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**Women Characters in Thomas Hardy's Short Stories**

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### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Pozdní viktoriánská próza je povětšinou zkoumána s cílem charakterizovat její sepětí s tendencemi kritického realismu a naturalismu. Cílem této práce však bude analýza ženských postav ve vybrané povídkové tvorbě britského prozaika a básníka Thomase Hardyho (Wessex Tales, Life's Little Ironies a A Group of Noble Dames). Autorka se zaměří na ženy ze středních a vyšších vrstev (např. venkovské šlechty) s důrazem na vykreslení jejich morálních zásad, povahových rysů a vztahů ke svému okolí. Pokusí se najít hlavní společné rysy těchto postav a tím pak definovat Hardyho obecné zásady při zobrazování ženství v krátké próze.

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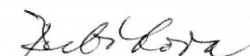
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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

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## **Annotation**

This work focuses on the portrayal of women characters in short narratives by Thomas Hardy on the background of Victorian society. There are described stereotypes about Victorian women, their duties and qualities which are in contradiction with women characters by Hardy in most of his short stories. The main part of this work provides Hardy's general approach towards women and the emphasis is placed on the description and analysis of particular stories with common features such as women courage and determination, the destruction and torture of men, and the role of social status.

## **Key words**

Hardy; Victorian women; morality; short stories;

## **Souhrn**

Tato práce se zaměřuje na zobrazení ženských postav od Thomase Hardyho v jeho povídkové tvorbě na pozadí Viktoriánské doby. Jsou zde popsány stereotypy o Viktoriánských ženách, jejich povinnosti a povahové vlastnosti, které jsou v rozporu s ženskými postavami ve většině Hardyho povídkách. Hlavní část této práce poskytuje Hardyho obecný přístup k ženám a důraz je kladen na popis a analýzu jednotlivých povídek se společnými rysy, jakými jsou kuráž, odhodlání, ničení a trápení mužů a vliv postavení ve společnosti.

## **Klíčová slova**

Hardy; Viktoriánské ženy; morálka; povídky

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## 1. Introduction

Thomas Hardy, born in Dorchester in 1840, belongs to the “third generation” of Victorian writers in critical realism. He published over 40 short stories that vary substantially in form, style and content but in many of them there are particular common features (Drabble, p. 434) which can be in short described as the courage and determination of women, the destruction and torture of men and the influence of social status on women behaviour. All of these qualities will be analyzed in this paper as Hardy’s literary portrayal of women.

Hardy was originally an architect after his grandfather and father who were called master-stonemasons (Pinion, 1976, p. 249). His architectural studies enabled him to precisely describe the buildings and picturesque county of Wessex which is also something that started to make him an extraordinary writer.

No other writer of fiction has been at once so truthful and so poetic a historian of his county. You will more easily find a parallel among painters than among men of letters. (Macdonell, p. 14-15)

He was not only successful in portraying the scenery and the picturesque villages, but also in portraying the county as a whole, involving the behaviour of people, their traditions and feelings. He involved in his works all types of characters of lower and upper classes from Wessex, their morals and behaviour in different situations.

The aim of the present paper is to show how surprisingly or even strikingly Hardy illustrated various women characters in the county of Wessex during Victorian times. Surprisingly means that he was very much ahead of his time with quite revolutionary ideas (Dutta, p. 93). He used the form of short narratives instead of novels in order to portray one piquant aspect of personality without large description of background. The personality is mostly a woman because as Abercrombie said, his psychological imagination is much better suited to creating feminine than masculine character (Abercrombie, p. 110).

This work begins with the theoretical part which is divided into 5 smaller chapters mentioning Thomas Hardy, how he became a writer, his life experience related to his works, and his style of writing. The next chapter describes what the Victorian age brought and how hard it was to be a Victorian woman who was supposed to be fragile



and submissive. The following chapter associates Victorian woman fragility with home imprisonment, in that women were not able to escape from home because of their weakness, and that it was a popular topic in literature. On account of female submissiveness, it was very rough and difficult for women to become writers and not to be regarded as inferior that is why they often used male pseudonyms to be taken seriously. They knew they had something different to say than men and their differences from that point of view are portrayed in the chapter “The differences between men and women writers.” The last chapter of the theoretical part shows how various writers (Austen, Thackeray, Brontë and Meredith) of Victorian times portrayed woman characters with passion or without, who portrayed them with faults, who emancipated them and how, and so on. That whole part is a background for Hardy’s portrayal of women that is analyzed in the main part of this paper and also serves as a means for comparison in Hardy’s writing.

The main part is focused on analyzing the typical features of Hardy’s literary portrayal of women characters in his short stories on the background of Victorian times. This part begins with a short introduction of Hardy’s depiction of women in his novels where the women characters are tender and submissive as was common, in comparison with women in his short narratives where they are strong, courageous and torture their men. It continues with an indication of his relationships with his wives and women in general that could have influence on his works. The other three chapters of this part are divided according to the most common female qualities and features in particular stories. Each chapter provides descriptive examples of selected stories and their following analysis.

## **2. Theoretical part**

### **2.1 The artistic purpose of Thomas Hardy**

Thomas Hardy belongs to the “third generation” of Victorian writers in critical realism because as Penny Boumelha said, the big change for Hardy was Darwin’s theory of evolution in contrast to older writers at these times such as Dickens and Thackeray. Evolution effectively replaces God as the origin and goal of moral behaviour, and

merges together the moral and the 'natural' (Boumelha, p. 24). In other words, Hardy's book "set in a predominantly rural Wessex, shows the forces of nature outside and inside individuals, combining to shape human destiny." (Abrams, p. 1692)

The way Hardy became a writer was a slow awakening in his feelings for literature. As was mentioned in the introduction part he was originally an architect, but architecture on its own did not fulfill his needs and interests so he started to study literature. When he was twenty years old, he went to London where he met with Sir Arthur Blomfield for whom he worked and helped in the restoration of churches. Actually, Blomfield was also a painter and designer who deepened Hardy's love for art more than for architecture (Macdonell, pp. 15-16). When he came back to his native county he combined his love for literature and architecture and began to write.

His first attempt to write was an essay on *Coloured Brick and Terra-Cotta Architecture*. Another little paper was *How I built myself a House* which was not technical but a humorous sketch. Then he continued with the novels *Desperate Remedies*, *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *A pair of Blue Eyes*. However, his choice between architecture and the design was made after the year 1874 when he wrote *Far from the Madding Crowd* which finally settled his career as a writer (Macdonell, pp. 18-20). Hardy was so highly criticized for his most sensitive and tragic work *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* that he later dramatized himself, but his book *Jude the Obscure* got much more resistance and criticism. Critics renamed this book *Jude the Obscene* and Hardy was accused of senility, morbidity, masochism and sexual perversion. Although there were also positive responses, he gave up writing novels and begun to write poetry (Stříbrný, pp. 528-530, translation mine). There is no particular period when he was devoted to writing his short stories, because he wrote them within the time before he started to write poetry.

His early works are full of diversity of form and approach and that is why he described himself as "a young author feeling his way to a method." (Boumelha, p. 29) According to Harold Child, the main features of Hardy's writing can be described as writing about rural folk in a part of England called Wessex, or to be more specific, writing about the battles of individual human wills against the might that rules the world (Child, p. 11). Hardy had some notes or fragments of stories from Wessex that he used to hear as a boy and then could play with his great imagination (Macdonell, p. 76). He

followed R. Browning and Wordsworth in his endeavour to write in a language close to the speech of people, not his own words. He experimented all the time with stresses, rhythms and verse forms, disliking and avoiding any facile flow (Drabble, pp. 433-434). There is hardly a comfortable sleepy or boring corner in his works, he is always awake and strenuous (Macdonell, p. 38).

His stories, rightly or wrongly, blend darkness and light together; that he mingles various propositions of either element, to produce various combinations. (Johnson, p. 41)

Zdeněk Stříbrný claimed that Hardy himself tended towards a tragic interpretation of life, mainly because he was a person sensitive towards human suffering and the injustice done to the people of his native county. Nevertheless he was able to consolidate all life experiences, both literal and intellectual influences, into an original and artistic vision of the human fate portrayed on a background of the infinite universe (Stříbrný, p. 526, translation mine). That he was sensitive towards human suffering does not mean that he avoided suffering in his works. Annie Macdonell said that:

the common incident had not often satisfied him; he loved to drag his personages into bizarre situations, where they grow desperate or light-headed, where circumstances stood to them in strong contrast, mark their isolation, prove their weakness or their strength. (Macdonell, p. 70)

In other words calling him pessimistic is too easy and only half of the truth (Macdonell, p. 210). “He is often in revolt: otherwise he would be no tragedian.” (Macdonell, p. 214) He began his literary career with thoughts that were in advance of the majority of his contemporaries that is visible in his works as a change in people’s minds and lives during Victorian times (Macdonell, p. 8).

## **2.2 The Victorian age and the idea of “the angel woman”**

The Victorian age is defined as an age of reforms and progress but also as an age of doubt. There were issues such as: “too much poverty, too much injustice, too much ugliness, and too little certainty about faith or morals.” (Burgess, p. 180) Thus there were many problems to face and write about. It was a period of conventional morality,

of large families with the father as a godlike head, and the mother as a submissive creature (Burgess, p. 181).

