Paradoxes of intimacy in selected novels of Victorian and early twentieth century

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PARADOXES OF INTIMACY IN SELECTED NOVELS OF VICTORIAN AND EARLY
TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

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ABSTRACT

While markers of the passage from Victorian to early Twentieth-century novel abound, none is more pointed or insistent than human relationships. Marriage, one of the important human connections for social, emotional, and spiritual purposes, becomes the dominant theme of the novels of the period. This dissertation addresses intimacy and its paradoxical nature in marriages depicted in Victorian and early twentieth century novels. It explores how these novels depict marriage and intimacy, and the paradoxes surrounding intimacy that develop from those depictions. Three novels—George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871), Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of d’Urbervilles* (1891), and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)—span the period from mid-Victorian to early Twentieth century and unfold the nature of intimacy in the conjugal life of the characters and the paradoxes it entails: the failure of marital intimacy leads, in fact, to self-recognition and propels further changes in intimate as well as social relations.

Throughout the study, I look at different intimate relationships among married couples, tracing the characters’ behaviors, perceptions, and social expectations in a changing and developing society, especially in relation to female characters who, although seeing marriage in economic terms, marry for happiness as their primary goal to gain social and financial status. Marriage remains a standard social norm for the rest of the century.

The intimacy that I will discuss in this study is not the closeness and connection between two people; it is instead an intimacy that characters have with themselves due to the lack of the closeness and connectedness with others; during and after marriage, intimacy in their relationships becomes paradoxical. Though they lack intimacy due to inequality, distrust, uncertainty and misunderstanding, their lives are still intertwined. Despite the physical and
emotional attachment, intimacy involves knowledge and awareness of their personality and identity. In this respect, the characters’ failure to achieve intimacy with others ends up generating a productive self-understanding and self-recognition.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MM  Middlemarch

Tess  Tess of D’Urbervilles

MD  Mrs. Dalloway
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Whales are social creatures that travel in groups. They use a variety of noises with a certain frequency to communicate and socialize with each other. Meanwhile, scientists have come across a strange case. They discovered a certain whale that produces a much higher sound frequency than other whales of its kind. This causes other whales to fail to recognize his noise and therefore he ends up alone. Because of the inability of this whale to establish the proper communication, he cannot convey his messages. So, he always lives alone. Because of this feature, he has been forced to separate his path from the other whales. As a result, in addition to not having a mate, he is also deprived of an encounter with others. His loneliness and helplessness are results of his lack of communication language.

Like whales, humans are social beings who live together in communities. Their relationships often have a wide variety of meaning and may include many forms of contact between two individuals or two groups. It is possible for human beings to establish relationships in specific social, cultural, political and in environmental situations. Regardless of its type and position, human relationship is driven by communication and an action-reaction notably between the two parties in which each wants to transmit a need or a specific message to the other. Love, hatred, reconciliation, and anger are within the bounds of human relationships. Intimate conversations, as well as verbal conflicts, are forms of human connectiveness that occur in the family, work, and society; people share their feelings, opinions, beliefs, and life experiences with others. Therefore, communication gives value to human existence. Thus, people’s indifferences are reduced; and with a new and stronger spirit, they start working and living with a renewed
vitality.

Literary works have a very fundamental role in depicting the life of human beings and the way they interact with one another. Reading them gives a sense of living the experiences characters have in their relationships. While markers of the passage from Victorian to early Twentieth-century fiction abound, none is more pointed or insistent than human relationships. Marriage, being one of the important human connections, is an institution in which individuals are involved socially, emotionally, and spiritually; therefore, it becomes the dominant theme of the novels of their times. This study will investigate the paradoxes of intimacy in the Victorian and Early-Twentieth-Century Novels. It will also explore what it is that these novels reveal about marriage and intimacy. It will develop paradoxes of intimacy as they appear in the three selected novels clearly related to one another by virtue of theme and style. I will argue that the marriages presented in the given fictions show changes in the nature of intimacy influenced by the changes in individuals’ relationships to one another due to the social adjustments and shifts in different aspects.

Although some marriages produce no intimacy between the characters because of inequality, distrustfulness, uncertainty, misunderstanding, as well as unrealistic expectations, their lives are still intertwined according to social norms and traditions; but their connectedness and closeness lead to paradoxes that characters cannot avoid. Selected novels in this study demonstrate failed marriages as productive in a sense that show the complexity of the relationship between couples. The main point is that these marriages become valuable experiences for those women who reveal their mistakes and expectations, those who realize unrealistic anticipations from their marriages. Therefore, upon realizing their mistakes, they become more knowledgeable and conscious which help them develop a new personality and
identity for themselves; they become capable and daring women in a society dominated by man power.

Among other literary genres, novels are significant genres because they allow the studying and analyzing of characters that help us to reflect on the events and incidents in a given society, which are mostly hidden from the public eyes. By utilizing “exactly the kind of information that literature supplies,” we can understand the behavior of characters “to enter into their feelings, and to enrich our knowledge of ourselves and others through an understanding of their inner conflicts and relationships” (*Imagined Human Beings*, Paris xi-xii). The reason why I chose novels for my dissertation is based on the fact that, like plays, they reflect the nature of human beings and their relationships with themselves and others more than any other genres, and I am “drawn to novels… because of [my] human interest.” Despite the cultural differences, I was able to observe “an underlying similarity in human experience” (*Imagined Human Beings*, Paris xii), no matter where and when they occurred. The question that may appear in the readers’ minds would be why Victorian and Early twentieth century novels? The reason is that I studied Victorian literature in my undergraduate and part of graduate studies. As a part of the educational curriculum in the Kurdistan Regional\(^1\) colleges, I primarily taught Victorian novels in my home country. Most importantly, many aspects of the Victorian era correspond with Kurdish cultures and social norms, in which one can find so many similarities between the Victorian and the Kurdish\(^2\) norms and conventions, especially on issues related to marriage and women’s rights.

\(^1\) Most of the Kurds live in contiguous areas of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey—a somewhat loosely defined geographic region generally referred to as Kurdistan (“Land of the Kurds”). Kurdistan Region is a semi-autonomous part of Iraq located at the northern part of the country which has its own government, parliament and police; it is a part under the federal government of Iraq. (See *Encyclopedia Britannica*)

\(^2\) Between 25 and 35 million Kurds (Kurdish people) inhabit a mountainous region straddling the borders of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran and Armenia. They make up the fourth-largest ethnic group in the Middle East, but they have never obtained a permanent nation state. (See “Who Are the Kurds?” *BBC News*)
While reading a Victorian novel, I observed the issues and unfair behaviors toward women depicted in those novels; those issues were mainly caused by suppressing women’s rights and limiting their abilities that hinder them from expressing their sufferings and pains. In both cultures, inequality of women is inevitably visible. This caused me to address these issues, especially marriage and emotional connections among couples in this literary period that reflected my own cultural traits.

Many research and critiques have been conducted on the Victorian literature, which are mostly concerned about the various issues of women, social class, family problems, religion, morality etc. Nowadays, we see little interest in the Victorian novels because some people, ordinary and academic alike, think of them as old-fashioned, outdated, irrelevant to modern society, as well as many other reasons that justify their disinterestedness. But I thank Philip Davis who insistently attempts to convince us that reading Victorian literature would still be interesting. In *Why Victorian Literature Still Matters* (2017) he states:

> Do not read as if what you read is merely past: it only distances you… do not even try to think historically as soon as you open a Victorian novel: it will become an all-too-knowing substitute for the experience of actual reading. Don’t speak of the Victorians’ sentimentality – or of their emotional repression instead. Don’t tell yourself that the book is merely pious or plain hypocritical.” (1)

He is right; when readers think of the Victorian novels with these ideas in their mind, they would lose interest in the mysteries hidden between the lines of the narrations that might reveal extraordinary secrets about human life, their relationships, and their feelings and emotions. As Davis emphasizes, Victorian literature often leaves a great impression on those who are
interested in the relationship between literature and life, reading and thinking. The Victorian authors have a unique vision which is relevant to today’s readers and academics. Davis introduces Victorian literature separate from an established set of values, beliefs and perceptions: “Like ourselves, they wanted to map the brain, to try to see from outside what was happening within, and then use such external knowledge to modify the interrelations of the varying inner parts” (7). That is why the experience of Victorian literature is still significant.

While marriage is a significant part of Victorian novel plot, the structure of the novels in this study are different than other novels like Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. Marriage in *Sense and Sensibility*, for instance, is all about prosperity and achieving social position and less about love and feelings. However, marriage in most of Victorian novels was represented as a business and vocation for women. Women in need of economic and financial support had to marry a man of fortune to have a reasonable life and support. In fact, “the idea of marriage being less about one’s heart and more about one’s wallet is repeated throughout the story” (Hall, 2020). What George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and Virginia Woolf explore in their novels differ from the conventional marriage. The main female characters’ purpose for marriage is not economic; they marry for a better reason: to help them develop their personality, to become women who can survive alone on their own in the patriarchal society. These writers reveal the failed marriages and give the reader the chance to think about the reason for that. The failure is clearly because those women do not follow the social conventions and standards, and do not accept being captivated within the matrimony and just serve their husbands. They need something more important than just being an obedient woman at home. A character like Dorothea wants to be educated and become a capable woman who can make the world a better place for herself and other women; Clarissa wants to have her own space and
Historically, socially, and politically, the Victorian era was a great period in which many changes and reforms took place. People’s thoughts and ideas on different aspects of life had changed; thus, in turn it became the milestone for new and modern changes in literature, and many other phases of society. Writers like George Eliot and Thomas Hardy put their upmost efforts into their writings in order to make substantial differences in their fields; realism in their writings influenced many people and encouraged them to think about life and society, showing them the private lives of people who were unknown to the public. Eventually, it turned out that they provided great literary and social legacies for the next generations. Virginia Woolf, the well-known modernist writer, was one of the few novelists who invented new forms of writing and subject matter by utilizing the stream of consciousness technique in her novels, and mostly focused on various personal relationships in a new way. Due to social changes in the Victorian era, which continued into the twentieth century and onward, many social rules and norms had changed; marriage, even though it took different forms, remained as a standard social norm and a criterion for the rest of the century, which was clearly portrayed in Woolf’s novels as well as in the writings of her contemporaries.

Covering the periods from Victorian to early Twentieth century, the objectives of the study are to explore the changes in marital relationships, and to trace the continuity or discontinuity of the culture in relationship to the concept of marriage, intimacy, and emotional closeness. Scholars researched and critiqued the social norms and conventions of the time. The core of their criticism emphasized the question of women and their roles and positions in the patriarchal society; in some ways they admitted the inequality of men and women by reflecting it in their writings. However, they overlooked or failed to investigate the concept of intimacy and
its paradoxes in both nineteenth and early twentieth-century novels. This study attempts to investigate the role of intimacy, as well as the consequences of its deficiency or the absence of closeness in marital relationships that determine the success or failure of marriage.

The selected authors’ focus was on women’s relationship with themselves and others, and how they perceived the idea of marriage in general. Women’s issues became major advocacy points for them, and the issues of love and emotional intimacy were intimately interconnected with the predominant social perception towards marriage. More importantly, as the disclosure of the women’s inequalities came to light, women realized the significance of matters concerning marriage and intimacy.

Historically speaking, women in nineteenth century were known as “the domestic ideals,” as Francoise Basch (1974) suggested. Marriage was considered “no return;” “domestic and family ideal;” “amenable and disciplined vision of human relations.” In the hegemony of marriage, as Basch stated, women were the only victim. They were mostly depicted as ‘caricatured or idealized figures’ in early Victorian fictions, and at any level they were “simplified, and seem to conform to a few stereotypes inspired by a tyrannical and narrow idea of the woman in the home” (viii). A woman was an ideal just in her wife-mother position but not as an individual. She was considered the “Angel in the House,” as indicated in the title of Coventry Patmore's long narrative poem (1854), and woman’s isolation rested on the public view of woman as physically weaker and inferior to man; the more obedient they were the more suitable they were for their position in the domestic sphere. Marriage was an intimate part of Victorian fiction because women’s life depended on marrying a man of the same or a better social status and to be good wives and mothers. Very few marriages started with love, but a woman’s life was not complete without being married. Concerning the inconsistency of
marriage, in a letter to her eldest daughter Queen Victoria comments:

All marriage is such a lottery—the happiness is always an exchange—though it may be a very happy one—still the poor woman is bodily and morally the husband’s slave. That always sticks in my throat. When I think of a merry, happy, free young girl—and look at the ailing, aching state a young wife generally is doomed to—which you can’t deny is the penalty of marriage. (Palmer)

This indicates that in the nineteenth century, marriage as an important social institution and family organization became the source of troubles and issues for women who sought for a stable social status in a patriarchal society; they married and eventually suffered, and consequently became the victim of an unequal relationship. The lack of closeness and enjoyment was evident in the passage, despite the fact that it was a conditional form of relationship that intertwined their lives artificially.

Jenni Calder (1976) remarked that “life in society, beyond the influence of the family, is artificial and corrupt.” Family was important for Victorians and women within the family were committed to the domestic duty by which “true moral happiness [lay] in [its] quiet performance” (12). Home was “a haven isolated from the trials and temptations of the ‘real’ world outside” (13), a place that they ought to be because they were not trusted in the outside world. Even if the Victorian society regarded them as ‘moral guardians’ this strength was clearly not enough safety in itself from society’s dangers and hazards. Calder believed: “Just as it lies in the nature of women to be morally weak, it lies in the nature of fashionable society to be dishonest, artificial and destructive” (13). She claimed that threads and issues of marriage almost all came from this area. The role of society, however, should not be overlooked. The patriarchal nature of Victorian
society failed woman, though ‘quiescent, ambitious, peculiar,’ and such a situation made marriage and consequently intimate relationships important and interesting in Victorian fiction. In early and late Victorian fiction, women writers attempted to show the challenges women faced as they searched for their own identity and independence.

However, due to the failure of social institutions, marriage became significantly “the proper ambition for well-bred young ladies” and their only “safe refuge” (Calder 17). Beside this safe refuge, they felt submissive and dependent which caused many more complex situations. The complexity of women’s status entailed two factors: on the one hand, they married to find a safe haven where they could be protected, and on the other hand, they wanted equality and freedom in their relationship with men. They thought that having equal rights would give both parties more happiness, and they believed intimacy and connectedness in relationships could only be built on equality, freedom, and independence.

The social and political changes that Victorian and Twentieth-century novelists observed caused them to write about marriage in different ways. Their focus was not on marriage itself, but on what happened among characters in their marital relationships; different aspects of marriage were addressed, and they depicted female figures as the ones who, for achieving their equal rights, stood against the social norms and conventions which limited their power and ability. Undoubtedly, many critics emphasized the theme of marriage and its reason for failure or success, but little attention was paid to the concept of intimacy and its paradoxes within matrimonial situations in Victorian and early twentieth-century novels. Although intimacy was considered an important aspect of human relationships, it was not discussed adequately and even overlooked by critics. Exploring the concept of intimacy in the selected novels in question will give a historical background on how intimacy was perceived and what differences or similarities
one can observe from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Tracing different aspects of
the concept will help better understand human relationships on the one hand, and the other hand
use it as a criterion for measuring the level of success or failure in the marital bond.

Considering human needs, we realize that most human needs can be met by the person or
persons with whom we interact. When we marry someone our existential needs, the continuity of
our generation, and our security are met. With marriage, the concept of home is formed, and we
reach peace and tranquility; as an innate quality, we pass on our emotions, feelings, joys, and
anxieties to our loved ones; we introduce ourselves to them by participating in society and
interacting with various individuals, so that they get to know us. As a result of these meaningful
connections, human beings are recognized; thus, we can assume that human needs can be met by
human relationships.

Human relationships are achieved when the parties can reap the benefits that come from
each person's relationship with another in order to survive. Anything that is in accordance with
human nature and contributes to its survival and growth is useful and beneficial. Relationships
that meet the physical, social, psychological, and spiritual needs of human beings are valuable
for they can facilitate the continuation of life. Healthy human relationships also provide the
grounds for motivation, growth, purpose, satisfaction, mutual understanding, and trust. These
results ensure positive signs of life, each of which is effective in creating the next positive state.

If we have ever accepted that the source of human behavior is to meet one’s needs, then
we must accept that people's differences are the basis of differences in their needs. If human
beings are forced to establish relationships to meet their needs, then relationships will be more
sustainable when they are more compatible with these differences. The basis of human relations
is the emergence of behaviors that are of interest to the other party, and one considers those behaviors in order to meet one’s needs. For this reason, understanding and accepting individual differences, and even those that are not necessarily unique to our wants and needs, is the foundation of human relationships.

In fact, one of the most fundamental aspects of human relationships is to introduce oneself to others. How can one introduce oneself to others if one does not know oneself and understand one's personality traits? Self-knowledge and self-openness allow us to get to know ourselves better by knowing and valuing others; the better we know ourselves, the better we know others, and with self-knowledge we can build a healthy and strong relationship. When we establish intimate relationships with others, we get involved in a developmental process in which we can cultivate our personality and the personality of others as well.

Intimacy is a commonly used term all over the world, and people measure the level of success or failure of their relationships based on its existence or its absence, respectively. Intimacy is an inevitable part of any relationship that is established based on love and understanding, which becomes a way of self-recognition and self-knowledge that eventually supports personal growth. Intimacy is obviously the key element of the sustainability and stability of any mutual bond. It underscores human beings as social creatures and guarantees the continuum of their relationships, and eventually their lives. As a new concept, intimacy has a close association with individuals and their privacy in relation to their emotions and feelings. In social relationships, and marriage being one of the major ones, intimacy plays a vital role in keeping people physically, socially, and more importantly, emotionally connected. However, it is hard to give a unified definition of the term because it entails many different aspects and perception in various relationships. If someone is asked to define intimacy, one may know the
meaning but at the same time possibly be unable to define it in an accurate and precise way.

The term ‘intimacy’ is generally defined as a close interpersonal relationship or feeling of nearness, both physically and emotionally. It denotes “the state of having a close personal relationship with someone;” “a thing that a person says or does to someone that they know very well;” “sexual activity, especially an act of sexual intercourse.”

Moreover, Debra Mashek (2004) suggests that “closeness and intimacy [are] a core theme in relationship science that is currently extraordinarily lively in a variety of disciplines, including social psychology, family studies, clinical psychology, communication studies, and developmental psychology” (ix). It is difficult to determine the forms of intimacy that people involve themselves in; according to MD. Muniruzzaman (2017), intimacy is classified in four types: physical, emotional, cognitive and experiential. “Physical intimacy is sensual proximity or touching, examples include being inside someone’s personal space, holding hands, hugging, kissing, petting and other sexual activity. Emotional intimacy, particularly in sexual relationships, typically develops after a certain level of trust has been reached and personal bonds have been established. Cognitive or intellectual intimacy takes place when two people exchange thoughts, share ideas and enjoy similarities and differences between their opinions... Experiential intimacy is when two people get together to actively involve themselves with each other, probably saying very little to each other, not sharing any thoughts or many feelings, but being involved in mutual activities with one another” (2).

However, though intimacy denotes closeness, according to Anthony Giddens (1992) it can be “oppressive, and clearly this may be so if it is regarded as a demand for constant emotional closeness” (3). Couples in a marital relationship are connected socially, legally, and

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3 https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/intimacy
physically; but they may not feel intimate in terms of emotional and spiritual bonds, and there is no guarantee that the marriage will attain intimacy for the married couples. What this suggests is that intimacy can be considered both as a connectiveness, and a destructive power which may result in numerous paradoxes. Regarding the importance of intimate relationships for human beings, Robert Firestone states:

Interpersonal relationships are the ultimate source of happiness or misery; love has the potential to generate intense pleasure and fulfillment or produce considerable pain and suffering. Our basic sense of self is formed originally in a relationship constellation that predisposes our attitudes toward ourselves, others, and the world at large. Our feelings about life are developed in the context of a close attachment with a parent, parents, or other significant people in the early years. Research studies have shown that these early attachments create feelings of wholeness and security or states of anxiety and insecurity that can persist for a lifetime (13).

Whether paradoxical, or giving pleasure or pain, intimacy is a necessary element in the development of human life, and it is an inevitable part that cannot be avoided. Giving a literature review on the term and its context will be helpful in the understanding of the concept.

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*Intimate Behaviour* by Desmond Morris appeared to be one of the first books on intimacy published in 1971. Morris in his book referred to intimacy as a concept that has been considered as an indispensable aspect of friendship and family relationships. Therefore, he focused on it as a separate matter. For him, the roots of intimacy went back to childhood, to the mother’s loving
attention, which he called “primary intimacies of direct body contact” (28). Contrasting sexual and social intimacies, Morris argued

To study human sexual intimacy is to witness the rebirth of lavish bodily contact between adults, replacing the lost intimacies of infancy. To study human social intimacy is, by contrast, to observe the restraint of cautious, inhibited contact, as the conflicting demands of closeness and privacy, of dependence and independence, do battle inside our brains. (103)

Social connection with other humans is associated, as Morris claimed, with “being understood emotionally” not “rationally or intellectually.” For him, “a single intimate body contact” is better than any connections, and “physical feelings … transmit emotional feelings” which in turn lead to a “powerful social bonding” (104).

In Sexual Intimacy (1973), Andrew Greeley approached the concept of closeness in a different way. He believed sexuality to be the core of all human relationships; “the more intimate they are, the more sexual they become.” Sexuality for him was exchange, as “a rhythm of giving and receiving, of taking and being taken.” Concerning marital relationships, he claimed that they are special types of ‘sexual intimacy.’ According to him, marriage is “the most difficult but also the most rewarding form of intimacy” (12). He also defined friendship as an “intimate relationship between two human beings in which both become sufficiently open to one another that they are able, at least to some extent, to put aside their fears and suspicions and enjoy the pains and the pleasures of vulnerability” (17).

Years later, Martin Fisher and George Stricker in their book Intimacy (1982) defined intimacy as a complex and difficult concept that has created a variety of explanations, concepts,
and viewpoints over the years. Fisher and Stricker related intimacy to individuals’ achievement of full self-knowledge, which was associated with his or her feelings and wishes. They argued that an intimate relationship happens when one willingly shares his or her feelings and wishes with another person. They considered self-disclosure as a significant aspect of intimacy. They also asserted that “intimacy is seen as the product of an interaction, and can only occur between people. Each one is able to touch something meaningful in the other, whether at a conscious, behavioral level or an unconscious and inferential level” (xi).

In *Love as Passion* (1986), Niklas Luhmann emphasized the differences between individuals and their environments. He believed that as a result of the individual persons’ differences, there is a possibility for the formation of many complex worlds in society; therefore, “The need for a world that is still understandable, intimate and close… stems from this, a world which one can, furthermore, learn to make one's own” (15-16). As he pointed out, there is a contradiction between the process of ‘individualization’ and the necessity of an intimate world; if one wants to find intimacy, and “in order for a commonly shared private world to become a differentiated entity, each person must be able to lend his support to the world of the other… he appears in the other person's world as the one who is loved” (16-17). For Luhmann, love is an important aspect that plays a great role in modern intimate relationships, which is different from the intimacy that is mostly assumed to be connected to sexuality and physical closeness.

