

There are two types of submissiveness: physical and spiritual. The superiority of men and the innate inferiority of woman had been stressed by Patmore's mentor, Swedenborg: "The man is born intellectual, and the female is born volitional." (Pearsall, 74)

The Victorian woman's status was constantly determined by her relations with men, after marriage all woman's possessions became propriety of the husband including money, land and children. The prevalent characteristics of the Victorian Angel influenced women's sexuality and sexual expectations. The moral code demanded that women remain virgins until marriage and only have sexual relations with their husbands; their bodies were considered the propriety of men. In order to promote the concept of chastity, women were brought up completely ignorant of their sexuality and sexual desires. They were raised to believe that sexual instinct were shameful and unnatural. Sexual intercourse was a deed of darkness; sexual desire was something the well-bred man and woman should not have; anomalies and perversions were hurriedly thrust from the mind into a nether region where they festered and broke into strange cankers. (Pearsall, 58-71)

The subject was comprehensively examined by Joan Pether in *Victorian Women* and Peter T. Cominos in "Innocent Femina Sensualist: an Unconscious Conflict". According to Cominos, "by keeping young ladies unaware of their instinctive sexuality, they were raised to believe that erotic desire was both shameful and unnatural, and the ideal woman was passionless." (Cominos, 163). What emerged from this so called "desexualization" of women was a dichotomy between dignity and sexual desire. An unmarried Victorian woman was either respectable, chaste or sexually active, no room for other labels in between these two, one excluding the other. This concept led to the classifications of pure and impure woman. It was strongly forced upon the Victorians the ideology that once an unwed woman had sexual intercourse she was irrevocably stained and consequently socially ostracized.

On the other hand, it was commonly believed that male sexuality was natural and that, as a result, men's alliances prior to marriage were unavoidable. Victorian men were encouraged to have premarital sex as long as they chose a sexual partner from lower class. The prominent differences were emphasized within marriage, as adultery committed by Victorian wives was an act of grave offence while the same act by men was a superficial concern. According to Victorian laws, husbands could divorce their wives on the grounds of infidelity alone, while wives could only procure a divorce on grounds of adultery coupled with another offense—including incest, rape, abuse, or abandonment, among others. According to Martha Vicinus,

that questions the foundation and moral beliefs of the Victorian life and culture. (http://classiclit.about.com/od/tessofthedurbervilles/fr/aa_tess.htm, retrieved 9th of September 2014)

The novelistic depictions of the fallen woman show her being judged by society on the basis of her sexual behavior, regardless of her character and values. The stigma she endured was based largely on how far her sexual behavior deviated from the ideal woman who was the model of virtue, purity, innocence, submissiveness, and self-sacrifice. Not surprisingly, Tess's exceptional good looks bring her unwanted attention from men, but what proves to be the most important for her is her mature sexual appearance.

"A luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, which made her appear more woman than she really was" (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* 37)

Moreover, there is little difference between Angel and Alec in how they view Tess. Both describe her in sensual, physical terms (Pearce 33). When Angel first sees Tess he thinks: "What a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature that milkmaid!" (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* 151). Later in the text, when his sexual desire for her has been fully aroused, his thoughts of Tess are blended with animal imagery:

[Angel] saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake's. She had stretched one arm so high above her coiled-up cable of hair that he could see its satin delicacy above the sunburn; her face was flushed with sleep, and her eyelids hung heavy over their pupils. The brim-fullness [sic] of her nature breathed from her. (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* 198)

This description is important for two reasons. Not only does it underscore Tess's association with animal imagery, evoking the notion of the dangerous woman, but also the description of her mouth is juxtaposed with the color red, which serves as an implicit link to sexuality. To the Victorian mind, the fallen woman and the prostitute were dangerous, mysterious, repulsive and yet, at the same time, compelling. The fallen woman's image as outcast, coupled with her exciting blend of innocence and experience, "came to embody everything in womanhood that was dangerously, tragically, and triumphantly beyond social boundaries" (Auerbach 150).

