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**THE SILENT SCREAM: ANALYZING THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE MARGINALIZATION AND SUFFERING IN TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES AND JUDE THE OBSCURE**

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**Abstract**

*This title “The silent Scream” implies an extensive analysis exploring how Thomas Hardy depicts the isolation and distress experienced by women through their portrayal under conservative societal constraints during the latter part of 19th-century Britain. This phrase symbolizes the unspoken suffering endured by oppressed females constrained within hierarchical systems, conflicting ethical norms, and marital frameworks. Thomas Hardy's novels, “Tess of the d'Urbervilles” and “Jude the Obscure”, explore themes of female ‘marginalization’ and ‘suffering’ through the experiences of Tess Durbeyfield and Sue Bridehead. These characters face intense personal tragedies caused by outdated social structures, hypocritical morals, and unavoidable biological impulses. Thus the paper is a humble attempt to discuss the female suffering and marginalization with special reference from Hardy’s novel ‘Tess of the d'Urbervilles’ and ‘Jude the Obscure.’*

**Keywords:** Silent Scream, Gender roles, Suffering, Marginalization, Victorian era, Patriarchy etc.

**1.0. Introduction**

Thomas Hardy is a rich subject for academic exploration due to his extensive body of work comprising novels, poetry, and short stories that addresses complex, often contradictory themes within a vividly historical and geographical context. His profound volume and depth, alongside a radical social critique, secure his ongoing relevance to scholars in various fields. Hardy's work critically examines Victorian society, especially during its transition to industrialism. Victorian society establishes a strict dichotomy for women, confining them to domestic roles as wives and mothers under patriarchal ideology. He highlights the restrictive moral code that creates inequalities between genders, portraying women as victims of male dominance. In "Tess of the d'Urbervilles," Tess's tragedy illustrates the harsh societal views on female purity. In "Jude the Obscure," Sue Bridehead embodies the struggles of a "New Woman," facing social punishment for her independence and unconventional views on

marriage, ultimately leading to her regression into a traditional role after personal tragedy. Here the phrase "silent scream" is literary appropriate since it captures the traumatic muteness of Thomas Hardy's female protagonists, such as Tess and Sue Bridehead, who suffer intensely without vocal expression, resulting in a silent, internal scream of despair. The Victorian era's social conventions create an oppressive environment, leading characters in Hardy's works to experience silent suffering. Dalsukhbhai (2020) had mentioned in his paper that "Thomas Hardy being the rebel of Victorian he expressed his feelings towards the atrocities happened in the society through his novels" (p356). Hardy critiques the superficiality and poor faith of 'public convictions' by challenging the Victorian viewpoint on women. Through his novels, he divulges society's constructed images of women and expresses a strong desire to transform the cultural perception of women in the Victorian era.

### **1.2. Review of Literature**

On the basis of field survey, following literary works related to above mentioned topic are noticed by the researcher:

Lemardelé Gildas's (2013) "Silence, Secrecy and Sacredness in Hardy's Fiction The Example of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*" He described that silence in Hardy's novels serves a dual purpose: it can represent a profound void while also functioning as 'a coherent and constructive interval'. This silence often connects various narrative parts into a unified structure, potentially revealing sacred elements and suggesting a perfect epistemological order within the narrative.

Salma Begum's (2022) "The Portrayal of 'Fallen Woman' in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*." In her work she had described that in the 19th century Britain, the term 'fallen woman' became associated with a woman's loss of chastity. Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* tells the story of Tess, an innocent rural girl who suffers under the Victorian Patriarchal Society and its social injustices, highlighting the hypocrisy of societal prejudice and the effects of male supremacy.

Fang. & Jiang's (2015). "Thomas Hardy's Feminist Consciousness in *Jude the Obscure*." In their work they have stated that This paper explores Thomas Hardy's 'feminist consciousness' in his novel "Jude the Obscure", focusing on the characterization of Sue Bridehead. It highlights Hardy's sympathy for her as a Victorian woman and critiques patriarchal beliefs. Sue's anti-marriage views, rejection of traditional feminine roles, and challenge to marriage and maternity reflect Hardy's personal criticisms of marriage as 'a social institution', showcasing his feminist sensibility.

