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# **Female Issues in *Women in Love*, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles***

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## **Introduction**

*The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders* (1722), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Women in Love* (1921) bring to light the hardships, dehumanization, exclusion and marginalization that females experienced during their hard struggle to acquire their rights and be self-dependent. Moll Flanders, Tess and the Brangwen sisters are good examples of those women who are besieged by an aggressive and hostile community that does not allow women a greater degree of freedom. As to whether women surrender to masculine attempts of domestication and suppression, one finds that these female characters make it very difficult for men to prevail.

Although these novels seem to tackle different issues, such as whoredom, alienation of the modern man, and rape, the basis is the same which is a scrutinizing look at the status of women in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries and women's hard struggle to achieve freedom. In addition to highlighting those female issues, this article concentrates on women's attempts to break the fetters and achieve self-dependence. That is, this article commits itself to rectify those wrong images concerning women and to encourage women to walk on the path of struggling against the misconceptions about women. Each character in these different novels follows her own way to achieve freedom despite all the obstacles she faces. From the eighteenth century when Moll was shouldering her way through different stages of abuse to the twentieth century when women, like Ursula and Gudrun, were fending off and struggling against male superiority and societal lack of recognition of female independence, women are still widely treated as 'dolls' and commodities.

For a very long period, women's legal rights and career opportunities have been fewer than men's. Throughout history, women have been considered not only intellectually inferior to men but also a main cause of seduction and evil. For example, in ancient Greek myths, a woman, called Pandora, is responsible for opening the forbidden box and bringing plagues and sadness to humankind. St. Jerome, a fourth century Latin father of the Christian Church, said: 'Woman is the gate of the devil, the path of wickedness, the sting of the serpent, in a word a perilous

object' (Klaits, 1985, p. 67). Thomas Aquinas, the thirteenth century Christian theologian, said that the woman was "created to be man's helpmeet, but her unique role is in conception . . . since for other purposes men would be better assisted by other men (Achterberg, 1990, p. 68). Pregnancy is the only thing that is required from women.

Women were seen as sexual objects rather than human beings constituting the other half of society. Thus, nineteenth century women were confined in the conventions of gender-imprisonment about which Gilman vividly states: 'So utterly has the status of woman been accepted as a sexual one that it has remained for the women's movement of the nineteenth century to devote much contention to the claim that women are persons! Those women are persons as well as females, an unheard of proposition! '(1966, p. 577). Women complement men. They form, as men, one part of society. In his book *The Subjection of Women* (1869), Mill depicts the real situation of women in Britain as follows:

We are continually told that civilization and Christianity have restored to the woman her just rights. Meanwhile the wife is the actual bondservant of her husband; no less so, as far as the legal obligation goes, than slaves commonly so called. She vows a lifelong obedience to him at the altar, and is held to it all through her life by law" (2008, p. 39).

For men, wives were not considered more than servants of their husbands. The patriarchal beliefs which are based on the notion that men are inherently superior to women support males and give them the right to dominate women in all spheres of life. The ideology of patriarchy also serves as a foundation for continuing discrimination and oppression against women. This ideology of male superiority to women, which indicates the supremacy of men and the inferiority of women, has generated a group of degrading expressions to demean and underestimate women. This terminology is not only intended to vilify females but also to solidify the ideology. Thus, the derogatory language and ideology continually reinforce each other. Patriarchal ideology, then, is responsible for constructing cruel images invoked against women which justify oppression and bad treatment of women. These degrading expressions are arranged according to a hierarchal system of dehumanizing words beginning with the adjective 'inferior' and followed by a set of words serving in increasing the degrees of worthlessness: 'subhuman,' 'nonhuman,' 'animal,' 'parasite,' 'disease,' 'object' and 'waste product'. Many scholars have devoted large efforts to show the cunning manner in which language functions to change the real image of women and keep them in a lower position. In *The Language of Oppression* (1974), Bosmajian concludes:

While the language of racial and ethnic oppression is often blatant and relatively easy to identify, the language of sexism is more subtle and pervasive. Our every-day speech reflects the "superiority" of the male and the "inferiority" of the female, resulting in a master-subject relationship. The language of sexism relegates the woman to the status of children, servants, and idiots, to being the "second sex" and to virtual invisibility. . .  
-The language of sexism remains with us and exerts an influence on the male's attitudes towards and control over women and the women's attitudes towards themselves (p. 15).

