

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX (OR NOT): THE FALLEN WOMAN'S LINGUISTIC DILEMMA  
AND THE DOUBLE STANDARD IN THOMAS HARDY'S TESS OF THE  
D'URBERVILLES AND THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER ONE.....	9
The Double Standard as a Class Issue .....	10
The Double Standard and Middle-Class Women.....	17
The Double Standard and Middle-Class Men .....	22
The Double Standard and Prostitutes .....	24
The Double Standard and Fallen Women .....	26
CHAPTER TWO .....	31
Lucetta’s Linguistic Framework and the Community’s Ostracism of the Fallen Woman .....	35
Implications of the Double Standard on the Linguistic Components of Tess and Angel’s Secular Confessions.....	40
CONCLUSION.....	53
WORKS CITED .....	58

## ABSTRACT

Combining literature and linguistics, this thesis examines Tess Durbeyfield from Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles and Lucetta from Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge in terms of their potential linguistic decisions and expectations in telling or not telling their husbands about their sexual pasts. On one hand, Lucetta exemplifies a conventional fallen woman who is aware of the double standard; she decides to conceal her sexual past from her husband Donald Farfrae, for fear that he will reject her if he knows. This decision, however, is wrested from her control when the townspeople find out about her past and hold a skimmington ride to publicly mock her. Tess, on the other hand, is unconventional in her linguistic framework. Because she bases her linguistic decision on the moral value of honesty over dishonesty and because she is ignorant that her husband Angel subscribes to the double standard, Tess thinks that if she is honest with him about her sexual past, then he will accept her. A combination of her strong belief in this basic moral system of honesty over dishonesty and of Angel's own confession leads her to make her sexual confession to him, which trumps her mother's previous warning to her not to tell Angel about her past. Angel's confession to Tess and her confession to Angel are analyzed in terms of their speech act components: the locutionary act, or the words the speaker uses; the illocutionary act, which includes the intention and the expected result the speaker has for his speech act; and the perlocutionary act, or the response that the listener has to the speaker's word. This speech act analysis reveals the inherent gender imbalance in the confession scheme between a husband and a wife because men were allowed to have sex outside of marriage, and Angel uses this to his advantage: he forgives himself but does not forgive Tess for the same act. Both women's linguistic decisions eventually lead to their deaths, which Hardy probably included in order to satisfy Victorian readers' moral outrage at the fallen woman.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I discuss the fallen woman's linguistic dilemma in telling or not telling her husband about her sexual past, and I use two of Hardy's novels – The Mayor of Casterbridge and Tess of the d'Urbervilles – to uncover the linguistic frameworks of both conventional (Lucetta) and unconventional (Tess) fallen women in making this decision. Although they make opposing decisions – Lucetta does not tell her husband Donald Farfrae while Tess tells her husband Angel Clare – they both die through consequences they do not foresee outside of their limited frameworks. I use the term “framework” to describe the overall linguistic choices and the expected consequences the fallen woman has in her situation.

Much recent Tess scholarship has addressed sexuality and consequences of its manifestations with Tess. Nina Auerbach, for instance, addresses the fallen woman myth in the context of Victorian art, as in Augustus Leopold Egg's trilogy Past and Present, and as in literature, including Hardy's novel. In an enlightening essay, Oliver Lovesey discusses the Victorian obsession with reconstructing virginity and how Angel inscribes this obsession onto Tess. However, I chose to study speech acts in two of Hardy's novels in light of these topics not only because speech acts in literature needs more scholarly attention, but also because this subject bridges the fields of linguistics and literature.

In Speech Acts in Literature, J. Hillis Miller discusses the speech act theories of Paul de Man and J.L. Austin. One component of speech act theory that Miller discusses is language's performative function: that words, when spoken, have the power to change something in the world. Satoshi Nishimura, a former doctoral student under Miller, applies Miller's approach of performative language to Hardy's major works. In terms of Tess, Nishimura discusses the performative functions of the parson calling Jack Durbeyfield “Sir John” and of Tess's

confession to Angel. This thesis also analyzes Tess's confession; however, I apply Tess's confession as well as Angel's confession to a component of speech act theory that neither Miller nor Nishimura discuss.

J.L. Austin posits that a speech act consists of three parts: the locutionary act, or the words the speaker uses; the illocutionary act, or the intention the speaker has for his speech act; and the perlocutionary act, or the response that the listener has to the speaker's words. While Austin's components of a speech act could be applied to any speech act, I look at Angel and Tess's confessions in terms of their speech act components.

I also analyze Angel and Tess's confessions in terms of the power scheme between the speaker and the listener, which Michel Foucault theorizes. The speaker is the individual guilty of some crime against society's laws or expectations, so the listener has power over the speaker because the listener ultimately decides whether to give forgiveness to or to withhold forgiveness from the speaker. To extend Foucault's theory, gender factors into the act of the Victorian confession if a woman guilty of a sexual crime (a fallen woman) confesses her sexual past to a man because men and women were expected to have contrasting sexual behaviors, as the phrase the double standard suggests. In this way, the confession was part of the male sphere: while a confession a man made to his wife would have engaged her presupposed forgiveness of him, a confession a woman made to her husband about her sexual past would have automatically violated the sexual standard she was supposed to uphold. This scheme plays out in Tess and Angel's confessions, since Angel presupposes that Tess will forgive him, but he does not offer Tess forgiveness for having committed the same sexual sin.

I outline the historical contexts of the sexual double standard and the fallen woman in Chapter One. The Victorian sexual double standard was primarily a middle-class phenomenon

in which unmarried women were expected to remain abstinent, married women were expected to be faithful to their husbands, and married men could have sexual relations not only with their wives but also with prostitutes. Victorians used supposedly scientific evidence to back up their claim that this standard followed each sex's natural level of sexual desire. Although this seems to be evidence that the middle class thought that the double standard was an internally motivated behavior, they found it necessary to externally enforce the double standard through the fallen woman myth.

The fallen woman was one who violated middle-class sexual standards: she either had sex before marriage or had an affair within marriage. Middle-class Victorians promoted the idea that the fallen woman would be ostracized by her husband and by the community, although technically they could only have done so if her sexual past was found out. However, I have been unable to find actual accounts of a woman being ostracized by her husband and the community for her sexual deviancy, so the fallen woman could be a myth the middle-class propagated in order to impose the double standard on women.

I think that a woman's fallen state materialized not through the community's awareness of her sexual deviancy, but through the act of the sexual deviancy itself. In other words, a woman became fallen when she had sex before marriage or had an affair within marriage even though the community might not have applied this label to her yet. This logic is explicated in Chapter Two, where I use Lucetta from Mayor as an example of a fallen woman who is aware of her sexual deviancy. Because she is aware of Victorian standards for women, she bases her linguistic framework of telling or remaining silent about her sexual past on her deviancy from Victorian norms; thus, she defines herself as a fallen woman.

In Chapter Two, I compare the linguistic frameworks of Lucetta and Tess in terms of their decisions of whether to tell or not to tell their husbands about their sexual pasts. These frameworks consist of their potential linguistic decisions and the expected consequences of those decisions, and the frameworks are based on Tess and Lucetta's relative awareness of the double standard. I use Lucetta in this discussion not only because her framework exemplifies that of a conventional fallen woman, but also because her character has largely been left out of the critical discourse on Mayor. Nishimura, for instance, analyzes Mayor in terms of Henchard's downfall, which he argues is due to his character and his desires, and Lucetta only marginally enters in the discussion. Although I admit she is a flat character, she becomes more significant in the discourse of Mayor studies when we analyze her in terms of her status as a fallen woman.

Lucetta is fully aware of the double standard; thus, she is aware of society's standard for her to remain sexually chaste before marriage. However, because she has a premarital affair with Henchard, she must decide whether or not to tell her husband (or anyone else) about her sexual past. Her linguistic framework thus consists of telling Farfrae about her sexual past, for which she expects he will reject her, or of not telling Farfrae, for which she expects he will accept her (as he already does in his ignorance of her past). Many women aware of the double standard would cautiously assume this framework, whether or not the expected consequences would actually occur. Thus, Lucetta decides to remain silent about her sexual past because she expects Farfrae's continued acceptance, and she takes measures to destroy the love letters she wrote to Henchard.

In Lucetta's case, her linguistic decision is taken out of her hands when Jopp, the chosen messenger to deliver Lucetta's old love letters to her, reads them in a pub. Two other townspeople, Mother Cuxsom and Nance Mockridge, listen to Jopp read one of the love letters,



and they subsequently devise a skimmington ride, a rural custom in which effigies of the guilty couple are paraded through town. Although traditional skimmington rides were performed in order to ridicule the cuckolded husband, Nance and Mother Cuxsom intend to harm not Farfrae but Lucetta because they hold a class grudge against her. Another method Victorians used to make individuals' sexual deviancies known was through police reports printed in newspaper reports. This method, like the skimmington ride, announced a couple's affair and forewarned other women against challenging the double standard.

While Lucetta acts as a conventional fallen woman in terms of her linguistic framework, Tess is unconventional in her linguistic framework. She bases her linguistic decision on the moral value of honesty over dishonesty, a perverse framework that probably stems from her simplistic, childhood Christian beliefs. In conjunction with her ignorance that Angel subscribes to the double standard, Tess thinks that if she is honest with her husband Angel about her sexual past, then he will accept her; however, she equally thinks that not telling him, or being dishonest by withholding information from him, will result in her acceptance because he already claims to accept her, although he does not know about her past. I argue that her strong belief in this basic moral system of honesty over dishonesty inevitably trumps her mother's previous warning to her not to tell Angel about her past.

Rural working-class communities, in addition to middle-class communities, often enforced the double standard through well-kept tradition. As one living in a rural working-class community, Tess's mother is aware that Angel's honor could be tainted if Tess tells him about her (Tess's) sexual past, and she advises Tess to conceal her sexual past from him as Tess's mother has concealed her (Tess's mother's) sexual past from Tess's father. However, because Tess's desire to be honest continually resurfaces, her only conceivable decision (in her mind) is

to tell Angel about her past, which she does when given a psychological and linguistic space to do so.

In order to see the inherent gender bias in Angel's reaction to Tess's confession, I compare Angel's confession to Tess's in terms of their speech act components, as previously mentioned. The locutionary act of Angel's confession, or the words that he uses, is textually absent, as is Tess's. The relative presence or absence of Angel's confession does not influence readers' judgments of him; as a male, Angel has the upper hand in confessing because middle-class standards allowed men to have premarital intercourse. Hardy could have included Angel's confession, and readers would not be biased towards him because he was allowed to have premarital intercourse. The relative presence or absence of Tess's confession, in contrast, could potentially sway readers' judgments of her as a pure woman, which is Hardy's primary purpose for the novel. Hardy argues that Tess is a pure woman because she does not will her sexual experience to happen, and if he had included her confession, her blaming of herself for her rape<sup>1</sup> might have convinced readers that she is not, in fact, a pure woman; readers would thus assume Tess's blame of herself by blaming her for her sexual past.