Victorian woman had almost no right during that period and among her main desired qualities were tenderness of understanding, innocent domestic affection and submissiveness (Abrams, p. 1596). It is partly owing to Queen Victoria who was a good example of strict morality and “the holiness” of family-life herself. Her indirect influence over literature and social life was significant (Burgess, p. 181). There are some rules that Victorian women from the upper classes had to adhere to.

- Never tolerates or performs rudeness, crudeness, indifference or ignorance from or to another human being.
- Never fixes her appearance (hair or make-up) in public.
- Accepts and gives compliments graciously.
- Does not gossip.
- Ladies shall never embrace and kiss when they meet in a public place  
(Victorian Courtship)

During Queen Victoria’s reign, which lasted more than 60 years, the British Empire became a prosperous world dominion. On the other hand, Edward Carpenter described the Victorian Age as:

a period in which not only commercialism in public life, but cant in religion, pure materialism in science, futility in social conventions, the worship of stocks and shares, the starving of the human heart, the denial of the human body and its needs, huddling concealment of the body in clothes, the ‘impure hush’ in matters of sex, class-division, contempt of manual labour, and the cruel barring of women from every natural and useful expression of their lives, were carried to an extremity of folly difficult for us to realize. (Marsden, p. 200)

From this quotation it is clear that Victorian times were complicated times and, to be more specific, it was tough mainly for women who were subjects to many restrictions and high morality.

Because of these restrictions there is a well known term, used by Gilbert and Gubar, “an angel-woman.” It should be stressed what this term means. It was claimed that the Victorian period was the popular aesthetic cult of ladylike fragility, which means that women were supposed to be slim, passive and pale enough to be called white as a snow. What helped a woman to feign morbid weakness was tight-lacing,

vinegar-drinking and diets that sometimes led them to death. When a woman was defined as sick or frail it was her success or a goal in other words, for which she was trained (Gilbert, p. 54). There was also something like a motto: “For to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead.” (Gilbert, p. 25) American physician Silas Weir Mitchell said that “the man who does not know a sick woman does not know women.” (Gilbert, p. 45) Not only Gilbert and Gubar used the term “angel woman” but also Clement Scott used this term for woman but in a little different meaning. He wrote that men were born “animals” and women “angels” and that it was as natural for men to indulge their sexual appetites as it was unnatural for women (Boumelha, p. 18).

### **2.3 Home imprisonment**

This fragility attributed to women can be perceived in many books written by female writers. For example in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, there is an exemplary picture of Jane’s rations of food at Lowood School and her starvation. Generally the feminine fragility is associated with being calm, staying at home, doing nothing but patchwork, combing hair and taking care of their children because they would not have had strength for anything else. Although for many of them it was deeply boring (Abrams, p. 1596).

It is said that Victorian woman, married or unmarried suffered painfully from boredom. Living in the home of uncle or clergyman she found no outlet for her energies and her boredom becomes so intense that she longs for death. (Abrams, p. 1596)

Also, Gilbert and Gubar described houses as a symbol of female imprisonment. This topic of enclosure was likewise a common topic for male writers. While Writers such as Poe and Dickens used to portray prison, cages, and tombs, the female writers wrote about house imprisonment through which they expressed their desire to escape from the house by dying of some illness (Gilbert, pp. 85-86). Hardy did not mention exactly home imprisonment but he warned against entering into marriage. He doubted whether marriage was such a desirable goal for all women as it was assumed to be, because it had never managed to create that homely thing, “a satisfactory scheme for the

conjunction of the sexes” and that is what he pointed out in his works as a tragedy (Dutta, p. 90).

## **2.4 The differences between male and female writers**

The differences from the Victorian male and female writer’s point of view on particular topics are again connected with the woman’s position. First of all it was very hard to be a female writer. They were not respected for a long time because it was in contradiction with social stereotype. Reading, writing and thinking were not for women, it was said that it was even dangerous for them. These skills were a kind of weapon that could help them to leave the house and stand on their own.

In one of Robert Southey’s famous letters, the poet wrote to Charlotte Brontë: “Literature is not the business of a woman’s life, and it cannot be.” (Gilbert, p. 8) Oftentimes women writers, including Charlotte Brontë, used male pseudonyms because they felt they could write more freely and without the worry that the book would be considered inferior. There is a nice example of a female p writers feeling in one of Anne Finch’s poems where it is stated: “Happy you three! Happy the Race of Man! Born to inform or to correct the Pen.” (Gilbert, p. 8)

It can be said that women were fighting to become writers, and they were fighting because they knew they had something different to say, to offer to literature than men: “Female authors dramatize their own self-division, their desire both to accept the strictures of patriarchal society and to reject them.” (Gilbert, p. 78) Women can provide their literary characters with anxiety and rage because that is what they feel, as an unequal being. Gilbert and Gubar used the term “infected sentence breeds” that is most often involved in female literature (Gilbert, p. 57).

The great artistic achievements of nineteenth-century novelists and poets from Austen and Shelley to Dickinson and Barrett Browning are often both literally and figuratively concerned with disease, as if to emphasize the effort with which health and wholeness were won from the infectious “vapors” of despair and fragmentation. (Gilbert, p. 57)

There are discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be, and this is what conjures up the mad creatures in their books, which is opposed to male literature where women are portrayed as foils or heroines (Gilbert, p. 78). For example, a man would describe Jane Eyre as a pretty and charming woman, but Charlotte Brontë depicted her with a passion as an ugly, skinny and poor girl. Another difference lies in the vicious creature. In most of male literature, the woman was at home in safety while the vicious creature was waiting outside the house (Gilbert, p. 29). It is in contrast with literature written by women who had the monster at home. They were hiding the secret in a common place, like Mr. Rochester's crazy wife in the attic (Chesteron, p. 49).

## **2.5 The literary portrayal of womanhood**

As it was said, Victorian woman was an interesting and hot topic that was worth portraying by numerous authors and authoresses. For example, Jane Austen wanted to show a small part of English society as it was in her day. She presented human situations with characters who were living creatures with faults and virtues mixed together (Burgess, 175), although, Gilbert and Gubar said that Austen's heroines were not born like people but like monsters who were fated to self-destruction (Gilbert, p. 129). Her heroines wanted to experience the world outside their parents' house and were easily abused by men taking pleasure in the adventure (Gilbert, p. 122). In all her novels she examines the female powerlessness and the pressure to marry, the ignorance of women, prohibited education, psychological vulnerability, the dependency of the spinster and the boredom of the lady which was a typical Victorian stereotype (Gilbert, p. 136).

William Makepeace Thackeray started his career as a satirist, writing mainly about the upper class. He portrayed in his most popular work *Vanity Fair* two girls with very contrasting characters. Becky Sharp is unscrupulous and clever, in the opposite of Amelia Sedley who is pretty, moral but unintelligent (Burgess, pp. 185-186). Gilbert and Gubar who studied it in more detail called Amelia angelically submissive as was common and Becky as an autonomous and charming girl who Thackeray described as a

monstrous and snake like in one point. That implies that the monster may not only be concealed behind the angel but reside within the angel (Gilbert, p. 29).

One of the most influential woman characters is *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. The book is “a feminist tract, an argument for the social betterment of the governess and equal rights for women.” (Gilbert, p. 338) Brontë opens Jane’s eyes to female realities, starvation, and rage (Gilbert, p. 336). Although Brontë admired Thackeray, her novel *Jane Eyre* is written in very “unThackerayan” style. There is the passion of the young girl and her master that can not be found in any of his or Dickens books (Burgess, p. 186).

Another Victorian writer George Meredith does not emancipate the women that mean nothing but expresses them as right even when he expresses himself wrong. His quote “Woman will be the last thing civilized by man.” (Chesterton, p. 61) means that he assumes that man is the master and woman is his material, but on the other hand he does not disbelieve women but civilization (Chesterton, p. 62). He is much more sympathetic in this age than in the Victorian era, because he was aware of the conflict between men and women. The conflict is that what humans desire is in contradiction to what society demands (Burgess, p. 188). “His attitude to women is a world away from the conventional Victorian view.” (Burgess, p. 188) In Meredith’s works it is nature that saves his women while in Hardy’s nature betrays and ruins them (Chesterton, p. 63). The tragedy of Meredith’s woman character is not that she follows man even if she is not allowed to but that she follows him too slavishly (Chesterton, p. 65).

As was described above, the Victorian age was an extremely diverse period and not ideal, particularly for women and their personal feelings, and there were a good deal of topics to write about and immortalize in literature. For example, sexuality was not unspoken but literally unspeakable as it was a taboo topic which was firstly portrayed in fiction only (Boumelha, p. 11).



### 3. Women characters in Hardy's short stories

#### 3.1 Hardy's portrayal of women

The differences between male and female writers points of view on women characters were mention earlier. Hardy was an extraordinary writer who was able to portray women from both points of view. In his novels the women were fragile and beautiful, as was common, for example in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. According to Shanta Dutta the pain and pathos of woman's position is portrayed there, because in a patriarchal society it is always a woman who is forced to "pay" (Dutta, p. 88).