Both the patriarchal mentality and the derogatory language perpetuate each other.

### **Lawrence's *Women in Love***

Within the stereotyping of women, Ursula, one of the main characters in Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1920), for example, is seen by her lover Birkin as merely a sexual object although she is educated and has knowledge of life. Birkin feels that she is only a 'perfect Womb' (Lawrence, 1992, p. 303) and sees her as a 'doll' (Lawrence, 1992, p. 244). Ursula is really injured because she feels that her spiritual qualities are not recognized by Birkin. She wants her lover to satisfy her spiritually, not only her body, but Birkin wants and needs something beyond this love. Therefore, Birkin wants friendship with another man to resist female domination and maternal possessiveness which he fears. However, Ursula cannot comprehend that his love for a man does not exclude his love for her.

Like Ursula, her sister Gudrun suffers because of the prevalent male dominant society. Although Gudrun is educated, she is seen by Gerald as a 'born mistress' (Lawrence, 1992, p. 366). Gudrun's relationship with Gerald is deadly because it always involves exploitation of the other. Gerald represents will-power and sensuality without love. He is an opportunist. He gets both sensual pleasure and power out of her. This makes him a symbol of oppression for her. Thus, the knowledge that he cannot dominate her, which will ensure his safety, makes him hate her.

Gerald's domination over everything comforts him and makes him feel safe. Gerald reduces the miners to merely 'mechanical instruments' (Lawrence, 1992, p. 224). He enjoys mastering animals. However, his mastering animals symbolizes his exertion of power over women, and this is a manifestation of his own way of living that freezes his nature so that he cannot love Gudrun or Birkin. Hence, Gerald Crich, a 'great blonde beast' (Hawthorne, 2011), is a symbol of the Nietzschean 'Overman' (Hawthorne, 2011), expressing his will to power through mastering miners, women, and animals. In his essay 'Blessed are the Powerful', Lawrence remarks: 'A will-to-power seems to work out as bullying. And bullying is something despicable and detestable' (1949, p. 321). Gerald always has a desire to overpower something

hiding a real inner feeling of weakness and loss. However, in Nietzschean sense, Gerald is only the tool or the servant of the Will to Power showing itself in recent times as industrialism and mechanization.

The lady Hermione Roddice is a good example of the tormented and rejected woman in Lawrence's work. As Ursula and Gudrun, she has a life of exclusion and dehumanization in the male society. Hermione lives in bitterness in her relationship with Birkin. She loves and needs Birkin. She considers herself as a priestess who is ready to serve the God she possesses, but Birkin becomes more satisfied and pleasant from his physical intercourse with Gerald than from his spiritual relation with her. This intimacy with Gerald torments her. Hermione is confused and depressed. Birkin knows her feelings, but he does not care about her. 'She must be confident here, for God knows, she felt rejected and deficient enough elsewhere' (Lawrence, 1992, p. 287). He scorns and makes fun of her as a 'spiritual woman who waits at the tomb, in her sandals and mourning robes' (Drain, 1978, p. 47). He does not love or even have desire for her although he forces himself on that. Despite the fact that she offers herself gladly as a sacrifice to him, he cannot destroy her with his passion. This love-making between them is a bitter failure that makes them hate each other.

The dominance of *the self* over *the other* is performed in terms of the mastering of the male and subjection or dependence of the female. The male is represented as the centre of gravity, and the female always gravitates towards him almost blindly. The female's gravitation towards the male is reiterated as below:

She was tortured with desire to see him again, a nostalgia, a necessity to see him again, to make sure it was not all a mistake, that she was not deluding herself, that she really felt this strange and overwhelming sensation on his account, this knowledge of him in her essence, this powerful apprehension of him (Lawrence, 1992, p. 9).