Later, Anthony Giddens in his well-known book, *Transformation of Intimacy* (1992) mentioned that for some people establishing a ‘constant emotional closeness’ with others in modern societies was hard because it might be ‘oppressive.’ However, he defined intimacy as ‘a transactional negotiation of personal ties by equals.’ He stated
Intimacy implies a wholesale democratising of the interpersonal domain… The transformation of intimacy might be a subversive influence upon modern institutions as a whole. For a social world in which emotional fulfilment replaced the maximising of economic growth would be very different from that which we know at present. The changes now affecting sexuality are indeed revolutionary, and in a very profound way. (3)

He introduced the term ‘pure relationship’ as an emotional bond that has nothing to do with sexuality, which was established “for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another” (58). Giddens related the transformation of intimacy to the revolutionary changes in perceiving sexuality in modern societies. He believed that sexuality was a creation of modernity and played a great role in the establishment of modern intimate relationships. These changes, as Giddens suggested, made possible relationships that presumed sexual and emotional equality. Along with personality changes, the necessity of self-development and self-recognition became important aspects of individualization. The emergence of the self and the importance of the individual, for him, were interconnected with the continuation of love. He suggests that “clear boundaries within a relationship are obviously important for confluent love and the sustaining of intimacy” (94).

*Identity and Intimacy in Marriage: A Study of Couples* (1990) is another book about the concept of closeness. Susan Krauss Whitbourne and Joyce B. Ebmeyer in one of their chapters entitled “Perspectives on Intimacy” emphasized that “close relationships penetrate into the depths of our own innermost beings” and “intimate relationships in marriage are vital products of the identities of the two individuals who make up that relationship” (1). For them, identity in marital relationships consisted of two processes: identity assimilation which enables individuals
to preserve their “particular view of the self;” and identity accommodation which is a process through which individuals “change their identities” to cope with the experiences (3). They emphasized that the spouse identity composed of three elements: “views of the self as an intimate person, models of intimate relationships, and views of the partner in one's actual relationship.” Significantly, an intimate person perceives oneself “as able to share and express feelings of tenderness, able to resolve conflicts, and able to negotiate issues of control… [and] the perceptions of the partner's potential for intimacy” (3). Therefore, individuals in intimate relationships either transform experiences to “minimize[] the implications of differences” with their partners or accommodate “in order to restore balance” in their relationships (4).

*Privacy, Intimacy, and Isolation* (1992) by Julie C. Inness covers privacy as a diverse concept and as the core of intimacy. Inness claimed that “intimacy is not a feature of behavior” and she refused the behavior-based classification of intimacy because “behavior is clearly not intrinsically intimate.” She asserted that “intimacy claims are claims about the motivations of persons, not the nature of actions,” since “privacy claims are claims to possess autonomy with respect to the expression of love, liking, and care” (10). ‘Motivation-dependent content’ identifies intimate decisions; by characterizing an act or activity as intimate, according to Inness, the agent claims that “it draws its meaning and value from her love, liking, or care.” In this case, this decision involves a choice on the agent’s part about how to (or not to) embody her love, liking, or care” (74-75).

In *Attachment, Intimacy, Autonomy: Using Attachment Theory in Adult Psychotherapy* (1996), which focuses on the attachment theory and its relationship with intimacy, Jeremy Holmes emphasized that there is a radical difference between intimacy and attachment. Although attachment is essential in relationships, it is not “sufficient condition” for intimate relationship;
too much of it “inhibits intimacy no less than the reverse.” Intimacy, instead, “is based on intersubjectivity, the knowledge that one has a mind like that of others, particularly one’s intimates” (16). As Holmes asserted, autonomy and intimacy are mutually linked and apparently are paradoxical, as autonomy [is] based on intimacy and intimacy [is] a prerequisite for autonomy. “Autonomy is possible on the basis of a secure inner world… Conversely, intimacy is possible if the loved one can be allowed to be separate” (19).

Robert Firestone, who was also concerned about intimacy and its effects on human relations, focused on love and its negative/positive effects. In Fear of Intimacy (1999), Firestone suggested that the closeness that love brings about is fearful. He stated: “Being close to another in a loving relationship makes one aware that life is precious but must eventually be surrendered.” (5). This paradoxical nature of love and closeness is the reason why individuals avoid being in love with others, because it requires one to change her/himself in order to experience a mutual connection with another person. Firestone called human relationships emotional investments; they are ambiguous because they “foster pain and grief as joy and pleasure” (15). For him, intimacy and love are most desirable, but many individuals cannot tolerate them. Personal traits such as ‘fantasy,’ ‘self-nurturance,’ and ‘inwardness’ are closely related to individuals’ withdrawal from intimate bonds. The lack of individuation, according to Firestone, prevents individuals from expanding and sustaining intimate relationships (49).

Jane Ridley argued that the success of an intimate relationship relies on the understanding of the “opposite sex’s intimacy needs;” otherwise, it can lead to failure. In her book, Intimacy in Crisis (1999), she claimed that intimacy has different meaning for men and women in terms of “physical and biological makeup,” as well as “gender differences in resources, needs and perspectives.” This means that “each gender seeks different satisfactions and responses from
their intimate long-term relationship with a member of the opposite sex.” As a result, if “each
gender’s different intimacy needs are recognised and respected they add depth and resilience to a
long-term relationship” (3). Ridley asserted that intimate relationship can be achieved if it is
considered as a “developmental process… in which the needs of the woman and man are
recognised, respected and responded to within these areas” (6).

In The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family (2000) Karen Chase
and Michael Levenson saw intimacy as a paradox, and emphasized on its impacts on Victorian
culture. They explored the importance of the family, and they indicated “The first, most intimate,
and perhaps most important community, is the FAMILY, not considered as the children of one
parent, but as the persons under one head” (4). The book emphasized “public opinion of privacy”
and how this aspect of privacy was handled in Victorian culture. At that time, as Chase and
Levenson asserted, “[t]he congregation of families in their sacred separate spaces was identified
as the paradoxical foundation of sociality. The delight in being happily apart offered itself as the
basis of community” (8). Therefore, the authors’ concern was to show the failure of the domestic
life; the virtues, pleasure and privacy of the family was publicized which transformed intimacy
into a spectacle.

Intimacy and Alienation: Memory, Trauma and Personal Being (2000) focused on the
self, self-knowledge, and the experience of intimacy and alienation. For Russell Meares intimacy
“depends upon the development of inner experience, which can be shared with another.”
Interestingly, Meares argued that self and intimacy are interrelated, and both depend upon a
“particular kind of memory of the past images;” an intimate conversation, he believed, “is
associated with a heightened feeling of being ‘myself’” (2). Concerning intimacy and alienation,
he asserted that “The attitude of ‘foreignness’, which treats the world as object, emphasizes logic
and tends towards monism. “Intimacy’, on the other hand, involves an empathic attitude, in which one stands within that which is to be understood.” Implicating ‘pluralism,’ intimacy give the notion that the world is a ‘community of selves’” (29). Meares also argued that to differentiate intimacy from sexuality is necessary; not necessarily all sexual relationships are intimate, or all intimate relationships are sexual. Among different forms of ‘pair-bonding,’ intimacy is the most delicate one. “People whose development has been disrupted, probably “have a failure in the sphere of intimacy, living out a relationship of alienation and isolation with a marital partner with whom, nevertheless, sexual relations are maintained. They live in relationships characterised by non-intimate attachment” (30).

Moreover, in Intimacy: Trusting Oneself and the Other (2001) Osho explained how people need intimacy and yet paradoxically they are afraid of being intimate with others. The fear is due to lack of self-knowledge, since being connected to others needs trust in oneself then in others. He asserted that closeness with others needs one to find intimacy with him/herself first. According to Osho “When two lovers are really open to each other, when they are not afraid of each other and not hiding anything from each other, that is intimacy. When they can say each and everything without any fear that the other will be offended or hurt… If the lover thinks the other will be offended, then the intimacy is not yet deep enough” (36). Therefore, intimacy is totally different from sexuality. It is, for him, “allowing the other to come into you, to see you as you see yourself” (37); he believed that intimacy disappeared from modern life. So did Anthony Giddens.

In Modern Love: Romance, Intimacy, and the Marriage Crisis (2003), by introducing a new language of love, David Shumway argued that over the course of twentieth century, intimacy coexisted with the earlier language of “romance.” Considering romance as an illusion,
Shumway contended that intimacy represents the truth about love and relationships. He emphasized the role of intimacy in marriage relationships, which “designates both a process and a goal, the particular kinds of interaction that typify marital relationships and the closeness that successful interaction is said to produce.” Regarding intimacy, he quoted Klagsbrun who claimed that “without it, inside as well as outside marriage, there is loneliness” (141). Shumway declared that intimacy includes some or all aspects of friendship, romance, passion, and sexuality but it is none of them. Most importantly, according to him “intimacy is [not] the only need that individuals experience in relationships. They also experience the need for autonomy” (145).

Jane Adams in her innovative and interesting book, *Boundary Issues: Using Boundary Intelligence to Get the Intimacy You Want...* (2005) emphasized the concept of boundary intelligence, which, for her, balances intimacy and autonomy in any relationship. By showing the way people should manage their psychological boundaries, she explained how people struggle with paradoxes of human relationship; they want to be both separate and connected, be intimate and autonomous, while they sustain their own self. “We can recognize when we need to vary or adapt our boundary style to tone down tension or conflict, increase intimacy and connection, and protect and nurture the self” (9).

In *Before Intimacy: Asocial Sexuality in Early Modern England* (2006) the main focus is the distinction between sexuality and intimacy. Daniel Juan Gil argued that “the early modern sex-gender system lacks the notion of intimacy.” Calling intimacy as a special class of interpersonal relationships, he suggested that “In modern societies sexuality has a policed but nonetheless sanctioned place as a privileged and highly valued experience” (x). He also argued that the modern social formation “set intimacy and sexuality apart from conventional modes of sociability and the whole bundle of social relations” (xi), and sexuality was an alternative to
intimacy. He defined intimate relationships as important aspect of human life which “are designed to mediate between individuals who have disparate experiences of the world and who value these disparate experiences as a source of personal identity.” For him, intimacy is communication about personalities, and is “the hallmark of a modern notion of private life that nourishes a personality that people value as the essence of who they are” (2). By referring to the conditions of intimacy in Luhmann’s *Love as Passion*, he asserted that people might not have “a stable social identity outside of something like a personality, and their personalities depend on recognition and affirmation by other persons.” (109). Therefore, intimacy with others determines human personality.

Similarly, Steen Halling addressed the strength and complexity of human intimate relationships, especially those moments when people come to see themselves and the others differently. *Intimacy, Transcendence, and Psychology: Closeness and Openness in Everyday Life* (2008) emphasized that, people in relation with others realize their capability of openness and wholeness (3). The author defined the complex human relationships: “We go to great lengths to protect ourselves by hiding from others (and from ourselves) many of our deepest thoughts, feelings, and inclinations… we also keep an eye out for someone who might care about us and value our point of view;” also present ourselves to others and see them in their “depth and complexity is another side of the experience” (15). Our intimacy experiences with others are deeply personal, and at the same time, according to Halling, are acknowledgement of the “cognitive development” (20). Within the context of being listened—which makes us to feel valuable by another person—gives “the possibility of an experience of a deep personal relationship with the listener” (22).

(2009) is a book that covers the topic of interpersonal relationships and their impacts on the personality of individuals. In his book, Bennett W. Helm claimed that “what is needed is to understand friendship as a relationship that involves some form of significant interaction… that stem from their love and that foster a distinctive kind of intimacy between the friends” (5). However, in dealing with intimacy, he explained that intimate concerns such as love should be contrasted from non-intimate concerns like compassion. “Both love and compassion are directed at particular persons and involve a concern for their well-being as such,” (9) and therefore, intimacy “requires incorporating [one’s] well-being into your own” (10).

Also, John G. McGraw in *Personality Disorders and States of Aloneness* (2012) emphasized personality and its association with intimacy and loneliness. He argued that intimate connections constitute human personalities; for him, “personality abnormality” is mostly caused by the lack of ‘shared inwardness’ which in turn leads to loneliness (155).

Ziyad Marar emphasized that contemporary society and its technological revolution allowed to replace real intimacy and face-to-face relationships with ‘simulation,’ which he called “only connect”. In *Intimacy: Understanding the Subtle Power of Human Connection* (2012), he asserted that intimacy “is elusive, subtle and often short-lived even when found” (2). The important thing is that it is paradoxical since we like connecting with others “without losing our autonomy and to express our freedom without being isolated” (6). Marar believed that there is always a fear involved in seeking a close familiar relationship, which is the fear of rejection, humiliation, shame, and the unsettling sense of its being impossible to achieve intimacy. However, with all its fluctuations, intimacy remains a necessity for human beings since we are social creatures. In this regard, intimacy for Marar has four characteristics: *reciprocal*, *conspiratorial*, *emotional*, and *kind*. Most importantly, the most successful intimate relationships
entail “at once together and separate and aware, and fundamentally reciprocal… [t]he private work of intimacy demands a reassertion of one’s uniqueness, all the more so for it to be understood by the other, rather than translated into groupthink” (60).

Nancy Yousef, the author of the book *Romantic Intimacy* (2013) is concerned with human close relationships. She asserted: “Intimacy designates the sphere of the inmost, of the private, and also the realm of cherished connection and association” (1). For her, it involves a disclosure of thoughts, feelings, and experiences among individuals who are intimately connected as they wish for “an inward region of irreducible privacy;” but this also “crystallizes a tension between sharing and enclosing as opposed imaginations of relational possibilities” (1) which reveals the paradoxical nature of intimacy. Thus, she defined intimacy as a term that “is meant to evoke the persistent tension between a confidence in the possibility of knowing and being known by others and an implicit commitment to existential privacy that is characteristic of these two discourses” (2). Intimacy, according to her, involves feeling for and with another, at the same time reveals emotional “expectations and disappointments” which include “aversion to self-abasing admiration,” “gratitude to resentment,” “frustration to fascination.” All these emotions and feelings do not necessarily involve “mutuality” or “reciprocity,” but they certainly must be taken into consideration in intimate relationships. (2-3). She emphasized the paradox of intimacy since it designates “solitary inwardness and interpersonal exposure” in a sense that people live alone but among others. (4)

In a similar way, Warren S. Poland focused on the paradoxes of intimacy. In his book *Intimacy and Separateness in Psychoanalysis* (2018), he attempted to explore the mystery of “the connection between self-definition and the fabric of human interconnectedness” (15). He believed that individuals live independently and live with others in order to maintain their self: “Only with
separateness can true intimacy grow, and only within the fabric of others can true individuality exist” (2). He also claimed: “To be an individual is to be sensitive to relationships, to be ever caught in the conflicting pressures for intimacy and separateness” (159).

In general, to summarize the ideas about intimacy, all the selected scholars had their own, or similar, perception of the term intimacy and they all pondered it differently. They defined it in accordance with context or other related phenomena that make it more complicated and paradoxical experience in which the prospective partners become involved. However, most of them believed in the complications that intimacy brings about. Some scholars like Morris and Greeley as the pioneer researchers of the concept of intimacy and closeness believed that intimacy was associated with sexuality and physical connection; for them intimacy was a process of giving and taking, through which both parties could be open and intimate with one another. Sexual intimacy for them is the direct physical contact that has less of a connection with the individuals’ emotional attachment.

Later scholars, who observed the changes in the social system and its impacts on human relationships, asserted that intimacy concerned sharing thoughts and feelings among intimates. Firestone and Osho were concerned about the fear of individuals in choosing their relationships; the people involved were scared of being rejected or discomforted at being subject to sharing their thoughts with others. On the other hand, Holmes, Adams, Marar, Shumway, and Yousef focused on the relation between intimacy and autonomy. Despite those who believed in the change in one’s personality to cope with others, they believed that intimate attachments did not involve submission of one to another in order to make a close attachment; instead, they claimed that both sides should keep their autonomous individuality in their relationship to make a more reliable and comfortable bond.
More importantly, intimacy for Giddens, Mears, and McGraw was the process in which self-development, self-recognition, and acknowledgment of cognitive growth were significant elements. When someone gets close to someone else in an intimate relationship, each has a chance to develop his or her personality. As they find an emotionally intimate relationship, it becomes a critical element in their emotional happiness. It gives them a more meaningful and valuable life experience. Intimacy is also closely associated with human identity as Whitbourne, Gil, Helm believed. Therefore, in human relationships intimacy is a key to having a practical, strong, and joyful life.

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Literary works as the advocates of the social lives of a given period can reveal similar or complicated understandings of the nature of intimate relationships. The significance of intimacy in human connections and its exploration in literary works have been overlooked. Not much research has been done in this area, especially in the novels of the Victorian and early twentieth century. Investigating the concept of intimacy in selected novels of these periods is the focus of this study. The main concern in the novels of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and Virginia Woolf is that marriage produces no intimacy and closeness; instead of bringing characters together they end up, whether intentionally or unintentionally, with a sense of alienation and loneliness within their conjugal relationship. This strangeness and distance allow characters, especially females, to have a sense of appraising their mistakes and errors, and eventually understanding their innermost sense of their ‘selves.’ The paradox that is worth exploring is that though marriage does not create connectedness with their partners, characters feel close and intimate with themselves with a degree of self-knowledge that helps them live independently and freely. All these will be investigated in the selected novels in question.
Intimate relationships are articulated powerfully in the novels of Eliot, Hardy, and Woolf. These three novelists, spanning the period from mid-Victorian to early Twentieth century, unfold the intimate relationships in the conjugal life of various characters in a yet further distinction, each in his or her own words. To explore intimacy and its paradoxical nature, I am looking at different intimate relationships, which postulate different questions about intimacy and marriage. Some of the important questions that will be addressed are: what is the importance of intimacy in marriage? Without intimacy, can a marriage continue? How does it affect couples to develop their personality and self? What are the obstacles for men and women in seeking closeness in their relationships? During marriage, do couples lack the sense of freedom?

To illuminate my theory of intimacy I have chosen the following fictions: George Eliot’s *Middlemarch (1871)*, Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of d’Urbervilles (1891)*, and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway (1925)*. Throughout the study, I will explore the marital relationships of couples, tracing their behaviors, perceptions, and social expectations in a changing and developing society, as well as the influence of marriage on their relationship with others and with themselves. The intimacy that I discuss in this study is not the closeness and connection between two people; it is instead the intimacy that characters have with themselves, because they lack the closeness and connectedness with others, a lack which in turn produces self-consciousness and self-knowledge. The paradox is that this failure of intimacy with others ends up producing a kind of self-knowledge, meaning it is, in some sense, productive, though not in the way originally intended. Scenes of intimate relationships are mostly missing in the novels in question and the marriages are failed. Authors of the novels try to reveal the issues of intimacy and the way it is defined in different periods of time, which eventually shows associated issues and aspects. For this purpose, I structured this study into five chapters.
The first chapter contextualizes the subject. The following three chapters are organized chronologically, each of which focuses on a period between early Victorian to the early twentieth century. Each chapter covers a novel with a close exploration of themes of marriage and intimacy and tries to answer some questions related to the subject.

Chapter two looks at the paradoxes of intimacy in *Middlemarch* in the early Victorian period. It explores the nature of intimate relationships portrayed by Eliot to criticize the social and common views on human relationships of the time. *Middlemarch* is all about starting the marriage and the way characters perceive intimacy in their marital life. There are some important questions to be answered in this chapter: Is marriage still a safe haven for women? Do women seek their self within the marriage, or do they lose it in order to save their marriage? What is the relation of intimacy to education and intellect? Why do women attempt to educate themselves? What are the social, personal, political, or religious factors that affect the way women or men perceive marriage and intimacy?

The third chapter, about Hardy’s *Tess*, gives a different perspective on intimacy in relation to the idea of violence and idealization. In *Tess*, the focus is on a pre-marriage relationship leading to a marriage which results in violence, both physically and emotionally. The important questions are: What are the relations of intimacy to human emotions, feelings, and mind? Is intimacy a question of mutuality, reciprocity, or separateness? Is the propensity for intimacy sexual or emotional? Why do unemotional relationships lead to violence?

The fourth chapter, covering the early modern period, focuses on the paradoxes of intimacy in *Mrs. Dalloway*, which in its own unique way discovers the connection and alienation of the main character in her marriage. *Mrs. Dalloway* portrays characters who are already
married, and by going back and forth in the narration it attempts to show the nature of the marriage and what happens in it. The following questions and many others will be answered: Is it closeness or separateness that comforts individuals within an intimate relationship? What are the individuals’ questions about life and identity? What are the problems and obstacles with the experience and expectations from intimate relationships? What were social or cultural obstacles in establishing an intimate relationship? Does intimacy get individuals closer to or separate from one another? Does intimacy mean to be obedient or free?

The final chapter summarizes and reflects on the research to state the answers to the main research question. It also includes some recommendations for future research on the topic.
George Eliot was one of the most extraordinary novelists of the Victorian period. She diligently studied various complex relationships that existed in the social climate of the nineteenth century. She dealt with the pressures of the Victorian society and its various customs that profoundly influenced the lives of individuals, particularly females. She also illustrated how they responded to those conventions. The connection between marriage and intimacy, and the given characters’ perceptions were well depicted in her novel, *Middlemarch*. In this chapter I examine the social and personal views about marriage and the paradoxical nature of intimacy represented in various marital relationships. I assess that Eliot’s portrayal of marriage was based on the fact that the failure of marriages often resulted from the idealization and the fantasies of the given characters who perceive marriage as a means of fulfilling their needs beyond social expectations. Those characters challenged the social conventions, and their unrealistic expectations that eventually brought about paradoxes in their relationships. For this purpose, I analyze various marital relationships and the characters’ definition of marriage and intimacy in order to get an understanding of the concept on both personal and social levels.

In his book *Rereading George Eliot*, Bernard J. Paris (2003) presented his new perspective on Eliot’s novels and eventually her ideas, recognizing at the same time that “the characters she celebrates as frustrated, self-alienated individuals, beset by inner conflicts. Their living for others is often a defense against despair.” Paris came to understand that “the highest good was not living for others but self-actualization” (12). The change in Paris’s attitude toward Eliot’s ideas and characters were caused by the fact that Eliot herself was changed. George Eliot
was both a realist and moralist, whose moralism partly resulted from her Evangelical personality that she had before her break with Christianity (Paris, *Experiments in Life* 2-5). The religious transformation made George Eliot dedicate her writing to create characters who would be reflection of the image of their creator. As Paris suggested, Eliot portrayed “her protagonists [as individuals who] arrive, through a varied course of experience, at some version of the Religion of Humanity, in which living for others, for something beyond the self, gives meaning and value to their lives” (Paris, *Rereading George Eliot* 3). It was obvious that George Eliot’s philosophy of selflessness and self-sacrifice was vivid in the characterization of her heroines.