On the beauty of Tess's character there is no need to dwell. Her fineness and clarity of spirit, her faith and devotion, her strength and tenacity in love, her essential sweetness, compel the reader to share the author's anguish of pity for her sorrows, his passionate indignation at the stupid waste of her lovely qualities. (Child, p. 67)

Similarly in the novel *The Woodlanders* is the character of Marty who is Hardy's noblest example of simple-natured womanhood. Her sweet mind and spirit were not hurt by sorrow, bitter hard work and humiliation that followed her all her life (Abercrombie, p. 121). But in many of his short stories, Hardy shows that he can also portray fragile men and that the women are not the poor foals as was described as a typical feature of men's literature.

At length this singular punishment became such a torture to the poor foreigner that he resolved to lessen it at all hazards compatible with punctilious care for the name of the lady, his former wife, to whom his attachment seemed to increase in proportion to her punitive treatment of him. (Hardy, 1903, p. 185)

He portrayed women as if he knew exactly what is inside them. It can be said that he learnt from them due to his literary, romantic or purely social involvements with various women. Although he needed those involvements for his writing, they are ascribed to his later unhappy marriage with Emma Lavina Gifford. She was jealous of his meeting with younger and more beautiful women (Dutta, p. 150). Emma Tennant said provocatively that he neglected his wife that he was indifferent and cold to her and that is why he made of her that well-known phenomenon, "the madwoman in the attic" (Dutta, pp. 127-128). After Emma's death he remarried Florence Hennier and although

he became disillusioned with her at both a romantic and literary level the relationship was not sour (Dutta, p. 140). Both of his wives had literary ambitions and he took them under his wing (Dutta, p. 127).

What was revealed later was his love affair, before his first marriage, with his cousin Tryphena Sparks. This relationship is written about as an important factor of his literary women and their complicated relations with men (Stříbrný, p. 525, translation mine). T.S. Eliot wrote of Hardy that he seemed to be relieving some of his own emotions at the expense of the reader (Boumelha, p. 33). The choice of the husband and the centredness of woman characters are Hardy's significant structure of his works that brings the question of female nature and the otherness of the male writer (Boumelha, p. 25).

### **3.2 Woman courage, strength and determination**

According to The Macmillan English Dictionary courage means: "the ability to do something that you know is right or good, even though it is dangerous, frightening, or very difficult." (Macmillan, p. 319) Strength is defined as "the ability to achieve something, even in difficult situation." (Macmillan, p.1418) And the word determination is described there as "the refusal to let anything prevent you from doing what you have decided to do." (Macmillan, p.377) These definitions can be put together for one special definition of human quality that Hardy ascribes to his women characters in particular stories. The first example containing those features is called "The Marchioness of Stonehenge" in *A Group of Noble Dames*. Generally, those noble dames were described by Annie Macdonell as Ladies of freer manner, but their freedoms are scrupulously written in such a way that will offend as little as possible (Macdonell, p. 227).

The story begins when Lady Caroline with all her personal charms becomes tired of wealthy young gentlemen. She passionately centres her affection on a plain but gentle man of no position. When being alone they whisper tender words to each other but nobody can see them and they decide on a secret wedding.

In Victorian times it was common to marry according to one's parents' wishes and thus advance the family status. Women depended on their husbands because they

were not allowed to study except for patch works, taking care of their looks, and raising children. Moreover, if a woman had a lover she was blamed for adultery which meant shame and humiliation and every man would scorn her (Abrams, p. 1596). In this story it is seen how the woman tries to conceal her relationship and marriage with the lower-class man for the same reason: the humiliation of her and her family. They meet in her room late at night when everybody is asleep for more than a month, but suddenly Lady Caroline's love begins to wane and she becomes more anxious about her own position in society than about her love. She treats him very badly one night, and he dies of a heart attack. Her treating him badly means that Lady Caroline is blamed for his death.

At first, she passionately cries for losing him, but after a while she starts to realize her own position as a daughter of an Earl. She dresses herself and him and drags him through the woods and leaves him in front of his house. She thinks that she will not be suspected, because nobody knows they have been involved in a relationship. He is known to have cardiac problems and if a man had not seen somebody in the wood dragging a dead body nobody would have suspected anybody. The Lady Caroline is afraid of being accused, so she designs a plan concerning her husband's recent affection towards Milly, a girl from the neighbourhood, who is still in love with him. Lady makes the best of this situation and offers Milly her wedding ring, telling her the whole story and saying: "you lost him in life; but you may have him in death as if you had had him in life." (Hardy, 1903, p. 117) Milly agrees because she still loves him. Therefore she confesses and everybody believes her because her explanation is so consistent with the details. Milly takes delight in caring for the grave and grieves there.

Lady Caroline is satisfied until she discovers that she is going to have his baby. She wants to tell the truth:

You must say that your statement was a wicked lie, an invention, a scandal, a deadly sin—that I told you to make it to screen me! That it was I whom he married at Bath. In short, we must tell the truth, or I am ruined—body, mind, and reputation—for ever! (Hardy, 1903, p. 121)

Lady Caroline even cries that she loves him, but Milly does not want to give her back her dead husband. The Lady tells her mother everything and leaves the village with her and Milly. Some months later, Milly comes back with a baby. Here is seen the obvious

tragic result of the Lady's determination to give up her own baby rather than to taint her social status.

One of the qualities which make Hardy one of the greatest writers and what is perceptible in this story is his power of describing an inevitable woman caprice:

For this womanly caprice, with all its tragical result, becomes at last the very type of impersonal, primal impulse of existence, driving forward all its varying forms of embodiment, profoundly working even within their own natures to force them onward in the great fatal movement of the world, all irrespective of their conscious desires. (Abercrombie, p. 85)

Years later, the Lady's child becomes a successful soldier and she is proud of him and wants to be proclaimed his mother. Her son refuses her with the words: "You were ashamed of my poor father, who was a sincere and honest man; therefore, I am ashamed of you." (Hardy, 1903, p. 127) Although she remarries the Marquis of Stonehenge, she no longer has a child. And she dies in anguish and sorrow for her deeds and because of her son who despised her.

Even though she dies in sorrow at the end she was strong enough for a long time. She is not the fragile and sick woman prescribed to Victorian woman and also as Gilbert and Gubar claimed. For this type of noble dame who is not used to any hard work, it must have been very exhausting to draw the dead body from her room and through the woods. Even the Lady never knew herself how she reached her lover's door (Hardy, 1903, p. 114). It is probably her strong fear of social dishonor that helps her. From this arrangement new difficulties arise that she has to solve. The difficulties are not only about physical strength but also about spiritual strength, for example to give her baby to Milly. She believes she is acting rightly, and when she realizes her mistakes it is too late to retrieve it.

In this narrative, there is also the discernible influence of social position that is something that people struggle for, and that will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.4. Hardy himself said that women and men are not the same in nature and in society. Hardy pleaded:

that the position of man and woman in nature, and the position of belief in the minds of man and woman – things which everybody is thinking but nobody is saying – might be taken up and treated frankly. (Johnson, p. 257)

Not only in this story does Hardy depict this difference between what people want to do and what they do in consequence of the pressure of Victorian values and social stereotype.

Another story with a nice depiction of woman's courage and strength is "The Distracted Preacher" in *Wessex Tales*. About the year 1902 which is 14 years later than this story was written, Katherine St John Conway, who was interested in personal democracy, wrote to her lover:

What does a poet think of a woman with ink on her finger and a hole in her stocking? What would he say to two thick ankles? [...] Again, what would a poet say to a woman who liked earning money and enjoyed the thought of being a breadwinner as well as wife that the husband might never have to sell a hair of himself. (Marsden, p. 205)

This quotation outlines the features of a strong and independent woman who Hardy depicted in contradiction with a timid man. The narrative is about Mr. Stockdale, a minister who is accommodated by Mrs. Lizzy Newberry. She and her mother are very hospitable and when she sees him sneezing, she offers him something better for the cold than just water. Since it is not at home they walk through the garden, climb the wall and go to the church where some barrels of alcohol are hidden. Stockdale feels uncomfortable and she starts explaining to him that it is no harm for the king and that people have been doing it for generations and she has the owner's permission to drink it. In this, Hardy shows how a woman does something which is forbidden even for men, and even more so for women.

Although Stockdale feels that it is not right, he drinks the alcohol and Lizzy fills the barrel with water. Stockdale is amazed how handy she is in this matter, from the opening to the plugging. He can not understand why it is not as unpleasant for her as it is for him, but he does not know the whole truth. One day Lizzy is discussing the barrels full of alcohol with Owlet, her cousin, who leaves them in her garden. The minister disagrees with it:

You are too timid. It is unfair of him to impose so upon you and get your good name into danger by his smuggling tricks. Promise me that the next time he wants to leave his tube here you will let me roll them into the street? (Hardy, 1976, p. 197)

During one night Stockdale is awake longer than usual and he sees a person coming out from Lizzy's room. The person is Lizzy in her husband's coat and hat. There is a hint to the introductory quotation. Lizzy knows that Mr. Stockdale would not like what she is wearing and what she is doing. That is why she does not tell him about it. But the minister decides to follow her through the woods, up to the bay. He watches and hears everything without being noticed. Then he waits for Lizzy and the consequent talk at home. When she realizes that he knows everything, she tells him that life would be dull without it and that the whole village lives by it instead of apologizing. It is clear that a woman does not want to stay at home because of the boredom. In other words: "women feel quite as men feel, they need exercise for their faculties and field for their efforts as much as their brothers or fathers do [...]." (Abrams, pp. 1596-1597)

He begs her to give up this wild business and live with him far away but she refuses it. Stockdale is dreadfully depressed, mainly by the discovery that Lizzy can not be a minister's wife because of this smuggling. But he goes with her at night anyway to look after her. They store the barrels in the church and in Lizzy's garden. Latimer and the officers follow them and try to find the barrels. They search through the whole village until they find the alcohol and carry it back to the king, but Owlett's group with Lizzy rushes them in the woods and takes their barrels back. It is the crucial point when Stockdale leaves, he can not stand it anymore. Two years later, he comes back to the village because of business and stops in at Lizzy's place. She tells him that they were hunted like rats. She was shot in the hand and Owlett in the back. Yet this story has a happy ending, Stockdale takes her away and Lizzy becomes his wife.

