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Erkin KIRYAMAN

Danışman: Doç. Dr. Nevin YILDIRIM KOYUNCU

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Yrd. Doç. Dr. Nilsen GÖKÇEN

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Ege Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü'ne sunduğum "Images of 'New Woman' in the Works of Late Victorian Male Writers" adlı yüksek lisans tezinin tarafımdan bilimsel, ahlak ve normlara uygun bir şekilde hazırlandığını, tezimde yararlandığım kaynakları bibliyografyada ve dipnotlarda gösterdiğimi onurumla doğrularım.

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YÜKSEK LİSANS

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ÖĞRENCİNİN

Adı Soyadı : **Erkin KIRYAMAN**

Numarası : **92120000661**

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Jüri Başkanı

Unvan, Adı, Soyadı : Doç. Dr. Nevin YILDIRIM KOYUNCU

Karar : Ø Başarılı O Başarısız O Düzeltme

İmza :

Jüri Üyesi

Unvan, Adı, Soyadı : Prof. Dr. Dilek DİRENÇ

Karar : Ø Başarılı O Başarısız O Düzeltme

İmza :

Jüri Üyesi

Unvan, Adı, Soyadı : Yrd. Doç. Dr. Nilsen GÖKÇEN (Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi)

Karar : Ø Başarılı O Başarısız O Düzeltme

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INTRODUCTION

In *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), Charles Dickens describes the dichotomous qualities and characteristics of Victorian Period (1837-1901). Dickens delineates the inconsistencies in development and transformation in relation to discrepancies of the age:

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only. (17)

The delineation of the period on composability addresses the question – "What is Victorian Period?" – which cannot be answered fully for a complete understanding of Victorian realities. In the widest sense, David Thomson defines the period as "one of the strenuous activity and dynamic change of ferment of ideas and recurrent social unrest, of great inventiveness and expansion" (qtd. in Abrams et al. 928). Undoubtedly, though industrialism seems to affect the social and cultural life of men and women positively, it also raises questions about gendered spaces. The Industrial Revolution in the 1780s has its major influences in the nineteenth century because it both formed the division of labour and the division of public and private spheres which elevated men's positions and titles in "public" while confined women in "domestic" boundaries. The French Revolution, which excluded women and based its tenets of social contract by men, clinches separate boundaries through the Industrial Revolution, which once again problematizes woman's place in public. The significant male predecessors of the French Revolution like J. J. Rousseau do not let women take part in social life because they believe that woman's physical nature is endowed only with reproduction which is only

fulfilled at private spheres. Therefore, for them, woman's physical nature is not fit for public life. It is true to state that "Men, not women, make the social contract" and this is why the Woman Question in the Victorian Age makes an overwhelming impression on cultural, social and literary studies (Laqueur 156). Leaving women out of the patriarchal social contract, men cements the patriarchal status quo and discourses as seen in the effects of the Industrial Revolution and the nineteenth century ideology and discourses. The Industrial Revolution increases the gap between man and woman by sharpening the edges of the divisions. As Thomas Laqueur also states "the social contract could … be created between men only, [as] an exclusively fraternal bond" (197). The fraternal bond remains intact until the Late Victorian Era when the New Woman emerges as a threat that challenges the contract.

The Victorian Age is the age of Acts which politically and culturally established social standards of life and strived to improve living conditions. The Industrial Revolution empowers the middle class – bourgeoisie – that initiated self-economy or "laissez-faire" which unsettled the previous faith in the division between aristocracy and common people. The changing social relations caused by the Industrial Revolution produced The Reform Bill of 1832, which gave each city a representational political right to be counted in the House of Commons. Thus, middle-class effect is one of the significant issues that shapes the Victorian ideologies. The Reform Bill of 1832, which provided middle-class citizens with suffrages, maintained its effect with The Reform Bill of 1867 that "extend[ed] voting franchise to almost all men over 21" (Moss xviii). Furthermore, The Factory Act in 1833 determines the minimum working age as nine and in 1834 "Poor Law Amendment Act forces able-bodied poor into workhouses in order to receive assistance" (Deirdre xiv). Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 "makes divorce available without a special act of Parliament" (xvi) and Medical Act of 1858 "establishes register of qualified physicians" (x). In 1870, W. E. Forster's Education Act proposes elementary education for children in England and Wales.

In terms of women, on the other hand, the period follows a more rigid and tough path in enhancing the political, social and economic conditions of women. For instance, in 1860 "Nightingale Training School for Nurses [was] established" which promoted women's working (x) and in 1866, women started to demand their voting rights and

John Stuart Mill offered a petition signed by 4,999 women to the Parliament (x). Women gained the right to possess their own wages earned after marriage in 1870. As for their education, it was in 1872 that "First women [were] admitted unofficially to Cambridge University examinations" (x) and it was in 1947 that women were awarded Cambridge degrees. What is more, "Women [won] the right to become licensed physicians" in 1876 (x). For women's marital political rights, 1882 holds significance because in 1882 "Final version of Married Women's Property Act" started to "protect women's right to all property they earn[ed] or inherit[ed] before or after marriage" (xi). What is accurately available in the political arena of the Victorian Age is that women's rights are "secondary" because their demands and rights were taken into consideration only in the 1860s while men's rights were started to be evaluated and supplied in the early 1800s. This inequality creates a conflict in which power and hierarchical relations favour men over women in Victorian Period.

Even though the industrial, mechanical and political developments in the Victorian Age seem to suggest that there are developments in the living standards, they also bring forth the Woman Question since a woman is defined as an "angel in the house" which prescribes her to be obedient, meek, a dutiful mother and wife, and a secondary citizen. Although there are acts which started to improve women's living conditions even in the 1860s, the patriarchal discourses continued to control women's lives. The Woman Question in Victorian England refers to the arguments over women's place in social life that pin down the antagonising voices which either try to defend their rights or confine them to home by excluding them from public life. The Woman Question is an extension of the Reform Bills of 1832 and 1867 because these bills started questions about women's political rights. The Married Women's Property Acts, similarly, held a significant issue in the 1870s since women wanted what they had possessed before marriage. Women's seeking social and political rights in the 1870s, which ended in the suffragette movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, crystallizes the Woman Question as women's strife for emancipation is also a challenge against patriarchal discourses. As a matter of fact, the most important issue that produced the Woman Question is the Industrial Revolution because it resulted in changes in production and the division of labour. Its sharpening the edges between

public and private spheres pushes women to home, which divides the women into two categories in the Victorian England: “angel in the house” and “the New Woman.”

The “angel in the house” is the creation of patriarchal norms that are also shaped by the Industrial Revolution. While men seek their business in public, women deal with domestic issues; therefore, the woman, whose identity is shaped according to the private sphere, cannot articulate herself anymore. The norms of private and public spheres designate women as passive whereas men as active. Man actively works outside and produces, which finds value in the production system. Yet, woman is seen as mother, caretaker, servant and cook, which are perceived as domestic labour and therefore cannot be valued in the exchange system. Unavoidably, the division of labour is the division of spheres that result in man’s activity and woman’s passivity.

The status quo in the Victorian Age follows a patriarchal model in which both social and literary codes degrade and belittle women’s body, capacity for intelligence, thoughts, existences and identities. As Rezzan Kocaöner Silkü argues in her work entitled *Industrialization, Modernity and the Woman Question*, Victorian ideology domesticated women, created angels in the houses and loaded them with the charges of motherhood, responsibilities of virtue and morality, and compulsory marital roles to be followed, all of which end in her sacrifice of self and identity (53, 55, 59). Moreover, women’s obedient and sacrificial characteristics attributed by patriarchy reverberate throughout Victorian fiction which is also dominated by male supremacy: “When novelists and poets dealt with feminist topics, they commonly portrayed women’s domestic and social roles … as doll-like subordinates” (Abrams et al. 941).

While early and mid-Victorian literatures are affective in shaping the reality of women and castrating her identity, the late Victorian fiction strived to transform the “angel in the houses” into the “New Woman” in the 1880s and 1890s. The subjection of women both in fact and in literature furnished a great question in feminist politics because women’s identity is lost and her representation is deluded by patriarchal tradition. Even though the very existence and reality of the New Woman is discussed by Victorian and contemporary critics, it is accurately evident that the New Woman emerged in fiction when the character’s revolts and the New Woman writers’ manners are taken into consideration.

Admittedly, Charles Dickens's depiction of the age in *A Tale of Two Cities* can be adapted to the Woman Question and the New Woman images in order to explain the descriptions and classifications that are related to gender relations based on binary oppositions: It was the best of times for men while it was the worst of times for women. Likewise, it was the epoch of belief in "angel in the house" whereas it was the epoch in doubt of the "New Woman." It was the season of Light for men because he was outside and in public. It was the season of Darkness for women because her domestic sphere and her duties impeded the sunlight. Similarly, it was the spring of hope for the New Woman to strive for freedom and it was the winter of despair when the New Woman was refused, mocked and denied. Men had everything before them: business, money, public life, freedom, socialisation, respect and superiority. Women had nothing before them: no life, no identity, no independence, and no respect, which deemed her inferior. In this sense, it has to men who go direct to Heaven while women are doomed to "the other way," that is, Hell. Still, the New Woman was there to shake the ground and to subvert the realities on which patriarchy and patriarchal values were erected because, as Ann Heilmann suggests in *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts: Marriage and Motherhood*: "the New Woman displayed '[t]rue womanliness'" (xiii). The true womanliness, which is both a literal and ironical statement for the evaluation of the New Woman, refers to the long-awaited woman type that is after her political rights, as in the suffrage movements, contributing to the first-wave feminism and egalitarian world order. Her emergence caused a growing debate over the question of woman's qualities and characteristics which do not fit into the previous portrayals and etiquettes. Her sense and perception of marriage, work, motherhood, morality, sexuality, death, writing, and politics dramatically challenged the ways in which paternalistic norms were dissolved and dissected.

On these grounds, this thesis offers an analytical argument of the images of the New Woman in the Late Victorian Period for the revelation of the New Woman images in male writers' works. For the purpose of this study, I plan to analyse Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* (1885) and George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1895) as responses to and challenges against the concept of the "angel in the house." I claim that the New Woman images in Hardy's,

Meredith's and Gissing's works disrupt and upset the patriarchal discourses of the Victorian Age by challenging the normative structures within the context of marriage, work, freedom, writing, politics, sexuality and morality. The New Woman images in these novels transgress these boundaries and therefore represent feminist traces. In a nutshell, this thesis is motivated by three major questions in order to understand the New Woman images and perceive her revolts against the normative patriarchal discourses in the Late Victorian England: (1) "What/Who is the New Woman in the Late Victorian Period?" (2) "How do the New Woman images challenge norms and authorities of patriarchy that impose "angel in the house" identity onto women?" (3) "How do these aforementioned novels discuss the images of the New Woman within the contexts of sexuality, morality, death, marriage, work, independence, writing and politics?" The New Woman images provide a rediscovery and re-evaluation of women's strife and success in independence and freedom. The final revelation and realization will help to uncover the feminist overtones in the Late Victorian Literature with references to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Diana of the Crossways* and *The Odd Women*.

The first chapter entitled "The Woman Question and The New Woman" introduces the concept of the "angel in the house" that defines woman's condition in Victorian England and her transformation and change towards the image of the New Woman. The first sub-section, "The Woman Question in Victorian England" offers a descriptive account of woman's case and her being conceptualized within the institution of marriage, morality, motherhood, family, sexuality and prostitution. In order to present a wide array of woman's condition in Victorian England, I will use the ideas of several writers and critics like Coventry Patmore, John Ruskin, Walter E. Houghton, Nancy Armstrong, Françoise Basch, Joseph W. Childers, James Eli Adams, and Ann Heilmann. The later section comprises the characteristics of the New Woman and her idiosyncratic images in fiction. Synthesizing the views of Ouida, Sarah Grand, Ann Ardis, Angelique Richardson, Chris Willis, Ann Heilmann and Gail Cunningham, this part presents a clear-cut understanding of the New Woman concept and images. Also, the links between the New Woman fiction and feminist thought will be examined. These two parts show woman's evolving image from submissive and obedient "angel in the house" into the anomalous and socially-ill New Woman image.

The second part of this thesis establishes the theoretical framework that contributes to the discussion of the New Woman in the textual strata concerning the three novels mentioned above. The theoretical premise behind the New Woman is Feminism, the endeavour of which is to emancipate women from socially and patriarchally constructed status quo and norms. In terms of the New Woman images, feminist issues are explained carefully in this chapter in relation to the concepts which have subordinated women. For grasping feminist arguments, I draw upon the ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Toril Moi, Pam Morris, Simone de Beauvoir, Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Virginia Woolf, Ann Heilmann and Lyn Pykett. The current debate in this chapter revolves around, how patriarchal literature creates an anxiety of authorship for women and how feminism and feminist critics deal with such a problem. These remarks upon feminism are significant to point out the New Woman's strife in order to transgress the boundaries drawn around her body, mind and thought.

The third chapter entitled "*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy: Sexuality, Morality and Death" discusses Tess's pioneering the New Woman image despite the fact that she is believed to be victimized by Alec D'urberville, which results in her being a fallen woman and therefore condemned to death in the very end. The basic argument that carries Tess out of victimizing and common interpretations about woman lies at the heart of her individual strife in sexuality, morality and death. Knowing that Tess dies at the very end of the novel, naming Tess as a New Woman seems difficult for many; yet, her transgressing image highlights her anomalous and different vision of reality. The ideas of the critics such as Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Simone de Beauvoir, Ann Heilmann, and Rachel Blau DuPlessis will be employed to clarify the reasons for claiming Tess as a New Woman.

The next chapter concerning George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* analyses Diana Antonia Merion (known as Diana Warwick) as a New Woman within the contexts of marriage, writing and politics. Basing its argument of the New Womanhood on sensational life-story of Lady Caroline Norton, *Diana of the Crossways* takes a more complete definition of the New Woman image because Diana is depicted both as independent and free. Her intrinsic and original New Woman character will crystallize through the ideas of Randall Craig, Ann Ardis, Virginia Woolf, Sandra M.

Gilbert, Susan Gubar and Ann Hailmann. Diana's representation of a complete image of the New Woman emancipates her and therefore contributes to the feminist overtones in Meredith's fiction.

The fifth chapter, "*The Odd Women* by George Gissing: Marriage, Work and Initiatives of Independence," seeks to analyse Gissing's New Woman characters, Rhoda Nunn, Mary Barfoot and Madden Sisters. Dealing with the questions about marriage, work and independence, this section revealingly undertakes a more feminist perspective. The characters are associated with educating women, with grappling norms and issues that shape women, and consequently with challenging the systems inhibiting women's individuality and freedom. With its various voices and versatile thoughts about independence and womanhood, *The Odd Women* is much more explicit in representing the New Woman images as it also discriminates between what is advantageous for the New Woman and her feminist struggle and what makes her fail in her path towards freedom and self-actualization. The clash between these approaches provides confirmatory evidence to decide and classify characters' perceptions of the New Womanhood.

In my conclusion, I will be comparing the attitudes of these three novels – *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Diana of Crossways* and *The Odd Women* – towards the images of the New Woman by taking the various contexts of sexuality, morality, death, marriage, work, writing, and politics into consideration. Furthermore, the perspectives of the authors – Thomas Hardy, George Meredith and George Gissing – will also be discussed as they all give voice to problems of the Late Victorian society by referring to specific fields of arguments such as politics, writing, sexuality, death, morality and work. Such unravelling of these issues is connected to the tenets of feminism which will also be argued in the conclusion. The grounds that these authors stand while representing the New Woman images contribute to feminist overtones while their perspectives and the ways they handle the issue change according to the contexts argued.

CHAPTER I

THE WOMAN QUESTION AND THE NEW WOMAN IN VICTORIAN ERA

1.1 The Woman Question in Victorian England

Joseph W. Childers in "Industrial Culture and the Victorian Novel" draws attention to the transforming and changing nature of culture in the Victorian Age:

> For along with the grand *mélange* of *things* that seemed to flow unchecked out of British factories, a river of knowledge (and questions) about how the world worked coursed through every aspect of Victorian life. The era's most conspicuous outward signs of unprecedented material change – steam engines, factories, railroads, urbanization – denoted even grander transformations in the way people thought and acted. … Not only were people living differently, they were thinking differently, talking and writing differently, acting differently. They were *existing* differently. (77; emphasis in original)

Laconically, Childers's display of active change in Victorian life and culture undermines the assumption that Victorian life is static and impenetrable in its systems and social integration. According to Childers, the reign of Queen Victoria between 1837 and 1901 not only started questions about mechanization, industrialization and progress but also produced one of the significant problems of all times: the Woman Question. The Woman Question refers to the inequality between man and woman in the Victorian Age due to the division of public and private spheres which were controlled by patriarchal discourses in culture. As an ideology, the Woman Question probes into the roles of the woman in society regarding the issues of woman's education, suffrage, legal and property rights and shortly all issues in which woman is depicted as secondary. Because of the development of industry and machines, and social progress, the gap between man and woman increased as the social economy changed from agricultural to industrial. In a nutshell, Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, points out that "[In the Stone Age], [w]hile man hunts and fishes, woman remains in the home; but the tasks of domesticity include productive labour – making pottery, weaving, gardening – and in consequence woman plays a large part in economic life" (80). Without probing into the details of the change it is true to conclude that with the arrival of industrialism and the

rise of middle class, man started to rule his own work in public by making trade, setting up businesses and factories and investing outside. As Susie L. Steinbach suggests "Men went out to do battle in the world(s) of business and politics; by 1840, the ideology of separate spheres emphasized men's identities as workers or professionals, and the husband's and father's identities as good providers" (133). It is clear that woman's role in economic and social life is diminished with the arrival of industrialism even though many lower class women started to work in factories for lower wages. In fact, the Woman Question encloses the economic and legal rights of the lower class women along with middle-class women's struggle for suffrage and property rights. On the other hand, focusing on the rights of the lower-class women will not necessarily contribute to this study as this thesis focuses on the New Woman as a formation out of middle-class women's endeavours.

The change started by the effects of the Industrialism has great influences on public life in the Victorian England in that there emerges the division between the private and public spheres. The division of private and public spheres means that woman's proper place is at home while man's is in public. This division produces the division of genders because both man and woman are indoctrinated into different roles and attitudes. For man, the effect of the division is another issue of argument since the division has significant formative effect on woman and her life. The woman is pushed into the "private sphere" which refers to her domestic roles and duties in family, marriage, motherhood, reproduction and so on. Patricia Stubbs, in *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920*, writes that "Economically impotent and with only a social, decorative and childbearing role to perform, there was an ever widening gulf between [woman's] life and that of the working class woman who had become a wage-earner outside the home, albeit an exploited one…" (3). It is significant that industrialism created a factory system where middle class started to rise. Yet, while the middle class man had economic functions, the women of middle class were domesticated. The only production that she was responsible for was the reproduction of children and rule among the four walls built by men. While man rules both business and social life in public, woman stays at home, which points towards the idea that she does not rule but serve to the sustainability of the system: "Women were expected to be

private rather than public and therefore oriented around domesticity and children" (Steinbach 133). Until the turn of the century, women's roles were controlled in public by men who stereotyped women's existences and representations. In order to understand the Woman Question in Victorian Era, my aim in this section is to explain the characteristics of Victorian woman until the *fin de siècle*. Moreover, the concept of the "angel in the house" and the issues of marriage, morality, home, spinsterhood and social duties of motherhood will also be discussed in order to trace the transformation of the "angel in the house" into the "New Woman."

To begin with, the ordinary Victorian Lady was an "angel in the house" which was coined in Coventry Patmore's infamous poem, *The Angel in the House*. In the poem, Patmore carefully defines the roles of the woman and shows that her only important job is to obey man, rule at home and keep the home peaceful. Even starting his poem saying, "'Tis right / That all should know what they obey / Lest erring conscience damp delight / And folly laugh our joys away" (Patmore 1.1.1.1–4), he immediately foreshadows that obeying the rules defined by the status quo of patriarchal Victorian society carries the utmost importance. In the later parts of the poem, Patmore characterises the idealised woman as a lover and writes that "And still the maid I most prefer / Whose care to please with pleasing comes" (Patmore 1.2.4.3–4).. In this sense, he determines the job of the woman as a maid in the house, who serves and also pleases the master who is totally patriarchal and demanding.

Looking at the ways in which the "angel in the house" is defined, we can easily understand that the beauty of the woman is another factor for Patmore in his preferences of "fit" lady:

> Each beauty blossom'd in the light
> Of tender personal regards;
> And, in the records of my breast,
> Red-letter'd, eminently fair,
> Stood sixteen, who, beyond the rest,
> By turns till then had been my care. (Patmore 1.2.4.7–12)

In these lines, the woman's beauty is associated with nature, which means that Patmore makes the beauty of the woman a natural role even though it is determined by

patriarchal discourse. Also, if she is fair and stood sixteen, she is preferable among others, which totally represents woman as an object because she becomes a property of man after marriage. These characteristics that determine the roles of woman in Victorian Era as obedient, beautiful, preferable, subservient, pleasing and natural, personify her as an angel that also demonstrates her adorable and holy image. The holy image isolates her, creating a different religious realm and surely producing problems in gender relations.

While defining the Victorian Lady etiquette, Patmore's poem interestingly and lengthily delineates the woman as full of patience, conscience, peace, service and pleasure. Attributing such roles and features to the woman, who herself cannot decide for her own living and partner, represents the man as a master in his own patriarchal world in Victorian Era. To summarize what Patmore clearly and basically desires, the following lines depict the angel in the house where she is everything to please and support the man:

> Man must be pleased; but him to please
> Is Woman's pleasure; down the gulf
> Of his condoled necessities
> She casts her best, she flings herself.
> How often flings for nought, and yokes
> Her heart to and icicle or whim,
> Whose each impatient word provokes
> Another, not from her, but him;
> While she too gentle even to force
> His penitence by kind replies,
> Waits by, expecting his remorse,
> With pardon in her pitying eyes;
> And if he once, by shame oppress'd,
> A comfortable word confers,
> She leans and weeps against his breast,
> And seems to think the sin was hers;
> And whilst his love has any life,

> Or any eye to see her charms,
> At any time, she's till his wife,
> Dearly devoted to his arms;
> She loves with love that cannot tire;
> And when, ah woe, she loves alone,
> Through passionate duty love springs higher,
> As grass grows taller round a stone. (1.9.1.1–24)

In these lines, the persona makes the woman responsible for all the actions and does not prefer empathising with her. In all cases, the woman should be silent and demanding man's mercy as she belongs to him, needs his love and strength. Even at quarrels, the man is always right and he should be pleased by the wife's pity in the eyes, sorry face and piteous condition. Concluding his lines focusing on the unrequited love condition of the woman, Patmore feels more honourable and self-respecting. If a woman loves more than the man or if she loves even if he does not love her, it is because woman has to love. All these lines in *The Angel in the House* show that the angel, even though represented as having wings to fly in most myths and religious stories throughout history, is kept silent. She should obey and satisfy her master. That is why she is confined at home where the man masters and the woman obeys like a maid.

In relation to Patmore's poem, the "angel in the house" image is certainly linked to the social institution of marriage which provides a social contract between the individual and society in the Victorian Period. Walter E. Houghton suggests in *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870* that "The Industrial Revolution creates the large, impersonal city and makes considerable wealth a requirement as well as a sanction for marriage" (393). For a clear understanding of the sanction for the marriage, it should be noted that the degradation of women with the arrival of industrialization in economy unlike agricultural phase in society, there emerges only one solution for her: to find a husband who can supply a rich life. Nancy Armstrong explains in "Gender and the Victorian Novel" that

> Compounded by the fact that no bouts of plague, famine, or other natural disasters had limited the growth of the population, people were marrying at a young age. Marry a man with whom you were emotionally compatible if

> you could, but marry a man of material means you must, such novels as *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Emma* (1816) seemed to say, or else face the degradation of impoverishment or, worse, the need to work for a living. (97)

Of course, for many middle class women, the later one was the option so that they could not risk her and their children's lives for working and even for death. But, the woman should possess the qualities of angels and servants so as to be bestowed with the privileges of marriage institution. In *Daily Life in Victorian England*, Sally Mitchell suggests that "Marriage was seen as woman's natural and expected role: it satisfied her instinctual needs, preserved the species, provided appropriate duties, and protected her from the shocks and dangers of the rude, competitive world" (267). The competition was of course both in the unsafe streets of England and in the marketing and manufacturing world of manhood. Moreover, Mitchell adds that "Marriage established her rank, role, duties, social status, place of residence, economic circumstances, and way of life" (268). The establishment of rank brings her the comfortable life in a period in which working class men, women and children had to work for low wages in terrible working conditions with apathetical employers. In this sense, not only was her physical elegance was guaranteed for marriage but also the psychological peace was provided because she guarantees a kind of social status for herself and for her children.

Nevertheless, marriage as a social contract both between man and woman, and the individuals and society, carries a different meaning when taken within the context of the Woman Question. The dependence of women on men in marriage delimits both her economic and public relations. Her responsibility towards her man and society is boundless: to please the man, to teach and feed children and to bring up individuals for the Supreme British Nation (Adams 133). John Ruskin demonstrates in "Of Queens' Gardens" that "it is the woman who watches over, teaches and guides the youth" (73). These duties of a married woman shows her capability of being a mother, organizing the domestic services and the national concerns in patriarchal British Victorian society where the hierarchy of gender relations stands for the balance between the citizens and the race. Glover and Kaplan claim that "femininity's function as the mainstay of nation and state through the affective relations of the family" is one of the precursors of the

nation's wealth and strength (qtd. in King 31). In the family, therefore, a woman's uppermost duty is to the nation because if women do not function as servants, teachers, guides, moralists, organizers, cooks and producers at home, who else should do the jobs weighted down on women? The men could not, because they were busy outside making trade and assuring their high steps in the hierarchical ladder.

The concept of home in the Victorian Period is closely linked to the condition of woman because home is a synonym of the private sphere where most of the women are held captive. Home as a microcosm of age and nation denotes order, peace, family, wealth, comfort and safety. Ruskin, in "Of Queens' Gardens," calls home as the place of peace, and as a result, specifies the woman as the peace-maker in home:

> [T]he woman's power is for rule, not for battle, — her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims and their places. Her great function is Praise, she enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation. … [W]ithin his house, as ruled by her, unless she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error and offence. This is the true nature of home —it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division. … And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her. (77-78)

The home in relation to the active power of man confines woman into the social expectations of patriarchy because woman is not allowed to think, to make business and to improve herself socially. Society bans her from battling, thinking and inventing. If she does not keep away from thinking, inventing, creating and battling, she will be in danger as Ruskin's warnings seem like threats against women. The home is a union where there is no division and doubt. Ironically, home divides the spheres of man and woman. As Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth suggests in *The English Novel in History 1840-1895*, "Domestic life simply prevents women from developing the focus and the 'constant exercise' of skills that men require to succeed in their more public and professional occupations" (213). The use of the woman at home both for domestic service and for pleasure supports the career of man in trade and public sphere which

constantly reproduces the virile discourses against womanhood as manifested in Ruskin's ideas. This shows the fact that man builds a barrier in front of the woman and does not let her bounce it.