Due to her philosophy and personal experience, numerous ambiguities appeared in the way Eliot observed the universe and its inhabitants. There was a conflict in her portrayal of female characters such as Dorothea, Rosamond and Mary Garth, all of whom she depicted according to the idea of living for others or living for themselves. She blamed Dorothea for her selflessness which apparently resulted in the weakening of her marital status with Casaubon; the failure of Rosamond’s marital relationship with Lydgate was determined when Rosamond’s proscribed self-sacrifice as a means to save her marriage; meanwhile the success of Mary Garth’s relationship with Fred was due to her selflessness which she considered valuable because self-sacrifice would benefit her family and Fred during her life. George Eliot transformed the character of Dorothea at the end of the novel from a person who believed in self-sacrifice to a self-actualized person. Thus, the second marriage was successful not due to her prior idealization but because of her new understanding of the standard reality by which she was previously blinded.

Even though George Eliot’s philosophy of living for others was criticized by critics like Bernard J. Paris, one could recognize the change in Eliot’s ideas and philosophy apparently in
the way she portrayed Dorothea while she realized at the end that living for others was not “the means by which we give value to our lives. If we believe that our life has the meaning that other people give it, we may be driven to try to live up to their values or to satisfy their needs at all costs” (Paris, *Rereading George Eliot* 5). Dorothea thought like that when she accepted marriage to Casaubon and at the same time planned to make a difference in the world and in Middlemarch; George Eliot conveyed her sense of observing and conceiving the universe more realistically rather than religiously because “Christianity and idealism no longer possessed religious virtues, for while they served the purpose of moralism, they failed to meet the demands of realism” (Paris, *Experiments in Life* 4) which was her philosophy in writing novels like *Middlemarch*. Like Eliot herself, Dorothea in the novel “sought always for meaning and value” (8) especially in marriage and in relationship with others.

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Some successful marriages were presented in *Middlemarch*. Mary Garth and Fred Vincy’s union was favorable due most likely to the reasonable expectations that they had of each other. But other relationships such as Dorothea-Casaubon and Rosamond-Lydgate for instance, were portrayed as failures in terms of intimacy and closeness—especially after the revelation of their unrealistic expectations and the idealization they had of a matrimonial union. There was a struggle between idealism and realism in the given characters’ perceptions of the world they lived in. Dorothea Brooke and Edward Casaubon’s quick marriage presented at the beginning of the story happened without the partners’ prior knowledge of one another. Almost at the end of the novel, the female protagonist, Dorothea, gave her final comment on marriage and intimacy that revealed the reality of the marital relationship she experienced. She realized that marriage was an unpredictable social phenomenon which might have unexpected consequences. Dorothea
wanted to share her experience with Rosamond; thus, she claimed:

Marriage is so unlike everything else. There is something even awful in the nearness it brings. Also, if we loved someone else better than—than those we were married to, it would be no use... I mean, marriage drinks up all our power of giving or getting any blessedness in that sort of love. I know it may be very dear—but it murders our marriage—and then the marriage stays with us like murder—and everything else is gone. And then our husband—if he loved and trusted us, and we have not helped him but made a curse in his life. (MM 491)

She said that in marital relationships with men, women could not do anything about the fact that they were considered inferior and subject to submission and a reliance on their partners had little value. This conversation between Dorothea and Rosamond showed the paradoxical nature of marriage, and eventually illustrated that their intimacy lacked mutual understanding and response. She tried to share her experience with them to help them sustain their relationship.

Eliot characterized Rosamond as a girl who wanted someone extraordinary in her life, because "She was tired of the faces and figures she had always been used to—the various irregular profiles and gaits and turns of phrase distinguishing those Middlemarch young men whom she had always known as boys" (62). She was an educated girl from a middle-class family who enjoyed a healthy lifestyle and regarded money and a social position as very valuable. Like any typical Victorian women, she envisioned a worthwhile comfortable life by marrying a man of social rank, with an agreeable fortune and profession. Rosamond was a girl “who had excellent taste in costume, with that nymph-like figure and pure blondness, which give the most extensive range to choice in the flow and color of drapery,” and in the school she was “an
example: no pupil... exceeded that young lady for mental acquisition and propriety of speech, while her musical execution was quite exceptional” (MM 61-62).

However, her education only prepared her for marriage in accordance with Victorian social norms, which demanded that women be instructed with household skills. She was obsessed with appearances rather than reality and her education was not helpful to her personal growth. She cared about meeting Lydgate, “the new doctor” (59) who she thought would be the ideal husband for the future. She wanted to leave Middlemarch society for the sake of having a higher lifestyle in a more sophisticated place. For Rosamond, marriage was an ideal she craved for not for its own sake but to utilize it for guaranteeing her future with a man who could provide her with a better life. Rosamond was convinced that marrying Lydgate was "the great epoch of her life" (76) and her intention in marrying him was to reach an agreeable social status according to the Victorian standards and expectations that allowed women like her to live a distinguished life. She showed little emotional objectives toward Lydgate in the first place, and she deceived him by pretending to be a submissive and obedient girl with appropriate skills. Her attraction to him was for achieving her uppermost desires.

Meanwhile, Lydgate came to Middlemarch from France after enduring his first unsuccessful love relationship with Laura, because their expectations of each other clashed. He intended to become a professional doctor and to make a difference in the field of science and medicine. Although unwilling to experience marriage again, when he found Rosamond he believed that she had "that feminine radiance, that distinctive womanhood which must be classed with flowers and music, that sort of beauty which by its very nature was virtuous, being molded only for pure and delicate joys" (105). Lydgate admired her intelligence and compliance with his demands, without mentioning any romantic connection and feelings involved in his description
of her. She was the one whom he needed in his life: an educated woman, talented with arts of dancing and music, and more importantly, submissive to his whims and wishes in regard to his profession. The narrator mentioned Lydgate’s ideal image of her:

Indeed, if falling in love had been at all in question, it would have been quite safe with a creature like this Miss Vincy, who had just the kind of intelligence one would desire in a woman —polished, refined, docile, lending itself to finish in all the delicacies of life, and enshrined in a body which expressed this with a force of demonstration that excluded the need for other evidence. (MM 105)

At the time he made his choice based on his perception of a wife he felt would guarantee him a relationship that could be safe and comfortable. However, it seemed that he was more concerned about his medical career, the improvement of his skills, his professional life and possible advancement in his field. Since his male-oriented business needed an assistant, of course a woman, who could help him improve his life and career. Therefore, he became attracted to her however on a misleading and false premise.

Lydgate and Rosamond did not know each other well; thus, they both were deceived by their illusions and obsessions, and their fictitious portraits of each other were unreal and imagined. While realizing the real reason behind Rosamond's agreement to marry him, Lydgate jumped to the conclusion that “the tender devotedness and docile adoration of the ideal wife must be renounced, and life must be taken up on a lower stage of expectations” (403). He recognized that building his life on an imagined picture and ideal image was unrealistic. Both of them “conditioned as they have been by society, married for the wrong reasons, and so they writhe under the failure of ideals and conventions” (Bailey 2016).
Lydgate was not the idyllic husband for Rosamond as she expected him to be, and Rosamond was not the ‘docile’ or ‘devoted’ wife that Lydgate imagined for himself. Intimacy and emotions were not the core of their partnership, as they had no intention to consider them as the principal cause of attraction to each other. Therefore, they failed and refused to continue the relationship that was meant to give them love and spiritual comfort. The problem was that "Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing” (MM 106), which isolated and distanced them from the reality of their situation.

Rosamond was a smart woman who pretended to be a typical Victorian candidate for marriage, and instead of using her talents and skills to improve her life with Lydgate she exceeded her demands that were beyond her husband’s ability to instantly provide. She was more concerned about having a refined and luxurious life, and she often utilized all her feminine power and charm to obtain it. Thus, she gave Lydgate some emotional attention and even some passionate love, but her purpose was not only to be a submissive and obedient wife; she also wanted him for her own self-obsessed demands which would eventually make her a rich and polished woman. Insistently, she expected Lydgate to provide her with a luxurious lifestyle she wanted but she failed in her marriage because of her ambitions and demands that were impossible to achieve all at once. On her part as a wife, Rosamond was somewhat responsible for the failure, because she was unable to compromise. Lydgate who could not immediately take care of her needs and desires, failed her to some degree. Meanwhile she was challenged by his own professional demands.

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Along with Rosamond and Lydgate’s marriage plot, Eliot presented Dorothea and
Casaubon’s marriage as the main focus of the novel. As the main theme of the story, Eliot offered a complex and dynamic representation of relationships, expressed in the characters’ marital union. Dorothea—an ambitious young girl with distinct plans in her life—had no intention to marry, but she knew that matrimony was inevitable. She was largely obsessed with her vocation to play the role of Saint Theresa by helping others. At the beginning of the novel, George Eliot portrayed Dorothea as a simple girl who did not pay much attention to her appearances. However, Dorothea’s “profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments;” right after Eliot described that she “was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common-sense” (MM 5). Eliot’s description of two sisters, revealed that Dorothea had little understanding of the society and its conventions which categorized her as a different girl.

Eliot’s reference to Dorothea’s plain clothes indicated that unlike other females of her age, she was not a conventional girl who dressed in refined appearance according to the societal standards. She was a smart young lady, but she did not represent the feminine virtues of the time. She was not interested in the social class because she wanted to be free of social conventions. She always acted against the constraints of the common beliefs on women and their submission, in order to find her "ideal of life" (19). Dorothea’s uncle, Mr. Brooke once told her: "I thought you had more of your own opinion than most girls. I thought you liked your own opinion" (26), which referred to her sense of self-determination and self-observation in comparison to other girls in her age, including Celia.

Dorothea’s ambition and mission were to improve society and to make a world according to her own vision of life. Having strong religious beliefs, she selflessly cared about others and was ready to sacrifice herself for them. Apparently, there were conflicts in her inner thoughts
that made her uncertain about her abilities and plans. Eliot characterized her as a complex character with a contradictory and confused personality. She was a conventional female in some respects, and at the same time unconventional in some others. She wanted to preserve her Victorian aspects and was against the social roles and standards that limited her abilities. In her opinion, marriage was one of her limitations which might prevent her from contributing to the outside world if she married an ordinary man. To show her reluctance, the narrator posed the question: “And how should Dorothea not marry?—a girl so handsome and with such prospects?” Although she was of marriageable age, marriage did not appeal to her because “Nothing could hinder it but her love of extremes, and her insistence on regulating life according to notions which might cause a wary man to hesitate before he made her an offer, or even might lead her at last to refuse all offers” (MM 6).

Dorothea’s perception of a marital life was somewhat immature, as she “with all her eagerness to know the truths of life, retained very childlike ideas about marriage” (7). She never longed for romance or love, and she thought of marriage as a convention that should teach her something: for her “The really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it” (7), and that marriage would be the “one that would deliver her from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance, and give her the freedom of voluntary submission to a guide who would take her along the grandest path” (19). For Dorothea, marriage was important, and she took it seriously; she considered marriage as “a state of higher duties” (27), and thus she knew that she might face difficulties and problems due to her new subsequent responsibilities. She claimed that she "never thought of it as mere personal ease" (27). She, however, regarded it as an institution by which she could become wiser by being guided by the man she was going to marry.
Dorothea tried to prove her independence and freedom through her vocation, like building cottages and helping poor people. She was uninterested in marrying Sir James—the one whom everyone, including her family, believed to be the suitable husband for her. Before proposing to her, Dorothea found out his intention from Celia that revealed: “Everyone can see that Sir James is very much in love with you” (MM 23). Although his attraction to her was apparent there were various reasons involved in her rejection of him. The narrator reflected Dorothea’s feelings in this matter, saying “All her dear plans were embittered, and she thought with disgust of Sir James's conceiving that she recognised him as her lover” (23). Dorothea realized his claim on women, when he said: ““Surely, a woman is bound to be cautious and listen to those who know the world better than she does” (454). A man with such perception was not her ideal. More importantly, her rejection was because of his conventionality, his fake willingness to aid in building cottages for the poor, and more significantly because “he [was] not equal to her imagination of her own possibilities, and will” (Levine 247). She was convinced that by marrying him, she had to succumb to him. She believed it would eventually prevent her from pursuing her dreams, which was one thing that concerned her the most. Since she had a socially accepted position by having a remarkable inheritance and moral independence, nothing could prevent her from making her own decisions.

Despite her resistance, she could not get away from marriage and according to social norms she was required to marry. Later, when she was introduced to Mr. Casaubon, there came another alternative which stroke her heart more intensely: Dorothea received a proposal from Casaubon and shortly after they married. Despite her family’s objection, she was relentless and stubborn in her determination to marry him, although he was much older. Her consciousness about marital duties on the one hand, and her quest for learning and knowledge on the other,
pushed her to accept the proposal. Dorothea’s craving for education heartened her to devote herself entirely to Casaubon—whom she believed to be her inspiration. Eliot remarked what Dorothea imagined for her future, by saying “I should learn everything then… It would be my duty to study that I might help him the better in his great works. There would be nothing trivial about our lives” (MM 19). She assumed that with Casaubon she could do everything she wanted and be more useful for others and herself. Her imagination for her future was evident as well when she stated that “then I should know what to do when I got older: I should see how it was possible to lead a grand life here – now – in England” (19).

Undoubtedly, Dorothea was more concerned with education. For her, it was an essential factor for a meaningful life. She was looking for “some lofty conception of the world,” (6) but her energy and power were limited. Regarding women’s education, Eliot claimed: “A woman dictated before marriage in order that she may have an appetite for submission afterwards” (46), which referred to the Victorian perception of female education. Although surrendering was important, she realized that achieving her demands were possible only through marriage and living in any other way could not help her. She was displeased with her education which she considered inefficient. Due to of her ‘ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent’ characteristics, she struggled “in the bands of a narrow teaching”, and she felt that she experienced “a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths” (19). Her hesitation became evident when she admitted: “I don't feel sure about doing good in any way now: everything seems like going on a mission to a people whose language I don't know” (19). Dorothea was not confident of her abilities and qualities among others to succeed. Thus, she felt in need of someone who was "above [her] in judgment and all knowledge" in order to "help [her] to see which opinions had the best foundation, and would
Eliot commented that Dorothea and Casaubon’s doubtful relationship was of short duration because they lacked prior knowledge of one another: “Between him and her indeed there was that total missing of each other’s mental track, which is too possible even between persons who are continually thinking of each other” (363). As she put it, since they both tried to conform to the societal conventions in this matter, they failed to understand each other which eventually resulted in a futile marriage. Like Dorothea, Mr. Casaubon believed “he had found even more than he demanded: [Dorothea] might be such a helpmate to him which would enable him to eventually dispense of a hired secretary” because she was “a modest young lady, with the purely appreciative, unambitious abilities of her sex, [who] is sure to think her husband’s mind powerful” (176). By seeing marriage as an ‘outward requirement,’ Casaubon conformed social norms and laws as the narrator suggested,

Marriage, like religion and erudition, nay, like authorship itself, was fated to become an outward requirement, and Edward Casaubon was bent on fulfilling unimpeachably all requirements. Even drawing Dorothea into use in his study, according to his own intention before marriage, was an effort which he was always tempted to defer, and but for her pleading insistance it might never have begun. (177)

His convictions were clearly typical of the Victorian society expectations, which he believed might lead him to a successful union totally harmonious with the social codes. Casaubon’s matrimonial life was directed by public expectations: “He had done nothing exceptional in marrying—nothing but what society sanctions and considers an occasion for wreaths and
bouquets” (MM 175). Casaubon himself, as an ambitious author and scholar, was insecure and uncertain about his own abilities, and he chose Dorothea because he imagined her as a completely idealistic person who would be submissive and provide for his needs and enhance his reputation. However, in his relationship with Dorothea he showed no love and intimacy.

Ambition for George Eliot—in her authorship and personal life—was an important concept which had a great impact on her writings. She compared marriage to authorship, both of which involved in ambition and desires alike. She considered ambition as a sin which could be fruitful as well as a destroying power. In his essay “Ambition and Its Audiences: George Eliot’s Performing Figure,” Rosemarie Bodenheimer (1990) referred to George Eliot’s ambition as “the complexities of an internal battle that was to make her work and her consciousness to the end.” For her, it was a limitless desire for personal esteem but at the same time a ‘sin’ and a ‘destructive fruitfulness’ (7). Bodenheimer indicated that Eliot’s definition of ambition was transformed as she became an esteemed author and onwards. He stated that “she defined her early ambition as a hindrance to writing… Now that she has become a novelist, ambition is also disconnected from public praise;” however, instead of being pleased by the fame she achieved from writing so many novels it became ‘the reverse of proud’ for her (7-8).

According to Bodenheimer, George Eliot considered herself as a ‘desponding soul’ instead of imagining herself as a successful author. Reflecting her thoughts in the character of Edward Casaubon—who had ambitions in being a well-known scholar, Eliot felt in a similar way: “But my strong egoism has caused me so much melancholy, which is traceable simply to a fastidious yet hungry ambition, that I am relieved by the comparative quietude of personal cravings which age is bringing” (qtd by Bodenheimer, 8). As is apparent from Eliot’s sentence, she separated that ambition from her achievement and transformed it into an impotent agony that
had a huge impact on her life. Her gender and religion had great roles in her active desire for repressing her ambitions because of the fear she had of the consequent sufferings; this was due to a profound self-consciousness she had to separate the ambition from her work which in turn became ‘a characteristic feature of her self-representation’ (qtd by Bodenheimer, 7).

Dorothea also was portrayed as an ambitious woman who suffered from the destructive fruitfulness of her desires. Though reluctant to marry, for her the whole idea of marriage was to be a self-development process in which she could improve her status as a woman in the world. By either refusing Sir James or accepting Edward Casaubon’s marriage proposal, Dorothea had no romantic love or emotional intentions. At the beginning, Eliot also indicated that Dorothea had little or no passionate responses to her life events because she was engaged with public life and improving others’ lives. Dorothea seemed less concerned about her feelings when she decided to marry Casaubon, she instead wanted to be wiser woman to make her life more meaningful. The point was, as Cherry Wilhelm (1979) suggested, “she could achieve emotional fulfillment in marriage but not the satisfaction of independent intellectual life” (55), and this was what she realized later on after wasting her youth living with an old man.

Dorothea believed as previously mentioned that there was something more important than romantic love. She viewed closeness in terms of improving education and knowledge as her ideal expectations; she saw matrimony as a means to help her to establish “the new real future,” (MM 124) but it turned out contrary to what she expected. Despite his expectations of Dorothea, Casaubon eventually realized he misunderstood her; instead, he found out that Dorothea’s persistent independent nature prevented her from being the ideal submissive wife who could help him achieve his goals. Ignoring her feelings and emotions, Dorothea’s search for a “social faith” (3) encouraged her to pursue learning. She ignored herself, and her only concern was others
since she needed to know herself first. This, of course, required a “genuine self-knowledge,” which could come “only through suffering,” as David Carroll believed. He stated, “it is the suffering which Dorothea has to undergo which finally resolves this conflict… she comes to understand simultaneously both herself and her relationship with others” (306). She sought a possible way out in order to fulfill her desires implementable through knowledge: “The thing which seemed to her best, she wanted to justify by the completest knowledge; and not to live in a pretended admission of rules which were never acted on” (MM 19). She, however, was not exceptional and for her to find a way out “marriage becomes the educating institution” because there was no chance of “the possibility of educational reform as a way out of [her] dilemma” (Edwards 627).

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George Eliot illustrated that the failure of their marriage was caused by both Dorothea and Casaubon’s unreal expectations, and asserted that "it would be a great mistake to suppose that Dorothea would have cared about any share in Casaubon's learning as a mere accomplishment" (MM 55). Eliot’s claim referred to the fact that Victorian society was not ready yet to accept wise women and their ambitions to guide them into public life. Casaubon’s disappointment was evident since he realized that Dorothea was a smart woman who wanted to be wiser and learn more from him. Women could not go beyond their predetermined roles to be equal to men in public life, and the importance of marriage as a union remained the same for women, because they were subjected to home and only home. Dorothea’s desire for marriage was not conventional, for she had eccentric personality that allowed her to stand against the society and its rules. She attempted to make something new and unconventional out of her marriage with Casaubon—to prove herself and her freedom, but social limitations and men
power were dominant, and eventually failed her.

The failure of Dorothea and Casaubon's marriage was, nevertheless, because of their idealistic notions, the wrong choices, and the mistaken expectation on marriage in Victorian society. They were both blinded by their own imaginations about an unrealistic marriage, the fantasies that prevented them from facing the realities of a marital relationship. According to Clifford J. Marks (2000), “In all cases the relationship between Casaubon and Dorothea reflects two self-centered individuals seeking to constrain the other so as to bolster their own inflated, tenuous view of their own selves” (33). With Casaubon, the issue was his absurdity and pride that distanced him from his family and society as a whole. He idealized himself and his work, as well as considering Dorothea as an ideal wife who could provide a safe home to carry on his study. His constant view of his life and marriage did not allow him to fulfill his husbandly duties with Dorothea, and eventually failed him to be a good husband and scholar. His domination of Dorothea caused her exclusion from the world by protecting her from participating in life outside her marriage. She had to remain inactive as far as it suited Casaubon.

Dorothea, on the other hand, was a slave of her idealistic notions. She also was uncertain about her own qualities, since all her benevolent plans remained unnoticed and unfulfilled. To improve her knowledge, she accepted Casaubon and surrendered to “the socially accepted feminine role of self-abnegation as a means for self-gratification” (Marks 33). She idealized him as a perfect and exceptional man who could help her improve her selfhood and do better things in her life, as well as helping others. She was ready to devote her whole life in order for her wishes to come true, but she realized she was terribly mistaken. Eliot explained her situation after her failure as an experience of pain and suffering that marked “Dorothea’s progression from an immature and self-centered—though warm-hearted—perspective into a greater appreciation
of otherness” (Weber 512). She had changed since her marriage with Casaubon, emotionally, intellectually, and socially. Although she lost important things in her life, she still had a chance to find her way out of ignorance and inferiority. As Eliot put it, “She was no longer struggling against the perception of fact, but adjusting herself to their clearest perception; and no when she looked steadily at her husband’s failure… she seemed to be looking along the one track where duty became tenderness” (MM 228)

Dorothea was more experienced and had a clear vision since she realized the truth about her relationship with Casaubon. She finally recognized who the real Casaubon was; therefore, she found it almost impossible to persevere her relationship with him. The narrator clearly articulated Dorothea's question about her expectations of marriage, “When would the days begin of that active wifely devotion which was to strengthen her husband's life and exalt her own? Never perhaps, as she had preconceived them” (173). Her ideal image of her marriage turned out differently, and later in the novel their relationship seemed different than what was expected. As the narrator voice noted, Dorothea realized that "Marriage, which was to bring guidance into a worthy and imperative occupation, had not yet freed her from the gentlewoman's oppressive liberty: it had not even filled her leisure with the ruminant joy of unchecked tenderness” (173). She married for a higher purpose than being only a wife at home and do nothing. She was disappointed and felt oppressive; because of the “moral imprisonment” (173) she had to maintain her relationship with Casaubon.