In this narrative it is shown how the woman is braver and stronger than man and the pressure of social expectations about woman's behaviour. Not only does she do something forbidden but also dangerous. She is not afraid to go alone into the wood during the night and hide barrels with smuggled alcohol in her garden. Hardy presents characters who are driven by the demands of their own nature (Abrams, p. 1692). Her determination to live in that way is stronger even than the love for Stockdale. She can not stop smuggling until she is shot and her cousin almost dead. Moreover, she does not think that she has committed a crime because she had been brought up in a family respecting endurance and strength in this business that is a part of family tradition.

There is neither any considerable thought of the woman about what she is doing, how she is doing it nor about her feeling towards Stockdale. In this point, neglecting the suffering of Tess, it is similar to Hardy's most famous work *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. According to Lionel Johnson there is no real struggle of will in Tess, no conflict of emotions, nor battle of passions: all is fated and determined (Johnson, p. 264). That can be said about the story "The Distracted Preacher" as well.

Another narrative from Hardy's collection, portraying woman courage and determination also foreshadows the following chapter, analyzing the destruction and torture of a man. The story called "The First Countess of Wessex" in *A Group of Noble Dames* is about the character of Betty who is not yet thirteen when her mother arranges a good marriage with Reynard, a man 18 years older, who is noticed for his excellent qualities and for being a wise man. The marriage takes place in London behind her father's back because he is strongly against the marriage. For her father, it is a torment that causes him illness. They postpone the meeting of the couple until she is 16 years old, but her father is still against it because she is too young.

One day her mother, knowing that Betty wants to escape, locks her up in her room to wait for Reynard, but Betty looks very pale and ill and she is taken out by her mother for a drive for some fresh air. They pass around a house where she sees a woman at her age suffering from smallpox. Betty has an idea to kiss the woman to get smallpox so her husband will not be allowed to come. It is an immediate act without thought, full of determination and courage just to avoid meeting with her husband. On the same day during the night she runs away with her true love. Her father is happy to hear that she has escaped with a young boy she loves instead of the one her mother chose her. Betty's father dies in peace at least, but what nobody expects is that Betty's lover will abandon her, because she is going to be ugly due to smallpox. While 18 years older Reynard is a really honorable man, and not only does he wait to see her for more than five years but also he loves her even with smallpox. He kisses her sore face and waits until she is nineteen years, according to her father's wish. And after that, they are known as a very happy couple.

The courage of the woman and how she seeks to avoid meeting her husband that she catches smallpox reminds a little of *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare. Juliet wants to avoid marriage and takes some kind of liquid that will narcotize her for a

day so that her family will declare her dead and she could wait for Romeo in a tomb. The result was different from her initial idea and also different from Hardy's endings, but it is the same idea in that Betty wants to avoid a man that she does not love. Annie Macdonell said that Shakespeare had influence upon Hardy's much loved and exasperating heroines. She said that Shakespeare gave them the courage and the example to extract their wit in rebelliousness (Macdonell p. 8). Patricia Stubbs saw Hardy's women characters from a different perspective and remarked:

there are among Hardy's women femmes fatales - 'emotional vampire[ s],' she calls them – whose potential for self-destruction and for destroying others arises from their excessively literal application of the idea that women's proper sphere is that of the emotions and, pre-eminently, of romantic love. (Boumelha, p. 38)

The potential for destruction, rising in romantic love, is seen in Betty's self-destruction but there is also destruction of her father by his wife. He dies of the suffering that his wife, Betty's mother, inflicts upon him. He has to obey his wife his whole life and he is not able to revolt against her even when it comes to his own daughter and he becomes ill instead. The other man, Betty's suitor, is also a victim of the same woman. He obeys Betty's mother to marry her daughter and not to meet her until Betty is sixteen, which is prolonged up to the age of nineteen. Both men are submissive to one woman, which is in contradiction with the Victorian stereotype.

### **3.3 The destruction and torture of men**

There is great happiness ... in devoting oneself to another who is worthy of one's affection; still, men are very selfish and the woman's devotion is always one of submission which makes our poor sex so very unenviable. (Abrams, p. 1595)

This quote by queen Victoria is in contradiction with the following Hardy's stories where the men are submissive to their women. "The Lady Icenway" is a narrative from *A Group of Noble Dames* where Maria marries Anderling who is Dutch and comes to England on business from the north coast of South America. When they are sailing to his home, where they are supposed to live together, he admits to her that he has been



married before. His first wife turned out to be scandalous and very bad, so he left her and did not see her again, praying that she might be already dead. The newlywed woman is too stout to be broken down by this piece of news, and first comes to a decision that she will return home alone and say that her husband died of malignant ague. It is not Maria but Anderling who is more wretched and shattered in spirit, because he loves her deeply. He obeys her and what is more, he gives her his bonds and jewels.

She returns home where she lives in a comfortable mansion and is going to have a baby. After some time, Maria remarries to Lord Icenway, but she can not escape her fate because Anderling, her first husband, sends her a letter full of tender words and devotion to her. It is written there that the scandalous wife is dead and they can remarry again because he has changed his name. When they meet after a long time, he does not fascinate her as he used to. Maybe that is because he has become a man of strict religious habits and self-denied. When he realizes that they will not be together again, he wishes to see his son for a moment at least. She still has power over him and dismisses him very vigorously. Nevertheless, Anderling returns once again and begs her for permission to see him. She eventually agrees under the conditions that the son will not see him and he does not reveal himself. The problem is when he sees his boy it is a torture for him not to see him again. He lets himself be employed by Lord Icenway as a gardener.

He does his job for more than two years with pleasure and torture at the same time. He becomes ill and the sadness of his heart that he is a stranger to his own son intensifies the illness and one day he dies. Lady Icenway feels sorry for him and at his deathbed tells him “You must get well—you must! I have been hard with you—I know it. I will not be so again.” (Hardy, 1903, p. 167) But there is no help for him, it is too late. She feels guilty and orders a stained-glass window with the words “Erected to his memory by his grieving widow.” (Hardy, 1903, p. 168) Nobody, of course knows that his wife was Lady Icenway.

In this story the woman is stronger than the man and she goes forward only for her own good. “Anderling ends up being a victim of Lady Icenway’s selfish manipulativeness.” (Dutta, p. 102) He does everything that she tells him to do because he is very calm and submissive to her, although her behaviour leads him to his own

destruction. At first he feels guilty for betraying her then he is refused by her, the next time he is desirous to see his own son and in the end he is sad and unhappy not to hug his son. What is the most astonishing feature of Lady Icenway is that she does the same thing as her first husband, Anderling. After his confession she proclaims him dead as he did with his first, cruel wife.

Another example of men's destruction is the story "The Honourable Laura" in *A Group of Noble Dames*. Laura and her lover Signor Smithozzi escape from her father and hide in a hotel standing near the wild north coast of Lower Wessex. Her father, accompanied by his nephew, traces them to the hotel and directs her to come back with them, but she refuses to go home.

"By the Lord Harry, Laura, I won't stand this!" he said angrily. "Come, get on your things before I come and compel you. There is a kind of compulsion to which this talk is child's play. Come, madam-instantly, I say!" (Hardy, 1903, p. 249)

When the quarrels go on James, the cousin, can not stand it and says the truth that he married Laura three months ago. He adds that they were meeting in secret and waiting for the convenient moment to break the news until Signor Smithozzi appeared and poisoned her mind against him. Her father says that if they are husband and wife that they should reconcile and he leaves his daughter in James' hands and goes home.

Both men blame each other and start arguing when they come to the conclusion that only one of them can have her, the one who will survive. They arrange a meeting outside the look of people, on a rock 80 feet above the icy sea. The Signor obeying a quick impulse pushes Laura's husband over the cliff and goes to the hotel. He says that James went home and the Signor leaves with Laura. On the way she overhears a conversation about two men going towards the waterfall and that only one of them had come back. She puts two and two together and takes advantage of the situation to escape him when he climbs a hill to look for the way. She runs to the people who were discussing the accident and asks for details. She learns that the man is alive and has slender hope for recovery.

Laura goes to James and watches him and nurses him but he does not even reply to her remarks, he only utters some words of thankfulness for smoothing pillows, shifting bandages but does not forgive her. After several weeks when he is able to walk,

they walk on the coast, she supports him, but he is not sure whether he can love her again, and when he is healthy enough he leaves her. She settles down to a mechanical existence alone without people when after 12 years her husband comes back and they end up in each other's arms.

