Bronte", 2: (1857). pdf.

Gorham, Deborah. "The Victorian girl and the feminine ideal". *Bloomington: Indiana UP*. 1982. Print.

Grand, Sarah. "The New Aspect of the Woman Question", *The North American Review*, 158.448 (1894): 270–276. JSTOR, Web. 4 October 2017.

<< [www.jstor.org/stable/25103291](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25103291).>>

Hardy, Thomas. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2014. Print.

Herjog, Tobey C. "THE GRAND DESIGN OF HARDY'S MAJOR NOVELS." *Studies in the Novel*, 6.4 (1974): 418–438. JSTOR, Web. 25 September 2017.

<<[www.jstor.org/stable/29531686](http://www.jstor.org/stable/29531686).>>

Kaplon, Megan P. "Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*: Struggle Against Society and Nature", *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse* 4.7 (2012): 1–2. Print.

Kitton, Frederick G. "Dickens and His Illustrators (2nd ed)", *London: George Redway*, 1899. Print.

Kubeisa, Jane M. "The Victorians and Their Fallen Women: Representation of Female Transgression in Nineteenth Century Genre Literature", *University of Worcester*, 2.2 (2014): 1–12. Print.

Mahajan, Randhawa. "Emergence of 'New Woman': A Study of Origin of the Phrase in the West from Historical Perspective", *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science*, 21.3 (2016): 1–4.

<<<http://www.iosrjournals.org>>>

Manheim, Leonard F. "Floras and Doras: The Women in Dickens' Novels." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 7.2 (1965): 181–200. JSTOR, Web. 12 September 2017.

<<[www.jstor.org/stable/40753857](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40753857).>>

Montashery, Iraj. "Kate Chopin's 'The Awakening' and the Exploration of Feminine desire and Expressions", *Journal of Comparative Literature and Culture (JCLC)*, 2.3 (2013): 147–149. Print.

Parker, Lynn. "PURE WOMAN AND TRAGIC HEROINE? CONFLICTING MYTHS IN HARDY'S 'TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES'", *Studies in the Novel*, 24.3 (1992): 273–281. JSTOR, Web. 10 October 2017.

<<[www.jstor.org/stable/29532872](http://www.jstor.org/stable/29532872).>>

Patmore, Coventry. "The Angel In the House" *Classic Poetry Series*, 2012. Print.

Pykett, Lyn. "The "Improper" Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing", *London: Routledge*, 1992. Print.

Reynolds, Margaret. "Fallen Women And The Great Social Evil In Victorian Literature And Culture", *Department For Culture, Media and Sport*, 2016. Print.

Rothschild, Ann S. "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: A reflection of the tension between conformity and rebellion in the life and times of Mary Wollstonecraft", *University of South Florida*, 2009. Print.

Tate, McMillan, Woodworth. "CLASS TALK", *Journal of Basic Writing*, 16.1 (1997): 13–26.

JSTOR, Web. 8 September 2017.

<< [www.jstor.org/stable/43444022](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43444022) >>

Tompkins, Jane P. "The Awakening": An Evaluation." *Feminist Studies*, 3.3/4 (1976): 22–29.

JSTOR, Web. 10 October 2017.

<<[www.jstor.org/stable/3177721](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3177721).>>

Toth, Emily. "The Independent Woman and 'Free' Love", *The Massachusetts Review*, 16.4

(1975): 647–664. JSTOR, Web. 10 October 2017.

<<[www.jstor.org/stable/25088592](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088592).>>

Willcox, Louise C. "Thomas Hardy", *The North American Review*, 201.712 (1915): 423–429.

Print.

Williams. Chriatina. R. "Reading Beyond Modern Feminism: Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*."

*The Ostwald Review: An International Journal of Undergraduate Research and*

*Criticism in the Discipline of English*. 10.1(2008):53 – 65. n.d. Web. 18 October 2017.

<<<http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1092&context=tor>>>

Wollstonecraft, Mary. "*A Vindication of Rights of Women*", Ed. Deidre Sauna Lynch, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. 2015. Print.