Angel's illocutionary act, or his intention in confessing, is related to his Christian background. Even though he has lost his faith, he continues to hate sexual "impurity," so his intention in confessing is to release his shame (Hardy 256). The perlocutionary act, or the response Tess has to his confession, relates to the reason she decides to confess: she thinks their sins are on an equivalent moral plane, which causes her to forgive him and creates a psychological and linguistic space for her to confess.

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<sup>1</sup> Some scholars, like H.M. Daleski, argue that Tess is seduced rather than raped; as such, she has agency for the event which occurred. I argue that Tess is raped because she is sleeping at the crucial moment of Alec commencing his sexual actions on her.

Tess's linguistic framework factors into the illocutionary act of her confession: she intends to be honest with Angel. The perlocutionary act, or the response that Angel has to Tess's confession, relates to his Christian background, as the illocutionary act of his own confession did. Having lost his Christian faith, he has embraced an intellectual ideology that romanticizes nature. However, he still subscribes to the moral value of sexual purity, a remnant of his Christian faith, and he applies it to his new beliefs in nature: he thinks that nature is sexually pure. Because he thinks that Tess embodies nature, he thinks she is sexually pure. However, when Angel realizes through Tess's confession that she is not, he rejects her. Because he does not weigh their sins equally as Tess does, we see that he not only subscribes to the value of female sexual purity but also to the double standard: he forgives himself but does not forgive Tess for the same act. His confession is a performative speech act in that it gives him the opportunity to release his shame and then to apply the double standard to Tess, a gender bias that is revealed in the perlocutionary act of Tess's confession.

In the conclusion, I argue that Tess and Lucetta's deaths arise from the consequences they cannot foresee in making their respective linguistic decisions to tell or not tell their husbands about their sexual pasts. Lucetta's death occurs because her realization that Farfrae will find out about her sexual past through the skimmington ride induces epileptic seizures. Tess dies after a sequence of events arising from Angel's rejection of her. Both Tess and Lucetta's fates follow the fallen woman myth: they are both ostracized from their communities for their sexual pasts, and they both die as a result of that ostracism. Some scholars note that Victorian readers' moral outrage at the fallen woman's situation forced Hardy and other Victorian novelists to conclude the novels with the fallen woman's death. In this sense, the consequences that actually occur in both novels are external to each character's linguistic framework because

those consequences exist on the metanarrative level: they must die, regardless of their expected fates, because morally outraged Victorian readers demanded it. In the end, Victorian readers decided the fallen woman's fate and, ultimately, Victorian novelists' linguistic/artistic decisions.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Double Standard and the Fallen Woman as Victorian Sexual Mores

The Victorian sexual double standard is primarily a middle-class norm based on the notion that unmarried women should remain sexually chaste, married women should be sexually loyal to their husbands, and men – whether married or unmarried – should seek sex with prostitutes. This standard for both sexes<sup>2</sup> was based on the supposedly scientific idea that men and women’s sexual desires stemmed from their biological natures: women were allegedly sexually frigid, and men were allegedly unable to control their sexual desires. In contradiction to this notion, however, Victorians enforced the double standard through outside influences, notably through the fallen woman myth. As the fallen woman myth goes, a woman who either had sex before marriage or had an affair within marriage was ostracized by the community and her husband for disobeying the standard of female virginity and fidelity. Although there is an absence of personal accounts testifying to the fallen woman’s existence, we can analyze the myth in terms of the literature of the period.

In this chapter, I will discuss different societal groups’ relation to the double standard – middle-class women, most middle-class men, prostitutes, and fallen<sup>3</sup> women. In relating the main characters of Tess – Tess, Alec, and Angel – and Lucetta in Mayor to these categories, I will show how the sexual standard for women was not only a middle-class issue but also a rural working-class issue.

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<sup>2</sup> Because I am focusing on the double standard, I am limiting my topic to two sexual categories: straight men and straight women. Although by the end of the nineteenth century “sexuality gave way to sexualities,” my discussion is restricted to straight men and women because of the strict standards of monogamous heterosexuality in the Victorian period (Adams 126). (In fact, homo- and heterosexuality both are concepts derived from the Victorian period.) I also assume that most Victorians were not hermaphroditic or otherwise sexually “other.”

<sup>3</sup> Ingham notes that “the alternative term lost” was “also common in the literature of the period” (39).

## The Double Standard as a Class Issue

In A History of Sexuality Michel Foucault theorizes the difference between how the middle and upper classes viewed sexuality. According to Foucault, the middle class observed the deployment of sexuality, in which they considered their sexuality to have the most significance in the health of themselves, their offspring, and their future generations out of all bodily functions. One way members of the middle class kept themselves sexually healthy was through the secular confession. In the patient-therapist relationship and the related patient-doctor relationship, women and men were encouraged to tell the intimate details of their sexual lives to physicians and psychiatrists. In this way, Foucault argues, the middle class was able to keep itself sexually healthy by having doctors diagnose, treat, and help prevent their sexual perversions.

Another means of keeping themselves sexually healthy was through the double standard. Foucault notes that the middle class, who valued their sexualities above all else, distinguished sexual perversions – homosexuality, women’s adultery, and oversexuality of children – from what they considered to be “normal” sexuality. The double standard thus was another way to render “normal” people sexually healthy. In other words, middle-class Victorians thought it best for men to stay sexually virile by having sex with women other than their wives, notably prostitutes, and for women to stay sexually pure by submitting solely to their husbands’ sexual desires, essentially to have no sexual desire of their own.

Foucault notes that the middle-class belief in regulating their sexualities was not a negative subjugation of their sexualities to their standards, but rather a “self-affirmation” for the middle class (123). Their sexual standards set them apart from the promiscuity they so despised in the lower class. In Tess, Angel figures as a member of the middle class who abides by the

double standard, but he adopts the double standard not less through his class interests and more through his religious background. Before his sexual confession to Tess, he gives her a brief outline of his religious past: “I used to wish to be a teacher of men, and it was a great disappointment to me when I found I could not enter the Church. I admired spotlessness, even though I could lay no claim to it, and hated impurity, as I hope I do now” (Hardy 256). Angel grew up in a middle-class home, yet his family’s Christian values overshadowed their class interests because they did not subscribe to the double standard, in which men were encouraged to be promiscuous. Although some Christians in the Victorian period subscribed to the double standard, Angel was taught that men and women should both be sexually chaste before marriage. This belief holds true even after he loses his Christian faith as is evident in his response to Tess’s confession, which will be examined in Chapter Two.

Foucault theorizes that the upper class, in contrast to the middle class, practiced the deployment of alliance, which he defines as “a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions” (106). In other words, members of the upper class arranged their sexual habits around marriages that would keep their ancestral names or inheritance – their privileged pedigree, essentially – within marital ties. It seems that Alec in Tess and Lucetta in Mayor would practice the deployment of alliance because of their socioeconomic positions, yet their sexual habits run counter to those that Foucault posits for the upper class. Lucetta, for instance, has an affair in Jersey with Michael Henchard, who does not have aristocratic blood, when she is nursing him back to health in a boarding-house. The reason for her errant sexual behavior has to do with the way in which she acquired her inheritance: she inherited a large sum of money, making her a member of the upper class not by blood but by economic status only.

Alec's relation to the deployment of alliance is similar. Although he is a member of the upper class, he has inherited this socioeconomic position through his father, who does not have royal blood but acquired his wealth by working as a money-lender (Hardy 47). Under the bought name d'Urberville, Alec and his parents live in a house in Trantridge that was once the generational home of an aristocratic family by birthright but is now in the hands of those who are not upper class by blood (68). Alec, then, if not for his father's acquired wealth, would still be a member of the middle class since that is what he is by blood. Since he has no upper-class blood to preserve, he is free from following the deployment of alliance and aligns his sexual habits, in part, with those of the middle class. Although he feels free to sleep with as many women as he wants, like other middle-class men, he directs his sexual habits not towards prostitutes but towards working-class women, including Tess.

Although in a similar position to Alec in terms of the deployment of alliance, Lucetta's sexual habits have different repercussions because she is a woman. Like Alec, she can follow the deployment of sexuality because she has no privileged blood to preserve, but unlike Alec, her sexual habits would have to be restricted if she were to follow the deployment of sexuality since women were expected to remain chaste before marriage. The reason she has an affair with Henchard is that she is a passionate woman – the same reason she later denies Henchard's honorable request to marry her and instead marries her love interest Donald Farfrae (who also happens to be Henchard's business opponent). Despite her economic position, she makes the decision to keep her sexual past a secret from Farfrae – an issue which will be discussed further in Chapter Two. This shows that she is not only aware of the double standard but also attempts to follow it (while covering her past tracks) like any other middle-class woman.



Although Foucault seems to draw a picture of the middle class preserving themselves as a class through their obedience to the deployment of sexuality, he states that they extended their standards to the lower class “as a means of social control and political subjugation” (123). Other sources support this argument that the middle class, at the least, were concerned with setting a good example for the lower class and, at most, imposed the double standard upon the lower class as a means to further solidify their class power by controlling the lower class. Ronald Pearsall argues that the middle class believed that adultery in their ranks would set a bad example for the lower class, which suggests that the middle class thought lower-class social ills to be behavioral (235). Penny Boumelha notes that some members of the middle class thought that society’s ills, existing primarily among the lower-class and deriving from their inherent natures, could only be changed through eugenics, which seemed to “[hold] out the hope of simply breeding out mental and physical handicap, and such socially undesirable ‘strains’ as the criminal, the prostitute, even the idle and vicious” (19). Whether these middle-class concerns for the social ills existing among the lower class were sincere or power play, in retrospect the sexual habits of the lower class were a result of another middle-class judgment of the lower class and of external circumstances.

Urban lower-class women could not “afford” to remain chaste before marriage or faithful to their husbands because “the tradition of promiscuity was too strong to allow the emergence of so sophisticated a concept as that of the double standard” (Thomas 204, 206). This was most likely due to the crowded living conditions in urban areas which became one of the biggest urban problems in the nineteenth century. William Acton, a Victorian physician writing in 1859, surveyed a number of unmarried women with illegitimate children in certain boroughs of London about the women’s social status and the status of the alleged fathers. According to

Acton, most of the fathers were lower-class laborers, “which favours the position that the promiscuous herding of the lower classes [. . .] contributes largely to corrupt the morals of the female poor” (“Observations” 495). In a different document, in which Acton recorded the number of prostitutes with illegitimate children, he claims that the sexual habits of young prostitutes have been affected “with their own consent, by boys no older than themselves, and [are] an all but natural consequence of promiscuous herding, that mainspring of corruption among our lower order” (Prostitution 19). In Acton’s terms, the “herding” of the lower class contributed primarily to their active sexual habits, both of the young women who became prostitutes and those who had other working-class occupations.

Acton also cites 25 men as having domestic roles like gardeners, butlers, and coachmen, and since most of the women were themselves domestic servants, Acton reasons that “it would appear as though the present system of keeping a large number of single men and women in households, is productive of a considerable portion of illegitimate children” (“Observations” 495). In this sense, the fathers are not the middle- or upper-class male owners of the households in which the women are working as domestic servants but other male domestic servants. In opposition to Acton’s claim, Victorian scholar Helena Michie suggests that “working-class women’s bodies were seen as places of public access,” which also probably contributed to the (sometimes forced) promiscuity of the lower-class, even if this did not result in an illegitimate child, which would thus not appear in Acton’s record (410).