As the peace-maker and organizer of home, woman's role is also defined in relation to motherhood, because, as I have stated above, she pleases as a wife and teaches and guides as a mother. Françoise Basch, in *Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel*, shows that

> Worship of the ideal woman merged with worship of the mother, who takes the form of "an angel transfigured and glorified with love … the look of the sacred eyes beaming with an affection unutterable." The mother has an even greater role as mediator between frail humanity and the Creator. (71)

It is clear that the ideal woman is much more idealised when she marries. Still, being a mother affirms her reproductive functions of femininity and demonstrates that by bearing a child, she ensured her service to the nation with a healthy citizen in all aspects. Also, the quote underpins the idea that motherhood binds woman to home forever because she is the one who takes care of and guides her children. She is the private and secondary head of the family and responsible for child bearing because is expected to become a model with her morality, education and domestic skills.

Woman's morality and virtue are other problems of the Woman Question due to the fact that the moral codes repress the identity of woman into prescribed roles, and therefore impedes the emancipation of woman. Morality is a social rule that is prefabricated in Victorian Period and the sexuality is a taboo and a repressed concept. A woman, whose moral ideas are lacking, is not respectable, and thus is not marriageable. Prudery of the age supports the conservative ideas about sexuality. As James Eli Adams concisely suggests in "Victorian Sexualities," "Almost from its first wide currency in the late nineteenth century, 'Victorian' has been a byword for a rigorous moralism centered on sexual repression" (125). The attitudes towards sexuality within the context of revival of the Evangelical movement of 1780s prescribed that morality should be for the gains of purity. In this sense, there was not a personalized or individualised morality of citizens but a collective morality that all people should follow. Adams also highlights the draped piano legs, coining new words for chicken parts and "close your eyes and

think of England" phrase in the first wedding night of the couples (125-126). It is in fact the patriarchal construction of woman because not only her self is shaped according to the expectations of society but also the social references associated to woman's body and sex are banned. The moral conservatism was not personal but worked as an ideological structure. A man has to look at the women around him as sisters and mothers while a woman must dress decently and appropriately, following the rules of ladyship. Walter E. Houghton comments on the concept of home explaining:

> In the Victorian home swarming with children sex was a secret. It was the skeleton in the parental chamber. No one mentioned it. … To keep body and mind untainted, the boy was taught to view women as objects of the greatest respect and even awe. He was to think of them as sisters, whether they lived in palaces or "in the cold sepulchre of shame." (353-354)

As the period was dominated by patriarchal ideology, repression was certainly applicable to women who were expected to be angelical, religious, pure, humble and beautiful. To marry, to be a good mother and a perfect lady, a Victorian woman was heavily indoctrinated into prudery and morality: "Every young Victorian heard his father's voice sounding in his conscience, 'Remember your dear, good mother, and never do anything, think anything, imagine anything she would be ashamed of'" (355). Hindrance of thinking and imagining of doing something immoral shows that patriarchal ideology penetrates to everywhere, both in physical and mental worlds of individuals. Within the context of the Woman Question, morality, then, delimits woman's actions and thoughts and functions as one of the controlling powers of freedom, existence and thinking.

John Ruskin, in "Of Queens' Gardens," writes that "She must be enduringly, incorruptly good; instinctively, infallibly wise — wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation…" (78). The moral advice over woman's corruption reveals that morality is a must and a duty of woman. Her goodness comes from moral behaviours and thoughts. It is clear that morality is a mechanism which shapes woman's self. The moral doctrines order yet disclose the idea that

> She is to be taught somewhat to understand the nothingness of the proportion which that little world in which she lives and loves, bears to the

> world in which God lives and loves; —and solemnly she is to be taught to strive that her thoughts of piety may not be feeble in proportion to the number they embrace, nor her prayer more languid than it is for the momentary relief from pain … when it is uttered for the multitudes of those who have none to love them, — and is "for all who are desolate and oppressed." (81)

The world in which woman should morally act is seen as the reflection of God. Ironically, nonetheless, Ruskin's description of woman's piety demonstrates that she is the one who is desolate and oppressed by moral and patriarchal rules. Though Ruskin tries to delineate the relationship between woman and the Lord in order to show the insufficiency of individual's religious devotion to God, his points ascribe a greater load of morality and religion to woman, which, therefore, canalizes the male's own responsibility of morality and religion onto womanhood. As it is evident in the case of the "angel in the house," the women should be moral angels whose roles for the divine not only represent themselves but also stand for the peaceful family and home.

With her moral stance, a woman is also responsible for bringing up moral children whose goodness, morality and religious thoughts are reasons for appreciation and respect in society. Both the boys and girls are brought up carefully because they are expected to be gentlemen and ladies when they grow up. They will partake in the instruction of marriage of the patriarchal system. Still, what problematizes the education of children is that there is not an equal platform on which women and men are subjected to the same type of instruction and education:

> Keep the modern magazine and novel out of your girl's way: turn her loose into the old library every wet day, and let her alone. She will find what is good for her; you cannot: for there is just this difference between the making of a girl's character and boy's — you may chisel a boy into shape, as you would a rock, or hammer him into it, if he be of a better kind, as you would piece of bronze. But you cannot hammer a girl into anything. She grows as a flower does, — she will wither without sun; she will decay in her sheath, as a narcissus will, if you do not give her air enough; she may fall, and defile her head in dust, if you leave her without help at some moments

> of her life; but you cannot fetter her; she must take her own fair form and way, if she take any and in mind and body must always "Her household motions light and free, and steps of virgin liberty." (Ruskin 83-84)

For the girls' education, the advice shows the tragic naturalization of womanhood and virile and potent position of patriarchal structures. While a man is described as powerful, as he will not be injured by the hammer by which he is struck, a woman is a flower which requires careful sustentation and watering. Ruskin warns the family that if a girl is not brought up morally and traditionally upright, she will find herself in dust, which means that she will not find the appropriate and high place among the members of society. In this sense, the woman should not only be moral but also should teach her children the moral codes of society so that they, especially the women, can be like one of them and marry. This is necessary for the continuity and sustainability of the society's morality.

Even though many women were ascribed to follow the tenets defined by patriarchal Victorian society, spinsterhood was a mockery and a degradation of woman who cannot find appropriate mates and therefore, cannot marry. Spinsters are posited against the "angel in the house" that can form a family, give birth to children and do a social and national service for Britain. The spinsters are surplus because they do not have marital or reproductive functions in society. Françoise Basch states that

> Unmarried women found themselves in an impasse, which after being economic become social. … Having lost her role and dignity as producer, and deprived of the new transcendent function of wife and mother, she became almost an outcast. It was this absolute division between a positive and negative role for woman, this social condemnation of the old maid, which the reformers and pioneers of women's work made every effort to attenuate, if not abolish. (103)

Also called "feme sole," spinsters are isolated and alienated individuals in the Victorian society because they do not fit into the prescribed norms of marriage and reproduction. Spinsterhood was an inappropriate example of womanhood for the ladies and middle class women who improved their domestic skills and became the salient agents of domestic work force. Patricia Stubbs, in addition to Basch's ideas, makes evident that

> Spinsterhood was still regarded as misfortune, marriage as the norm, and feminists and reformers alike supported the factory acts which restricted women's employment in industry not primarily because they objected to factory conditions as such, but because the reality of working women's lives was an affront to the ideal of home and family. (5)

The problem of unmarried women was also a problem of married women because they spoiled the ideal image of home and family and created a double standard in the unitary norms of society. The spinsters' loss of economic power and social prestige as women cause them to retreat from public life. Like the "angel in the house" they end in the private sphere where ideas and even imaginations are controlled by patriarchal social rules.

Another problem concerning women in Victorian Era was prostitution which both blemished the honour and the etiquette of Victorian lady and violated the moral standards of society. Sheila Jeffreys indicates that sex motivated a moral panic in the society and prostitution was a focus of moral concerns (193-195). In *Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and The Novel*, Françoise Basch elaborates on the idea that prostitution was "The Great Sin of Great Cities, The Great Social Evil, and London's Curse" (195). It was a great social evil because it was seen immoral and mother of contagious diseases. Also called "women of the town", "women of doubtful reputation," "nymphs of the pave," "prima donna," "women of pleasure," "fallen women" (195), prostitutes were the symbols of corruption and inferiority. Because industrialization requires less of human power in production when compared to agrarian society, many women could not work and thus they started to sell their bodies. The cities were growing and women who could not work had to start prostitution. Yet, they were outcasts like spinsters because they were seen as impure and unhealthy. As F. W. Newman writes, "A man found a woman already spoiled; he did not do her any harm, poor creature!" (qtd. in Houghton 366). She is poor and in a piteous condition since the man, who abused her, also othered and isolated her.

Seduction, additionally, was an issue of debate in the context of the Woman Question because, though the woman was seduced by the man without her own consent, she was handled as a fallen woman who could not be regarded highly in society. In

Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870, Walter E. Houghton says that "In 1857 Dr. William Acton said that no one acquainted with rural life would deny that seduction was 'a sport and habit with vast numbers of men, married … and single, placed above the ranks of labour" (365). In addition to the commonness of the seductive cases of women, Houghton continues to quote from F. W. Newman in order to exhibit the importance of the case:

> Adultery and Seduction, [the Victorians] avowed, were utter scoundrelism. It was needless to say a word more about them. *At least* (said one) if a gentleman *did* seduce a poor girl, at any rate he ought not to abandon her, but to make her an allowance, to look after her now and then; to maintain her child, if he had one by her; in short, he must honourably take the consequences of his own act. Nevertheless, on the whole, [the Victorians] did not approve of seduction. A man could not exactly put the woman back where she had been. It was a real shame to spoil a girl's after-chances. (qtd. in Houghton 366)

It is evident that if a man seduces a girl, he is expected to bear the results of his action; however, it is important to note that he is given a chance as he can supply food, life and money to the child and fallen woman. Though many do not approve of seduction, it is a way of pleasure. For woman's chances of marriage, yet, she becomes fallen and an outcast with a baby in her hand. She cannot find a chance of marriage and work because of her own fallen state caused by men. In this sense, repression of desire is the first rule for a woman to survive in Victorian England. Nancy Armstrong, in "Gender and the Victorian Novel" points out that "In Victorian fiction, a woman's value as a woman no more depends on her lack of desire than on the machinations propelled by desire that lead her to gratification. True femininity depends on the subject's active suppression of desire" (111). This patriarchal repression of desire represents a critical edge in woman's life because her nature of being a woman is shaped by the paternalistic norms, which isolate her from the self and from society.

These characteristics of Victorian lady were fictionalized in novels by many prominent writers of the time, such as Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë, Wilkie Collins, Anthony Trollope, Anne Brontë, Emily Brontë, George Eliot

and Eliza Lynn Linton. Their characterisations of womanhood in their novels were mostly based on the tenets defined by the patriarchal society. In *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, it is written that "When novelists and poets [in Victorian Era] dealt with feminist topics, they commonly portrayed women's domestic and social roles as educated companions of men or as doll-like subordinates" (941). Until the 1880s and 1890s, these delineations of women in literature showed that their identities and sexuality were constructed by male writers in accordance to patriarchal expectations. These ideologies were effective in all areas related to womanhood and also in literature because literature was dominated by male writers and their fiction about woman was seen as the representative of realities.

1.2 New Woman: Her Emergence and Characteristics

In the late nineteenth century, the Victorian lady's transformation into a woman of independence and intelligence – New Woman – is a debate among scholars because "she" not only unsettles the patriarchal status quo but also subverts the stereotypical representations of women in fiction. The emergence of the image of the New Woman in the 1880s and 1890s is a kind of revolt against all relations and representations that mark woman as other, submissive and inferior; shortly an "angel in the house." It is right to state that the New Woman is a hope for the emancipation of woman because, as Ann Heilmann writes in the introduction to *Marriage and Motherhood*, "At a time of social, cultural and political upheaval, the New Woman epitomized the anxieties but also the hopes of the *fin-de-siècle*" (ix; emphasis in original). Also known as "Novissima, the Odd Woman, the Wild Woman and the Superfluous Woman," the New Woman was a product of repressive ideologies which challenged conservative characteristics of women in fiction (Ardis 1). According to Susan C. Shapiro, "In reality, the New Woman was never *new*; those primarily aristocratic and upper-middle class women who reject traditional roles and strive for equality with men always have been labelled 'new' and have been ridiculed as a phenomenon of the moment, wholly unknown to the ages of the past" (510; emphasis in original). Even though Shapiro dates the emergence of the New Woman back to the 1600s (510), the New Woman of the *fin de siècle* was different because of her infringement of the social norms and codes in

fiction. Ann Ardis writes in *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* that "[F]or her transgressions against the sex, gender and class distinctions of Victorian England, she was accused of instigating the second fall of man" (1). It is important to note that the evolution of Victorian Lady into New Woman image in fiction was constructed as a challenge against the etiquette of "angel in the house" and as the representative of the violation of social and moral codes regarding marriage, maternity, sexuality, power and domesticity.

In *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel*, Gail Cunningham summarizes the emergence of the New Woman in fiction and gives a clear-cut understanding of the term:

> [I]n the 1890s a group of popular writers dubbed "the New Woman novelists" created a sensation with their highly polemical, and often lurid, feminist fiction. Heroines who refused to conform to the traditional feminine role, challenged accepted ideals of marriage and maternity, chose to work for a living, or who in any way argued the feminist cause, became commonplace in the works of both major and minor writers and were firmly identified by readers and reviewers as New Women. (3)

It is obvious that the New Woman in fiction is the symbol of emancipation with her "improper" stance and defiant posture. Stating that the New Woman was from the middle-class, Cunningham also describes her as intelligent, individualistic and determined (11). It means that she is fond of her own independence as an individual, does not act according to the societal laws and is wise, which implies that she knows her duties as a New Woman like educating women in society, challenging the norms which dominate women, yearning for political and social rights equal to men's and creating an egalitarian world order.

The New Woman authors not only represent the New Women characters and their dedicated efforts in the patriarchal world order in their fiction but also epitomize New Woman characterisations. Even though Talia Schaffer in her article, "'Nothing but Foolscap Ink': Inventing the New Woman," argues that the New Woman is an imagination according to some critics of the age, the fictional realm offered her a reality in which she attempted to change the norms created by male authors (39-40). Schaffer

also adds that the New Woman is a modern usage. Her modern sensibility comes from the fact that she rides bicycles, work as a clerk, a typist, a teacher, a college student, a journalist and a shopgirl, lives in flats, struggles to earn money, smokes cigarettes, cuts her hair, wears divided skirts and rational dresses, and walks without her chaperones (39). The examples consist of Sarah Grand, Mona Caird and Lady Jeune, who are in fact both New Women and New Women writers.

Ouida's putting the New Woman in literature, though, seems to marginalize her or captivates and confines her identity, Schaffer writes that "The New Women could be marginalized and dismissed [from reality] … once they were relegated to the ranks of the merely imaginary" (40). Ann Ardis's point about the existence of the New Woman is significant in that Ardis relates the literary imagination to reality:

> Labelling the New Woman a literary rather than a "real" phenomenon, [the] critics locate all "genuine" change, all "real" reform, in the non-literary realm. Thus, they curtail the discussion of art's relation to life that is such large part of the debate on the New Woman in the early 1890s. Moving literature from the center to the margin of culture, they relegate the New Woman novel to the margin of that margin. (13)

Ardis's claims about the relationship between literature and reality carry the argument into the hypocritical criticisms against the New Woman. It is surely known that the novel genre is a popular form of art in the nineteenth century and the field was full of male novelists. Paradoxically, when male authors created the "angel in the house" in their novels, represented men as virile and women as weak, they formed a fictive reality in which patriarchal voices are dominant. This was the accepted case in literary reality. A fervent critic of the New Woman image, Elizabeth Lynn Linton says that it is "impossible to satisfy [New Woman] by any means short of changing the whole order of nature and society," and adds that the New Woman is a lie (qtd. in Ardis 20). Is it true that there was not any trace of the New Woman in reality? In fact, banishing the literary realm from reality means banishing the New Woman writers into a corner, who themselves were the pioneers of the New Woman image. Thus, Eliza Lynn Linton, who is a New Woman in fact, criticizes harshly the New Woman. This shows that the image

of the New Woman in late Victorian Era is both criticised and othered not only by male writers but also by the women who themselves represent the New Woman features.

Fictionalizing the New Woman idealizes her within the context of activism because she is the symbol of woman's liberation movement both in literature and in society. As Ouida explains,

> [S]he demands the lion's share of power due to superior force alone. … She can write and print anything she chooses; and she scarcely ever takes the pains to acquire correct grammar and elegance of style before wasting ink and paper. … Her influence on children might be so great that through them she would practically rule the future of the world … [S]he wants to be admitted into public life. (612-614)

Ouida clearly endows women with new features that will enable them to enlarge the visions of women and transform rules erected by men. It is a call for activism because Ouida advises women to write, print, demand, breed and travel in public. The New Woman is the question of the captivated women and thus she bursts out of the dominated, pushed and chained women. Her desire to be admitted in public life is the labefaction of the private sphere in which she is only seen as a mother, wife and subservient to men. Yet, she wants to transgress the boundaries that are constructed by patriarchal discourses. Even though she seems to carry the New Woman into fiction, her words recreate her and posit her among society.

The emergence of the image of the New Woman is a complex issue since it was defined by a single woman writer but was taken as a challenging topic by many women writers in 1890s. In 1894, two significant New Woman writers, Sarah Grand and Ouida, also known as Marie Louis de la Ramee, published two articles in *The North American Review* focusing on the new aspect of womanhood and her characteristics. Sarah Grand, in her "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," puts forward that

> Women were awaking from their long apathy, and, as they awoke, like healthy hungry children unable to articulate, they began to whimper for they knew not what. They might have been easily satisfied at that time had not society, like an ill-conditioned and ignorant nurse, instead of finding out what they lacked, shaken them and beaten them and stormed at them until

> what was once a little wail became convulsive shrieks and roused up the whole human household. (271)

The discovery of the New Woman shook the pillars on which patriarchy was erected. Claiming that it is the historical and cultural context of Victorian Period that created the New Woman, as society was not able to understand her, Grand displays the ignorance of man towards the autonomous identity of woman in the Victorian Era. Grand's article criticises the norms of patriarchy and explains the protest of women by their newly constructed image. Stating that "self-sufficing and self-supporting [women] are not afraid" of man's power, Grand related "The Woman Question [as] the Marriage Question" (276) attacking the institution of marriage and implying free love slightly. As Grand believed that marriage is an institution where women were enslaved and abused, her image of the New Woman is tightly linked to the one who violated the codes of marriage and changed its structures into a convenient and acceptable one for women.

Ouida's article, "The New Woman," also alludes to the Cow-Woman and Scum-Woman, which was man's product. Ouida interestingly begins her words stating that "The Workingman and the Woman, the New Woman, be it remembered, meet us at every page of literature written in the English tongue; and each is convinced that on its own especial W hangs the future of the world" (610). Being radically reformative and optimistic, Ouida believes that literature depicts "angels in the houses," which cannot address the women who are overwhelmed under the doctrines taught by men and cannot articulate their enslavement and subjection. In her introduction to *Marriage and Motherhood*, Ann Heilmann emphasizes that "… New Woman fiction retained its links with literary realism in that it always located the conditions of women's oppression in contemporary social reality" (xv-xvi). Dealing with literary realism, the New Woman fiction is an antagonism against the patriarchal construction of reality in fiction. Seeing the New Woman as the "remedy for the problem," Ouida's pinning criticisms of socially and patriarchally formulated gender show that a man must shrink into his true proportions (611). Being the "center of controversy" according to Ann Ardis, "In the 1880s and early 1890s, the New Woman was implicated for all manner of 'social ills' — from the falling national birthrate to 'the Problems of Great Cities' and the 'rise of Socialism and Nihilism'" (12). She was an anomaly in the eye of others and was seen as

an equal to a fallen woman who was seduced by men. Yet, Ouida sees the New Woman above the Man (610), who arranged the social system and controlled the ages without concerning his own state and work (611). The New Woman represents her own individuality and improvement because as Lady Mary Jeune reminds us, "she exists entirely for her own edification" (qtd. in Davis 578). The point which lies behind this perspective exemplifies one of the significant characteristics of the New Woman fiction and image: subversion of well-accepted and popular cultural norms. In *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird,* Ann Heilmann draws attention to the challenge in the New Woman fiction by subverting conventions: "One of the defining characteristics of the New Woman fiction was its challenge to and subversion of the conventional dichotomies between literature and political writing, art and popular culture" (1). Heilmann's argument demonstrates that the New Woman fiction is like her character in transgressing the boundaries because it does not fit into the conventional fictional styles of the Victorian Period. Ouida's discussion, in this fashion, places woman above man and therefore lead us to conclude that New Woman fiction is above man's fiction because the New Woman fiction both changes and subverts the realities of fictional boundaries.

In the Late Victorian period, there are many examples of New Woman novels written by both male and female novelists. Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus*, Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did,* Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, Beatrice Harraden's *Ships That Pass in the Night*, L. T. Meade's *The Cleverest Woman in England*, Mrs Edward Kennard's *A Crack County*, Iota's *Anne Mauleverer*, E. M. Hull's *The Sheik*, Mrs Oliphant's *Madonna Mary*, George Egerton's *Keynotes,* Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, George Gissing's *The Odd Women* and George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* are only some examples of the New Woman fiction which are infamous for their undertones about criticisms of marriage, maternity, patriarchy, men, women's liberation and education and work pinning down feminist overtones.

As far as the characteristics of the New Woman fiction are taken into consideration, the New Woman novel demonstrates idiosyncratic features in terms of characterization, themes, issues and styles. In terms of characterization, the New

Woman heroine in the novel is "young, pretty and single" (Willis 53). She is "a keen bicyclist, well educated, physically and mentally healthy, attractive, intelligent, honourable, a Socialist" (53-60). With her traversal stance against both society and stereotypical woman of Victorian Era, the New Woman tries to be equal with men. As Chris Willis writes,

> The heroine spends most of the novel proving her superiority to him, only to capitulate unconvincingly in the final chapter and give up her career aspirations for the dubious delights of marriage to a man who is her physical and mental inferior. If she does not marry she is almost invariably left disconsolate and unsatisfied, having lost her lover to a conventionally 'womanly' woman. (57)

The character of the New Woman is so strong that she considers marriage as her submission to man. In this sense, she challenges marriage roles, the power relations between man and woman. The New Woman author formulates the male characters as inferior, incapable of keeping up with the New Woman's level of superiority.

As for marriage, the New Woman image does not serve the necessities prescribed by the norms of the Victorian Age. Having a sense of freedom and economic independence, the New Woman's perception of marriage institution is the reverse of the one of the "angel in the house." Since the New Woman does not follow the previous and traditional gender roles, she is seen a monster in society. The monster image isolates her from society and carries her into the state of abnormality since the "angel in the house" is the norm while the New Woman is socially-ill. Referring to Mona Caird in "Mona Caird (1854-1932): Wild woman, New woman, and Early Feminist Critic of Marriage and Motherhood" Ann Heilmann fosters a debate upon the New Woman's keenness for her freedom within the context of marriage:

> The ideal marriage … should be *free* … Even the idea of "duty" ought to be excluded … it need scarcely be said that there must be a full understanding and acknowledgement of the obvious right of the woman to *possess* herself body and soul, to give or withhold herself body and soul exactly as she wills. (qtd. in Heilmann 69-70)

The New Woman's demand for freedom in marriage diverges from the Victorian sense of marriage because she does not want to follow a Ruskinian model of marriage, family or duty. She wants to be on her own, which dramatically represents her equality and individuality. In "Masquerade, Sisterhood and the Dilemma of the Feminist as Artist and Woman in Late-Nineteenth Century British Women's Writing," Heilmann also argues that "Marriage and traditional feminine virtues such as sexual innocence and naivety, passivity, submissiveness and self-abnegation come under attack in [New Woman fiction] because they stood in the way of female self-development and independent professional or artistic self-expression" (156). Refusal of Victorian female ideas such as purity, virginity, passivity, self-sacrifice, spotlessness is one of the striking characteristics of the New Woman image since all the associated qualities of marriage demean her and limit her self-actualization. In the introduction to *New Woman Fiction (2): Gender and Sexuality*, Heilmann's characterising the New Woman as anti-marriage supporter illustrates how the New Woman was seen as pathological in Victorian society: "… New Woman writers promoted their protagonists' withdrawal from heterosexual contact which is provided via marriage institution" (xvii). Portrayal of marriage as a degenerate structure or union in the New Woman fiction helps to construct a more egalitarian unitary system between man and woman based on wit, love and independence. This controversial and unconventional delineation addresses a more realistic and true character of woman as opposed to the traditional representations of women in Victorian fiction.

Moreover, the New Woman fiction deals with the problems of inequality, working issues and politics. It is significant that this kind of fiction is a politicized version of the Victorian novel because not only the gender-oriented questions are thematised but also the political, economic and social rights of women are problematized pertaining to career, motherhood and intellect. In *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird*, Ann Heilmann contrasts the New Woman fiction and conventional novels of the age and thus concludes that the New Woman fiction disseminates the authoritative discourses in conventional novels:

> New Woman fiction navigates the "complex vibrations" between mimicry and mockery, the invocation and implosion of hegemonic structures in

> culture and literature and, in Bakhtinian terms, the collision of "authoritative" and "internally persuasive" discourses in rather more direct, carefully controlled and even flamboyant ways than might be assumed. (2)

Inverting the traditions of love and romance plots of Victorian novel by focusing on the ideas of women who try to work, earn, live, and claim their own rights, the New Woman fiction "convey[s] a political message in a light-hearted way" (Willis 54). Gail Cunningham, in *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel,* claims that education, law and improvement were the real factors in the emergence of the New Woman (4-5). Cunningham also adds that "[T]he New Woman represented everything that was daring and revolutionary. …[She] had high ideals; she examined the world from an intelligent and informed base … [and] would try to go on her own way according to her own principles" (10). The more she learned and knew, the more revolutionary and socialist she became in order to close the gap between the sexes. For her, there is no distinction between the sexes in terms of morality and personality; the only problem is that what is provided for one lawfully should be provided for the other (14). It was the New Woman's first concern within the context of individualism and social equality. Ardis says that "[she] struggled to renegotiate the gender-based division of labor … took the streets to support animal rights and protest the new laws requiring prostitutes to have regular physical examinations" (15). Her active challenge against the odds and the inequalities in society shows that the New Woman fiction is totally political and social. It is a social-problem novel because with all the dynamics of the text, the characters are the advocates of certain and determining aims like liberation, equality and work.

In the New Woman novels, the New Woman heroine is the symbol of equality, individuality, change, challenge, revolution and revolt in order to destroy the conventional structures of society, which seem to confine women and their liberation. In "The Man of the Moment," Sarah Grand summarizes the basic objective of the New Woman: "We are bound to defend our own sex, especially when we find them suffering injustice, injury, poverty, and disgrace, until men are manly and chivalrous enough to relieve us of the horrid necessity" (620). The New Woman, therefore, gives voice to both her own problems and her sisters' problems. Kate Flint in *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* mentions how the New Woman novels affect their readers and create an

empathy among women in terms of their problems of gender, inequality, economy and political rights (581). Analysing the ways in which woman becomes an active agent in reading, which as a result, shows her discussant and intellectual status, Flint argues that "[T]he relatively downbeat endings of [these] novels ensure that the reader is not lured into total identification with the central character" nonetheless, she fantasises a reality in which she might "have been stronger and have struck more bravely to her principles; or that social pressures did not render principle stances almost impossible to maintain" (297).This feminist function of the New Woman novels is to awaken the readers by showing the ills and inequalities in society via the New Woman heroine who tries to oppress the mechanisms that trap women.