Eliot’s emphasis on morality was evidently expressed in her characterization of individuals in the novel. She underlined the matter by saying:

We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our
supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling—an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects—that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference. (MM 135)

Evident in the passage, Dorothea saw the moral offering in devotion to her husband, which eventually let her seek knowledge and moral development for herself. At the same time, she felt that she was not as obedient as she supposed to be with Casaubon. She wanted equivalency for her self-improvement through marriage. These contradictions caused Dorothea’s disenchantment with her marriage, along with her uncertainty and despair. She could not separate from Casaubon because she felt responsible since she was legally and morally bound to him, and also had wifely duties to perform.

During their honeymoon in Rome, the turning point in Dorothea’s life happened as she recognized her mistakes in her choice of marrying the alleged scholar. She remained silent and unable to articulate her problem. Dorothea found out that achieving the unattainable demands which were beyond the conventional expectations of marriage required suffering. She realized that for such a huge goal, she must feel pain that caused her anger and uncertainty about Casaubon. Their visit in Rome made the ineffectiveness of her husband’s study clear to her—that might bother her the most—both of which gave her a lesson to realize that “she had felt the waking of a presentiment that there might be a sad consciousness in his life which made as great a need on his side as on her own” (134-5). Her disappointment intensified by realizing the failure
of her idealistic expectations of her husband,

…for that new real future which was replacing the imaginary drew its material from the endless minute by which her view of Mr. Casaubon and her wifely relation, now that she was married to him, was gradually changing with the secret motion of a watch-hand from what it had been in her maiden dream. (MM 124)

Her imagination of the new future faded, and she realized that her dream would never come true. With this frustration, she felt a change in her thoughts of her husband, of new knowledge, and even of her duties. The sense of ignorance from Casaubon made her feel lonely and isolated, as well as angry.

Eliot sympathized with Dorothea while she felt humiliated, stating that “In such a crisis as this, some women begin to hate” (265). It would be reasonable for Dorothea’s doubts to turn into hate over the failure of her marriage because she was overwhelmed by harsh experiences at the beginning of her marital life. Her feelings and emotions turned out differently. After her marriage—primarily due to the failure she recognized—she started showing her deep feelings of anger as a response to her situation, as the narrator put it:

She was in the reaction of rebellious anger more potent than any she had felt since her marriage. Instead of tears there came words: —

"What have I done—what am I—that he should treat me so? He never knows what is in my mind—he never cares. What is the use of anything I do? He wishes he had never married me." (265)

It seemed that Dorothea did not listen to herself before, but in the current situation, she started
‘to hear herself.’ Her reaction was not of frustration and anger but in using strong vivid language, she was now able to express her inner feelings and emotions. Finally, she realized the truth of her mistakes, at least to herself, which, in turn, was a powerful insight into her self-knowledge and self-appraisal. This realization led to their separation as she recognized her ambitions and expectations were not heard by Mr. Casaubon, and eventually she felt the loneliness and confusion in the very depths of her being.

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By rendering the characters’ relationships in the novel, Eliot attempted to show that the emotional engagement was mostly ignored by individuals themselves and the society they lived in. Marriage almost remained as a social demand that happened to all young women like Dorothea and Rosamond, and others in order to have a normal life. For female characters, love was considered the second criterion, and many women were not given any attention that would feed their emotional needs. Dorothea’s confession on love and marriage was articulated when she said, “marriage drinks up all our power of giving or getting any blessedness in that sort of love.” (MM 491). She considered it “dear,” as the core of any marital relationship, however, romantic love was a murderer that could destroy any intimate relationship in marriage.

Regarding the emotional attachment of the characters, there were always obstacles especially for women which brought about misery and suffering. Dorothea, for instance, tried to get close to her husband to approve her loyalty and trust, with the intention of helping him with his work and research. She was ready to devote her whole life with all its wifely duties that she thought to be the blessings of their marriage. She intended to satisfy her husband, and in return she could learn many new things—which was not an extraordinary demand. Thus, Dorothea
thought that it would help her to broaden her horizons to view the world clearly in order to help herself and others to live a healthy and refined life. But restrictions and limitations prevailed.

The narrator called Dorothea a “short-sighted” character who was involved in the details of her personal longings which incapacitated her to observe others’ needs and expectations. This even prevented her from being a good helpmate for Casaubon, because she could not enter into the mind and heart of her husband as well. Although Casaubon himself was disinterested in opening up his feelings with Dorothea. On the other hand, she was unable to understand his feelings and even did not try to emotionally attach herself to him. As the narrator mentioned, “She was as blind to his inward troubles as he to hers; she had not yet learned those hidden conflicts in her husband which claim our pity; she had not yet listened patiently to his heart-beats, but only felt that her own was beating violently” (MM 128). She was unaware of her husband’s inner tensions because of her own idiosyncratic intentions, which made her just like Casaubon a dry and impassionate person.

The intimacy that Dorothea imagined was a form of closeness, a mutual but not romantic relationship with Casaubon. She wished to be more educated to improve her personality and character thus advancing her position by using her husband. She sensed the inferiority of females due to their lack of education; therefore, she utilized marriage as a means of raising her level of understanding and knowledge to find a way out of the struggle and conflicts she felt. According to her expectations, intimacy would exist in her marriage as long as she could achieve her goals. If not, no intimate relations would exist between them. Happiness could be achieved if compassion and love were established. But it was lacking in Dorothea's relationship because each of them lived in a different world with different knowledge about the world of others. In Casaubon's world, everything was predetermined for women, considering them as possessions of
man without having any ambition or desire rather than being a good wife and mother. Dorothea was aware of these conventional aspects of her society, and she knew that marrying a man would to some degree make her responsible for the success of her relationship. She also knew the difficulties that might restrict her from other activities. However, she accepted to submit to Casaubon’s intellectual elegance, and at the same time was wishing to make a difference in Middlemarch.

Even though introduced as a scholar, Casaubon was short-sighted too. His conventional thinking and Victorian idealistic notions made him think of women as “purely appreciative, unambitious abilities of her sex.” Therefore, since “Dorothea accepted him with effusion, that was only natural; and Mr Casaubon believed that his happiness was going to begin” (MM 176). His decision to choose Dorothea as his wife was restricted to his ideals that had nothing to do with his emotions and feelings. When he saw her for the first time, he was unable to see her mind and her potentials for demanding and expecting things beyond wifely responsibilities. He did not know her well and did not even have an emotional connection to her nor did her display any affection. Eliot characterized Casaubon as a person whose experience was of that pitiable kind which shrinks from pity, and fears most of all that it should be known: it was that proud narrow sensitiveness which has not mass enough to spare for transformation into sympathy, and quivers thread-like in small currents of self-preoccupation or at best of an egoistic scrupulosity. (176)

His preoccupation with his research prevented him from being an emotionally connected person. He ignored his feelings in order to focus on his study which had detrimental effects both on his wife and the world around him. This eventually turned Casaubon into a stern scholar who ruined
Dorothea’s yearning for happiness and intimacy.

In a short amount of time, Dorothea realized that her marriage was not exceptional, no matter how much effort she put into her marital relationship. Everything was determined for them, and nothing could be done regarding their limited conditions and tough restrictions. Paradoxes of emotions appeared to be the central issue for women like her, and they due to their moral obligations, had to sustain their lives, willingly or unwillingly. So, there was no way out of the labyrinth. As Cara Weber (2012) put it, Dorothea “participates in a view of marriage structured by an idealist conception of meaning that accords with both the conservative gender ideology of her time and the conception of selfhood as identity” (507). She had the same fate as other women of the time, who could not have any ambitions to improve their selves, socially and emotionally.

Besides her outward life, Eliot took into consideration Dorothea’s mental condition, especially after her marriage. Her relationship was not the one she expected since she felt the sense of abandonment from her husband. Therefore, she “had gathered emotions as she went on, and had forgotten everything except the relief of pouring forth her feelings,” which caused “a perpetual struggle of energy with fear” (MM 243). From the pain she experienced during her tragic life with Casaubon, she learned to express her feelings and responded vividly. Dorothea felt more emotional, when exposing anger and fear because of seeing the real image, not the ideal one she envisioned. Therefore, she felt a tension that illustrated her value to be associated with "that roar which lies on the other side of silence" (124). But, learning from her experiences, she realized that the reality and her idealistic notions eventually made her more educated and well-informed.
As a matter of fact, during the Victorian era men and women often sought an ideal marriage based on the given social expectations. The way they responded to the societal demands was the determination for whether success or failure of their marital relationships; it depended also on their expectations, whether realistic or unrealistic. In *Middlemarch* George Eliot emphasized the importance of social conventions as they related and defined the success or failure of marriage and family life, depending of course on characters who defy or conform to them. Women like Celia for instance, whose desires were nothing but to live up to the social expectations, had no problem in their marriage in comparison to other women; instead, they had a happy conventional life with no conflicts for their acceptance and submission to the foremost social norms. The “innocent-looking” Celia as a typical Victorian woman had no power and no claims to do more than what was expected of her. She faced reality and possessed more ‘common-sense’ thus she was not threatened by societal norms and rules, and she even criticized her sister Dorothea when she acted in a different way, when she told her: “You always see what nobody else sees; it is impossible to satisfy you; yet you never see what is quite plain” (MM 24). It was a good point; however, Dorothea refused to accept it, and thus Celia blamed her for not playing by the rules and had ambitions like men to think for herself, to initiate her own plans, and to crave for an independent and valuable status in society.

Rosamond, like Celia, was prepared for marriage and its predetermined purposes. However, her selfishness dominated her decisions which limited her perception to meeting a gentleman—a doctor—and finding a way out of Middlemarch toward a bigger city like London. She was not satisfied with the way of life that the people in her town chose to live. She wanted a more luxurious life and enough fortune to spend on material things while entertaining friends and
family members. But her husband was unaware of the fact that Rosamond was fascinated mostly by the outward appearances and expressions of the privileged and thus she fancifully assumed that marriage would provide her a comfortable living and financial support to live like an aristocrat. She was driven by her feminine ambitions and desires that were common for women of the time to have in their matrimonial state. She used her feminine powers to make Lydgate submit to her demands and wishes instead of using her energy to make a comfortable life for herself and her husband. Lydgate might assume that Rosamond pulled him into an unwilling and unpredictable situation; but as an adult and ambitious doctor, he was responsible to some degree for providing for his wife’s demands as a part of his marital contract.

The narrator pointed out that Lydgate was aware that the woman he needed must be “grace itself… perfectly lovely and accomplished” (MM 60), a woman in accordance with the Victorian standards, and she should not be like Dorothea who had plans and ambitions that controlled her life. He was not ready for marriage, and he “believed that he should not marry for several years: not marry until he had trodden out a good clear path for himself away from the broad road which was quite ready made,” (60-61) but he could not avoid “the true melodic charm” of Rosamond. For him, Rosamond was “a creature who would bring him the sweet furtherance of satisfying affection—beauty—repose—such as help our thoughts get from the summer sky to the flower-fringed meadow” (222), however what he saw was only on the surface of his imagination.

Outwardly, their relationship was passionate and romantic but then they began to experience the hardship of one another’s company. They suffered deeply from a misinterpretation of each other’s needs and inner conflicts, which prevented them from focusing on love and intimacy. Lydgate realized that the reason behind the failure of their relationship was
the lack of mutual appreciation of each other, when he said to her:

Can you not see, Rosamond… that nothing can be so fatal as a want of openness and confidence between us? It has happened again and again that I have expressed a decided wish, and you have seemed to assent, yet after that you have secretly disobeyed my wish. In that way I can never know what I have to trust to. There would be some hope for us if you would admit this. Am I such an unreasonable, furious brute? Why should you not be open with me? (MM 412)

Rosamond was acting against his wills to do anything in order to keep her life (with all jewelries and furniture). Therefore, since she could not convince him to do what she wanted, she left him at their first trouble which definitely related to money and household materials. While she was about to lose her ideal lifestyle, she missed her feelings and love for him. She did not support him physically and emotionally and did not focus on his career and ambitions for reforming the medical research.

That feeling of insecurity and disagreement even turned into violence, which was initiated by Lydgate due to his incapacity to provide for his wife’s unnecessary needs; when he could not do anything about her excessiveness, he started to act violently and express his feelings in the form of anger. Rosamond, instead of trying to understand the causes of the hate and anger, blamed him for his brutal behaviors. Their emotions were mutual: she responded with anger and left him alone instead of supporting him; she expressed her feelings and tried to blame him for what happened to her life. Her reaction seemed to exonerate her from the guilt by declaring her inability of doing something worthwhile with her life, “What can I do, Tertius?” (MM 367) and just complained of “the hardships which our marriage has brought on me [Rosamond]” (412).
Eliot highlighted the question of “what can I do?” with both Dorothea and Rosamond, but with different implications. When Dorothea asked the question, she wanted to do something good for people in order to ease their problems, as in case of Lydgate’s marriage; she wanted to help them keep their marriage and she asked how she can assist them. But Eliot’s comment in this matter was evident and clear in Rosamond’s response which showed her ignorance or incapacity:

That little speech of four words, like so many others in all languages, is capable by varied vocal inflexions of expressing all states of mind from helpless dimness to exhaustive argumentative perception, from the completest self-devoting fellowship to the most neutral aloofness. Rosamond's thin utterance threw into the words "What can I do?" as much neutrality as they could hold. (MM 367)

When they were in debt, Rosamond told her husband that it was not her fault, and making things right was Lydgate’s responsibility not her; she withdrew and neutralized herself as if she had nothing to do with the difficulty that both encountered. The only thing she could do was to criticize him for the misery she felt, and to blame Lydgate that “Certainly you have not made my life pleasant to me of late” (412).

Eliot’s characterization of female characters in the novel was significant, since their stories were interrelated and by comparing them many similarities and differences became evident. Rosamond and Celia were alike, but Celia was not selfish like Rosamond because she had her own inheritance and fortune that Rosamond needed, and she tried to get it through marriage with Lydgate. Celia was a very simple and conventional woman who conformed to the social norms and culture. She chose to marry Sir James, a wealthy baronet, and was happy with
her life. As a core of any relationship, there should be something mutual to bring about happiness for both husband and wife, which Celia had, but in case of Rosamond, she “chooses her husband because he will admire her beauty and provide her with all the material things she will need for her own happiness” (Hornback 613). Her selfishness and her disregard for her wifely duties created in her marriage which in time failed.

Dorothea was characterized as an idealistic female character in the novel, who was more into morality and less cared about material things. In her whole life she wanted to know things and she acted differently, since she “never called everything by the same name that all the other people about me did” (MM 333). She claimed that she was “fond of knowing something of the people I live among” (203) and she wanted to help others and make their lives easy for them. “This insistence on social morality and charity” (Hornback 607) was Dorothea’s principle which helped her to feel intimate with other people and thus feel their pains and sufferings. Although “no persons … had a sympathetic understanding for [Dorothea’s] dreams” (MM 18) but she tried to understand others with that sort of knowledge, which derived her to learn more and more. However, Eliot commented on Dorothea’s purpose for learning which was not an outward thing:

All her eagerness for acquirement lay within that full current of sympathetic motive in which her ideas and impulses were habitually swept along. She did not want to deck herself with knowledge—to wear it loose from the nerves and blood that fed her action; ... But something she yearned for by which her life might be filled with action at once rational and ardent” (55).

She was enthusiastic about doing good, but she did not know how to do it: “What should I do—how should I act now, this very day,” but she was eager to sacrifice herself to others like
Rosamond and Lydgate, and Will as well; she was prepared to “clutch [her] own pain, and
compel it to silence” (MM 486) which was grand and noble.

Instead of using her fortune and inheritance from her husband, this time Dorothea chose
to marry Will Ladislaw for love, and tried to accept the responsibilities of her own choices in her
life and wanted to do better and see better with a clearer vision and perceptions of the world.
What she experienced in her first marriage with Casaubon was a disappointment on the matter of
intimacy and closeness, the matters that caused their marriage to fail in a very short time. This
realization made her and Mary Garth much alike, though she comprehended the truth later in her
life which enabled her to see her idealism more obviously. Dorothea became more realistic in her
ideas and perceptions after her first marriage, who could see “Far off in the bending sky was the
pearly light” and therefore, she felt “the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men
to labour and endurance” (486). Dorothea became smarter and educated after she experienced
her first marriage. Because of her imaginative idealization on Casaubon, whom she assumed that
he could make her wiser and knowledgeable, she could not see the bigger picture of her life. But
after she recognized the truth about her husband’s research failure and emotional coldness, she
decided to give up on most of her inheritance and marry Will for real love. Dorothea became a
new woman with a clearer understanding of her relationships with others and a better perception
of life and its meaning.

In comparison to other female characters, Mary was one of the most prominent
representatives of realism in the novel. Unlike Dorothea, Mary had a harsh life, and was there for
her family with her labor and efforts. She loved Fred but she acted more wisely when she
rejected to marry him at the beginning. She was aware of the truth about her life and had a clear
vision because she wanted her husband to do something useful and to be worthy of life, unlike
conventional Celia who believed that her husband should “think” for her. In Mary’s case, she thought for herself and made intelligent decisions for her life.

With less attention to Mary Garth’s marriage, the focus of *Middlemarch* was on Dorothea’s marriage. Despite some similarities between both, Mary was portrayed as a minor character—an ignored and unwelcomed girl in comparison to other beautiful girls. She was a maid in Featherstone’s house and put all her efforts to help her family. She was an ordinary girl—not so beautiful as Rosamond and Dorothea— but who was more concerned about simplicity of life and its reality, and as a stubborn girl she cared about real intimacy and love. Maintaining her love for Fred, she was not ready to give up on him for any other men, and she attempted to make Fred a man she wanted—a man who did not know what to do with his life, but she gave him purpose and she showed him a path for a successful life and finally a way to deserve her love.

However, I believe that Mary and Fred’s marriage was one of the most successful ones presented by Eliot in the novel. The narrator, while comparing her with Rosamond, explained Mary’s character by saying: “Mary Garth, on the contrary, had the aspect of an ordinary sinner: she was brown… and it would not be true to declare, in satisfactory antithesis, that she had all the virtues” (MM 72). Her plainness and Rosamond’s beauty were the purpose for George Eliot to show the different lives they both had to manage. Rosamond with her idealistic demands and expectations failed in her marriage because she was unrealistic about the real meaning of marriage and love. Mary, quite the opposite, was more realistic than Rosamond and many other females, a girl who knew her limitations and power and, thus remained true to herself. The narrator explained her character as:
Advancing womanhood had tempered her plainness, which was of a good human sort, such as the mothers of our race have very commonly worn in all latitudes under a more or less becoming head-gear ... For honesty, truth-telling fairness, was Mary's reigning virtue: she neither tried to create illusions, nor indulged in them for her own behoof, and when she was in a good mood she had humour enough in her to laugh at herself. (MM 73)

She was, indeed, an honest and truthfully virtuous girl who knew the meaning of family, life, love and happiness. Despite all the hardship and agonies of her life, she remained respectful and trustworthy.

In terms of honesty and morality, Mary did not experience any evident changes in her character from the beginning to the end of the novel. She retained her real self along with the changes that occurred around her. She tried to keep in balance her moral determination and self-protection, which was tested in Featherstone’s last moments of life and in his wills. Even though she was desperately in need of money, she preserved her real and honest self and make no demands. Like many other females, she was subjected to marriage, but unlike many others, love and intimacy were the core of her marriage. She loved Fred for him, not for any other purposes such as money or fortune; she had a happy ending because of her own right choices in life, and it could be said that she prepared her own husband to deserve her love and intimacy.

As Allan Spencer (2015) pointed out, Rosamond and Dorothea sought power “in a society in which, by design, women were powerless,” therefore they found themselves “at an impasse” (6-7). They both married to the men who could not provide for their needs and were not the perfect husband they both dreamed of. At the end, unlike Rosamond who remained
ignorant, Dorothea reached a state of mind that allowed her to have a clear vision that would transform her idealism into realism. She found love, joy and peace which she achieved even after she refused inheritance from her dead husband. By contrast to her, Rosamond who could not find happiness since she could not change her perspective on marriage and excessive demands that had nothing to do with happiness and intimacy. She overlooked intimacy associated with real love and emotional connection to her husband, and they both lacked mutual understanding of the other. Mary Garth, a poor but happy woman acted upon her realistic notions about life and marriage, and found real intimacy with her husband, who in return gave her the same emotional support and love.
CHAPTER THREE

LOVE, MARRIAGE, AND INTIMACY IN TESS OF D’URBERVILLES

The nineteenth-century novelist, Thomas Hardy, criticized Victorian society in most of his novels. He was one of the pioneers who stood up against the laws and norms concerning marriage and women’s function in social settings. He introduced ‘fallen women’ who rejected social roles that associated them with the female sexuality. He called them pure women despite their downfall. In this chapter I examine the issues of marriage in relation to the concept of intimacy and closeness in Tess of d’Urberville. I focus on the paradoxes of intimacy in connection to violence and idealization as portrayed in Tess’s marriage relationships. I intend to argue that her experience of intimacy resulted in sharing violence both physically and emotionally. Alec’s brutal exploitation and Angel’s ideal love were grounds for her downfall. The former turned out to be related to physical violence and the latter associated with devaluation and emotional violence, respectively. Angel’s idealistic beliefs in woman’s physical purity was the reason that failed Tess as well, since he ignored her morality and intellectual qualities.

According to literary and historical documents, Victorians defined women as ideal, chaste, and obedient and thus must only fit into the common social standards. They were limited to family life, and only their purity and domestic functionality at home as mothers and wives mattered. As Susan M. Cruea (2005) believed “women were the continual victims of social and economic discrimination. Upper- and middle-class women's choices were limited to marriage and motherhood, or spinsterhood. Both choices resulted in domestic dependency.” Therefore, marriage was a survival means and they “were forced, for a variety of reasons, to be dependent
upon their husbands for financial support” (187). According to the patriarchal ideology of the period, men and women had unequal roles. For Victorians, “The Angel in the House” as Coventry Patmore called it, was the ideal image of a woman, manifesting her submission, self-sacrifice, and purity. Those who deviated from this social norm considered as ‘fallen’ which mostly resulted in their rejection by the society. As John Stuart Mill (1989) pointed out, women were the victims of gender polarization. He stated,

All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections. And by their affections are meant the only ones they are allowed to have. (132)

He apparently referred to the nature of women and their position in the Victorian society which regarded them as subjects belonged to home only, who had to sacrifice themselves for the men with whom they were connected. They were expected to have no ambition for a different and independent life, and even thinking about these things scared men. This was true about women’s desire as well, and there were restrictions in this regard. What was known about women were only their appearances, physical features, and purity not their real self.

