

## Women's Death as the Triumph in the Patriarchal World of Victorian Imagination

Roya Nikandam

University of Malaya  
E-mail: [Roya\\_200358@yahoo.com](mailto:Roya_200358@yahoo.com)

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**Abstract** *The novel chosen for this study are Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891) and the Mayor of Casterbridge (1889). I choose Lacan's psychoanalytic theory as a way to understand the psyche or the unconscious of the Victorian construction of gender. I will explore the process of the construction of the symbolic order. The close relation between Lacanian and feminist theories has led me to adopt the latter as well, as espoused by Julia Kristeva in order to investigate the interconnection of these theories through the manifestation of the woman's role as goods. This manifestation refers to the ways in which the female characters are victimized in the patriarchal order, which transforms them into commodities in what Lacan terms the symbolic male-dominated setting. Therefore, it is crucial to study Kristeva's discourse on the connection of women to abjection/death. Kristeva's concept is considered under the postulation of Lacan's psychoanalytic theories, to clarify the attempt of the patriarchal order to repress the identities of women by depicting them as incomplete, and how they can contest this symbolic patriarchal view of the Victorian era. It will examine the paths that women have taken to overcome their oppressive exclusion that law and how women can manifest their capability to threaten this order.*

**Keywords:** *Abjection, ThomasHardy, Symbolic Law, Women, Victorian Era;*

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### 1. Introduction

Feminism as a socio-political theory is concerned with women's oppression and their subordination to men. It aims at liberating women from their oppression and their subordination to men. It aims at liberating women of all the oppression and exploitation they suffer in a patriarchal world. Suffering oppression and prejudices in the world of patriarchy is not exclusive to women of a particular area and time rather it is a "shared psychology" (Delmar, 1986:10), which has brought women together to form a community and defy the domineering forces of the society. As Delmar (1986) states: "One of the most distinctive practices of modern feminism has been the "consciousness-raising" (12) and women have strived to make other women aware of their oppression through campaigns and writings. They have also displayed "an active desire to change women's position in society" (1986:27). According to Delmar(1986), feminism is created for women and "women are its subjects, its enunciators, the creator of its theory, of its practice and its language" (...). Thus, in feminist criticism of the 1970s, considerable attention was paid by feminist theorists to psychoanalytic models of sexuality and subjectivity. Psychoanalytic feminism, with the help of psychological theories, challenges the concept of women as being considered secondary to men. The dispute over the relationship between psychoanalysis and feminism seems to have been started by Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* in which she recognized the contradictions in Sigmund Freud's texts, and focused on Freud's theory of femininity, in which anatomical differences directly affect the structure of the feminine character (Weedon 1997: 43). To defend Freud against Millet's accusations, Juliet Mitchell published her book entitled *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* in which she argued that Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis provide a useful conceptual framework for understanding the construction of human sexuality. She believes that the apparent phallogentrism of psychoanalysis is descriptive of the state of society rather than a precondition of human sociality (Humm 1986: 65). Provoked by Millet's view of Freud and Jacques Lacan's theories as the origin of women's oppression, some other feminists like Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous challenged Lacan's ideas on the Imaginary world and the Symbolic world that have been widely used to understand the development of the personality of women in social constructions. Therefore, this paper will trace Lacanian

psychoanalytic principles narrowed down to the symbolic order and its processes. It examines the unconscious of Victorian cultural traditions in the construction of female's identity as commodity in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), in light of Julia Kristeva concept, abjection/death, , thereby exploring the female capability to threaten the unconscious of her identity in the Victorian symbolic era. In order to explore the nature of Hardy's insight into the unconscious, socially contradictive presentation of his female characters as a male writer, I begin the initial part of the first chapter by examining the various responses of nineteenth and twentieth century critics to Hardy's portrayal of the heroines in his novels.