Through the prescriptive, symbolical and instructive ways of the New Woman heroines, the New Woman Novel becomes a didactic form of fiction. It not only affects the readers who read about a woman who works and improves herself but also instructs and engrains in the readers with feminist or womanly concerns. Ann Heilmann's introduction to *New Woman Fiction (1): Marriage, Motherhood and Work*, specifies the target of the New Woman fiction along with the messages it conveys in relation to the public audience:

> By organizing [New Woman] fiction around the primary concerns of the Victorian women's movement (marriage, motherhood and moral reform; gender roles, sexuality and personal development; education and the professions; political emancipation), feminist writers created a gynocentric genre at the intersection of cultural politics and political activism, within whose framework feminist ideas could be articulated, theorized and popularized for a predominantly female mass market. (ix)

The New Woman novel challenges the feminine images presented by traditional writers and therefore draws attention to the other side of the medallion: woman and liberation. The New Woman fiction is a feminist protestation against the rules which dominate women. That is why the New Woman fiction tends to create a didactic fiction to draw the attention of the female mass market because it needs its support by questioning the status quo. Angelic Richardson and Chris Willis suggest that "Many New Woman novels were strongly and overtly didactic, bringing debates on femininity to a wider

audience, and unwittingly underscoring the negative publicity which the periodical press lent to the figure of the New Woman" (24). The feminist ideology in the novels carries activist messages for female readers. The plot, which showed the transformation of the New Woman character from bad to good, slavery to freedom, poverty to richness, encouraged many women to think about the Woman Question. It also gives voices to freedom, equality, working, public life and liberation to which the women characters are closely bound.

The New Woman fiction, with its anomalous women characters, struggled to form a new perception of morality. Traditionally, morality constituted the norms of womanhood in Victorian England. Because of the social codes, prudery and the evangelical tenets, morality for woman meant chastity, honour, purity, virginity and virtue. It was a social bond and any woman whose name was called with immorality was fallen and unchaste. Yet, New Women novels represent a subjective form of morality because the New Women characters are aware of the fact that what enslaves women is the institution of morality. That is why they also depicted a crumbling sense of morality, which was not unitary and dictated. Gail Cunningham states that

> [The New Woman novel] was the novel which could investigate in detail the clash between radical principles and the actualities of contemporary life, which could portray most convincingly the stifling social conventions from which the New Woman was trying to break free, and which could present arguments for the new standards of morality, new codes of behaviour, in the context of an easily recognisable social world. (16-17)

These points show that the Woman Question, as one of the biggest problems of the Victorian Age, concerning the gender relations, economy, politics, education, arts and culture, remained highly untouched in traditional Victorian novels until the New Woman novel problematized the concept of femininity and the image of the "angel in the house." Morality, imposed by patriarchal society, was seen as something individual and it worked operationally for the cases in which women and men were taken together in order to revolt against the taboos. The emergence of the New Woman was a moral revolt and reform: "Social purity … became transformed by the very discourses it [New Woman novel] set out to transform" (8). Evidently, the New Woman novel was against

the moral codes since they were imposed on women more than the men and, as a result, caused the subjection of women.

The New Woman novel, interestingly, is the novel of desire. What I mean is that this kind of fiction does not ignore the characteristics of human beings and their first and basic need of sexuality. Sexuality is emphasized in most of the New Woman plots because the character does not ignore her desire which is a natural result of being a human. Ann Ardis, in *New Women, New Novels*, puts forward that New Women novelists deal with the topics of sexuality, use the sexual relationships as the basis of the plot in an experimental way and therefore present the reality as it is (36-37). Ardis also adds that "[The New Women novelists] are interested in rewriting an aspect of nineteenth-century realism — the idealized representation of 'Womanhood' — which the naturalists neither criticize nor correct, notwithstanding the alleged scientific accuracy of their representations" (37). The misrepresentation of womanhood is not only about the image that the male desires and thus forms but also about the hypocritical denial of sexuality and its connotative meanings. A woman is endowed with the mechanism of reproduction, which is the cause of her maternity and fertility. Still, repressing her sexuality, controlling the very function of reproduction and most importantly ignoring her desires is the main argument of all.

Within the perspective of desire and sexuality, "the responsibility will lie with the English New Woman novelists to 'defy censorship of prudery' and present 'the truth' about human sexuality" (Ardis 37). Thus, because of the realist images that contain sexual references and sexuality, many New Women have been regarded as highly sexual beings (Cunningham 14). Instead of denying sexuality as something immoral and blemished, the New Women novelists discussed sexuality freely. James Nobel says that "these novelists are not mirroring and representing a sexuality that exists 'in a domain of nature outside of and prior to representation'" (qtd. in Ardis 85). Since sexuality is the basic component of human nature, the representation of sexuality in fiction contributes to a realist depiction of human desire. As Ardis adds, "these writers [New Woman novelists] are *producing* or constructing sexuality. In their narratives, the body of the New Woman serves as a proving ground for new conceptualizations of 'human nature'" (85; emphasis in original). In this fashion, even

though “Her sexual anarchy accentuated contemporary fears about the shifting categories of gender and sexuality, while her growing cultural resonance enhanced concerns about the feminization of literature and the impending death of virile Englishness,” the New Woman novels produce new women types whose identities are not oppressed by the master but emphasized by their own characteristics (Heilmann ix; *Marriage and Motherhood*). Sexuality, therefore, is not a forbidden fruit for them but a nutrient of freedom and individual identity.

In conclusion, from 1837 to 1901 the norms of the Victorian Age were the source of the questions about woman. Even though the woman was described as an “angel in the house” in the early and mid-Victorian Periods, the emergence of the New Woman at the turn of the century contributed to the real nature of woman. It was in the New Woman novels that the woman as the heroine of the novel managed many things: she made money, became rightful mother, contributed to the economy, travelled freely, wrote and printed as she desired, realised her own sexuality, divorced her husband if she did not love, rode bicycles, changed and challenged the patriarchal order. The New Woman novel is not only the novel of the turn of the century but also the novel of the modern because it strikingly provides an insight and freedom given to women and their evolved sensibilities in the novel form.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW WOMAN FICTION AND FEMINISM

Ann Heilmann's ideas concerning the relationship between the New Woman fiction and feminism lays the ground of the theoretical framework of my thesis. In her introduction to *Literary Degenerates*, Ann Heilmann demonstrates feminist concerns by drawing attention to the importance of the messages the New Woman fiction conveys:

> [A]lthough the Late Victorian debate on New Woman fiction was a debate on feminism in literature, this central aspect was often obscured by other issues: realism, naturalism and decadence; the question of whether sexually explicit literature should be available to all; the controversy about the moral purpose (or otherwise) of art. The specific questions New Woman fiction raised about the construction of gender and male violence in society, about the institution of marriage and motherhood, and about women's right to radically redefine every aspect of their position in the world, were frequently submerged in the sensationalism of the "sex" question. (xv)

Heilmann's opinion of feminist issues in the New Woman fiction rather than realism, naturalism or decadence is much more appropriate for the revelation of women's literary history because, even though the aesthetic values matter for literary frames, the analytical vision requires a more in-depth study of gender relations and identities that were explored, changed and subverted in the New Woman fiction. Thus, it is an undeniable fact that the study of naturalism, realism and decadence in the New Woman fiction deludes us into accepting the available representations and realities of women who were already lost among the pages of conventional Victorian fiction. Nevertheless, the discovery of women's thoughts, actions and identities engenders a debate over the question of feminist objectives in the New Woman fiction. Therefore, as my aim of this thesis suggests, this chapter offers a descriptive account of feminism and feminist thoughts that will contribute to the discussion of the New Woman fiction in my following chapters.

It is evident that the long Victorian Period was the source of diverse acts and manifestations that contributed to the nineteenth century feminism and women's liberation project. The flame that was kindled in 1792 by Mary Wollstonecraft in her *A*

Vindication of the Rights of Woman was in fact maintained by John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* in 1869. Wollstonecraft, in "Observations on the State of Degradation to which Woman is Reduced by Various Causes," questions woman's reduced and reified condition in society in an exclamatory way:

> And will moralist pretend to assert that this is the condition in which one-half of the human race should be encouraged to remain with listless inactivity and stupid acquiescence? Kind instructors! [W]hat were we created for? To remain, it may be said, innocent; they mean in a state of childhood. We might as well never have been born, unless it were necessary that we should be created to enable man to acquire the noble privilege of reason, the power of discerning good from evil, whilst we lie down in the dust from whence we were taken, never to rise again. (34)

Wollstonecraft's questioning the patriarchal norms which shape woman's reality and identity is intrinsically a call for activity. Attacking the moralists, "kind" instructors and the structures which maintain status quo by degrading woman and seeing her as a subsidiary tool, Wollstonecraft reprovingly addresses the patriarchy and demonstrates a revolt against the on-going system of patriarchal power. Likewise, John Stuart Mill supports Wollstonecraft's call and therefore asserts in *The Subjection of Women* that men need women to define their own mastery and superiority:

> All men, except the most brutish, desire to have, in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave but a willing one, not a slave merely but a favourite. They have therefore put everything in practice to enslave their minds. The masters of all other slaves rely, for maintaining obedience, on fear … All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others. (14)

The dialectics of gender relations work to assist men's guaranteeing superiority and as a result becoming masters. Nevertheless, power relations do not let women to realize themselves. That is why woman is defined in relation to man by being settled in binary conflicts which elevate men's hierarchical order in society. In order to challenge these

rules of captivity and subjection, Mill also states that "All causes, social and natural, combine to make it unlikely that women should be collectively rebellious to the power of men" (14). Her ideologically controlled self is the product of patriarchal status quo that limits the boundaries of space, action and speech.

Given these facts, feminist agenda in the Victorian Age starts with the political rights that spearhead the feminist action in modern and contemporary cultures and literatures. For instance, the acts and campaigns organized by feminists drew great attention to the harsh working conditions of women in the factories, the social and economic inequality between man and woman, woman's strife for freedom and her desire to be in public life. In *Industrialization, Modernity and Woman Question,* Rezzan Kocaöner Silkü points out that "By the 1800s, women's activism became more radical. They also contributed to parliamentary politics by supporting their candidates through their pressuring strategies, and by compelling shopkeepers or workers to vote for the candidate they supported" (50). Inviting equal rights for women, middle class and working class women contributed to social improvement. To illustrate, Lady Caroline Norton, with her campaign for maternal custody, contributed to the Infant and Child Custody Bill of 1839 by opposing the ideas "based on the dominant view of woman as a naturally dependent, self-sacrificial, nurturing, maternal creature" (Pykett 55). From a historical point of view and within the political progress, the Contagious Diseases Act of 1864, 1866 and 1869 forced many women to be checked when the police wanted and therefore were found contrary to women's intimacy, privacy and freedom. Prostitution was seen as the Great Social Evil of the big cities, yet, many feminists agreed that it was the politics and patriarchal hierarchy that produced the unemployment and poor conditions for these women. Also, Married Woman's Property Act of 1882 was a reform for the married women as it allowed her to own her property after the marriage, too. On the other hand, woman's suffrage was not supported by the Reform Bills of 1832 and 1867 and women had to fight for it until 1928, when it was finally granted by the Representation of the People Act.

The political insufficiencies to represent women's economic, social and political rights were parallel to the perceptions of patriarchal order which controlled public and private lives of women. In 1854, Florence Nightingale wrote in *Cassandra* that "If [a

woman] has a knife and fork in her hands for three hours of the day, she cannot have a pencil or brush" (1664). The domestication of woman in the house rather than socialising in public life showed man superior and higher while woman stood as other and inferior. As Sarah Stickney Ellis wrote in "The Women of England: Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits," "To men belongs the potent … consideration of worldly aggrandizement; and it is constantly misleading their steps, closing their ears against the voice of conscience, and beguiling them with the promise of peace, where peace was ever found" (1653). In this sense, the stance of feminism to defend the rights of women, educate the society like militants of socialism and fight for the equality between the sexes, demonstrates the humanist ideology that individuals are equal, their difference does not mean that they are unequal. The inequality arising from the imbalance of rights between man and woman and of the patriarchal political system is challenged and changed by feminist activities both in social life and in literature.

As far as literary constructions of womanhood and representations of sexes and women are taken into consideration, feminist thought deals with the problems of what it means to be female, feminist and feminine. By making clear distinctions among these three words, feminism vehemently argues that feminist ideology is political and it tries to deconstruct the patriarchal, hierarchical and compulsory dictations. For the distinction among feminist, female and feminine, Toril Moi writes that "Feminist criticism … [is] a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature, at least not if the latter is presented as no more than another interesting critical approach on a par with a concern for sea-imagery or metaphors of war in medieval poetry" (117). Seeing that the concept of power is at the very centre of ideologies that need to be criticised, Toril Moi adds that "feminists want to combat" (120). The combat is against the biological determination of femaleness and the social construction of femininity. Both of these are the implied reasons of inequality and power relations. Cultural thought become natural facts. That is why the cultural interpretations of woman's biology masquerade as natural facts. The goal of feminist criticism is to deconstruct the binary oppositions that are classified around the distinction of activity and passivity under which man and woman are classified according to their active and passive roles. Thus, in literature, the cliché

and stereotypical woman characters created by the writers are analysed carefully and distorted in order to emphasize the fictionalized identities.

Biological difference, in relation to feminist perspective, is the centre of argument because it not only reminds woman that she is different from man but also shows the biological fact that becomes her destiny. The ancient idea that female does not have a penis is the simplest explanation. Aristotle puts forward that femaleness is deformity because it is not a male but female:

> Aristotle says that the courage of a man lies in commanding, a woman's lies in obeying; that 'matter yearns for form, as the female for the male and the ugly for the beautiful'; that women have fewer teeth than men; that a female is an incomplete male or 'as it were, a deformity': which contributes only matter and not form to the generation of offspring; that in general 'a woman is perhaps an inferior being'; that female characters in a tragedy will be inappropriate if they are too brave or too clever. (Freeland 145-146)

Defining femaleness as defect and malformation, Aristotle's views on women are based on biological essentialism which shapes woman's body and identity. Pam Morris, in *Literature and Feminism,* calls "biological essentialism" as the determination of inequality and injustice (1-2). She also adds that "a woman's nature" is an inevitable consequence of her productive role. This deterministic and essentialist idea specifies the role of woman within the borders of her productive roles (3). Sigmund Freud, the prominent psychoanalyst of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, claims that male is the active agent whereas the female is the passive one, because the ovum which waits to be inseminated passively by the active sperm of the male is the biological fact a woman cannot deny (Lecture XXXIII, 114-115). Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, therefore, conclude that "Freud's texts are increasingly misogynistic" (7). In this sense, the clash between passivity and activity is symbolically attributed to the clash between woman's and man's biological difference. That is why Luce Irigaray concludes that woman is defined in relation to man's body and penis, which ends in woman's inability to represent and understand herself:

> The girl … has no right to play in any manner whatever with any representation of her beginning, no specific mimicry of origin is available to

> her: she must inscribe herself in the masculine, phallic way of relating to origin, that involves repetition, representation, reproduction. And this is meant to be "the most powerful feminine wish" (78). (qtd. in Castle 97)

Irigaray's probing into the feminine wish reveals that woman is seen as bound to man, which hints at the idea that "she" is a subordinate to "he." The fact that woman is delineated repetitively in relation to man is linked to her cultural, literary and social representations in which she is lost from the very beginning. In this sense, Simone de Beauvoir's exorbitantly famous words ring in our ears: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (273).

Though woman is endowed with reproduction, the taboo of sexuality for women is one of the points that problematize her condition in literature. In the introduction to *Marriage and Motherhood,* Ann Heilmann states that "… New Woman and feminist writers shared a sense of outrage about the sexual double standard and about legislation which reinforced it and legitimized men's sexual exploitation of women" (xix). Supressing the desire and sexuality of woman is also suppressing her identity because a natural fact of human's characteristics is prohibited for women while a man explicitly performs his desire. In *The Second Sex,* Simone de Beauvoir draws an analogy which combines sexuality and identity tightly:

> Sexuality most certainly plays a considerable role in human life; it can be said to pervade life throughout. We have already learned from physiology that the living activity of the testes and the ovaries is integrated with that of the body in general. The existent is a sexual, a sexuate body, and in his relations with other existents who are also sexuate bodies, sexuality is in consequence always involved. But if body and sexuality are concrete expressions of existence, it is with reference to this that their significance can be discovered. (71-72)

If woman's sexuality and body are degraded, ignored or totally invisible to herself, her identity also vanishes because there is no reminiscence of woman but a construction which is built by men. Sexuality, thus, matters because it assures her identity and existence. Revealingly, the feminist approach vehemently sees her [sexual] desire equal to men's and as a result, her identity and existence are fundamental issues that

contribute to her sex and sexuality. Yet, there are social forces that entrap her individuality. For instance, in the Victorian Period, as I have argued in my first chapter, a woman is supposed to be chaste and moral, shortly, the "angel in the house." If she has a sexual relationship before marriage she is doomed to be alone and fallen. As a result of her inappropriate action, she cannot be a good mother, honourable citizen of Britain and even cannot work. Yet, even though a man is condemned when he spoils the chastity of a woman, he is not doomed to a horrible end. While a woman is othered and alienated from society, a man can continue his life and public duties. He can even marry a pure woman who deserves to be his lady and mother of his children. The inequality lies in the instances of sexual double standards.

The patriarchal system not only creates the myth of woman biologically in different ways but also politically constructs her with the patriarchal language and the discourses. It is significant to note that in a world where economic and public relations are fulfilled by men, women cannot act freely and are abused by the male tongue. As Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore argue, "Language does not merely name male superiority: it produces it" (4). The fact that language not only emphasizes the superiority of men over women but also circulates the constructed and fabricated patriarchal order displays a reality which is made up by male system. The order has a sacred and shared language among men who contribute to the sustainability. Quoting from Jacques Lacan, Pam Morris suggests that language contributes to social and gender identity: "Because language … subjects us to its law, the term 'subject' is used within [the] framework of thought in preference to 'individual'" (100). The connection between woman and language functions as the system of differences; that is why the binary oppositions elevate male power, cement his ideological impositions and publicly annunciate him as the superior. However, the same language degrades and belittles woman[hood], describes her as inferior and other, and therefore functions as a tool which does not contribute to her true identity but reshapes her according to the male dominated society's tenets.

It is evident that the role of the language to set up a formulation is undeniably effective on women. The influence of patriarchy is also observable in the literature where men write and women cannot. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their famous

work, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*, ask immediately "Is a pen a metaphorical penis?" (3). Arguing that "The male quality is the creative gift," Gilbert and Gubar put forward the very reality in Victorian fiction: Victorian writing represents male citizens and under that fiction lies the hierarchy. The hierarchy in fiction does not represent any sites where the clash among men occurs. It is the hierarchy which shows man over woman: "*Underneath all these is the imagery of succession, of paternity, or hierarchy*" (Gilbert and Gubar 5; emphasis in original). The representations of women in novels are symbolically designated to prescribe women how to act in society or to show them the terrible ways in which a woman could be devastated if she did not follow the moral, social and domestic rules. The feminist perspective, on the other hand, reads these novels from different angles to see the power relations, to analyse the underlying mechanisms and dynamics of the very degrading and captivating points.

Gilbert's and Gubar's evaluations of the nineteenth century novel within a gender-based context clearly point out that there is a father-son relation in writing:

> As Harold Bloom has pointed out, "from the sons of Homer to the sons of Ben Jonson, poetic influence [has] been described as a filial relationship," a relationship of "*sonship*." The fierce struggle at the heart of literary history, says Bloom, is a "battle between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites, Laius and Oedipus at the crossroads." (emphasis in original; 6)

The writer, in this respect, is the father as the author becomes a role model for the following male generation that has a desire to write. The offspring of the author, father, master and ruler follows the same pattern which builds a language to secure his own place, generates a patriarchal domination over women and bequeaths his fiction to the next generation. The fiction, thus, becomes an educational and hereditary inheritance for men. The educational side also emphasizes the education of women through literature because the fiction created by men reflects the social norms and duties that a woman should have: "Having defined [women] in language and thus generated them, he owns them, controls them and encloses them on the printed page" (12).

Within the context of the canon which is established by/within paternalistic tradition, writing becomes a social and political act. Defining the norms and stabilizing

the customs of the society in which the division between manly and womanly duties are predetermined, the novels written by most male writers create a cultural arena of subordinated gender inequalities:

> Writing was a cultural rather than a purely individual phenomenon, and the social context of literature was more than an explanatory 'background.' Fiction, it seemed, both manifested and influenced the ways in which societies understood themselves and the world. Literature was in this sense profoundly historical. (3)

Significantly, the novels written in the Victorian Period illustrate the confined women images well enough to reflect the superior states of men. The potent, virile, strong and independent depictions of men in fiction remain as a tradition while most women characters have to deal with problems of sexuality, motherhood, morality, economic difficulties, familial ties, sickness and death.

By contrast with male writers, the women writers of the nineteenth century were hindered from writing because of the idea that a woman cannot write. Mary Ann Evans, using the pseudonym George Eliot, writes in "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" that

> We may remark, by the way, that we have been relieved from a serious scruple by discovering that silly novels by lady novelists rarely introduce us into any other than very lofty and fashionable society. We had imagined that destitute women turned novelists, as they turned governesses, because they had no other "ladylike" means of getting their bread. On this supposition, vacillating syntax, and improbable incident had a certain pathos for us, like the extremely supererogatory pincushions and ill-devised nightcaps that are offered for sale by a blind man. We felt the commodity to be a nuisance, but we were glad to think that the money went to relieve the necessitous, and we pictured to ourselves lonely women struggling for a maintenance, or wives and daughters devoting themselves to the production of "copy" out of pure heroism—perhaps to pay their husband's debts or to purchase luxuries for a sick father. (180)

Ironically, George Eliot comments on the woman writer who writes in order to survive. The common belief which imposes that women writers do not present any knowledge of

the real world but intrigue the readers with their imaginative and unrealistic representations produces a copied version of male tradition because if a woman writer desires to write, she cannot fully depend on idiosyncratic writing styles but follows a way in which one can also find the traces of male tradition. The feminist perception does not deal with these problems in a detailed way but looks at the interesting and distinct ways in which the women's literature represent women and the related problems such as emancipation of women, education, conjugal relations and so on.

As for the male tradition in fiction-making, Dale Spender in "Women and Literary History" suggests that "the literary traditions represent the views and values of one small select group of men who agree that those who are not in their own image are not worthy of recognition – or that they are available for exploitation – then the divisions of good and bad, rich and poor, dominant and subordinate, are readily constructed" (31). While many women writers are ignored, because of the fact that the divisions between man and woman work against women whereas the positive sides of the oppositions aggrandize the men, the male writers who do not represent the true nature of women but [re]construct her according to the conservative values of Victorian ideology prevail in Victorian fiction. Still, what feminism seeks for is the evaluation of the writing and fiction in relation to the qualities of both sexes. Women should be taken into consideration for the evaluation of literary history and in other aspects of life because women of the time who write do not constitute a minor group whose voice is cowed. Still, the major canon in novel writing in the nineteenth century was dominated by male writers whose descriptions and representations of the related topics appeared to be totally true. So, is realism which mirrored life as constructed from the male point of view a truer and completer version of reality while women and her act of writing are confined? This is the main paradox while analysing the literary text which either gives way to women or quarantines her skills and worldview due to the patriarchal concerns in writing.

The New Women fiction created by women writers therefore deals with the problems of reality and women's place in the reality, which is closely linked to feminist politics. The 1880s and 1890s fiction not only produces a sensation but also define the functions and roles of the women writers while formulating the New Woman. Lyn

Pykett in *Improper Feminine: The Women's Sensational Novel and the New Woman Writing* asserts that

> If the New Woman writing was a distortion of reality, the woman writer was a distortion of nature. Within the terms of a discourse which defined her as a mere copyist or detailist, a woman could only become an artist by throwing off 'the habit of her sex' (Waugh 1894:210). Thus by aspiring to be an artist, rather than merely a woman writer, a woman automatically unsexed herself. (41)

It is significant to note that the New Woman writing challenged the realism in fiction which was formulated and dominated by patriarchal order. By redefining the modes of realism in relation to women's roles and desire for equal rights, the New Woman writers shook the ground on which patriarchal realism and tradition of writing were erected. In terms of feminist perspective, "The exclusion of women from the literary canon as a political as well as aesthetic act is being addressed and remedied, but impatience with such patriarchal prejudice is not enough for most feminists" (183). Yet, the inclusion of the real nature of women and woman's writing in fiction demonstrate the fact that woman is explained in all aspects not only in reality but also in the fiction reality defined by both male and female writers. As Pam Morris writes in *Literature and Feminism*, "It has traditionally been believed that creative forms of writing can offer special insight into human experience and sharpen our perception of social reality. Literary texts may, therefore, provide a more powerful understanding of the ways in which society works to the disadvantage of women" (7). Only upon knowing that fiction creates a reality through the very language of patriarchy, does one grasp the idea that literature is another system whose wheels were turned by men.

Fundamentally, the feminist ideology foregrounds that women and men should be equal in life in terms of sharing the same political, educational, cultural, social and economic rights and independence. Heilmann's introduction to *New Woman Fiction (2): Gender and Sexuality*, emphasizes that "Feminists [are] concerned with female equality, economic autonomy and freedom from institutional ties and fixed gender roles" (xv). In fact, the inclusion of arts and literature to the fields politics, culture, education and economy enlarges the scope of feminism as a mode of reading because dealing with the

problems associated to women and gender studies in literature both provides an exploration for the reasons of patriarchal order and women's marginalization, and contributes to the quarantined literature and arts created and done by women writers and artists. Charles E. Bressler, in *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, suggests

> Feminism's goal is to change [the] degrading view of women so that all women will realize that they are not a "nonsignificant Other," but that instead each woman is a valuable person possessing the same privileges and rights as every man. Women, feminists declare, must define themselves and assert their own voices in the arenas of politics, society, education and the arts. (103)

When the very common idea is taken into consideration, the feminist thought can be sought in the field of literature as the literature done by women writers was both isolated and alienated. Yet, by applying the feminist perception into life and understanding the Women's very natural need for freedom in all fields of life, literature seems to be the exodus through which women not only liberate themselves but also challenge the male tradition in writing by depicting the truest and most real nature of women and by educating the readers from all ages.

The revisionist feminist literary history ignited a revival of the canon because, though there were many women writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they were pushed aside and their works were not considered as the works of art but as nonsense. The phallocentric discourse, thus, remained as an essentialist part of Victorian novels written by most male writers because the perspectives offered for the reader was not unsexed but really gendered. Evidently enough, the revival of literary history both looks into the works produced by women and explores the representations of women and her characterisations in the works of male and women writers. In this sense, as Günseli Sönmez İşçi suggests, the most frequent words are closely related to the prefixes of "re-" that are used to examine women's place in literatures: re-vision, re-definition, re-creation[1] (161). As the representations of women need redefinitions in terms of emancipation and equality, the feminist agenda examines the women

[1] Translation mine.

characters, her typology and actions in relation to literary, linguistic and artistic fields because the suggested alternatives interchangeably present a new argument for the sake of feminist ideology.

