

**‘Women’ and ‘Sexuality’ in the 18th and 19th century English novels: A  
Reading of Eliza Haywood and Thomas Hardy.**

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April 2018



Inspiring Excellence

BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Reading of Eliza Haywood and Thomas Hardy.**

A Thesis

By

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Submitted to

The Department of English and Humanities

Of BRAC University

In Partial Fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts in English

April 2018

## **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 and my siblings. They are my strength and I know they are always there for me in any situation. I am really thankful to my supervisor Nawshaba Ahmed who has given her valuable suggestions and feedbacks. Her constant feedbacks encouraged me to think critically further it helped me to organize my thesis properly.

Finally, I am grateful to Professor Firdous Azim, Chairperson of the department all my faculties of the Brac University ENH dept. Last but not the least I am delighted to acknowledge my friends who have always encouraged me immensely.

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## Abstract

The Dissertation seeks to explore and comprehend the 18th century and Victorian perception towards female sexuality, desire and sexual crime by reading the works of Eliza Haywood, and Thomas Hardy. In doing so, this thesis seeks to incorporate the social environment of interpretation. It explores and links societal factors with literary productions. It looks at the aforementioned issues in these novels as a way to understand the society's notions and judgments concerning these. Victim's treatment, discernment of the society and her subsequent abandonment, women's desire and sexual freedom are studied critically. In Eliza Haywood's novella *Fantomina* the protagonist is a young woman who yearns for freedom and breaks the sexual codes of the time. Through the use of disguise and masquerade the protagonist *Fantomina* explores her sexuality which was a sin in the eye of the conservative society of Haywood. On the other hand, Thomas Hardy's Protagonist Tess from the novel *Tess of d'Urbervilles* is persecuted throughout her life and is killed by the male chauvinistic Victorian society. Thus, both Haywood and Hardy have shown the sexual double standards of the English society through their works. They have also shown the manifold restrictions and repressions imposed on women and how these hypocrisies result on women's sufferings and withdrawals.

## Chapter One: Introduction

This paper examines the attitude of early 18th and 19th century England toward the women who failed to play the traditional roles and was unable to meet the expectations of the conventional society. In the early 18th and 19th century women were seen as a sexual object but at the same time they were not considered as sexual being, in consequences women had no choice than keeping their sexual urges under wraps and had to play a role of the ideal daughter, mother, sister, and wife. As a woman, I constantly felt there were many restrictions inflicted on me from my early childhood. As a modern woman, I am familiar with the contemporary western society so, my interest was to explore the early periods of the western society. As a teenager, I had a perception that western women had freedom from the earliest time, which later on changed after gathering insight about the women in early 18th and 19th century in England. I had interest into gaining knowledge about position of women in early 18th and 19th century England. The reason was to explore the position of women in early 18th and 19th century society before the feminist movement. Smiley (qtd.in Goodyer) stated that “A novel proposes that the world has a certain mode of existing. It doesn’t propose this by asserting it explicitly, but by depicting it implicitly (44)<sup>1</sup>.” Literature is compared as the mirror of the society. In literature novels are one of the literary works that gives a scope to the reader to connect with the characters. However, in literature depiction of a story or a character is mostly done in a manner in which readers have to infer the inner meaning. Through reading novels one can gain insight about the condition of a society of a certain time period. As the novelist often reflects the true picture of a society through his writings.

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<sup>1</sup>Goodyer, Meigan Gates. “Literary Theory, The Novel and Science Media”.MA Thesis. Montana State University, 2008.Print.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century “the rise of novels” brought about progressiveness in literature and novelist like Defoe emerged. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century there were very few women writers so when I came across Haywood I was fascinated by her bold nature and way of expressing her views. Her amatory fictions were evident of her earnestness regarding women’s freedom and independence. The most prominent amatory fiction writers were Eliza Haywood who wrote *Love in Excess* or *Fatal Enquiry*, *Fantomina* or *Love in a Maze*, Aphra Behn who wrote *The History of the Nun*. These are the works which are written regarding the female point of view as a result these were not included in the “rise of the novels”. Though amatory fiction was originally excluded from "rise of the novel" narratives, traditionally written by men but the contemporary Scholars have claimed that these works are not merely precursors to the novel rather those works are novels in their own right. As the amatory works were some of the only places where women could share their opinions and express their feelings of oppression, and their experiences. Again early 19<sup>th</sup> century was not much different for women as though the social structure of England was rapidly changing and the position of women in Victorian society was same as the Augustan. I was intrigued by Hardy’s work *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*. It’s depiction of a girl who became a ‘fallen woman’ from a ‘pure woman’ highlights the hypocrisy of the Victorian society. In early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century England women who could not meet the expectations of the society was ostracized by their society.

To gain more knowledge about the position of women in early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century it was essential to dig into the history and the social context that time. Literature is considered the mirror of the society so to get a crystal clear idea about certain periods along with history it is important to analyze the literature that as well. Augustan Age (1700-1745) can be considered as one of the most illustrious periods in the history of English Literature. The first half of the 18<sup>th</sup>

century is known as the Augustan age in England. The Augustan age is throughout Europe was characterized by the spirit of the Enlightenment. Classical models Virgil, Horace and Ovid who were the classic Roman poets were imitated and followed. Johnson stated in his article that, The Augustan period started under the Roman emperor Augustus (27 B.C.-A.D. 14) which was the brilliant literary period of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid (Johnson, 508)<sup>2</sup>. Writers like Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope were prominent in England during the Augustan era and they were heavily influenced by the Romans .in they adopted literary forms and subjects from the Romans. The literature of that era undoubtedly was dominated by the rise of novels. Daniel Defoe who is revered as a classic writer is a prestigious novelist from that era. In England Augustan period is known as a time when females used to live in a conservative environment as a result, there was not much scope for female writers and the atmosphere was also not much favorable. Female writers like Lady Mary Wortley is one of the female writers of that time period. As stated in Encyclopedia Britannica “Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was a brilliant letter writer in a great era of letter-writing; she also wrote poems of wit and candor that violated the conventional moral and intellectual roles assigned to women in the Augustan era” (Gaur). She additionally mentions that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu<sup>3</sup> can be taken an example of a female writer who had broken the convention as Montagu’s Turkish letters is considered as an inspiration to later generations of European women travelers and writers. In particular, Montagu dedicated herself to encourage women to write.