### 1.1 Thomas Hardy and Women

The unconventional women in Hardy's novels are often more complicated and engaging than their male counterparts. A nameless 1879 review of his novels remarked that Hardy's "story is always the story of one woman in her relations to two or three men; and it is part of this scheme that, though the men do not lack individuality, they are chiefly introduced with reference to the women, and only fully developed at the points of contact with them" (qtd. in Assmann 1994: 10). Even Hardy's remarkable ability to depict vivid female characters may have been the factor which led early reviewers to suspect that his works were in fact written by a woman. In a review essay written in 1883, Havelock Ellis once again referred to the question of Hardy's gender:

Even when this was seen [that Hardy was not George Eliot], many people were still uncertain about the sex of the new writer, and reviewers of Thomas Hardy's works were occasionally doubtful whether to speak of 'him' or 'her'. The cause of this uncertainty is not hard to find. The minute observation, the delicate insight, the conception of love as the one business of life, and a singularly charming reticence in its delineation, are qualities which, if not universally characteristic of women's work in fiction, are such as might with propriety be attributed to it—at all events from an *a priori* standpoint. (qtd. in Assmann 1994: 12)

Some wonder whether Hardy was a critic of current social situations or simply another author reifying the current patriarchal ideology. Margaret Higonnet (1993) points out that "Hardy's texts [...] have been censored for their sexual content, admired for their frankness, decried as misogynist, and described as feminist" (5). With every new novel, Hardy seemed "to have been capable of persuading both his editor and himself that the story envisaged would not actually transgress [...] the unwritten conventions" governing publications of the time. However, "as each new story took shape it proved to dwell not incidentally but centrally upon questions of sexuality and technical immorality almost certain to provoke criticism and complaint" (1993:291). Did Hardy wish to defy Victorian norms, or was he simply so confident in the worth of his writing that he did not consider the possible negative reaction to his work? Michael Millgate (1971) believes that "Hardy's peculiar difficulties with his editors were largely the product of his own indecision, of a characteristic reluctance to take firm positions" (292). Some critics believe that Hardy's characters are in keeping with the prevalent image of woman in the Victorian era; he often portrays women in their most noble role of spiritual guide and loving nurturer. For example, according to Rosemary Sumner, in Hardy's *The Woodlanders* (1887), Marty South has "perpetual faithfulness" to Giles; and in Hardy's first published novel, *Desperate Remedies* (1871), the heroine Cytherea Graye, chooses to be self-sacrificing rather than seek her own happiness, marrying a man she does not love in order to gain financial resources for saving her brother's life (qtd. in Jumonville 1991: 43). M. Houghton (1925) also emphasizes how *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* shows the heroine's capacity for suffering (435), while he regards Eustacia's pride in *The Return of the Native* (1878) as the source of her inability to compromise with life; on the whole he finds Hardy's women "so small and helpless" that Hardy is "pleading for the weaker sex" in depicting them (1925:439-40). Similarly, while Virginia Woolf (1967) believes that women comprise the greater part of Hardy's interest, they stand as the lesser of the two sexes. She claims that men carry the force of rebellion in his novels; women serve to demonstrate a

capacity for suffering (263). Some of the negative public responses of the nineteenth century seem to have come from women readers. Edmund Gosse suggested that “women did not like Hardy’s novels and attributed this phenomenon to the author’s concept of the feminine character” (qtd. in Assmann 1994:13). He later pointed out that the “modern English novelist has created, and has faithfully repeated, a demure, ingenuous, and practically inhuman type of heroine, which has flattered womankind, and which female readers now imperatively demand as an encouragement” (1994:14). Some other feminist critics tend to view Hardy as either a sinner or a saint, a proud defender of female honour or a villain willing to pitifully abase women to serve his own creative needs. As Judith Mitchell wonders: “How does a female reader—particularly a modern feminist reader—read Thomas Hardy? Does she applaud his feminism? Deplore his sexism?” She further observes that “feminist critics seem undecided whether to accept Hardy with distaste or to reject him with reluctance” (qtd. in Kyte 1999: 7). Much of the criticism Hardy received was centered on the way in which he characterized his heroines, resulting in the characters, and Hardy himself, being viewed as highly immoral. In 1881, Charles Keegan Paul, a contemporary of Hardy’s, had this to say about Hardy’s female characters:

