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Fallen Woman in Victorian Society: Eliot's *Adam Bede* and Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*

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Abstract

In Victorian's society, the woman who was not considered to be completely pure and untainted fell into the category of the fallen woman. This paper studies the notion of the fallen woman as presented in two novels of the period: George Eliot's *Adam Bede* and Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Each novel relates the fate of a young, single, and innocent girl who is seduced by a man more highly placed than herself socially. Left alone in her misery and guilt, the woman sees no hope of a better life. Death is the only solution to her dilemma. Hetty Sorrel is the most fallen character because she causes her own fate. As the traditional fallen woman, Fanny Robin prepares the reader for the notion of the fall which pervades the novel. Each of these women goes through a fall; a change in state of being, a fall from innocence to social ostracism.

Introduction

Historical texts, the pictorial arts, and literature reveal that the Victorian society imposed a strict dichotomy on women. Variants of the classification are many, but all have the same meaning: saint \ Magdalene, angel \ demon, Mary \ Eve, virgin \ whore, virtuous \ fallen. The Victorians had very high expectations for women. The ideal defined her role as a faithful and comforting wife, and loving mother who promoted peace and harmony within the family. The home became a sanctuary from the mundane world, the nucleus of society. Coventry Patmore immortalized this ideal woman in verse "*The Angel in the House*":

Her disposition is devout, \ Her countenance angelical; \ The best things that the best believe \ Are in her face so kindly writ \ The faithless, seeing her, conceive \ Not only heaven, but hope of it ... (qtd. in Frederick Page 83).

The Victorian dichotomy left no room for mistakes. The female who was not considered to be completely pure and untainted, fell into the category of the fallen woman. Whether she lost or was suspected of having lost her virginity, society's condemnation was exactly the same. Whether she is seduced, raped, or a prostitute, society's labels her "impure." Victorians based their condemnation on natural law: "A woman is physically changed when she is no longer a virgin" (Mitchell XV). Consequently, the young girl who makes, or is forced into, a mistake has no future ahead of her: she will be looked down upon, ostracized, and pointed to as a warning for those who are still "pure." As Sally Mitchell writes, "A woman who falls from her purity can never return to ordinary society" (X). Her fall is irremediable, but only because society insists that it be so.

The notion of the "fall" subdivides into two definitions. First, the sexual act itself, the loss of the woman's virginity, can be labeled her "personal fall." Second, the influence of society's recognition that a woman has broken a social and moral law can be labeled her "social fall." Essentially, the fall consists of a change in state of being, be it physically or psychologically imposed by society's response. A fall refers to the change from the state of innocence to that of non innocence; a displacement from the first state to the second.

Novelists such as Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Thomas Hardy gave a more objective and realistic representations of the Victorian woman. They aimed at making their readers aware of the injustices to women, the result of imposing such a severe dichotomy on them. They wanted to prove to the headstrong members of society that there is a difference between the woman who makes a mistake and the one who prostitutes herself; that loss of virginity is not necessarily moral corruption.

This paper studies the fallen woman in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) and Thomas Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874). Each of these novels follows the convention by illustrating the fate of a young, single, and innocent girl who is seduced by a man more highly placed than herself socially. Four very different women, but in each case the irreparable mistake (whether consciously willed or not) brings shame and alienation. Left alone in her misery and guilt, the fallen woman sees no hope of a better life. Death is the only solution to her dilemma.

Hetty Sorrel (*Adam Bede*) causes her own fate. Her ambition is to become a lady; she therefore "accepts" seduction by Arthur Donnithorne. Yet, even in her willingness, Hetty does not consciously realize that what she is doing is wrong. In this novel, the fallen woman holds second place to her "fall" which provokes a social regeneration.

Fanny Robin (*Far From the Madding Crowd*) is a minor character who is presented early in the novel and who returns to die at childbirth; the reader does not follow her on her journey in despair. As the conventional fallen woman, she metaphorically prepares the reader for the notion of the fall which pervades the whole novel.

George Eliot's *Adam Bede*: That "False air of innocence"

Adam Bede deals with the pastoral world, and Hetty Sorrel is appropriately introduced in the dairy where there is "such fresh fragrance of new-pressed cheese, of firm butter ... such soft coloring of red earthenware and creamy surfaces ... and rich orange-red rust on the iron weights ..." (Eliot 127). This setting is reflective of the butter maker's physicality. Apart from the many references to her dark long curly hair and eyelashes, and to her round black eyes, the colors most often associated with Hetty are precisely those which dominate the dairy: red and creamy white.