In this story the character of the Lady is not evil or unscrupulous but she is only ignorant to the consequences. She does not play with men intentionally. When all of them meet in the hotel and the truth is revealed she only cries and does not know what to do. The wretched men take the situation into their hands and handle it in their own way. One of them could have been dead due to her and even when James survives with serious injuries it takes him twelve years to overcome the situation and forgive her.

Men and women in Hardy's fiction are not masters of their fates, they are at the mercy of the indifferent forces that manipulate their behaviour and their relations with others, but they can achieve dignity through endurance and heroism through simple strength of character. (Abrams, p. 1692)

Another story "Barbara of the House of Grebe" from *A Group of Noble Dames* is a mixture of two features: the torture of a man, and the role of social status. The story begins at the courting ball when Barbara, who used to not speak ill of any one, leaves with her lover Edmond without being seen. She sends a letter to her worried parents, telling them that she is going to London and by the time they read the letter she will be married. She leaves because she knows what is going to happen during the ball. She is supposed to marry to Lord Uplandtowers, and at first her parents do not speak to her because of the disgrace which is brought upon them by the marriage.

His blood was, as far as they knew, of no distinction whatever, whilst hers, through her mother, was compounded of the best juices of ancient baronial distillation, containing tinctures of Maundeville, and Mohun, and Syward, and Peverell, and Culliford, and Talbot, and Plantagenet, and York, and Lancaster, and God knows what besides, which it was a thousand pities to throw away. (Hardy, 1903, p. 70)

A few days later, the couple are vexed, so Barbara writes to her parents begging for forgiveness. Mr. Grebe becomes aware that he loves his daughter more than his name and does not object his daughter returning home with her husband. Barbara's mother does not wonder how Barbara could choose this man because he is very handsome.

They are financially dependant on her parents so there is no objection when Edmond is sent to the Continent for a year with a tutor to get the education needed for the status of being Barbara's husband. In that age it was agreed that a gentleman was someone who had a public or private school education (Miller). Edmond obeys his wife and her parents and goes away to receive an education.

He writes to her from every place he visits. Barbara is happy to see his progress in reflection, but on the other hand she starts to miss her affection for him after not seeing him for a long time. She asks him for his portrait, but he is going to send her his statue but not immediately. She even prays to God to love him again, but it is very difficult for her and she becomes ill. But the worst news comes with a letter where it is stated that Mr. Willowes, her husband, was in a theatre when it burned down, and he risked his own life to save some people from there. He is fearfully burnt, and she recovers her affection and wants to go to him, but she is not allowed to go to see his wounds. After several weeks he is able to write himself and tenderly writes to her how it is a miracle to have one eye at least, and he prepares her for his visage. She assures him that nothing will change her affection but he does not trust her, he knows how he looks.

She had lived six or seven weeks with an imperfectly educated yet handsome husband whom now she had not seen for seventeen months, and who was so changed physically by an accident that she was assured she would hardly know him. (Hardy, 1903, p. 80)

When her husband arrives home he is wearing a mask and he is trembling because of the impression he is producing. He asks her if she is prepared to see him without the mask. She says yes but a spasm of horror passes through her, she is unable to look at him and sinks down to the floor. Barbara runs to her room to recover but she is so terrified when she hears that her husband is coming to her that she runs away. The following day she finds a letter with a heading "My ever-beloved Wife." (Hardy, 1903, p. 87) He writes that he understands her and that he will return in a year if she changes her mind. "I confess I thought yours divine; but, after so long an absence, there could not be left sufficient warmth to overcome the too natural first aversion." (Hardy, 1903, p. 87) The year passes and he does not come and there is no sign of him, so they start to consider him dead. Lord Uplandtowers comes back and he becomes Barbara's friend,

and although she does not love him, she marries him. As one might expect, she is not happy with him.

One day she receives an announcement of Edmond's death. He died of suffering coupled with a depression of spirit, and it all becomes too much for Barbara. At the end she becomes a victim of her new husband who feels that she still loves Edmond because she admires and fondles his statue in which he is in all his beauty as he used to be. Lord Uplandtowers hates the statue so he deforms it and frightens her with it.

In this story Edmond has to obey Barbara's parents and goes away for the education that ruins him in a way. The parents, unintentionally, get what they wanted. They ruin the relationship between Barbara and Edmond and she finally gets married to the Lord. Barbara does not blame her parents. She let him go to study because she herself wanted an educated husband, but in the end she can not look at him. He saved human's lives at the expense of his own. Maybe it is only his beauty she loves and admires and when he loses it she can not be with him anymore. Edmond would do everything to please his wife and Barbara is finally terrified of him, which causes him so much suffering up to his death. Annie Macdonell wrote that Hardy's narrative talent does not lie in the integral structure of his stories, which are a little based on some fragments he used to hear as a boy, but in his rich invention of incident (Macdonell, p. 72) which is quite visible in this story.

### **3.4 The role of social status**

During the Victorian era the social classes were reforming and the growth of the middle class was very large. Society was full of struggles to distinguish themselves from the lower classes. In many cases the parents were looking for a husband for their daughters, regarding their children not to be mature and reasonable enough to choose their partner themselves. The differences between upper class and lower class women were that lower class women were not educated. They did not even know that they should stay passive in a relationship and not to show affection until a man declares his honorable intentions to her father. Upper class men knew that and very often took advantage of their ignorance and had relationships with girls without marriage that was really a

shame for the woman for her whole life (Kuhl). Sometimes the rich man could fall in love with a woman from the upper class and vice versa as was evident in “Barbara of the House of Grebe” but in that story the struggle for social status starts after the marriage, because parents did not know their intentions.

The narrative “To Please his Wife” In *Life’s Little Ironies* is a nice example of longing for better social status and with features of man’s devotion to his woman. The character Jolliffe returns from the sea after several years and meets two girls he used to know. After some time he picks Joanne to be his wife, but Emily, her friend, is sad and Joanne realizes that she does not love him as much as Emily and his social position is not as good as her so she wants to leave him for her friend Emily. Jolliffe feels the same and goes to Emily to tell her about it, but Joanne is eavesdropping and suddenly wants him again when she feels the loss of him. That is why Joanne pretends to be ill and Jolliffe, feeling guilty, marries her. There are seen the ironies rising from the title of the book which are Hardy’s artistic purposes (Child, p. 52).

The couple takes on a grocer’s shop even though they know nothing about the business, and consequently the shop did not thrive. They have children and Joanne starts to be afraid of her sons’ education. She is also envious of Emily who has a much better position than she after marrying a thriving gentleman. That is why her husband goes to sea to earn more money. When he returns she is not satisfied.

‘Well you see, Shadrach,’ she answered, ‘we count by hundreds; they count by thousands’ (nodding towards the other side of the street). ‘They have set up a carriage and pair since you left.’ (Hardy, 1962, p. 154)

He understands her and suggests sending boys to sea, as they can earn more money together. She is worried about the boys, she knows there is a danger on the sea, but finally lets them go. Joanne waits for them but they never come home again. She is wretched and is not able to live alone, so Emily does a good turn and offers her a room at her house. Joanne is not proud of herself for living with somebody she hates and admires at the same time but she has no other possibility. Abercrombie wrote that Hardy’s women exist entirely in their own right, and even the ruinous fine ladies are easily forgiven for their suffering (Abercrombie, p. 32). Emily knows Joanne married him out of spite and they have not been friends since the marriage but in the end when Joanne is ruined, Emily offers her help.

This narrative is similar to previous stories where the woman is determined to do anything to reach her goal. In this case she wants to be rich or richer than Emily at least, which leads her husband and even her children to fatality. In general, envy plays a big role in this story. She would not have married without envy and her husband would not have died without the role of envy. The whole book *Life's Little Ironies*, according to Henry Child, is full of human effort thwarted and human happiness destroyed by the action of circumstance, using instruments such as stupidity, timidity and passion (Child, p. 52).

The following story "Squire Petrick's Lady" in *A Group of Noble Dames* is about a woman who wants to better the social position of her son. After a short time acquaintance, Petrick Timothy marries a very pretty Annetta whose position is no better than his. When she delivers a baby her health becomes bad, and when she feels that she will die she confesses to Petrick that the boy is not his. The child is cut off from all inheritance, but he promises her that he will take care of him.

Petrick wants to remarry but seeing a girl he can not avoid mistrust of womankind and he decides to live alone. He does not pay too much attention to her son but three years later he sees the baby in the garden playing with a box and he can not help liking him. What is more, he realizes that his name is Rupert, and that he could have been named after his father, because the name was given to him by his mother. He associated this name with the Marquis of Christminster for whom Annetta had warm feelings before the marriage. In an instant, he understands and forgives her deeds that she wanted to improve the blood and breeding of their family. He reasons that it is wrong to cut off his child from his inheritance, when in fact Rupert is nobler than him. During the night he searches for the last will of his father and he alters the date of the first will where Rupert is stated as the inheritor.

Everything has changed when Petrick meets a family doctor Budmouth whom he has not seen for a few years. The doctor tells him that Annetta's mother and grandmother suffered from the hallucination of believing in certain dreams as realities and asks him whether he noticed it in Anetta as well. He tells him the story about the confession before her death and the doctor tells him that such a delusion is something that he would expect from her in such a crisis. Petrick's inquiries continue until he discovers that the Marquis was abroad when she got pregnant. After all he is

disappointed that Rupert has no more than plebeian blood in his veins and his manner towards his son grows colder.