Writing, linked with both language and representation, is a medium which portrays women in literary works and also manifests her life and strife towards freedom in public and private life. Though the act of writing was possessed by men once, leading women writers in Victorian Period manifested their identities and search for freedom in all areas of social life through their writing. Hélène Cixous, Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen in "Laugh of the Medusa" urge women to write stating that "And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it" (876). Writing helps to redefine and reinvent the ignored identities of women in literature and therefore creates a more genuine and self-reflective work. Cixous and Cohens also argue that writing is an individual act which will resurrect the confined and essential nature of being when women's confinement and censored body are taken into consideration (880). The feminist platform is designed to discover women's writings and to contribute to the canon of the women writers in all literatures. Though Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva want to form a community in which a sole language is invented to be spoken and written by women (qtd. in Guerin et al. 184), writing ideologically subverts the reality constructed by patriarchal subjects and therefore becomes susceptible. Therefore, writings by women not only are the manifestations of their beings and existences but also are the grounds which produce discussions on justice, equality and freedom. Also, within the context of writing, the female characters show their existences and awareness through writing in literary works similarly. They stand for the women writer of the novel and the female characters who are malignantly and superficially portrayed by male writers.

Accordingly, Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* states, "The title WOMEN AND FICTION might mean, and you may have meant it to mean, women and what they are like, or it might mean women and the fiction that is written about them, or it might mean that somehow all three are inextricably mixed together and you want to consider them in that light" (1). In this sense, Woolf addresses a controversial topic in that writing both in fact and in fiction might mean importantly for women. In relation to

the ideas aforementioned, writing symbolically provides a common ground for woman in the fiction by reflecting the desire for freedom and self-expression. When a woman character writes letters, novels, stories and poems in the fictionalized world, she overcomes the boundaries drawn for her by the patriarchal operatives of the society which sublimates morality, religion, prudery, domestic values and familial obligations. Writing means a way of protestation, a reminiscence of existence and surely a version of material reality in which identity is discovered.

Woolf's penetration of the boundaries of writing in *A Room of One's Own* connects women's writing for survival and independence of the writer. Her quandary question, "The world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing?" (Woolf 50) explains the fact that "it is the masculine values that prevail" (Woolf 72). The masculine desirability and advantage in tradition is the core where woman drowns. Her representations are delineated by men and therefore, the reality of woman is not her reality but the construction and fabrication of men's imagination: "[S]ince a novel has [the] correspondence to real life, its values are to some extent those of real life. But it is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex; naturally, this is so" (Woolf 72). In order to subvert and deconstruct the fabricated reality and its normative structure, feminism calls for a new type of reality and identity in which the New Woman stands out because she is the one who will not be victimized by the pen of the men. Woolf challengingly adds that "Men were no longer to her 'the opposing faction'; she need not waste her time railing against them; she need not climb on to the roof and ruin her peace of mind longing for travel, experience and a knowledge of the world and character that were denied her" (91). Also, her refusal of following the paternalistic tradition in writing presents the non-performative style of women's strife of writing because she no longer believes the patriarchy's reality, order and norms: "It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men, for if two sexes are quite inadequate, considering the vastness and variety of the world, how should we manage with one only?" (Woolf 86). The polyphonic faith in Woolf encourages diversity and thus discourages singularity which stands for man in fiction-making. The authorship of

men dissolves in the hand of Woolf. Her response clearly answers the question of Susan Gubar and Sandra M. Gilbert in *The Madwoman in the Attic*: "What does it mean to be a woman writer in a culture whose fundamental definitions of literary authority are … both overtly and covertly patriarchal?" (46). Concomitantly, it is the dissolution of the patriarchal tradition and the labefaction of the anxiety of authorship.

In conclusion, encompassed within the independence and freedom, feminist criticism clarifies the assumption that woman is other, inferior and bound. On the basis of the argument above, feminist criticism seeks to represent, revaluate, reconsider and subvert the realities or ideologies which dominate woman's identity, her true nature and literary representations in the literary history. Woman understands that these cultural norms are not natural facts and therefore are apt to change. Simone de Beauvoir highlights in *The Second Sex* that gender is a cultural construction, not a natural one. She also contemplates upon woman's transforming self and identity which are the new and unconventional characters that define and provide liberty:

> The free woman is just being born; when she has won possession of herself perhaps Rimbaud's prophecy will be fulfilled: "There shall be poets! When woman's unmeasured bondage shall be broken, when she shall live for and through herself, man – hitherto – detestable – having let her go, she, too, will be poet! Woman will find the unknown! Will her ideational worlds be different from ours? She will come upon strange, unfathomable, repellent, delightful things; we shall take them, we shall comprehend them" ([Rimbaud] [i]n a letter to Pierre Demeny, May 15th, 1871; Simone de Beauvoir's note]. … What is certain is that hitherto woman's possibilities have been suppressed and lost to humanity, and that it is high time she be permitted to take her chances in her own interest and in the interest of all. (672)

Beauvoir seems to suggest that the New Woman is out to try her chances for proving her identity and existence in patriarchal conventions which dissolve through her actions, speech and character. Her controversial and anomalous character is what feminism assigns, demands and manages. She is no longer under the patriarchal rules and norms which enslave and abuse her body, existence, language, thought and emotion. She is the

New Woman and her image transgresses and transcends the “angel in the house” and conventional types of womanhood.

CHAPTER III
TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES BY THOMAS HARDY: SEXUALTY, MORALITY AND DEATH

> "Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Æschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess. And the D'Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing. The two speechless gazers bent themselves down to the earth, as if in prayer, and remained thus a long time, absolutely motionless: the flag continued to wave silently. As soon as they had strength, they arose, joined hands again, and went on.
>
> – Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

Thomas Hardy, one of the great Victorian novelists and poets, produced many works ahead of his time, such as *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), *Jude the Obscure* (1895), *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* (1898) and *Satires of Circumstance* (1914). These are only a few of Hardy's significant works of art because when Hardy died in 11 January 1928, he left fourteen novels, more than forty short stories, over nine hundred poems and two dramas (Diniejko). In almost all his works, Hardy delved into the questions of humanity: "For Thomas Hardy, writing is a means of experimenting with the possibility of human happiness and love in a universe which is at best indifferent to human aspirations" (Brown 85). His concern to perceive and understand the human existence reverberates in his style and writing because "[his] novels often succeeded at least on the surface in giving the impression of a social awareness, even a concern with manners. Hardy fills them with exquisite courtesies, and he is even sentimental about refinement" (Goodheart 215-216). It is true that in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* Hardy follows an

impressionistic pattern in which he both configures woman's identity through/within diverse contexts and deconstructs the patriarchal ideology in a shadowy manner. As *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was published in 1891, the stereotypical woman was carried into a platform on which everything is blurry. The bleariness is also seen in her character because it is not easy to define and classify Tess as a New Woman. Hardy's novel is a product of the *fin de siècle* in which realistic and aesthetic concerns clash due to the social interest in shaping the reality through fiction. Tess's characterisation fits into the delineations of the New Woman although Hardy does not directly present Tess as a New Woman who both physically and conceptually challenges and resists the norms of Victorian ideology (as seen in George Gissing's *The Odd Women* and George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways*). She becomes a pioneer of the New Woman since her discrepancy and abnormality can be traced within the contexts of sexuality, morality and death. In this sense, the issue under scrutiny in this chapter is Tess's representation of the New Woman image in which she transgresses the "angel in the house" and attempts to rejuvenate and modernize the traditional and stereotypical woman of the Victorian Age.

To begin with, the first issue that contributes to the argument of Tess's image of the New Woman is sexuality through which she seems victimized and intrigued. On logical grounds, there is no compelling reason to argue that the Victorian Age prohibits sexual connotations concerning women. James Eli Adams, in "Victorian Sexualities," suggests that "Almost from its wide currency in the late nineteenth century, 'Victorian' has been a byword for a rigorous moralism centered on sexual repression" (125). Furthermore, in *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870*, Houghton explains the secrecy of sexual intercourse in the family because talking about sex in public is a matter of immorality which distorts the unity of decorum (353). Houghton also adds that "the sexual act was associated by many wives only with a duty and by most husbands with a necessary if pleasurable yielding to one's baser nature: by few, therefore, with an innocent and joyful experience" (353). It is evident that sexuality is a matter of chastity for Victorian women and a taboo in women's thought and action before marriage. After the marriage, it becomes a duty for reproduction.

Tess's condition, however, is not centralized on a deliberate sexuality as a deviant act; for the sake of being deviant accepted from the female norm. Her only endeavour is to atone the death of Prince because "she regarded herself in the light of a murderess" (Hardy 36) and to follow the hereditary surname of D'Urbervilles by going to the mansion of the D'Urbervilles family (39). But, "her mother's plans for 'claiming kin'" does not increase Tess's social status but reduces her into a natural object which is to be silenced and subordinated by a man (41). This is the first point in which her clash with tradition starts. Ann Heilmann, in the introduction to *New Woman Fiction (1): Marriage, Motherhood and Work*, states that "When the heroine of a New Woman novel is not a mother but a daughter, the text frequently revolves around the conflict between a male-identified older woman intent on socializing her daughter into patriarchy, and the younger woman's struggle for self-determination" (xix). Evidently, Tess's mother wants her to follow a patriarchal surname which both guarantees their social status and maintains patriarchal power relations. Until Tess's sexual intercourse with Alec, the story revolves around her desire and her mother's demand for the aristocratic surname.

When Tess meets Alec, there emerges an erotic scene in which "[Alec] D'Urberville began gathering specimens of the fruit for her, handing them back to her as she stooped; and, presently, selecting a specially fine product of the 'British Queen' variety, he stood up and held it by the stem to her mouth" (44). Even though Tess says "No –no!" twice, Alec finds her refusal nonsensical (44). This scene is significant to reflect Hardy's concern for sexual impressions. He does not hide the sexuality between the lines but means it directly because sexuality is a natural side of being a human. Yet, Alec's actions are tempting and tantalizing, which draws the attention of Tess and in a way arouses sexual desire. On the horseback, Alec says "Don't touch my arm! We shall be thrown out if you do! Hold on round my waist!" (59). The call for sexuality is disambiguated by Alec's intentions and since Tess is a woman, she responds in a close time. Immediately afterwards, Alec says "Let me put one little kiss on those holmberry lips, Tess; or even on that warmed cheek, and I'll stop – on my honour, I will" (60). But Tess refuses saying "I don't like you at all! I hate and detest you!" (62). Tess knows that love brings kiss and she should not kiss a man if she does not love him. Interestingly,

Tess falls in the hands of Alec in "Maiden No More," and therefore becomes a different woman who determines her "self.". Hardy warns us against, "An immeasurable charm was to divide our heroine's personality thereafter from that previous self of hers who stepped from her mother's door to try her fortune at Trantridge poultry-farm" (84). In "Sexuality in the Victorian Novel," Jeff Nunokawa points out that "the sense conveyed so fully in Hardy that erotic attraction, and in particular male heterosexual desire, has the destructive force and the aura of inevitability that we attach to a natural disaster" (126). Since the cultural becomes the natural in woman, Tess's anomalous desire and action causes a natural disaster. Yet, it is true that the destructive power of Alec is, in fact, a reconstructive and deconstructive power for Tess's identity because as Simone de Beauvoir writes "'Anatomic destiny' is … profoundly different in man and woman, and no less different is their moral and social situation" (368). Pre-sexuality and post-sexuality, therefore, matters for Tess because sexuality becomes a formative force in her future life, which is a milestone in her transformation.

Tess's leaving childhood and passing into adulthood through sexuality manifests her rite of passage. The discovery of self via sexuality is characterised by her evolving nature and body, which convinces us that Hardy presents a girl's bodily and psychological change in time with the help of sexual encounter. Ann Heilmann, in her introduction to *New Woman Fiction (2): Gender and Sexuality*, propounds the view that the New Woman and feminist fictions focus on the construction of gender roles and sexuality within the changing and evolving state of the character: "Devoting considerable narrative space to the childhood and adolescence of their heroines, and highlighting the clash between traditional and individual temperament, social role and personal identity, many feminist writers called attention to the social construction of gender and sexual relations" (x). Hardy's questioning gender roles seems to suggest Alec as victimizer and Tess as victimized. Similarly, sexual relation between Alec and Tess validates the view that a woman is readily represented as a body that is to be penetrated and Alec's masculine and womaniser attitude completes the plot. On the other hand, Hardy's probing the double standards is motivated by his perception of sexuality because Hardy does not describe Tess as a woman who is fallen and dead from the very beginning. Sexuality is situated between innocence and experience,

through which one can analyse Tess's evolving identity. Tess's accusation of her mother after the sorrowful incident saying, "How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house four months ago. Why didn't you tell me there was danger? Why didn't you warn me?" (Hardy 95) manifests the clash between childhood and adulthood, which in the following chapters of the novel, leaves their places to adulthood. The accusation and inquisition of the mother shows that Tess breaks off the advice coming from a traditional mother and therefore leads her way to self-determination and self-actualization.

The sexuality, which is directly deployed in the narrative to focus on male and female desire, carries Tess's innocent womanhood into a more experienced sense of existence. To portray the issue in Beauvoir's terms, sexuality is a different action for woman because Tess, after having a sexual intercourse with Alec, seeks for a recovery and this recovery is expected from Alec:

> [S]he is divided against herself, she longs for a strong embrace that will make her a quivering thing, but roughness and force are also disagreeable deterrents that offend her. Her feeling is located both in her skin and in her hand, and the requirements of one are in part opposed to those of the other. In so far as she can, she chooses a compromise; she gives herself a virile man, but one young and attractive enough to be a desirable object; in a good-looking youth she can find all the attractions she covets. (371)

Tess's loss of innocence is in clash with her experience because she is in "melancholy" (Hardy 91). Alec is not ready for Tess and does not accept any kind of institutional bond. Tess's desperate situation is worsened by her thoughts about society, marriage and her loss of virginity. She wants to save her social position as a working-class woman via marriage which ends in failure because Alec does not propose marriage but promises a secure working life like a master who regulates the working conditions. The idea of marriage echoes in the mind of Tess, yet she is not able to put her ideas into words:

> Get Alec D'Urberville in the mind to marry her! He marry *her*! On matrimony he had never once said a word. And what if he had? How she might have been impelled to answer him by a crude snatching at social

> salvation she could not say. But her poor foolish mother little knew her present feeling towards this man. Perhaps it was unusual in the circumstances, unnatural, unaccountable; but there [sexuality] was; and this, as she had said, was what made her detest herself. (95; emphasis in original)

Her questioning the option of marriage is a way of looking for an exit as she feels trapped and confined by the social rigidity of Victorian status quo: "a respectable girl should be completely ignorant about sex and sexuality until initiated by her husband on the wedding night" (Mitchell 369). Tess's desire, thus, ignores the reality about sexuality in Victorian sense and therefore follows a different path and code of sexuality in which Tess seems victimized but formed as the progenitor of the New Woman (un)consciously. In this sense, Tess has to bear the consequences as a strong and independent woman, which hints at the idea that she is on her own throughout the novel until the end of her existence.

Tess's experience through sexuality withstands the normative ideology of Victorianism where domesticity is appreciated for the women while public life is restrained. Nancy Armstrong writes in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* that "writing about the domestic woman afforded a means of contesting the dominant notion of sexuality that understood desirability in terms of the woman's claims to fortune and family name" (8). In this respect, sexuality for Tess is a denial of her surname which she is in search of for her family's sake. Since she does not have a fortune as Prince the horse is dead now, she is on her own. That is why sexuality does not victimize her but liberates her. Tess has to survive as a fallen woman and she must get rid of the etiquette of fallen woman for the sake of her individual and existential freedom.

As a rebuttal to this point, Tess's baby, Sorrow, who is an outcome of an unwanted sexual intercourse, seems to chain her to social responsibility. It is evident in the novel that Tess acts as a mother responsibly and cares for the baby. For instance, when the baby was ill, "[t]he baby's offence against society in coming into the world was forgotten by the girl-mother; her soul's desire was to continue that offence by preserving the life of the child" (Hardy 107). In fact, Tess's strife to save her baby is a way of acknowledging sexuality and the result. She does not hate the baby because she is aware of the fact that maternity is based on sexuality. Then, Tess takes the baby to a

parson who refuses to baptise it (108). As a result, she baptises the baby on her own but Sorrow is lost. Tess's inclination to save the baby is in contrast with her traumatic past: "So passed away Sorrow the Undesired – that intrusive creature that bastard gift of shameless Nature who respects not the civil law; a waif to whom eternal Time had been a matter of days merely, … new-born baby human existence, and the instinct to suck human knowledge" (111). Obviously, the baby intrudes in the life of Tess as the result of sexuality; yet it has to die in the novel because Tess is destined to become a woman of independence and difference. In fact, Tess does not want to be bounded by the baby because she knows that it will cause many societal troubles for Tess. Though the baby dies because of a sudden illness, Tess foresees its death when she thinks of the moral codes of the society: "'she wishes the baby and her too were in the churchyard,' observed the woman in the red petticoat" (104). Hardy, wittily, does not want Tess to utter the death of her own baby but projects her wishes into the mouth of another woman passing by. On these grounds, what seems evident is that Tess does not want an attachment which undermines her "sex." She is not in search of passivity but tries to activate her energies: "she felt that she would do well to be useful again – to taste a new sweet independence at any price. The past was past; whatever it had been it was no more at hand" (105). In narrative terms, the death of the baby seems cruel but in terms of Tess's freedom, it becomes a necessity.

After the death of the baby, domesticity was replaced by public life in which Tess looks for work in different places. Sexuality, in this sense, is not only linked to experience but also refers to Tess's independent economic and individual quest. Within this respect, Tess kills the "angel in the house" and constructs a new identity. Killing the angel in the house is indeed a way of eradicating "the doll of English fiction for Hardy" (Ingham 137). Nancy Armstrong argues that "sexuality is a cultural construct … and … written representations of the self allowed the modern individual to become an economic and psychological reality; and …the modern individual was first and foremost a woman" (8). The energy of sexuality which is Tess's desire is in fact effective on Tess's travelling throughout the novel. It means that even though Tess is situated at home before sexuality, she starts to travel for work after it. Truly, it is the reversal of the division of spheres. She is ready to look for work which will economically and

psychologically motivate her. In the beginning of Chapter Fifteen, Hardy cannot help himself quoting from Roger Ascham, the tutor of Elizabeth I: "'By experience,' says Roger Ascham, 'we find out a short way by wandering'" (Hardy 114). Tess is associated to experience because she is now a New Woman who was transformed from a traditional type of woman:

> Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice. Her eyes grew larger and more eloquent. She became what would have been called a fine creature; her aspect was fair and arresting; her soul that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize. But for the world's opinion those experiences would have been simply liberal education. (115)

Her revolutionized and remodelled character in Hardy's fiction causes her to leave home for the second time (119). After Trantridge, she leads to Talbothays Dairy where she meets Angel Claire and starts to work as a milkmaid. Although her relationship with Angel Clare is stressed more in this section, Tess's endeavour to work as a woman presents her fondness of independence that completes her "self" generally. Therefore, leaving home is leaving the old-fashioned ideology and domesticity. As Donald D. Stone suggests "Hardy's fictional characters typically have neither homes in heaven nor homes or relationships on earth to compensate for those lost eternities" (Stone 294). Instead, the lost purity or victimized virginity is used to construct a new and different life. Working and public life, in this fashion, is the tour de force of Tess.

The sexual explicitness in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* produces another issue – morality – which needs to be discussed in order to enlarge the vision and image of the New Womanhood of Tess. Morality, in Hardy's fiction, starts with Tess's leaving home for Trantridge to follow the hereditary surname. After losing her virginity, Tess calls her mother to account for her lost virginity, because she believes that it is the mother who teaches and guides a young girl:

> "O mother, my mother!" cried the agonized girl, … "How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house four months ago. Why didn't you tell me there was danger? Why didn't you warn me? Ladies

> know what to guard against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance of discovering in that way, and you didn't help me!" (95)

Tess's putting the blame on her mother reminds us both of John Ruskin and of Sarah Stickney Ellis. For valued, admired and beloved women, Ellis propounds that women should be "dignified with the majesty of moral greatness "(1654). She also states that "The long established customs of their country have placed in their hands the high and holy duty of cherishing and protecting the minor morals of life, from whence springs all that is elevated in purpose, and glorious in action" (Ellis 1653). Ellis's positioning morality into the very centre of being a woman clarifies the idea that when a woman is immoral, there is no need for her in her land where she lives. Likewise, John Ruskin charges mothers to watch over for their own moral actions: "it is the woman who watches over, teaches and guides the youth" (73). Given these facts, Tess's breaking the conventions of morality through sexuality makes her fallen, and thus isolates from society. That is why she leaves home for working and independence, which helps us to call Tess as a New Woman.

The issue of morality is closely related to the ideas of convention. Either religious or social, conventions bring forth morality. In the novel, Chapter Ten alludes to the norms of morality sarcastically and therefore foreshadows Tess's violation of moral codes: "Every village has its idiosyncrasy, its constitution, its own code of morality" (Hardy 71). It means that one has to follow the moral codes of the territory s/he belongs to. But, when Tess demolishes these rules which are associated to chastity, purity and innocence, her traditional self dissolves into a more existential and individual sense of being: "But this encompassment of her own characterization, based on shreds of convention, peopled by phantoms and voices antipathetic to her, was a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy – a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason" (99). Gail Cunnigham asserts that "… Tess is unwittingly making a more general protest for women against the social conventions which foster deceit as an essential part of their nature" (96). Sexuality starts her immoral and unconventional type of self and it truly leads us to conclude that the inner layers between sexuality and morality contribute to Tess's New Woman image. In this sense,

her fear and codes were destroyed for the sake of an autonomous self. That is why "Feeling herself in antagonism she was quite in accord. She had been made to break a necessary social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such anomaly" (Hardy 99). In the introduction to *Marriage and Motherhood,* Heilmann states that "A vibrant metaphor of transition, the New Woman became a symbol both of the dissolution of society, and of that society's moral renovation" (ix-x). Hardy's placing Tess into the realm of desire by excluding her from the domestic fiction delineates her character as an anomaly because she is both fallen and isolated. That is why she, in the end, renovates the moral standards. Still, she is aware of the fact that she fancies this situation as a beginning in her new self. Ann Ardis, in her *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, points out that "In the 1880s and early 1890s, the New Woman was implicated for all manner of 'social ills'" (12). Tess's awareness of her isolated and anomalous nature fosters the debate upon her reversal of Victorian expectations. While "[t]he moral agency of a Victorian 'lady' is predicated upon the denial of her sexual appetite (Ardis 14), Tess "refuses to be assimilated into the iconography of Victorian 'Womanhood.' [She] demands to belong to herself … She asks … for freedom to make out of her own life the highest that can be made, and to develop her own individuality as seems to her the wisest and the best" (Ardis 27). That is why Tess's sexual desire is represented as a protest against the fiction which does not relate sexuality with women. Even though Tess's sexuality is has an equivalent meaning to her victimization, Hardy's representation of sexuality regarding woman's desire and nature is in fact a challenge in Victorian realities. As a result, collective patriarchal Victorian morality is in collapse, which is also in clash with Tess's true and New Woman identity.

When Tess heads for Talbothays Diary, she appears to have a mission of infesting the patriarchal and religious codes of morality of society. Tess and Angel's intimacy shows us the path towards marriage. On the other hand, "[Angel] is a pa'son's son, and is too much taken up wi' his own thoughts to notice girls" at first (Hardy 132). Upon knowing that "He was a man not merely religious, but devout; a firm believer – not as the phrase is now elusively constructed by theological thimble-riggers in the Church and out of it; but in the old and ardent sense of the Evangelical school …"

(136), Tess wants to confess her past which is stained by Alec D'Urbervilles. Jeanette Shumaker puts forward in "Breaking with the Conventions: Victorian Confession Novels and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*" that "*Tess* argues against the convention that confessions which reinscribe the gender and class hierarchies lead to the 'fallen' woman's salvation. *Tess* shows the injustice of the sexual double standard, along with the hypocrisy of gender" (445). On these grounds, Tess does not follow a pattern in which she looks for religious, moral or individual salvation. She quests a man whose moral sensibility is outgrown: "The insight afforded into Clare's character suggested to her that it was largely owing to her supposed untraditional newness that she had won interest in his eyes" (Hardy 151). Nevertheless, Tess's non-stereotypical uniqueness and modernity are not efficacious to alter Angel's Evangelical beliefs and moral sensitivity. Tess's immoral "fallenness" cannot be exterminated because Angel is loyal to Evangelical learnings: "Despite his heterodoxy, Clare was a man with a conscience. Tess was no insignificant creature to toy with and dismiss; but a woman living her precious life – a life which, to herself, who endured or enjoyed it, possessed great a dimension as the life of the mightiest to himself" (184). Felix, Angel's brother, suspects the fact that Angel loses his moral concerns. Still, Angel asks him: "Why should you think, Felix, that I am likely to drop my high thinking and my moral ideals?" (191). He is determined to follow his unique belief in Evangelical thoughts without following the strict doctrines of the Church due to his belief in "modern civilization" (189). However, when Tess confesses her past, Angel Clare is perplexed and shocked:

> "Tess, am I to believe this? From your manner I am to take it as true. You cannot be out of your mind, though you ought to be. Yet you are not. … Why didn't you tell me before?"
>
> …
>
> "Forgiveness does not apply to the case. You were one person; now you are another. How can forgiveness meet such a grotesque prestidigitation as that?"
>
> …
>
> "I thought, Angel, that you loved me – me, my very self! If it is I you do love, O how can it be that you look and speak so? It frightens me!..."

> "I repeat, the woman I have been loving is not you. … Another woman in your shape." (271-273; emphasis in original)

At this point, Angel becomes a strict and moral member of Victorian patriarchy which shapes woman's body, moral perceptions and subjectivity. Even though Tess forgives his confession which is that "[he] used to wish to be a teacher of men, and it was a great disappointment to [him] when [he] found [he] could not enter the Church," Angel does not forgive her because he is "a stickler for good morals" (267). The double standard of morality does cause Tess to be seen wicked, fallen and abnormal.

Tess resists exaggerated and cliché doctrines of patriarchal morality through death because death is not an ending for a fallen woman like Tess but a way of proving existence, newness and idiosyncrasy. Authentically, Victorian fiction considers death appropriately fit for fallen woman because a fallen woman cannot survive in "properly-organised" Victorian society since she is a threat against morality, youth and nation. The author, who is a representative of patriarchal ideology and tradition, kills the unmitigated woman who is disobedient. Susan Gubar and Sandra M. Gilbert synthesize their own views with Simone de Beauvoir's in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* and hereby explain the death of the woman in relation to the male's performative power:

> Simone de Beauvoir has commented that the human male's "transcendence" of nature is symbolized by his ability to hunt and kill, just as the human female's identification with nature, her role as a symbol of immanence, is expressed by her central involvement in that life-giving but involuntary birth process which perpetuates the species. Thus, superiority – or authority – "has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills. (Gubar and Gilbert 14)

This natural system is available in nineteenth century novel because the author – the authority, superiority and decision-maker – does not allow any anomalous women survive in the boundaries of the novel. It is, in fact, a way of instructing women readers ideologically because what goes in the novel ideologically and ideationally produces a reality which should be grasped as true and believable. Thus, since the author as a paternal figure controls the "angel in the house" in fiction, he constructs her as an angel

that is already dead (24). Gubar and Gilbert also focus on the author's isolating and alienating strife against woman who tries to substitute the old order and reveal that

> …the monster-woman, threatening to replace her angelic sister, embodies intransigent female autonomy and thus represents both the author's power to allay "his" anxieties by calling their source bad names (witch, bitch, fiend, monster) and, simultaneously, the mysterious power of the character who refuses to stay in her textually ordained "place" and thus generates a story that "gets away" from its author. (28)

At this point, the author denigrates the woman who distorts the systematic power relations. Death, as a solution, eradicates the "superfluous" woman in the novel and the fluctuations are settled down by the fictional-god.