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At the beginning of the novel the narrator described Tess Durbeyfield as “a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience” (Tess 21), and George Watt (1984) stated that "Tess of the
"d'Urbervilles is not merely an emotional novel; it is one of the greatest distillations of emotion into art that English literature can show" (Tess 166). Hardy showed her as an emotional character, and her intimacy was defined in her close relationships to her family, which proved her innocence and ignorance when she asked her mother “Why didn’t you tell me there was danger in men-folk?” (94). Although she was very concerned about her family, but her family decided for her and put her in that ‘danger.’

Tess seemed like an innocent, unaware girl who knew nothing or little about her sexual attractions and feminine features that might endanger her life. Hardy described her innocence and unconsciousness of her physical charms while Alec was watching her:

… Tess Durbeyfield did not divine, as she innocently looked down at the roses in her bosom, that there behind the blue narcotic haze was potentially the “tragic mischief” of her drama—one who stood fair to be the blood-red ray in the spectrum of her young life. She had an attribute which amounted to a disadvantage just now; and it was this that caused Alec d’Urberville’s eyes to rivet themselves upon her. (47-48)

Being aware or not, it seemed that she “has no choice but to be a sexual temptress to any healthy male encounters” (Pykett 160). As the narrator mentioned in this passage, the tragedy waiting for her was because of her sexual attraction and womanly features that seduced Alec, as well as Angel. Although she was a young innocent girl with ‘a luxuriance of aspect’ and ‘a fulness of growth,’ Tess seemed more like a woman to Alec. She could not avoid it because of her own innocence and naivety, but when she became aware of it, she could avoid it by, for instance, putting on “one of the oldest field-gown,” covering her face and chin with a “handkerchief from
her bundle” (Tess 299). This happened when she realized how men were dangerous to women.

The nature of Tess’s relationships with men showed that her sexuality and womanly nature caused her catastrophe, ruined her life, and at the end caused her death. Introducing Tess began with a description of her as part of a group of young girls who shared a numerous physical traits and natural beauty—the only things that were visible to others. The narrator explained

… their heads of luxuriant hair reflected in the sunshine every tone of gold, and black, and brown. Some had beautiful eyes, others a beautiful nose, others a beautiful mouth and figure ... A difficulty of arranging their lips in this crude exposure to public scrutiny … was apparent in them, and showed that they were genuine country girls, unaccustomed to many eyes. (20)

These ‘country girls’ were the embodiments of attractive appearances, and Tess was pictured by her own specific beauty and features that distinguished her from other girls. Those features were all related to the sensitive parts of women’s body that involved feminine temptation to men. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Hardy portrayed girls, specifically Tess the central female character, to show the significance of female desire and sexuality. In Hardy’s world, female desire was disruptive and eventually led to disaster. In the novel, he presented male fear of female desire, in a sense that women were the center of attention for men and their nature of womanly features made them the temptress.

Hardy repeatedly showed the scenes where Tess was associated with temptation with men. Although there was no evidence in the novel to suggest, intentionally or not, the central female character sought to use her sexuality to seduce men. However, both of Tess’s lovers felt she used her female attributes, therefore they accused her of being a temptress. Hardy pictured
Tess in her natural view with all her inevitable womanly features, and he tried to show that although these were implications of female sexuality, it did not mean that she was temptress and seductive. There were several scenes related to this matter. When Alec tried to get close to Tess, he forced a strawberry between her lips, “and in a slight distress she parted her lips and took it in” (Tess 47). He convinced her to have strawberry, and though she was not certain of having it or not, “provides a symbolic transposition of the sexual encounter” (Boumelha xxi). Or when Angel saw “the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake's” (Tess 187), it suggested that this attraction showed his, and the author's, erotic engagement with Tess that in turn made her a flirt. The narrator explained Tess waking up, as “It was a moment when a woman's soul is more incarnate than at any other time, when the most spiritual beauty bespeaks itself flesh; and sex takes the outside place in the presentation” (187). Hardy observed that women’s physical appearance spoke louder than their spirit, and their sexuality was their weakness. Women were presented by their bodies, and as Lyn Pykett (1993) suggested, though Hardy “represent[ed] the feminine essence of the female character by means of physical description,” but in Tess “Hardy [was] working both within and against a discourse on sexuality in which female sexual purity denotes (and consists of) sexual passivity, chastity and asceticism” (159-160). Thus, Hardy tried to prove her purity despite others’ beliefs that she was not.

Thomas Hardy portrayed Tess’s physical appearances by introducing her attractiveness and bodily features, along with specific body part as a “mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes (Tess 20) that suggested her sexuality provoking men’s desires. Although Hardy had a modern view on women and sexuality, his image of Tess with physical features and natural beauty was paradoxical with his idea of calling her pure and innocent. He focused on body and bodily traits more than other aspects when describing her. Some feminist critics supported his
depiction of women, known as ‘one of that brave and clear-sighted’ writers who believes in women’s moral values not associated with their chastity (Qtd by Boumelha xvii). Yet, Mowbray Morris criticized Hardy’s insistence on his heroine’s attractiveness, as he stated in 1892 in *Quarterly Review*, “Poor Tess's sensual qualifications for the part of heroine are paraded over and over again with a persistence like that of a horse-dealer egging on some wavering customer to a deal, or a slave-dealer appraising his wares to some full-blooded pasha” (Qtd by Dutta, 4). It seemed at first that Hardy was showcasing Tess to prepare her for selling on the market, but later the reader realized that her focus was more on her moral purity.

Rather than a sexual object and a temptress, Hardy later presented Tess as an intellectual and moral person, “a girl who is also more mature than her parents, and more philosophic than her scholar husband.” Due to her personality, she felt responsible and caring toward her family with a useless father and an ignorant mother. Unfortunately, like Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s country girl Marian Erle in *Aurora Leigh* (1854), “whose mother similarly tried to sell her, and who was later drugged and raped,” Tess was placed in a sexual marketplace by her mother as well (Higonnet). She was the victim of her own sexual and physical features on the one hand, and her unconsciousness about those traits on the other. To some extent her mother’s lack of responsibility was evident. Tess was not given enough education on those important sexual matters. As some put the blame of her downfall on Tess, but Hardy’s text implied that it should be put on men with whom she interacted. The concept of paying the price of guilt was mostly associated with women, and according to Pykett, they paid for “masculine desire, both sexual and spiritual.” She believed that in Tess’s case, she “ha[d] to pay the price of Angel's spiritualization of femininity, just as she [paid] for Alec's physicality” (160).

Victorians’ morality and double standard occupied a great position in such a price paying
of women like Tess, who suffered socially, economically, emotionally, and even physically. Those standards were the reasons for discrimination and polarization of genders, that made men superior and women inferior. Tess is obviously a victim of the Victorian social norms and morality that made Hardy's heroine “increasingly the object of desire and feeling, rather than a complex feeling and desiring subject” (Pykett 160). Although at the beginning Hardy called her “a mere vessel of emotion,” in fact she was not as such; her feelings, emotions, and intimacy were associated with violence on the one hand and idealization on the other hand by Alec and Angel respectively. Her terrible experience with Alec, whether her fault or not, was the reason that made her an angry woman who attempted to find her position in the brutal society with restrictions and limits on women. Finally, being unable to find her ideal life with an ideal husband, she was disappointed and had no choice but to get revenge as an inner relief. In this regard, though she tragically paid with her life, but she was a successful and determined woman, and ‘a pure woman’ with moral values who was able to prove her ability and determination through her acts to stand against the rules and standards of the Victorian society.

Moreover, the concept of idealization by Victorians resulted in assigning the label of “fallen woman” to those women who deviated from the social norms and conventions. This concept focused more on their physical aspects while their moral and spiritual traits were often forgotten, which of course were more important characteristics by which a person was evaluated. Unlike men, women did not have the opportunity to receive a good education, and they were also required to keep their feelings of private life to themselves. Being aware of all these limitations and divergences upon women, Thomas Hardy attempted to portray the real image of female characters and avoid the stereotypes in his novels. Hardy’s writings “pushed back against the idea that a woman’s virtue is tied to her virginity,” and believed that “The Victorians … had
confused virginity, a physical state, with virtue, a metaphysical condition.” (Prior 2013). Though criticized profoundly, he insisted on his own perceptions and vision of women.

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As illustrated in the plot of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, its focus was on the heroine who lived in the Victorian society that treated women as fragile and vulnerable, and thus it often inflicted them with emotional pain. Tess, the female protagonist coming from a farm family, was an innocent and brave girl who tried to do the best for her family’s financial improvement. She was an educated woman who put her family’s interests ahead of her own and sacrificed her life for them. At the same time, she stood against the social rules and conventions, and acted differently because she found those norms as improper and against women’s desires and expectations. According to moral and political conditions of the Victorian society, there was little or no place for independent, adventurous, and rebellious women; Victorians valued only the submissive and compliant women, “The Angel in the House” as Coventry Patmore called it. For their restrictions, women were considered inferior to men, and were deprived of having any occupations or professions of their own. As Rosemarie Morgan (1988) stated, “There is no area of exploration, whether occupational, sexual or merely developmental, that does not, eventually, conflict with the dominant male will to dispossess woman of autonomy, identity, purpose and power” (41). Women’s power was restrained within the domestic sphere of home and they were mostly expected to be good mothers and wives, with no ambitions. Therefore, such a society dominated by males preferred “the docile woman over the daring, the meek over the assertive, the compliant over the self-determining, the submissive over the dynamic” (41).

Thomas Hardy portrayed Tess differently from other female characters in the novel.
Other women were passive and docile, and they had already accepted their limitations because they did not have choices other than being conformed to the social codes to survive. Tess, though from a pastoral environment in which life was simple and people saw the world in terms of community and friendship, closeness and trust, but she had a vision that gave her a sense of opposition to society and its restrictions. As Barbara Hardy (2000) put it,

Tess is no simple rustic girl. Like some of D. H. Lawrence's working-class characters, she is given enough education — in her case, up to Standard Six—to allow her to be socially bilingual. She is bookish enough to know, quote and revise the language and mythology of the Bible, peasant enough for folk-wisdom and folk-ignorance. She is unselfconscious enough to make up her own language, and is the most strikingly articulate of Hardy's characters, possessed of a creativity he does not repeat in the more conventional languages of Jude and Sue.

(44)

She was distinct because of her education that gave her a common sense to think and act upon her own ideas in order to find an ideal and meaningful life. But at the same time, she had a complicated personality with different desires and ambitions in life. One of these impediments was that she was unselfish as other rustic girls who cared about her family: family came first. The fact was that the role of her family, the wrong decisions they made for her, and her lack of knowledge about the danger of the outside world controlled by males were the reasons for her doomed fate.

Reluctantly and out of her sense of responsibility, Tess followed the family decision in order to make things right for them, and “Mrs d’Urberville was glad of her decision” (Tess 54)
but not Tess. Mrs. Durbeyfield had her own purpose for sending her to her alleged cousin and marriage; it was only to gain some financial support. Instead of protecting her daughter from the outside dangers, her mother sent her to their alleged relatives of d’Urbervilles without any precautions and prior knowledge of their family. They left her no choice other than to go and claim their fortune, a wrong decision made for her that resulted in her future downfall. Even later, Tess went back to Alec because of her family’s need of financial support, and she herself had no intentions to do so. Hardy summarized what her mother thought of the whole situation when Tess left Alec with the intention not to go back to him again. But her mother did not expect the separation to happen, and she tried to convince her because she felt ashamed of people’s gossip about her:

*Why didn't ye think of doing some good for your family instead o' thinking only of yourself?* (my emphasis) See how I've got to teave and slave, and your poor weak father with his heart clogged like a dripping-pan. *I did hope for something to come out o' this!* (my emphasis) To see what a pretty pair you and he made that day when you drove away together four months ago! See what he has given us—all, as we thought, because we were his kin. But if he's not, it must have been done because of his love for 'ee. And yet you've not got him to marry! (Tess 93)

It seems that for Mrs. Durbeyfield, people’s concerns and ‘all the talk’ were more important than Tess and her feelings that had been devastated. Despite all these, her mother expected to benefit from the relationship and asked Tess to do something good for her family by marrying Alec—a man who had a social standing and enough fortune that could help Durbeyfield family get rid of financial difficulties. For her, Tess was a selfish woman who only thought of herself. Her mother repeated the same mistake and decided what good is for her and her family.
Tess, like many other women of the period, must follow social conventions and so she unwillingly married Alec who raped her with no love involved. Although ambiguously presented by Hardy, there was no clear indication to whether she was raped or seduced. As Marcia Baron (2013) believed there were conflicting clues, but the important thing was the way Hardy conveyed his purpose. Baron suggests

Hardy draws attention to the aspects of her character and her relationship to Alec … that she is not sexually attracted to Alec, is not otherwise fond of him, is not interested in marrying him, is (at this stage of her life) far too principled to grant sexual favors in exchange for money or familial support, and yet somehow ends up sexually entangled with him. (127)

Nevertheless, she was involved with Alec and acceded to its consequences unwillingly. She followed the social expectations and rules, as well as her family’s demands. In her marriage, she had no choice but to accept the social obligations; traditionally, marriage happens first without any prior sexual contacts, but on the occasions when sex happens before the connection marriage was sure to follow—as Mrs. Durbeyfield believed.

For Hardy marriage was a social convention—a practice that was invented by people. As in Tess’s case with Alec, she was blamed by her mother—and others as well—of being sinful and guilty about her illicit relationship, therefore she must marry Alec and sustain her marriage with him. As Mrs. D'Urbervilles assumed, “she ought to make her way with 'en, if she plays her trump card aright. And if he don't marry her afore he [Alec] will after” (Tess 58). On the one hand, marriage would cover her wrong-doings, and on the other, it gave her and her family financial support. According to social standards she had no other choices but to marry. She was
intimately connected with her family and followed her parents’ wishes. She also played by the rules of society, and thus fell when she was made to break those rules. Later when realizing the whole truth, she blamed her mother whose role was to protect and warn her but she did not:

“Why didn’t you tell me there was danger in men-folk? Why didn’t you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hands against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance o’ learning in that way, and you did not help me.” (Tess 94).

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In *Tess*, along with family, the men whom she encountered in her life shared similar responsibilities in her downfall. Hardy’s characterization of men and their relations and behaviors with Tess were of significance to explore, and eventually helped to better understand Tess’s circumstances. Involved in a love triangle with her, Alec and Angel were associated with her destiny. Both were from families with different backgrounds and perspectives, each of whom had distinct views on women, intimacy, and the way of behaving in mutual relationships. Tess was involved in two contrasting relationships: one with an immoral and lustful man, and the other with a virtue and intellectual man who seemed more open-minded and to have modern views and perspectives. The first incident was her encounter with her false cousin. Without any intention to marry or to have any close relationships with her, Alec pulled Tess into an undesirable situation that for her—and many women of the time as well—was prohibited. Without thinking of any misery that might happen to her, he had a sexual relationship with her. The moment of pleasure without obligation caused Tess’s long-term suffering. In fact, Tess first perceived Alec to be a high-class gentleman with nobility of a great family, but it turned out differently: Tess realized that, as the narrator claimed, he missed “an aged and dignified face, the sublimation of all the d’Urbervilles lineaments, furrowed with incarnate memories representing
in hieroglyphic the centuries of her family and England’s history” (Tess 45).

Hardy portrayed Alec as a reckless person who did not care about women’s feelings and emotions, only regarding them as objects of pleasure. He was the one who destroyed Tess’s life by putting her into a situation that was unacceptable for a woman according to the social rules and standards. That became a crucial point where her life path took a new direction towards mystery and suffering that haunted her lifelong. The reason was that she grew up in a rustic environment with no or less knowledge of the dangers of the outside world; so, Alec exploited her and found her attractive and seductive whom he had a right to possess. Tess, however, felt weak and powerless in the hands of a powerful master who thought of her as his slave: “She had dreaded him, winced before him, succumbed to adroit advantages he took of her helplessness” (93). It was hard to tell if it were Tess’s fault at all, because she appeared to be an unexperienced girl, believing that she could trust the so-called cousin who could help her family to get rid of financial hardship. The powerlessness of Tess and her family’s problems appeared to be the weak points which Alec grabbed in his favor. As it was evident in Hardy’s characterization, Alec was a typical wrongdoer man who saw women as weak and powerless creatures to be controlled and possessed. When he found Tess vulnerable and in need, he used his winning card against her for his own interest and desire.

At the beginning of their introduction, Tess regarded him as a callous person who cared about nothing but himself. The narrator explained the way Tess thought of Alec and the possibility of marrying him,

Get Alec d'Urberville in the mind to marry her! He marry her! On matrimony he had never once said a word. And what if he had? How a convulsive snatching at
social salvation might have impelled her to answer him she could not say…

Perhaps it was unusual in the circumstances, unlucky, unaccountable; but there it was; and this, as she had said, was what made her detest herself. She had never wholly cared for him, she did not at all care for him now… Hate him she did not quite; but he was dust and ashes to her, and even for her name's sake she scarcely wished to marry him. (Tess 93-94)

For Tess, marriage was an important institution whose purposes were far from financial support and gaining social position. It needed an emotional connection which involved the feelings of love and passion—those things she could not find in being with Alec. The only reason she accepted relationship with Alec was her family’s financial hardship. As Phillip Mallett (2002) suggested, “Alec’s attempt to ‘ruin’ Tess through his relentless and forced seduction; [he] seeks to encompass the object of his desire as a way of both controlling the response that object evokes, and of demonstrating power over […] her” (89). His intention of having Tess was only to possess and control her, and there was no place for intimacy and love relationship.

Later, Tess was introduced to Angel and upon seeing him she abandoned the wrong perception on love she had because of her experience with Alec. She instead perceived Angel a perfect companion and lover, with whom she would feel a divine and indefinable relationship:

There was hardly a touch of earth in her love for Clare. To her sublime trustfulness he was all that goodness could be, knew all that a guide, philosopher, and friend should know. She thought every line in the contour of his person the perfection of masculine beauty; his soul the soul of a saint; his intellect that of a seer. The wisdom of her love for him, as love, sustained her dignity; she seemed
to be wearing a crown. The compassion of his love for her, as she saw it, made her lift up her heart to him in devotion. (Tess 211)

Tess was in love with Angel with all her heart, to the extent that she felt ready to devote her whole life for him. Tess considered Angel as a perfect and flawless person who could be the supportive and loving man in her life. Despite unknowingly having a delusional and unrealistic perception of him, she felt strongly connected with Angel. For Tess so passionately in love, Angel was “godlike in her eyes” (199) and he—in comparison to Alec and her devastating experience with him—was a more-than-perfect man. He was an ideal man and future husband who could support her.

They were involved in a romantic idealization, but in different ways; each romanticized the other with different perspectives on love and intimacy. Angel was a gentleman, aristocrat with different opinions from his father and family, who perceived life intellectually. He imagined Tess as a pure woman who had no flaws and was a perfect choice for marriage; she was a good marriage candidate according to his idiosyncratic views of a stereotypical woman. Tess was an inevitable part of nature to be a perfect “visionary essence of woman— a whole sex condensed into one typical form” (146), and he made an elusive image of her in his mind. The narrator explained that “Clare’s love was doubtless ethereal to a fault, imaginative to impracticability. With these natures corporeal presence is sometimes less appealing than corporeal absence, the latter creating an ideal presence that conveniently drops the defects of the real” (264). The ‘ideal presence’ quickly disappointed Angel when Tess became “another person” after she revealed her past to him.

But Angel turned out the opposite, not as honest as Tess was with him; he only admired
her as long as she remained naturally and physically ‘pure’ without regarding her pure soul and moral values. He called her ‘Artemis’ and ‘Demeter,’ idealizing her for her looks but she asked him: “call me Tess” (Tess 146), which was her real self. As she realized the way Angel saw her and wanted her to be, she felt guilty of her unreal image pictured by Angel, as the narrator suggested, “she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence” (97). Angel was upset with Tess’s confession, and because of her committed sin—losing her physical purity—she was accused and labeled as guilty. Angel’s claim that Tess had changed since they were acquainted and got married, relied on the fact that his perception of her changed, since he said: “you were one person, and now you are another” (248) which was only in his imagination, but Tess was the same person. Tess’s purity vanished because Angel linked it to her physical qualities not spiritual and emotional traits. She defensed herself after her confession and rejection by Angel: "I thought, Angel, that you loved me—me, my very self! If it is I you do love, O how can it be that you look and speak so? It frightens me! Having begun to love you, I love you for ever—in all changes, in all disgraces, because you are yourself. I ask no more. Then how can you, O my own husband, stop loving me?" (248). For Tess nothing changed in regard to her morality and personality, but he missed her real image with all beauty and honesty since his love was an illusion.

Thus, Tess became an unacceptable woman to Victorian society and had no place in Angel’s imagined world and he could not forgive her. Before the revelation of her past, she was “a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature... She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed unto on typical form” (146), but at marriage night when Tess became honest with him, Angel changed his mind: “I repeat, the woman I have been loving is not you... Another woman in your shape” (248-9). Angel became blind to the reality
due to his misconceived idealistic nature. He could not be her "true" husband anymore, and he struggled with understanding her but unfortunately realized it “too late.” The reason was that whatever Tess’s image he had in mind was not real and he totally forgot about Tess’s real nature as a woman, a pure woman with human emotions and spirit.

As a significant part of the plot, Angel’s relationship with Tess was more important than her relationship with Alec to be addressed, though both are interconnected. Her relationship with Alec was clearly depicted as undesired and out of discussion because it was associated with violence and lack of love. However, her relationship with Angel seemed, on the surface, more intimate. In fact, it was a more complicated relationship, and their intimacy entailed many impediments. Closeness is all about mutual relationship and understanding, but their affection did not seem real because disclosure of their secrets to each other caused more distance and separation. As the narrator suggested, “neither having the clue to the other's secret, they were respectively puzzled at what each revealed” (Tess 141). Angel’s confession on his past did not diminish any of Tess’s love for him because she believed that he was still ‘himself,’ and she accepted him without any hesitation. But, when Tess revealed her past sexual experience with Alec, she became a different person whom Angel did not expect—he imagined her as an ideal but not impure woman. Not only their past secrets—love and sexual relationships, along with family ancestors—did not barricade their intimacy, but ‘the distance between them’ and ‘the social difference’ were more evident obstacles. Despite these differences, as Pettit put it, “Hardy emphasises Angel's inability to see the real Tess behind the whole host of stereotypes into which he tries to fit her” (175). The elusive vision associated with the purity and chastity of women blinded him from seeing her real image and moral values; rather he saw only the physical features and her body.
Angel’s idealistic perception was originated from primary narcissism. According to Barbara Schapiro (2002) “The idealized other is considered to be a projection of the ego ideal, a substitute for the one primary and now lost narcissistic perfection” (3). His characterization implied that Angel was a narcissist who cared about himself and his beliefs which demonstrated his superiority. In the process of appraisal of Tess, once Angel believed in her as a pure virgin who cared for all his needs, his later reaction to her confession became the reason for his ignorance and abandonment of her. This indicated his devaluation of her for lacking physical purity and chastity; the idealization made Angel believe that Tess could not be bad, sinful, and thus she would always be protected, but when she was out of his imagined image, she was of no value to him.