Some urban working-class women, however, succeeded in going where they pleased without being molested. Hannah Cullwick, a working-class Victorian woman living in London, chose to remain unfeminine in both her appearance and her behavior despite her upper-class employer’s attempts to change her into a lady. This unfemininity seems to have warded off

potential advances from men since Cullwick often walked about by herself when and where she chose. Liz Stanley, the editor of Cullwick's diaries, states, "It would be a mistake to see [Hannah] as atypical in this" (4). It seems, then, that if the middle class saw working-class women's bodies as open to sexual advances, as Michie claims, many working-class women avoided these advances through their unfeminine features and their physical strength, which might have discouraged men from making advances.

Cullwick does not describe her sexual experiences that occurred before or during her writing, yet she mentions several occasions on which she "kiss'd" her employer (170). Although she and her upper-class employer eventually marry, she does not describe the nature of their sexual intimacies; her diaries existed primarily as a means of a record of her daily work and habits and, later, as a means of communicating with her employer/husband. Cullwick's diaries are extraordinary in that Cullwick had the opportunity and the encouragement to read and write; they depict the day-to-day life of a member of the Victorian working class, for which there exists little primary information besides.

Assuming, though, that the sexual habits of the urban working-class woman were indeed promiscuous, we can compare them with the sexual habits of rural working-class women. Having spent most of his life in rural Dorchester, Hardy applies his knowledge of working-class sexual standards to Tess, in which the rural working class has sexual standards comparable to those of the middle class. Tess's mother Joan Durbeyfield, for instance, insists that Tess keep her sexual past a secret because Angel might have honor to uphold. Joan herself did not tell her own husband about her sexual past "on account of his [r]espectability" (Hardy 221). This glimpse into one fictional working-class woman's standards shows that while Joan admits that she, too, was not sexually chaste before entering into marriage, she did not tell her husband

because his own honor would have been tainted. Joan and, perhaps, other working-class women of like mind were able to follow these standards because they lived in rural areas. Because they did not live in the crowded conditions of the urban poor, which fueled women's promiscuity, rural working-class women could afford to be chaste if they chose. The space between families and bodies afforded them protection from promiscuity. Some working-class women chose not to remain chaste before marriage. In Tess, for instance, Tess's mother admits that she has had premarital sexual relations, and Car Darch, one of the working-class women on Alec's property in Trantridge, has premarital sex with Alec. However, other working-class women chose to remain chaste, like the dairymaids Retty, Izz Huett, Mariam, and Tess.

But Tess's rape shows that the upper class inscribed their prejudices onto working-class women's bodies even in a rural setting. Although rural working-class women might choose to remain chaste before marriage, in certain instances their upper-class employers took advantage of them. In Tess, for instance, Alec reads "Tess's economic position as well as her mature body as signs that she cannot be a virgin" (Lovesey 919). Alec, then, subscribes to the notion that working-class women's bodies are open for his taking. If he hadn't, then she would, in fact, still be "an unsullied country maid" (Hardy 300).

In many ways, doctors supported the middle- and upper-class notion that lower-class women's bodies were different from and more open than middle-class women's bodies. In respect to childbirth, doctors encouraged middle-class women to take "to their beds for weeks before and after" having a child, while working-class women were expected "to return to work at a factory the day following delivery" (Michie 410). Victorians used science in this and other ways to support their class and gender preconceptions. In turning our discussion to middle-class

women, we will see how Victorians used science to attribute the double standard to the respective biological natures of men and women.

### The Double Standard and Middle-Class Women

An unmarried, middle-class Victorian girl or woman was expected to remain sexually chaste, which had legal implications. Thomas notes that “the double standard [. . .] is the reflection of the view that men have property in women and that the value of this property is immeasurably diminished if the woman at any time has sexual relations with anyone other than her husband” (210). The fact that women were property in the Victorian period gave sexual rights first to the girl’s father, then to her husband (if she were able to marry at all). If the girl or woman was sexually active before marriage (and if it were found out), she lost her inheritance rights “because the advantage to the lord of her marriage might now be lost through her having lost her honor” (211). Thus, even before marriage, a Victorian girl or woman was property to her future husband, and he expected her utmost sexual loyalty.

Although the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 focused primarily on property and inheritance laws in terms of granting divorces, over time the “defenders of the double standard [. . .] were justifying it by the appeal to the laws of biology” (Boumelha 18). In other words, a shift occurred in which the double standard began to be based not on laws but on the supposed biological nature of each sex. In terms of the recent debate on human nature, middle-class Victorians who validated the double standard were essentialists who believed that the characteristics of each sex’s sexuality derived from human nature.

As the social norms regarding sexuality began to shift to a significant extent,<sup>4</sup> Victorians found it even more necessary to use science as a validation of those norms. Foucault notes the medicalization of female sexuality in the Victorian period, the way in which physicians and psychiatrists alike began to inscribe their double standard prejudices onto female bodies by making female frigidity a normal part of female sexuality and “hysteria” part of the abnormality (104). The Victorian Clement Scott argued “that men are ‘born animals’ and women ‘angels,’ so that it is in effect only ‘natural’ for men to indulge their sexual appetites and, hence, perverse – ‘unnatural’ – for women to act in the same way (Boumelha 18). A contradiction arose, however, at the Victorians’ urge to gain evidence from science to support their beliefs in the polarized sexual desires of the sexes: “[O]nce the need to define and redefine had been accepted, then there had been an acceptance that gender characteristics and roles were neither fixed, natural nor obvious” (Parker 11). Many Victorians, however, remained oblivious to this inherent contradiction.

The apology to nature that Victorians made in regards to the double standard might have been related to “the central fact that when a man and a woman have sexual relations the woman may conceive whereas the man will not,” and they might not have been far from the truth (Thomas 216). Renowned psychologist Steven Pinker, using the words of modern anthropology, argues that the double standard has everything to do with the biology we share with our primitive ancestors. Males are wired, argues Pinker in How the Mind Works, to find as many mates as possible in order to increase their chances of having healthy, viable offspring. Females, who recognize males’ urge to be promiscuous, create defenses against this behavior since females want males to help in taking care of offspring. Males also recognize the need to physically care

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<sup>4</sup> Dissident and alternative sexualities existed during the entire Victorian era but seemed to become more prominent at the approach of the fin-de-siècle.

for their offspring in order to increase the chance of their offspring's survival, thus taming their desire to be as promiscuous as possible. It seems that modern<sup>5</sup> humans, however, have created laws and cultural warnings to enforce this sexual standard.

In describing this scenario, Pinker seems to say that males will learn to control their desire to be promiscuous without the help of societal standards. However, the sexual habits of both men and women of the Victorian lower class subvert Pinker's claim because they were promiscuous without any sexual standards in place. The middle class's sexual habits, however, seem to support Pinker's claim because they had sexual standards set in place that encouraged males to be promiscuous with prostitutes. Without this sexual standard, then, men might not have been as promiscuous as they were encouraged to be.

When a woman married, her body was thought to change from an "indicatively singular, virginal, and asexual to a body [. . .] legibly sexual, and from a world essentially domestic and homosocial to a world defined around heterosexuality" (Michie 421). The honeymoon was considered to be the formative period in which the husband and wife became one. Yet in becoming one body, the husband and wife did not somehow meet in the middle. They shared the husband's body because, as will be discussed, the wife gave up her personal rights – legal and sexual – to serve her husband. This view supports the imperative for a woman to be virginal before and to be faithful within her marriage; if she wasn't, she tainted her husband's metaphorical body, his honor.

In other ways, women were defined in relation to men. For instance, their sexualities were "believed to be weak, passive and responsive" while males were sexually "active, aggressive and spontaneous" (Nead 6). Victorians attributed science to this view because "some

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<sup>5</sup> Because Pinker discusses our primitive ancestors, "modern" humans would be homo sapiens of the last 10,000 years because in that time humans have shown signs of symbolic knowledge through art, abstract thinking, etc.

doctors thought that men and women had different internal temperatures and thus radically different sexual desires,” which supports the notion that women were sexually frigid and men torrid (Michie 409). In a strange twist of thinking, Victorians not only socially encouraged women to be faithful in marriage but thought that it was in middle-class women’s biological natures to have no sexual desire. It seems that if women were, by nature, not sexually aroused, then external pressure such as that of the double standard would not have been required.

James Eli Adams, however, notes that many women thought that conception necessarily accompanied orgasm (Adams 132). Women, thus, might have chosen to be sexually frigid in order to avoid pregnancy – in other words, they chose not to have orgasms – rather than choosing frigidity because of external social pressure. However, despite the fact that some women chose to be sexually unresponsive, it remains that society attempted to maintain this standard through external influence.

The following quotation reveals the logic behind the apparent contradiction that women must be sexually frigid in marriage yet submit to their husbands’ sexual urges:

[A] perfect ideal of an English wife and mother [is] kind, considerate, self-sacrificing, and sensible, so pure-hearted as to be utterly ignorant of and averse to any sensual indulgence, but so unselfishly attached to the man she loves, as to be willing to give up her own wishes and feelings for his sake (Nead 19).

A wife’s duty to her husband to be sexually receptive, then, trumped the expectation that she should remain sexually frigid although, at all other times, she was to remain so.

Since “pleasure for sex, enjoyment of intercourse, was out of the question,” women’s identities in marriage were created chiefly through their domestic roles (Goldfarb 39). The wife was expected to keep house, and she was, in Coventry Patmore’s terms, the “Angel in the



House.” Confined to domesticity, her roles included keeping up the house (if not herself then hiring others to cook, clean, and garden), “submit[ting] now and then to the beast in her husband’s nature,” and raising the offspring of that union<sup>6</sup> (Goldfarb 39). All of these tasks were essentially directed toward one purpose: “cater[ing] to the needs of men” (Thomas 213).

Married women were defined by their sexualities, even as they had been while they were unmarried: “[W]omen were, quite simply, ‘the sex,’ a terminology which stressed the gendered and, by implication, exceptional character of women, as if they alone were dominated by gender, by their natural biological functions” (Parker 6). It is ironic that middle-class Victorians thought women had an absence of sexual desire although they continued to define them by their gender. Nancy F. Cott agrees: In the nineteenth century, “women (although still primarily identified by their female gender) were [considered to be] less carnal and lustful than men” (163). The supposedly scientific view that “the female body was [. . .] distinctly organized with the uterus as the center of its anatomical web” supports the widespread belief that middle-class woman’s primary function was to submit to her husband’s sexual desires and to bear and raise their children (Rothfield 177).

Russell Goldfarb theorizes that because “[t]he Victorians wanted desperately to believe that their wives and mothers were sexually pure [. . .] they placed women on a towering pedestal the better to idolize them” (41). However, this created an ironic distance between a mother and her sexuality: “She was perhaps more alienated from her own sexuality than any man” (41). Because of the sexual purity that a mother was expected to maintain, she was defined by a sexuality that was foreign even to her.