In the 18th century freedom in the lives of women was quite unthinkable. Most women did not receive education. Consequently, the literary domain was under the rule of male

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<sup>2</sup>Johnson, James William. "The Meaning of "Augustan", *University of Pennsylvania Press*, 1958.print.pg.508

<sup>3</sup>*The Turkish Embassy Letters* were written by Montagu when she traveled with her husband, Edward WortleyMontagu, who worked as an Ambassador Extraordinary to the Court of Turkey.



authors. Goller's statement sheds light on this as he says, "The idea that a farmer's wife or scullery maid might need emancipation was simply unthinkable at the time" (78)<sup>4</sup>. As the feminist movement had yet to occur women had the least right. Additionally, the workingwomen had to suffer adversity in the workplace or even domestic violence and sexual violence. Women were treated as mere objects, something from which men could pleasure themselves. Women did not have the right express their opinion, their viewpoint was not taken into account. The reason of such tragic condition of women of that era is well explained by Mary Wollstone Craft, great proto-feminist female writer Mary Wollstone Craft<sup>5</sup> in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: Introduction* argued that men and women are equally intelligent and they both have the ability to think logically, as humanity's magnificent gift is its power to think rationally, men and women are born with the equal potential to reason, women should be as privileged as men and get educated just like men. Then they will have the same power and influence in the society and would be taken as seriously as men. The only reason behind women are not as smart and able as men, she says, is because they aren't given the same education. The only one thing she is willing to admit is that men are physically strong.

In the history of Britain, another period which is considered as remarkable and noteworthy is the Victorian era (1837-1901). The country as a whole moved more forward into the country we know today because of this lustrous phase came into the history of Great Britain. The Victoria era begins with the crowning of Queen Victoria in the early 19th century. The Victorian era can be divided into three parts; the early Victorian period, the middle and the late Victorian period. In the Victorian era science and technology was developing rapidly. Besides

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<sup>4</sup>Goller, Karl Heinz. "The Emancipation of Women in Eighteenth-Century English Literature" *Anglia - Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie*, 2009. print. pg. 78

<sup>5</sup>Wollstonecraft, Mary. "Introduction." *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. New York: *Hackett Publishing*, 2013. print

that this era also fueled the social, political and economic development in England. Many talented novelists, writers, and poets has contribution in making Victorian literature substantial. Charles Dickens (1812–1870) was one of the most influential authors. He wrote novels like *Great Expectations*, *Hard times* on the subject matter of class struggle and poor working condition and poverty. In Victorian literature is largely characterized by the class struggle of working class people and triumph of right over wrong. Victorian writers often chose subject matters related to poverty, industrialization, women question, science, religion and social restrains. Thomas Hardy is also considered as one of the efficacious Victorian writers. In his novelshe wrote about social injustice and his work also highlighted class consciousness in the Victorian England.

In the Victorian era the right and privileges of women were limited. During that period women were not allowed to vote, sue, or own property. At that time when a Victorian man and woman got married under the law they became same entity. Hence all the property goes under the control of the husband. Not only they lost money and material goods to their husbands but the Victorian wives became property to their husbands and they had to give those rights to what their bodies produced for example children, sex and domestic labor. Marriage overruled a woman's right to consent to sexual intercourse with her husband and gave him the 'ownership' over her body. "Women were forced, for a variety of reasons, to be dependent upon their husbands for financial support"(Cruea,187). As a result their mutual matrimonial consent became a contract to give herself to her husband as he pleased. In early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century the role of women was quite similar. In both Augustan and Victorian society women were seen as domestic being and objectified. Both the married and single women in early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century had disadvantages.

They had to endure sexual, verbal, domestic violence and in particular married women were subjected to infidelity by their husbands they had no option to appeal for a divorce.

At the same time, women were engaged in the paid workforce in increasing numbers following the Industrial Revolution. At that time feminist ideas were spreading amongst the educated middle classes. The women's suffrage movement achieved momentum in the last years of the Victorian era. Despite the suffrage movement a lot of people still thought women as domestic beings and thought that women's place were in their houses. As a result it was compulsory for them to serve their families with clean houses and ready meals. "At this time, women were the continual victims of social and economic discrimination. Upper- and middle-class women's choices were limited to marriage and motherhood, or spinsterhood. Both choices resulted in domestic dependency. While they could find jobs as shop girls or factory workers, women were discouraged from being wage earners by the belief that women who earned wages were "unnatural."(Cruea, 187). Working for money was considered as unnecessary for women and also working women used to receive much less wages than the male workers. In the book, *Beginning Theory* it says, "... in nineteenth century fiction very few women worked for a living, unless they are driven to it by dire necessity. Instead the focus of the interest is on the heroine's choice of marriage partner, which will decide her ultimate social position and exclusively determine her happiness and fulfillment in life or her lack of these"( Barry, 123)<sup>6</sup>. In the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Tess belongs to the Victorian era because of her poverty she had no choice than working to fulfill her needs. One of the reason of her becoming a rape victim is her working outside home. In the novel she blames herself for going that place where she was assaulted. This sheds light on the works environment for women during the Victorian era. Tess

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<sup>6</sup>Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. UK: Manchester University Press, 2002. Print.

might have saved herself from the assault if she was compelled to go outside of her house because of her needs. As she was out alone without any male to protect her she became the victim of the rape. This again reinforces patriarchal notion Victorian society which perceives women as domestic being.