Otto Kernberg (2004) called it “primitive idealization” as he believed that this complicated phenomenon “creates unrealistic, all-good and powerful object images… is the direct manifestation of a primitive, protective fantasy structure in which there is no real regard for the ideal object” (30). The truth was that Angel saw Tess as an object—an ideal object—that was only of importance if she was pure, virginal, and moral in accordance with the given social norms as well as his idealistic account. Angel was engaged in self-idealization as well, and he valued himself more than others. As long as Tess lost the features of the ideal woman, she lost her value to Angel, as Kernberg suggested “‘self-idealization’ usually implies magical fantasies of omnipotence… A corollary of this fantasy is the devaluation of other people, [his] conviction of his superiority over them” (102).

Tess was the victim of violence, both physically and emotionally by Alec and Angel
respectively. Alec was the villain for whom the reader had no empathy when he was murdered at the end. The Reader regarded him as a seductive, harasser, and evil in nature who represented an immoral person caring about only himself, especially when it came to Tess. He felt like a master to her and looked down to her as a slave, which gave him a sense of control and possession, as he mentioned to Tess, “Remember my Lady I was your master once! I will be your master again” (Tess 352). With this sense of powerfulness, he was the one destroyed Tess’s life and her reputation in society by having an inappropriate relationship with her. He was the person to be punished for what he did to her, and no one was surprised by it. Although in some point Alec declared his regret: “I am sorry to wound you. I did wrong– I admit it… I am ready to pay to the uttermost farthing” (89), but he remained as a traditional villain and, after all, he caused the physical violence to Tess that resulted in her miserable life.

Angel was also responsible for Tess’s misery and downfall. He represented the male who preferred woman who was chaste and pure, although he claimed to be a modern man viewing things differently than other Victorians. He idealized Tess according to the Victorian social codes, a perceived common-sense mentality toward women as to be pure, and free of any sexual desires outside of marriage, willingly or unwillingly. He believed in the same traditional values, only he covered them as modernist ideals. He chose Tess despite his parents’ disapproval for his future wife because he believed in her idealized image, a typical Victorian female conformed to the social standards as submissive, compliant, and chaste. This illusioned picture he had in mind changed into the image of a fallen woman since Tess confessed and revealed her past relationships to him. As she broke (or forced to break) the social rules, for him and the whole society she became an unacceptable woman who did not fit in the society anymore. The transformation Angel noticed in Tess’s personality was only in his imagination because it was
different from what he expected and portrayed in his mind, which does not indicate Tess’s real character. His narcissistic personality left him no choice but to abandon Tess, which resulted from the shallowness of his emotional life. As Kernberg claimed,

They experience little empathy for the feelings of others, they obtain very little enjoyment from life other than from the tributes they receive from others or from their own grandiose fantasies, and they feel restless and bored when external glitter wears off and no new sources feed their self-regard. (17)

Angel ignored her real personality that was hidden behind her appearance; he was unable to see it because of the illusory perception of her. However, he devalued her but saw the value in her physical beauty and sexual attributes. Angel was a representative of the emotional violence Tess experienced, and he also shared in destroying her life as Alec did.

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Hardy’s delineation of Tess relied on who she really was, regardless of her physical features and appearances, emphasizing that the purity of woman was not what men or society imagined or expected. He probably idealized her as pure woman since she was known to the whole society as fallen. But he introduced her as a morally pure and symbolic woman who did not give up on hope to achieve her goals. Tess was entrapped into two different perceptions of herself: one as an acceptable and preferable woman by the society and its social codes, i.e. submissive, dependent, compliant, and an angel in the house; and one whom she wanted to be, an independent, self-reliant, and determined woman. Therefore, she experienced a conflict within herself. When it came to social standards Angel acted as other men would, for they represented dominant males who were always in control of the other sex. Her personality and real self that
was passionate and moral-oriented, despite her physical downfall, was ignored and for her fallen status—which was caused by a man—she was blamed for a crime and convicted. That eventually resulted in her removal from the society, but in reality, she was the victim of men’s desire.

Tess, out of her own perception on love and intimacy, sacrificed herself for winning Angel’s love, accepting him with all his defects and idealism and expected the same from him. Unfortunately, there was no intimacy between them because for Angel it was associated with body and physical purity not the reality of human nature; it easily disappeared upon the revelation of the past relationship. Purity of woman, for Hardy, was more than physical chastity; it was all about their heart and soul. She was a passionate and ambitious girl who longed for freedom and happiness. However, her marriage and its intimacy turned to be tied to violence because of her unwilling experience with Alec. Her marriage with him was not based on a love relationship or any other passionate connections, but an inevitable act that eventually would have happen to any woman in Tess’s situation.

In fact, feelings and emotions were important for Tess, and she wanted a marriage that allowed and expected a deep emotional connection based on mutual love and intimacy, but her mother did not care about it. Her relationship with Alec, and the misery that happened left her no choice but to forget about love and conform to society and her family’s expectations. As a matter of fact, she married Alec for the sake of family’s reputation and dignity. As her mother told her, “And yet th’st not got him to marry ’ee!” and insists on blaming her for that: “Any woman would have done it but you, after that!” (Tess 93). For Tess, this was not acceptable, because it was against her expectations of marriage. She believed that emotions and feelings that were part of intimacy were of essence in a marital relationship. But unwillingly, she gave up her emotions for her family because she cared about them and she felt in part guilty and responsible for her
family’s misfortune.

Tess sought intimacy and closeness as a way to obtain the necessary help to improve her personality. But her forced marriage with Alec could not provide the help for her improvement. Thus, she assumed that with Angel she could have an intimate, mutual relationship as he represented her ideal love, in contrast with Alec who regarded her a subject of sexual possession. But she failed and was unable to find comfort and happiness in either relationships; none of the lovers could see her real self beyond her appearances and physical features. In her introduction to *Tess*, Penny Boumelha (1983) stated:

If Angel and Alec are apparently antithetical, they are also alike in their attempts to make Tess stand for the whole female sex. Alec believes that her behavior is like that of all women, saying one thing and doing another and she responds by asserting her individuality… Angel prefers to cast her as ‘a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names.’ (xviii)

Both men saw her in accordance with their own views of a female, who incorporated physical and bodily features that made her to be ‘the whole female sex’ regardless of her other important features. They both had the same share in making Tess’s life a tragedy and disaster because they had unrealistic images of her and were blind to see her as herself.

Although both Alec and Angel claimed their passions, but they had no real intimacy with Tess, and “the dissolute and amoral Alec and the ascetic and intellectual Angel stand in essentially the same relationship to Tess” (Boumelha xxiii). Alec was a man motivated by his senses, considering Tess just as an erotic object for his temporary pleasure without thinking of
her as a valuable individual. On the other hand, Angel as an idealist focused on his archetypes and dreams who considered Tess as an ideal of purity (at least until she revealed her past).

Therefore, both Alec and Angel were in the same level of responsibility toward Tess’s miserable fate and her death. As Phillip Mallet (2002) suggested, Alec’s “dark, sensual desire to possess that innocence and purity,” made him villain “within the standard value-systems of a nineteenth-century novel,” and Angel, his “rival, whose very name carries a celestial connotation, seems to hold a much more elevated desire, but in the end he is equally instrumental in causing the central character’s death,” which could not be considered as a hero (87). It became evident that in different ways both men wanted to control Tess, possess her, and have her without respecting her emotions and real moral spirit. This was an obstacle for being honest with her, and eventually led to lack of intimacy and closeness in both relationships.

Although unwillingly forced to be with him and later to stay within the relationship, Tess repeatedly confessed that she did not feel intimate with Alec. She told him: “Not as then– never as then–’ tis different! … And there was never warmth with me” (Tess 350). The idea of loving Alec was never in Tess’s mind, because the reason for coming to him was only her family’s decision. While riding home from Trantridge with Alec, she told him with confused emotions why she came to him: “If I had gone for love o' you, if I had ever sincerely loved you, if I loved you still, I should not so loathe and hate myself for my weakness as I do now! ... My eyes were dazed by you for a little, and that was all” (89). She showed signs of regret and admitted her mistakes, and as W. Eugene Davis (1968) suggested, “So hesitant, so filled with "ifs," so equivocal is this reply that we are unable to form a clear idea of her true emotional response to Alec, although that phrase "if I loved you still" is strongly suggestive” (399). Love for Tess entailed a real connection of souls that would make the mutual relationship possible, and that
would eventually provide the chance of improvement and personality growth. However, it seemed she was unable to find any strong connection with Alec, the amoral lover.

Tess knew her guiltlessness, but she morally sensed the obligation to reveal the truth to Angel. Her ambiguity of character evoked the feeling of absence of herself; she did not feel that belonging in the society was acceptable where its inhabitants all judged her based on her appearances and physical traits. Once in the novel, she said about her lack of belonging to Marlott,

Her kindred dwelling there [in Marlott] would probably continue their daily lives as heretofore, with no great diminution of pleasure in their consciousness, although she would be far off and they deprived of her smile. In a few days the children would engage in their games as merrily as ever, without the sense of any gap left by her departure. (Tess 117)

She felt that she could not become a part of her society anymore, which meant that Tess could not be herself and have her genuine identity, moral standards, and mindset; rather her character was created by people who observed her with their eyes, as well as the whole society’s standards and conventions. “The moral codes which she breaks (or is forced to break),” as Charles Pettit (1994) put it, “are not merely abstractions, but views strongly held by most of those around her” (186). That was why she could not avoid them and even was obliged to share them in order to survive.

Concerning Tess’s purity, Hardy introduced her as a modern and pure woman who
sought intimacy and love associated with disclosure and honesty. Although she was considered fallen for acting against the social standards and opposing the Victorian codes but insisted upon her own will and desire. Hardy noticed, “unlike virginity, virtue is located … in the soul: in one's spirit, one's desires, in one's thoughts, one's will” (Prior). Despite the criticism for his valiant opinions, he insisted on presenting Tess as ‘a pure woman’ despite her failure in her sexual relationships with men. For all her wrongdoings, Tess was a fallen woman according to the Victorian social values. Hardy tried to show that her downfall was not her fault, but the result of a corrupt environment that refused to make men equally responsible for her miserable and flawed destiny. For him, women’s emotional nature was important to be explored in their relationships with men. As Ellen O'Connell Whittet (2017) suggested, “He does not idealize these women as much as he humanizes their ambitions, the intensity of their feelings, their fancies and passions. Through… Tess, Hardy writes intelligent women who work hard and write their own rulebooks.”

There were many other significant aspects of women’s personality that made them valuable and unique that were beyond their physical and bodily features. Therefore, Hardy was convinced that their thoughts and desires should be honored, respected, and praised.

Subjected to many criticisms, Hardy defended himself by inspiring his readers to see the truth of a woman’s life in a social context, of what everybody knew and thought but did not articulate. He tried to show ‘true sequence of things’ in form of novel to illustrate the real nature of a woman and her interactions with men in the Victorian society. *Tess* was all about women’s representation in sexual and marital relationships, and arguably Tess was whether a victim because of her own sexuality. However, Hardy sought his readers’ acceptance of the heroine, Tess as a pure woman despite her downfall in the hands of male characters. In fact, the subtitle ‘A Pure Woman’ made *Tess* as “designed, not to set out Tess’s story as a warning fable, but as a
defence of her moral values” (Boumelh xvii).

One of Hardy’s aims was to separate the female sexual and moral purity. What he attempted to convey was that Tess was obviously the victim of abuse and harassment by men both physically and emotionally, and the indications referred to an unwanted sexual relationship and an abandonment that caused her devastation. In the story, Hardy emphasized Tess’s real nature, something beyond her physical and bodily traits. His defense of her purity was based on the fact that her emotions and spirit has been ignored by her family and society as a whole. Tess wanted to be herself—even though she did not fit in the stereotypical social image in Victorian society. Hardy’s idealization of Tess might seem unreal, but it provided a defense to those women who were the subject of men’s control and domination, and more importantly their desires. His intention was to show that women could be better than socially assigned and determined roles given them. They could be as good as—even better than—men. Hardy’s question and concern was why a fallen woman existed but not a fallen man? He criticized the fact that whether criminal or victim, a woman was the fallen one who should be punished and removed from society but not man. Finally, he wanted to emphasize women’s ability and quality of being rebellious in order to gain their social rights in patriarchal societies.

Though labeled as an impure and fallen woman according to social conventions and standards, Tess opposed the Victorian idealized and stereotypical images of womanhood. I believe that desire and disruptiveness played a great role in Hardy’s depiction of women in relationships with men, especially since females were considered objects of male desire and control. Considered as victim of social patriarchy and male-dominant norms, Tess finally was removed from the society for breaking the Victorian brutal rules and principles. However, she remained spiritually pure and determined to choose her own destiny by acting against the social
conventions and standards that caused her tragic life. Even though she did not fit into the social norms and standards, she never gave up and started anew. She defied social expectations in an attempt to define her own meaning of life and relationships based on love and intimacy, even though it cost her own life. Thus, she represented women who struggled for their rights and recognition by standing against male power.
CHAPTER FOUR

MRS. DALLOWAY AND NEW FORM OF INTIMACY

Today’s modern society has inherited its norms and conventions from the Victorian era. At that time society formulated limitations and constrains on individuals. Thus, close relationships were hard to establish. Intimacy became almost impossible, especially for women, as they were more vulnerable. However, Virginia Woolf’s modern novel, *Mrs. Dalloway* demonstrates paradoxes of intimacy in various relationships. This chapter explores the way in which Woolf reveals her protagonist’s intimate relationships and also illustrates how their meanings and values affect her. Clarissa experiences a new form of intimacy by exploring the nature of each connection, and therefore ends up with a unique intimate relationship which eventually gives her a sense of selfhood and meaning of life.

As the novel begins, after a long detachment from the outside world, Clarissa moves out of her attic room to “buy the flowers herself” (MD 35). She prepares for her party which is to bring various people together. The party is a venue for grouping isolated individuals; they gather in one place for the same purpose, which is, for Clarissa, an ‘offering.’ This helps Clarissa understand that bringing them together is to appreciate their privacy. She believes that life consists of individuals who “making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh” (36). However, eventually her relationship with these people defines her character, as the narrator declares:

“So that to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter… It ended in a
transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe, or say that she believed (for all her scepticism), that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places, after death. Perhaps - perhaps.” (MD 145)

She admits her need of other people’s connectedness and realizes that being around people is a necessary part of life. Her party, however, does not imply a real intimacy and nearness; instead, it indicates that being in touch with others in a lonely and isolated world becomes a necessity.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf introduces a post-World War I progressive society with an advanced technology. The events of the novel take place in London, five years after the end of the World War I; and “Time and again, the novel reveals how the myriad anxieties and overwhelming grief of the war were etched into every aspect of post-war life” (Bradshaw). Woolf imagines war as a devastating experience, which impacts both society and individuals, as she says: “This late age of the world’s experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears” (MD 39). Characters in the novel are absorbed in their own internal thoughts, and each of them individually observe and think about their surroundings which is more significantly for having a “room” of their own. As Ban Wang (1992) states, “The novel seems to be a depiction of various disparate, monadic consciousnesses, isolated from each other and impossible to be unified into a spiritual community” (177). There is barely a genuine connection among the characters, therefore communication is minimal and lacks meaning and expression.

When people retreat to solitude more than ever, the issues of human connectiveness and
nearness become problematic. More importantly, marriage and intimacy are concerned since marriage remains as an inevitable social norm—the inheritance of the Victorian culture. Woolf’s own personal life significantly reveals the issues of intimacy. Although reluctant, she was married to Leonard in 1912. According to Quentin Bell (1972) Woolf mentioned in her letter: “I began life with a tremendous, absurd, ideal of marriage; then my bird's eye view of many marriages disgusted me, and I thought I must be asking what was not to be had” (186). She had different perspective on marriage, and it took long for her to make her choice to marry Leonard. “As their intimacy progressed,” Bell declares, “Virginia’s fears melted away, her confidence grew, her feeling for Leonard became more definite and at length, on 29 May, she was able to tell him that she loved him and would marry him. It was the wisest decision of her life” (187). Her fear of sex and the consequent emotional connection were the motives of her unwillingness to marry, and although she has no physical attraction to her husband, she never left her marriage for any reason. Intimacy was a significant part of their relationship and as Virginia testified, they both “want[ed] a marriage that is tremendous living thing, always alive, always hot, not death and easy in part as most marriages are” (186).

Virginia Woolf provides intimacy in diverse relationships: romantic love, marital relationship, and friendship. During the party, Clarissa reminisces how her past and present are interconnected, and how she ends up with her present life as Mrs. Dalloway. Her retrospection revolves mostly around her relationships with Peter and Sally, and her life in Bourton where she felt ambitious and rebellious. Clarissa’s old feeling for Sally and Peter was real love, but “there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity… this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear” (MD 169). However, Clarissa fails to sustain intimate relationships with them. On the one hand, as Peter “was so passionately in
love with Clarissa” (MD 76), however she tried to avoid intimacy with him, because it would probably leave no space for her privacy. Peter’s intimacy, as Clarissa believed, would not bring about a mutual relationship through which both can express their thoughts and emotions. Instead, it would result in sharing everything which did not satisfy her. On the other hand, she could not fulfill her love with Sally because it was unacceptable by the social norms and conventions, and as Wolfe suggests she “[has] lost an object of passionate same-sex love… to social convention… [she] has retreated, in the wake of this socially proscribed sexual-emotional possibility, into a legal, heterosexual union that cannot be fulfilling” (145).

All these reveal contradictions in her thoughts concerning love and intimacy. As she experiences diverse relationships—with both men and women, love for her becomes a difficult conception to define. She is married to Richard, but still thinks about Peter’s love and her old feeling with Sally. After having such passion and heat one wonders why Clarissa turns into an impassionate woman; perhaps Clarissa’s contradicted personality evokes the question of love and its conflicts in herself in order to shed some light on her problems of intimacy. This inseparable part of a love relationship appears to take different shapes and, as a Bloomsbury writer, Woolf reinvents intimacy and closeness. This reinvention is interrelated with the triangle of Clarissa’s love relationships with Peter, Sally, and finally with Richard. By exploring those relationships, I will try to clarify the meaning and nature of Clarissa’s perception of intimacy.

Virginia Woolf portrays Clarissa’s connection with men more of a failure than success. On the one hand, her relationship with Peter Walsh reveals its unsafety, yet her marriage to Richard, for some critics is a self-betrayal. Peter’s love is an oppressive relationship which Clarissa fears "everything had to be shared; everything gone into" (38). With Richard, Clarissa can easily maintain her "impenetrability" (77), something that allows "a dignity in people; a
"solitude" that avoids a fully open relationship to another person (MD121). On the other hand, her ‘moment’ with Sally occupies a significant part of her life, which cannot be repeated and remains unfulfilled. These give her a sense of ambivalence toward love and friendship, which is worthy of consideration in order to find out what intimacy is and its paradoxical effects in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

*Clarissa and Peter’s Romantic love*

Clarissa gives up her ambitions and accepts marriage in order to have a socially accepted position in society and to get a chance to be known. She is conscious of the various social demands and expectations for women; however, she has no choice but to embrace them. She “spoke of marriage always as catastrophe” (57) and acknowledges the limitations and constrains of marriage; but perhaps she inevitably marries a man to whom she has no emotional attachment after she refuses the proposal from her passionate suitor, Peter Walsh. Her marriage to Richard is an obligation “and she had too” but she had at least a choice “not to marry… [Peter]” (38). Many readers may wonder why Clarissa chooses Richard over Peter.

Being in love with a romantic and passionate man but marrying an impassionate one is a hard decision for Clarissa. Although married to Richard, she is still not sure about her preference of unemotional husband over romantic Peter, as the narrator says:

> So she would still find herself arguing in St. James's Park, still making out that she had been right- and she had too - not to marry him. For in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be between people living together day in
day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him... But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced; (MD 38)

This passage reveals that for Clarissa love demands a little space which Richard offered her while Peter’s more intense and romantic love though satisfying was suffocating. Despite rejecting Peter’s proposal, Clarissa’s reflections on him take up more space in the novel than her thoughts on Richard. Woolf illustrates her relationship with Peter as a close but suppressive one that Clarissa fears: to share everything with him. Clarissa and Peter were close and intimate friends and “They had been very, very intimate, she and Peter Walsh, when he was in love with Clarissa” (171), but she “has a certain resolute innerness—a kernel of selfhood that [she] can’t share with others” (Rothman 2014). Therefore, Clarissa keeps her feelings and emotions to herself as a mystery of her life that stays worthy if kept unrevealed and unopened. Moreover, it would be unpleasant and unbearable for her to be in a romantic but suppressive love with Peter. She is scared of being trapped in a long-term relationship that demands one-sided sharing of everything.

Rejecting Peter is a painful memory and losing him continuously hurt Clarissa, which is like the feeling of “an arrow sticking in her heart” and “the horror” when she finds out he is married. Her refusal of Peter’s love is a challenging choice, yet intimacy with Peter is not what she expects. Clarissa prefers to put aside her romantic emotions and feelings by accepting an averse and cold relationship with Richard in order to free herself from captivity in a love bond that allows no ‘space’ or ‘license.’ Eventually, she feels isolated and lonely as for her “There was
an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room” (MD 55), but anyhow it is significant for Clarissa to have privacy—even on the expenses of her loneliness and isolation—and as Jesse Wolfe (2011) puts it, “Unlike Peter’s love, Richard’s [love] is not oppressive. It provides Clarissa with space, both physically… and psychically” (144), and at the end it “grants Clarissa’s private life” (146), the vitally important aspect that Clarissa expects from her marriage.

Peter’s attention to Clarissa is an indication of the control of masculine power over woman, and love is a means of influence and possession. He is introduced as an interrupter of Clarissa’s privacy in several scenes. One interruption is the morning while she is preparing for her party, and Peter shows up in her life again:

"Who can - what can," asked Mrs. Dalloway (thinking it was outrageous to be interrupted at eleven o'clock on the morning of the day she was giving a party), hearing a step on the stairs... She made to hide her dress, like a virgin protecting chastity, respecting privacy... Now the door opened, and in came- for a single second she could not remember what he was called! so surprised she was to see him, so glad, so shy, so utterly taken aback to have Peter Walsh come to her unexpectedly in the morning! (MD 62)

The Peter who reappears after 30 years of absence seems the same as the one in Bourton, “Exactly the same, thought Clarissa; the same queer look” (62). He looks unchanged, with his pocket-knife, willing to invade Clarissa’s privacy without permission. He is older but has maintained his own attitude of criticizing her as he used to.