They are all charming; they are all flirts from their cradle; they are all in love with more than one man at once; they seldom, if they marry at all, marry the right man; and while well-conducted for the most part, are somewhat lacking in moral sense, and have only rudimentary souls. (qtd. in Kyte 1999: 11)

Based on the responses of many critics, it is evident that there are many complexities and paradoxes in Hardy’s female characters which are not yet completely defined. However, I believe that Hardy, overwhelmed with his unconscious bias as a male writer, shapes his female characters accordingly. This will be clarified with the aid of Lacanian psychoanalytic theories. Hardy not only portrays his female characters as commodities, but also stands as a symbol of a deeply patriarchal Victorian society, since it is through his portrayal that these values are reinforced.

## 1.2 *Lacanian Subject*

Psychoanalytic criticism is a method, which attempts to elucidate literary works utilizing techniques of psychoanalysis (Barry, 96). Psychoanalysis itself is the science of curing mental disorders by probing the relations between the conscious and the unconscious (Barry, 98). Jacques Lacan is a French psychoanalyst (1901-1988) whose works have had exceptional influence on literature as his ideas seem to appeal more to the feminists. Instead of attempting to look at the Freudian unconscious and conscious from a new angle, he tried to allocate more importance to the unconscious as the core of our being and he claimed that unconscious is structured like a language (Lieberman, 88). Hence, differences could be found between Freud’s theories and Lacan’s revisions of them; for instance Bertens (2001) believes that Lacan’s work “avoids the fixed developmental scheme that Freud proposed and instead proposes a relational structure that allows for difference” (160). Grosz believes that the significance of Lacan’s theories lies on the fact that they underscore the originality of Freud’s theories and attempt to justify psychoanalysis in feminist terms. From her point of view, the privilege of using Lacan’s theories in feminism is that they interpret “women’s castration and penis envy” from socio-historical and linguistic point of view (Morris 1993:101). As Lacan’s theories help psychoanalytic feminists understand women’s position in the patriarchal society, his two postulations on imaginary and symbolic worlds and also phallus will be explained in the following paragraphs and the identities constructed for women in the patriarchal world will be identified. Lacan reviewed Freud’s theory of Oedipus complex and chose the term Imaginary for the stage in which the child identifies with the maternal body and before it acquires language and a perception of self (Morris 1993: 103). Lacan interpreted Freud’s notion of the difficult journey from pre-Oedipal stage to Oedipal as a strenuous path towards self-realization. This transition is commenced by the mirror stage in which the six-month old child gains the imaginary perception that it is a separate being from the mother through looking at itself in the mirror or in the mother’s

eyes. Lacan believes that the child's image of itself is a fancied and imaginary one as it is not yet a separate being from the mother. The conception of an imaginary self, which is created within us at this stage, will remain with us and we always look for real and authentic self. However, the child's conception of a social self is achieved only through the resolution of the Oedipal complex. It is the castration complex which results in the child entry to the social order and language system called symbolic by Lacan. The need for speech arises from the end of the unity with the mother while at the stage of attachment to the mother, the child does not need to know any language as its needs are gratified easily. On the other hand, separation from the mother leaves the child in the symbolic in which it has to speak for its needs to be satisfied. Furthermore, he contends that phallus is the signifier in language, which displays the law of father and the loss of the mother. The boy identified with the father as he recognizes him as the possessor of the phallus (Jones 1999: 455). The outcomes of the transition from the Imaginary to the Symbolic will be explained in the following paragraphs.