One cannot help being attracted to and tender with this "kitten-like maiden." Hetty's beauty affects the strangers that she meets, thereby bringing her certain advantage: the coachman gives her a privileged seat by him; and the old woman who assists her in childbirth takes her in because she was touched by Hetty's beauty.

The narrator of *Adam Bede* is critical of Hetty's charm. It is important to rest on Hetty's physical appearance since it is that which attracts Arthur and, therefore, causes her fall; and which deceives Adam into believing that her appealing physique is reflective of her morality. In reality, "Hetty really has nothing in herself except prettiness to recommend her" (Doyle 37). Even Mrs. Poyser who, in fact, "detects the moral deficiencies hidden under the 'dear deceit' of beauty" is affected by Hetty's loveliness (Eliot 200). But, as the innkeeper's wife says, "'It'd have been a good deal better for her if she'd been uglier ...'" (423). The outcome of Hetty's affair with Arthur is evidence that beauty can also lead to trouble.

The question of Hetty Sorrel's complete innocence and naiveté is a very complex one. I think one can safely say that she is naïve in the sense that she is not aware of the dangers that her behavior towards men can lead to. She is a uniformed girl who, like Hardy's Tess, does not know that there is "danger in folk." Yet, Hetty is also a theatrical role-player on occasions. She is aware of the power of her beauty, and she knows that her smile affects men. Though she dislikes Mr. Craig, she encourages him in order to find out where Arthur has gone (chapter XVIII). She

knows when a certain position, gesture, or air is to her advantage. Hetty is most guilty of purposely deceiving Adam into marrying her for her own salvation. She makes him believe that her love is genuine, and that she has completely forgotten Arthur. Her “false air of innocence” (128) causes Arthur to believe that she is more knowledgeable and more experienced than she really is. Hetty Sorrel feels for no one; she has never loved and never will love anyone but herself. Jerome Thale justly writes, “What feeling there is arises and remains with her self-engrossed loveliness” (35). This lack of human bondage and feeling isolates Hetty from the community. Her future exile is mere reflection of her inner isolation. It is precisely Hetty’s lack of humanity which prevents the narrator and the reader from sympathizing with her.

Prior to her fall, Hetty already possesses certain negative attributes of the traditional fallen woman which eventually lead to her ruin. She is beautiful, sensual, and desirable. She seems made for love. Her vanity is excessive. She enjoys contemplating her own beauty just as much as she likes to be admired by others. She wants to be preferred to and envied by all other women. She, therefore, dresses and fixes herself for the eyes of others, and by so doing, objectifies herself. We recall that she dresses with the utmost attention because she expects to be seen by Arthur at church, but when he does not come, she feels her attention has been wasted.

It is Hetty’s love of possessions and of being admired and envied which causes her to aspire to such a future, and she likes Arthur only because he can give her a luxurious life. She has no other conception than that he will marry her. Arthur could buy everything for her and that is why she permits his attention. George Eliot writes that Hetty had no fond thoughts for the giver, but only for the gift (295). And, we recall that “if Adam had been rich and could have given her these things, she loved him well enough to marry him” (144). There is an exchange going on: if Arthur gives her finery and a luxurious life, Hetty will grant him a kiss or a caress since she has everything to gain. This form of bartering associates the emotionless Hetty even further with the professional fallen woman.

Hetty Sorrel already has the makings of the fallen woman inbred in her nature; if she must be categorized as one of the two opposites virtuous/fallen, she leans heavily towards the latter. This is emphasized in chapter fifteen when Dinah interrupts Hetty's nighttime ritual. Whereas Hetty is completely absorbed in her own dream world, Dinah dedicates her time to others. Dinah notices “the absence of any warm, self-devoting love in Hetty’s nature” and she senses “a thorny thicket of sin and sorrow, in which she saw the poor thing (Hetty) struggling torn and bleeding, looking with tears for rescue and finding none” (203). This is a symbolic foreshadowing of Hetty's fate. Dinah anticipates that Hetty’s tendencies and lack of feeling will lead to her misery; and she tries to provoke a change from within Hetty. But Hetty never listens to Dinah's words of wisdom because she sees the preacher as a riddle which she “wasn’t interested enough to solve.” It is significant that this is their last encounter (chapter XV); the next time they meet, Hetty will have passed the demarcation line and fallen into the category of ruined women.