‘Why didn’t you have a voice like the Marquis’s I saw yesterday?’ he continued, as the lad came in. ‘Why haven’t you his looks, and a way of commanding, as if you’d done it for centuries—hey?’ ‘Why? How can you expect it, father, when I’m not related to him?’ ‘Ugh! Then you ought to be!’ growled his father. (Hardy, 1903, p. 185)

In this story a woman dies at the beginning but she mixes up the fates of both of the men, her son and husband. It is not clear if she had a hallucination, or if she wants to improve her son’s social status, instead of tainting it by her low position, but the result is not good. Petrick married her without speculating about her position but knowing a taste of better he starts to dislike his own son because he does not have noble blood as he thought.

Subsequent stories, containing features of social role, are a little bit different from the female point of view than all the previous narratives. There are no evil women, they are not strong enough and lack the courage. These women are calm, humble and uneducated. It can be said that it is because they are servants as opposed to the noble dames mentioned before. Only Lizzy Newberry is not a noble dame or a poor woman, but she is independent living alone with her mother in her own house. But these two women who will be analyzed later are, or used to be, maids without their own home that can be prescribed to their qualities. Ellis Ethelmer said:

Our instincts have been given us by Nature, and Nature always knows what is best for us. There are cases of course, in which these instincts have been perverted by the influence of civilization. These must be corrected by education. (Boumelha, p.13)

This quotation is perceptible in the story “On the Western Circuit” in *Life’s Little Ironies*. A gentlemanly young fellow from London comes to Wessex for professional reasons where he sees the fairest product of nature, Anna. He watches her whirling and enjoying a ride on the carousel. He pays another ride for her and she is missed by Mrs. Harnham where she lives and works as a maid. Mrs. Harnham likes her as her child so she is worried about her not coming home for a long time. She sees her with a gentleman and asks her if he kissed her for parting. Anna says that he said that a kiss would not do her any harm and for him it would be a great deal of good. They



meet six times before he leaves and he wins her over body and soul. He gives her his address and waits for a letter.

There is an explanation of the introductory quotation by Ellis Ethelmer. Civilization in this story means the man from London who exploited Anna. He is a foreigner who does not belong to her village and who brings something bad from the city, although she herself does not realize it. She only feels a longing for the touches and human body that is a natural thing that does her good, but advice or an education would stop her from such imprudent behaviour.

Although he gave her his address he is afraid of the vulgarity or extravagance that he expects from her but on the other hand, he is sad when she does not write to him and he writes to her first. Her reply is so charming and sensible that it surprises him. He has never received such a letter even from a Lady. They write to each other regularly but Anna can not read and write. She lets Mrs. Harnham read her the letters and replies them with only a few words of her own, because she does not know what to write to him.

All I want is that niceness you can so well put into your letters, my dear, dear mistress, and that I can't for the life o' me make up out of my own head; though I mean the same thing and feel it exactly when you've written it down! (Hardy, 1962 p. 127)

But one day when Anna is not at home Mrs. Harnham replies to the letter herself without Anna's supervision. She writes from the depths of her own heart that makes Anna a noble character to Raye. When Anna learns that she is pregnant, Mrs. Harnham writes it in such a humble way that he feels ashamed of himself to be a wicked wretch. He consults the letters with his sister and when she agrees that Anna is fairly well educated, expressing herself with taste and bright ideas, he proposes to her.

According to Anna's wish Mrs. Harhnam accompanies her to the wedding, although she knows it will be painful for her since, she loves him too. After the wedding they celebrate and Ray speaks mainly to Mrs. Harhnam because he does not know why, but he has nothing to say to his wife. When he sends her to write a note for her sister she tells him the truth with tears brimming up in her eyes; she started learning to read and write several weeks ago. Then he goes to Mrs. Harhnam to discover if it is really true.

You have deceived me—ruined me! [...] Legaly I have married her—God help us both!—in soul and spirit I have married you, and no other woman in the world. (Hardy, 1962, p.135)

He kisses Mrs. Harhnam for the first and last time and goes to his legal wife. They leave for honeymoon and he feels as if he is chained to work for the rest of his life in a galley. According to Shanta Dutta it is not merely a case of self-pity it is the inescapability from marital inconsistency (Dutta, p. 102). This is associated with Hardy's often used saying in his short stories "What is done cannot be undone." (Hardy, 1962, p. 137)

In this story it is clear how a gentleman does not have anything in common with a woman of lower class. He loves her beauty but that is all. As is mentioned above, gentlemen know about those uneducated women and take advantage of them. It is Raye's first intention but when he sees through the letters that she is very different from those women that she does not press him, expresses herself with nobleness and that her letters are very charming, he changes his mind. In Victorian times letter writing was very proper. The Victorian housewife was judged by her writing skills, which would indicate good breeding as it is in this story (Victorian Letter Writing Etiquette).

Although these women ruin him, it is not intentionally. One of them is too silly to think about it and the second wants to help her maid. Though it becomes her pleasure she is resolute not to do anything more to spoilt their relationship, furthermore she has her own husband who she almost forgets at times when in the passion of writing.

Hardy is fond of portraying the troubles, that come from the infusion of a little experience, a little education, dazzling and disquieting, into the old, placid homely village lives. (Johnson, p. 62)

The following and the last story portraying social status is "Son's Veto" in *Life's Little Ironies*. This story is regarded by Hardy as his best, containing his sympathy for woman's position (Dutta, p. 100). Sophy is a parlour maid in the vicar's house. When the vicar's wife dies there are too many servants in the house for one person. He does not want to release Sophy, because she is the closest to him, but one day she slips down the stairs and she is forbidden to walk and bustle around for ever again. The vicar feels guilty that she fell when she was nursing him and he does not want to release her, although she is not able to work as a maid again. Consequently, he asks her to marry him. Sophy does not love him but has a respect for him that is why she agrees. Mr.

Twycott, the vicar, knows that he has committed social suicide by this marriage so they leave the place where everybody knows her former position.

She was a charming partner but with a Lady's defiance. After 14 years she is still confused whether to use "was" or "were". Even her only son who is well educated and old enough to perceive these mistakes is ashamed of her. Her husband being 20 years older dies and she is abandoned having nothing to do but braiding her hair, eating and drinking. Her son with his aristocratic school knowledge drifts further and further away from her.

It was not surprising that after her husband's death she soon lost the little artificial tastes she had acquired from him, and became—in her son's eyes—a mother whose mistakes and origin it was his painful lot as a gentleman to blush for. (Hardy, 1962, p. 43)

Her life becomes dreary as she can not walk and does not want to travel anywhere. She can not sleep and watches vehicles passing by with loads of vegetables and one night recognizes her former friend. She calls on him and they speak in their native village slang in which she used to speak and she suddenly feels much more comfortable. He notices that she is not happy there and that she would like to go to Wessex, her real home. They meet regularly and sometimes she rides with him. He persuades her to come back to Wessex and to be his wife. She would be glad to accept his offer but she is afraid of her son. When she tells him about her intention of remarrying he has not any objections if it would be a gentleman. She tells him that he is as much as she was before she met his father. Her son is inexorable, and he bids her to kneel and swear that she will not marry him. She keeps her word and four years later dies plaintively and alone.

Why does Mr. Twycott marry Sophy? She is very nice and cute and her otherness of the woman's class-experience provides a focus for his emotional fantasies or needs. Most class-disparate couples are in mutually unhappy and destructive relationships as it was also in this narrative (Boumelha, p. 43). There is a hint that you have to be born into the middle class, you can not become one of them only by marriage. She can not learn to speak correctly or express herself with bright ideas, even if she tries hard, because she does not have it in her blood and was not trained from her early years. According to Anthony Burgess, Hardy's works are full of the sense of

man's bond with nature and with the past. Man is not free, the weight of time and place presses heavily on him and there are inscrutable forces which control his life (Burgess, p. 209). It is visible how happy Sophy is when she can speak with her old friend without any hypocrisy or disguise because she grew up in the village and cannot change herself. Social status is so important to her son that not only does he avoid his uneducated mother but he also forbids her to marry again to a man who is not a gentleman.

These stories of mismatched loves bear the typical Hardy signature in their plotting as they voice Hardy's indictment of a flawed universe, inimical to human happiness, where 'the call seldom produce the comer, the man to love rarely coincides with the hour for loving.' (Dutta, p. 101)

## Conclusion

Although Thomas Hardy (1840- 1928) is mostly known as a novelist and for portraying his picturesque native county of Wessex, in this paper he is analyzed as a short-story writer and for his rich portrayal of women characters in particular stories. In spite of the fact that all his characters shared the same background, in Wessex as was mentioned, he revealed varieties of human nature (Johnson, p. 93). Even though, some of his short stories could have been elaborated into novels, his intention was to skim the surface of diverse life that more fits into the form of shorter tales (Macdonel, p. 75).