### **Meet the Authors**

#### **Eliza Haywood**

Eliza Haywood, (1693-1756) prolific English female writer who wrote sensational romantic novels that mirrored contemporary 18th-century scandals. In her novels, erotic elements were found abundantly. As a result, she was not liked by Augustan audiences. She left her husband who was a clergyman. She was a performer and did stage performances additionally to support herself she wrote and work the theatre. She then became extremely passionate for novels which had scandalous elements in it, which also involved leaders of the society and she denoted them by their initials. *Memoirs of a Certain Island Adjacent to the Kingdom of Utopia* (1725) and *The Secret History of the Present Intrigues of the Court of Caramania* (1727) these are some the works among them.(Sampolo). Eliza Haywood was quite ahead of her time and she never shied away to express her opinion even when she was condemned by many of her contemporary male writers including Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift. “Alexander Pope attacked her with coarse brutality in his satirical poem *The Dunciad*, and Jonathan Swift called her a “stupid, infamous woman.” Pope’s attack, which she attempted to counter with *The Female Dunciad* (1729), caused her to cease writing for almost 16 years” (Sampolo). He also emphasize on the fact that women were mocked and ridiculed by the men because men never accepted a woman who was walking on the path of her passion, this shows the position of women writers in the 18th century. They were judged by the society for every action they made. In addition to that, there was no

option to make career choices for women that is why women with ambitions were not taken in make good manner. Besides Haywood was undoubtedly extremely bold for that period of time. As a female writer, she gained recognition in the many years after she has started her career. It is stated in the Encyclopedia Britannica, “Later, she achieved some success with *The Female Spectator* (1744–46), the first periodical to be written by a woman, and with her realistic novel *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1753)”(Sampolo). The novella *Fantomina*, in fact, was subjected to many tumultuous situations regarding its publication. “Haywood acknowledges that her subject matter is of particular urgency for women's edification against harmful indulgences of the passions.”(Lubey313). As a female writer, Haywood can be seen as very progressive and her subject matters were issues of conflict at that time.

### **Thomas Hardy**

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was a Victorian novelist and poet, he was a Victorian realist in tradition to Eliot. As he was a Victorian realist, Hardy examines the social constraints and boundaries on the lives of those living in Victorian England. Additionally, he criticized those perception thoughts and beliefs, especially those relating to marriage, education, and religion that limited people's lives and cause unhappiness. He was the eldest of the four children and he was an avid reader and admired literature immensely along with that he had a habit of studying in private which resulted in the attraction towards poetry which also helped in the systematic development of his own poetic expertise and ability. In 1867-8 he wrote the class-conscious novel *The Poor Man and the Lady*, which was never published. Dolin says; “George Meredith, as a publisher’s reader, advised Hardy to write a more shapely and less opinionated novel”(Dolin,699). This also clears a point that Victorians were not much open to opinionated writings. Hardy took the suggestion and later on wrote a novel which was much light-hearted and

humorous which was called *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872). Hardy is known as a writer who was very much affected with social restraints and he was very sympathetic towards those who were sufferer because of social injustice, “Hardy is sympathetic and responsive to the lives and life-stories of others, and under no illusions about his own power of self-determination”(Dolin,703). He says that Hardy as a writer took interest in the life stories of others and his motivation and decision making abilities came from his self-determination. Hardy had a great amount of moral sympathy towards England’s lower class.

In the later part of his career he wrote, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) which are generally considered his finest works. Hardy was one of the most impactful personalities of the Victorian-era after Dickens, which is undoubtedly true. His diversity and creativeness can be seen as the cause of his immense success. An interesting fact about Hardy, late in his life he was directed towards novel just because of the crisis of money. Hardy can be seen as a straightforward person as he liked to express his opinions through his writings, but throughout his life, this was a major issue. Publishers often rejected his novels because they thought the subject matter was too harsh or inappropriate. In fact, with *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, it was no different. Initially, it was not even being published as the conservative Victorian society did not readily accept a female character in such manner. Hardy was quite disheartened as his fourth novel *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, was rejected by two editors before being accepted by the third publication. The publication of this novel brought aggressive reaction which later on increased by the publication of his great work *Jude the Obscure* As the reaction was quite a negative. Hardy was pessimistic and cynical at the same time. He was confused what to expect from the readers, as he was financially secured at that he moved his concentration towards poetry from novels.

Though the Haywood and Hardy belong from different era their subject matter of writing is the thread that connects them as both of them are writing against the injustice and oppression on women of their time. Haywood is considered as a proto feminist because of her amatory fictions and writing from female point of view. Hardy was criticized for highlighting the plight of a female protagonist in the Novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The reason was presenting an aristocratic male figure a negative character. At that time the novel received huge amount of negative criticism. As the conservative Victorian readers conceived the novel was explicit in sexual content and pornographic elements. Hardy was also quite ahead of his time like Haywood. Consequently, they were not received for their bold and opinionated writings.

## **Chapter Two: Sexuality and Feminine desire in the 18th century English society through the eye of Eliza Haywood**

In the early 18th century society woman who was open about sexuality is considered as frivolous though women are thought to be responsible for male sexuality, women were not allowed to have sexual desires. The word 'sexuality' itself is a dodgy word if related to female sexuality it becomes more problematic. For example, a girl was marked as aristocrat by the manner of her dressing.