Still, Gubar and Gilbert look at the other side of the medallion and interpret the death of the female character as a "getting away" from the moulder-type author. This situation fits into Tess's character because death is not a price paid for immorality or sexuality but a way of getting away from the double standards. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, in her famous work, *Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers*, suggests that "Death for the female protagonist in many nineteenth-century texts is the negative print of marriage – all the tones opposite, but the picture unmistakable. … Death comes for a female character when she has a jumbled, distorted, inappropriate relation to the 'social script' or plot designed to contain her legally, economically and sexually" (15). It is true that when Tess fails in her marriage with Angel Clare, she sees that everything is intermingled and knotted. Her victimization, losing her home, the death of her baby, Angel's refusal of marriage are the elements of the knot that is tightly bound. There is no way of unravelling the knot. Angel, as the representative of purity and morality, propounds the death of Tess: "When he reached the middle of the room he stood still and murmured, in tones of indescribable sadness – 'Dead! dead! dead!" (Hardy 293). He repeats 'dead' for several times to emphasize how much he desired to see her 'dead' (294). He also fantasizes about drowning her: "Was he going to drown her? Probably he was. The spot was lonely, the river deep and wide enough to make such a purpose easy of accomplishment. He might drown her if he would; it would be better than parting to-morrow to lead

severed lives" (295). Tess witnesses his illusions in his sleep-walking, and therefore feels that she is already confined in a coffin (296). As a result, her parting from Talbothays Diary is the best choice in order to complete her own path where her death approaches her gradually.

On the other hand, Tess interestingly delays her own death by substituting it with the death of Alec D'Urberville. This twist of order is a resistance against conventional style of fiction in which women die first. As a New Woman, she independently acts without dispatching the death of Alec in the hands of patriarchal order and justice. She does not allow any one kill Alec but she herself wants to fulfil the act of murder because as a fallen woman, she is already cursed by the society which does not believe in her purity from the very beginning. When she meets Alec D'Urberville at Flintcomb-Ash Farm, Alec proposes to Tess, "[W]ill you be my wife , and go with me?" (375) for the second time. Even though Tess does not accept his offer at first, she contemplates upon the consequences: "[W]hat might have been the result if she had been free to accept the offer just made her of being monied Alec's wife. It would have lifted her completely out of subjection, not only to her present oppressive employer, but to a whole world who seemed to despise her" (379). After a long follow-up by Alec, Tess yells, "Once victim, always victim – that's the law!" which draws attention to her resistance and awareness.

Meanwhile, Angel works in Brazil and Tess writes a letter to him in order to be saved from the hands of Alec (400-401). Returning from Brazil, Angel finds Tess and discovers that she is married to Alec though Tess immediately says that "Too late, too late!" because Alec tells her a lie that Angel will not be back. This scene causes an epiphany in Tess's life since she feels the burden of being a "woman," etiquette as "fallen," deceived by the "liar" and pushed into "marriage" by social scripts: "My own true husband will never, never – O God – I can't bear this! I cannot!" (454). As a result, she decides to stop the system that decides on behalf of her. In "Masquerade, Sisterhood and the Dilemma of the Feminist as Artist and Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century British Writing," Ann Heilmann states that " Subverting the patriarchal myth of woman's 'natural' purity and spiritual superiority, feminists now declared the current state of male morality to be totally inadequate for matrimony" (156). Stabbing Alec

means both the freedom for her and the symbolic death of the patriarch whose desire is unleashed. It is the death of sexual double standard. Alec's death is highlighted in relation to his body when Angel asks Tess, "What, bodily? Is he dead?" (Hardy 459). The bodily death is significant to refer to Alec's end of bodily desires. Symbolically again, the end of his body is an end of his sexual desire for Tess. In this sense, the death of the victimizer is the death of the past: "Having learned from her confession that the revelation of one's private history is not effective in wiping clean the slate of public history, Tess must kill the one being who symbolizes the fruitless attempt to reclaim past, Alec D'Urberville" (Gordon 118). It should also be added that Tess's killing of Alec demonstrates her active position in handling with the issues. Her transformation from passivity to activity is glorified with the death of Alec once again. Therefore, Alec's death provides her with the emancipation she looks for. In fact, the freedom was captivated and covered in Tess; nonetheless, his death dissolves the reminiscence of the past upon desire, body and action, which makes Tess free from the hands of the patriarch.

After Alec's death, Tess's death is a revolt against the moral codes and religion, which prohibits sexuality and desire. Having committed the crime, Tess is sure that what is done cannot be undone. She tells Angel not to "think of what's past" (Hardy 464). Instead, she intends to take her time with Angel because Angel is back now. Their heading for Stonehenge represents Tess's belief in another time, morality and religion. She becomes a pagan because she does not find her true self in the constructed morality based on Christianity in Victorian society:

> "It is Stonehenge!" said Clare.
>
> "The heathen temple, you mean?"
>
> "Yes. Older than the centuries; older than the D'Urbervilles! Well, what shall we do, darling? We may find shelter farther on."
>
> …
>
> "Can't we bide here?"
>
> "I fear not. This spot is visible for miles by day, although it does not seem so now." (468)

Obviously, Tess knows that the temple is the place of the heathen. She wants to rest there because she defies her own society's moral and religious doctrines. As a woman, who is isolated, marginalised and accused, she is right to convert into paganism because the morality and religion of her time does not favour her identity and does not back up her. Although Angel warns her that she will be seen by the police, she is not afraid and obedient anymore. She is brave enough to confront the reality in which she should die. Therefore, "[She] believes to the sun" (470) which will enlighten her new and complete identity as her epiphany does. She is now ready for death.

Tess's execution, therefore, unsexes Tess, which in the very end turns her into an intangible phenomenon. When she is caught, death awaits her. She is not afraid, though. While her execution means the retribution for Alec's death, it carries a deeper meaning for her existence and identity. Rachel Blau DuPlessis indicates that

> Death is the result when energies of selfhood, often represented by sexuality, at once their most enticing and most damaging expression, are expended outside the "couvert" of marriage or valid romance: through adultery (Mme. Bovary, Edna Pontellier), loss of virginity or even suspected "impurity" (Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Lily Bart), or generalized female passion (Maggie Tulliver, Monica Widdowson). (15)

DuPlessis's explanation clearly shows Tess's reason for death: loss of virginity or even suspected "impurity." Tess is executed because she is no longer pure: she is fallen, immoral, murderess and pagan. On the other hand, DuPlessis adds that "Writing beyond the ending, 'not repeating your words and following your methods but … finding new words and creating new methods,' produces a narrative that denies or reconstructs seductive patterns of feeling that are culturally mandated, internally policed, hegemonically poised" (5). Hardy's fiction is established upon Tess's death. Tess is doomed to death from the very beginning due to the fact that she becomes a social ill by desiring the undesirable, immortalizing the immoral, desexualizing the sexual and unsexing the sex. Tess's death, within the context of the "beyond," means her newness, transcendence, abstraction and sublime. The very last paragraph mirrors her pathological New Woman image:

> "Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Æschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess. And the D'Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing. The two speechless gazers bent themselves down to the earth, as if in prayer, and remained thus a long time, absolutely motionless: the flag continued to wave silently. As soon as they had strength, they arose, joined hands again, and went on. (Hardy 474)

Justice, as the narrator declares, seems to be carried out by the patriarchal members of the society. However, since the President of the Immortals does not help Tess any longer, she brings the justice by killing Alec. She is on her own; in other words, independent or desolate. That is why justice is not provided with the death of Tess but with the death of Alec – the paternalistic member of patriarchal ideology. In her death, Tess unsexes herself because there is no sex and sexuality left. Only her name, her deeds and impression remain. As Olive Schreiner's heroine in *The Story of an African Farm* utters, "Death means so much more to a woman than a man … when you knew you were dying, to look around on the world and feel the bond of sex has broken and crushed you all your life gone, nothing but the human left, no woman any more" (qtd. in Larson 52). What remains after Tess's death, then, is a black flag – "It was a black flag" (Hardy 473) – that Tess stands upon. It is on this impression she becomes new, "beyond" and anarchic.

By and large, Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* represents the precursory of the New Woman and hence, Tess becomes the pioneer with her sexuality, morality and death. Her being overwhelmed by sexual desire, challenge against authorized morality and unsexing death in the very end of the novel transform her into an anti-essentialist heroine of the New Woman whose self-actualization elucidates her victimisation, anomaly and death. Her change of passivity into activity and of innocence into experience is the precursor of her New Woman image since she not only escapes the societal assertiveness of the age but also rationalises woman actions. Her rebellious nature leads to a realization of the "self." She is also able to subvert the norms and social structures with her self-abnegation. In this sense, she exemplifies the New Woman in that she does not need any patriarchal intermediator. She does what Simone de Beauvoir urges: "Once she ceases to be a parasite, the system based on her

dependence crumbles; between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator" (641). She has been never a parasite but if she had followed the traditions, she would have been a woman who would depend on patriarchal values. It is in Tess's anomalous nature that she is born out of the ashes of the old "angel in the house." She desires, feels, thinks and fulfils. Her death, then, does not mean her fallenness and impurity but her agency as an individual and woman.

CHAPTER V
DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS BY GEORGE MEREDITH: MARRIAGE, WRITING AND POLITICS

> We women are the verbs passive of the alliance, we have to learn, and if we take the activity, with the best intentions, we conjugate a frightful disturbance.
>
> – George Meredith, *Diana of the Crossways*

George Meredith (1828-1909) published many novels and poetry in Victorian Period. His most famous novels are *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1856), *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859), *Beauchamp's Career* (1875), *The Egoist* (1879) and *Diana of the Crossways* (1885); and his prominent works of poetry include *Modern Love* (1862) and *The Lark Ascending* (1881). In his works, Meredith is a nonconformist both in his style of writing and in the presentations of his characters in different contexts. Leonie Gilman in the study prepared for the *National Magazine* contends that "Meredith is a nonconformist, and he stands out boldly as the opponent of conventionalism" (273). His nonconformist and anti-essentialist views on women, also, seem challenging to the normative system in the Late Victorian Era: "Meredith has the honour of being preeminent in his treatment of women: indeed he has been called the 'ultra feminine Mr. Meredith.' He has a power that is really marvellous of throwing himself into women's feelings and analyzing their motives of action. He makes his women think, too" (274). These claims are traceable in his *Diana of the Crossways* because Meredith not only deploys the mechanisms of extraordinary characterisation in the depiction of Diana Antonia Merion but also questions the accepted roles of women in diverse contexts like marriage, divorce, speech, politics and writing. His creation of a different type of Woman – New Woman – stands out immediately as Diana, both new and different, fosters the debates on marriage, politics and writing, all of which closely touch upon the idea of womanhood in the novel. Thus, this chapter explores Diana's New Womanhood as she makes explicit the double standards in marriage, politics and writing.

First of all, George Meredith draws a realistic picture of the New Woman with Diana Antonia Merion as he draws upon the views of the diarist in the description of Diana. The opening section of Meredith's fiction outlines Diana's extraordinary witty and beautiful character. In the very first chapter, entitled "Of Diaries and Diarist Touching the Heroine," Meredith bases Diana's the "unusual combination" and personality on real life character mentioned in the "Leaves from the Diary of Henry Wilmers" and Perry Wilkinson's diaries (Meredith 1). It is in this introduction that Meredith writes Diana's character, that is "a lady then becoming famous for her beauty and her wit" (1). Thus, Diana becomes the fictive representation of a real New Woman. Diana, who is the symbol of the New Woman in the novel is as real as any Victorian woman. At this point, Gayla McGlamery in "In His Beginnings, His Ends: The 'Preface' to Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways*" states that "…Meredith's circumnavigation of Diana's character in the first chapter signals a new direction in his handling of identity" (470). A new direction of identity is presented to the reader, which implies that the author does draw the boundaries for them. Meredith, therefore, does not leave Diana alone. Instead, he supports her real identity, which explains the idea that she is not a fictive New Woman or a fake representation but a real and touchable one. Meredith's intrusion, then, reverberates throughout the novel in which Diana's actions and thoughts are also representative of her New Woman characteristics.

Diana's "unusual combination," as Meredith constructs it in the very beginning, specifically rationalizes Diana's New Woman type because she is not depicted as a lady acting within the prescribed rules of womanhood but seeks for a new and different version of existence:

> We shall then set a price on the "unusual combination." A witty woman is a treasure; a witty Beauty is a power. Has she actual beauty, actual wit? – not simply a tidal material beauty that passes current any pretty flippancy or staggering pretentiousness? Grant the combination, she will appear a veritable queen of her period, fit for homage; at least meriting a disposition to believe the best of her, in the teeth of foul rumour; because the well of true wit is truth itself, the gathering of the precious drops of right reason, wisdom's lightning; and no soul possessing and dispensing it can justly be a

> target for the world, however well-armed the world confronting her. (Meredith 2)

By focusing on Diana's extraordinary characteristics, Meredith adds that "Henry Wilmers is not content to quote the beautiful Mrs. Warwick [the surname of Diana's first husband] – he attempts a portrait. Mrs. Warwick is 'quite Grecian.' She might 'pose for a statue'" (3-4). Apart from Henry Wilmers, Meredith mentions Perry Wilkonson who "describes her in his 'Recollections' as a splendid brune, eclipsing all the blondes coming near her; and 'what is more, the beautiful creature can talk'" (4). Wilkonson's ideas on Diana support the notion that she can talk unlike other Victorian ladies out in public. She is free in her thought and in her speech. By weaving together the real and fictive features of his character, George Meredith explains the reason of his advantageous use of diaries and diarists in the later pages of the first chapter: "Diarists of amusing passages are under an obligation to paint us a realistic revival of the time, or we miss the relish. … We can be veraciously historical, honestly transcriptive" (14). In this respect, Meredith implies that he guards and preserves Diana and her unique identity, while Diana, in the rest of the novel, gets married and divorced, talks about politics and writes for money.

In fact, Meredith's characterisation of Diana is based upon Mrs. Caroline Norton, which defines the image of the New Woman – Diana Antonia Merion – more realistically and believably. Thus, Diana becomes at once both real and imaginary; putting end to the claims of Eliza Lynn Linton who argued that the New Woman is only a fiction that has no real existence in Victorian life. Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton, who is the iconic woman of the Victorian Period, creates a sensetaion when she has an affair with Lord Melbourne and deals with feminist reformations (Craig 1-2). According to Ann Heilmann, "New Woman writers strategically deployed sensationalism, exaggerating the extent of the issue in order to make a point about women's rights" (*New Woman Fiction (1): Marriage, Motherhood and Work,* xiii). Having based its plot on Norton's sensational background, Meredith aggravates Diana's rights and thus crystallises her uprising against the norms through writing and politics. Correspondingly, Norton both writes fiction and politics, which represents her outstanding position in a male-dominated society. On the other hand, why Meredith

takes advantage of Caroline Norton's life pieces seems quite perceptive because Meredith, as a nonconventional author, gets beyond the limits of writing fiction. Gayla McGlamery elucidates the basic reason evidently:

> As Meredith readers know, the character of Diana Merion Warwick is drawn from the real and reputed history of Mrs. Caroline Norton, a lively and clever beauty Meredith had both met and heard discussed. The granddaughter of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Caroline Sheridan became a darling of upper-class society despite her lack of fortune. And, like Meredith's Diana, she eventually married a man with whom she was totally incompatible. Caroline Norton continued to shine in drawing rooms after her marriage, pursued by a phalanx of the wealthy and well-born, until her relationship with Lord Melbourne prompted her husband to bring suit against her for adultery in open court. (470)

McGlamery's explanation is in fact a summary of Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways*. The parallel between Caroline and Diana's lives and blending the fact and fiction provides an evidence for the critics who question the reality of the New Woman. Admittedly, the New Woman is labelled as a literary construction. Yet, Ann Ardis argues that "To label something literary rather than 'real' is to quarantine it, in effect: to isolate it in a special corner of life, to box it off as a special kind of phenomenon, not something one encounters in society at large" (12). As a result, the morality of the Victorian society remains unblemished and clear, which eliminates the problem. On the other hand, Meredith cleverly benefits from the diaries of Henry Wilmers and Perry Wilkinson and the life of Mrs. Caroline Norton in order to resist the criticisms about the artificiality and the dubious condition of the New Woman. That is why Meredith's debate over the New Womanhood does not seem futile.

Diana's New Woman character is first going to criticise the marriage institution and subvert marriage through divorce in the novel. Diana's outstanding nature within the disciplined and conventional Victorian society is signalled through her marriage which leads the concept of New Woman to a different point. Sally Mitchell, in *Daily Life in Victorian England*, writes that "Marriage was seen as woman's natural and expected role: it satisfied her instinctual needs, preserved the species, provided

appropriate duties, and protected her from the shocks and dangers of the rude, competitive world" (267). Diana's marriage is foreshadowed by Lady Emma Dunstane, who is a close friend of Diana: "She's volatile, she's frivolous, a rattler and gabbler – haven't I heard what they say of Irish girls over there! She marries, and it's the end of her sparkling. She must choose at home for a perfect harmonious partner" (Meredith 28). Revealingly, Lady Dunstane tries to convince us to accept that Diana is a different woman; that is why she needs a harmonious partner in marriage. She also poses a danger for the traditional women as she is to seduce their husbands. On the other hand, harmoniousness cannot be achieved easily for Diana because she believes that marriage is not a natural process for her own identity: "'Though,' said [Diana], 'speaking generally, I cannot tell you what a foreign animal a husband would appear in my kingdom'" (48). She confidently utters these words and unlike any other conventional Victorian ladies, she sees her own as a kingdom adding that the husband is an animal, which is a denigration of male sex. Her ideas about marriage, therefore, seem negative because she does not want an intruder into her kingdom.

Nevertheless, Diana's inclination towards marriage emerges out of the blue when she sends a letter to her dear friend, Lady Dunstane. Though Lady Dunstane talks with Mr. Thomas Redworth, who is also secretly in love with Diana, about Diana's engagement to Mr. Warwick, Diana's letter about Mr. Warwick's marriage proposal perplexes Emma: "My own Emmy, - I have been asked in marriage by Mr. Warwick, and have accepted him. Signify your approval, for I have decided that it is the wisest thing a waif can do. We are to live at The Crossways for four months of the year…" (59). The immediacy of her decision is in fact caused by Lady Dunstane's husband. While Diana and Sir Lukin Dunstane are riding in the woods, Sir Lukin harasses her: "They were in the heart of the woods. She found his hand seized – her waist. Even then, so impossible is it to conceive the unimaginable even when the apparition of it smites us, she expected some protesting absurdity, or that he had seen something in her path. – What did she hear? And from her friend's husband!" (50). As a result of the incidence, she declares Mr. Warwick's proposal, which is an exit for her. In the next chapter, she visits Lady Dunstane with her husband. Lady Dunstane thinks that she rushed into marriage with Mr. Warwick. In fact, when Diana comes to the Copsley

where Dunstanes reside, the crisis between her and Mr. Redworth draws attention. Her husband accuses her of a relationship with Lord Dannisburgh, who is also a member of the Parliament. That is why she leaves the Crossways. Emel Sönmez, in her *The Novelist George Meredith: Woman's Champion*, suggests that "Confronted with her husband's accusation, Diana hastily decides to go away rather than face a law-suit. If Diana were a typical country lady of her period, she would have endured this accusation in dignified silence, but her unconventional direct nature and intense vitality demanded action" (93). As a woman of action, her desire to leave her husband takes her out of the normative structure of Victorian patriarchal ideology. Ann Heilmann writes that "New Woman writers suggest that the only solution to [the problem of constraints of space and time] is to leave a marriage which allows no space for personal development" (*New Woman Fiction (1): Marriage, Motherhood and Work*, xvii). Given these facts, Diana Warwick is a New Woman within the traditions of ideal domestic wife and marriage because she does not allow the spaces of domesticity and marriage drag her into stereotypical image of woman. That is why her escape is a confirmation of her New Woman identity.

In the process of escape, Diana's letter to Lady Dunstane is an evaluation of her own accused state. She also attests the ordinary causes of the accusation in such strict Victorian society:

> But I leave the case, and [Mr. Warwick], to the world. Ireland, or else America, it is a guiltless kind of suicide to bury myself abroad. He has my letters. They are such as I can own to you; and ask you to kiss me – and kiss me when you have heard all the evidence, all that I can add to it, kiss me. You know me too well to think I would ask you to kiss criminal lips. But I cannot face the world. In the dock, yes. Not where I am expected to smile and sparkle, on pain of incurring suspicion if I show a sign of oppression. I cannot do that. I see myself wearing a false grin – your Tony! No, I do well to go. This is my resolution; and in consequence, - my beloved! my only truly loved on earth! I do not come to you, to grieve you, as I surely should. Nor would it soothe me, dearest. This will be to you the best of reasons. It could not soothe me to see myself giving pain to Emma. I am like a

> pestilence, and let me swing away to the desert, for there I do no harm. I know I am right. I have questioned myself – it is not cowardice. I do not quail. I abhor the part of actress. I should do it well – too well; destroy my soul in the performance. Is a good name before such a world as this worth that sacrifice? A convent and self-quenching; – cloisters would seem to me like holy dew. But that would be sleep, and I feel the powers of life. Never have I felt them so mightily. If it were not for being called on to act and mew, I would stay, fight, meet a bayonet-hedge of charges and rebut them. I have my natural weapons and my cause. It must be confessed that I have also more knowledge of men and the secret contempt – it must be – the best of them entertain for us. Oh! and we confirm it if we trust them. But they have been at a wicked school. (Meredith 76-77)

Without a doubt, Diana knows the danger if she stays in the Copleys. She knows that she will be oppressed and judged without any questions. The oppression does not fit in her own character, which clearly explains that she does not want to be a scapegoat of Victorian society. Though she uses the word "criminal" to refer to the cursed state of herself, she does not believe that she is guilty of adultery or infidelity. On the other hand, she is sure about that she has to play the part of an actress because she does not want to be drowned in the waters of imputation. As Sumner Holmes and Claudia Nelson point out in *Maternal Instincts: Visions of Motherhood and Sexuality in Britain, 1875-1925*, "While a wife's adultery was sufficient cause to end a marriage, a woman could divorce her husband only if his adultery had been compounded by another matrimonial offense, such as cruelty or desertion" (40). On the other hand, as Ann Heilmann argues, the "New Woman emphasized female independence within and outside marriage" (*The New Woman and Female Independence*, xi). So, her activity out of the norms of marriage demonstrates not only the way of defying the Victorian ideology which labels woman as fallen but also a way of revealing the true identity of womanhood regarding emancipation.

Diana writes a letter to Lady Dunstane to call for action: "We women are the verbs passive of the alliance; we have to learn, and if we take to activity, with the best intentions, we conjugate a frightful disturbance. We are to run on lines, like the steam-

trains, or we come to no station, dash to fragments. I have the misfortune to know I was born an active. I take my chance" (Meredith 68-69). Rightfully, it is unmistakable to state that Diana is a New Woman because she takes action which is both a social protestation and a political resistance. In this sense, she becomes a demander for rights because she has to vindicate her own thoughts and actions. With the decision to leave, fight against the norms of society and strive for freedom, Diana reflects the thoughts of George Meredith:

> Suffragists! … I have always stood up for the intellectual capacities of woman. I like to see the combative spirit in them. It is as it should be. Certainly they should be given the use of intellectual weapons. But I am not in agreement with anything that is bad taste and bad strategy. Those rowdy scenes! No! Not that. That is not the way. There is a better. (qtd. in Cunningham 121)

The Meredithian approach in the novel is obvious in Diana's actions and words. What Diana resists is the inequality between the sexes and the insensible nature of society which blames the woman who does not follow the rules of the status quo. Diana finishes her words to Emma writing, "How immensely nature seems to prefer man to women!" (Meredith 78). It is this idea that Diana does not agree upon. Instead, she starts a fight which will change her state and ideas socially and personally.

The divorce, which is to finish Diana's marriage with Mr. Warwick, is in fact a cry for freedom. Even though "Women were expected to center their lives on home and family; they were expected to conduct themselves, indeed draped themselves, in modesty and propriety; they were expected to find the commands of duty and the delights of service sufficient, in fact ennobling, boundaries for their lives" (Schor 172), divorce is the other side of the medallion. For a Victorian lady, divorce means impossibility because when a woman falls, there is not redemption. Nonetheless, Diana's subversion of Victorian reality hints at the idea of freedom because when she wants to be free, she means the broken bonds of marriage:

> Diana cried aloud, "My freedom!" feeling as a butterfly flown out of a box to stretches of sunny earth beneath spacious heavens. Her bitter marriage, joyless in all its chapters, indefensible where the man was right as well as

> where insensately wrong, had been imprisonment. She excused him down to his last madness, if only the bonds were broken. Here, too, in this very house of her happiness with her father, she had bound herself to the man voluntarily, quite inexplicably. Voluntarily, as we say. But there must be a spell upon us at times. Upon young women there certainly is. (Meredith 103)

Though Diana knows that the Victorian ideology and society do not approve of what she is doing, she is also ready for the challenge against the hypocritical sense of the ideology: "…she did battle with the hypocrite world" (104). She demands her rights for independence and for survival. At this point, divorce does not mean an ending for her but a rebirth, new identity and regeneration. "'Let me be myself, whatever the martyrdom!' she cried, in that phase of young sensation when, to the blooming woman, the putting of a mask appears to wither her and reduce her to show she parades" (106). Her fight, both against the marital captivity in patriarchal society and against the status quo that condemns her woman identity to oblivion and invisibility, certifies her New Woman identity because Diana has internalized the risky consequences of her resistance. That is why she favours martyrdom over fall, condemnation or submission. Subsequently, Diana cuts the long apathy short and immediately takes into action: "She was, then, this martyr, a woman capable of telling the world she knew it, and of confessing that she had behaved in disdain of its rigider rules, according to her own ideas of her immunities. Oh brave!" (106). She is brave as she is now able to start to construct her new life and identity.

As soon as Diana Warwick becomes Diana Antonia Merion via the divorce, she focuses on writing. Writing as a tool for rehabilitation and for survival has an emblematic meaning in Meredith's fiction. Ann Heilman, in "Feminist Resistance, the Artist and 'A Room of One's Own'," clarifies that "Late Victorian feminist writers argued that precisely because of [the] pressures, which denied woman a separate existence in their own right, it was a matter of intellectual and psychological survival for them to carve out a space for themselves in the public world" (294). Through writing, Diana revives and reconstructs her life and most importantly she starts to earn her own money. By initiating writing, Diana opens up a public space for herself because

writing is a means of changing the tenets which are encompassed within the division between public and private spheres. Carving out a space by writing, Diana becomes a symbol of the New Woman because she opens a window to public world with her own endeavours to fiction. She says that

> The Crossways has a board up for letting. I should prefer to be my own tenant; only it would give me a hundred pounds more to get a substitute's money. I should like to be at work writing instantly. Ink is my opium, and the pen my nigger, and he must dig up gold for me. It is written. Danvers, you can make ready to dress me when I ring. (Meredith 123)

It is obvious that Diana does not feel helpless and fallen as any other divorced Victorian woman does. Instead, she dramatically looks for the ways in which she can make money at once. Her writing enkindles her New Woman identity in that she looks for independence through writing. Ann Ardis contends in *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* that "[New Women] are no longer women, in other words, because their beauty cannot serve as an emblem of Victorian 'Womanhood'" (25-26). Diana, in this sense, subverts the introduction of Meredith into a different reality because her wit and labour – writing – transgress her beauty in the second part of the novel. She distorts the constructed reality of Victorian faith in the "angel in the house" as she engenders a different kind of woman who can both think and write. Utterly, Diana lays a foundation of the New Womanhood which will fit her identity in the upcoming events, ideas and actions in the novel.