The physical description of Tess brings out the complexity of her character

He paused, contemplating this definition; the suddenly broke in to horrible laughter- as unnatural and ghastly as a laugh in hell.(Tess of the D'Urbervilles 179)

It is unfortunate that Angel cannot bring himself to acknowledge Tess's virtuous nobility before he deserts her, putting in motion the chain of events that end in her act of murder. Sadly, it is Tess's lack of chastity that consumes Angel, causing him to miss the obvious. Even during a visit with his parents, before he leaves for South America, when Angel's vicar father reads Psalm 31, the chapter in Proverbs in praise of a virtuous wife (Tess of the D'Urbervilles 291) Angel is blind to Tess's noble qualities, linking only her sexuality to her virtue:

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. She raised while it is yet night, and grivet meat to her household. She girded her loins with strength and strengthened her arms. She perceived that her merchandise is good; her candle gout not out by night. She looked well to the ways of her household, and eaten not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and 46 he praised her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excelled them all. (Tess of the D'Urbervilles 291)

Hardy explores the depths of Angel's wound caused by Tess's revelation, leading Angel to extreme gestures. While he was sleepwalking reveals the great psychological torment that he feels inside his soul. He so fervently believes that his wife is dead that he carries her to a coffin and lays her there. Hardy is trying to emphasize the degree to which Tess will sacrifice herself for her husband. She remains completely submissive to her sleepwalking husband as he carries her across the river and to the cemetery. She remains open to the possibility that he may murder her or cause their mutual death, but remains still rather than disturb Angel. Tess therefore makes manifest her promise to Angel by leaving her life in his hands. (Leigh M. Gardner 25-29)

It is interesting to note that Tess's sense of herself as unforgiving and unforgiveable [...] changes after she kills Alec (Morris 136). Furthermore, it is odd that that Angel can forgive murder, although he could not forgive Tess's sexual experience (Morris 141). It is, however, her final act of murder that "consummates her identity as an outcast (Auerbach 172). Tess becomes associated with the pagan world of Stonehenge when Angel places her on the stone altar. Tess is symbolically linked with the pagan world as she declares to Angel: "'And you used to say at

deeds attributed to Grace Poole. (<http://www.shmoop.com/jane-eyre/bertha-mason.html> , retrieved 29th of August 2013)

In Victorian publishing world it's easy to establish that the character of Bertha in Jane Eyre is a symbolic one, the skeleton in Rochester's closet, the mad wife kept prisoner, and making her discomforting existence a secret like dust hidden under the carpet. Although Bertha does serve as one of the seeming villains of the novel, she should be seen more as a critique of a society in which passionate women are viewed as monsters or madwomen. Madness as represented in Jane Eyre can therefore be understood not as reflecting a physical or mental reality, but a social construction and means of control. (<http://www.shmoop.com/jane-eyre/bertha-mason.html> , retrieved 29th of August 2013)

In Victorian England, those who were considered insane could be legally locked up in a home like a prisoner without any documentation attesting their state of mind and insanity. A diagnosis of madness could itself be purely social construction, for the only requisites necessary to confine a person insane is that of saying this person is "disordered in mind", which was often an infamously subjective argument. A woman's emotional fluctuations associated with her life-cycles came to be linked to mental instability and provided a satisfactory explanation for wrongdoing, especially for the middle and upper class female criminal. Emotional excess, diagnosed as hysteria, was also considered a form of madness. (<http://heatherwellington8.wordpress.com/papers-ive-written/understanding-the-madwoman-in-jane-eyre-a-reading-of-wide-sargasso-sea/> , retrieved 4th of September 2013)

Because women were viewed as physically and emotionally weak creatures, they were more likely exposed to madness and often considered medically abnormal as well as morally abnormal. This kind of interpretation is deeply rooted in the Victorian notion that women were inferior to men. This labeling effectively removed her agency and made her a helpless victim of her own biology.