Nevertheless, Hetty is not consciously responsible for her fall. She is not aware of what she is doing; she is not conscious of any wrong in her behavior. Hetty has a perverse childlike consciousness which simultaneously causes and excuses her fall. It is true that she breaks social, religious, and moral laws. But Hetty is unaware of these laws; she does not live by them. Therefore she has erred only from society's point of view. Furthermore, Hetty’s yielding to Arthur’s desire is not due to passion: she “thinks nothing of the sensations of passion, only of the social fiction that ... she will soon be a lady” (Fisher 46). In fact, making love to Arthur cannot be called a yielding since it does not involve any reflections, hesitations, or psychological struggle. It was simply the next step to take: Hetty drifted along from accepting gifts, kisses and

caresses, to lovemaking without really being aware of it and without recognizing the distinction from one stage to the other.

Hetty's infantile consciousness and physical appearance combined are strong enough in themselves to provoke her fall. But it is more precisely her discontentment with her own social situation which leads her to take the route towards self - ruin. John Goode writes that "Hetty is a case of 'fatal non- adaptation'. Hetty is a brilliant study in alienation. She has to mediate her relationship with her social reality by living in a dream of the luxurious future in which she escapes the present" (27). Hetty is not satisfied with being a farm girl and with marrying a local. It is due to ambition that she encourages and abandons herself to Arthur. Arthur is only her means to an end: high class life. It is on this point (her dissatisfaction with her lot) that she is condemnable and responsible for her own fate. Her fall is self-ruin; it is not due to weakness, but to pride and strength of ambition. Hetty aspires to the unattainable, and after having been granted a small taste of it, she is left in misery.

Hetty Sorrel does not acknowledge the personal fall since she does not see any wrong in her behavior. The issue, however, is of great importance to the two men involved. Upon discovering Arthur's involvement with Hetty, Adam insists on being told whether the personal fall has taken place. Arthur lies mainly to save himself, but also to save Hetty from the social fall. He is more blamable than Hetty because of his awareness of the gravity and possible consequences of his behavior. At different times in the novel, both Irwine and Adam state that if people knew that Arthur was paying attention to Hetty, she would be condemned whether or not she had lost her virginity.

Hetty awakens to the recognition of being considered fallen only when she sees that her pregnancy, evidence of her personal fall, will be noticeable. Until then, "All the force of her nature had been concentrated on the one effect of concealment, and she had shrunk with irresistible dread from every course that could tend towards a betrayal of her miserable secret" (Eliot 411). Her sense of shame surfaces from her fear of being discovered, not from an awareness of having committed an error. Nowhere in the narrative is it even hinted that Hetty repents her behavior because she recognizes it as wrong; she regrets it only because of the consequences. She does not feel shame, but merely regrets that others will ascribe shame to her.

After childbirth, Hetty envisages the possibility of returning to Hayslope to continue a normal life. She abandons her child, the symbol of her shame, with the hope of preserving her social existence. We have been prepared for this deed since she was first introduced; it is stronger evidence of her egoism and insensitivity. Hetty defies the natural law as well as the social code. Hetty is condemned for murder, but she does not outrightly kill the baby, she abandons it to death. And yet, she does return to it out of guilt which is perhaps a sign of increasing maturity.

Exile is self-imposed by the fallen woman. Society can provoke her departure by creating psychological pressure on the individual (as in *The Mill on the Floss*), but it cannot condemn her or enforce her exile in any legal way. In this novel, George Eliot takes the fate of the fallen woman one step further by making Hetty cause the death of her child, and thereby enabling the law to condemn her. Hetty's conviction for murder is symbolic of the way in which society judges, condemns, and forces the fallen woman into exile. Hetty is condemned to the worst form of exile when she is deported and forced to live in loneliness and alienation; she is condemned and exiled by a community and by a nation. As Fisher writes, "Death and exile are one and the same" (51). Once a woman falls, she is dead in society's eyes. Hetty's own silence, her passivity, and her attempts at suicide further emphasize her lifelessness. "Hetty's death only registers a destruction already complete" (Fisher 53). For the Poysers, who never want to see or hear of her

again, Hetty is dead. They feel the shame that she has brought to them to the extent of wanting to move away from Hayslope. Her shame is not only a lifelong burden, but also a black mark that will affect all generations to come. Hetty's fall is not only her own, it also influences the lives of those connected with her. Arthur's dream of being the best landlord has been replaced by his exile. And Adam's hopes have been shattered. Hetty is labeled the black sleep of Hayslope, and her fate remains an example to other girls like Chad's Bess.