Haywood, in the novella, has created a character who is very unlike than conventional 18th-century lady. Protagonist belongs from upper class as the novella in the opening says that "A young Lady of distinguished Birth, Beauty, Wit, and Spirit, happened to be in a Box one Night at the Playhouse."(Haywood,1) . In the previous chapter of this paper, it is shown that only the upper class and the aristocrats were able to sit in the 'Boxes'. The beginning of the novella reveals that protagonist belongs from the upper class. Immediately after that the novella reveals that the unnamed female protagonist was actually very observant as she notices that " where, though there were a great Number of celebrated Toasts, she perceived several Gentlemen extremely pleased themselves with entertaining a Woman who sat in a Corner of the Pit, and, by her Air and Manner of receiving them, might easily be known to be one of those who come there for no other Purpose, than to create Acquaintance with as many as seem desirous of it".(Haywood,1). The unnamed protagonist sitting the Box notices that under the Box there is a woman is sitting in a 'pit' is receiving much attention from the male crowd. The woman does not come from a noble or affluent family it is evident by her sitting position. Additionally, Haywood mentions about her 'Air and Manner' which also indicates that she could be a prostitute as the behavior and activities of a person is often determined by their social class, for example, the



etiquette and manner of a lady and a prostitute are not the same. Especially at that that a lady had to be full manner and etiquette. So a woman with coquettish behavior was unacceptable for a lady.

Augustan Age the impression of pure elegance and refinement, decorous social behavior and certain rigidity in the arts and literature characterized by Neoclassicism. Throughout the 1700s, British culture was quickly evolving. Wealth was shifting to the rich people whereas the poor were living a miserable life. This shift was quite visible in the Augustan societal values and standards. "In the Augustan era, there was a big contrast between the higher and lower classes; while the rich enjoyed parties and dinners, the poor wondered what they would eat the next day..."(Sampolo). He further implies that the upper-class and lower class had significantly distinguished living standards, as a result, the way in which the conducted was also different, to be more precise they behaved according to their class. The upper-class women had certain decorum, women, for example, was not allowed to wear a dress which is revealing because if they did so they may have a resemblance of a prostitute. Moreover, there a certain propriety for women for both classes. The upper class had to be modest in the way they dress and behave. In the article "The Emancipation of Women", Goller claims that "If women are still designated as "the weaker sex" it is only because men have inconsiderately, and even brutally, kept them from doing anything to develop their minds. Rather, men have practically forced them to preoccupy themselves with trivia, such as fashionable clothing and trinkets"(Goller,81)<sup>7</sup>. In the 18th-century upper-class women were very much conscious about their appearance. They were trained to please men. They were constantly concerned about they look, as the society judged them by their appearance. As the perception of the society was women were not capable of anything

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<sup>7</sup>Goller, Karl Heinz. "The Emancipation of Women in Eighteenth-Century English Literature" *Anglia - Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie*, 2009. Print.pg.81

rather than looking pretty and presentable looking all the time. Women were not considered as intellectual being. So their role was very limited. As a result, they were perceived to be lower than men in every sphere of life. Whereas lower class women used to work as housekeepers and maids. For example, Pope who was an Augustan writer wrote a mock heroic poem named *The Rape of the Lock*, where he mocks a girl named Bellinda who is well bred woman. He tries to show that she is brainless beauty who is only busy with her looks. In the poem Bellinda loses two locks of hair as man named Baron manages to cut her hair. Cutting of the lock actually symbolizes her loss of virginity.” In the title of the poem, therefore, 'the Lock' is a symbol of virginity and the title, in straight forward words may be put as 'the loss of virginity’”(Singh,174)<sup>8</sup>. The loss of virginity is seen as a trivial issue by Pope. As he showcases cutting two locks of a girl’s hair as extremely negligible matter and her making fuss about it as her stupidity. Women, in general, had no scope to raise voices for themselves. For example, a woman has gone under any kind of harassment be it physical or mental they never spoke about it at that time. As they were advised to be more tolerant and patient any difficulties they faced in their life, moreover the fear of being stigmatized in the society was the reason. Which is even true in modern times as women are afraid of being disgraced publically and refrain from expressing their hardships rather they preferred to swallow the pain. Again the movement of women was even more monitored and restricted. Women who are flirtatious and playful in nature were not considered as ladylike. According to Oxford dictionary, the word ‘Ladylike’ defines as “polite and quite; typical of what is supposed to be socially acceptable for a woman” (861)<sup>9</sup>. That implies that a girl who showed interest in men was not considered as ‘Ladylike’. The

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<sup>8</sup>Singh, Satyendra Kumar. “Stylistic Features in *The Rape of The Lock* by Alexander Pope.” *Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies*, 2013. print. pg.174

<sup>9</sup>Oxford dictionary. 2003. Ed. print. 861

repressed sexual behavior was considered as modest. So women, of all classes were controlled by the rules of the patriarchal society.

In the early 18th century England, the British society was stratified with a little number of aristocracy and landed gentry at the top whereas a huge number of poor at the bottom. Society was quickly changing and the number of the middle class was gradually increasing. For the aristocracy, the 18th century was an extraordinary phase as they were able to gain immense wealth and agricultural production was boomerically increasing. The 18th-century society was becoming more fluid than in the previous because of the growth of the middle classes in towns and cities. Middle-class families earned their livelihood through professions, such as law and medicine additionally they valued literacy and education. The ideas that were spread by thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment were changing the views of the society. In the 18th century, the wealthy and rich used to patronize the theatres and playhouses. So, women frequently visited those places for entertainment. Theatres were the place where both upper and lower class women had access. In Norton Anthology, "Playhouses from the Gentleman's Magazine" it is stated that, "During much of the period, wealthier patrons sat in boxes on the stage and young bucks on benches in the pit, just below, while high above, in the upper gallery, "the gods" (one-shilling customers) often pelted the crowd and stage with orange peels"(Playhouse). The upper class was separated from the lower class as their sitting arrangements were different. This reflects the social hierarchy during the particular era. The place where every sort of people had access were the playhouses yet the upper and lower class maintained the social barrier.