Women were considered childlike, emotional and inherently weak, prisoners of their own female biology, and they were easily integrated into the psychological profile of a mentally unstable. (Leigh M. Gardner , 74). To Victorian men, puberty, menstruation, pregnancy and menopause were proof that women weren't fit to live a normal life and that they were victims of their condition, prisoners of hysteria and lunatic behavior. Apparently, it was much less

her tainted heredity. All these facts are spoken through Rochester's description of his wife and her relatives. Furthermore she is represented as a stain of shame on Rochester's life and an obstruction to Jane's happiness. (Gretchen Huey Barnhill, 149)

Another aspect analyzed by critics is the fact that Jane and Bertha share various attributes in their characters, some consider the two women mirrored each other as they are passionate, restless and willing to follow their nature. Jane is described from when she was a young girl as "such a picture of passion" trying to escape the typical Victorian women's life. Jane and Bertha serve as doubles for one another how are described with passion and fire, how their moods are reflected through nature, alike Jane, Bertha has a passionate personality too. Bertha is described with the same fire as Jane is. Through Jane's eyes, when she first sees her, she appears like "the fiery eye glared upon me-she thrust up her candle close to my face...I was aware of her lurid visage flamed over mine..." (Jane Eyre, 425)

Rochester describes Bertha: "on all fours, it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal..." (Jane Eyre, 425), "a fanatic with burning eternity" (461)

On the surface, Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason are the most opposite female characters an author could conceive. Jane, as an admirer is described as being quaint, quiet, grave and simple, while Bertha is a robust woman "a big woman, in stature almost equaling her husband, and corpulent features" with a "virile force" and "purple...bloated features" (Jane Eyre , 338). In Jane's eyes Bertha is described as

"a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back" who possessed a "fearful and ghastly ... discolored face," "red eyes and...fearful blacked inflation of the lineaments," also "lips . . . swelled and dark." She looks to Jane like "the foul German specter, the vampire" (Jane Eyre , 326).

It is important to note the similarities in their positions and the plots that engage them at Thornfield Hall. They are both prisoners in some way, Bertha is literally trapped in the mansion, guarded by Grace Poole while Jane is figuratively trapped in her red room. But the most important aspect is that they both are trapped, in spirit, in a rigid society, oppressed by the system of British patriarchy. A direct consequence of the male-dominated society they both live in is the automatic reliance on men. They must marry a powerful rich man in order to ensure

subordinate rank and be willing to put personal desires and requirements. The prevalent characteristics of the Victorian Angel influenced women's sexuality and sexual expectations. The moral code demanded that women remain virgins until marriage and only have sexual relations with their husbands; their bodies were considered the propriety of men.

I have established that a woman's role in the Victorian society was determined by her marital status. They were raised to believe that their only purpose was to marry and bare children, be submissive and fulfill their husband will at all costs.

I have described the woman in the Victorian society as she was, passionless and ignorant; by keeping young ladies unaware of their instinctive sexuality, they were raised to believe that erotic desire was both shameful and unnatural. Young girls were groomed for the role of mother and dutiful wife.

Victorian society and the family spawned two kinds of women, the womanly woman and her negation, the wholly whore, the pure and the impure [...]. The pure woman was innocent, inviolate, inspirational and indulged; the impure woman (less than a woman) was doubtful, detected and destroyed. (Venus, 168)

The Victorian age was a time when some believed a woman who was insatiable had a mental disorder, or worse, a manifestation of evil. From this sort of thinking, we get a sense that the Victorians were preoccupied with a very old figure—the femme fatale

In the second chapter, called "Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A pure woman?", I have focused on the character of Tess and I have presented Hardy's point of view regarding his heroine, starting with his intent to defend her honor expressed in the title "A pure Woman". Hardy makes Tess's character absolutely clear to the reader when he identifies Tess in the subtitle on the frontispiece of his novel as "A Pure Woman".

The second chapter focuses on emphasizing Hardy's point of view regarding the concept of pure and impure in the Victorian Era. I have presented the theory regarding the sacrificial ritual and the role that sexually subversive women play within the Victorian society and in relation to Victorian culture and rigid expectation for ideal female behavior and conduit.

The author is trying to emphasize that there is something unnatural and wrong about the Victorian moral conduit and sees Tess as a part of nature, and not a part of the Victorian society; in consequence she should only be judged only by the rules of nature. I have described Tess's honorable intentions that attached to her actions, even if the Victorians condemned her and