This contradiction between the male and the female is expressed through a systematic use of metaphor and metonymy. By using metaphor, through its structural equivalence, Lawrence constructs and confirms the solidity and integrity of the male. In contrast, by using metonymy, through its minimization and prose, he belittles and distorts the image of the female. The woman is represented as a slave, whereas the man takes over the role of the master. Like a slave, the woman is given the eccentric edges of the setting, whereas the man occupies the centre. Of course, the woman is not born a slave. Simone de Beauvoir says: 'One is not born a woman; one becomes one' (Madsen, 2000, p. 94). Thus, the woman might be, as the novel suggests, a 'bolter', and the man acts as the domesticator of the wild woman. Hence, the novel

raises the repeated idea of taming the 'shrew' (McHugh, 1993) especially in Chapter Twelve in the novel. In this Chapter, it becomes clear that the mare is the maid. Here the male distinguishes himself by depth and vastness. The female, however, is identified with shallowness and fixity. The result is the submissiveness of the latter and the overpowering presence of the former, and that submissiveness develops into the self-resignation and the renunciation of the woman vis-à-vis the 'Dionysian' (Kaufman, 1968, p. 282) role of the man. All the previous oppositions arise from the substructure of the dialectic between the mother and the father. The image of the woman, as a mother, is underlined in the novel especially in this passage:

One [statue] was a woman sitting naked in a strange posture, and looking tortured, her abdomen stuck out. The young Russian explained that she was sitting in childbirth, clutching the ends of a band that hung from her neck, one in each hand, so that she could bear down, and help labour" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 68).

The mother stands for nature and passivity, whereas the father symbolizes culture and activity. The moon represents the feminine principle, but the sun symbolizes masculinity. The male is super-humanized into the subject, whereas the female is materialized as the undebatable object. Consequently, the man is represented as the centre of this world. The woman looks like a degenerate outcast committed to the underworld. The man always looks charismatic and worth worshipping by the woman. The female relates to the male as the body relates to the mind. The female, no matter what she might be, is always pathos, and the male stands for logos. The male is always represented as arguing and standing for typically patriarchal attributes, such as competition, consciousness and death. By contrast, the female calls for peace, unconsciousness and love. However, women's ability to love does not belittle them, but it can be used to create 'more-balanced culture' (Flynn, 2002, p. 85) and thus change their situation. Coretta King says:

Women, in general, are not a part of the corruption of the past, so they can give a kind of leadership, a new image for mankind. But if they are going to be bitter or vindictive they are not going to be able to do this. But they're capable of tremendous compassion, love, and forgiveness, which, if they use it, can make this a better world (Flynn, 2002, p. 92).

In her book *The Newly Born Woman* (1975), written in collaboration with Catherine Clement, Helene Cixous comes to grips with the framing concept of the patriarchal mentality which is a death-dealing, hierarchal and symbolically codified form of exclusiveness and closure. Patriarchy thinks that the woman is by definition the opposite of the man, and consequently that femininity is the other of masculinity. All the other possibilities which might open up, revise,



or discredit this closure are excluded. That is why the only way for the feminist survival is to fracture this fixity and to reach for the multiple and the pluralistic differentiation which is, to use the language of Jacques Derrida, usually embedded within the concept itself as its own necessary critique.

Patriarchy, as Helene Cixous explains, immediately translates the above terms into ideological language. The binary opposition between the male and the female becomes a distinctive feature between passivity and activity or negativity and positivity. Ultimately, the distance between the two sides is seen as a difference between logos and pathos or nurture and nature. Such a perspective commits the woman to an exilic marginalization and allocates the full centrality to the male. The dangerous game that patriarchy has played is the fabrication of a symbolic system which not only markets, but actually consecrates and immortalizes the binary opposition itself.

The man is often seen as sun, culture, day, father, head and intelligibility. By contrast, the woman is referred to as moon, nature, night, mother, emotions and sensitivity. The corollary of such a set-up is that the female stands as the other of the male. The woman is everything the man is not which feeds into the traditional definition of the woman as 'lack':

Aristotle declared that 'the female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities', and St Thomas Aquinas believed that woman is an 'imperfect man'. ... form is masculine and matter feminine: the superior, godlike, male intellect impresses its form upon the malleable, inert, female matter (Selden and Widdowson, 1993, p. 203).