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<sup>6</sup> Women raising the children alone contradicts Pinker’s premise that men and women will raise their offspring together because they both realize that the offspring’s survival depends upon it. In nineteenth-century British society, it was perhaps less crucial for men to contribute to raising their children because circumstances were not as dire as the primitive means of living that ancient humans had; comparatively, Victorian society was a land of plenty for members of the middle-class, what with access to medicine, food, fuel, and habitation.

## The Double Standard and Middle-Class Men

On the opposite end of the spectrum, men were considered to have a “natural sexual energy which women did not possess” (Watt 7). The Victorian Richard Steele does not acknowledge that man’s uncontrollable sexual desire derived from his carnal nature. Steele feigns ignorance when he writes, “I know not how it is, but our sex has usurped a certain authority to exclude chastity out of the catalogue of masculine virtues” (qtd. in Thomas 204). Aside from the argument of nature, it seems that chastity was not granted in “the catalogue of masculine virtues” primarily because men already had positions of power in society, stemming from the patriarchal society of seventeenth-century England. In this way, men were giving themselves a sexual advantage (one that, according to Pinker and the Victorians, aligned with their biological natures).

The majority of the middle class thought that the male sexual urge was unable to be repressed, which created a dilemma within the confines of the middle-class marital relationship: “[I]f a society was to allow men comparative sexual freedom and at the same time keep single women virgin and married women [sexually pure] then a solution had to be found which would gratify the former without sacrificing the latter” (Thomas 197). The solution, then, was to turn to a “class of fallen women” who could “keep the rest of the world [particularly women] pure”: prostitutes (197).

The reason this scheme could work was that Victorians believed that “a man could vent his sexual passion on someone other than his wife” and still “manag[e] to keep the purity of his wife intact” (Watt 7). Within the female prostitute/middle-class male customer encounter, the man was thought not to sink to the level of the prostitute in the act of fornication, which itself is a double-edged belief. In other words, although the prostitute and the middle-class male engaged

in the same sexual act, each retained their respective class: the middle-class male did not lose his reputation by sleeping with a prostitute. A report of the Royal Commission published in 1871 on the Contagious Diseases Acts – a law which forced all female prostitutes to undergo medical examinations, in the mistaken goal<sup>7</sup> of containing syphilis – states: “[T]here is no comparison to be made between prostitutes and the men who consort with them. With the one sex the offence is committed as a matter of gain; with the other it is an irregular indulgence of a natural impulse” (qtd. in Thomas 198). Men could sleep with prostitutes while still retaining their social and economic statuses.

Three subsets of middle-class men, which did not have wide followings, served as exceptions to this sexual standard; they did not think that men should be free to sleep with prostitutes. One small minority of the middle class maintained that men and women alike should not commit adultery. Some advocates of strong family values – what Thomas calls a “middle-class respectability” – considered adultery to be “incompatible with the high emotional values expected from marriage [...] because it took time and money which would have been better spent in the pursuit of a gainful occupation” (204).

Similarly, some hygiene books in the nineteenth century suggested sexual abstinence for both men and women, thus striking through the double standard. In step with the middle-class focus on sexual health, these books aligned “self-sufficiency [. . .] with self-containment and self-containment with abstinence from sex of all kinds,” perhaps as a backlash against the sexual diseases that were widespread among prostitutes (Michie 416). Acton describes the condition of spermatorrhoea in men who overindulged in sexual intercourse. He claims that frequent ejaculation would lead to a “wasting of the spinal cord” (Acton Functions 96). One of the men

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<sup>7</sup> Because men, particularly those in the armed forces, were not equally subject to medical examination, containing syphilis was a mistaken goal because both sexes needed to be examined in order to contain it. This fact also shows how the double standard was enforced through the examination of prostitutes and not also of men.

he cites with this disease is an older gentleman who seemed to grow mentally weaker after each sexual episode (96). However, this condition could have been attributed to the gentleman's old age rather than his sexual experiences, a factor Acton does not consider. Although not against male promiscuity for moral reasons, Acton shares the same position as other Victorian writers of hygiene books because he seems to suggest that men should inhibit their sexual practices as women do.

Several articles printed from 1850 to 1870 in the Westminster Review describe the degraded state of the prostitute and highlight the ravaging sexually transmitted diseases, primarily syphilis, that prostitution significantly aided in spreading.<sup>8</sup> These articles exemplify the mid- to late-nineteenth-century argument for the containment of prostitution, in uncertain terms, to attempt to contain sexually transmitted diseases. However, these middle-class arguments seem powerless compared to the more widely accepted idea that men had uncontrollable sexual desires and should visit prostitutes as a means of releasing those desires while maintaining their wives' purity, a characteristic notably different from sexual virginity. Although Victorian wives were expected to submit to their husbands' sexual desires, husbands were encouraged to sleep with prostitutes as a means of diverting their sexual energy away from the "Angel in the House," thus maintaining the image of their wives as Angels.

#### The Double Standard and Prostitutes

Prostitutes were the scapegoats of the middle class who wanted to divert the male's sexual desire outside the home: "On that one degraded and ignoble form are concentrated the passions that might have filled the world with shame. She remains, while creeds and

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<sup>8</sup> For the full versions of these articles, see Prostitution in the Victorian Age: Debates on the Issue from 19<sup>th</sup> Century Critical Journals.

civilizations rise and fall, the eternal priestess of humanity, blasted for the sins of the people” (qtd. in Thomas 197). Like the transcultural existence of the standard for female virginity, the prostitute transcends history and geography: she lives in the lowest rank of society, thus becoming an object of disgust for all the women of the higher classes and an object of unclean sexual desire for the men of those classes. In the Victorian period, at least, the double standard might not have been in existence without her.

During the 1700s, the demand for virgins in brothels increased, a demand which probably led to the Victorian belief that “intercourse with a child virgin [was a] cure for male syphilis” (Lovesey 918). In the 1880s, child prostitution increased with the establishment of the Contagious Diseases Acts, probably because female prostitutes were liable to be detained for examination for weeks at a time, hurting the profits of brothel owners (919). The brothel owners, desperate for prostitutes, sought children who were sexually clean and would give them business while more experienced prostitutes were being detained under the Contagious Diseases Acts.

Virginity was high in demand in the 1800s, and not only because brothel owners could replace their detained prostitutes but because virginity was a fetish for their clients. This rise in the demand for virgin prostitutes is revealed in the “tremendous advances in plastic gynecology,” which include the attempt to reconstruct the hymen in order to re-create virginity (917). Brothels used this medical technique to their advantage: “Some brothels employed medical staff to repair lacerated young girls, presumably to enable them to be marketed again as reconstituted innocents, at a time when there was a ‘considerable trade in ‘second-hand virgins’” (918). Virginity for women, even in the fantasy-laden atmosphere of the brothel, was thus in demand in

all classes of society: in lower-class prostitutes, in working-class women (like Tess), in middle-class women, and in upper-class women (like Lucetta).

Counter to the idea that most prostitutes were prostitutes for life, a “detailed study of prostitution suggests that working-class young women often went in and out of street-walking as a stage in their lives perhaps closer to adolescent sexual exploration than to career prostitution” (Maynard 258). In fact, it was not “until late in the century [that] prostitution began to be the very distinct and separate profession that it is in our century” (258). Although some Victorians categorized prostitutes as fallen women, I use the term to denote both lower- and middle-class women who had either premarital intercourse or an extramarital affair.

### The Double Standard and Fallen Women

Regarding the middle-class double standard, it was essential to keep “the two worlds apart” – those of prostitutes and those of chaste or sexually loyal middle-class women – in order to maintain the status quo (Watt 8). However, “if a woman transgressed[,] this represented a threat to the whole system [and] this threat could not be tolerated” (8). Because of the lack of primary accounts of sexual experience in Britain in the Victorian period,<sup>9</sup> it is possible that some, if not most, middle-class women were unfaithful to their husbands and simply did not get caught (Michie 420-1). In The Life of Thomas Hardy, his second wife Florence Emily Hardy notes that Hardy received letters from many women, many of them educated and of high social standing, “with a past like that of Tess, but who had not told their husbands, and [were] asking for his counsel under the burden of their concealment” (244). She does not give the number of letters that Hardy received, as he destroyed most of them later out of respect to the women’s

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<sup>9</sup> Lovesey cites The Sins of the Cities of the Plain, or the Recollections of a Mary-Ann, in which “Jack Saul, a male prostitute, relates a litany of sexual encounters in the homosexual underworld” (Lovesey 921). However, there is not much primary information on British Victorian heterosexual encounters.

privacy. However, this slight information gives us some idea that some women did, in fact, have premarital intercourse and did not tell their husbands – a linguistic decision that Lucetta makes, as outlined in Chapter Two.

At any rate, these women had not told their husbands and were thus not considered to be fallen women in society (although they considered themselves to be fallen women, which will be discussed) because their pasts were concealed. Thus, it is possible, in conjunction with the absence of actual individuals' accounts, that the fallen woman was merely a “cultural myth [. . .] created by the neurosis of a culture that feared female sexuality and aggression and so enshrined a respectably sadistic cautionary tale punishing them both” (Auerbach 31, 39). In other words, the fallen woman kept the social system from collapsing. I agree with Auerbach that we can only go by what art and literature tell us about the fallen woman since there are few if any factual accounts which convey the actual circumstance in which real women who transgressed found themselves.

As the myth of the fallen woman goes, once a middle-class woman was known to have been unfaithful in her marriage or to have had sex prior to marriage, she was deemed a fallen woman, one who could never rise to her original position in society again. She was ostracized by her husband, an important event because her husband was her sole source of monetary support. After this ostracism, she had to support herself, presumably through prostitution.<sup>10</sup> Although Lucetta has the monetary means of supporting herself after her husband would theoretically reject her for her sexual past, Victorian laws might have proclaimed Farfrae as the possessor of her inheritance since she might have had to surrender it to him when she entered the marriage. At any rate, Lucetta avoided his rejection in order to save her reputation, since the

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<sup>10</sup> The fact that the fallen woman myth (which was created by the middle-class) was based upon the fallen woman being a slave to her sexuality thenceforward (a hellish consequence of her sexual deviancy) further shows how the middle-class defined women by their sexualities.

general assumption was once fallen, always fallen, as Victorians believed that “sexual deviancy and its effects were somehow permanent and unalterable” (Nead 49). Thus, a fallen woman’s “identity define[d] itself only in that fall,” and the fallen woman label marked a woman for the rest of her life (Auerbach 30). Like the identities of women of other classes, the fallen woman was defined by her sexuality.

It is interesting to note that the fallen woman might not have defined herself as a fallen woman. In Romantic literature, the “sexually transgressive heroine [...] positions herself as the unnamed; the familiar epithets usually attached to her fail to represent her situation and subjectivity” (Eberle 6). This could equally apply to Victorian literature and society. However, both Tess and Lucetta act as if they see themselves as fallen women.