This paper is divided into two main parts. The theoretical part deals with Victorian issues as a whole. It gives a background of Thomas Hardy as a writer and Victorian age and mainly Victorian woman in general, outside and inside of the fiction. His works are set in Victorian times where women were supposed to be calm, submissive and fragile. Hardy sympathizes with women and he portrays them in two ways. Firstly, mainly in his novels, he makes them too fragile, as was common, to wake people's minds to do something against it, and secondly, mainly in short stories, he gives an inducement or example for women to reach their goals, not the goals of society. The Victorian era was marked with a set of values proposed by society but society was not ready to accept such strong ideas, and he was criticized many times and accused of sexual perversion, masochism, which is why he eventually gave up writing fiction and started to write poetry. Nevertheless, in this era, far away from Victorian times he is much more interesting as a fiction writer.

When reading all of his short stories in *A Group of Noble Dames*, *Life's Little Ironies* and *Wessex Tales* three main topics of women characters were chosen as rather significant and interesting to deal with in contradiction to Victorian society. This is analyzed in the main part of this paper. The chapters are called: "Women courage and determination", "The destruction and torture of men" and "The role of social status." All chapters provide enough examples of development of women characters, how they behave and what leads them to their deeds on the background of Victorian society.

Although the chapters of the main part are divided according to the most perceptible features in particular narratives it can be said that the features penetrate together in most of the stories. In the chapter analyzing women courage and

determination in the narrative “The Marchioness of Stonehenge” Lady Caroline’s courage and determination is associated with her social position. The torture of her man is visible in her bad treatment of him, and in that he dies of heart attack. In the story “The Distracted Preacher” Lizzy does not vex the man so considerably, but he can not stand her illegal smuggling therefore he leaves. In “The First Countess of Wessex” Betty’s father dies due to his wife’s obsession with social status.

The next chapter is about the destruction and torture of men but in “The Lady Icenway” is also perceptible the role of social status and determination when she does not want to taint her reputation by marrying to an already married man. In the story “The Honourable Laura” is a hint of the role of social status when Laura and her cousin hide their marriage, and the courage is perceptible in her leaving with another man. “Barbara of the House of Grebe” presents courage when Barbara leaves home with a lover, a very handsome man of lower position who is consequently forced to go abroad for an education to be regarded a gentleman.

In the last chapter, analyzing the role of social status, belongs a story “To Please his Wife” where the woman’s determination to get more money ends up with the lost of her husband and children. In “Squire Petrick’s Lady” it is not clear whether it was her determination or delusion, but she wanted to better the social status of her son, which ruined her husband. “On the Western Circuit” contains a feature of the torture of a man who is with a woman with whom he has nothing in common and only in the last analyzed story “Son’s Veto” is not any considerable woman determination, courage or destruction of a man. There is seen the considerable similarity of some stories dealing with the same topics. According to Johnson Thomas Hardy is too simple and strong a master in his art using coincidence of time and place, repetition of incidents and experience (Johnson, p. 61).

To sum up his female characters, Hardy neither idealized nor flattered women (Macdonell, p. 103) and he did not create them intentionally moral or immoral but he wanted to point out that human will had limited vitality and resistance that means that everybody struggles in his own way (Macdonell, p. 59). It seems that in his short stories Hardy portrays the differences in behaviour caused by the distinction between classes.

Women of lower position are more unfettered, that means livelier and more cheerful. When they happen to be immoral it is by their lack of the education needed to

behave properly, for example: Anna in “On the Western Circuit” made love with the man without a marriage because of her lack of education. It is in contradiction with noble dames who are educated and know what is moral and immoral that is why in the stories “The Honourable Laura” and “The Marchioness of Stonehenge” the couples got married to have sex, although they married in secret, because of the men’s lower position. Generally, Hardy’s noble dames are ruthless in comparison with the village girls who are kind and warm. The nature of upper class women is associated with their restrictions. They are proper all the time and when they release themselves it is much more extensive, and with tragical results. They are even in many cases evil and mischievous which can be prescribed to their long lasting severity. Lower class women do some jobs around the house at least, they can release their energy more often while noble dames without any physical work stifle their feelings until they reach a peak and the results are much worse. That is what Hardy says because some of his stories are based on fragments of true stories and he is seemed to reveal true women to society with all their charms and faults.

## Resumé

Ačkoliv Thomas Hardy je znám více jako prozaik a básník, který ve svých dílech popisoval venkov, v této práci je jeho tvorba zkoumána z pohledu zobrazování ženských postav v povídkách, jejich morálky a charakteru. Hardy napsal více než 40 povídek, které se liší ve formě, stylu i obsahu, přesto se v nich nachází společné rysy, které jsou analyzované v hlavní části této práce.

Teoretická část představuje Thomase Hardyho, který byl původně architektem, což mu umožnilo tak precizně zobrazit jeho kraj Wessexu, že by mohl být srovnáván s malíři. Jen na chvíli opustil svůj rodný kraj a odjel do Londýna, kde pracoval pro Artura Blomfielda a pomáhal mu s restaurováním kostelů. Artur Blomfield u něj na druhé straně prohluboval lásku pro umění. Jeho první díla byla spojená s architekturou, jedná se například o esej: *Coloured Brick and Terra-Cotta Architecture*. Později začal psát romány, ale jeho rozhodování mezi architekturou a literaturou ovlivnilo až dílo *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Po napsání románu *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* a *Jude the Obscure* byl kritiky odsuzován za jeho sexuální perverzi a masochismus. Protože byl Hardy v tomto ohledu citlivý, kritika se ho dotkla a přestal psát fikci a začal psát poezii.

Hardy nejčastěji psal o vesnickém životě a o bojích lidské vůle proti moci, která vládne světu. Experimentoval s verši, přízvukem a rytmem a v jeho dílech se tudíž nenachází žádný nudný odstavec, snaží se být vždy ostražitý. Hardy, často považovaný za pesimistu, dokázal sloučit životní i literární zkušenosti v originální uměleckou vizi osudu člověka. Byl citlivý k utrpení lidského života, které často zobrazoval v jeho dílech a tím to odhaloval společnosti. Rád vtáhl své postavy až do zoufalých situací, kde jim mohl dokázat jejich slabost nebo sílu. Jeho díla byla o krok napřed v porovnání s jinými autory ve viktoriánském období a pozoruhodná je hlavně změna lidské mysli v jeho postavách.

Dále je v teoretické části stručný přehled viktoriánské doby a tehdejší ženy. Během 19. století v éře Viktoriánské se událo mnoho změn, od reform, pokroků a společenského života, které ovlivnily názory a myšlení tehdejších lidí. Bylo to období stanovené morálky hlavně pro ženy. Postavení ženy se velice lišilo od pozice ženy v dnešní době. Mezi její vlastnosti patřily křehkost a podřízenost a důraz byl kladen na posvátnost rodinného života, čehož byla sama královna Viktorie dobrým vzorem.



Sandra Gilbertová a Susan Gubártová podaly výklad viktoriánské ženy a její zobrazení v literatuře poněkud ostřejším způsobem. Tvrdily například, že když je žena chatrná je to její cíl, ke kterému byla vychovávána. Ženy dodržovaly přísné diety a pily ocet aby byly štíhlé, bledé a bezvládné. Jejich slabost spojovaly s tím, že by ženy měly zůstat doma a starat se pouze o výchovu svých dětí, látání a vzhled, aby na nic jiného neměly sílu, ale pro některé z nich to byla značná nuda a vězení.

Práce také poskytuje velice stručný přehled rozdílů mezi literaturou psanou ženami a muži v té době. Literatura nebyla pro ženy, a proto často psaly pod mužskými pseudonymy, aby byly brány vážně. Ženské autorky zobrazovaly jejich postavy vzteklé a úzkostlivé, protože to je to, co samy jako nerovnoprávné cítily. Jejich rozlišnosti mezi tím, čím byly a mezi tím, čím by měly být vytvořilo známý fenomén „blázen na půdě.“ To, že zobrazovaly vzteklé postavy je v protikladu s literaturou psanou muži, kteří by ženu zobrazili jako krásné a plaché hříbě. K celkovému porovnání je tu krátce popsána kapitola obecného zobrazení ženství v literatuře ve Viktoriánské době. Hrdinky Jane Austenové chtěly zažít svět mimo dosah jejich rodného domova a často byly jednoduše zneužity muži užívajících si dobrodružství. William Makepeace Thackeray zobrazil dvě rozdílné ženské postavy. Jedna je nesvědomitá ale chytrá, druhá je mravná, poddajná jako bylo zvykem, ale není inteligentní. George Meredith si byl vědom rozdílu mezi mužem a ženou, že muž je její pán a tragédie ženy je, že ho až moc slepě poslouchá.

Hlavní část této bakalářské práce se zabývá tím, jak Thomas Hardy zobrazoval ženy všeobecně a následně v jeho povídkové tvorbě. Jak již bylo, řečeno ženy i muži zobrazovali ženy v literatuře odlišně, ale Thomas Hardy je dokázal zobrazit dvěma způsoby. V jeho románech byly ženy křehké a roztomilé a většinou měly trpký a hořký život jako bylo pro ženy zvykem, zatímco v jeho povídkách jim dodal více síly a vyjádřil je odvážné a kurážné, které s sebou nenechaly manipulovat, ba naopak ony manipulovaly s muži, což vůbec nebylo ve viktoriánském období zvykem.