Being a romantic lover, Peter believes in comprehending the meaning of life through love, as Miss Kilman does with the power of religion. Clarissa questions both concepts as unable
to solve any problem, “Love and religion! thought Clarissa…how detestable they are!” (126). Miss Kilman, the representative of the religious idea in the novel, is one who does not “wish everybody merely to be themselves,” and tries to convert others into believing a certain set of beliefs. Clarissa regards them both as an equally destructive phenomena: “There was something solemn in it - but love and religion would destroy that, whatever it was, the privacy of the soul.” (MD 126). But more effectively love is a big question, especially when it involves intimacy which allows sharing everything. Clarissa is afraid of sharing because she believes that it is totally surrendering her utmost being. She assumes her life would be ‘intolerable’ with him since it allows little or no space and no independence. She is convinced that living with him would destroy both of them and she has to break up with him. She also does not believe that religion or love can resolve her situation, because it “was simply this: here was one room; there another. Did religion solve that, or love?” (127).

Peter Walsh’s other interruption is the time while Clarissa and Sally having their moment in Bourton. They were young girls spending most of their times together, and all of a sudden Sally “immediately spark love in the eighteen-year-old Clarissa” (Haffey 140). Clarissa remembers the important moment with Sally disrupted by Peter which “was like running one's face against a granite wall in the darkness! It was shocking; it was horrible!” (MD 59). Clarissa’s retrospection on her relationship with Sally—a temporary bond made possible only by the impetuousness of youth (Fulton 72)—"had a quality which could only exist between women, between women just grown up. It was protective, on her side; sprang from a sense of being in league together, a presentiment of something that was bound to part them" (MD 57). Whether love or an intimate friendship, it was an unfulfilled passion in the past, but at the same time has a great impact on Clarissa’s future.
Clarissa and Sally: Love-friendship Relation

It is ambiguous that a woman like Clarissa would give up on her admiration for a woman whom she loved and who gave her a self-awareness. All her thoughts and reflections in her private room “suggests the authenticity of the “old feeling,” and Clarissa’s evasiveness in denying it” (Wolfe 150). Clarissa and Sally’s intimacy is undeniable, but Clarissa asks herself in the attic that “this question of… falling in love with women… had that not, after all, been love?” (MD 56). It was love, a love in a wrapped box given to her, but unopened. As Jesse Wolfe puts it, “Mrs. Dalloway evokes feelings of both resignation and hope, in its picture of a heroine retiring at midday to her attic room, illustrating the importance, to a stable intimacy, of solitary space.” (14). This intimacy is provided not by her love and closeness to Richard but because of the separation that they maintain in their life. As discussed earlier, Clarissa enjoyment of her own privacy and loneliness with Richard is the result of the separateness between them.

Caroline Webb (1994) suggests that Clarissa has a sense of ‘self-allegorizing’ (283) in her existing life “never would she have a moment any more” (MD 61), because the only moments she had—besides Peter’s love—were formerly with Sally. Some days in her past life, Sally and Clarissa had an intimate friendship. Sally was a smart young girl with “an extraordinary beauty of the kind she most admired, dark, large-eyed” and a distinguished sense of “abandonment, as if she could say anything, do anything” (56). She was brave enough to stand against social norms and her interest in politics and Shelley was the evidence for her free thinking and rebellious personality. Those traits of her attracted Clarissa’s attention which led eventually to a passionate relationship. Unexpectedly, everything changed when Sally picked a flower from the vase and kissed Clarissa on the lips. That moment aroused in her unique and distinct feelings.
"This protective feeling which was much more on her side than Sally’s” was a shock to Clarissa, as if “The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it—a diamond, something infinitely precious” (MD 58). As long as she wanted to be like Sally, that moment played a great role in Clarissa’s life, and its influence continued even after her marriage. They did not have any chance to see each other for a long time due to various life experiences and marriage; losing her friendship with Sally hurt Clarissa more than anything else in the world because it was unrepeatable. Clarissa thinks, "The strange thing, on looking back, was the purity, the integrity, of her feeling for Sally" (57), but at the same time "the most exquisite moment of her whole life" could also be reflected as the most painful experience of her life. It means that “her only true friendship dies and Sally becomes just another potential lover that Clarissa must reject to preserve her solitude” (Fulton 72).

When Clarissa asks the question of “falling in love with women,” the narrator claims that “Had that not, after all, been love?” She answers it with another rhetorical question “what was this except being in love?” It seems that for Woolf the answer is yes, but there are many contradictions whether it is love or friendship. Taking into consideration different critiques by Jagose, Transue, Showalter, Raphael, and Henke, Kate Haffey (2010) gives an account on Clarissa-Sally relationship. She suggests,

The scholarship that deals with this relationship most often presents it in terms of childhood friendship or "adolescent love"... Sally Seton is positioned as "the wildly charming and reckless friend of [Clarissa's] youth"... And the love between the two women is described as "girlhood fascination"…, as "romantic idealism"…, as a "love that may leave virginity and . . . purity intact"…, and as
"unclouded by sexual masks and societal roles that often muddle adult heterosexual relationships"… Despite the quite sexual nature of Clarissa's descriptions of her affections for women, her feelings for Sally are most often constructed as representing a period of girlhood innocence that is sharply contrasted with the adult self who remembers this love. (139)

These are all qualifications of their relationship, and they are true in one way or another. But as narrator mentions it as ‘old feeling,’ she refers in in some point as meaningless to her as “she could not even get an echo of her old emotion” (MD 58). It was a spark, a momentary feeling of close contact between the two young girls that went away with the passing of time, and it remained as an old feeling, old emotion. But still that moment is important and remains with her, which gives her confidence and allows her to be free and more determined in choosing her future life.

It is obvious that it is more of a friendship connection than a love relationship, since their friendship is sustained even after thirty-two years, when they met again at the party. There is no apparent love or passionate connection between them, but still they are friends, Clarissa invites her to the party to share her joy with her. Sally reappears as a mother of five boys, and it suggests that both have followed the same path in life as if there were nothing serious between them. As Jesse Wolfe puts it, “the moment should be dispensable… perhaps her marriage is where she belongs psychologically; perhaps only a man could satisfy her as a permanent partner” (150). Therefore, that “most exquisite moment” dies and she chooses life over death by living with Richard the rest of her life, the man who gives her respect and privacy.

Due to her marriage, the silence and aloneness in her room give her the necessary relief
from all sufferings and illness she experiences. When she chooses to retreat to her solitude, the only reason is the apprehension she has of a man’s power to control her. Her fear of the outside world and its dangers make her life uncomfortable. However, she refuses to go out because there is always someone to stand against her desires and independence. The silent and ‘exquisite moment’ of her life makes her retreat to her attic room in order to preserve her life’s precious moments, and as Webb puts it, “Clarissa's choice of Richard and of silence has provided a way to preserve the soul (if only on ice) rather than killing it, as Peter's own eventual "extraordinary excitement" at her entrance acknowledges” (286).

After all, it becomes clear that “how valuable her privacy is to Clarissa, how stingy Peter would likely have been in granting it to her, and how generous (perhaps unthinkingly) Richard is” (Wolfe 152). Her intimacy with Richard is a new form that possibly exists only if the gulf between them is preserved. Her emotions are different than when she was young, and the question of love is a challenge for her. Although “the words meant absolutely nothing to her now” and Clarissa “could not even get an echo of her old emotion,” but she is still thinking about it and her “old feeling” remains intact for the rest of her life (MD 58). Being lonely in her attic room allows her to think and come in terms with her inner self. Woolf was interested in “the way that [Clarissa] become[s] aware of that innerness” (Rothman), which was provided by her marriage to Richard.

**Clarissa and Richard: “Self-betrayal” Marriage**

Richard is characterized as “a reliable, delicate, yet uninteresting man, whose affection for Clarissa is genuine, yet they do not share a close and satisfying relationship” but he gives her
an “emotional freedom” which seems to satisfy her. As a matter of fact, Clarissa has limitations within marriage, but she seems to “[have] managed to maintain a bit of emotional space in her choice of marriage partner” (Haffey 147-8). Clarissa’s reason for accepting Richard is not because of his social standing or career. Woolf reveals the emotional detachment between Clarissa and Richard by showing the lack of concerns she has for his professional life. For Clarissa it is not significant that she is the wife of a high-class member of society, what matters for her is that Richard can take care of her and keep a space that retains a healthy distance between them. Although the intimacy in their marital life is functional, it is not a true and sincere.

In fact, the relationship between Clarissa and Richard is a connection and an isolation at the same time, as Hannah Williams (2013) puts it: “withstanding the discrepancy between connection and isolation day after day is a remarkable event that [she] recognize[s] even down to [her] physical being[ ]. [She has] a heightened sensation of being alive, even when it physically aches” (49). The good thing is that, despite her restrictions, she has some freedom and so feels comfortable. Clarissa’s attitude toward marriage is clearly stated at the beginning of the novel: it is to provide ‘license,’ which she gained. Clarissa’s connection with Richard is not a typical intimate relationship, and though they are married for a long time but they both experience conditioned intimacy and loneliness.

Richard respects Clarissa’s privacy, and he insists on the necessity of her loneliness in her room due to her illness. As long as Clarissa is happy with her isolation, Richard feels the same way. Thus, her result is loneliness: “So the room was an attic; the bed narrow; and lying there reading, for she slept badly, she could not dispel a virginity preserved through childbirth which clung to her like a sheet” (MD 55). Clarissa sleeps alone in the attic room to prevent any
disturbance to her privacy she needs, and it makes her happy and worthwhile. Her isolation seems to make her romantic relationship and intimate friendship unsustainable, but Clarissa accepts the conditions of marriage and home confinements. She gives up on intimacy which frees her to come to terms with her real self.

The intimacy that is obviously the crucial part of marriage is lacking in her marital relationship with Richard, but they keep it lively. In fact, closeness would not be achievable in Clarissa’s world, which is full of chaos, misunderstanding, disconnections, and lack of communications. She instead ends up marrying a man with whom she has little or no emotional connection, but with whom at least reaches to a mutual understanding. She believes independence in marriage is substantial in order for partners to have a happy and satisfied life. This independence enables Clarissa to find a balance between her private and public self.

“What she liked was simply life” (MD 122) and living a life with privacy and selfhood, at least a space—both mentally and physically—and a room of her own is what she wants. Admittedly, Clarissa needs someone who can bring some stability to her life, support her in the modern world of chaos and suppression for women. As Kate Haffey (2010) suggests, her marriage is not an emotional connection, yet is “to preserve a space for herself,” which Richard provides for her. Above all issues and sufferings, marriage can be a safe context and haven that allows women like Clarissa to be a known woman to themselves and to others as well. Therefore, despite all the limitations on Clarissa, it can provide the freedom and independence that offers her the security and safety that she needs in life. Woolf’s protagonist is capable of finding light in the dark corners of her life, a woman who is able to express her inner consciousness. Perhaps this scenario would be just the beginning of women’s equality, independence, and freedom in the future.
Clarissa maintains freedom and a "little independence" that must exist "between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him" (MD 38). They both understand other’s expectations and demands, both physically and emotionally, and for Clarissa the emotional space that he provides gives her peace of mind. As Fulton suggests, although Clarissa chooses to marry Richard, fulfilment of any possible connection with Richard is impossible for her, which is “because of a perceived lack within herself” (73). As long as she feels isolated and lonely, having her own room becomes a necessity that allows her to isolate from the outside world and its dangers she feels every day and every moment. As Woolf declares that through self-realization “She could see what she lacked. It was not beauty; it was not mind. It was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together;” due to this coldness Clarissa believes she has "failed" Richard (55).

The fact is that her choice between Peter’s passionate love and Sally’s intimate friendship depends on the realistic notion of Clarissa’s perception, as well as societal standards and conventions. Romantic love with Peter would be intolerable because it would destroy her individuality and privacy, while her unacceptable and almost impossible union with Sally would be forbidden. Although reluctant and uncertain about her marriage choice, she accepts the traditional lifestyle with Richard which is less threatening than the romantic one. At least she has some sort of mutual understanding with Richard, who allows her to have her own privacy; she has no obligations to share her private feelings and thoughts with her husband, and he does not expect that from her. She is a free woman, and her solitary helps her a lot.
Mother-Daughter Relationship

The marriage relationship of Richard and Clarissa produced a daughter, who had few personality traits of her mother’s. Seventeen-year-old Elizabeth did not have Clarissa’s enthusiasm for parties or clothes: “Gloves and shoes; she had a passion for gloves; but her own daughter, her Elizabeth, cared not a straw for either of them” (MD 41). She preferred living with her father and her dog in the country rather than with her mother in London, and her father and her dog over her mother. It was hard to decide on Elizabeth’s character; besides being like her father, she also preferred to keep her sense of privacy like her mother. As a disciplined young lady of her class, she was sympathetic towards other people and loved to help them but maintained a social distance for the own benefit since she was on the verge of making decisions for her life and career. Despite Clarissa’s objection, Elizabeth spent most of her time with her history teacher, the religious Miss Kilman, whom Clarissa had little admiration and thus she regarded her as a “poor embittered unfortunate creature!” (41). Clarissa’s interactions with Miss Kilman were directly related to their relationship with Elizabeth. Clarissa felt abandoned by her daughter and was puzzled as to why she spent so much time with her tutor.

Both Clarissa and Miss Kilman suffered from loneliness; even though Clarissa had a family and outwardly she appeared to be happy with her husband, but she still struggled with her feelings of isolation. Miss Kilman, on the other hand, depicted by Woolf as an unadmirable religious woman, who was considered an enemy to Clarissa. “Their intense ambivalence toward each other is centered on Elizabeth, whom each woman tries to rescue from the other. Both vie for her attention.” This attention is not an attention for possessing the young lady; but instead, they seem “interested in … making sure that the other loses her” (Berman 232). This peculiar attention toward Elizabeth, as Berman suggested, was due to both Clarissa’s and Miss Kilman’s
‘narcissistic hunger:’ “They need her primarily as an admired, omnipotent self object who will restore their shattered self-esteem” (234). It was shocking for Clarissa when she questioned in her mind that “This a Christian - this woman! This woman had taken her daughter from her! She in touch with invisible presences! Heavy, ugly, commonplace, without kindness or grace, she know the meaning of life!” (MD 125).

When Miss Kilman took Elizabeth to the Stores, “With a sudden impulse, with a violent anguish, for this woman was taking her daughter from her, Clarissa leant over the banisters and cried out, "Remember the party! Remember our party to-night!” (126). During that moment in time deep feelings of jealousy permeated her being; she was also desperate that her own daughter was not ready to hang out with her mother but seemed to have had no objection to be with her tutor. The only way that Clarissa could get her back was to mention the party, in which Elizabeth had no interest but it gave Clarissa a sense of possession and control over her daughter. Her connection with her daughter was in some way peculiar; “Here is my Elizabeth” was the way Clarissa addressed or introduced her daughter, perhaps ‘emotionally, histrionically,’ as the narrator voice suggested with a doubtful tone (67). She seemed unable to communicate properly with Elizabeth. Even Peter Walsh noticed that something was not right between the two: “The way she said "Here is my Elizabeth!" - that annoyed him. Why not "Here's Elizabeth" simply? It was insincere. And Elizabeth didn't like it either” (68).

The mother-daughter relationship in Virginia Woolf’s novel revealed the fact that she herself struggled in creating the mother figures. Being absent in her own life, mothers in Woolf’s novels were failures and imperfect, a perception which had roots in the hazy image she had of her own mother. She lost her mother when she was only thirteen, and she did not have enough time to experience a genuine relationship with her. This lack of mother’s love in her own life
resulted in creating mothers, including Clarissa as a mother who was not able to have an affectionate and an intimate relationship with her daughter, Elizabeth. Clarissa is “unmaternal” (MD 173) as Sally Seton believed her to be, which seems to make the mother-daughter relationship almost impossible.

Undoubtedly, Elizabeth belonged to her father more than anyone else. With her father, she had more freedom and fewer limitations than with her mother. Though they had different interests and values, Clarissa desired to make Elizabeth like herself—like someone who enjoyed social entertainment; she reminded Elizabeth of her party as they went out with Miss Kilman. For Clarissa, such gatherings were her recuperative since they gave her a sense of belonging and communication, which obviously Miss Kilman lacked. While Miss Kilman tried hard to keep Elizabeth away from her mother’s party, Elizabeth left her anyway, as the narrator pointed out: “She had gone. Miss Kilman sat at the marble table among the eclairs, stricken once, twice, thrice by shocks of suffering. She had gone. Mrs. Dalloway had triumphed. Elizabeth had gone. Beauty had gone; youth had gone” (131). It appeared that both Clarissa and Miss Kilman failed to have her; and in this case Elizabeth preferred to go to the party rather than to stay with her tutor. However, her mother still felt emotionally somewhat disconnected.

The conflict between Miss Kilman and Clarissa over Elizabeth weighed heavily in Clarissa’s perception of her daughter’s tutor; “For it was not her one hated but the idea of her, which undoubtedly has gathered in to itself a great deal that was not Miss Kilman.” For Clarissa, she was an outside monster actually a “brutal monster!” (41); that is, what she sees in Miss Kilman is what she feels inside herself. According to Berman, “Clarissa sees Miss Kilman, not as a real person, but as a symbol of a monstrous evil or disease able to destroy all that is most dear in life” (229). Her fear was that since she had access to Elizabeth with her ‘emotional disability,’
Miss Kilman would eventually impose her will on her daughter (Berman 228). This religious woman was perceived as reflection of Clarissa’s inner feelings, exacerbating her fears that she was also “emotionally disable, unworthy of being loved, imprisoned by a brute monster from which there is no escape” (229). All those conflicts and contradictions that Clarissa felt were the causes that disabled and made it impossible for her to have a healthy and motherly relationship with Elizabeth; she was filled with anxiety and worried about her daughter’s future. However, in the end, “Richard, not Clarissa, is the nurturant parent in Mrs. Dalloway,” with whom Elizabeth felt intimate and close (251).

*Attic Room and Privacy*

Clarissa’s private thoughts revealed that she “had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen, unknown… this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway” (MD 40). She felt no more herself and saw herself only as Mrs. Dalloway because it was the only identity she had. Keeping her life as such, she sticks to her conventional role, although she disliked it because “she recognizes the way it limits her, confines her, and functions as only a superficial and ineffective substitute for the self she covets” (Forbes 43). This fear of losing one’s self within marriage was Woolf’s concern, and she emphasized the idea that marriage should be a means by which women would experience intimacy and reach self-improvement and personality growth rather than restrictions and passivity. Clarissa’s marriage choice presented by Virginia Woolf brought about the fact that individuals should give each other some independence and space, and a mutual understanding by which both can preserve their personality.
The isolation of the attic room provided the necessary quiet where she gained a full understanding of her self and a realization that she failed mentally by thinking destructively and thus allowing unpleasant thoughts to occupy her mind. She finally became aware of the fact that she herself was the only one who could sustain a balance between her private and public self, being Clarissa and Mrs. Dalloway at the same time. For Clarissa, the solitude and privacy gained from her marriage is a great achievement, to the extent that she is ready to sacrifice her emotions and romantic love for it. This isolation manifests her separation and eventually her sense of loneliness. The pertinent issues of her current life are evidenced in her abiding sense of depression and isolation, as reflected in her thoughts: “I am alone; I am alone!” (MD 50).

Clarissa feels lonely and inactive since married, and in fact the emptiness and loneliness that Clarissa feels throughout the novel is accompanied with a deep feeling of fear that cannot be avoided: “feeling as she did, standing there at the open window that something awful was about to happen” (35) and “she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day” (39). Clarissa experiences a deep anxiety every day, in a sense that even simple events and actions scare her, and she feels disconnected day after day. Therefore, she attempts to avoid this uneasiness and escape the feeling of being alone by retreating to her attic room and by throwing the parties which gives her the sense of belonging.

In the attic room, she feels enclosed inside her own thoughts; she has intense moments of vision there, as she recalls her past memories and finally her consciousness opens up and reveals itself deeply. She thinks about her life, in which she might lose many things unwillingly, but she could get more precious things out of her confinement and imprisonment. Even after retreating to her attic room, she insists on keeping her private moments she had in the past with people she loved once. That was a wrapped gift given to her that must be left unopened. Joshua Rothman
(2014) comments that it is Woolf’s way of conceiving life, as he says:

It’s hard to say just what holding onto life without looking at it might mean; that’s one of the puzzles of her books. But it has something to do with preserving life’s mystery; with leaving certain things undescribed, unspecified, and unknown; with savoring certain emotions, such as curiosity, surprise, desire, and anticipation. It depends on an intensified sense of life’s preciousness and fragility, and… when it comes to our most abstract and spiritual intuitions, looking too closely changes what we feel.

She was in love with Sally, and the moment Clarissa kissed her was “the most exquisite moment of her whole life” (MD 58). Although their partnership as Webb calls “Clarissa's and Sally's silent intimacy” has never been fulfilled, but it remains as an existing passion between the two, especially for Clarissa. Clarissa wants to preserve that precious silence and keep it safe with herself, therefore she refuses Peter’s oppressive love and recedes to “a dangerous passivity;” she accepts Richard because with him she can have “the private and nun-like life by which [she] retains the potential to renew her identity” (286).

As a matter of fact, the failure of finding an intimate relationship within marriage with emotional attachment makes Clarissa more vulnerable. She is unstable and more sensitive to what happens around her, most commonly her connection with others. The most significant thing in her life is that she fears of being counted as worthless. According to Jeffrey Berman (1990), she “experiences terror and dread of a self that is always threatening to fragment,” in a sense that she is not scared of death, but of her life being judged “worthless.” In order for her to escape this feeling is to throw parties which reveal the culmination of “[h]er vitality and generosity of spirit”
and a “celebration of the interconnectedness of life” (226). Realizing the truth about herself, when “the whole world seems to be saying "that is all" more and more ponderously,” she stands and her heart says, “Fear no more… Fear no more… committing its burden to some sea, which sighs collectively for all sorrows, and renews, begins, collects, lets fall” (MD 61). By listening to her heart, Clarissa’s feelings and emotions lead the path towards success and happiness, and self-recognition.

According to Shannon Forbes (2005), Clarissa—the perfect hostess “tries to equate the performance of this role with her identity, but her attempts to use the role as a substitute for the fixed—essentially the Victorian—sense of self she covets result in emptiness, a lack of fulfillment, and ironically, virtually no self at all” (39). Though the gatherings are for grouping people together, but it is only an outward performance which enables her to have the only possible public identity. As Morris Philipson (1974) suggests, Clarissa’s parties are used to illustrate that “how an occasion in social life becomes the most effective metaphor for an understanding of personal and private life” (124). It is a means of communication with others, a stage that brings people together and helps Clarissa to feel better even for a while.