Like the fallen woman, the New Woman is another sexually transgressive figure. Ann L. Ardis claims that the difference between the new and fallen woman lies in their intention: the New Woman has premarital sex or is sexually abstinent for political reasons (3). Even though Lucetta could be seen as the predecessor to the New Woman, I think that, because of her linguistic decision not to tell her husband Farfrae about her sexual past (which will be discussed further in Chapter Two), she acts as a fallen woman aware of society’s standards. Whereas the New Woman did not care about such standards, Lucetta chooses to keep her sexual relations a secret.

Although some characteristics of the novel Tess position it as New Woman fiction, Tess herself is not a New Woman (Cunningham 103). Ardis concurs, noting that Tess is not given space in the novel to offer her own point of view; most of what we see of Tess comes through the arguably voyeuristic narrator (75). However, Tess blames herself for Alec’s rape of her and for going back to him at the end of the novel (Lovesey 919). In this way, she faults herself much as



Victorian society faults her and other fallen women for their sexual pasts: both Tess and Victorian society thought that she was an agent of her own downfall rather than a victim of the man she slept with. Boumelha notes that a woman's "sexuality, provocative without intent, seem[ed] inherently guilty, by virtue of the reactions it arouse[d] in others," as Victorian society believed (125).

It does not follow that Tess is a fallen woman simply because she is not a New Woman. To find evidence for Tess as a fallen woman, we must turn to her status as a rural working-class woman. As previously described, some rural working-class women, like Tess's mother, chose not to tell their husbands about their sexual pasts in order to keep their honor – that is, it would reflect poorly upon their husbands and, presumably, upon the women if the community found out about the women's sexual pasts. In this way, the rural poor subscribed to the standard of female chastity before marriage. What this means is that Tess can fall if others (including her husband) find out about her sexual past; the uncrowded conditions create the cultural and physical space for the fallen woman label. In this sense, the woman who came from the lower class was as equally subject to the fallen woman myth as the middle-class woman.

Victorian scholar Amanda Anderson agrees that fallen women come not only from the middle class but also from the lower class. Anderson notes that Victorian society applied the fallen woman label across many different classes of women and upon women of different circumstances, including prostitutes, lower-class women, unmarried women who had premarital intercourse, and married women who had affairs (2). In contrast, Lynda Nead and Patricia Ingham categorize fallen women as middle-class women who have become declassed through their act of sexual deviancy against the middle-class double standard. In this sense, the difference between prostitutes and fallen women was in the way they respectively reached the

lower class: “unlike the working-class prostitute, the fallen woman came from the respectable classes” (Nead 95). While prostitutes had always been part of the lower-class, fallen women became “declassed” by falling from their middle-class status to the lower class (Ingham 48). These formerly middle-class women were presumed to go into prostitution for life because there were no other career choices for them. However, in my estimation, Anderson’s evidence outweighs Nead and Ingham’s claim, which is why I argue that Tess is a fallen woman despite her status as a working-class woman.

While some women were to blame for their sexual deviancies (like the fictional Lucetta), others were not (in my opinion, like Tess). In Tess, Hardy, like other Victorian authors, “demythified the fallen woman by making her victim rather than agent” and constructed her as “victim and survivor” (Auerbach 31-2). Ardis agrees: “Hardy releases [Tess] from the trap of society’s condemnation of women who are sexually active outside of marriage as ‘impure’ or ‘fallen’” (79). However, the one whose opinion matters most – Tess’s – does not think that she is a New Woman, nor that she escapes blame for her sexual past; she defines herself as a fallen woman because she blames herself for her rape. Having explained how Lucetta and Tess are fallen women, I will next examine their linguistic decisions in deciding whether to remain silent to their husbands about their sexual pasts, a dilemma that both women face in the novels.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Implications of the Double Standard on Tess and Lucetta's Linguistic Frameworks

The intention of the middle class in creating the fallen woman myth was to enforce the sexual purity of women, an external force which contradicts the middle-class assumption that women were sexually frigid by nature, as described in Chapter One. However, many women did not abide by the enforced standard; their position, then, required a linguistic decision either to tell or not to tell others about their past sexual activity.

Although the Victorian era has traditionally been seen as one of “prudery, hypocrisy, and pruriently excessive linguistic delicacy,” Foucault and other scholars surmise that Victorians were far from silent about their sex lives, whether physical or purely psychological (Boumelha 11). Foucault posits two “great procedures for producing the truth of sex”: ars erotica and scientia sexualis (Foucault 57). Ars erotica, or the erotic art, is primarily practiced in Eastern countries in addition to Arab countries and ancient Rome. This approach to the sexual experience highlights the pleasure of the sexual act. Participants focus on the physical sensations of the sexual experience and evaluate it “in terms of its intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberations in the body and the soul” (57).

In contrast to ars erotica, scientia sexualis is “geared to a form of knowledge-power,” which means society is split into the haves and the have nots – those with sexual power and those without (58). Instead of focusing on the pleasure of the sexual experience, those who use scientia sexualis to produce their “truth of sex” are focused on “an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden” (57). This type of production of sexual truth occurs, according to Foucault, only in Western societies, and its primary mechanism is the act of confession.

Although Foucault does not give an exact time of origin, he states that since at least the Middle Ages the religious confession has been a way of producing sexual truth in Western society. The premise of this method, then, is that sexual truth lies deep within the individual and can be extracted through speaking. Within the act of the confession, the confessant – the one who speaks the confession – is powerless to possess the forms of power that prohibit sexual deviancy; she assumes a submissive role in the confessional act because she is the penitent one, asking for forgiveness. The hearer of the confession, then, is “the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile,” the one with the power to give or withhold forgiveness (61-2). In the religious confession, the confessant’s purification is guaranteed: the confession act “unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation” (62). The confessant, at least in the religious confession, has power over her own salvation: as long as she confesses her faults, sexual and otherwise, her salvation is guaranteed. Forgiveness of the individual in the secular confession, however, is not necessarily imminent.

Foucault also theorizes that the secular confession is intimately linked to the same forms of power as the religious confession, and that the act of confession in both instances “frees” the confessant by giving him the means of releasing shame (60). At the same time, Foucault notes that the “power [of the confessor] reduces one [the confessant] to silence” (60). This seems to contradict the freedom the confessant can find through the act of confession because the confessor has power over her. In other words, it seems that those who committed sexual perversions would have been unwilling to confess their sexual desires or acts – despite the relative freedom that might come with it – because they knew that those in power, like physicians and psychiatrists, might tell others or try to stop their acts or desires. Even more

harm would have been done to one's reputation had a sexual confession been made to a member of the bourgeoisie who was not a physician or a psychiatrist. For women, a confession such as this would have been subject to the standards of the relative purity, chastity, and sexual loyalty of middle-class women. In Victorian society, this scenario is evident in the admittance procedures of the London Foundling Hospital.

The London Foundling Hospital admitted illegitimate children, and the mothers of the children applying for admittance were forced to endure months of interrogation regarding their past sexual acts, usually not related to the child's conception (Kalikoff 102). Because of the apparent sexual standards that the middle class held, including chastity and purity, those administering the interrogations were, to extend Kalikoff's argument, hypocrites to their own standards by asking for and listening to the sexually graphic accounts of the mothers' sexual exploits. Thus, while those guilty of voyeurism in Victorian police reports were the readers, in the hospital the guilty were the admittance interrogators: middle-class members who violated their own sexual standards simply by listening to the sexual accounts.

Interrogators did, however, intend to instill middle-class values that emphasized female chastity and sexual loyalty in the transgressive mothers. While the mother did not necessarily regard her original sexual act as an offence, by the end of the interrogation period, she "was given a new start, [. . .] 'a chance for the ritual exchange of motherhood for respectability'" (Kalikoff 102-3). This procedure stands as a limited example of how the middle class imposed their sexual values upon working-class mothers, labeling them as fallen women in need of reform through confession and coercing the mothers to adopt this label.

Some scholars have noted Foucault's failure to consider how gender affects his theory of confession and sexuality. Susan David Bernstein, for instance, examines how the "cultural

constructions of gender, that is, the equation of domination with masculinity and submission with femininity, are embedded in the rhetorical folds of confession” (Bernstein 2).<sup>11</sup> The female confessant submits to the male confessor, the latter of whom has the power because he is the confessor of the confession, as evidenced in Foucault. However, the gender roles are reversed rhetorically: the female, who is traditionally seen as passive, is the one performing the act of confession, while the male, traditionally the active participant, assumes the passive role of listening. These roles right themselves to their conventional modes only after the act of confession has taken place, when the male assumes an active role of judging the penitent and sexually guilty female, while the female must submit to his judgment.

This gender scheme of the confession – male confessor and female confessant – exemplifies the double standard. The confession across genders seems to be part of the male realm: because men were allowed to have sex before marriage and sex with prostitutes during marriage, any confession they may have made to their wives would have engaged a presupposed forgiveness. In contrast, because women were subjugated to strict sexual standards, a confession women might have made to their husbands about their sexual past would have automatically violated the presumed standards that they were supposed to uphold. A fallen woman’s telling her husband about her sexual past, then, would have allowed her husband to have ultimate power over her because he had the choice to either forgive her or to reject her, and thus ostracize her. We can analyze fallen woman literature like Mayor and Tess in terms of the linguistic decisions available to them and the consequences they expect of each decision. Both Tess and Lucetta encounter the decision of telling or not telling their husbands about their sexual pasts, but they

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<sup>11</sup> It seems that the male-to-male confession or the female-to-female confession would be exempt from this type of power play, which seems to exist only in the female-to-male confession. For instance, the fictional character of Henchard tells Farfrae about his sexual past without revealing Lucetta’s name; Lucetta likewise tells her sexual past with Henchard to Elizabeth-Jane without revealing Henchard’s name. In both instances, their friendships are not altered because there is no cross-gender power play at work.

subscribe to different linguistic frameworks. I use the term “framework” to describe the perspectives that Tess and Lucetta take in defining their situations as fallen women and in making assumptions about the potential consequences of confessing or not confessing their sexual pasts to their husbands.

#### Lucetta’s Linguistic Framework and the Community’s Ostracism of the Fallen Woman

Lucetta’s framework for her potential linguistic decisions and their consequences exemplifies the kind of thinking any woman who had transgressed the prescribed sexual standards would have if she were, indeed, aware of society’s standards for her. Obviously, telling her husband (or, perhaps, anyone) about her sexual past would, as the fallen woman myth goes, result in her ostracism from the middle-class community, which includes her husband’s rejection of her. Although this ostracism is a part of the fallen woman myth that the middle class propagated, as outlined in Chapter One, any woman who was guilty of adultery or premarital sex and who wanted to take precautions against the possibility of these consequences would probably adhere to the fallen woman myth, even if there was a chance that she might not be ostracized. Thus, the fallen woman cautiously assumed that ostracism was a very real threat and could expect her husband’s rejection of her (whether or not it would actually happen) if she were to tell him about her sexual past. Lucetta, as a fictional character exemplifying a woman with a sexual past, thus assumes that Farfrae will banish her if she tells him about her sexual past with Henchard.