Moreover, the combination of oppositions are systematically hierarchal. The male with his attributes is always higher than and superior to the female. This transforms the symbolic system into a value system and confirms that the aesthetic map is basically ethical and political. Since the woman is confined to the bottom of the hierarchy, her future is bound to be hopeless. The closure within which she is positioned necessitates her death, as Helene Cixous confirms in a book edited by Toril Moi:

Cixous . . . goes on to locate death at work in this kind of thought. For one of the terms to acquire meaning, she claims, it must destroy the other. The "couple" cannot be left intact: It becomes a general battle field where the struggle for signifying supremacy is forever re-enacted. In the end, victory is equated with activity and defeat with passivity; under patriarchy, the male is always the victor. Cixous passionately denounces such an equation of femininity with passivity and death as leaving no positive space for woman: "Either woman is passive or she doesn't exist" (1985, p.105).

All these structures govern the discourse of *Women in Love*. This novel is strategically schemed in terms of the diametrical male/female opposition as mapped out by the patriarchal mentality. The man, the self as contrasted with the other, cannot tolerate the existence of another self. Hence, he tries to appropriate what looks improper to him. He pushes the woman into a proper non-entity. Exactly, as a horse cannot be a 'bolter', the woman also cannot be the same. Both should be domesticated. The conjunction between the horse and the woman and the necessity of nurturing is prioritized in the text when Birkin says: 'And woman is the same as horses: two wills act in opposition inside her. With one will, she wants to subject herself utterly. With the other she wants to bolt, and pitch her rider to perdition' (Lawrence, 1992, p. 135). However, Ursula's response is that she is a 'bolter' (Lawrence, 1992, p. 135).

It suffices here to mention that there is harmony between the thematic duality (man/woman) and the technical duality (metaphor/metonymy). Indeed, metonymy and metaphor, as defined by J.A. Cuddon in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* and Gerald Prince in *A Dictionary of Narratology*, are figures of speech based on contiguity and sequentiality, as in metonymy, and on similarity and equivalence, as in metaphor. However, the way these two devices are politicized, their traditional conceptualizations will prove to be severely reductionist. Thus, they should be called tropes not figures of speech because their specific functionality is semantically distorting and manipulative. Metonymy, in the novel, is not a mere device, but it is a medium of reductionism, vulgarization and dehumanization. There is relation between its use and the binary opposition on the one hand, and the patriarchal sexism on the other hand. Metonymy is often used for the representation of women, whereas metaphor is devoted for the characterization of male characters. Metonymy, the part for whole, is practiced in *Women in Love* in a number of ways, all of which undermine the integrity and the personhood of the female. One of these ways is to use a part of the female body to mean the whole woman. For example, on the debut of the bride the narrator says:

A ripple of satisfaction ran through the expected people. They pressed near to receive her, looking with zest at the stooping blonde head with its flower buds, and at the delicate, white, tentative foot that was reaching down to the step of the carriage. There was a sudden foaming rush, and the bride like a sudden surfrush floating all white beside her father in the morning shadow of trees, her veil flowing with laughter (Lawrence, 1992, p. 12).

Lawrence, in the above passage, uses metonymy. Instead of referring to the bride, he mentions the head, the foot and the veil: the head stoops, the foot reaches down and the veil flows with laughter. By using the metonymy, which is a perfect example of dehumanization, Lawrence

minimizes the woman and reduces her to mere fragments. This practice becomes completely a developed technique which is the anatomy of the female body.

Moreover, even when Lawrence tries to discontinue his metonymic style by using the metaphor in the representation of women, his metaphors turn out to be, in terms of their effect, very metonymic. Similes are considered metaphorical because they are based on the logic of equivalence. The metaphorical devices used in *Women in Love* to portray women are related to insects, birds, animals, aborigines and fetuses. Although such ploys give the impression that they establish a similarity between the woman and a bird or an animal, that similarity is dehumanizing and dwarfing. Images are not mere linguistic ado. They are, as Fowler quite rightly says, social and political processes. A text is treated as a process, the communicative interaction of implied speakers and thus of consciousness and of communities, and the ‘consequences of this approach, for literary criticism, are very considerable. Literature seen as discourse is inevitably answerable, responsible; it cannot be cocooned from an integral and mobile relationship with society’ (1981, p. 129).