One of the reasons George Eliot criticizes society's reaction (especially the Poysers') is that Hetty (the individual) cannot be completely separated from the community of Hayslope. Since Hetty is a product of that society, it must accept some responsibility for the person (and the fault) that it condemns. George Eliot suggests that something must be wrong, that there must be a failing in the social system in order for Hetty's fall to have been possible. John Goode agrees that "the disruptive change grows out of the existing order" (24).

George Eliot is not an assiduous defender of the fallen woman (as is Thomas Hardy). For Eliot, the community, and cooperation between its members, is "a greater ideal than individualism" (king 92). She criticizes the social flaw which led the woman to tragedy; she aims for the root of the problem, not the aftermath. The fallen woman herself holds second place; her fall is more important because it is also a social fall, a social failing. Within the structure of the novel, Hetty Sorrel's fall serves to provoke an awakening within the community of Hayslope. By shattering the presumed social stability, the fall forces the members of society to reconsider their position: past, present, and future. From the woman's point of view, the fall is negative, irremediable, and therefore tragic; but for society it is positive and beneficial because of its transforming power. After "its" fall society can, and must, reevaluate and reshape itself.

Thomas Hardy's *Far From The Madding Crowd*: Not Just A Fallen woman

Certain critics have written that *Far From the Madding Crowd* is modeled on or influenced by George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, due to the similarities in the tragicomic pattern, the pastoral setting, the plot and characters. Eliot's main theme of learning through suffering is prominent in Hardy's novel as well. Hetty Sorrel and Fanny Robin are neither comparable as characters nor in their status as women; yet, each follows the same course: the road beginning in hope, leading to despair, and ending in death. Fanny Robin is not a central figure in the main plot, and this is precisely what makes the study of the "fallen woman" interesting in *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Neither the fallen woman as a character nor her fate attracts as much attention as the whole notion of the "fall." In this novel, Hardy sees the fallen woman as only one part of a spectrum. The "fall" not only refers to the woman's sexual transgression; it is a transformation, a change (physical or psychological) that can occur to all men and women.

Though a minor character, Fanny is very important because she represents the traditional portrayal of the fallen woman: seduced in her youth, she leads the existence of a solitary wanderer, until she returns to die at childbirth. And, although she is absent from the main plot for the most part, she defines the epitome of the possible fall and suffering that any human being may be subjected to. *Far From the Madding Crowd* deals with love relationships: it is about courtship, disappointment and uncontrollable suffering. Each of the main characters experiences the effect of a fall in one form or another. Oak loses his sheep and is forced to wander about in search of employment. Boldwood suffers from unrequited love; and Bathsheba must deal with the consequences of having married an irresponsible and fickle husband. Troy himself is briefly

seen as repenting his abuse of Fanny. When Fanny leaves Weatherbury, she is already connected with each of the main characters before they themselves have met. Hardy purposely presents her at the beginning and keeps her alive in the readers mind in order to prepare him for the notion of the fall which pervades the novel; and, the fallen woman's return provokes a more marked fall for Bathsheba and Boldwood: Bathsheba loses her husband (Troy), which in turn excites Boldwood's murder of the same man when her returns to claim his wife.

Contrary to Fanny, Bathsheba is vain and arrogant. Strong-minded, determined, and independent, she believes herself capable of dealing with any situation single-handedly. The fact that she is undertaking a traditionally male role is emphasized when she warns her employees: "Now mind, you have a mistress instead of a master ... Don't any unfair ones among you ... suppose that because I'm a woman I don't understand the difference between bad goings-on and good" (Hardy 132). As a woman, Bathsheba is unconventionally bold, "mannish" and "wild." This impulsive woman "is a un- deliberate, inadvertent, unconscious agent of evil. Her actions are not within her control" (Casagrande qtd. in Dale Kramer 50). Bathsheba and Fanny are contrasted on the basis of social status; whereas the first is a respected landowner, the latter is merely her servant. Troy himself opposes the two women, their natures and their positions, when he says, "But she (Bathsheba) has a will not to say a temper, and I shall be a mere slave to her. I could do anything with poor Fanny Robin" (Hardy 289).