Contrary to Freud who assumed that penis is the origin of the gender construction. Lacan believed phallus to be what distinguishes the genders. According to him in the imaginary world, women do not suffer from a lack but in the Symbolic world, equation of the clitoris with the penis is nullified in order to recognize women as incomplete and castrated as phallus is the signifier because of the "existing structure of the patriarchal power" (Grosz 1990: 124). The relation to the phallus is what determines the role of each sex in society and it also establishes the structure of romantic relations between men and women. For Lacan, it is the phallus, which defines the subject's access to the Symbolic world and builds up the structure of language as both in English and French the verb is conjugated with either being (etre) a phallus and having (avoir) a phallus. Based on Lacan's definition of phallus, Grosz perceives the phallus as a signifier of the access to or lack of power and self-assertion; "the phallus thus distribute access to the social categories invested with various power relations" (1990:121). She comments on the role of the phallus as depicting women's incompleteness: "When the veils are lifted, there is only Medusa-the women's castrated genitals, lacking, incomplete, horrifying. Salome's dance like strip-tease can only seduce when at least one veil remains, alluring yet hiding the nothing of women's sex" (1990: 121). Her assumption of phallus is what induces men have more narcissistic feelings towards themselves as they recognize women as incomplete. She puts the valorization of the phallus and the negation of the vagina side by side and identifies phallus as what determines the identity of men and women in society. For instance, men are recognized as subjects who can exchange among them and silence them. A woman, then, adopts a seductive, coquettish attitude as the result of her attempt to become the phallus of the object of the desire for the other. For Lacan, the girl should use techniques which include: "Seductive, Coquettish behaviour, narcissism, vanity, jealousy, and a weaker sense of justice-are a consequence of her acceptance of her lack (of the phallus)" (Grosz, 1990:132). They are strategies developed to ensure that, even if she doesn't have the phallus, she may become the phallus, the object of desire for another (1990:132). Psychoanalytic feminist Julia Kristeva, who base her theory on Jacques Lacan's signification of the Symbolic order will be examined in the following part to illuminate women's resistance to men's intention to objectify them.

### 1.3 Abjection/Death

One of the most fundamental aspects of the subject in process, what Kristeva terms *abjection*. She defines it as "the state of objecting or rejecting what is other to oneself and thereby creating borders of an always tenuous 'I'" (McAfee 2004: 46). Kristeva's notion of abjection figures most prominently in her later book, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection* (1982). As I mentioned earlier, Lacan argued that subjectivity arises when a child is at some point between six and eighteen months of age when s/he see her/himself in a mirror and takes the image to her/ himself; however, this identification of oneself with an image is false, because the self and the image are not one and the same. But, this identification helps the child develop a sense of unity in her/him. Kristeva agreed that the mirror stage may bring about a sense of unity, but she believed that,

even before this stage, the infant begins to separate itself from the other in order to develop the borders between 'I' and other. The infant develops this separation by abjection (McAfee 2004: 46). For Kristeva, abjection is "a process of jettisoning what seems to be part of oneself. The object is what one spits out, rejects, almost violently excludes from oneself: sour milk, excrement, even a mother's engulfing embrace." Based on Kristeva's postulation, what is objected to is radically excluded but never banished altogether. In fact, it hovers at the periphery of one's existence, and is constantly challenging one's own tenuous borders of selfhood. Therefore, what makes something abject and not simply repressed is that it does not entirely disappear from consciousness. It remains as both an unconscious and a conscious threat to one's own clean and proper self. For Kristeva (2004), the object is that what does not respect boundaries. It beseeches and pulverizes the subject (46). Based on Kristeva's perception, the abjection speaks of curdling milk, dung, vomit, and corpses and of how one retches at their presence. All this is to show the violence by which the phenomena that both threaten and create the self's borders are jettisoned:

Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring—I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. 'I' want none of that element, sign of their desire; 'I' do not want to listen. 'I' do not assimilate it. 'I' expel it. But since the food is not an 'other' for 'me', who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit myself out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish *myself*. (1992: 3)