### **Defoe’s *Moll Flanders***

In turn, *Moll Flanders* suffers in an indifferent patriarchal society. Moll desires to be a gentlewoman and not a servant in an age when the only available employment for women is menial domestic work. This desire drives her to be immoral. Moll lives in a patriarchal society where acquisition or resources are a primary focus, and where women are virtually non-existent before the law and have numerous barriers to economic independence and social mobility. In his analysis of *Moll Flanders*, Mr. Alick West says: ‘The life the child wants – working for herself in freedom – is the contrasting background to the life the woman gets in a world where a gentlewoman does not live on the threepences or four pences she earns by her own labour, but on riches of unexplained origin’ (Defoe, 1973, p. 391). Women lag behind men in the terms of equality. *Moll Flanders* demonstrates the plight of women trying to survive at a time when they have few or no rights and are rigidly controlled by men.

Moll's first affair disappoints her. It makes her change her position towards marriage. After her romantic hopes have been destroyed, before the age of twenty, she thinks of marriage in a colder and more practical way. All her next marriages are not more than matrimonial whoredom. Marriage institution represents a kind of civil adultery and a legal prostitution. Marriage is used by women improperly for profit. Moll's acceptance of the life of whoredom is foisted upon her by a society that treats women as properties. At various times in her existence, from being sexually abused by men to being abandoned and left without resources or social

support, Defoe provides situations for Moll that leave her little choice but whoredom and thievery. Moll Flanders lives in a society where it is often necessary for her to resort to what might be viewed as immoral acts to survive. She is indulged in the prostitution field motivated by necessity not for the sake of vice. Poverty, necessity, her feeling of extreme sadness and pain, and lack of a husband, who will guarantee protection for her, force Moll to commit vice. Therefore, to get a husband is essential as the only substitute to prostitution or crime for eighteenth century girls who refuse to work as servants, as in Moll's case where she is a woman who struggles to attain the state of security:

I was now a loose, unguided Creature, and had no Help, no Assistance, no Guide for my Conduct: I knew what I aim'd at, and what I wanted, but knew nothing how to pursue the End by direct means; I wanted to be plac'd in a settled State of Living, and had I happen'd to meet with a sober, good Husband, I should have been as faithful and true a Wife to him as Virtue itself could have form'd: If I had been otherwise, the Vice came in always at the Door of Necessity, not at the Door of Inclination; (Defoe, 1971, p. 128).

Moll is an example of a clever and persevering woman who seeks independence and security through money and has opportunities to acquire money only through marriage or selling her body. She gets married several times searching for settlement and financial help not thinking about mutual affection. She is not obsessively greedy or a hard capitalist, but simply a woman who seeks the secure life in an indifferent patriarchal society. Personal property is what makes her feel secure and be self-sufficient in a very mercantile society. Thus, she all the time tries to find a rich husband who is able to save her from the life of poverty and crime. She survives to achieve her aim, and she fulfils what she desires by rising from abject poverty and anonymity to wealth and security although after a life fraught with difficulties, much of it of her own making.

The early eighteenth century was hard time for unprotected women who lived without family, friends or money in a world where money could turn human relationships to, merely, commercial transactions. Moll Flanders is one of such women who are the products of their callous environment. She is made bad by her circumstances, as Mckillop points out that,

Moll is a victim of society, showing the workings of economic and social compulsion; an unfortunate adventuress, showing the workings of chance and random circumstances; a cool exponent of self-interest, systematic-ally trying to figure profit and loss in business, love, and crime" (Defoe, 1973, p. 346).

Moll, as a woman lives in an indifferent society, blames society for her miserable life. Having lived in other social circumstances, she would be educated, taken care of, and hence survive in the best way possible. Defoe believes that women are capable and strong, but society deprives them of education and the opportunity to control their own affairs. In his essay 'Education of Women', Defoe refers to the high capacities of women, and he denounces the harsh injustice done to them when he says:

I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us as a civilized and a Christian country, that we deny the advantages of learning to women. We reproach the sex every day with folly and impertinence; which I am confident, had they the advantages of education equal to us, they would be guilty of less than ourselves (1973, p. 341).