Yet, in her relationship with Troy, Bathsheba undergoes a transformation: she becomes more like Fanny, so much so that "Fanny's own spirit seemed to be animating her frame" (360). Under the effect of Sergeant Troy's flattery and charm, Bathsheba slowly loses her boldness and her self-control. This is illustrated through a progression of incidents: the first meeting in the dark (Ch. XXIV), the conversation in the field (Ch. XXVI), the beehiving (Ch. XXVII) and the sword demonstration (Ch. XXVIII). Peter J. Casagrande labels "the place of the sword demonstration and of Troy's first kiss" (qtd. in Dale Kramer 58), the place of Bathsheba's "fall."

The episode (sword demonstration) is, in fact symbolic of Troy's seduction of the supposedly inaccessible Bathsheba, as well as evidence of both character's recklessness and daring (Carpenter 343). The scene ends with Troy's cutting of Bathsheba's curl: "That outer loose lock of hair wants tidying, he said before she had moved or spoken. Wait: I'll do it for you. An arc of silver shone of her right side: the sword had descended. The lock dropped to the ground" (Hardy 240). The fact that Bathsheba believes that the sword is blunt (when it is really sharp) is indicative of her being unaware of what she is getting involved in by responding to Troy's charm. The incident leaves her in a state of emotional turmoil, and "she felt like one who has sinned a great sin" (242). Penelope Vigar writes, "Troy's strange power creates a specifically emotional atmosphere in which the two states of dazzled bewilderment and acquiescence are mingled in Bathsheba's own mind" (107).

Early in the novel Bathsheba had said, "I want somebody to tame me: I am too independent" (Hardy 34). Her wish is fulfilled when she meets Troy. As Casagrande writes, "Bathsheba is tamed - that is reduced from a state of wildness so as to be tractable and useful. Like a spirited animal, she is broken to harness (qtd. in Dale Kramer 57). Sergeant Troy is her tamer and will become her master. She is transformed from a totally domineering and independent woman to one who has lost her "pluck and sauciness."

If the sword exercise episode is to be considered as equivalent to the seduction or personal fall, then her trip to Bath is more precisely the socially recognizable fall. Much like Fanny, she leaves Weatherbury during the night in order to warn Troy against Boldwood's threat, and she returns as Mrs. Troy. Bathsheba knows that she will be severely judged if she returns

unmarried: "I saw, when it was too late, that scandal might seize hold of me for meeting him alone in that way." (Hardy 311). Her marriage to Troy is provoked by her fear of losing him, as well as by her awareness of social expectations. Although both Fanny and Bathsheba follow the same pattern initially, their social status is responsible for their different fates. Whereas Fanny is seduced and then abandoned, Bathsheba is seduced, married and then abandoned by Troy. The pattern is virtually identical except that Bathsheba's "fall" has been made respectable by a social law marriage.

In chapter XXXXIII, Troy points to the fact that it is society that dictates and labels a woman as being fallen. He says to his dead lover "...in the sight of Heaven you are my very wife!" And, when Bathsheba asks "If she's that what am I?" he answers "you are nothing to me nothing ... A ceremony before a priest doesn't make marriage. I am not morally yours" (361). A question arises: who is the true "fallen women" in *Far From the Madding Crowd*? Bathsheba, with her unconventional "mannish" bearing and her dark figure, fits the role to perfection. It is Bathsheba, not Fanny, who is the dark women (like Hetty, Maggie Tulliver, and Tess). Moreover, following the conversation quoted above, Bathsheba's immediate reaction is that of the traditional fallen woman: wishing to be alone in her despair, she leaves the house, and sleeps outdoors. Later she returns to the farmhouse only to seclude herself in the attic. She is not totally alone in her misery, Liddy keeps her company. Yet, she remains "alone" in her mind: that is to say that in her eyes she is or feels abandoned and "fallen":

Ironically, it is a male character who best expresses the fallen women's condition, and the notion of the fall in *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Bathsheba's suffering is psychological, Fanny's is physical; but Boldwood's is evident on both levels, the internal as well as the external. There is a parallel to be made between Troy's abuse of the two women, and Bathsheba's treatment of Mr. Boldwood. But it is in the consequences of each relationship that the parallel is strongest. Boldwood first appears as the strict, reserved, and inaccessible virgin male. His fall (his physical and psychological transformation) is provoked by Bathsheba's valentine, and from then on he will follow the downward path leading to the fate of the traditional fallen woman.