Nuria Bel Sancho's (2019). *An Analysis of Female Characters in Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure* This work explores Thomas Hardy's 'feminist consciousness' in his novel "Jude the Obscure", focusing on the characterization of Sue Bridehead and Arabella Donn. It highlights

Hardy's sympathy for her as a Victorian woman and critiques patriarchal ideology. Sue's anti-marriage views, rejection of traditional feminine roles, and challenge to marriage and maternity reflect Hardy's personal criticisms of marriage as 'a social institution', showcasing his feminist sensibility while Arabella embodies the common folk, adapting to societal expectations for survival. This analysis highlights the dichotomy between the two women and critiques institutional structures, particularly marriage.

### **1.3. Methodology**

The research paper will utilize 'Qualitative Textual Analysis' with a 'Feminist Literary Criticism approach', emphasizing 'close reading' and 'thematic analysis'. This qualitative design seeks to interpret nuanced representations of marginalization and suffering in the texts rather than rely on numerical data. The framework will analyze 'portrayals of women', 'gender roles', 'power dynamics', and patriarchal impacts, primarily focusing on Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" and "Jude the Obscure," with key characters Tess Durbeyfield and Sue Bridehead representing female marginalization and suffering. Data will be collected through close reading and note-taking from primary texts. The analysis will use Comparative Thematic Analysis within a feminist framework. Findings will integrate with existing scholarship to support or challenge current critical understanding of the texts. The methodology aims to interpret how Thomas Hardy portrays female characters and narrative techniques to highlight the cruelty of Victorian social norms, making women's "silent scream" audible to readers.

### **1.4. Key Research Objective**

1. Identify and categorize the marginalization and exploitation of female characters, specifically Tess Durbeyfield and Sue Bridehead, within Victorian social, economic, and patriarchal structures. Analyze the interplay of gender, class, and social status as contributing factors.
2. The researcher will highlight how Hardy employs narrative techniques to convey their often-unheard suffering, termed the "silent scream," in a male-dominated society.

### **1.5. Significance of the study**

The study of the research topic holds significant academic, historical, and socio-cultural importance. The main significance lies in its potential to illuminate and critique the patriarchal structures and hypocritical morality of Victorian England. The novels serve as crucial texts for exploring early feminist themes and gender issues. The "Silent Scream" motif draws attention to those whose suffering is often ignored, dismissed, or repressed, making the research a continued effort to give historical and literary voice to the marginalized experience.

## 2.0. The Silent Scream

The phrase "The Silent Scream" indicates a critical examination of Thomas Hardy's portrayal of female marginalization and suffering in "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" and "Jude the Obscure." It highlights the anguish experienced by women within the constraints of late Victorian England, emphasizing their oppression under patriarchal structures, double moral standards, and marriage. The analysis focuses on the hardships faced by central characters Tess Durbeyfield and Sue Bridehead.

### 2.1. The silent scream in "Tess of the d'Urbervilles"

The novel "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" underscores Tess's tragic inability to defend herself verbally, highlighting the significance of her voicelessness in the narrative. Yacine (2018) stated that "Hardy presents the main character Tess as a pure woman but also as a fallen woman. Hardy depicts Tess as a fallen woman to show the hypocrisy of sexual double standard and the cruelty of the convention of society." Tess Durbeyfield endures immense grief and shame after her rape and the birth of her illegitimate child, illustrating her victimization in a patriarchal society that silences her trauma. (i) Her failure to confess her past to Angel Clare highlights this tragedy; her voice fails her as she attempts to speak the truth. (ii) When confronted with her past, Tess's mouth is described as a "round little hole" symbolizing her inability to articulate her pain. (iii) Visual symbolism is prevalent in the narrative, exemplified by the red stain left after she murders Alec, representing Tess's repressed anguish. (iv) Tess's execution by hanging is interpreted as the ultimate act of silencing, forcibly removing her suppressed voice and rendering her permanently voiceless.