Coupled with resistance against patriarchal hegemony and unconventional type of womanhood in Victorian society, the notion of writing in fact exhibits Diana's idiosyncratic power in survival. Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own*, argues the relationship between writing and sexes and she sagaciously explains that "… a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction; and that, as you will see leaves the great problem of the true nature of woman and the true nature of fiction unsolved" (2). Evidently enough, Woolf draws attention to men's writing and women's poverty and she also enlightens us about the problem of sex divisions, which causes her to retort that "Why did men drink wine and women water? Why was one sex so prosperous and the other so poor? What effect has poverty on fiction? What conditions

are necessary for the creation of works of art? – a thousand questions at once suggested themselves" (23). Indeed, Diana acts as if she was aware and cognisant of these questions that Woolf asks. Diana most certainly knows "… where she could begin to write, earning bread: an idea that, with the pride of independence, conjured the pleasant morning smell of a bakery about her" (Meredith 124). She starts writing for the sake of her own independence and exemplifies the gift of observation as the other authors do: "She had the woman's faculty … of distinguishing minutely in the calmest of indifferent glances. She could see without looking; and when her eyes were wide they had not to dwell to be detective" (134). This faculty contributes to her first work, *The Princess Egeria*, through which "Diana was talked of in the London circles" (173). As a result of her first novel, Diana shoots to fame. The public opinion, as the narrator conveys us, seems interesting and appealing: "A witty woman is such salt that, where she has once been tasted, she must perforce be missed more than any of the absent, the dowering heavens not having yet showered her like very plentifully upon us" (173). In this sense, she establishes a public in which her novels created a sensation because of her style and courage in telling stories. This is just a beginning for her, though.

Diana's desire for independence is crystallized through writing. Her desire is not a domestic one because she exceeds the boundaries of domesticity and other formative gender issues which shape the perception of womanhood. In fact, Nancy Armstrong writes in "Gender and the Victorian Novel" that "[F]iction made the constraints of gender seem natural and necessary, if not always desirable and right, to a geographically diverse and socially heterogeneous readership" (100). At this point, Diana's rising popularity proves her sex's transgression. She comes out of rooms and houses and leads into London circles as I have argued in the previous paragraph. Armstrong also adds that "[F]iction [provides] simultaneously a range of violations of and resistances to gender capable of reverberating across the entire system of social categories" (100). In this sense, Diana opens the way for another world in which the social system is being reconstructed through her writing, which, in the long run, completes her strife for independence. In the novel, Diana's writing is a deliberate cause for her own independence:

> [S]he had reason to desire an extended sale of the work. Her aim, in the teeth of her independent style, was at the means of independence – a feminine method of attempting to conciliate contraries; and after despatching the last sheets to the printer, he meditated upon the several ways which might serve to, assist her; the main way running thus in his mind: – We have a work of genius. Genius is good for the public. (Meredith 174)

Concomitantly, the act of writing meets up the expectations of Diana in that she is now a woman who is able to give her divorced identity the voice it needs. In this sense, her fragmented ideas are unified in order to prove herself. Likewise, writing also provides her with the financial support she needs after the marriage. Mr. Thomas Redworth, who encourages Diana in the act of writing fiction and publishing them by doing the criticisms as Diana was not able to find critics that would help her, says that Diana's book is qualified enough to satisfy the reader's expectations. He also says that writing proved what Diana expected:

> The truth is, her book is clever. I have read the proofs. She must have an income, and she won't apply to her husband, and literature should help her, if she's fairly treated. She's Irish by descent; Merion's daughter, witty as her father. It's odd you haven't met her. The mere writing of the book is extraordinarily good. If it's put into capable hands for review! That's all it requires. And full of life... bright dialogue… capital sketches. The book's a piece of literature. Only it must have competent critics! (178)

At this point, even though Diana is able to support herself financially and even if started to be counted as a writer in her own backyard, there is another point which deserves discussion. As Mr. Thomas Redworth says Diana is not able to find critics who will criticize her works and introduce them into the public: "What is good for the public should be recommended by the critics. It should be. How then to come at them to get it done?" (174-175). Obviously, Diana is looked down on because she is a divorced woman who meddled into a man's business which is writing. Diana's problem reminds us of George Eliot's words in her "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists:"

> We may remark, by the way, that we have been relieved from a serious scruple by discovering that silly novels by lady novelists rarely introduce us into any other than very lofty and fashionable society. We had imagined that destitute women turned novelists, as they turned governesses, because they had no other "ladylike" means of getting their bread. On this supposition, vacillating syntax, and improbable incident had a certain pathos for us, like the extremely supererogatory pincushions and ill-devised nightcaps that are offered for sale by a blind man. We felt the commodity to be a nuisance, but we were glad to think that the money went to relieve the necessitous, and we pictured to ourselves lonely women struggling for a maintenance, or wives and daughters devoting themselves to the production of "copy" out of pure heroism – perhaps to pay their husband's debts or to purchase luxuries for a sick father. (180)

As George Eliot states above, woman as a writer cannot easily find a place in the literary canon since a woman cannot be thought as an individual who gets through the domestic and familial duties assigned for her. On the other hand, for a woman who has a desire for writing, there is no other choice than fiction-making. She must earn her bread. Moreover, Diana deconstructs the conventional woman image whereas she reconstructs the New Woman image through writing.

In order to resist all negative criticisms, Diana publishes her second novel entitled *The Young Minister of State*, which is in fact an impression of Percy Dacier, the nephew of Lord Dannisburgh. Her new book creates a tremendous impression in public because "Antonia's hero was easily identified. The Young Minister of State could be [Percy Dacier] who was now at all her parties, always meeting her…" (Meredith 213). Yet, she is still being criticized by the reviewers harshly and negatively: "A Literary Review (Charles Reiner's property) had suggested that perhaps 'the talented authoress might be writing too rapidly;' and another actuated by the public taste of the period of our 'vigorous homely Saxon' in one and two syllable words, had complained of a 'tendency to polysyllabic phraseology'" (220). Nonetheless, Diana is not demotivated by the negative evaluations of the critics. Her situation and determined character in writing produces a growing debate over the question of whether she will be writing

another novel. As Meredith foreshadows in Diana's new and *au courant* status among patriarchal traditions, Diana writes another work called *The Man of Two Minds*, which "she shall sign [as] *By the Woman of Two Natures*" (388; emphasis in original). It is Diana's nature that she cannot leave her aim of independence and of becoming a New Woman. When Percy Dacier visits Diana and they talk about her *The Young Minister of State*, we, as the readers, are informed about her obstinate and unyielding woman posture because she believes in herself as a woman and as an author:

> Women are women, and I am a woman but I am I, and unlike them: I see we are weak, and weakness tempts: in owning the prudence of guarded steps, I am armed. It is by dissembling, feigning immunity, that we are imperilled.' She would have phrased it so, with some anger at her feminine nature as well as at the subjection forced on her by circumstances. (233)

The Meredithian manner in Diana's characterisation is a rediscovery of woman in Victorian Era because as Arthur Symons writes "… Mr. Meredith conceives that the novelist's prime study is human nature, his first duty to be true to it" (275). In this fashion, Diana's anti-normative characterisation is encompassed within her writing, which draws attention to her emancipated identity. Robert Buchanan highlights in 1862 that "[T]he birth of the novel has given speech to many ladies who must otherwise have been silent" (qtd. in Pykett 22). There seems to be no compelling reason to argue that the novel not only gives voice to women but also provides a field in which women can liberate themselves. Diana's case illustrates the evolution of the condition of woman in and out of the novel tradition appropriately.

Diana's act of writing is also a challenge against the norm of writing which is the male tradition that is based upon the idea that "*Underneath all there is the imagery of succession, of paternity, or hierarchy*" (Gilbert and Gubar 5; emphasis in original). As Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar probes in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*, "In patriarchal Western culture … the text's author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis" (6). In a dialogue with Lady Emma Dunstane, she demonstrates woman's being secondary in all cases while man constitutes the primary element:

> "I suppose we women are taken to be the second thoughts of the Creator; human nature's fringes, mere finishing touches, not a part of the texture," said Diana; "the pretty ornamentation. However, I fancy I perceive some tolerance growing in the minds of the dominant sex. Our old lawyer Mr. Braddock, who appears to have no distaste for conversations with me, assures me he expects the day to come when women will be encouraged to work at crafts and professions for their independence. That is the secret of the opinion of us at present – our dependency. Give us the means of independence, and we will gain it, and have a turn at judging you, my lords! You shall behold a world reversed. Whenever I am distracted by existing circumstances, I lay my finger on the material conditions, and I touch the secret. Individually, it may be moral with us; collectively, it is material-gross wrongs, gross hungers. I am a married rebel, and thereof comes the social rebel. I was once a dancing and singing girl: You remember the night of the Dublin Ball. A Channel sea in uproar, stirred by witches, flows between." (Meredith 143)

Diana is aware of the fact that the dominant sex's form of thought shapes the world as it produces patriarchal discourses. Notwithstanding, Diana's rebellious nature does not conform into the prescribed norms of society and Godly-constructed version of reality. By saying "women will be encouraged to work at crafts and professions for their independence," Diana both refers to her writing as a tool for independence and rebellious act of writing within the male tradition. That is why she hopes a reversed world in which women can write and emancipate themselves through their own realistic world impressions. Diana becomes a feminist writer in Meredith's feminist fiction because she is able to actualize her own thoughts about women and the world in which the relationships between man and woman are organised by men. Ann Heilmann also points out that "Narrating her own story of spatial expansion through the eyes of a fictional *alter ego*, the feminist writer was uncovering and exploring a female tradition hidden behind male-dominated discourses of art" ("Feminist Resistance, the Artist and 'A Room of One's Own'," 305; emphasis in original). In this sense, via the three works she writes – *The Princess Egeria*, *The Young Minister of the State* and *The Man of Two*

Minds – Diana is able to show that a text can also be "mothered." As Virginia Woolf points out in "Professions for Women", the woman writer should "kill the angel in the house" as Diana attempts to manage in her strife in writing (236-238).

Apart from the concepts of marriage, divorce and writing, Diana illustrates a new sensibility of womanhood when she takes part in political discussions with men. It is evident that a woman in Victorian society should deal with domestic services because politics is a man's business. In "Women and Politics," June Hannam writes that "Notwithstanding the Victorian ideal of domesticity, we know that, far from confining themselves to the home, a significant minority of women in the nineteenth century took an active role in public life. By doing so, they challenged Victorian ideas about a woman's place, both explicitly and implicitly" (218). Diana is in the minority in respect to her interest in politics and discussions with men. In the very first chapter – Of Diaries and Diarists – Meredith keeps us advised of Diana's political interest and her vehement nature in political discussions: "On Politics she is rhetorical and swings: she wrote to spur a junior politician: 'It is the first business of men, the school to mediocrity, to the covetously ambitious a sty, to the dullard his amphitheatre, arms of Titans to the desperately enterprising, Olympus to the genius'" (Meredith 12). In this sense, *Diana of the Crossways* spends a considerable amount of effort to deal with the issue of politics. For instance, Meredith characterises Diana as an avid reader capable of participating in the men's political world. That is why she needs to know about many things: "[Emma and Diana] were readers of books of all sorts – political, philosophical, economical, romantic; and they mixed the diverse readings in thought, after the fashion of the ardently youthful. Romance affected politics, transformed economy, irradiated philosophy" (42). Rendering Diana as a the woman interested in political talk, Meredith puts a spanner in the male world of politics.

As Diana "wanted external life, action, fields for energies, to vary the struggle," political talk is an arena of her show of force (44). Although "A woman, Sir Lukin held, was by nature a mute in politics," Diana's "monstrous" intrusion is enough to affect them, which lets down the expectations of the patriarchy:

> She spoke of Reform: of the Repeal of the Corn Laws as the simple beginning of the grants due to the people. She had her ideas, of course, from

> that fellow Redworth, an occasional visitor at Copsley; and a man might be a donkey and think what he pleased, since he had a vocabulary to back his opinions. A woman, Sir Lukin held, was by nature a mute in politics. Of the thing called a Radical woman, he could not believe that she was less than monstrous: 'with a nose,' he said; and doubtless, horse teeth, hatchet jaws, slatternly in the gown, slipshod, awful. As for a girl, an unmarried, handsome girl, admittedly beautiful, her interjections, echoing a man, were ridiculous, and not a little annoying now and them, for she could be piercingly sarcastic. Her vocabulary in irony was a quiverful. He admired her and liked her immensely; complaining only of her turn for unfeminine topics. (44)

For a woman, stating the political opinions is not easy because of the division between the public sphere and the private sphere. If a woman belongs to the private sphere in which the domestic and familial services matter most, how then can she be aware of what is going on in politics? It is certain that Diana does not let the patriarchal ideology confine her neither in politics nor in marriage and divorce. Her feminist awareness epitomizes the New Woman who deals with political talk.

Knowing that the characterisation of Diana Antonia Merion is based on Caroline Norton, whose "subsequent protests were instrumental in the passing of the Infant Custody Bill of 1839" and whose "efforts were influential in the passing of the Marriage and Divorce Act of 1857" (BBC), it can be easily claimed that Diana's political tendency is not coincidental. In *The Narratives of Caroline Norton*, Randall Craig clarifies the assumption about Diana's predisposition towards politics: "Diana's circumstances epitomize the legal and social dilemma of married women in nineteenth-century England. Although she does not take up specific legislative causes, her political philosophy is similar to Norton's and goes well beyond the preoccupation of Berengaria Montfort and Laura Kennedy with parties and power" (157). Despite the fact that she is not as active as Norton herself, Diana's freedom in speech highlights her anomalous and rebellious nature against the patriarchal Victorian codes: "The liberty she allowed herself in speech and action must have been trying to her defenders in a land like ours; for here, and able to throw its shadow on our giddy upper circle, the rigour of the game

of life relaxed though it may sometimes appear, would satisfy whist-player" (Meredith 7). Her way of combining speech and action is visible in her political talk when she has political arguments with Lady Emma Dunstane. After they read together, they discuss the condition of England, look for solutions for the internal problems and Diana plays the role of the leader in these discussions:

> Thus far in their pursuit of methods for the government of a nation, to make it happy, Diana was leader. Her fine ardour and resonance, and more than the convincing ring of her voice, the girl's impassioned rapidity in rushing through any perceptible avenue of the labyrinth, or beating down obstacles to form one, and coming swiftly to some solution, constituted her the chief of the pair of democratic rebels in questions that clamoured for instant solution. (42-43)

Within this context, Diana undertakes what male politicians cannot do. Unlike other stereotypical women who obey the rules imposed on them, Diana's desire for political debate is in fact a subversion of patriarchal fiction-making. As far as the depictions of women in Victorian novels have been taken into consideration, it is evident that women are delineated as the "angel in the house." Jeannette King writes in *The Victorian Woman Question in Contemporary Feminist Fiction* that "Images of the Madonna and of the angels … contribute to the formation of the Victorian feminine ideal, in both visual and literary representations" (10). Likewise, Françoise Basch contemplates upon the domestic representations of women and the issues on femininity and argues that women are represented according to the norms of morality, social formation and domestic felicity (53-58). Yet, Diana is motivated to contribute to the social argument concerning the relations between woman and politics.

Diana's interest in politics is surely affected by the situation in which Percy and Diana have feelings for each other. Percy Dacier is a member of the Cabinet and therefore Diana is able to have political conversations with him. Percy Dacier delivers speeches in the House of Commons with the help of his uncle, Lord Dannisburgh and Diana follows the political news via Dacier. For instance, she explains the latest political news to Emma: "[T]his young woman of fervid mind, a reader of public speeches and speculator on the tides of politics (desirous, further, to feel herself rather

more in the pure idea), began to yearn for England long before her term of holiday exile had ended" (Meredith 148-149). The current topic they argue is the conflict and disunity between Ireland and England. As an Irish woman, Diana reckons herself as a moderator, which results in the idea that "she could exercise a judgement in politics – could think, even speak acutely, on public affairs" (149). Her socialist, pacifist and negotiating perception of politics mirrors George Meredith's views on politics because "In politics, [Meredith] is with that small but steadily increasing minority who are not satisfied with the present social order and who would take radical measures for its remodelling" (Gilman 276). Even though Diana does not actively participate in politics in the novel, she can articulate the problems immediately as a reaction to present political issues.

To portray Diana's active agency in politics, I would like to present an interesting example in which Diana and Percy have to have a heated argument over the Corn Laws, which results in their separation. In the previous pages before Chapter XVI, Diana participates in the discussions Corn Laws. She also participates in from time to time. She also argues the very issue with Percy Dacier though Dacier does not want to talk about politics everywhere:

> "Besides, permit me to say, you should be with your party. The times are troublous – not for holidays! Your holiday has had a haunted look, creditably to your conscience as a politician. These Corn Law agitations!"
> "Ah, but no politics here!" said Dacier.
> "Politics everywhere! – in the Courts of Faery! They are not discord to me.
> "But not the last day – the last hour!" he pleaded.
> "Well! only do not forget your assurance to me that you would give some thoughts to Ireland – and the cause of women. Has it slipped from your memory?"
> "If I see the chance of serving you, you may trust to me." (Meredith 167)

The repeal of Corn Laws has been argued until the very end of the novel even if in implicit sense. In Chapter XXXI, Percy Dacier tells her secretly that his party has reached a decision about the repeal of Corn Laws but it is not publicly declared. Percy warns Diana not to tell the secret to anyone even by showing physical violence. Meanwhile, Diana sells Percy's secret to Mr. Tonans who is a journalist in one of the

newspapers. When Mr. Tonans publishes the news, Percy feels cheated and accuses Diana of deceit:

> "I was beset with debts, unable to write, and, last night when you left me, abject. It seemed to me that you disrespected me…"
> "Last night!" Dacier cried with lashing emphasis.
> "It is evident to me that I have the reptile in me, Percy. Or else I am subject to lose my reason. I went... I went like a bullet: I cannot describe it; I was mad. I need a strong arm, I want help. I am given to think that I do my best and can be independent; I break down. I went blindly – now I see it – for the chance of recovering my position, as the gambler casts; and he wins or loses. With me it is the soul that is lost. No exact sum was named; thousands were hinted."
> …
> "I can never trust you again," he said.
> "I fear you will not," she replied. (351)

Given this conversation, it is true to say that Diana supports herself with her own endeavours. Her love of independence transcends her loyalty, which indicates that Diana has the potential to abuse Percy and betray his secret for her own economic and financial concerns. In this perspective, she is wittier than any other politician because she knows the characteristics of politics. Even though Percy Dacier leaves her and marries Constance Asper, Diana is able to declare her full independence now according to Randall Craig (160-166). She remains independent and emancipated until the very end of the novel, where she decides to marry Mr. Thomas Redworth with the advice of her dear friend, Lady Emma Dunstane.

In conclusion, Diana Antonia Merion in George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* is a New Woman since she resists the normative patriarchal structures of the institution of marriage and she tackles the difficulties of divorce with her own endeavours unlike the suppressed "angels in the house." Moreover, Diana's image of the New Woman is strengthened by the acts of writing and politics. Through writing, Diana reconstructs her "self" as an independent woman who is able to survive in the male dominated economy of fiction-making world. Her three works, *The Princess*

Egeria, *The Young Minister of the State* and *The Man of Two Minds*, reflects her own individual, free and wild voice in that she flies in the face of patriarchal tradition of writing. Her perception of politics, is also interesting in that Diana can talk about political fluctuations like the repeal of Corn Laws in the novel. Even in these talks, she does not let her individuality and independence go under the carpet, which means that she is not captivated. Given these facts, it is true to say that Diana is an embodiment of a strong, witty, determined and independent image of the New Woman. As George Meredith clearly depicts in his fiction, Diana is extraordinary, diverse in thinking and action:

> She had brains and ardour, she had grace and sweetness, a playful petulancy enlivening our atmosphere, and withal a refinement, a distinction, not to be classed; and justly might she dislike the being classed. Her humour was a perennial refreshment, a running well, that caught all the colours of light; her wit studded the heavens of the recollection of her. In his heart he felt that it was a stepping down for the brilliant woman to give him her hand; a condescension and an act of valour. She who always led or prompted when they conversed, had now in her generosity abandoned the lead and herself to him, and she deserved his utmost honouring. (Meredith 259-260)

Diana deserves utmost honouring because she not only manages to survive in a world which is strictly and morally patriarchal and rigidly normative. She produces and talks. She is not curbed and restrained by the dominant ideology. She becomes New, a prima donna of woman's reality.

CHAPTER VI
THE ODD WOMEN BY GEORGE GISSING: MARRIAGE, WORK AND INITIATIVES OF INDEPENDENCE

> Women's battle is not only against themselves. The necessity of the case demands what you call a strained ideal.
>
> – George Gissing, *The Odd Women*

George Gissing (1857-1903), who published twenty three novels between 1880 and 1903, was a prolific author in the Late Victorian Period. His most famous novels, *The Unclassed* (1884), *New Grub Street* (1891), *Born in Exile* (1892), *The Odd Women* (1893) and *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894), dealt with the problems of gender, freedom, human nature and marriage. The image of the New Woman is tightly related to *The Odd Women* in which the female characters like Rhoda Nunn, Mary Barfoot, Alice Madden, Virginia Madden and Monica Madden try to survive in a society that is rather strict and totally patriarchal. In "Feminist Resistance, the Artist and 'A Room of One's Own'," Ann Heilmann indicates that "Many *fin-de-siècle* feminist narratives explore heterosexual middle-class women's real-life experiences of living on their own for the first time and fending for themselves in an ever more competitive world" (294; emphasis in original). Placed in a competitive world in which the clash between man and woman emerges as a necessary action, these characters still keep themselves out of the chain and become the pioneers of new life for women because they are interested in self-realization and freedom. Through their sisterhood for a more egalitarian world and society, they look for their own social, cultural, economic and conjugal rights in order to challenge the norms which suppress them. Rhoda Nunn, as the representative of the New Woman image appears in Gissing's fiction to explore the limits of women's liberation in marriage and work. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to analyse the traces of the New Woman images in Gissing's *The Odd Women* by pinning down the representations into the concepts of marriage, work and independence for a complete discussion which contributes to feminist thought.

To begin with, Gissing portrays a sisterhood basing the feminist argument on the title, *The Odd Women*. In fact, oddness is an etiquette that is used to describe unmarried superfluous women or shortly the "spinsters." As Françoise Basch writes, "Unmarried women found themselves in an impasse, which after being economic become social" in Victorian England (103). Although Rhoda and her friends are seen as "feme sole" (unmarried women) as they are not married, becoming an odd woman is not easy and by chance for them. The status quo which pushes them to the margins is a mechanism that controls each aspect of life. Still, their union as spinsters prove their concern for battling against gender roles. Ann Heilmann, in "Masquerade, Sisterhood and the Dilemma of the Feminist as Artist and Woman in Late-Nineteenth-Century British Women's Writing," argues that either married or single, all woman produces a hook-up and agreement against the abusive manhood (157). In this respect, becoming odd is becoming new for Rhoda and other New Women. It requires belief and resistance, which means that women should act as if they were in a movement and create a sisterhood. Rhoda knows, on the other hand, that "She did not seek to become known as the leader of the 'movement,' yet her quiet work was probably more effectual than the public career of the women who propagandize for female emancipation" (Gissing 60). Even though Gissing does not directly let women to act in public life as free as men, he portrays such strong female characters in order to draw attention to the New Woman. For instance, like her female friends who are in the same thought, as Mrs. Smallbrook says, "I aim at the solidarity of woman" (59), Rhoda is conscious of the responsibility she takes: "My work and thought are for the women who do not marry – the 'odd women' I call them. They alone interest me. One mustn't undertake too much" (164). It is evident that Rhoda's remarks are tightly related to the concept of marriage because, as Wendy Lesser mentions in "Even-Handed Oddness: George Gissing's *The Odd Women*," "the 'odd' ones [are] left over after everyone else has paired up" (210). The oddness, in this sense, becomes a synonym for the marginal, new and abnormal.

In a conversation with Monica, who is torn between her own aspirations and the dominance of her husband in the later chapters of the novel, Rhoda spends a great deal of time on her perception of marriage and on the social base of her individualistic and feminist argument:

> "Don't you approve of anyone marrying?" [asked Monica].
> "Oh, I'm not so severe! But do you know that there are half a million more women than men in this happy country of ours?"
> "Half a million!"
> "Something like that, they say. So many *odd women* – no making pair with them. The pessimists call them useless, lost, futile lives. I, naturally – being one of them myself – take another view. I look upon them as a great reserve. When one woman vanishes in matrimony, the reserve offers a substitute for the world's work. True, they are not all trained yet – far from it. I want to help in that – to train the reserve." (Gissing 41)

As a rebuttal to the social norms which define unmarried women "useless, lost, futile lives," Rhoda's explanations draw attention to her new understanding of womanhood and marriage. Ann Heilmann, in her introduction to *New Woman Fiction (2): Gender and Sexuality*, suggests that "When feminist writers discussed free love, they thus frequently drew attention to the need for both sexes to liberate themselves from the ideological cage of conventional marriage" (xvi). I would like to show Rhoda as a New Woman because on the grounds where her New Woman image stands, we can argue that Gissing's fiction is a New Woman fiction:

> Whether or not she could be called a comely woman might have furnished matter for male discussion; the prevailing voice of her own sex would have denied her charm of feature. At first view the countenance seemed masculine, its expression somewhat aggressive – eyes shrewdly observant and lips consciously impregnable. But the connoisseur delayed his verdict. It was a face that invited, that compelled, study. Self-confidence, intellectual keenness, a bright humour, frank courage, were traits legible enough; and when the lips parted to show their warmth , their fullness, when the eyelids drooped a little in meditation, one became aware of suggestiveness directed not solely to the intellect, of something like an unfamiliar sexual type, remote indeed from the voluptuous, but hinting a possibility of subtle feminine forces that might be released by circumstance. (Gissing 21-22)

Given the centrality of Rhoda's New Woman image to the feminist agenda, it is obvious that Rhoda is a protestor against the social norms which are designed by the patriarchal forces. Chris Willis's definitions of the New Woman – "young, pretty, single, well educated, physically and mentally healthy, attractive, intelligent, honourable, a Socialist" (53-60) – come into existence in Rhoda. Her New Woman image is clear enough to provide a confirmatory evidence for the feminist argument in terms of marriage and work in Gissing's fiction.