Defoe stresses that women's abilities are not less than men's, and it is savage and inhuman to consider them as inferiors to men. It is society which is responsible for the original crime even in the attempt to correct other wrongs. Moll, born in Newgate, speaks for the author: "there are more Thieves and Rogues made by that one Prison of *Newgate*, than by all the Clubs and Societies of Villains in the Nation" (Defoe, 1971, p. 87). Defoe's central character, then, is a woman who is marginalized and isolated with few friends and no family. Her bad luck and later the loss of her beauty, her greatest source of power, makes her criminal life an inevitable result. Her life is always uncertain. Moll often has to re-invent herself to achieve her serious social aspirations towards affluence and gentility, but, unfortunately, she is doomed never to be able to achieve her ambitions by virtue of 'right' i.e. birth and social standing. So, she has to create her own opportunities by intentionally tricking men when she is good-looking and later by deceiving men through planning schemes with older 'mothers' who teach her all about prostitution, criminality, marriage and childbirth.

Defoe, in *Moll Flanders*, presents a sympathetic understanding and a vivid portrayal of the misfortunes of an unprotected woman in contemporary society, where money plays a large part in her history, and it becomes not only sordid but tragic when it does not stand for ease and consequence but for honour, honesty and life itself. However, this novel is not a scornful presentation of sullied humanity as a subject for jest. Defoe sees human experience with the eyes of a social historian. He regards vice and crime as subjects for sympathy and not for scorn or mirth.

### **Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles***

The life of exclusion can also be seen in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. This novel is a tragedy that details the loss of innocence and the ultimate destruction of a young, fresh, and poor girl due to circumstances of life. Tess suffers from the doings of the country people among whom she lives, from the working of chance, luck or fate, and because of her innocent acceptance and instinctive animal-like reactions to whatever she faces: 'My life looks as if it had been wasted for want of chance! . . . I feel what a nothing I am! I'm like the poor Queen of Sheba who lived in the Bible. There is no more spirit in me' (Hardy, 1988, p. 124)

Tess is a good example of those women who are considered 'outcasts' in society. According to Simons, such women are 'ostracized' after being raped and having illegitimate children not supported by the government or the religious charitable organizations: 'If a woman is raped, marriage is not a possibility. She will be shunned by her family, by the state, and by the church and will have to accept menial jobs and poor working conditions that will allow her a meagre existence and no opportunities for advancement' (Flynn, 2002, p. 48). However, modern feminists believe that the solution to this problem lies in 'modernization', a radical change of the outmoded conventions and laws that keep women, as Tess, in such degrading situations, and give women all their legal rights.

Hardy, in his novel, illustrates the double standard of sexual morality to which Tess falls a victim. Although Tess, as Hardy believes, is a virtuous woman, she is seen by society as a fallen one. She is exposed to marital abuse by her husband and true love Angel Clare who considers himself a free thinker, but his notions of morality turn out to be fairly conventional. Angel rejects Tess on their wedding night when she confesses that she is not a virgin. Even though he, too, was engaged in premarital sex. The double standard of the Victorian society is harshly criticized by Hardy, yet it plays an important role in creating Tess's tragic fate.

These are just some brief examples that demonstrate how women had suffered a prolonged history of marginalization and dehumanization before they arrived to the relatively-better current status. However, this objectification of women, for psychoanalytic feminists, is attributed to the recognition of the 'sexual difference' (Bergner, 2005, p. 7) in the Oedipal stage which leads to the 'gender identity' (Madsen, 2000, p. 95) defining women as inferiors. In this stage, the boy child observes that his mother, unlike his father, is different as she is 'castrated' (Madsen, 2000, p. 95) lacking of a penis. The absence of a penis is a symbol of the inferiority of the feminine. Thus, the boy's loyalty and love are transferred from his inferior powerless mother to his authoritative father. The boy, then, is emerged from the Oedipal stage possessing

a masculine gender identity. On the contrary, the girl child perceives that she is the same as her mother who is 'castrated' through the absence of a penis, and this will lead to 'penis envy' (Madsen, 2000, p. 95). The thing which makes the girl transfer her love from her mother to her father developing a feminine gender identity in response to the requests of the powerful patriarchal culture which the girl tries to belong to it. This male-female distinction with its sexual and social meanings is perpetuated through the Oedipal crisis. Thus, psychoanalytic feminists see that these experiences acquired in early childhood must be denied, and they should not lead to 'stratification' (Madsen, 2000, p. 102). However, this 'stratification' does not make women condescend or forsake their aim of being free and independent.