Hardyho tvorbě jsou připisovány jeho životní zkušenosti se ženami. Říká se o něm, že zobrazoval ženy, jakoby věděl, co je uvnitř nich, učil se od nich. Bohužel jeho zápletky a schůzky s různými ženami a zanedbávání jeho vlastní ženy vedlo k nešťastnému manželství s Emmou Lavinou Giffordovou. Po její smrti se Hardy znova oženil, ale ani toto manželství nebylo příliš šťastné. Tudíž si Hardy uvolňuje některé ze svých vlastních emocí na úkor čtenáře.

V Hardyho Povídkách: *A Group of Noble Dames*, *Life's Little Ironies* a *Wessex Tales* se nachází společné rysy, které jsou zvláště analyzovány ve stejnojmenných kapitolách. Kapitoly se nazývají Ženská kuráž, síla a odhodlání; Ničení a mučení mužů a Vliv sociálního postavení.

V kapitole: Ženská kuráž, síla a odhodlání jsou popsány 3 povídky. “The Marchioness of Stonehenge” je o Lady Caroline, která si tajně vzala muže z nižší společnosti a schází se u ní v pokoji po večerech, aby je nikdo neviděl. Když její láska k němu opadá a nechová se k němu hezky, on umírá na infarkt. Její síla je patrná v tom, jak ho Lady táhne přes les k jeho bydlišti a je odhodlaná zamaskovat všechny stopy, které by vedly k ní. Domluvila se s jednou dívkou ze vsi, která ho milovala, aby to vzala na sebe a že může být jeho vdova. Vše se mění v okamžiku, když Lady čeká dítě a chce svého mrtvého muže zase zpět, což jí dívka, nacházející radost v pečování o hrob, nedovolí. Proto spolu odjíždí z města a dívka se vrací se synem, kterého jí Lady dala, aby si zachránila svou čest.

Povídka “The Distracted Preacher” je o ženě, která pašuje alkohol a po nocích chodí do lesa hlídat, jestli vše probíhá tak, jak má. Pan Stockdale, duchovní, který je u nich ubytován, ji prosí, aby přestala a odjeli spolu z města. Její touha po dobrodružství a odhodlanost pokračovat v rodinné tradici je však silnější než její láska k němu a duchovní odjíždí, když už se na to dále nemůže dívat.

Poslední povídka obsahující prvky kuráže a odhodlanosti, je “The First Countess of Wessex.” Betty je ve svých 13 letech provdána o 18 let staršího muže výborných vlastností. Otec o sňatku nic nevěděl, protože matka si uvědomovala, že by to nedovolil a říká mu to až po obřadě. Dohodli se tedy alespoň na tom, že se svým mužem se uvidí, až jí bude 16. Když se blížilo datum jejich setkání, Betty, odhodlaná se s ním nesejít se nakazila neštovicemi, aby její muž nemohl přijet. Téže noci utíká se svým milencem, který ji bohužel opouští kvůli jejím neštovicím.

Následující kapitola se zabývá tématem ničením a útrapami mužů, způsobené ženami. V povídce “The Lady Icenway” se po svatbě Anderling svěří své ženě, že už jednou ženatý byl, ale že jeho žena se proměnila v šílenou a zlou bytost, kterou opustil a od té doby neviděl. Maria s ním nadále už nemůže žít, tudíž navrhuje řešení, že se vrátí domů sama a řekne, že její manžel zemřel na zimnici. On souhlasí a ještě jí přidává šperky a cenné papíry. Maria se znovu vdala, a když přichází Anderling zpět se

zprávou, že jeho žena už je mrtvá a můžou se znova oženit, Maria o něj vůbec nemá zájem a dokonce mu nechce ukázat ani jejich syna. Anderling se nechal jejím mužem zaměstnat jako zahradník, aby syna alespoň viděl, ale i tak se utrápil, že ho nemůže obejmout a říct mu, že je jeho otec.

“The Honourable Laura” je povídka o ženě, která se tajně provdala za svého bratrance, ale utíká s jiným mužem, který jí poblouznil hlavu. Když to oba muži zjistí, chtějí to vyřešit po svém a to tak, že se setkají na útesu za městem, aby je nikdo neviděl a mají si to vyřešit jednou pro vždy. Laury milenec ale využil situace a v nestřeženém okamžiku shodil jejího muže z útesu, Lauře řekl, že její muž odjel. Následně Laura s milencem opouští hotel a na cestě se dozví z vyslechnutého rozhovoru místních lidí, že její muž byl svržen ze skály, ale stále žije. Laura utíká od svého milence, aby se o svého muže mohla starat a pomoci mu v zotavování. Její muž ji nemůže prominout a když je znova v plné síle, opouští ji.

Dalším příkladem jak žena zničila svého manžela, i když ne přímo záměrně, je v povídce “Barbara of the House of Grebe.” Barbara utíká se svým milencem, aby se mohli tajně oddat, protože věděla, že rodiče by jí svatbu nepovolili. Rodiče s Barbarou nemluví kvůli hanbě, kterou jim způsobila, když si vzala někoho, kdo nemá urozenou krev. Barbara prosí o odpouštění a nakonec se vrací i s mužem k rodičům. Když matka uvidí muže, kterého si vzala, pochopí svou dceru. Je to totiž velice krásný a urostlý muž. Avšak naléhají, aby odjel studovat do zahraničí, aby se z něj stal džentlmen. Během jeho pobytu byl velmi vážně zraněn, když se snažil zachránit lidi z hořícího divadla, ve kterém byl sám hostem. Od té nehody byl znetvořený a jeho žena se ho bála. On poté odjíždí. Jeho žal je tak silný, že umírá.

Poslední kapitola analyzuje vliv postavení ve společnosti na chování a jednání žen. Obsahuje povídku “To Please his Wife”, kde Joanna přivede do záhuby jejího manžela i s dětmi, to všechno jen proto, aby měla více peněz. Po svatbě, která nebyla ani tolik z lásky jako z trucu, si pár otevře obchod, který jim moc nevydělává. Joanna závidí své sousedce její lepší život a chtěla by se mít také dobře, proto její muž odjíždí na moře, aby vydělal více peněz. Jelikož peněz, co přivezl, bylo málo, sám ženě navrhuje, že pojedou i s chlapci, společně můžou vydělat více. Ženě se to moc nelíbí, ale nakonec souhlasí, bohužel se jí už nikdy domů nevrátili.

Následující příběh "Squire Petrick's Lady" je o ženě nižšího původu, která umírá po porodu. Ještě před tím však řekne manželovi, že syn není jeho. Chce totiž vylepšit jeho krev. On si ho nejdříve vůbec nevšímá, ale když si dá dohromady pár skutečností, uvědomí si, že může být potomkem Markýze, pro kterého měla jeho žena slabost. Najednou v chlapci vidí jen to vznešené. Po příjezdu rodinného doktora jeho nadšení upadá. Ten mu poví, že matka jeho ženy trpěla halucinacemi a je dost možné, že i jeho žena měla halucinace před smrtí. Najednou je Petrik našťvaný ze skutečnosti, že jeho syn je jeho syn a ne Markýze.

"On the Western Circuit" je povídka o muži z Londýna, který se seznámí s vesnickou dívkou, jenž ho okouzila svoji krásou a spontánností, ale nemá s ní hlubší úmysly. Po odjezdu čeká na její dopis, jak tomu bylo zvykem od takových dívek, ale ona nepíše. Ray ji tedy napíše první a její odpověď je velice potěšen. Dopis byl plný pokory, vznešenosti a bystrých myšlenek. Dopisování pokračovalo až do té doby, kdy mu bylo sděleno, že Anna čeká dítě. Ray neváhá a chce se s ní oženit. Bohužel ještě neví, že si celou dobu nepsal s Annou, ale s její paní, protože Anna neumí psát a ani číst a poprosila svoji paní, aby ji dopisy četla a odpovídala na ně. Až po svatbě se dozvídá pravdu a připadá si, jako by měl před očima galeje, žít s nevzdělanou ženou, se kterou si nemá ani co říct.

Poslední analyzovaná povídka je „Son's Veto“ kde si pán vzal svoji služebnou, protože ji měl moc rád a už mu nemohla dále sloužit kvůli svému zranění, které si způsobila, když ho obsluhovala. Odjeli pryč z města, aby nikdo nevěděl její původní pozici, ale Sophy se nenaučila býti pravou dámou. Nenučila se pořádně mluvit, čehož si všiml už i její syn a styděl se za ni. Když její manžel umřel, žila zcela sama, protože její syn se od ní stále více vzdaloval. Jedné noci viděla z okna svého bývalého kamaráda z vesnice, kde žila a dali se do řeči. Bylo ji velice dobře, když mluvili svým venkovským nářečím. Občas ji vzal ven na projížďku a nakonec ji požádal o ruku, a aby se s ním vrátila do rodného Wessexu. Syn ji svatbu zakázal a ona po několika letech zemřela opuštěná.

Většina povídek obsahuje i prvky jiných kapitol, než ve kterých jsou analyzované, tudíž se často prolínají stejné vlastnosti, které Hardy zobrazoval. Obecně a ve zkratce řečeno, jsou jeho vznešené dámy mnohem více radikálnější a bezcitnější než prosté dívky z venkova, které jsou milé a citlivé, což způsobuje jejich větší volnost.

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