In contrast, if a fallen woman who is aware of society’s sexual standards makes the opposite decision of not telling her husband about her past – the form of thinking that what he doesn’t know will never hurt him – she could expect her continued acceptance in her marriage,

not to mention in the community. Taking both decisions and their expected consequences together, this framework can be illustrated as follows:

Linguistic Decision	Expected Consequence
Telling	Rejection
Not telling	Acceptance

Following this framework, Lucetta decides not to make her sexual past known to Farfrae so that he will continue to accept her as his wife. Her personal decision not to tell Farfrae about her sexual past supports the notion that she is not a New Woman. If she had made her sexual past known to others, including her husband, with a political intent, she would be considered a New Woman (Ardis 3). However, her decision not to tell Farfrae shows that she is aware of the double standard and that she intends to keep her elevated position in society rather than risking her downfall by attempting to be socially and sexually liberated. In other words, because she does not risk exposure of her sexual past in order to become liberated, she is not a New Woman. Certainly at the time in which Hardy wrote the novel, the New Woman had yet to make a definite appearance on the societal stage. Hardy himself does not seem to have this intention for Lucetta's character because she remains a flat minor character who makes linguistic choices that reflect those of a conventional fallen woman.

What Lucetta does not consider from within her framework is that the linguistic decision of telling or not telling Farfrae could be wrested from her control. Two outside factors threaten to, or succeed in, usurping it. Michael Henchard, the former mayor of Casterbridge, teases Lucetta's husband, Donald Farfrae, with the information that he once had a sexual relationship with Lucetta, thus threatening Lucetta's linguistic decision to remain silent. However, Henchard



does not give him Lucetta's name; she remains, to Farfrae, a nameless entity in a story of Henchard's sexual past. Lucetta, who witnesses this teasing, negotiates with Henchard: she attempts to keep their sexual past secret from others by asking to have back the love letters she had written to him. Her ultimate plan is to come back into possession of the letters, since once written to Henchard, they are conventionally his property. She intends to destroy them when they are once again in her possession; however, her plan collapses altogether because Henchard has chosen a dangerous messenger to deliver the letters: Joshua Jopp, who nurses an old grudge against Henchard and a fresh one for Lucetta, both of whom have at some point refused him job opportunities. Jopp, under interrogation by other pub patrons, reads the letters out loud, thus disclosing Henchard and Lucetta's affair. In this sense, the letters she once wrote to Henchard become a certain kind of speech act in themselves, although they are not actually spoken but rather written. As written speech acts, they can be accessed by others outside the "conversation" which Lucetta and Henchard have had, as indeed they are.

One pub patron, Nance Mockridge, who listens to Jopp's reading of the letters, suggests they hold what she and others call a "skimmity-ride," the Wessex dialect for skimmington ride. A skimmington ride is an ancient country custom in which the effigies of the guilty couple are paraded through town, usually to disgrace a cuckolded husband (Hardy 361). In this case, however, the characters do not intend to disgrace Farfrae, who has earned great admiration and respect from the community and is the mayor of the town at the time of the skimmington ride. Nor do they intend to disgrace Henchard, who is equally guilty of the sexual relationship. It is interesting to note that when Mother Cuxsom and Nance ask Jopp whom he intends to harm, he says, "One that stands high in this town. I'd like to shame her! [...] For 'tis her love-letters that I've got here" (Hardy 266). Although the phrase, "one that stands high," might remind the

reader of Henchard's former reputation as the mayor of Casterbridge, it is not Henchard that Jopp intends to shame, but "her" – Lucetta. In this way, Jopp is able to utilize the community's adherence to the double standard<sup>12</sup> in order to disgrace Lucetta, which is evident in Nance and Mother Cuxsom's moral disgust at Lucetta's, and not at Henchard's, premarital sexual activity.

Marjorie Garson suggests that Nance and Mother Cuxsom intend to disgrace Lucetta because of class animosity. In other words, they "[foreground] Lucetta's power as a wealthy person" because her "economic exploitation and decadent pleasures have oppressed and even helped criminalize the underclass which destroys her" (Garson 105, 107). However, Nance's reaction to hearing the love letters is equally related to Lucetta's sex: "Mrs. Farfrae wrote that! [. . .] 'Tis a humbling thing for us, as respectable women, that one of the same sex could do it. And now she's vowed herself to another man!" (Hardy 266) Nance's shock at Lucetta's situation illustrates the rural working-class's condemnation of a married woman with a sexual past and the community's virtual exoneration of the man who equally took part in the act. Although Norman Page notes that the skimmington ride is "a traditional and noisy demonstration of communal disapproval of immorality" and goes so far as to call it "communal punishment," the characters in Mayor intend to disgrace only Lucetta – not necessarily Henchard – while having a bit of fun (100-1). Because of the characters' intentions, the skimmington ride is unlike Victorian police reports of the time.

While the skimmington ride was an actual rural custom to make sexual affairs known to the public, police reports in Victorian newspapers did the same but through linguistic means by offering "graphically detailed accounts of the sexual misbehavior of all classes" (Boyle 212). Some of the reports' topics correspond with some of the types of sexual deviancy that Foucault

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<sup>12</sup> Casterbridge's rural working-class community, which includes Nance and Mother Cuxsom, subscribes to the double standard as does Tess's rural working-class community.

discusses in A History of Sexuality: adultery, prostitution, and sadism. These published police reports served as ways to enforce middle-class sexual norms for both sexes by cautioning others who had thought about – or were already – breaking the norm and by promoting heterosexual, matrimonial, vaginal sex.

Often, both the man and the woman who were guilty of adultery were mentioned in the published police reports; however, according to the myth of the double standard, the man's reputation would not have been severely damaged. The woman's reputation, on the other hand, would have been damaged, and thenceforward she would be marked as a fallen woman. In these terms, then, the police reports on adultery and prostitution served as warnings to women – young and old, married and unmarried – to avoid diverging from the sexual standards for women.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to the Victorian police reports, Nance, Mother, and Jopp do not directly intend to warn women against premarital sexual relations by making Henchard and Lucetta's affair known. However, the event probably discourages other women from having them – or least from having them found out – because of the repercussion at hand, which is the symbolic representation of their deviancy literally paraded before their eyes.

In the act of the skimmington ride, Lucetta's status as a fallen woman materializes among members of the community. As noted in Chapter One, Lucetta has already labeled herself as a fallen woman. However, the skimmington ride announces and solidifies her position as a fallen woman in the community; now, everyone in the community labels Lucetta in the same way she had previously (and privately) labeled herself.

When the public spread information on those who had committed sexual crimes, the public had linguistic power over the individuals who committed those crimes. In other words, the decision to make the deviancy known lay not with the guilty individuals but with others

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<sup>13</sup> Whether they actually served this purpose or not remains to be seen.

outside the crime, people who acted as societal police and blamed those guilty of sexual crimes. In Mayor, Nance and Mother Cuxsom are the societal police although they have a class motive in addition to a moral motive.

So far, I have examined Lucetta as exemplary of a fallen woman who decides to remain silent about her sexual past but whose secret is found out and made public. However, some fallen women, like Tess, decide to tell their husbands about their sexual pasts because they subscribe to alternative frameworks. Tess subscribes to the moral value of honesty over dishonesty, and because she is ignorant that her husband Angel Clare subscribes to the double standard, she makes her sexual confession to him after he confesses his own.

#### Implications of the Double Standard on the Linguistic Components of Tess and Angel's Secular Confessions

In "Breaking with the Conventions: Victorian Confession Novels and Tess of the d'Urbervilles," Jeanette Shumaker discusses several Victorian literary works that depict a middle-class male as the confessor/judger and a working-class fallen woman as the confessant. Among these works is Tess, which also depicts a sexual confession between two members of society that Foucault fails to mention: the husband and the wife. We must look at the confession scene in Tess in two parts in order to identify this gender bias: first, Angel's confession to Tess and, second, Tess's confession to Angel. Within each confession, we can examine the three parts of a speech act that J.L. Austin posits: the locutionary act (the words the speaker uses), the illocutionary act (the speaker's intended meaning), and the perlocutionary act (the effect on the listener) (109). Tess and Angel's confessions are contradictory because Angel has a gender bias against Tess while Tess thinks their sexual acts are equal.

The words Angel uses for his confession, or the locutionary act, are not presented as direct dialogue in the text. Rather, the narrator remarks: “He then told her of that time of his life to which allusion has been made when, tossed about by doubts and difficulties in London, like a cork on the waves, he plunged into eight-and-forty hours’ dissipation with a stranger” (Hardy 257). Although previous “allusion has been made” to Angel’s confession, the narrative we are given is itself is allusion because it refers to the actual words Angel uses in making his confession to Tess. In this way, Angel’s locutionary act is textually absent. The intentions Hardy has for the reader’s attention to Angel’s and Tess’s confessions is indirectly proportionate to each confession’s relative textual presence or absence. In other words, Hardy does not want the reader to focus on Angel’s confession, so he gives a short summary of it; however, Hardy wants the reader to focus on Tess’s confession because vindication of Tess’s purity is the purpose of the novel, so he makes her confession absolutely absent from the text, which will be discussed later. Also, the relative presence or absence of Angel’s confession does not deter the reader from thinking that he is in the right: because Victorian standards expected men to have sexual relations outside of marriage, Angel does not suffer any retribution for this past act. In contrast, the relative presence or absence of Tess’s confession is important since the presence of it would potentially sway the readers’ judgment against her (Hardy is, after all, arguing that she is a pure woman because she does not will her rape to happen), as will be discussed.

Angel’s intention for his confession, or his illocutionary act, relates to the traces left of his bygone religious faith. As noted in Chapter One, Angel holds the belief that men and women should remain sexually chaste before marriage because of his religious background. Although he and his family are members of the middle-class, their Christian beliefs trump their class interests. Even though he has since lost his religious faith, he continues to revere sexual purity in both

sexes, as revealed in his statement to Tess: “I used to wish to be a teacher of men, and it was a great disappointment to me when I found I could not enter the Church. I admired spotlessness, even though I could lay no claim to it, and hated impurity, as I hope I do now” (Hardy 256). His intention for his confession is to confess his sexual past in order to release his shame. Yet his journey to apostasy not only creates a space for him to have an affair in the first place, but it also allows him to apply the double standard to himself in the act of confession, for his own benefit: he has no doubt that Tess will forgive him because as a male it is acceptable for him to have premarital sexual relations, and when faced with the decision to either forgive or reject Tess, he rejects her, as will be discussed. Tess’s forgiveness of Angel is so matter-of-course that Angel figures as both the “confessing subject and the judging confessor” within his own confession (Bernstein 157).

The perlocutionary act of Angel’s confession, or the response that Tess has to it, bridges the space between Angel’s confession and hers. Nishimura notes that Angel’s confession, figuring as Tess’s counterpart, seems to give Tess an opening, psychologically and rhetorically, for making her confession: “[. . .] Angel is forgiven so as to establish himself as someone who seems particularly fitted to forgive such a penitent as Tess” (Thomas Hardy 182). In other words, the situation is made to seem as if her confession and her sexual act are morally and psychologically equal to Angel’s. We must comb the text for evidence of Tess’s relative awareness of the double standard, the presence of which would contradict her notion that her sin is morally equal to Angel’s.