There was an abundance of theatre in the 18th century London in addition to that the patrons of the theatre were keen to have entertained the visitors of the theatres and playhouses. To ensure the visitors can have a good time there were many performances , in Norton

Anthology, "Playhouses from the Gentleman's Magazine" it is stated that, "... typically they were entertained not only by a full-length play but by interludes of music and dance, as well as an "afterpiece" such as a farce or pantomime, a mythological tale enlivened by clowning, imaginative costumes, and tricks of scenery and staging London audiences were also famously, or infamously, involved in the action, ready to jeer the author or talk back to the actors" (Playhouse). The article shows that 18th century England was quite open to entertainment. Cross-dressing was also one of the famous ways which were adopted in the dramas and plays. Women were allowed to participate in those shows but those women were not considered as honorable and often fall under the categorization of "whore". The reason was quite obvious as the society was not progressive enough to permit women and also theatres and playhouses were the place where prostitutes were available and they visited those place so that they could get customers. Holland and Patterson sheds light by stating, "Theatre audiences in London were, in any case, growing throughout the century at an even faster rate than the population growth of the city. The changes in theatre architecture reflected this."(267). This reflects how popular theatre was becoming in the 18<sup>th</sup> century England. This could be also a reason of choosing *Fantoina's* setting in a playhouse. A playhouse or theatre is a place where besides entertaining people sexual interaction happened frequently as often prostitutes were available. The audience of the 18th century were very much involved in the theatres and playhouses but the upper class and lower class never mingled. It is important to talk about class consciousness and class distinction at this point to show that class distinction had an impact on the treatment of women, for example, women of upper class were much more live affluent life whereas lower class women lead a life of misery as a result mostly lower class women were dragged into prostitution. Prostitution was very much abhorred by the society yet the majority of the male

population visited prostitutes. Since the discussion is on prostitution, class consciousness there is a close connection to the theme of Haywood's novella *Fantomina*.

*Fantomina* is a novella which was considered exceedingly disputable because of its erotic elements. The society during the Augustan era was extremely orthodox about female sexuality, pre-marital sex. In the 18th century, it was unimaginable for an upper-class woman to have a sexual relationship before marriage. Society of that time was the traditionalist and they perceived women only as caregivers. The repressed sexuality of women is very much evident in the novella. Pre-marital sex is undoubtedly an extremely sensitive subject even in the contemporary times. Haywood being a female writer had the audacity to talk about such offensive issue, which also resulted in much uproar among the 18th-century audiences. The gender role was strictly decided by the society and people adhered to the conventional idea regarding women's position in the society. As a result, a novella like *Fantomina* was seen as a stigma and the writer was also criticized much. The predominant perception of society is men are the only sexual being and men are flirtatious naturally, as a result, a woman who is open about sexuality is considered as frivolous and promiscuous. In their article, Khanna and Price have highlighted that "Sexuality has often been regarded as a source of male power and female oppression. We have tried to show how views of sexuality are not fixed but constantly changing..."(34). They have talked about female sexuality and myth regarding it and they have also come to a conclusion that sexuality is not constant rather it varies from person to person and situation to situation. An extremely conventional perception of sexuality is women do not enjoy sex and it is an entirely male thing. Which also generate an idea that males have the right to dominate and it is the duty of the female to be submissive. Haywood challenged this idea and created a character like *Fantomina* who is bold and not afraid of sexuality. The reason behind such a controversial character may be she wanted

to have control over men rather than being controlled by the men. Through creating such a bold character, we can assume that she might want to show that women are powerful enough to dominate men again this could be also the reason behind the disguise of the protagonist. Haywood may be tried to show that a girl can have sexual desire and she is able to control a man. Along with that Haywood have presented Fantomina as a witty and intelligent girl, which again challenged the idea that women are less intelligent. Throughout the novella she is able to convince Beauplasir that she has four different identities, he never could figure it out. This is the evidence of the fact that Haywood wanted to establish a female protagonist who takes a man under her control. Beaumeister and Twenge sheds light on this as they said, “The suppression of female sexuality can be regarded as one of the most remarkable psychological interventions in Western Cultural history”(,166). The article is evidence that female sexuality is suppressed and as a result, it has a tremendous effect on females psychologically. Sexuality is something which is extremely natural but the society has made it exclusively a male-oriented thing. There is also a double standard regarding sexuality among the society, for example, an action which is very normal for a man but abnormal for a woman. Regarding the virginity of a man is never an issue whereas a woman or girl even if she loses her virginity by any mishap like rape is stigmatized. The society has made it compulsory for women to suppress their sexual urges or else they would be considered as impure and unholy. “The double standard of sexual morality has condemned certain sexual activities by women while permitting the identical actions for men” (Beaumeister and Twenge,166). This article reflects that society holds biasedness when it comes to the judgment of the same action done by both the genders, for example, an action which is justified for a man is not justified for a woman,if a woman smokes she is considered to be a brat, whereas a man can smoke, drink and never held accountable at all.

Haywood in the novella showcases that sexual violence is not a modern problem rather it can happen in conservative society. It happens when the society trains women to see their own selves as objects and consider attracting men more important above their own identity additionally when it is encouraged to devalue and sexualize women in society sexual violence becomes common. In the novella *Fantomina*, Haywood has established the fact danger of a society that encourages women to be sexually attractive, but also at the same time criticizes them for attracting sexual assault. The unnamed protagonist of Haywood in the novella, a young maiden who is unaware of the fact that flirting with a man will consequence in such a major dispute into her life. The protagonist is on the brink of adulthood and extremely excited to interact with opposite sex. As she was very curious about men and saw a prostitute getting much attention. *Fantomina* frequently visited the theatre and as she observes prostitutes interacting freely with gentlemen, she in her innocence tries to act like a prostitute and thus she encounters the male protagonist, Beauplasir. As she was dressed like a prostitute and also acting like a prostitute, he mistakenly thinks her prostitute but at the first meeting, she manages to avoid any sexual intimacy. As the unnamed female protagonist finds Beauplasir very attractive, which is quite usual for a young girl. Beauplasir instantly was attracted to her and unnamed protagonist also mentions to that she was a virgin, “Thus much, indeed, she told him, that she was a Virgin, and had assumed this Manner of Behavior only to engage him. But that he little regarded, or if he had, would have been far from obliging him to desist; – nay, in the present burning Eagerness of Desire...”(Haywood,2). Though she told Beauplasir that she was virgin and resisted him, he forcefully had established a sexual relationship with her. The fact that she was acting like a prostitute and this the reason of her getting raped is not justified because she tried to stop him but he could not resist having a virgin. Later on, she reveals her identity but not her name so that she