Virginia Woolf emphasizes that “Communication is health; communication is happiness” (MD 101), and the difficulty of retaining social connections in a world of detachment and separation is her main concern. She believes that regardless of what efforts they make, it remains a big challenge for characters. All through Mrs. Dalloway, most of the characters suffer from the harsh impacts of the war and various social limitations; they struggle to communicate with others but is hard for them to find the right means. A character like Septimus Warren Smith who came back from the war, struggles with a society whose standards and principles reject him. He has difficulties in making connections with others because he is labeled as insane, and others ignore
him. Similarly, Clarissa faces a lot of criticism regarding her parties—a means of communication—from other characters, like Peter Walsh who asks her “what is the sense of your parties?” (MD 122) but for her “it was an offering; to combine, to create” (123). Clarissa feels that English society is trapped by modernity and its consequences. Therefore, many people feel desperate and isolated because they lack the necessary communication skills to improve their lives by sharing and expressing the depth of their beings.

For Woolf, people need to be connected more than anything else in order to avoid the depressing feelings, and as Riya Payal (2018) suggests “The ramifications of such fragmentariness and chaos are feelings of despair, angst and anxiety.” She illustrates that suffering is almost an unavoidable part of the characters’ lives, and their agony result from the lack of exchange and expression of their feelings and emotions. For instance, Clarissa's husband Richard Dalloway, who loves her very much, finds himself incapable of expressing his love to her, and instead gives her flowers as his love expression; Rezia suffers from an isolation and a deep sense of loneliness, along with feeling empathy for her mad husband; Septimus ultimately commits suicide to end his mad suffering; Peter suffers above all from the past, from the fact that Clarissa never loved him; and Clarissa negates and represses her pain by pretending outwardly to be happy in her marital relationship. All these are the causes of their inability to find the right way to communicate with others. This failure “leads to an existential crisis” but in an attempt to avoid it “Clarissa’s parties show us an affirmation of life” (Payal).

As she feels “an emptiness about the heart of life” (MD 55), socialization and connection become a necessity for Clarissa. She performs her role as a perfect hostess—the typical vocation for the Victorian women—in order to enjoy the life among others even for a little while; her party is a venue for communication and liveliness, in which Clarissa acts as a medium between
herself and others. She is aware of the lack of communication among people, and she tries to be
the one who initiates the connection among them, and for herself as an escape from the agonies
of loneliness. According to Williams,

Clareissa survives her loneliness by maintaining social appearances as she grows
older and feels herself slipping away from her relationships. For [her]… each day
is a battle between [her] external responsibilities… and [her] internal voice[ ].
Clareissa’s… social responsibilities demand connections among [her] peers, even
as [her] internal dialogue… exposes [her] isolation and anxieties. (49)

Being a perfect hostess gives her the feeling of usefulness and being known, and in this way she
overcomes her fear of being worthless and without identity; she feels like a woman who can
express herself and continue living despite all of her experienced sufferings and miseries.
Therefore, she prepares for her party, as she goes out herself to buy flowers, which shows the
importance of getting back to life. Gathering people in one place for the same purpose, for her, is
an ‘offering’ as she believes that life consists of individuals who “making it up, building it round
one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh” (MD 36). As long as she is married to
Richard, she must perform her role as a submissive wife and a hostess to show that she is
someone like other members of the society, and to prove her being.

**Intimacy in Mrs. Dalloway**

As seen by Bloomsburian group, including Virginia Woolf, in early twentieth century
intimacy took new forms in accordance with the changes in the social structure. Judith Ruderman
(2014) states,

Between 1900 and 1930, many changes occurred in the conception and practice of intimacy due to the key cultural shifts in England. Although marriage itself as an institution remained the norm, it dissolved more frequently than in Victorian times; sexual and platonic relationships were more open, honest, and integral to a meaningful life; and women had more freedom and opportunity. (E455)

Social changes occurred in different aspects, but marriage was still the option for most of the women to gain a social standing as the previous century tradition. According to Jesse Wolfe (2011), reinvention of intimacy is a complex process with various interrelated elements. Those components include but not limited to “increases in the frequency of marriage and divorce to redefinitions of sexuality to anxieties about women’s proper marital and social roles” (146). In comparison to the Victorian culture, these developments indicate individuals’ liberation and freedom from social conventions that haunted them for decades. Woolf’s characterization of the protagonist and related characters support the idea of new forms of intimacy and closeness that allow partners a better life based on self-realization and recognition. Clarissa is one of those courageous individuals who decides for herself to control her own destiny despite the social restraints and limitations of the time.

Virginia Woolf depicts Clarissa’s marriage in *Mrs. Dalloway* as one that lacks intimacy in its traditional sense and attempts to illustrate the reinvention of intimacy in modern societies. Paradoxically presented, intimacy goes beyond the marital relationship for Clarissa which flourishes out of the privacy of her solitary. The closeness is not provided by the marriage itself; it is instead achieved through the space that her marital relationship offers to her. It appears as a
different kind of perception: it is the separation that makes the close relationship thrive. Intimacy is portrayed as a thing that can be performed within one’s self in privacy that eventually provides a sense of acknowledging and realizing one’s real self.

In her article titled “Intimacy Begins Within,” Suzanne Degges-White (2018) suggests that having an intimate relationship with others is difficult and self-intimacy is even more challenging. She says,

> When we do not give ourselves time alone for reflection and self-intimacy, we are letting ourselves off too easy in life and not holding ourselves up to the inner scrutiny that allows us the space to acknowledge and address the areas in which we may need to grow. We also need time alone with ourselves to reconnect with who we are when we “show up” in relationships with others.

In fact, to know others and understand them one needs to know oneself first, a self-realization that is an essential aspect of one’s personality. Knowing people in modern societies in which people carry different attitudes and personalities, is not an easy task. Subsequently, being close and intimate within social and marital relationships is event harder, and therefore, finding such connectedness starts within the persons themselves. Clarissa is confined within a marital relationship for a long time, and she only sees herself as a mother and wife without thinking of her inner self. As Degges-White puts it, “The point of healthy inner solitude is to provide a space to explore the pieces of yourself that you treasure or that you wish you could change.” Clarissa thus needs the privacy in the attic room to find out what is lost; securing a safe place in her marriage is an achievement that allows exploring who she is and what she wants. In this way, she feels the intimacy of a comfortable and quiet enjoyment.
Being close and connected, according to Lynn Jamieson (2007), is not enough for an intimate relationship, yet it should be reciprocal. She states: “Intimacy is increasingly understood as representing a very particular form of “closeness” and being “special” to another person founded on self-disclosure. This self-disclosing or self-expressing intimacy is characterized by knowledge and understanding of inner selves” (2411). Intimacy is more than sharing and blend of two persons into one, which more likely causes the loss of identity and personality of both. It is something special that tends to connect both parties, and at the same time help them to grow towards self-knowledge and understanding of their inner selves. In Clarissa’s case, her love is mutual with Peter, but intimacy seems problematic and ambivalent. Peter believes that “for in some ways no one understood him, felt with him, as Clarissa did--their exquisite intimacy” (MD 66), but this is not a mutual intimacy; he wants everything out of this relationship that leaves no space for Clarissa and she has to share her private self and thoughts with him.

Sharing, and eventually surrendering, scares Clarissa because there would be no place for Clarissa’s self-knowledge and self-expression in that intimate relationship, and she would lose her selfhood. Having an identity that women deserve is Clarissa’s goal and she tries to get it whatever it costs. The cost is her youth life lost in a conventional marriage which made her confined and limited her abilities and capacities. She—in her early life—was “interested in politics like a man” (40) and having a profession for a woman of the time was challenging to attain a public self outside home as an independent woman. However, she gives up her ambitions, passions and emotions to confinement, but what matters for her is that she feels free and independent, and she enjoys the mutual understanding with Richard. He respects her privacy, and her room is where she retreats and exposes her self and others, as well as the meaning of her interactions with the outside world.
Woolf is enthusiastic about the abilities of free women, encouraging the idea that there are women out there in society that go somehow beyond the surface and penetrate deeper into the world of confinement. They, like Clarissa, can be happy within the imposed restrictions by the social standards if they reach a level of self-conscious and self-knowledge; they can choose their own personality, free and independent of all patriarchal conventions and limitations. In fact, self-knowledge and self-expression that is suppressed by the patriarchal society and its standards, lead to making confined and limited women who are unable to express themself as independent persons free of conventional and social standards. Sometimes, if a woman is aware of her ability and power of mind, she—like Clarissa—can be a strong woman who becomes a role model for other women. When Clarissa finds a way out of her confined state, with the slogan of “Fear no more” proves that woman can be different and can stand against the standards of a male-dominant society. Having a better understanding of herself, she is able to view the world differently. Finally, she begins to enjoy life and provides a balance between private and public spaces. From her marriage, Clarissa wins a little license, little room of her own where she can unravel her self-conscious and self-expression, and as Shalom Rachman (1972) puts it,

Only in her attic can she let herself truly be, truly be Clarissa that is, or in other words, eliminate momentarily the censor that keeps the real Clarissa repressed and for a moment feel whole before assembling and composing herself for the world, even the world that is her own house. (11)

The attic room is the safe haven where she finds her real self, and eventually enjoys the silent moments of her life without any disruptions.

As Caroline Webb (1994) evaluates Clarissa’s condition as “Life After Death,” she
suggests: “By using Miss Kilman's opposition and later Septimus' suicide to define her present self, instead of losing that self in reviving the past, Clarissa regains her vitality” (285). While she feels sick with a life-threatening problem, she survives and retains a new positive perspective on herself and her life. For now, her life is an ongoing process, and the best part is to currently enjoy it and benefit from past experiences in favor of her present circumstances. She throws parties which symbolizes her passion for liveliness and energy to benefit her survival. Besides having endured many sorrows and miseries, she is happy and seems to enjoy her simple life as she reaches a new level of contentment—no more darkness, emptiness, and fear but more self-knowledge and self-consciousness that keep her alive and visible.

Many critics believe in Clarissa’s failure as an isolated woman, but I believe that she is regarded as a successful woman in modern London who can achieve success within restrictions and limits of marriage to establish her own identity. She realizes that only her few basic needs can be met through marriage, but women as a whole need more. Some may think that Richard is the one who provides the space and little license for her, and without him Clarissa is not able to gain it. Admittedly, he plays a great role in this matter, but, as Woolf characterizes Clarissa, she is the one who decides for her life, first by rejecting Peter’s suppressive romantic love, and for her choosing a marriage that grants her a private and meaningful life. In fact, accepting the conditions of marriage and home that put aside intimacy frees Clarissa to understand her real self and eventually to overcome her fears. In the end, she overcomes the feeling of worthlessness, loneliness, and invisibility, which enables her to perceive the world more consciously with an open mind. Although, intimacy in Mrs. Dalloway is presented paradoxically, it also suggests that it can be performed within self that may lead to self-realization and self-awareness. Intimacy is characterized as an important part of women’s lives, personally and socially, which establishes
closeness within themselves and with others; she proves that though “closeness drew apart; rapture faded; [but] one was [not] alone” anymore (MD 169).
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Through the preceding chapters, I have tried to explore the paradoxes of intimacy in selected novels from early Victorian to early twentieth century. The main concern of the selected novels was women and their status according to the strict Victorian standards and norms. Those social restrictions could still be observed in the early twentieth century. The literary works of this period reflected on the close relationships as an inseparable part of human life, especially in marriage which was a dominant theme in most of the novels. From Eliot’s *Middlemarch* and Hardy’s *Tess* to Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, intimacy in marital relationships, despite some similarities, were depicted differently; the reader could observe the way marriage and its experience for characters differed from what was perceived. From the early Victorian to the early Twentieth century many social, cultural, and political changes had occurred, in a way that they had direct or indirect impacts on human relationships.

In fact, intimacy is a key element of human relationships and it makes individuals to get closer to someone whom they care about with loving and providing their needs, whether emotional, physical, or intellectual. To achieve such closeness, individuals need communication with other fellow humans. They are always subject to changes that happen around them, and any changes in the society influence human experience and the way individuals connect to one another. The significant discovery observed in this study was that intimacy did not involve only in physical or emotional relationship, but it engaged the partners in knowledge and personality development as well. As it is meant to be, intimacy keeps people close together if their expectations are met, but when partners have different expectations and they do not understand
each other’s needs and expectations, intimacy takes a new path far away from what is originally meant to be.

Based on earlier literature, intimacy was perceived as a sexual or physical closeness. As the social traditions and standards of the early nineteenth century advocated, mutuality and reciprocity involved in sharing of feelings, thoughts, and emotions were overlooked. According to the Victorian social conventions, men were the dominant gender in all relationships because women were considered as weak who belonged to the home domain. Later, as the social standards changed and people needed more emotional connections than before, the concept of intimacy was perceived as sharing and exchanging the experience, which in turn would lead to more openness and closeness among individuals in intimate relationships, especially marriage. In some regards, intimacy was sacrifice that some people believe they had to give their life to someone else to make them happy. Some believed that partners should change their personality to cope with others to make a close attachment.

However, what literary works in question suggested was that they all conveyed different perception of the term intimacy and attachment. They all emphasized the importance of intimacy in human relationship, especially in marriage; but the writers were influenced by the period and its unique social and political conditions. George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and Virginia Woolf were concerned about the circumstances and problems of their society which were inspirational for their writings. Therefore, they tried to present a criticism through their works to show the importance of the issues and the situations. These problems were associated with women and marriage, which were portrayed as a reflection of different impacts on women and their positions in the given societies. Some women, along with the changes, tried to cope with new situations and attempted to establish or improve their own personality and identity, but they failed because
the cultural and social conventions were the biggest obstacles. Men did not let the women leave the private domain of home because they never believed in their freedom and rights.

*Middlemarch*, written in the early Victorian period, reflected the social norms and traditions regarding the role of women and marriage in society. As Eliot suggested, women were inferior and considered weaker than their husbands and other men. They were treated as the obedient partners who were responsible to take care of their husbands and home during marriage. Eliot tried to show the defect of the social rules which prioritized men over women in many aspects. Women like Dorothea attempted to be as equal as men in terms of education and social roles. In marriage, as one of the most important stages for women to be seen, men still had the power of manipulating and using women as their properties.

By showing Dorothea’s atypical perception of marriage, Eliot’s revolutionary ideas of traditional marriage emerged, as she tried to show that Dorothea was a willing woman who struggled to mark her own self in a patriarchal society. In such a society that women had no position as independent agents, she craved for education and knowledge to shape and improve her own personality and identity. Although she was unable to establish her life as she wanted, but at least she recognized herself as a capable woman who reached a degree of self-knowledge, self-recognition, and self-confidence. Her marriage did not provide her an intimate relationship with her husband, Mr. Casaubon; but her self-education process occurred when she realized her mistakes and tried to resolve them according to her own understanding of life and experience. At first, her expectations from marriage were unrealistic—according to social and traditional norms of marriage—but she insisted on the development of her personality which might provide equality and freedom. Her choice, which was not an option for married woman at that time, led her to a new, fruitful love relationship with a man whom she loved, Ladislaw. Finally, Dorothea
learned her educational lesson she always craved for; she improved and developed a new perception of herself and others.

According to the social conventions of the Victorian period, marriage was the only support women had, as far as they did not have the right of owning properties and having a source of income. Marriage was still a safe haven for women, and women were playing their roles as mothers and wives without seeking their self within the marriage. They gave up on their personality and identity to have a life of their own. Even though most of the women at that time were educated only in terms of home works to take care of children and husbands, for some of them, including Dorothea, knowledge was an important aspect of their lives. Those women realized that there was a direct relationship between education and their lives and marriages, which encouraged intimacy and intellectual bond within their relationships. By educating themselves, women attempted to overcome the social, political, and even economic obstacles that affected the way men thought of marriage and woman in general.

_Tess_, then, was one of the few writings that gave the women a special concern. Living in late Victorian and early modern period, Hardy was the one who depicted female sexuality and violence. Through _Tess_, Hardy tried to criticize the society and the way people perceived women and marriage. He showed disasters such as poverty, rape, and pregnancy which made Tess a victim of society. Tess, the fallen women, who was educated to some extent, failed to have a happy marriage because of the social norms and conventions. Women were the victims of discrimination, both socially and economically. Because of the prejudices, Tess found herself in an impossible situation where she could not handle it because she was a woman living in a society which did not allow women to fail social roles and standards. She was a rare character depicted as “fallen woman” who was pure at the same time. For Hardy, Tess was the victim of
society’s double standard which left women no choice of their own. Despite Alec’s unreal feelings to her, Angel loved Tess; but he rejected her because of her perceived misdeeds and faults. Seemingly, Angel’s love for Tess was unreal, as his personality tied to the spiritual and unworldly. In her case, both lovers were accountable for her downfall because they had equal share in hurting her in one way or another.

The propensity of intimacy, as appeared in *Tess*, was sexual for Alec; he did not respect Tess’s personality and was not ready to accept her as a human being. Alec treated Tess as a means of satisfying his own sexual desires without paying attention to what would happen to her afterwards. The reason was Tess’s lack of financial support, which made most of the women of the time vulnerable to abuse and violence. Consequently, Angel broke his promises to her, making her suffer even more by leaving her alone and helpless. Instead of supporting her, he rejected her for not satisfying his marital expectations and standards; he wanted her to be a typical Victorian woman who could serve him at home and make him a happy husband. But, as Alec, Angel did care about himself and his needs without taking her needs into consideration. The unemotional relationships that both Alec and Angel had towards Tess led to the violence that ruined Tess’s life.

*Mrs. Dalloway* showed a different story about women and marriage. Clarissa in her youth subjected to marriage as many other girls in her age; but she had at least a choice to make for her future. She intellectually chose Richard over Peter because she knew what was better for her. Richard was more open-minded than Peter, as Peter was very demanding and asking to share everything with Clarissa. She wanted more than a closeness from her intimacy with her future husband. Clarissa left her romantic emotions and feelings by accepting a cold relationship with Richard to free herself from restrictions which allow no space or license. Although she felt
isolated and lonely, Clarissa had her privacy. Woolf showed a kind of change in perception towards marriage and intimacy. Women like Clarissa had different expectations from marriage, and they needed a partner who could understand their needs and provide for them a freedom of choice, personality, and life. She achieved a degree of self-realization and self-recognition, as well as a personality development that set her free from emotional sufferings.

Woolf believed that marriage for women was different from just being obedient and restricted. Women should have their own space and privacy within marriage, a separation that encouraged one’s closeness to oneself and others. When Clarissa chose Richard, she knew that he would give her such a space to be herself; she was comfortable as she was, a woman that was still alive despite all the agonies and sufferings she went through. Mr. and Mrs. Dalloway were close and intimate, although they were separated; they were happy to have each other the way they were—each with his or her own self. As Esther Perel in her book *Mating in Captivity: Reconciling the Erotic and the Domestic* (2006) said: “Love rests on two pillars: surrender and autonomy. Our need for togetherness exists alongside our need for separateness. One does not exist without the other.”

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Violence towards women, whether physical or emotional, was well depicted in the three novels. The idea behind this was that men were considered stronger and more controlling within the relationships, based on the traditional sense of marriage. Men’s control and power were clearly illustrated in *Middlemarch*, while Dorothea’s husband did not allow her to be educated, to be free, or even help him with his study; all were indications of her being devaluated by Mr. Casaubon. This was obviously an indication of violence against a married woman. Even though
Dorothea’s husband did not employ any direct physical harm or violence, but emotionally and intellectually harmed her; this was personality and identity devaluation. Realized a very precious life lesson, Dorothea finally learnt how to care about herself first to be able to care about others.

The apparent violence against women can be observed in Hardy’s *Tess* too. He depicted physical abuse by Alec and emotional violence by Angel, which hurt Tess the most. Angel, instead of forgiving, ignored her and left her with all her agonies and sufferings. Both Angel and Alec deployed violence against her, emotional and physical, respectively. Tess became a fallen woman just because of men’s violence against her. Women suffered from a double standard which discriminated women because of their natural and bodily features. They all were doomed to be removed from the society upon doing any misdeeds that occurred to them, advertently or inadvertently.

The violence against women were different in *Mrs. Dalloway*. When Clarissa refused Peter Walsh’s marriage proposal, she knew that there might be a brutality in their relationship—a violence that caused by making her doing things that she did not want to do. Clarissa wanted to be free of any conventions and norms that restricted women from being free and confident; she wanted to be herself whether married or not. Being emotionally restricted was a violence that men opposed to women during the marriage, and Clarissa wanted a man like Richard to leave her a space of her own where she could retreat as a safe haven. Instead, with Peter she had to do what Peter wanted from her: sharing thoughts, feelings, and everything.

The power of man—patriarchal power—was obviously described in the selected novels. In *Middlemarch* Mr. Casaubon left a note after his death to control Dorothea’s life and all her properties. For him, she was a typical Victorian woman who only belonged to home and did not
deserve to have an education, or even a passionate love, she craved for. Dorothea was treated as a slave who had no rights to be free and express her feelings, thoughts, and opinions. In *Tess*, both Alec and Angel had control over Tess in one way or another. Man’s power was clearly depicted when Alec abused her just for his sexual desires to be fulfilled without giving her any human value. Angel, on the other hand, showed that he had power of control over her, by refusing her as his wife after Alec’s misdeeds to her.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginial Woolf tried to illustrate men and their controlling power in a different way. Women were given more freedom of choices than before. When Clarissa was able to refuse Peter’s marriage proposal and accepted Richard’s, it showed that women could have more control over at least their own choices of life and marriage. Woolf emphasized that having a space of their own was very crucial for women of the period. This was the beginning of women’s freedom and expression of their ideas and thoughts in order to achieve equality and freedom.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In the course of this project, I came up with some ideas and concepts that were related to my research questions. Because of the limitations on my research, I just referred to them and embodied them within my discussion as a secondary theme, but they are related to the concept of intimacy and its impact on human behaviors and experiences. Moreover, I wanted to suggest future research to address unanswered aspects of my project which remain important issues of human life and relationships.
Violence and sacrifice are two related concepts directly or indirectly associated with intimacy and its paradoxical nature. Violence is a broad topic and needs more detailed research; it can be addressed in relation to intimacy and marriage, which will help better understand the paradoxes of intimate relationships. Physical violence may not be found in many works of art, but emotional violence can be observed in Victorian and Modern novels, and for those who are interested in such topics it will be a research question in connection with marriage, love relationships, and intimate relationships. Also, sacrifice is another topic which has been overlooked. As part of intimacy, some people believe in sacrificing their lives for others. Some do not take others into consideration, because they believe in individuality and personal beliefs. The impacts of this subject, negative or positive, can be studies in literary works of Victorian or Modern periods.

Another important aspect of intimacy is its relation to gender. The subjective meaning of intimacy is a significant aspect of relationships for everyone. Men and women have different expectations of an intimate relationship. Analyzing paradoxes of intimacy in relation to changing gender norms during and after the Victorian era is a topic to be addressed. The advent of sexology and the invention of the homosexual as a deviant sexual type is also linked to this topic.

Also, the relation between intimacy and free indirect discourse is very important. This technique is being used by Victorian novelists, especially George Eliot, who relies heavily on it in her novels. It is worth exploring the intimacy, a kind of ’marriage,' between characters' and narrator's voices/perspectives. Also, it is significant to understand the way Eliot and other Victorian novelists reproduce intimacy, and the way it is manifested at the level of narratology.
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