In one instance in the text, Tess experiences what she takes to be the congregation's condemnation of her sexual past. When she is about three months pregnant,<sup>14</sup> she attends church for the first time since returning home, and she chooses to sit in an inconspicuous spot in the back. However, despite her cautiousness, some members of the congregation glimpse her and then whisper to one another. The text continues, "She knew what their whispers were about, grew sick at heart, and felt that she could come to church no more" (Hardy 102). Note that Tess does not directly overhear the whispers; she merely "knew what their whispers were about" – presumably, her pregnant state and/or the events resulting in it. She actually does not have sufficient information about the congregation's whisperings to assume that the congregation is condemning her for her sexual past with Alec and not, on the contrary, sympathizing with her – as the field hands do after the baby is born (108). The narrator does not give us access to Tess's thought process (not only here but throughout the text), so we must interpret Tess's actions for ourselves.

If Tess had thought that the congregation members were being sympathetic to her plight, she would have continued attending church. However, after this incident she decides to stop attending because she thinks that they are condemning her, that they are her adversaries in this matter. In this sense, then, Tess is aware of the sexual standard for women and applies it to herself because even though she does not know what the members of the congregation actually whisper to one another, she assumes that they are making harsh judgments of her condition.

A figure who directly condemns her for the baby's illegitimacy is the parson, whom she confronts after her baby dies. Not only does Tess ask if christening the child – she christens him Sorrow – is the same as a Christian baptism, but she also asks if the church could give Sorrow a

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<sup>14</sup> I calculated this period by the fact that Tess stays with Alec for another month after the initial rape (although she could have conceived if they had intercourse again after that). After her return home, she is "revived sufficiently" from her experiences in Trantridge to attend church after a few weeks' time (Hardy 101).

Christian burial. The parson replies, “Ah – that’s another matter” (115). He expounds his train of thought: “Well – I would willingly do so if only we two were concerned. But I must not – for certain reasons” (115). In this case, Tess directly experiences the parson’s – and, indeed, Christianity’s – judgment on her situation. One of the “certain reasons” that the parson has in mind could be that the child was illegitimate, not arising from a state of wedlock. Another is that he could potentially face the congregation’s criticism of him if he were to give Sorrow a Christian burial, particularly since he tells Tess that if she buries Sorrow alone, without a formal service, then “it will be just the same” (Hardy 115). Tess is validated, then, in her thinking that the congregation condemns her for her sexual past.

Because of these two occurrences within the Christian community – the parson’s and the congregation’s condemnation of her – readers know that Tess is aware of Christians’ standard for women to be sexually abstinent before marriage. However, does this warrant that she is aware of the middle-class double standard? Tess does not appear to have any direct or indirect knowledge that the middle class act of men’s sleeping with prostitutes was considered socially acceptable. Although Tess observes that Alec suffers no retribution for sleeping with country women, Alec, by economic position at least,<sup>15</sup> is a member of the upper class, not the middle class. Therefore, besides Angel, Tess does not have any direct or close relation to anyone in the middle class, and she realizes only after she confesses her sexual past to him that Angel abides by the double standard. In this way, Tess does not know about the double standard, but she does know through personal experience about the strict standards for women’s sexuality.

Tess’s initial hesitation in telling Angel about her sexual past seems to parallel her experiences with the churchgoers and the parson: if Christians condemned her when they found

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<sup>15</sup> Alec aligns his sexual habits with those of the middle class because he does not have an aristocratic pedigree to preserve. See Chapter One for more on the deployments of alliance and sexuality regarding class.



out about her sexual past, then Angel – whose father is a minister and who himself had been a Christian until recently – might also condemn her if she confesses. However, further exploration into Tess’s response to her mother’s advice shows that this experience does not factor into her hesitation in telling Angel about her past.

In a letter to Tess while Tess is living at Talbothays Dairy, Joan Durbeyfield notes Tess’s “Childish Nature to tell all that’s in [her] heart,” which includes her desire to be honest with Angel about her sexual past (Hardy 221). Tess’s “Childish Nature” seems to stem from the Christianity of her childhood, in which issues were black and white; her lens, then, is that she will either be honest or dishonest. Although the Church in general encouraged sexual confessions between churchgoers and parsons, as Foucault notes, it did not specifically advocate wives and husbands confessing to one another. Tess, then, seems to be an anomaly in the Christian environment: she thinks that wives and husbands should confess their sexual pasts to one another in order to establish trust within the marriage. After acknowledging the fact that Tess is perversely honest through her “Childish Nature,” Joan supplicates Tess to resist this desire and to remain silent about her sexual past with Alec:

Many a woman – some of the Highest in the Land – have had a Trouble in their time; and why should you Trumpet yours when others don’t Trumpet theirs? No girl would be such a Fool, specially as it is so long ago, and not your Fault at all. [. . .] [I] made you promise me never to let it out by Word or Deed, having your Welfare in my Mind; and you most solemnly did promise it going from this Door (221).

Joan seems to be aware of the double standard because of the logic implicit in her argument. If a woman has premarital sexual relations and could potentially harm her husband’s honor if she

told him about her past, then it follows that if a man has premarital sexual relations and if he told his wife, she would have no honor to uphold because her honor is not at stake. It seems that Tess would have gathered something about the double standard from Joan's advice, if she had not already known about it. Although Hardy does not write a skimmington ride into the text of Tess and he does with Mayor, the primary settings of the two novels are the same: Marlott, Trantridge, Talbothays Dairy, and Flintcomb-Ash – all settings in Tess – are rural working-class communities, as is Casterbridge in Mayor. It is possible, then, that Tess has witnessed skimmington rides in her community, and as such she would be aware of the double standard, since skimmington rides made apparent the dire implications for a woman's transgression and the lack of implications for a man's. Even though Tess might be aware of the double standard, she is not aware that Angel might subscribe to it, which, in addition to other factors, gives her reason to acquiesce to her "Childish Nature" of honesty.

Although Tess has already been made a fool by members of the congregation, this experience does not seem to diminish her view that she should be honest with Angel. After receiving her mother's advice, she writes to her mother, imploring her to consider that "it was a gentleman who had chosen her" (Hardy 234). Tess's implicit request is for her mother to change her mind about advising Tess to withhold information about her sexual past from Angel. In making this request, Tess seems to take her mother's original advice at face value; in writing to her mother again, it seems that only Joan's advice stands in the way of Tess telling Angel the truth about her past. In this way, Tess's previous humiliation does not factor in to her hesitancy in telling Angel; rather, it stems from the conflict between her desire to be honest – her "Childish Nature" that Joan notes – and her mother's warning not to tell Angel about her past.

I think that Tess’s desire to be honest wins out because despite her mother’s advice, Tess thinks it will have a positive result: Angel will forgive and accept her. In addition, her ignorance of what will be<sup>16</sup> Angel’s adherence to the double standard gives her no reason to keep her sexual past from him. From Tess’s perspective, her framework, based on honesty, is laid out thus:

Linguistic Decision	Expected Consequence
Telling (Honesty)	Acceptance (Forgiveness)
Not telling (Dishonesty)	Acceptance (Because of a lie of omission)

Note that the linguistic decision of telling and its consequence of acceptance are different from Lucetta’s framework. This difference manifests itself in the fact that Tess’s framework of honesty substitutes for her limited knowledge of the double standard while Lucetta has a clear knowledge of the double standard which leads to her decision to remain silent about her past. In Tess’s mind, being honest will result in Angel’s forgiveness of her sexual past and, thus, his acceptance of her as his wife. Not telling Angel about her past – which circumvents Austin’s speech act components since it is not a speech act – would result in his acceptance because of a lie of omission. Until this point, Tess has not told Angel about her past and has not suffered his rejection, so technically she has been accepted by him for not telling him about her past. However, her urge to be honest with him is so strong that it is inevitable that she will eventually tell him about her past. In that sense, not telling him results in his acceptance only because of his

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<sup>16</sup> I emphasize the potentiality of Angel’s adherence to the double standard because he himself does not show signs of subscribing to it prior to his reaction to Tess’s confession, as will be discussed.

ignorance; not telling him is a temporary decision until she works out her hesitation and finds a psychological and linguistic space to tell him about her past.

Nishimura posits forgiveness as an intention Tess has for her confession: “Confession may be seen as an act of asking for forgiveness. [. . .] [Tess] begins [to confess] in the hope of being forgiven” (Thomas Hardy 179-80). However, according to my framework of Tess’s linguistic choices and their consequences, Tess intends to be honest only in that it will result in Angel’s forgiveness of her. In other words, honesty is Tess’s intention while forgiveness (and, subsequently, trust within their marriage) is her perceived result of that linguistic action. In this sense, the illocutionary act is split into two parts: the intention for the confession and the expected result. Having analyzed Angel’s illocutionary act, I think his confession could also be split into his intention to release his shame and his expectation that Tess will accept him without question. Although she is in the rhetorical position – as a confessor of the confession – to offer either forgiveness or judgment, Tess effortlessly forgives Angel for his sexual past because she thinks that their past acts are morally equal, a belief that is revealed in her exclamation that her past act is “just the same” as his (Hardy 257). Angel’s confession, then, leads to Tess’s, which can similarly be examined in its constituent parts.

The locutionary act of Tess’s confession, like Angel’s, is absent from the text. Hardy instead gives some physical details of the scene at hand and a single statement of the speech act occurring, which ends the chapter: “[. . .] she entered on her story of her acquaintance with Alec d’Urberville and its results, murmuring the words without flinching, and with her eyelids drooping down” (257). Phase the Fifth merely begins with a statement that she has finished making her confession (261). Although Hardy was forced to revise or altogether excise several portions of the manuscript for the serial publication, he had already written Tess’s confession out

of the main narrative (Bernstein 148). Considering the confession is also absent in the novel's final form, which had less censorship by the publisher, Hardy probably had a purpose for excluding the monologue of Tess's confession.

Ardis suggests that in leaving out Tess's confession, Hardy intended to "[call] attention to what falls outside the bounds of 'normal' female sexual [. . .] experience" (73). Tess's sexual experience falls outside of what is considered to be normal because, as Hardy argues, she is pure in that she did not wish sexual experience upon herself. In this way, Hardy intends to call attention to his argument: that Tess is a lower-class woman with a sexual past who, despite her sexual experience, is still a pure woman because she played no active part in her downfall (Ardis 73). In fact, part of his argument for Tess's purity rests on the linguistic absence of the rape scene and of her confession of it; his argument that Tess is a pure woman depends upon it (Bernstein 145). In other words, if Tess's confession were revealed in the text, it might theoretically sway readers' moral judgment against her actions.<sup>17</sup>

Ardis, too, criticizes Hardy for not giving Tess a place in the text to speak on her own; instead, that "place given to her, [is] a text others inscribe on her" (75). Bernstein extends this logic to the metanarrative level: the reader does not hear Tess speak her own confession, and to that extent Hardy as an author remains traditionally patriarchal and even voyeuristic (144). Bernstein also comments on the absence of the voice or perspective of the woman with whom Angel committed the sexual offense, which supports Bernstein's argument that Hardy is a patriarchal author (157). Unlike Ardis and Bernstein, Nishimura uses a linguistic rather than a feminist lens when he theorizes that the absence of Tess's confession highlights the consequences of it, rather than focusing on the words that she used or the rhetorical strategies of

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<sup>17</sup> If Hardy had included Angel's confession in the text, it would not have had this kind of weight. Because Angel is male, his confession does not have extreme implications (like marital and societal ostracism) as it does with Tess's female confession.

her confession (211). The most direct consequence that the absence of her confession highlights is Angel's reaction to it, in which Tess and Angel himself find that he abides by the double standard.