could keep away from the stigma of the society. “She, therefore, said she was the Daughter of a Country Gentleman, who has come to town to buy Cloaths, and that she was call'd Fantomina” (Haywood, 2). The protagonist of Fantomina is not different than any contemporary victims of rape; she is a young woman who finds herself in a situation where she is extremely perplexed. Fantomina is also immature and has less knowledge of the world and is naturally very curious. Fantomina was not able to understand the gravity of a young gentlewoman acting like a prostitute could be so risky, and the night ends with her being violated by a man named Beauplaisir. The scene is one of the most intriguing parts of the novella where it shows the juxtaposition between what Fantomina thinks she wants and what Beauplaisir takes from her, “She had now gone too far to retreat. He was bold; he was resolute; she, fearful, confused, altogether unprepared to resist in such encounters [because she is a virgin], and rendered more so by the extreme liking she had to him. Shocked, however, at the apprehension of really losing her honor which is her virginity, she struggled all she could.”(Haywood,2). The diction in the first sentence shows the connection between Beauplaisir’s forcefulness and Fantomina’s fear as she was neither comfortable nor she approved him to do his action rather she indeed had to bear the consequences for her sexual curiosity. She was extremely in dilemma and overwhelmed the situation. Even after knowing Fantomina’s is a well-bred, decorous virgin who failed to understand the implications of visiting the theatre dressed as a prostitute but he keeps on taking advantage of her and exploit her until sex with her becomes “tasteless” and “insipid” (Haywood,47). The reason behind her taking disguise to keep Beauplsir engaged into her, as he is a “womanizer” and was at all ready for any commitments, “Fantomina reinvents herself three more times in order to attract Beauplaisir, and he takes advantage of each “new” woman every time. Creating her own sexual agency[...], a sharp reminder from Haywood that female sexual



agency is short-lived in a world where women are punished for both desire and innocence” (Creel and Dowd-Arrow). Haywood’s heroine in “Fantomina” goes under tremendous transformations and left no stone unturned to lure and hold attention as well as the sexual interest of Beauplaisir and to ensure that she takes help of disguise by turning herself into multiple women. The theme of Disguise and Masquerade was fascinating and also the appeal of masquerade still present in the modern day society where role-playing is considered as a way to maintain excitement in relationships and sex life. The heroine takes disguise for four times at first she claims to be Fantomina, then she takes a role of a servant named Celia during Beauplaisir visited Bath, after that she pretends to be a widow and exposes herself as Mrs. Bloomer and lastly Incognita, the final disguise the protagonist Incognita showcases herself as a masked lady and her ambiguity is significant of her being a high-class woman, but by this time Beauplaisir<sup>10</sup> becomes aware of the fact that he is being misled. She self-transforms within societal ranks to explore this new found freedom. Starting with her masquerade as a prostitute she succeeds in successive transformations as Celia (a maid), Mrs. Bloomer (A merchant-class widow), and Incognita<sup>11</sup>(aristocrat). She defies the behavioral restrictions imposed on women of her rank, rather than submitting to her role in society. However, one must take into consideration the entirety of the situation. While Fantomina has been discussed as an early feminist text, it’s hard to discern whether or not it is. Through her relationship with Beauplaisir she explores her own desires and defies society. Her indulgence is something to consider as well. While she is much younger, and innocent compared to Beauplaisir, she does find her own pleasure in her

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<sup>10</sup>Beauplaisir is a French word which means “Fair pleasure”.

<sup>11</sup> Incognita is a Latin word which means ‘A woman whose identity is disguised or concealed’.

masquarades. Content with “putting on almost what Face she pleas’d” (57)<sup>12</sup>, she is gratified with her disguises and exults how she has outwitted Beauplaisir. Additionally, she has access to large amounts of money which allowed her this freedom to purchase disguises, bribe servants and travel to follow Beauplaisir. Haywood’s heroine takes different disguises so that she would be able to pursue her sexual desires and grab the attention of Beauplaisir while keeping her reputation undamaged in the society as in our society a woman who asserts her sexual desires is separated from a woman who is virtuous. The protagonist faces the similar problem as women in the contemporary world. Women who are free about their sexuality and engage in sexual activity are heavily stigmatized. Meanwhile, a woman who is virtuous relationship is often seen as less sexual by the male counterpart as a result they often feel the need to spice up her sex life and hold the attention of her partner. These two female identities are put at odds with each other, but just as Haywood’s heroine tried to stay the virtuous woman while performing as a role of seductress.

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<sup>12</sup>Haywood, Eliza. *Fantomina*, 2010.Print.

### **Chapter Three: Honour, Chastity and Sexual Crime in the Victorian England through the lens of Thomas Hardy**

Throughout, the nineteenth century, families were large and patriarchal. They encouraged hard work, respectability, social deference and religious conformity. The sexual morality of women was under scrutiny and sexuality for men and women was completely different. As women and men were treated differently in terms of sexuality, to earn the title of “a good woman of the period” repression of sexuality was imperative for women. *Fallen woman and femme-fatale* these are the terms used to tag a woman into the category of a whore. As Gonclaves said, “What happens to Tess throughout the novel will be addressed in the light of the concepts of Angel, Fallen woman and Femme-fatale”. These three ideas are quite important in order to understand the deep polarization of women in the nineteenth century, that is to say, how easily they could cease to be seen as a “good woman of the period” and fall into the “whore” categorization”(Gonclaves,2). She here tried to imply women were very easily stigmatized and held accountable for the actions which they do not have any control over. In another article Sheperdstated “Women were often portrayed as either Madonnas or whores, yet increasing educational and employment opportunities gave many a role outside the family” (Sheperd,1). Madonna-whore complex is a psychoanalytic approach to literature. The inability to maintain sexual arousal within a committed, loving relationship had been identified as Madonna-Whore complex by Freud. A man with Madonna-Whore complex considers women as debase prostitutes. In the article, "Female sexuality, regulation and resistance" has been stated that, "Women are viewed as inferior, but are held responsible for male sexuality, which is thought to be more aggressive and often uncontrollable" (Khanna and Price, 29).the article reflects that women are held responsible for male sexuality which is undoubtedly a fact. Universally women