### 2.2. The silent scream in "Jude the Obscure"

The "silent scream" in "Jude the Obscure" symbolizes the psychological and physical suppression of Sue Bridehead, paralleling Tess's tragic fate. Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead struggle against strict class and marital norms, causing them to suffer in silence as their modern aspirations and desires are repressed by a hypocritical society. (i) Major tragedy occurs when Sue and Jude's children die at the hands of their son, Little Father Time, leading Sue to extreme grief and religious fanaticism. (ii) Sue's psychological trauma is profound, rendering her pain inexpressible and resulting in her internal trauma. (iii) As a "New Woman," Sue seeks intellectual and sexual independence but ultimately succumbs to societal pressures, returning to a loveless marriage with Phillotson due to religious guilt. (iv) The trauma of the children's deaths is characterized by silent despair rather than a cathartic outcry, illustrating the depth of Sue's internal suffering and her forced compliance with norms she previously rejected.

### **2.3. Marginalization and the Double Standard**

The suffering of Hardy's heroines is deeply connected to their marginalization by a society that imposes a strict double standard of sexual morality. In "Tess of the d'Urbervilles," Tess becomes a victim of sexual marginalization after being seduced by Alec d'Urberville, who is judged less harshly than she is. This societal stigma leads to her abandonment by Angel Clare when he cannot reconcile her past with his ideals of female purity. Economic marginalization also plays a role in Tess's vulnerability, as her family's pursuit of status compels her into difficult situations. Similarly, in "Jude the Obscure," Sue Bridehead, seeking to escape oppressive marriage conventions, faces institutional marginalization through ostracism and denial of employment due to her relationship with Jude. Sue's struggle with intellect and emotional intimacy further isolates her. Ultimately, after personal tragedies, she succumbs to societal pressures and returns to marriage, silencing her independent spirit in a bid for acceptance

### **2.4. Nature of Suffering**

Tess and Sue's suffering in Hardy's works serves as a commentary on societal, fate-driven, and biological forces that oppress individual spirit. Tess embodies physical and moral agony, showcasing immense endurance despite her burdens and tragedies. Her act of murdering Alec d'Urberville represents a moment of defiance, though followed by the cruel irony of achieving happiness with Angel only to be met with execution. Sue's anguish is psychological, as she struggles against societal norms and personal fears, culminating in trauma from the loss of her children and culminating in her submission to Phillotson, signifying a spiritual death. Hardy critiques Victorian society through their experiences, illustrating how women striving for self-determination are crushed by rigid social codes and patriarchal structures, represented by the metaphor of a "silent scream" that reflects the stifled human emotion and morality.

#### **2.4.1. The suffering of Tess Durbeyfield**

Tess Durbeyfield's tragedy stems from her innocence being destroyed by Victorian morality that labels her as a "fallen woman." Initially exploited by Alec d'Urberville, Tess faces abandonment by Angel Clare when he learns of her past, exposing the era's brutal sexual double standards. Following the birth of her child Sorrow, Tess is ostracized by society and denied compassion, reinforcing her shame and hardship. As a working-class woman, her vulnerability to male exploitation ultimately leads to her downfall, illustrating the intersection of poverty and patriarchal oppression in her life.

Key dialogues in the context of "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" illustrate Tess's profound suffering resulting from 'male actions and the constraints of Victorian morality'. A significant moment

occurs when Tess admits her past relationship with Alec to Angel Clare, leading to his instant denunciation, which underscores her desperate plea for the mercy and forgiveness that society fails to offer her as can be seen in the following dialogues:

Angel: "How can forgiveness meet such a grotesque prestidigitation as that?" (Chapter 35)  
Tess revealed something shocking and critical of Angel's reaction; she viewed it as an offensive manipulation rather than honesty.

Tess: "Have mercy upon me—have mercy!" (Chapter 35)

In response to Angel's harsh judgment, Tess urgently pleaded for mercy and understanding right away.

Angel: "The woman I have been loving is not you. . . . Another woman in your shape." (Chapter 35).