The odd woman evidently represents the New Woman because the characters are aware of the fact that they are different from stereotypical Victorian lady. A stereotypical Victorian woman is defined as an angel in the house by Coventry Patmore (*Angel in the House*). Moreover, according to John Ruskin, a woman should be moral because she is the guide that teaches the youth and shows the morality (73-78). Marriage is an institution that offers woman a peaceful and comfortable home yet with limited sense of freedom. Sally Mitchell claims that "Marriage was seen as woman's natural and expected role" while most of the New Women in *The Odd Women* defy the institution of marriage. In this sense, oddness becomes newness for the female characters in the novel as Rhoda, Mary and others emblematically stand on behalf of subjugated individuals by the standards of the age. For instance, while Everard and Miss Barfoot are talking about Rhoda, Everard is sure about that Rhoda is a New Woman because she is stronger and more determined in her way than Miss Barfoot (Gissing 93). Likewise, Everard does not change his view of Rhoda in a conversation with Mr. Thomas Micklethwaite, who has been suffering from marriage with Fanny, as he has not been able to support her:

> Miss Nunn, I warrant, considers herself proof against any kind of wooing. She is one of the grandly severe women; a terror, I imagine, to any young girl at their place who betrays weak thoughts of matrimony. Now, it's rather a temptation to a man of my kind. There would be something piquant in making vigorous love to Miss Nunn, just to prove her sincerity. (106)

It is evident that Miss Nunn is the symbol of the New Womanhood not only in the eyes of women but also in the eyes of men. Her perception of marriage and understanding of union of sex address a controversial belief in Victorian society, because, as a New

Woman, she is also odd and a threat against the normative structures. Everard's thoughts about Rhoda Nunn provide a different angle from which the meaning of the New Woman can be traced. Everard, since he is in love with Rhoda, is interested in Rhoda's thought-provoking nature against marriage and the social order. The different attitudes and stance that Rhoda has affects him deeply because Rhoda is not similar to any woman he has encountered before:

> But if his intellectual sympathy became tinged with passion – and did he discern no possibility of that? An odd thing were he to fall in love with Rhoda Nunn. Hitherto his ideal had been a widely different type of woman; he had demanded rare beauty of face, and the charm of a refined voluptuousness. To be sure, it was but an ideal; no woman that approached it had ever come within this sphere. (147)

Everard's indecisiveness about his feelings towards Rhoda creates a conflict in the novel because Everard's passion for Rhoda's intellect affects both of them in terms of conjugal judgements. While Everard cannot decide on proposing marriage to Rhoda, Rhoda does not want to betray his sisterhood and the New Woman image as she is certain that "To reject a lover in so many respects desirable, whom so many women might envy her, would fortify her self-esteem, and enable her to go forward in the chosen path with firmer tread" (168). Rhoda's awareness strengthens up her mission as a New Woman who is to educate other women and to find occupations for them.

Even though marriage seems to be an obligation for the women to survive in the male-controlled Victorian society, Rhoda Nunn and Mary Barfoot refuse to marry. The institutional marriage which refers to woman as a property handed to the husband from the mother is most women's irresistible fate. Martha Vicinus, in *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, suggests that "Clearly the limited choice of employment and low pay for all classes of women meant that marriage was the most attractive option" (ix). In the novel, Gissing's delineation of Tom Micklethwaite persuades us that he believed a Ruskinian model of womanhood: a woman is a peace-maker in the home and should stay at home for domestic services. On the other hand, Rhoda Nunn and Mary Barfoot create self-control over marriage. Knowing that the New Woman does not prefer institutional marriage as it limits the way in which her actions

and thought are restrained, it is true to say that the New Woman favours free love, which refers to the alliance of the intellect. Their self-control is a defining feature of the New Woman. Tom Micklethwaite believes "It is the duty of every man, who has sufficient means, to maintain a wife. The life of the unmarried women is a wretched one; every man who is able ought to save one of them from that fate" (Gissing 105). On the other hand, Mary Barfoot contests his view saying "The girls of our class are not like the uneducated, who, for one reason or another, will marry almost any man rather than remain silent" (67). Rhoda and Mary know the very essence of oddness and newness as they represent a non-typical woman image through their economic independence and individualistic search. Rhoda and Mary's running Great Portland Street School in order to promote women into the workforce emphasizes their traversing attitude against the norms. Bringing the view that marriage drags women into misery, confinement and dependence on men, Rhoda's conversation with Mary Barfoot is striking enough to foster a debate over marriage on the basis of radicalism:

> "I maintain that the vast majority of women lead a vain and miserable life because they *do* marry."
>
> "Don't you blame the institution of marriage with what is chargeable to human fate? A vain and miserable life is the lot of nearly all mortals. Most women, whether they marry or not, will suffer and commit endless follies."
>
> "Most women – as life is at present arranged for them. Things are changing, and we try to have our part in hastening a new order." (65; emphasis in original)

The desire for new order via challenging the qualities of marriage or non-marriage alerts us about Rhoda's type of the New Woman. She is a radical feminist who desires to abolish the matrimonial and patriarchal norms in the society. As Deirdre David explains in "Ideologies of Patriarchy, Feminism, and Fiction in *The Odd Women*," "Rhoda is concerned with all women, regardless of class origin, and is firmly committed to the establishment of a revolutionary social order in which women will reject marriage entirely" (126). The social reform based on marriage is one of the qualities which define New Woman because marriage restrains the actions of the New Woman, lobotomizes her, and therefore curbs her identity.

On the other hand, though Mary Barfoot believes that unplanned and wrong marriages will end in failure, her perception is most likely more moderate because in the conversation where Rhoda refuses all types of marriages, she knows that marriage can be unpredictable and erratic according to human fate. While Rhoda seems radical in her ideas, Mary symbolizes a more moderate sense of feminism. Susan Colón describes Miss Barfoot's character as "Gissing's privileged voice of moderate reform" (441) because Mary attaches credence to a possibility of happy and free union. Even to her cousin, Everard Barfoot, she is able to explain how marriage and work go hand in hand plausibly. While Everard tries to persuade her that marriage changes the desires of woman, Mary insists on the idea that

> Women must have just as wide a choice. … Not henceforth profitless. There's the very point I insist upon. So far is it from profitless, that it has made her a wholly different woman from what she would otherwise have been. Instead of a moping, mawkish creature, with – in most instances – a very unhealthy mind, she is a complete human being. She stands on an equality with the man. He can't despise her as he now does. (Gissing 110-111)

This paragraph exhibits Mary's determined standpoint against Victorian and patriarchal division of labour. In this regard, she not only voices her faith in which marriage and work are incorporated for an egalitarian relationship but also disregards John Ruskin's model of private spheres. John Ruskin humbly advises women and men who are to marry, "[The home] is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division. … And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her" (78). Knowing that Ruskin also does not place women outside but inside, we can conclude that working is rejected for women because she is subdued by domestic sphere. Nonetheless, Mary reverses this ideology and combines marriage and work as a New Woman should do. She wants to be equal with men because if she works and then marries, she will not be alienated to herself and the marriage she is in.

Still, Gissing concisely claims that marriage is a mutual and intellectual union for the odd women in that they are keen on their self-improvement and individuality. In fact, Gissing's fiction proposes a type of free love in which the relationship between a

man and a woman are based on their mutual independence and perception of life. Rhoda ratifies their perception of marriage by responding to Mary's statements about Miss Royston. Mary thinks that Rhoda supports the women who are unmarried; thus, the married women are out of Rhoda's reach and interest. Nonetheless, Rhoda retorts that

> You will have taught them that marriage is an alliance of intellects – not a means of support, or something more ignoble still. But to do this with effect you must show yourself relentless to female imbecility. … The endeavour to give women a new soul is so difficult that we can't be cumbered by side-tasks, such as fishing foolish people out of the mud they have walked into. (Gissing 64-65)

In a nutshell, Rhoda rightfully retells her own thoughts about marriage because she knows that marriage abuses women and therefore encumbers their abilities to act and think. As George Drysdale demonstrates in *The Elements of Social Science or Physical Sexual and Natural Religion*, "Marriage is one of the chief instruments in the degradation of women. It perpetuates the old inveterate error, that it is the province of the female sex to depend upon man for support, and to attend merely to household cares and rearing the children" (qtd. in Cunningham 5). Rhoda is in the opinion that marriage is a prison for women. Thus, she is surely troubled by Everard, the cousin of Mary Barfoot since Everard has a desire for Rhoda but Rhoda's contradictory nature does not allow her to accept Everard and matrimonial relationship easily:

> "If," remarked Rhoda, "it were first provided that no marriage should take place until after a ten years' engagement."
>
> "Yes," Barfoot assented, in his smoothest and most graceful tone. "That completes the system. Unless you like to add that no engagement is permitted except between people who have passed a certain examination; equivalent, let us say, to that which confers a university degree. (Gissing 110)

In the dialogue with Everard, Rhoda seeks for a former time before the marriage because, in a ten years' engagement, a woman comes to know her mate well and therefore decides for a durable and planned future. This utopic wish of Rhoda persuades us that she does not evaluate marriage within the context of social contract. Her sharp

character elucidates the disgraces and failuresof marriage institution which in fact forces women to marry for economic security not for their own happiness and love.

Admittedly, the denial of marriage not only represents women's resistance against the social norms and patriarchal status quo but also signifies the emancipation of the female. Everard's rapid and equitable remarks are to convince Rhoda for a relationship because when Rhoda asks "The average man labours that he may be able to marry, and the average woman certainly has the same end in view. Are female teachers to be vowed to celibacy?" (110), Everard replies, "Women must have just a wide choice" (111). This emancipatory attempt of Rhoda both in marriage and in labour relations provides an exclusive understanding of the New Woman. Instead of becoming an angel in the house, she becomes a devil as Ann Heilmann suggest in *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-wave Feminism* (22). For the quest of emancipation, though, Rhoda propounds the view that education is compulsory because she makes out that "The girls' nature was corrupted with sentimentality, like that of all but every woman who is intelligent enough to read what is called the best fiction, but not intelligent enough to understand its vice. Love – love – love; a sickening sameness of vulgarity" (Gissing 64). In order to free the women from the male-centred views and rules that are constructed in novels, Rhoda deeply counts on marriage and dramatically calls for an activism in the education of women in her speech for raising consciousness:

> And when the whole course of female education is altered; when the girls are trained as a matter of course some definite pursuit; then those who really are obliged to remain at home will do their duty there in a quite different spirit. Home work will be their serious business, instead of disagreeable drudgery, or a way of getting through the time till marriage offers. … I would teach them that for the majority of women marriage means disgrace. (111)

While rejecting the norms fabricated in patriarchal fiction and wishing to subvert the education provided for women, Rhoda Nunn is truly a nun who adheres tightly to her duties and beliefs as a New Woman. If education is altered within the context of free womanhood and if the woman is free to choose her own work, then, a woman becomes

mature enough to marry as she now knows herself and aware of her capacity and potential to realize herself.

The education of women in order to create awareness about life, freedom and relationships appears to be the fundamental purpose of the female characters like Rhoda and Mary. Ann Heilmann suggests that "Heroines [in New Woman fiction] tend to be educated along sharply gendered lives in most regimented style" (*New Woman Fiction (1): Marriage, Motherhood and Work,* xvii). Their education provides the New Women with the sharpness of their thinking through which they can observe the mechanisms that instruct women and dominate their self and freedom. For example, Rhoda ceaselessly criticizes the women who are brainwashed by the novel reading and the sentimentality. She says, "All her spare time was given to novel-reading. If every novelist could be strangled and thrown into the sea we should have some chance of reforming women. The girls' nature was corrupted with sentimentality…" (Gissing 64). The current debate that Rhoda galvanises, in fact, revolves around a protest against Ruskinian ideology. Ruskin, in "Of Queens' Gardens," testifies that "Keep the modern magazine and novel out of your girl's way: turn her loose into the old library every wet day, and let her alone. She will find what is good for her; you cannot: for there is just this difference between the making of a girl's character and boy's …" (83). Rhoda's opposition to novel-reading becomes sensible when one takes them into consideration by keeping Ruskin's advice in mind. Since Ruskin wants to shape all women in particular model and system, ideology of conventional roles depicted in the modern magazines and novels [like the New Woman fiction] poisons her mind. On the other hand, Rhoda is aware of the fact that education is a must for women as she thinks, if an average man benefits from the rights of being educated, a woman's right for education cannot be restricted:

> Because one of the supreme social needs of our day is the education of women in self-respect and self-restraint. There are plenty of people – men chiefly, but a few women also of certain temperament – who cry for a reckless individualism in these matters. They would tell you that she behaved laudably, that she was living out herself – and things of that kind. (Gissing 62)

Education that is desired for the rights and liberation of women provides a strong ground on which the New Woman image is erected. Education represents the New Woman in that the rigid polarities between man and woman are softened and eroded. Mary Barfoot, whose ideal of educating women is highlighted several times, is sure about the advantages of educating women because she knows that education leads to a new type of woman:

> We are educating ourselves. There must be a new type of woman, active in every sphere of life: a new worker out in the world, a new ruler of the home. Of the old ideal virtues we can retain many, but we have to add to them those which have been thought appropriate only in men. Let a woman be gentle, but at the same time let her be strong; let her be pure of heart, but none the less wise and instructed. Because we have to set an example to the sleepy of our sex, we must carry on an active warfare – must be invaders. Whether woman is the equal of man I neither know nor care. We are not his equal in size, in weight, in muscle, and, for all I can say, we may have less power of brain. … At any cost – at any cost – we will free ourselves from the heritage of weakness and contempt! (154)

Mary's activist and encouraging speech echoes Sarah Grand's words in "The New Aspect of Woman Question." In her infamous article, Grand provokes the idea that "Women were awaking from their long apathy, and, as they awoke, like healthy hungry children unable to articulate, they began to whimper for they knew not what" (271). Evidently, Mary says, "Because we have to set an example to the sleepy of our sex, we must carry on an active warfare – must be invaders" (Gissing 154). Both Mary and Sarah Grand direct their feminist call for an activity. According to Mary Barfoot, the passivity of women can be eradicated through education which will liberate them and end their passive conditions.

Whereas Rhoda focuses on the freedom of women via education and the subversion of marriage rules, she is also intrigued by the marriage proposal of Everard Barfoot in that she does not either believe in the sincerity of Everard's proposal or believe that marriage will make her happy in such a circumstance while she was protesting against the normative structure. For Everard, Rhoda seems different and

marginal: “She is *full* of practical expedients. The most wonderful person! She is quite like a *man* in energy and resources” (32; emphasis in original). On the other hand, is it true to say that Everard could become a man that can allow Rhoda to travel or to do whatever she wants? This question reverberates in Rhoda’s mind as she cannot be disloyal to her tenets of feminism and marriage: “I maintain that the vast majority of women lead a vain and miserable life because they *do* marry” (65; emphasis in original). She questions herself, her own desires, her perception of marriage and dissents to marriage:

> What was her life to be? At first they would travel together; but before long it might be necessary to have a settled home, and what then would be her social position, her duties, and pleasures? Housekeeping, mere domesticities, could never occupy her for more than the smallest possible part of each day. Having lost one purpose in life, dignified, absorbing, likely to extend its sphere as time went on, what other could she hope to substitute for it? Love of husband – perhaps of child. There must be more than that. Rhoda did not deceive herself as to the requirements of her nature. (309)

Rhoda’s nature is revealingly not fit for the institution of marriage. If she marries, this will delude her into accepting the conventions of Victorian life, which will cause a great depression and sadness for her. Also, she will not be an odd woman and “[n]o longer an example of perfect female independence, and will be “unable therefore to use the same language before” (309) once she marries. In terms of her ideals and the duties that she needs to follow, Rhoda says “[Only] let *me* be what I now am” (375; emphasis in original). Learning that Everard Barfoot will marry Miss Agnes Brissenden, who is a typical Victorian lady, Rhoda is relieved from her ambivalence. In this sense, she reflects the success that a woman should have while refusing the mate to whom she does not want to be attached. Therefore, she concomitantly rediscovers herself. Chris Willis points out the very ambiguous sense that the female character has in the New Woman fiction:

> The heroine spends most of the novel proving her superiority to him, only to capitulate unconvincingly in the final chapter and give up her career aspirations for the dubious delights of marriage to a man who is her physical

> and mental inferior. If she does not marry she is almost invariably left disconsolate and unsatisfied, having lost her lover to a conventionally 'womanly' woman. (57)

Eventually, Rhoda rejects Everard and loses him to a mere conventional Victorian lady, Miss Brissenden. On the other hand, she preserves and adheres to her ideals as a New Woman. She is able to prove her consistency and determinacy against marriage and intelligence as a New Woman. She does not leave her career and desires for the sake of marriage and Everard. In this respect, Rhoda urges the readers to think about the New Woman more than they have done and deliberately presents a stronger type of the New Woman.

Although Rhoda Nunn rejects conjugal relationships, Monica Madden's marriage with Edmund Widdowson illustrates how a marriage is in fact a failure. Monica, whose actions and decisions function antagonistically to Rhoda's thoughts, decides to marry Edmund Widdowson. Since she and her sisters are brought up by Dr Madden, who is the Victorian patriarch in the novel, Monica's marriage is like a hope for other sisters as Monica is the youngest and the others are not married yet:

> To the others, no wooer had yet presented himself. Alice, if she had ever dreamt of marriage, must by now have resigned herself to spinsterhood. Virginia could scarce hope that her faded prettiness, her health damaged by attendance upon an exacting invalid and profitless study when she ought to have been sleeping, would attract any man in search of a wife. Poor Isabel was extremely plain. Monica, if her promise were fulfilled, would be by far the best looking, as well as the sprightliest, of the family. She must marry; of course she must marry! Her sisters gladdened in the thought. (Gissing 12)

On the other hand, Rhoda as a fervent feminist and Mildred, one of the members of the odd women, do not approve of the marriage. Mildred reacts to Monica's matrimonial desire for Widdowson because both Rhoda and Mildred believe that it will be a stillborn action: "I think you're going to marry altogether wrong ideas. I think you'll do an injustice to Mr. Widdowson. You will marry him for a comfortable home – that's what it amounts to. And you'll repent it bitterly some day – you'll repent" (125). In fact, their worries and destructive comments are on target and prove to be right because Monica's

marriage will be a failure. It can be said that Monica has problems about her individualistic attempts both in economic and social life. Edmund does not want her to work and see any of previous friends. For Edmund, "Women were very like children; it was rather a task to amuse them and keep them out of mischief" (271). He is the embodiment of Ruskin's ideals in the novel. As Ruskin claims in "Of Queens' Gardens," Edmund Widdowson internalizes Victorian doctrines of prudery and "angel in the house." Consequently, he utters, "A married woman must accept her husband's opinion, at all events about men." (271). He plunged into the ancient quagmire. "A man may know with impunity what is injurious if it enters a woman's mind" (228). In this sense, he is a traditionalist towards the notion of marriage (Bailey Linehan 365). Monica is entrapped by her desire both for marriage and for independence. She marries; yet, is entrapped by the patriarchal ideology of womanhood.

Edmund Widdowson's belief in the fact that a woman cannot work seemingly threatens the image of the New Woman because he confines Monica and thus produces a problem in her social life. Deirdre David states that "Monica […] is the victim of male ideology twice over – once as theorized by her father and once as practiced by her husband" (124). Knowing that Dr Madden does not want his daughters to worry about working and money, Edmundson seems to take over the duty of Dr Madden while hindering Monica from working. When Monica does not accept staying at home, Edmund says "The woman who has become my wife ought to be something more than a friend, I should think. You have lost all love for me – there's the misery" (Gissing 229). Though he wants his wife to be like a friend, his attitudes towards his wife subvert the very reality. In this case, Monica responds, "Your behaviour seems to me very weak, very unmanly. You make us both miserable, and quite without cause. I can only say as I have said before, that things will never be better until you come to think of me as your free companion, not as your bondwoman" (230). Monica's desire for freedom, socialisation and independent working conditions make Edmund suspicious of Monica because Monica starts a relationship with Bevis with whom she wants to elope. When Edmund catches them in the act, Monica is on the verge of giving birth to Edmund's daughter who cannot be accepted by him in an unbiased and unquestioning way. When Monica repents and becomes sorry, Rhoda does not keep calm and says, "Foolish girl!

Why couldn't she stay with us, and keep her liberty? She doesn't seem to have made any new friends" (247). Monica, who is torn between conventional and new values, has to die because there is no place for her in the New Woman fiction as she weakens the ideals of New Womanhood. There is no future for her. Therefore, Rhoda cleverly thinks that "Seriously, I believe if a few men and women in prominent position would contract marriage of the free kind, without priest or lawyer, open and defiantly, they would do more benefit to their kind than in any other possible way" (327). Her addressing free love in her speech demonstrates a new type of relationship which is completely unacceptable for Victorians. However, Rhoda's radical view is a social anarchy that is to change any kind of heterosexual reproductive system. Free love, in this fashion, implies the death of the marriage institution.

Though Monica had just started to transform her husband's views, as Edmund starts to question himself "Let me ask myself a question. If Monica were absolutely free to choose between continuing to live with me and resuming her perfect liberty, can I persuade myself that she would remain my wife? She would not" (273), her attempt of eloping does change Edmund's ideas and therefore everything becomes complex. Patricia Comitini points out that "Monica attempts to subvert the relations of dominator/dominated that characterize the 'natural' law of Victorian sexual relations … by softening the effects of feminine influence" (533). Nonetheless, her venture with Bevis makes her a fallen woman and as Susan Colón exposes "she dies the death of a fallen woman, guilty by association" (Gissing 450). Her guilt, on the other hand, is veiled by her new born daughter. The symbolic meaning of the daughter is significant to render the question of the New Woman image in that Edmund's bigotry is not broken: "Monica dies, totally estranged from her husband, in childbirth, her tragedy brought about primarily but not entirely by the extreme bigotry of her husband" (Cunningham 141). His daughter is not enough herself to shatter the conservative character of Edmund because "Widdowson's desire was that Miss [Alice] Madden should undertake the care of the child" (Gissing 385). In this case, the daughter becomes a member of the odd women and Rhoda's disciple. When Alice says that they are setting up a school for the education of women, Rhoda adds that "[H]ere is one pupil growing for us!" which

symbolically stands for the transforming notion of womanhood into the image of the New Woman.

Most importantly, Gissing's fiction subverts the private and public spheres, through which he presents the idea that women can work and thus they can liberate themselves through their independent economic condition. In the very beginning of the novel, Dr Madden's thoughts on women's working are not positively accepted because he believes in the very notion of the private spheres: "I don't think girls ought to be troubled about this kind of thing [money matters]. … Let men grapple with the world; for, as the old hymn says, ''tis their nature to'" (Gissing 1). He also adds that "No, no; women, old or young, should never have to think about money" (2). He is sure that his six daughters will not be troubled by working and earning money. Gissing, nonetheless, reverses his thoughts by killing Dr Madden symbolically. The death of the father stands for two significant purposes in the novel: first the death of the patriarchal order and secondly the reversal of the fortune for the daughters, Alice, Monica and Virginia, who survive and therefore have to work for a living. In fact, the father's thoughts are fixed upon the conventions of the Victorian society that imposes moral and religious codes over women. Since "Dr Madden's hopes for the race were inseparable from a maintenance of morals and conventions such as the average man assumes in his estimate of women" (3), he is the very representative of the patriarchy and morality. In the introduction to *New Woman Fiction (1): Marriage, Motherhood and Work*, Ann Heilmann reveals the New Woman's independent working character: "If the female communities which replace heterosexual marriage in the New Woman fiction serve a political purpose, they also offer the possibility of professional development by providing women with the spatial and temporal independence necessary if they are to pursue their studies or a paid occupation" (xvi). In this fashion, Rhoda's entrance into the same scene demonstrates the changing nature of womanhood. Dr Madden's last words can be taken into consideration within the perspective of the dying patriarchy. Rhoda's question, "Do you think women ought to sit in Parliament?" is sharply answered with a "No!" by Dr Madden. But, Madden sisters work as governesses and later for a school (Gissing 4). Moreover, Rhoda and Mary enforce the notion that

women can work and therefore they can step outside of home which restricts their choices of jobs and working.

In fact, *The Odd Women*, which bridges the ideas of working to the liberation of women, deconstructs the model of the strict division, private – public, proposed by the Victorian ideology. When Dr Madden dies at the very beginning of the novel, the daughters start working because they have to survive: "Alice plies her domestic teaching; Virginia remained a 'companion.' Isabel, now aged twenty, taught in a Board School at Bridgewater, and Monica, just fifteen, was on the point of being apprenticed to a draper at Weston, where Virginia abode" (12). When they decided to move, they realized that they did not have enough money. Alice, the eldest, worries about their situation and therefore expresses her feelings of hopelessness if they cannot earn money: "Supposing we neither of us obtain employment before the end of this year" (15). The worry of employment is significant because it provides us with ample proof so as to understand the situation of women in Victorian Period. Working is almost impossible because if they work, their perception of public and private spheres is destroyed. Leonore Davidoff informs us about the fact that "Domestic service … from 1850 to 1950 … *was the single most important form of employment of women and girls*" (89; emphasis in original). Nevertheless, this fact is overthrown because the domestic service functions as public service in the novel. The revolution of spheres in Gissing's fiction is instigated by two plots that go hand in hand: first, Rhoda's and Mary's running Great Portland Street School and secondly, Madden Sisters' attempt to work. Rhoda and Mary are able to encourage Alice and Virginia to start their own work as they foreshadow their establishment of a school in the very end of the novel: "[A]s soon as the baby walk we are going to think very seriously about the school" (Gissing 386). Meanwhile, when Alice asks Rhoda how her work is going on, Rhoda answers, "More! … We flourish like the green bay-tree. We shall have to take larger premises. By-the-by, you must read the paper we are going to publish …" the dialogue reveals the entrepreneurship by women in labour and the defeat of patriarchal labour relations in Victorian society.

In the chapter entitled "An Independent Woman," Rhoda's working experiences are highlighted to show that a woman is capable of earning her own money, of using the

money for her own desires and thus, of challenging the models which confine women in the domestic sphere while liberating men in the public economy. Rhoda explains that "When my mother left me that little sum of money I took a bold step. I went to Bristol to learn everything I could that would help me out of school life. Shorthand, book-keeping, commercial correspondence – I had lessons in them all, and worked desperately for a year" (23). Yet, Rhoda starts her own work and travels a lot, which means that her determination as a New Woman provides her with money, respect and freedom. Rhoda and Mary, along with other comrades in their path for working and freedom, teach women and provide them with several jobs that fetch them money. They talk about travelling, reading and education and also teach them type-writing as illustrated in Monica's case: "Without enthusiasm, but seemingly contented, Monica worked at the typewriting machine, and had begun certain studies which her friends judged to be useful. She experienced a growth of self-respect" (79).Even though Monica gives up type-writing for the sake of marriage, the chances that Rhoda and Mary present women are for their economic independence. As Gillian Tindall comments about women's work, working as a clerk "may hardly seem a pinnacle of emancipated freedom, but at the period clerking jobs were nearly always done by men and therefore for a woman to take one on was a way of showing that she was, in Mary's words, 'a rational and responsible human being'" (qtd. in Kramer 323). Substituting men at work, the New Woman is able to socialise in public life, support her own needs and create her own identity by earning her own money, which contributes to her independence.