are held responsible for male sexuality. In the novel Hardy showcase that Tess was being accused for the crime done by the person who seduced her or possibly raped her. Hardy introduces Tess as a pure woman who cares about her family and very responsible. Yet when she loses her virginity she is abandoned by her own people and thought as impure. The conservative Victorian society and their views regarding women's virginity was quite authoritarian and uncompromising. In the novel Tess is a comprehensible example of a girl who suffered immensely because she lost her virginity before getting married. Hardy keeps the incident ambiguous that happened to Tess in the forest. Alec from the very beginning of the novel tries to be friends with Tess and the reason was to take advantage of her sexually but as readers we can clearly see Tess was least interested in Alec and she never agrees to be intimate with him. In the first chapter of the novel Alec asks Tess, "Tessy –don't u love me ever so little now?"(Hardy, 89)<sup>13</sup>. In reply Tess reluctantly admits that, she was grateful. She never agrees to Alec's proposal. Though there is no clear description of the rape but there are hints which make the incident as forceful act rather than the act of love, "... but by this time the moon had quite gone down ,and partly on account of the fog The Chase was wrapped in thick darkness although morning was not far off"(90). The description of the forest gives the hint that everything happened in the forest was not right but there is no direct depiction of the sexual violence. In the forest Tess falls asleep and Alec takes advantage of that chance, "he knelt and bent lower, till her breath warmed his face, and in a moment his cheeks were in contact with hers"(90). Though in the text it has not been clarified that she was raped or seduced but there are evidence of the rape which is more conspicuous. "The most violent and ineradicable of those inscriptions occurs in The Chase, by means of that action which has been varyingly designated a "rape". (Silverman,

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<sup>13</sup>Hardy, Thomas. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Dhaka: Friends Book Corner, 2014. Print.

9). He agreed that in the forest rape has occurred to the protagonist and also called it as an act of violence.

During that time Hardy was much criticized for the novel, as it contained problematic issue like sexual assault, seduction, which was unacceptable for a Victorian novel. During Augustan era and Victorian-era condition of women was similar, For instance; the Victorian era can be also seen as a crucial period when the women question arose, Hewitt claims that "The Woman Question" arose because of the extreme inequality towards women. The women did not have any right and freedom. Even the right to vote, the custody of minor children and ownership of property in marriage was not allowed the women (Hewitt, 409). At this period the rise of women question helped women to attain some of the rights which they did not use to enjoy before. By the end of the Victorian era, women were allowed to take degrees at twelve universities. Still, hundreds of thousands of working-class women labored at factory jobs under appalling conditions, many were driven into prostitution. John Stuart Mill, British philosopher, and thinker argued that the "nature of women" was an artificial thing while most male authors preferred to claim that women had a special nature fitting them for domestic duties. Many of the historical changes which characterized the Victorian period encouraged discussion and argument about the nature and role of the woman. Which is known as the "The Woman Question"<sup>14</sup>.

Hardy highlighted the exploitation the female character in the novel along with that showed the nurturing character of women. The biased and unfair nature of the patriarchal society has been condemned also the double the double standard of the society has been criticized. For instance; a woman is accountable for her every action whereas the male is being excused for

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<sup>14</sup>"The woman question" is a phrase usually used in connection with a social change in the 19th century, which questioned the fundamental roles of women in Western industrialized countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, and Russia.

their wrongdoings. This double standard towards women is much criticized in the novel. Industrial Revolution brought huge changes for women as well. The massive growth of the textile industries brought a huge number of lower-class women into factory jobs with grueling working conditions. The new kinds of labor and poverty that arose with the Industrial Revolution created a challenge to the conventional ideas of woman's place. Middle-class voices also raised questions about conventional ideas about women. The poor working condition was one of the major issues in the Victorian era, which also reflected in the literature of that time. "The Victorian Age was characterized by rapid change and developments in nearly every sphere - from advances in medical, scientific and technological knowledge to changes in population growth and location" (Sheperd,1). The Victorian era had was era witnessed much change in social and economic spheres changes. For the Victorians, women must play a certain role and fit in; moreover, women should be submissive, sacrificing in nature. The social context was changing in the Victorian era in the consequences the struggle was also increasing. Though the challenges of the Victorian society was different than the Augustans, as the industries were growing ardently. Hewitt stated that during Victorian era there was a huge development in industries; in consequences, the living condition of the people was also rapidly changing along with that "class consciousness" was prevalent. In addition to that, the feudal society was society was changing to industrial. (Hewitt, 398). He focuses on the fact the society was changing its structure as the feudal society was turning into industrial, women were also affected by the changes. For example women used to work in household environment previously but with industrial revolution working women were compelled to work in to the industries in an abominable condition and the wages were also less than man. The Industrial Revolution had a great impact on the literature at that time, even Hardy's novel, *Tess of the Durbervilles* also

shows the negative impact of the industries. The novel bears witness how patriarchal society uses and abuses women to fulfill their needs and for example in the novel Hardy portrayed Tess as kindhearted, connected to earth and sacrificing character. She rides horses and works in a dairy farm. Hardy has highlighted her yielding nature. Her sacrificing nature has been juxtaposed by Alec selfish behavior. Nature has always been associated with femininity whereas the industries symbolizes masculinity. Hardy tried to show that the way nature was suffering because of the industries, Tess suffered because of the patriarchal society.