Kristeva identifies the phenomenon that sets off abjection: and it is the presence of a cadaver. She believed that death seemed to infect the body and through death, we experience the fragility of our own life. According to Kristeva, "if dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel, 'I' is expelled" (1992:4). She mentions that the presence of a corpse violates the borders:

Deprived of world, therefore, I fall in a faint. In that compelling, raw, insolent thing in the morgue's full sunlight, in that thing that no longer matches and therefore no longer signifies anything, I behold the breaking down of a world that has erased its borders: fainting away. (1992:24)

Kristeva refers to the corpse as a symbol, saying that "it is direct infection of my own living: It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object" (1992:3). Furthermore, Kristeva's view of death was that the object continuously violates one's own borders; it is sickening yet irresistible: "imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (1992:3). Therefore, Kristeva proposes the concept of abjection which considers improper, unclean and disorderly elements of the imaginary as rejected in the symbolic. Her notion of death/abjection as an element for empowering women is used in Hardy's female characters to depict the vigor of women in the face of the symbolic world, and how death threatens the symbolic law.

## 2. Patriarchy Regulate Women

It can be seen in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* that the first bearer of the Name of the Father, whose authority and power exhibits itself through language, is Alec, who suppresses Tess. Alec's patriarchal language is manifested in his conversation with Tess in their first meeting in the fruit-garden at Trantridge. The reader notices the way Alec gazes at Tess—as the possessor of the phallus that desires Tess' phallic body. Based on Lacan's assumption, Alec is positioned as a speaking being and his subjectivity is affirmed by the phallic as a sign of mastery. It is here that Tess doesn't have the phallus, so she becomes the object of desire for Alec:



He stood up and held strawberries by the stem to Tess' mouth: 'No-no!' she said quickly, putting her fingers between his hand and her lips. 'I would rather take it in my own hand.' 'Nonsense!' he insisted; and in a slight distress she parted her lips and took it in (Hardy 1958: 64).

Tess has entered the world of language, authority, and symbolic laws. Alec displays the law of the father here. Alec's function is masculine and he is positioned as having the phallus. It is only through the having the phallus that cultural value and dignity is given to him. It is here that we notice the power and patriarchal language that he uses to suppress Tess. As Kristeva mentions, "the sociosymbolic contract has been a sacrificial contract" (Donovan 1992: 113). Tess is sacrificed by the symbolic Victorian law. She obeys Alec's patriarchal request; and her reaction to this lawful language should be observed as well: "Tess eating in a half-pleased, half-reluctant state whatever d'Urberville offered her" (Hardy 1958: 64). The second meeting between Alec and Tess takes place in his gig. Alec as the possessor of phallus desires Tess's phallic body. While the phallus provides all meaning, Alec manifests its power to Tess. Tess presents her role as lack in the symbolic Victorian society: "now damn it—I'll break both our necks!" (Hardy 1958:79) swore her capriciously passionate companion. 'So you can go from your word like that, you young witch, can you?' (Hardy 1958:79). Alec's forceful words to Tess highlight the function of patriarchal symbolic order, in which her identity has been denied and destroyed. She seems to exist outside the social system, her subjectivity under the control of rules and traditions. With Alec's authority, Tess is observed as a sexual object. "[Alec] knelt and bent lower, till her breath warmed his face, and in a moment his cheek was in contact with hers. She was sleeping soundly, and upon her eyelashes there lingered tears" (Hardy 1958: 101). Alec observes Tess as a sexual object. He assumes Tess to be only sexual object for him to satisfy his desire. Although Tess resists his advances, he does not give up on her. She is only beautiful object for him. The second bearer of the Name of the Father in Tess' life is Angel. Angel grows up in "the symbolic order [...] which is governed by the paternal metaphor and the imposition of the paternal law" (Homer 2005: 57). Angel chooses Tess for marriage based on the rules of a patriarchal culture and the symbolic law that defines her as a pure and saintly woman. However, when Angel finds out that Tess has had sexual relationship outside the marriage (even though it was against her will) it leads him to look upon her as a guilty woman. The superiority and power of law in Angel's blood is so full of strength that Tess' plea for forgiveness is rejected and Angel said that "O Tess, forgiveness does not apply to the case! You were one person; now you are another. My God-how can forgiveness meet such a grotesque-prestidigitation as that!" (Hardy 1958: 264). Angel as the valued party and the possessor of authority, believes that Tess is not good enough for marriage since she is not virgin. Tess fails to become the phallus for Angel to extend his position and power. She was excluded from the symbolic conception of Angel and was repudiated because of her past deeds. According to Joseph Mahan, "in the nineteenth century, it is the woman who incurs the social stigma for behavior for which men may be chiefly to blame" (qtd. in Ahmad 2003: 45). Tess's realization of her fate reflects Lacan's statement that "the symbolic order which, as andro- or phallogocentric, is governed by the father's law" (Fraser and Bartky 1992:123). Tess is suffering under the patriarchal norms which lead to the shattering of her subjectivity. It happens when the symbolic world rejects her as an unchaste that violated the law, and her identity is formed in the patriarchal society which considers unchaste as a dishonor to the family. Alec and Angel assume Tess to be only a sexual object to satisfy their desire and she is expected to become a commodity, the one who served them best. Therefore, Lacan's postulation on the symbolic order and its processes clarify the identity constructed for Tess as commodity in the patriarchal world.