Like the fallen woman he says, "I have lost my respect, my good name, my standing - lost it, never to get it again ... if I had got jilted secretly, and the dishonor not known, and my position kept ..." (Hardy 261). Boldwood is more concerned, with society's reaction to his "fall", than with the fall itself: "now people sneer at me - the very hills and sky seem to laugh at me till I blush shamefully for my folly " (261). He believes himself to be the talk of the town, and that he is lowered to nothing in society's eyes as in his own. Hardy makes it clear, as he does with Tess, that Boldwood hears condemnation where there is none. Moreover, the poor man voices the fallen woman's immediate desire after having been abandoned: "I had better go somewhere alone, and hide..." (261). The lost man wanders during the night "walking about the hills and downs of Waterbury, like an unhappy shade in the Mournful Field by Acheron" (292).

Although the notion of the fall pervades the novel, chapter XXXIV best illustrates what we have discussed until now by linking the main issues and the four characters most concerned. The seductions and the falls already discussed are presented here under the frame of Troy's seduction of Boldwood. The farmer rebukes the sergeant for his treatment of the two women, offering to pay first for Troy's marriage to Fanny and then to Bathsheba. Both women deserve to be married: Fanny's honor has already been lost, and Boldwood "on the merest apparent evidence"(291) readily believes in Bathsheba's dishonor. Troy, however, can only choose one.

Far From the Madding Crowd shows that the human fall is independent of sex, social status, and individual personality. It may be physical (Fanny), material (Oak), psychological

(Boldwood), or a combination. Any man or woman may fall either through weakness, willingly or by force, or due to circumstances.

Conclusion

The subject of women was a topical issue in the Victorian's period. The ideology of separate spheres, the popular Madonna \ whore iconography, and changing legislation such as divorce and women's property laws all testify to this. Each of these nineteenth – century conventions set up expectations which women were expected to accommodate. The ideology of separate spheres advocated very distinct duties for men and women: the woman's sphere was that of domesticity, involving the management of hearth and home; the male sphere was the public realm, involving all other aspects of life. It was he who dealt with a career, politics and social interaction.

In their respective novels, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy give a faithful representation of the values and prejudices of their society. The woman who falls pays with a life of hardship and suffering because society does not permit her to return to a normal life. If Hetty Sorrel had not feared Hayslope's response, she could have continued a peaceful life despite her being void of feeling. Though Fanny Robin dies before Weatherbury has a chance to react, the fact that she is buried in the reprobates quarter implies the social opinion. If they no longer belong in the category of the "untainted," neither do they belong in that of the morally corrupt. But then, why have such a system of classification? (Fanny's return to Weatherbury metaphorically contests the validity of the Victorian dichotomy. Bathsheba is just as "fallen" as Fanny, but society dictates otherwise.) The uniqueness and individual circumstances of each fallen woman show that they should not merely be classified under one heading.

Eliot and Hardy were daring enough to use their art to condemn Victorian society. But, it was necessary for them to omit the narration of the "personal fall" in order to prevent society from totally banning their works, since just writing about such a delicate issue was in itself a provocation for social disapproval. From the earlier novel to the later one, the novelists demonstrate more openness – perhaps more confidence – in the task that they set out for themselves. The minor character Fanny becomes the full-focused Tess. And even Eliot, in the span on one year, becomes more aggressive in attacking social prejudices.

The reader cannot help sympathizing with the four fallen women. Therefore, the novelists are successful in sensitizing their audience. There is no great difference in attitude towards their fallen women, but the difference lies in the way the writer present each woman's tragedy. The fall occurs towards the end of Eliot's novels, and at the beginning of Hardy's. The male writer is more interested in the consequences that the sexual fall has on his female character; he is an outright defender of the fallen woman. George Eliot lingers on the factors that led to the fall; she is more precisely a condemner of the society that permitted the fall and which then refuses to accept responsibility. The route that each writer takes may differ slightly, but the end is the same: both believe that the fallen woman can be redeemed if society gives her a chance.

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