Angel's response to Tess's confession reveals Angel's "unjust gender and class hierarchies" with which he judges her confession (Shumaker 459). Class hierarchies figure into the fact that Tess is, after all, of a lower class than he, so it is possible that he finds it difficult to transcend class barriers within marriage. He had previously denied his class interests in terms of the double standard and opted instead to uphold the Christian value of sexual purity for both sexes; however, his response to her confession shows that he does, in fact, uphold the middle-class value of the double standard.

It is possible that Angel might have learned about Darwin's theories of evolution, published in 1859, during the course of his schooling, which would have made him skeptical of nature's purity. However, through his Christian background he probably views nature as an entity on which to inscribe his own desires, since most Christians see nature only for its function of supporting human life. Under such an anthropomorphic influence, Angel inscribes the ideal of sexual purity onto nature. In other words, he retains a sexual standard that was implicit in his religious background, and he applies it towards his shifting views of the world (including nature). Thus, what he does not recognize about himself but is revealed in the confession scene is that he links nature to sexual purity. Hardy has already made it clear to readers, however, that "there are no virgins in nature," so Angel's viewpoint is purely an idealistic one (Garson 141). Indeed, "it takes Tess's confession to prove to him that she embodies the lowness of her class" – that she is not, in fact, a virgin – and that nature is sexual to the core (Shumaker 451). In this way, Angel aligns his opinion of female sexuality with the bourgeois standard of chastity before

marriage and loyalty within marriage even though in his private life he has broken away from his Christian beliefs (Page 152).

Because Angel thinks that Tess embodies nature and that nature is sexually pure, he thinks that Tess is sexually pure. However, since Tess has had premarital sexual relations, Angel's response to her confession exemplifies the response of any typical bourgeois member to a fallen woman: he rejects her. In this way, he blames her just as Victorian society blames the fallen woman: he fails to see that she is not an active agent of her rape but a victim of it (152). Angel also fails to realize that Alec has possessed only Tess's body, not her spirit, a fact that supports Hardy's argument that Tess is a pure woman (Garson 143). In considering one part of the illocutionary act of Angel's confession – that he expects Tess to forgive him – and the perlocutionary act of Tess's confession – that Angel rejects Tess and does not offer her forgiveness – we can see that Angel subscribes to the double standard. He presupposes that Tess will forgive him, and he does not offer her forgiveness in return, even though she has been raped and thus has an equivalent amount of sexual experience as he. In this way, his confession is performative – it makes something happen – because he utilizes the double standard when he previously did not show signs of subscribing to it.

Garson notes Tess's "obsessive fear of Angel's learning her history," and the irony that "Tess is unrealistically unable to predict [Angel's] response" for all her prior hesitation in telling him (137). Indeed, when Angel says he "admired spotlessness [. . .] and hated impurity, as I hope I do now," it seems that Tess should have applied Angel's way of thinking about his own sins to herself: that when she tells him about her impurity – her sexual past with Alec – he will reject her (Hardy 256). However, Tess's simplistic view of honesty over dishonesty trumps any

forewarning she might have found in Angel's words; her simplistic paradigm blinds her to any other circumstance that could occur and does occur.

Tess's confession does not have the desired effect because telling the truth means, in terms of the framework of the conventional fallen woman, she will be rejected by her husband. In this framework, keeping silent will result in his acceptance; however, Tess tells Angel because she operates under a different framework, and Lucetta, although she does not tell Farfrae, undergoes the community's ridicule when the information is leaked through Jopp. Even though they make opposite linguistic choices with different expected consequences, both women meet in the tragedies that arise from the consequences they do not expect.



## CONCLUSION

Both Tess and Lucetta's tragedies arise from consequences they cannot foresee when they make their linguistic choices in (not) telling their husbands about their sexual past. Tess, for instance, does not foresee Angel's rejection because she is blind to any consequences lying outside her limited framework. Daleski argues that "the essential cause of her tragedy" is her failure to confess her sexual past to Angel before their marriage, yet seen in this light, the ultimate cause of her tragedy is her failure to consider the possibility that Angel might reject her (154). Similarly, Lucetta does not foresee the information of her affair with Henchard leaking out to the public. Her failure to retrieve the letters directly from Henchard creates the space for her tragedy to occur. Both women's fates end in their deaths, a fact which will be considered in the context of the fallen woman myth.

Tess's death occurs after a lengthy chain of events. After rejecting Tess, Angel leaves for Brazil, so the abandoned Tess works for herself at Flintcomb-Ash. She happens upon Alec while he is preaching on the countryside, and after seeing Tess again, Alec reverts to his old ways. Eventually, Tess's father dies, and the family encounters dire economic circumstances. Alec offers to provide financial aid for Tess's family if she becomes his kept woman. When Angel reappears while Tess lives with Alec as his kept woman, she has become completely indifferent to what happens to her body, including the prospect of her execution after she murders Alec. Angel's initial rejection of her allows for the possibility of these events occurring, and his rejection itself occurs because Tess confesses. In other words, Tess's linguistic decision indirectly results in her death.

Although Lucetta's death does not result from her linguistic decision as Tess's death does, Lucetta does not expect her death any more than Tess does. After seeing her and

Henchard's effigies paraded down the street, she says aloud, in Elizabeth-Jane's presence, "Donald will see it! He is just coming home – and it will break his heart – he will never love me any more – and O, it will kill me – kill me!" (Hardy 287). She does, in fact, begin having epileptic seizures shortly after this remark, and she later miscarries and dies from this episode. Her words "it will kill me" foreshadow the cause of her death: she thinks Farfrae will find out about her sexual past through the skimmington ride, and this belief does, in fact, kill her. In this sense, the drastic effect that the skimmington ride has on Lucetta reveals the indirect violence that could occur when a community wrenches a fallen woman's secret away from her.

Roxanne Eberle notes that "the prototypical 'harlot's story'" consists of "the loss of virginity (and/or reputation), shame and exile from respectable society, and ultimately death" (4). This sequence of events comprises the fallen woman myth, and Hardy applies it to both Tess and Lucetta's characters. Tess suffers her loss of virginity through Alec's rape of her in the Chase, she is exiled from respectable society when Angel rejects her, and she ultimately suffers death after she murders Alec. Lucetta, too, loses her virginity to Henchard, suffers the community's contempt during the skimmington ride, and subsequently suffers death from epileptic seizures after she sees her effigy.

Many factors could eventually have led to the death of a fictional or factual fallen woman: sexually transmitted diseases, childbirth, or factors unrelated to her sexuality. The latter, however, could have inflicted a pure, or non-fallen, woman. Lucetta's death lies outside of these categories because while she died neither from a sexually transmitted disease nor from childbirth (she is, in fact, pregnant when she dies), her death is still related to her sexuality because it stems from the spreading knowledge of her sexual past.

Because novels might take a snippet of a character's life rather than focusing on the whole scope of it, the relative inclusion or exclusion of a character's death should be taken into consideration. In Mayor, for instance, Elizabeth-Jane grows from a baby to a married woman in the scope of the novel; we do not know how she dies. Susan Henchard is, arguably, a fallen woman because she has sex with Newsom out of wedlock after Michael sells her to Newsom. Susan's death is written into the novel; she, like Lucetta, exemplifies the trope of the literary fallen woman who dies. We must examine the trope of the death of the literary fallen woman in order to pinpoint internal influences (unrelated to characters' positions as fallen women) and external influences that prompted some<sup>18</sup> Victorian novelists to include the fallen woman's death.

Middle-class Victorian readers wanted the fallen woman to be ostracized from the community and ultimately to die because they were morally outraged; she rebelled against their sexual double standard, and for that they demanded not only her banishment but also her death. Publishers, in turn, wanted to satisfy their readers morally, so Victorian novelists, in seeking publication, were forced to have the fallen woman exiled and killed in order to satisfy middle-class readers and achieve publication. In this way, the middle-class influenced the Victorian novelist's artistic and linguistic decisions, and they used him to promote the fallen woman myth.

Although Hardy includes the fallen woman myth in both Mayor and Tess, it seems as if he was prompted by the values of middle-class readers to include Lucetta and Tess's deaths, since he would not have attained publication otherwise. Tess's death in particular seems to have offered Hardy the opportunity of holding a mirror up to middle-class readers' values, as if to say that although Tess is a pure woman because she was not an agent for her rape, she, as an

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<sup>18</sup> Gaskell's Ruth does not incorporate the fallen woman's death; rather, the fallen woman undergoes a lifetime of maternal devotion. In this way, some middle-class readers were satisfied because the fallen woman, in this way, sacrifices herself for her sins.

innocent victim, must die because of middle-class readers' values. Lucetta's death, while certainly influenced by middle-class readers' values, was also included because of her position as a minor character. Her fate was subject to the agenda Hardy had for other characters' fates: because Lucetta dies, Elizabeth-Jane is able to marry Farfrae. In this way, some fallen women's deaths were not only included because of the influence of middle-class readers' values, but also because the author sought to achieve a certain goal with the plot. In these ways, I do not think Hardy promoted the fallen woman myth of his own accord but was influenced by both outer circumstances and his own internal agendas to write in two fallen women's deaths.

I have revealed the linguistic frameworks – consisting of their potential linguistic decisions and their expected consequences – that Tess and Lucetta have for telling or not telling their husbands about their sexual pasts; however, the primary reason they do not foresee the consequences that occur exists on the metanarrative level. They do not know that they are characters in novels which have been written by a Victorian novelist who himself was controlled by middle-class readers. In this sense, Tess and Lucetta's frameworks are powerless against Victorian readers' moral outrage.

I intend for this thesis to encourage other scholars to trace the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the linguistic framework of the conventional factual and fictional fallen woman that I have outlined in this thesis. I also hope that more alternative frameworks, like Tess's, will be uncovered in other works of Victorian fiction. By breaking down Tess and Angel's confessions into their linguistic components, we can see more closely the means by which Angel uses the double standard to his advantage. In this way, the linguistic components of the confessions further reveal Bernstein and Shumaker's extension of Foucault's theory of the power play in the act of the confession, which includes the gender bias inherent in this scheme. This

thesis gives us a starting point for interpreting fallen woman fiction in terms of the fallen woman's linguistic choices. It also allows us to interpret confessions, including the fallen woman's confession, in terms of their linguistic components, which can reveal their underlying gender bias (if, in fact, a cross-gender confession is being analyzed). In this way, I further bridge the gap between linguistics and literature, as I hope future scholars will continue to do.

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