It is Michael Henchard, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, who acts as the bearer of the Name-of-the-Father. His pessimistic symbolic language is manifested in his speech, and it is through the construction of women's subjectivity in the culture of the Victorian symbolic order that Henchard puts his wife, Susan, in a perfectly inferior position: "I'll sell her for five guineas to any man that will pay me the money and treat her well; and he shall have her for ever, and never hear aught o' me. But she shan't go for less. Now then—five guineas—and she's yours" (Mayor 1936: 13). Henchard's putting his wife up for auction serves to highlight Lacan's postulation:

Woman is introduced into the symbolic pact of marriage as an object of exchange along basically androcentric and patriarchal lines. Thus, the woman is engaged in an order of exchange in which she is an object: indeed, this is what causes the fundamentally conflictual character of her position—I would say without exit. The symbolic order literally submerges and transcends her. (qtd. in Fraser and Bartky 1992: 123)

Susan was presented as commodity. Her subjectivity is shattered under the norms of the symbolic society. She is trapped in the symbolic process. Susan's split of subjectivity does not happen just once in her life, but at another instance eighteen years later, when Henchard attempts to treat her as commodity again and buys her back. Henchard's patriarchal symbolic is constructed unconsciously; Susan is expected to be the object of exchange since she lacks the phallus, and she is used to guarantee Henchard's power and mastery. He "sat down at the table and wrote a few lines; next taking from his pocket-book a five pound note which he put in the envelope with the letter—adding to it, as by an afterthought, five shillings" (Hardy 1936: 68). While Susan reacts by saying: "I am quite in your hands, Michael, she said meekly" (Hardy 1936:74). Henchard not only dominates with patriarchal power his wife, but also his daughter, Elizabeth-Jane. He tries to control the society's perception of Elizabeth, and emphasizes the legal language which is constructed under the rules and norms in that symbolic society. This is evident when he scolds Elizabeth for her accent, with even her handwriting coming under scrutiny: as she "produced a line of chain-shot and sand-bags, he reddened in angry shame for her, and, peremptorily saying 'Never mind—I'll finish it,' dismissed her there and then" (1936:131). Elizabeth's identity is presented as commodity in the construction of Henchard's unconscious. He uses his power to make her obey his rules. The extent of her suppression is evident in the line: "Oh, I wish I was dead with dear mother!" (Hardy 1936:137). The other heroine in Hardy's novel whose subjectivity is undone, and plays the role of a commodity in the symbolic order, is Lucetta Templeman. When Henchard becomes mayor of Casterbridge, he takes Lucetta on as a lover. Lucetta believes in his love, and hopes to marry him. She takes care of Henchard for eighteen years in the absence of Susan. However, Henchard abandons her and decides to marry Susan once again. Lucetta is commodified to the extent that Henchard decides to pay her for her services:

Henchard copied the letter, and, enclosing a cheque, took it to the post-office, from which he walked back thoughtfully.