Angel announced that he has lost faith in his cherished vision of her; it now exposes his unwillingness to embrace her true, flawed nature.

Tess: "I will obey you like your wretched slave, even if it is to lie down and die." (Chapter 35) Despite submitting completely to Angel's desires, Tess reveals an overwhelming sense of despair and highlights the limited autonomy available to female characters during this time period.

#### **2.4.2. The suffering of Sue Bridehead**

In "Jude the Obscure," Thomas Hardy portrays Sue Bridehead as a "New Woman" who challenges Victorian social norms, particularly regarding marriage. She views marriage as a restrictive institution and chooses to live with Jude in a non-conventional union based on emotional compatibility. However, Sue's progressive views lead to her downfall when societal pressure and guilt follow the tragedy of losing their children. This culminates in her psychological breakdown and return to a loveless marriage with Mr. Phillotson, symbolizing her submission and the silencing of her intellect. Unlike Tess, who suffers from external cruelty, Sue's tragedy stems from the internal collapse under social and moral pressure.

In the final section of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, the dialogues highlighting female suffering center on Sue Bridehead and her tragic interactions with her stepson, Little Father Time. Sue's emotional anguish, exacerbated by societal judgment and her mental collapse, reaches its peak in a poignant conversation with her stepson shortly before his tragic decision. This exchange encapsulates both the children's suffering and Sue's acknowledgment of her complicity in their fate.

Little Father Time: "It would be almost better to be out o the world than in it, wouldn't it?" (Part VI, Chapter 2) Focus of Suffering: Existential despair; the burden of life.

Sue: It would almost dear (Part VI, Chapter 2) Focus of Suffering: Agreement with despair, weariness of existence

Little Father Time: "But we don't ask to be born?" (Part VI, Chapter 2)

Sue: "No indeed." (Part VI, Chapter 2)

As soon as Little Father Time discovers that Sue is pregnant again, tension rises in their conversation, solidifying his belief that they will face more problems ahead. The lack of Sue being able to explain why they made certain decisions despite experiencing distress highlights her state of mental collapse.

Little Father Time (crying): "No room for us, and Father a-forced to go away, and we turned out to-morrow; and yet you be going to have another of us soon! 'Tis done o' purpose!" (Part VI, Chapter 2)

Sue (imploringly): "Y-you must forgive me, little Jude! I can't explain—I will when you are older. It does seem—as if I had done it on purpose, now we are in these difficulties! I can't explain, dear! But it—is not quite on purpose—I can't help it!" (Part VI, Chapter 2)

The conversation marks the end of Sue's painful experience not only due to her financial struggles and isolation, but also because she feels responsible for raising kids who were born in an environment unsuitable for them causing distress. The girl struggles to articulate why she desires to marry Jude despite his logical objections due to societal pressures; this showcases how harsh judgments and obstacles have profoundly diminished both her emotional resilience and identity. The conversation hints at Little Father Times concluding remark: It was done due to our lack, symbolizing the dire conclusion of Sue's decisions affecting her offspring.

### **3.0. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that both "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" by Thomas Hardy and "Jude the Obscure" effectively critique Victorian patriarchal society through their portrayal of Tess Durbeyfield's oppression and Sue Bridehead's plight, highlighting how these characters suffer due to strict societal norms rather than accidental misfortunes. Hardy highlights how society exploits moral principles in an attempt to control women's behavior, ultimately suppressing them through harsh criticism. These stories depict an inevitable tragedy where societal structures like marital regulations and spiritual doctrines strip away women's autonomy, ultimately causing their demise. Through expressing inner turmoil externally, Hardy turns his pain into an open accountbook, as seen in Tess's frantic behavior and Sues profound melancholy. The "mute outcry" provokes public skepticism towards moral hypocrisy while urging individuals to acknowledge its repercussions. The enduring impact of Hardy extends far beyond his realistic writing style into an unending plea for compassion and

a profound challenge to unjust power structures that suppress individuals seeking more fulfilling lives outside conventional expectations.

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