### **Conclusion**

In *Moll Flanders*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and *Women in Love*, women prove hard wrestlers and arch-rivals that do not give in easily for whatever is being dictated to them by men. They never compromise their set goal which is to be free and to break down those fetters they find themselves in. In *Women in Love*, for example, the Brangwen sisters, Ursula and Gudrun, are in constant conflict with their background. They aspire to attain the personal freedom to choose jobs, friends and ways of life which were not achieved by most English females until later in that century. The up-to-date independence of Will Brangwen's daughters is a 'sore trial' (Lawrence, 1992, p. 149) to him. Both Ursula and Gudrun enrage their father because of their unconventionality. Both are nervous of marriage which may impede the independence that they aspire to achieve. Unlike *Moll Flanders* who sees marriage as a necessary institution which guarantees a secure life, Ursula and Gudrun no longer belong to the working class into which they are born – or to any social context that values marriage as something significant and important. These two women do not search for romance as their nineteenth century counterparts did, but instead for escaping from a barren and outmoded life.

Although Gudrun is represented as someone who gives a kind of yielding to sensuality, she ends up rebelling against her lover Gerald and his fervent attempts to domesticate her and make her subject to his masculine drives. Although Gerald gets comfort and reassurance from his relationship with Gudrun, the same does not apply to Gudrun because of the lack of a mystic union between them. This makes the restless Gudrun determine to launch her struggle for freedom against Gerald who is 'naturally promiscuous'.

The same thing applies to Tess who decides to rebel against the existing beliefs in her society determining to feel free by killing the exploiter Alec and running after Angel. Gudrun wants to escape from materialism. She is unable to accept a conditional role as a natural mistress. She feels that she is torn and subjected by wanting her too much.

Ursula, Gudrun and Hermione are unconventional. Even their styles of clothes express their way of thinking and their radical difference from their surroundings. Their costume defies the prevailing conventions in their grey colliery town. While legs had been strictly covered up in the nineteenth century, they assert themselves with strong brilliant stockings and clashes of colours.

Moll Flanders also puts women in a position of strength and self-reliance. She, from the very outset, stands up and depends on herself. Unlike Ursula, Gudrun and Hermione who resort to moral ways to achieve independence, Moll Flanders often adopts immoral ways to be self-reliant. She works as a thief, a mistress, a prostitute and a businesswoman just to maintain the freedom she struggles hard to achieve. She lives in isolation from the beginning of her life till her death. Although she exists in the midst of a noisy and crowded urban world, she makes almost no enduring loyalties or friendships. Moll struggles against the confines of femininity, and she cannot rest until she is able to create a space, a definition of femininity that applies to her unique nature.

Tess, like her counterparts, struggles to find a place in nineteenth century British society. She is a victim of society and her own nature. She tries to respond to the changing world around her with honesty and integrity. Unlike the Brangwen sisters, she tends, in the beginning, to submit passively to males' wills and to consent to their attitudes, but later she rebels against the traditional morals of her society. She can be viewed as an independent, active heroine who decides to draw her destiny by herself not by others. Although Tess is a fallen woman, she has the ability to overcome the moral and social stigma. Such victims do not see their lives completely grim despite their bad circumstances. Tess maintains her high moral standards as well as her innocence, and thus she maintains her dignity. After her disaster in Trantridge, she is able to make a new start and thus a new identity although she lives in a society, where the woman's bid for independence is not permitted. She seeks employment outside the village where no one knows her past. She, at the beginning, almost accepts guilt, but later she is defiantly self-defensive. She rebels against the prevailing social and moral customs insisting on her need for feeling free and independent, even if for a short time before death.



Though Lawrence and Defoe give their female characters more freedom than Tess enjoys in Hardy's novel, one cannot claim that women in their novels live in a paradisiac world where they are absolutely free. As a result, women need to continue their endeavours to gain a better status using somehow various weapons to confront the challenges they face which are changeable from time to time. They should not give up to revise their position and to get over the obstacles they come across on their way to achieve freedom. Since the suffering of women is global and their struggle is also universal, women who suffer will always look to art, and in particular to fiction, for a brighter future irrespective of the nature of the oppressing force which hinders their freedom.

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