'Can it be that it will go off so easily!' he said. 'Poor thing—God knows! Now then, to make amends to Susan!' (1936:81)

The shift of Henchard's attention from Lucetta to Susan, relates to the woman's ability to become the phallus in this symbolic order:

If, in effect the man finds satisfaction for his demand for love in the relation with the woman, in as much as the signifier of the phallus constitutes her as giving in love what she does not have—conversely, his own desire for the phallus will make its signifier emerge in its persistent divergence towards 'another woman' who may signify the phallus in various ways, either as virgin or as prostitute. There results from this a centrifugal tendency of the genital drive in love life, which makes impotence much more difficult to bear for him, while the *Verdrangung* [repression] inherent in desire is more important. (qtd. in Grosz 1990:136-7)

Lucetta's misery in the symbolic world of laws, in which her subjectivity is submerged, and the status of sexual commodity being pronounced upon her, after eighteen years of living under a false image, is suitably summarized in the following excerpt from Lacan:

She strives to be affirmed as a unique, desirable, special subject, an individual distinct from all other women; yet romantic love relations involve, instead, 'putting her on a pedestal' (the projection of the man's narcissistic self-conception) and/or a reduction to the position of sexual object (receptacle of active masculine

desire). What is more clearly affirmed is not her subjectivity but her ability to be reduced to desired object, which she shares in common with all women in patriarchy. (1968:134)

Thus her fate is to be reduced to an object, which reflects Lacan's postulation that the absence of a phallus is defined as a lack of value, given that the phallus stands for value, limit, authority and law: "For women to be the phallus means, then, to reflect the power of the phallus, to signify that power, to 'embody' the phallus, to supply the site to which it penetrates, and to signify the phallus through 'being' its other, its absence, its lack, the dialectical confirmation for its identity" (qtd. in Hoshyar Rashti 2006: 54). Lucetta adopts a seductive, coquettish attitude as the result of her attempt to become the phallus, or the object of the desire for Henchard. Henchard's love toward her was not real; it was a way to confirm his own subjectivity, in order to be in a position of authority and power. Therefore, Tess, Susan, Elizabeth, and Lucetta are all victimized under patriarchal culture; they are sacrificed in this realm. The principles of Lacanian psychoanalysis used above indicate how their subjectivity is suppressed in Victorian cultural traditions, and their identities reduced to mere commodities.

### 3. Women Defying the Patriarchy

Reading Kristeva, we see that the traditional notion of a stable, autonomous and unified subject is replaced by a more fluid notion of subject, that is, subject-in-process or subject on trial. Kristeva notes that "[a] 'fixed identity' [is] perhaps a fiction, an illusion—who amongst us has a 'fixed' identity? It's a phantasm" (qtd. in Montashery 2006: 15). This relates to the last incident worth noting in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, in terms of Tess' playing with convention: her murder of Alec and own her death in Phase the Seventh, entitled "Fulfillment". Tess's death is the incidence in which the most violence to the body, and accordingly, it is the greatest threat to the patriarchal borders. While Tess enters into the society, she is soon prohibited and repressed within patriarchal cultures; therefore Tess's subjectivity is not complete yet, it is thwarted by patriarchal laws; but the process is to be continued. Kristeva suggests that misplaced abjection is one cause of women's oppression. In patriarchal cultures, women have been reduced to the "fixed identity" of maternal function, that is to say, reduced to reproduction. So, if it is necessary to abject the maternal function, then all will be abjected along with it, and it is this misplaced abjection that is responsible for women's oppression and degradation within patriarchal cultures. Thus, the only conceivable threat to the symbolic while living is death; it can also be considered as a threat to identity.