The industrial revolution brought many troubles for the as a country girl she had to suffer immensely because she is a dairy maiden and belonged from an agricultural society. The society was evolving from the agricultural to industrial as a result rural areas were affected badly. In the time of Tessurbanization was causing a major issue in the inhabitant of the rural areas. In the novel the contrast between Talbothays and Flintcomb-Ash is quite visible. Hardy intends to show Talbothays as a beautiful and ideal farm whereas Flintcomb-Ash as full of dreariness. Talbothays is shown as place of prosperity and rich in agriculture. Whereas Flintcomb-Ash with the part of the name being “ash” is covered in rocks and mud. Marian who worked formerly in Talbothays compares the new farm in Flitncomb ash as “a starve-acre place”. Tess was a victim of the industries as well as the patriarchy. As the industries were the reason which made it difficult earn her livelihood and because of the patriarchal society she had to bear the consequences the rape alone. Being a victim she was punished while her culprit was set free. Again her own community was against her and gossiped about her. Finally Angel Claire who comes into her life as a hero also turns to be a product of patriarchy and the moment he comes to know Tess is not a virgin he considers as impure and unholy. Which reinforces that Angel nothing different than other male characters of the novel.

## Chapter Four: Conclusion

The Feminist movement has established the rights that are enjoyed by women of contemporary world. The waves of Feminism have brought epoch making changes in the society and ensured the political, economic, sexual and reproductive rights for women. Until the feminist movement occurred women were subjected to countless prejudice as they were not allowed to vote, own property and so on. In the early 18th and 19th century the social context of England was quite different than the present day. The representation of a female protagonist with desire or being subjected to sexual violence was very rare in early 18th and 19th century literature. Sexuality is a hypersensitive issue since very beginning and when it comes to female sexuality the Augustan and Victorian society was extremely reactionary. The conventional Augustan and Victorian society had much double standard and gender biasness. At that time women were considered as the symbol of purity, chastity, and sacrifice in consequences society never approved of women who were open about her sexual desires. Women are not even acknowledged as sexual beings and women who are unobstructed about their sexuality are not accepted by the conventional society.

Woman of contemporary England definitely enjoy freedom and independence than Augustan and Victorian England. As feminism has taken over the world by storm women have able to secure many of their rights all over the world especially in Western world. In early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century women were very much under the patriarchal gaze and the double standard regarding sexual morality was not uncommon. The protagonists of the paper are from different era and different social class but there is no difference in their condition. As an upper class woman Fantomina faced much restriction as a result she becomes jaded by the norms of the



society and tries to explore her sexuality under cover. Whereas Tess fails to protect virginity as result she becomes a “fallen woman”.

In Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina* the young lady tries to fulfill her desires but also keeps it a secret because of the restrictions. She finds a sexually and emotionally stimulating relationship but she was unable to disclose it, which demonstrates the complications of relationships between men and woman in the eighteenth century. *Fantomina* as a 18<sup>th</sup> century female protagonist is undoubtedly an immensely strong character who tries to explore her sexuality going beyond social boundaries. Being an upper class woman she was not supposed to have a relation with a man who below her class. As a young lady *Fantomina* also wanted to enjoy her life and in the play house while she saw the prostitute was getting attention she also wanted the same freedom, but being a upper-class woman she could never attain that freedom. In the character of *Fantomina* there is yearning for freedom which clarifies that women during 18<sup>th</sup> century were heavily restrained by social rules and regulations. The society held women accountable for the every choices they made. The disguise that *Fantomina* uses is to keep her reputation untarnished. *Fantomina* can be also considered as a character who tries to fulfill her desire without even thinking about the consequences which makes her bold and fearless. Through the character of *Fantomina* Haywood establish that women can have desire and they should have the right to fulfill it. In the beginning of the novella *Fantomina* dresses herself as prostitute to feel the freedom because a prostitute can certainly flirt to men. Again as young lady she is also naïve and she was unaware of the consequences of becoming a prostitute. She wanted a scope to discover and know more about adult relations which naturally every teenager has. The early 18<sup>th</sup> century conservative society and the restrictions inflicted upon women can be seen as the reason of *Fantomina*'s taking disguise as way tool to attain her liberty. To break the shackles of the society

and enjoy her life in her own terms she makes choices which might not be ideal for her but shows her a path of liberation from the barriers of the social norms.

On the other hand, in the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Tess had been portrayed as a heroic character. She is one of the female member of her family who shows more gratitude than the male members. She is an ideal daughter, sister and a kind-hearted young lady. Her journey from a pure woman to 'fallen woman' is undoubtedly unfortunate and evident of the biasedness that Victorian society held against women. Again the Victorian society was very much against about discussing about matter like 'sex'. They altogether avoided talking about sex as a result when *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was published it was not well received and another reason could be it was written favoring a female character and male characters were shown as antagonistic. Consequently Victorian conservative society was aligned with the subject matter of the novel. Tess throughout the novel is subjected to many struggles for illustration she had to endure all the pain and sufferings due to the incident of the sexual assault. She becomes pregnant because of the assault and had no option than carrying the child. In a woman's life her virginity and the feeling of becoming a mother is very sacred but for Tess both feeling are reason of her agony. Tess becomes a mother surely but it never brought the joy of motherhood rather it became a burden on her tender shoulders. However, we see Alec is never questioned about the mishap happened to Tess, he is set free. The child soon dies after birth and even then the blame came on Tess. We can see how the Victorian society had double standard reading sexual ethics and morality. For men rules are flexible and they can do anything according to their will whereas women are always under scrutiny. Victim blaming and shaming is new term yet we can clearly observe that how in victim blaming exists during that time. Hardy successfully shows how just

being a woman Tess had to suffer without any wrongdoing. Her sufferings are increased because of the patriarchal notions of the society in which criminal is dismissed and the victim is punished for the crime of the criminal. As the victim is a lower class girl no one has interest to defend her let alone talking about justice for her.

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