Miss Barfoot's talk entitled "Woman as an Invader" holds significance in the novel within the context of labour and independence:

> "They will tell you that, in entering the commercial world, you not only unsex yourselves, but do a grievous wrong to the numberless men struggling hard for bare sustenance. You reduce salaries, you press into an already overcrowded field, you injure even your own sex by making it impossible for men to marry, who, if they earned enough, would be supporting a wife." To-day, continued Miss Barfoot, it was not her suppose to debate the economic aspects of the question. She would consider it from another point of view, repeating, perhaps, much that she had already said to them on other

> occasions, but doing so because these thoughts had just now very strong possession of her mind. (Gissing151-152)

This thought-provoking and motivating speech summarizes the aim of the New Women. They focus on the endorsement of working of women in all fields, including domestic and public. Encouraging women to work is a means of liberation because "[S]he demands the lion's share of power due to superior force alone. … [S]he wants to be admitted into public life (Ouida 612-614). Women's desire for autonomous self is additionally emphasized by Miss Barfoot in the end of her speech: "I am not chiefly anxious that you should *earn money*, but that women in general shall become *rational and responsible human beings* (Gissing 152; emphasis in original). In this sense, Miss Barfoot's call for an activism describes their New Woman sensibilities as they radically attack on male-centred labour relations which are designated by patriarchal social order. Seeing labour as the course of freedom and rationalising their struggle, Rhoda, Mary and their sisters convey a political message which threatens men of the public working. As Willis says, "Such fiction reached a large audience, and could be used to convey political message in a light-hearted way, without being overtly didactic" (54). The message is that women are strong enough to take back what they own.

In conclusion, the feminist discussion presented by Gissing as a male author in *The Odd Women* treats women and men as socially equal, which foregrounds that it is not the montage of gender relations but a reformation or renovation of gender roles and ideologies. As Gissing writes to his friend, Eduoard Bertz on 2 June 1893,

> My demand for female "equality" simply means that I am convinced there will be no social peace until women are intellectually trained very much as men are. More than half the misery of life is due to the ignorance and childishness of women. … I believe that the only way of effecting [*sic*] this is to go through a period of what many people will call sexual anarchy. Nothing good will perish. (qtd. in Mattheisen et al. 113)

Evidently enough, Gissing does not guide his female characters into any invidious acts in his fiction because he objectively alerts us about the struggle of women in Late Victorian Period by constructing a reality in which women are entrepreneurs in education, work and marriage. Given these facts, Rhoda Nunn, Mary Barfoot, Alice

Madden and Virginia Madden are the representatives of the New Woman because of their controversial and egalitarian views on marriage, work and education. They all represent the intelligent, independent, working, travelling, political, socialist, educated and intellectual New Woman type. Even if Monica dies as a fallen woman and cannot have the right to decide her actions and ideas immediately, her daughter stands for Monica within the familial affiliation and therefore she contributes to the New Woman ideology by adding a member into the population. In the novel, Gissing's mere aim of providing women with an egalitarian social life is fulfilled without a doubt. Pinning down the feminist arguments of labour, education and marriage in *The Odd Women*, Gissing makes the readers realize that he could fictionalize the lives and ideas of women in egalitarian terms as a male writer, which elucidates his androgynous mind.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the diverse aspects of the New Woman image represented in the works of Late Victorian male authors – Thomas Hardy, George Meredith and George Gissing – based on the analysis of prominent Victorian critics and New Woman critics such as Ann Heilmann, Ann Ardis, Sarah Grand, Ouida, Gail Cunningham and several others. The diverse representations of the New Woman images in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Diana of the Crossways* and *The Odd Women* involve the main characters' endeavours to emancipate themselves from the patriarchal dictates of marriage, politics, morality and sexuality and also to expose sexual division of labour that confines women in the private realm. Interestingly enough, the main characters in these novels – Tess, Diana, Rhoda, Mary and Madden Sisters respectively – challenge the norms constructed by patriarchal traditions and subvert the realities with their New Woman features.

Ann Heilmann writes in her *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird* that "[O]ne of the most important, most indispensible services to Social Reform [will] have to be undertaken by the Writers" (1). In this sense, Hardy's, Meredith's and Gissing's introspections into the New Woman's emancipatory process in fiction provide us with the conclusion that the New Woman produces a reformatory novelty in Late Victorian Period. Their perceptions reflected in their novels subvert social and cultural patriarchal norms and contribute to a social reform. It is evident that all of these three novels represent their main female characters with outstanding courage to transgress the social and cultural boundaries that are established by paternalistic power and discourses. Transgressing the boundaries of marriage through divorce, work through demolishing the division between private and public spheres, sexuality through desire and death, politics by speech, and identity through writing, these women characters delineate the New Woman images with their socially unacceptable but individually self-realized characters. Even though the representations of the New Woman images differ within the contexts offered and discussed in this thesis, what these three novelists achieve is to prove the woman's ability to survive, change, challenge and transform themselves by wittingly exploding the patriarchal structures and hegemonic perception of reality in fictional realm.

In terms of the New Woman images discussed in this study, these three novels represent the New Woman characters through distinct contexts regarding her emancipation and independence. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy presents Tess as New Woman indirectly. Even though this novel was published in 1891, which is later than 1885 when George Meredith published *Diana of the Crossways*, Tess does not completely function as a New Woman in the novel. Hardy presents Tess in a more modest fashion, which seems to complicate Tess's New Woman image as she ostensibly follows a Victorian type of "angel in the house" who is victimized and thus becomes a "fallen woman." Many would think that Tess's New Woman image is clouded by her being victimized. On the other hand, the issue of death forms a different and stronger argument concerning the New Woman because Tess's sexuality and death do not confine her into Victorian standards but liberates her.

Knowing that Tess challenges the norms of sexuality and morality with her "fallen woman" image, it seems difficult to define Tess as a New Woman. However, sexuality in the novel is the factor which enables Tess to self-realize. She abandons the moral and sexual tenets of the conventional society and symbolically becomes a pioneer of the New Woman. Even her death is the sign of the New Woman image because, through death, she both unsexes and liberates herself. As a result, Tess's anomalous character starts with her desire and sexuality with Alec even though she is seduced. She also reverses the moral codes with her "fallen" nature by challenging the normative structure with her rebellious act of deliberately killing Alec at the very end of the novel. It is true that she is freed from conventional type of Victorian woman and therefore adopts a New Woman identity. In this sense, the latent and silent invocation of the New Woman image in Tess's representation shows us that Hardy's character is the predecessor of the New Woman image concerning the contexts of sexuality, morality and death.

In *Diana of the Crossways*, however, Meredith builds a much more open and direct argument over the issue of the New Woman by pinning down her representation within the contexts of marriage, politics and writing. In these three fields, Meredith's main character, Diana Antonia Merion, not only becomes emancipated by her escape and divorce Mr. Warwick but also holds on to writing which contributes her survival

and symbolically frees her from the tenets of Victorian patriarchal ideology. Diana has already killed the "angel in the house" by divorcing Mr. Warwick. Her later strife, therefore, is the mission of survival through writing novels, which brings down the virile and patriarchal discourses in fiction in ruins. Her shifting position among marriage, divorce and writing is strengthened up by her speech in politics because Diana both challenges the patriarchal norms with her survival as a widower and bursts in upon political talk with men, which is totally forbidden for a woman in Victorian Period. Her strong and individual characterisation provides confirmatory evidence in order to conclude that Diana is a New Woman in that her actions and speech make a perfect sense for subverting hierarchical and patriarchal power relations. Although Meredith's fiction foreshadows a marriage between Diana and Mr. Thomas Redworth, which is motivated by Lady Emma Dunstane at the very end of the novel, and thus marriage seems to curtail Diana's individuality, the open ending is an attempt to foreshadow that Diana may be out of marriage institution once again. If the vice versa is thought, it is sure that Diana's New Woman image will be maintained in her marriage because the novel establishes a background in which Mr. Thomas Redworth is a New Man as he sees marriage as a union of wit, intellect and mutual understanding. On logical grounds, there is no intractable reason to argue that Diana will turn back to follow the patriarchal Victorian ideologies and become an "angel in the house." The "angel in the house" has been killed once and it will remain dead for Diana.

In Gissing's fiction, *The Odd Women*, the representations of the New Woman are based upon a sisterhood in which female characters are odd because they are spinsters who are aware of their New Woman features. The female characters' revolt against the institution of marriage in order to continue to work subverts the division between public and private spheres. Both the marital perception of these characters and their initiative to work ensures the idea that they are keen on their individuality and freedom. In this sense, Gissing consciously delineates these female characters out of the confines of marriage, which means that they are not spinsters because they are not able to find mates but because celibacy is something they have consciously chosen. Gissing's portrayal of two different relationship types – Monica Madden and Edmund Widdowson; Rhoda Nunn and Mr. Barfoot – can be considered as a comparison of the

positive and negative effects of marriage. Even though Rhoda is interested in Mr. Barfoot and contemplates upon the marriage issue at first, Rhoda's refusal of marriage leads us to conclude that Rhoda is not a socially ill character as Victorian society would deem her but a New Woman because of her preference for individuality and freedom. Moreover, the educational backgrounds of the characters allow us to focus on the New Woman who is educated, informed and didactic in their speech, thought and action. These evidences seem to suggest that *The Odd Women* is a more elaborate and modern fiction in terms of suggesting a world, which is endowed with feminist concerns centred upon self-realization, work, and individualism.

Hardy's initiating an argument over the issues of sexuality, morality and death gives an insight into Victorian Era's dominant discourses of gender and power relations. Tess handles these issues on her own, which implies the idea that there is not a supportive power apart from Angel Clare's slightly changed character at the very end. Keeping Angel's turning back to Tess out of discussion, Tess is alone in seeking for the justice she needs. That is why her death does not mean that she has to die because she does not follow the Victorian standards. Her death is the explanation that Tess completes her mission successfully. As a result, there is nothing to do because she is not fit for a conventional society. She manages to be an individual by transgressing the sexual and moral prohibitions, which contributes to the idea that she kills the "angel in the house" who has to obey the sexual, moral and religious codes of the Victorian society. However, the contexts of marriage, politics and writing in *Diana of the Crossways* demonstrate a more distinct way of delineating the New Woman's endeavour in society. Dealing with these issues rather than morality, sexuality and death, George Meredith exposes a step further, in which a woman is equal to a man. Her equality depends on her fragmentation of patriarchal norms in politics and writing. Diana's work is parallel to men's work in discussing and writing, which renders a more radical and egalitarian perception of woman's existence: A woman can realize her potential only by subverting the patriarchal traditions and eradicating man's traces in dominating fictional and political realms. Similarly, *The Odd Women* narrates a sisterhood in which each New Woman struggles for the sake of others. This unitary combination of thoughts and action within the fields of marriage and work is the only

way for securing women's emancipation. In this perspective, a married woman has to die because marriage circumscribes her identity as seen in Monica's death at the very end of the novel. Work and money provides a true self for woman. The message conveyed in Gissing's fiction is that a woman should not get married until she finds her own self. These women in the novel, therefore, should prove their endeavours and selves in order not to have "parasitical" status when they are married. That is why the single women – Rhoda, Mary and alive Madden Sisters – continue to change the world with their education and work because they are opening a school to train women. All these diverse contexts and perspectives in each novel offer the unstable and shifting images of the New Woman in fiction.

In terms of didacticism, which is one of the characteristics of the New Woman fiction, these novels employ a different strategy. In Hardy's fiction, for example, Tess's death complicates the didactic conclusions that are to be made. Tess has to die because she is different, criminal and anomalous. The narrative cannot incorporate her anymore. After killing Alec, as there is no one to revenge Tess's loss and fall, there are no other supporters that will contribute to Tess's existential and individual self in the novel. Rachel Blau DuPlessis writes that "Death … is a more than economic arrangement, for the punishment of one desire is the end of all" (16). Therefore, Tess's death is not didactic but political, which lead us into accepting that Hardy has to kill Tess in order to open the way for readers. It is Tess's anomalous character that is punished according to the expectations of the society. If Tess were not killed, the novel would surely raise questions about abnormality in Victorian fiction, which would hinder Hardy's aim of questioning mechanisms that suppressed women and of urging readers to follow another path. Unlike *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Diana of the Crossways* and *The Odd Women* demonstrate the importance of women's participation in the social realm as workers, politicians or writers which ultimately would hopefully contribute to a social reform. That is why Gissing articulates a deliberately remark on didactic conclusion which shows that social reform could be fulfilled by emancipated women with their being educated.

In *Diana of the Crossways*, Diana's all actions and thoughts are a call for activism: ""We women are the verbs passive of the alliance; we have to learn, and if we

take to activity, with the best intentions, we conjugate a frightful disturbance. We are to run on lines, like the steam-trains, or we come to no station, dash to fragments. I have the misfortune to know I was born an active. I take my chance" (Meredith 68-69). Her call is a didactic message which completes the fiction's aim of changing and challenging the status quo. Similarly, in *The Odd Women*, Rhoda and Mary talk didactically. Rhoda demands radical change in the system and therefore wants all women to be educated, which will result in a reform: "And when the whole course of female education is altered; when the girls are trained as a matter of course some definite pursuit; then those who really are obliged to remain at home will do their duty there in a quite different spirit" (Gissing 111). Her call is didactic because it certainly forces the readers to question the novels women read. In this sense, *Diana of the Crossways* and *The Odd Women* take advantage of the New Woman images in order to convey didactic and activist messages to the readers while Hardy, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, follows a metaphorical and subtle way of dealing with formative mechanisms of woman's identity and individuality. In fact, Tess finds herself situated into New Womanhood out of the blue. While Hardy leads Tess to atone for the injustice, Tess finds herself on the shore of the equality between man and woman. In this respect, Tess is an incidental New Woman while Rhoda, Mary, Madden Sisters and Diana start their ways as New Women. Thus, Tess is an outcome whereas the other characters are the examples of the New Woman.

The feminist agenda declared in these novels is also a significant topic because, on the basis of the examples and discussion currently available, these novels are grounded on the feminist thought and ideology. Feminism, the belief that men and women should have equal rights, is embedded into characters, plot and argument of these novels. As for *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy displays a feminist stance because his representation of the New Woman image of Tess in relation to the concepts of sexuality, morality and death does not belittle Tess's situation but instead sublimates woman's effort to emancipate herself from repressive and domineering social and cultural ideologies. Tess's breaking the rules of sexuality and morality via her sexual desire; her endeavours of working; her reversal of the division between public and private spheres; her confession to Angel as an honest woman who does not care about

public reputation unlike other Victorian ladies; her murder of Alec D'Urberville who stands for the patriarchal ideology or the repressive and sexual double standard; her unsexing herself concerning the existential approach towards death, and her metaphorical reminiscence after death persuade us to conclude that Thomas Hardy's fiction constitutes a feminist outlook. Even though, one can argue that Tess is killed by Thomas Hardy as Hardy can also be taken into consideration as the member of the paternal literary canon, Hardy does not present a clear evidence for the death of Tess. Tess explodes in Hardy's face because he does not know how to handle with Tess. There is no other solution than death. Tess does not die as a "fallen woman" but as an emancipated New Woman because she takes the law of her own life in her own hands.

Thomas Hardy's entitling his novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented* means his questioning of the realities in Victorian Age. "Is Tess's purity and existence ruined when she dies?" is the only question that reverberates in the readers' minds. Thomas Hardy writes in "Candour in English Fiction" that "The first consideration is one which must be passed over here; but it will be conceded by most friends of literature that all fiction should not be shackled by conventions concerning budding womanhood, which may be altogether false" (Hardy, "Candour in English Fiction"). It is evident that Hardy does not agree with his friends who do not portray women's real conditions in their fictions. By letting Tess self-realize herself, Thomas Hardy concludes the feminist discussion on Tess's representation of the New Woman image. It is Tess's transgression and abstraction when she becomes a New Woman instead of dying as a "fallen woman" or as an "angel in the house."

In *Diana of the Crossways*, the feminist stance of George Meredith is grasped through his construction of Diana as a woman of independence, who divorces and starts to work. Meredith is completely a non-conformist because he does not follow the patriarchal tradition in fiction. His concern about Diana's marital rights and her words about the divorce particularly support his feminist attitude in the novel. Jacqueline Banerjee, in "The Later Novels: Meredith as Feminist," states that "Only by taking up a home-grown *cause célèbre*, in this case the story of Lady Caroline Norton's acrimonious marriage-breakdown, and creating a heroine with whom both he and his readers could identify, could Meredith as last win over the public, and say what he

wanted to say about women" (78). Meredith's dedication to Lady Caroline Norton refers to his fiction's feminist argument in which stereotypical Victorian lady of the period evolves into a woman of letters. Interestingly, Meredith's feminist belief manifests the fact that a woman is equal to man and marriage should not ban women from their social and intellectual activity. In this perspective, Meredith's fiction forms a scene at the very end of the novel, where Diana decides to marry Mr. Thomas Redworth, who is also a New Man. In "George Meredith at the Crossways," Margaret Harris suggests that "[Diana] strikes out a feminist line, demanding rights for women (her Irishness reinforces presentation of the oppressiveness of the English patriarchy)" (351). Instead of denigrating the woman who divorces, talks about politics and writes fiction, George Meredith addresses woman's abilities and actualizations in order to defy any oppositions to woman's identity and equality to man. As a rebuttal to this point, one may argue that Diana is pushed into the institution of marriage with Mr. Redworth. Nevertheless, Diana is not pushed into marriage or she does not need to marry to survive. George Meredith makes it explicit that marriage is not a contradictory act against the agenda of the New Woman as along as the New Woman's identity is supported by a New Man who is also a supporter of equal rights for man and woman. They marry for love, not for money. Encompassed within innovative ideas and reformatory examples, George Meredith and his fiction represent feminist ideology and agenda.

Lastly, George Gissing's *The Odd Women* spends a great deal of time to contribute to the feminist politics with its characters' strife to lay hold of the lost rights to men. Interestingly, the novel's definitely integrative approach towards women by rationalising spinsters as sisters is enough to categorise the novel as a feminist fiction. The feminist attitude is presented towards woman's liberation. The novel portrays female characters that shake patriarchal norms with their education and denial of marriage institution. Therefore, the institutions and ideologies which dominate women and their identities are rejected by these characters through their conscious and deliberate actions. In "The Space of Optimism: State Fantasy and the Case of 'The Odd Women'" Zarena Aslami claims that "In *The Odd Women,* the distinction between the individual and the institution is in a constant state of erosion" (78). In relation to

Aslami's claim, the characters' revolts against patriarchal norms prove their existential and feminist stances. Rhoda Nunn's refusal of conventional stories about women, which teach sentimentalism and help women internalize the "angel in the house" role; Mary Barfoot's strife in educating women and raising their social and cultural awareness, and Rhoda's, Mary's, Alice's and Virginia's setting up a school in which girls will be trained like militants, are all evidences to support that Gissing's fiction enlarges the visions of feminism. Even though Monica's death and Rhoda's love of Mr. Everard Barfoot seem to change the flow of narration and therefore appear to blur the feminist call in the novel, it is obvious that Monica dies because of her following patriarchal norms, which proves that Victorian marriage means captivity and even death for women. Similarly, Rhoda leaves her love and refuses to marry as she does not want to be confined in domestic chores. And Everard marries Miss Agnes Brissenden who is a typical Victorian lady. Although the novel wishes to transform Everard into a New Man, his marriage with Miss Brissenden ceases his evolution. That is why Rhoda, Mary, Virginia and Alice are the symbols of the New Woman as they have feminist thoughts and speeches throughout the novel. The birth of a baby-girl at the very end of the novel, therefore, signals a feminist and egalitarian pattern of world order in which women and men will hopefully have equal rights. In this sense, Gissing's insistence on women's education, work and wit suggests that he and his fiction represent feminist qualities in order to express noncoercive gender relations.

In conclusion, this study investigates Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways*, and George Gissing's *The Odd Women* by drawing on feminist approaches in order to prove that both these fictions and the main female characters – Tess, Diana, Rhoda, Mary, Alice and Virginia respectively – represent the characteristics of the New Woman images. The findings obtained from this study helps to uncover that Hardy, Meredith and Gissing contribute to the New Woman fiction as male authors through their characterisation of the New Women and attributing these women with distinct, challenging and sharp qualities and images which help them to kill the "angels in the houses." It is true to say that these three works written by the male novelists of the 1880s and 1890s fictionalize the New Women who in fact embody the true womanhood because they want what men prohibit by protesting

the patriarchal discourses. The analytical frames and feminist overtones throughout the thesis is connected to the New Woman fiction in terms of Late Victorian male writers' perspectives through which the gaps in the New Woman fiction and images are to be filled.

On these grounds, these three novels stand as forums where the past, present and future of the women are discussed by male feminist writers and women feminist characters. In the introduction to *Marriage and Motherhood*, Ann Heilmann highlights the function of fiction in problematizing the Woman Question, solving these questions, and publicizing the outcomes for fostering further debates upon the issues: "Women and men, feminists and anti-feminists alike, used narrative literature as a medium to publicize their views and politicize their readership, fiction became a battlefield in the war of the sexes" (xiv). We can argue that all of these writers of the New Woman fiction represent the New Woman images in order to support women's liberation process. The New Women in these novels provide confirmatory evidence to suggest that Thomas Hardy, George Meredith and George Gissing contribute to feminist agenda in fiction. Their handling the issue of the New Woman by problematizing her emergence and challenge in diverse contexts such as sexuality, morality, death, marriage, work, writing and politics, enlarges the New Woman fiction, contributes to literary history regarding women and feminism.

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

2011 yılında Ege Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü'nden mezun olan Erkin Kıryaman aynı yılda Yaşar Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı'nda tam burs desteği ile başladığı yüksek lisansını 2015 yılında "Psychoanalysis, Trauma and War: A Comparative Study of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Pat Barker's *Regeneration*" başlıklı tezi ile tamamlamıştır. 2013 yılından itibaren araştırma görevlisi olarak çalıştığı Ege Üniversitesi'nde lisansüstü çalışmalarını sürdürmektedir. Erkin Kıryaman'ın İskoçya, Polonya ve Türkiye'de düzenlenmiş çeşitli konferans ve sempozyumlarda sunduğu sözlü bildiriler bulunmaktadır. Aynı zamanda bazı dergi ve kitaplarda çeşitli konularda yayımlanmış makaleleri vardır.

ÖZET

Bu tezin amacı Geç Viktorya erkek yazarlarının üç romanında – Thomas Hardy'nin *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), George Meredith'in *Diana of the Crossways* (1885) ve George Gissing'in *The Odd Women* – feminist edebiyat kuramı çerçevesinde, Yeni Kadın imgelerini incelemektir. Bu üç roman Geç Viktorya dönemi kurgusunda, gelişimi özellikle 1880'lerde ve erken 1890'larda görülen Yeni Kadın imgelerini temsil etmektedir. Viktorya Dönemi "kadın sorunsalı"nı içeren tartışmaların odak noktası olduğundan ve kadını "evdeki melek" olarak tek tipleştirdiğinden, Geç Viktorya romanında ortaya çıkan Yeni Kadın imgeleri kurguda var olan sınıflandırmalara, tanımlamalara ve basmakalıplara karşı çıkışı temsil eder. Novissima, ayrıksı, vahşi, sosyal olarak hasta ve tuhaf olarak tanımlanan Yeni Kadın, Viktorya edebiyatında hüküm süren ataerki tarafından çizilmiş sınırları aşar. Bu üç romanda, ana kadın karakterler statükoya ve statükonun ataerkil değerlerine meydan okurlar ve kendilerini gerçekleştirmek için klişeleşmiş düsturların düzenini bozarak devirirler. Geç Viktorya Dönemi'nde erkek yazarlar tarafından yazılmış olmalarına rağmen, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Diana of the Crossways* ve *The Odd Women* eserleri, kurguda ataerkil yapılar tarafından inşa edilen Viktorya değerleri ile ilgili gerçeklikleri değiştirebilen ve hatta kökünü kurutabilen çeşitli Yeni Kadın imgelerine işaret ederler.

Bu çalışma *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Diana of the Crossways* ve *The Odd Women* eserlerindeki Yeni Kadın imgelerinin irdelenmesi için üç ana sorunsala odaklanır: (1) "Geç Viktorya Dönemi'nde Yeni Kadın nedir/kimdir?" (2) "Bu Yeni Kadın imgeleri kurguda kadınlara "evdeki melek" kimliğini dayatan ataerkinin otoritesine ve değerlerine nasıl meydan okumaktadır?" (3) "Erkek yazarların bu üç romanı ataerkil geleneklere dayanan kadın gerçekliklerini değiştirmek ve devirmek için Yeni Kadın imgelerini cinsellik, ahlak, ölüm, evlilik, bağımsızlık, yazma eylemi ve politika bağlamları ile nasıl ilişkilendirir?" Bu soruları cevaplamak için, bu tez, cinsellik, ahlak ve ölüm olgularını Tess ile; evlilik, yazma eylemi ve politika olgularını Diana ile ve evlilik, iş ve bağımsızlık olgularını Rhoda, Mary ve Madden Kız Kardeşler ile ilişkilendirir. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma Yeni Kadın imgelerini, kadını özgürlüğüne kavuşturmayı arzulayan feminist gündeme katkıda bulunarak çeşitli bağlamlarla açıklar. Tartışmaların ardında yatan kuramsal dayanak feminizm olarak belirlenmiştir çünkü bu romanlar ve romancılar "kadın sorunsalı" ile başa çıkmaya çalışarak Yeni Kadın imgelerinin temsilleri için feminist düşüncelerle ilgilenirler. Bu tezde, tartışmanın sonuçları, yazarların feminist bakış açılarını kanıtlamak ve üç Geç Viktorya erkek yazarının Yeni Kadın kurgusuna katkılarını düşünerek Yeni Kadın edebiyatlarındaki çalışmalar ve görme biçimlerini genişletmek için yeterli derecede kanıt sağlayacaktır.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to present an analysis of three novels by Late Victorian male novelists – Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* (1885), and George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893) – in order to reveal the New Woman images within the framework of feminist literary theory. These three novels represent the New Woman images the development of which was particularly viewed in the 1880s and early 1890s in Late Victorian fiction. Since the Victorian Period produces the Woman Question and typifies woman as the "angel in the house," the New Woman images in Late Victorian fiction represent challenges against classifications, descriptions and stereotypes in fiction. Described as Novissima, anomalous, wild, socially ill and odd, the New Woman transgresses the boundaries drawn around her by patriarchy which prevail Victorian life and literature. In these three novels, the main female characters challenge the status quo and its patriarchal qualities and subvert the norms of clichés in order to realise their selves. Even though written by male authors in the Late Victorian Period, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Diana of the Crossways* and *The Odd Women* impersonate diverse images of the New Woman who is able to change and even to eradicate the Victorian realities constructed by paternalistic structures.

This study is motivated by three fundamental questions in order to examine the New Woman images in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Diana of the Crossways*, and *The Odd Women:* (1) "What/Who is the New Woman in the Late Victorian Period?" (2) "How do the New Woman images challenge norms and authorities of patriarchy that impose "angel in the house" onto women" in fiction? (3) "How do these novels of male writers associate the images of the New Woman to the contexts of sexuality, morality, death, marriage, work, independence, writing and politics in order to subvert the realities of women which depend on paternalistic traditions?" In order to answer these questions, this thesis relates the concepts of sexuality, morality and death to Tess; marriage, writing and politics to Diana, and marriage, work and independence to Rhoda, Mary and Madden Sisters, and bridges the images of the New Woman in diverse contexts all of which contribute to the feminist agenda that desires to emancipate women. The theoretical premise behind the argument is feminism in that the novels and novelists handle with the Woman Question and feminist thoughts for the representations of the New Woman images. In this thesis, the results of the discussion will provide enough evidence to prove writers' feminist perspectives and to enlarge the studies and visions in the New Woman literatures as three male writers contribute to the New Woman fiction in the Late Victorian Era.