[Abjection] is an extremely strong feeling which is at once somatic and symbolic, and which is above all a revolt of the person against an external menace from which one wants to keep oneself at a distance, but of which one has the impression that it is not only an external menace but that it may menace us from inside. So it is a desire for eparation, for becoming autonomous and also the feeling of an impossibility of doing so [...] (qtd. in Montashery 2006: 48)

Therefore, death or loss of the corporeal body is the only way Tess can retain any pride or subjectivity. Through her death, she speaks to Victorian readers; she "escapes cultural structuration by retreating out of, rather than into corporeality" (Silverman 1993: 143). It must be noted that before Tess actually dies, but after she has "lost her body," Angel's speech becomes "as inexpressive as silence" (Hardy 1958: 425). For the first time in the novel, a man's words are powerless. Tess' physical act has destroyed the power in all languages. For the first time, Tess' body, rather than being used as a commodity, is an abundance of meaning, threatening the symbolic realm of Victorian conventions. This particular analysis is also applicable in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*; it is the moment of Susan's death that Elizabeth, her daughter, begins questioning: [...] all this while the subtle-souled girl asking herself why she was born, why sitting in a room, and blinking at the candle, why things around her had taken the shape they wore in preference to every other possible shape; why they stared at her so helplessly, as if waiting for the touch of some wand that should release



them from terrestrial constraint; what that chaos called consciousness, which spun in her at this moment like a top, tended to, and began in. (Hardy 1936:119) As with Tess, Susan's death destroys the stability of patriarchal language. The exact border between life and death has been broken, and in fact her death seemed to 'infect' the body, similar to Kristeva's own recollection of staring at a corpse:

Deprived of world, therefore, I fall in a faint. In that compelling, raw, insolent thing in the morgue's full sunlight, in that thing that no longer matches and therefore no longer signifies anything, I behold the breaking down of a world that has erased its borders: fainting away (1992:3).

An old inhabitant remarks, upon Susan's death, that she is "helpless to hinder that or anything now." But Kristeva believes that the corpse is "a border substance, polluting life with death in the same way that other forms of body waste disturb our clear sense of distinctions between living and dead, self and other, safety and harm" (qtd. in Covino 1996: 81). Therefore, Tess and Susan, being armed with the object of death, desire to abolish phallogocentric and patriarchal laws before they are returned to the wholeness of chora.

#### 4. Conclusion

As it has been shown in the study, through the Lacanian psychoanalysis process which is a sample of patriarchal Victorian norms and rules, women were excluded from the patriarchy and they were suppressed in the symbolic world. The identities of Tess, Susan, Elizabeth and Lucetta are all transformed to ones that best serve the patriarchy. Their identity becomes bound up with the meanings and the values of the symbolic rules and the power of that the metaphor and phallus gives them. They are expected to have a lack of subjectivity in order to exist in the Victorian society. It is also clarified with the aid of the Lacanian psychoanalytic theories that Hardy intends to portray his female characters as commodity; however, a heroine's vigor derails the security of both Hardy and Lacan's patriarchal world, and resists this threat through reviving ruined identities. It has been clarified that women have some ability to shatter the symbolic, patriarchal world. Psychoanalytic feminist, Julia Kristeva allows for a paradoxical triumph and shows the awareness of women's struggles in the world of the patriarchy. Women's connection to death, through Kristeva's theory of abjection, highlights that a woman's body can shatter being as an object for men through the presence of cadaver. So, death can break the only one subjectivity in the symbolic patriarchal order and create a split in it. Tess experiences death or loss of her corporeal body, it destroy the stability of patriarchal language. It makes Angel speechless, while Susan's death causes tension and worry to Henchard. She inflicts anxiety upon him.

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