The Problem of Subjectivity and Hysteric Discourse in Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd

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Abstract

This study explores Hardy's novel *Far From the Madding Crowd* in the light of Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis, particularly the problem of subjectivity and the hysteric discourse. This essay offers a Lacanian reading of Hardy's presentation of the divided 'subject' in relation to the Other and explores some elements of Lacan's theory on hysteria, desire, need, demand, and enjoyment as embodied in all those linguistic, narratological and discursive elements attempted by Bathsheba to gain independence, freedom and psychological health. Hardy's characters are in an endless effort to unite their own split selves, are divided within and without and try to formulate and re-formulate their own divided subjectivities. This article tries to show that Hardy's characters are best understood and appreciated when seen through a psychoanalytical analysis. Focusing on the linguistic and discursive side of this analysis we can see the main character Bathsheba trying all the time to foreground and emphasise her "I" as a subject of her own actions and speech, and challenging all those patriarchal Victorian subjugations and objectifications linguistically, politically and socially. Indeed her castration is embodied in the irony which persists in the novel: when she was able to say "I" it was too late and she had to sacrifice her independence and power as a female and accept subjugation at the hands of Gabriel Oak, her symbolical psychoanalyst and virtual, primordial healer spiritually and physically. This study, finally, tries to link between

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these disciplines of linguistics, psychoanalysis and novelistic narration and to see how much Hardy illustrates in *Far from the Madding Crowd* Lacan's and even Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, the problems of subjectivity, femininity, and the discourse of the hysterics, which drives the reader into the deep structures of language and its society.

Thomas Hardy's important novel *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874) seems to me to embody the problem of subjectivity and the hysteric discourse as elaborated in Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis and its linguistic dimensions and effects on the study of literature and its discourse. Looking deeply into this late-Victorian novel, Hardy seems Freudian and Lacanian when he engages his characters in an endless effort to unite their own split selves, characters who are divided within and without and trying to formulate and re-formulate their own divided subjectivities linguistically and socially. Probing into the problem of subjectivity in *Far From the Madding Crowd* reveals clearly that the main characters in this novel (Bathsheba, Gabriel, Boldwood and Troy) are (each in his and her own way) indeed suffering from psychological problems which affected their lives and even from hysteria which led some to tragic consequences. To illustrate this psychological dimension of the novel, I shall focus in this article on a Lacanian reading of Hardy's presentation of the divided 'subject' in relation to the Other and to explore some elements of Lacan's theory on hysteria, desire, need, demand, and enjoyment as embodied in all those linguistic, narratological and discursive elements attempted by Bathsheba to gain independence, freedom and psychological health. I shall explore the question of how far we can stretch our claim about the connection between psychoanalysis, linguistics and the novel. This essay will try to show that Hardy's characters are best understood when seen through psychoanalytical prism. Focusing on the linguistic and discursive side of this study we can, for example, see the main character Bathsheba trying all the time to foreground and emphasise her "I" as a subject of her own actions and speech, and challenging all those patriarchal Victorian subjugations and objectifications linguistically, politically and socially. Bathsheba's femininity, desire, needs, and physical enjoyment are an interesting site of contention concerning her attitudes towards men with the phallic function or castration preoccupying her mind all the time. Indeed castration is embodied in the irony which persists in the novel: when she was able to say "I" it was too late and she had to sacrifice her independence and power as a female and accept subjugation at the hands of Gabriel Oak, her symbolical psychoanalyst and virtual, primordial healer spiritually and physically. This study tries to link between these disciplines of linguistics, psychoanalysis and novelistic narration and to

see how much Hardy embodies in *Far from the Madding Crowd* Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis, especially the problem of subjectivity, femininity, and the discourse of the hysterics, which drives the reader into the deep structures of language and its society.

Far from the Madding Crowd is thus a psychological novel since it poses deep questions about psychological independence and maturity on the part of its protagonists and even its author. From the very beginning of the novel till the very end, the question of psychology and personal power persists and dominates the entire narrative around Bathsheba, the heroine of the novel, and all the men who revolve around her. The best place to begin this study of the novel is when Bathsheba acts out her own psychological division and the split within her own self towards the middle of the novel when Troy left to meet Fanny without telling her about his intentions. This quotation is very revealing about the mental and psychological regret and the division within her own psyche, about her own hysteria: the narrator tells us that Bathsheba

> burst into great sobs - dry-eyed sobs, which cut as they came, without any softening by tears. But she determined to repress all evidences of feeling. She was conquered; but she would never own it as long as she lived. Her pride was indeed brought low by despairing discoveries of her spoliation by marriage with a less pure nature than her own. *She chafed to and fro in rebelliousness, like a caged leopard; her whole soul was in arms, and the blood fired her face. Until she had met Troy, Bathsheba had been proud of her position as a woman; it had been a glory to her to know that her lips had been touched by no man's on earth - that her waist had never been encircled by a lover's arm. She hated herself now.* (Italics mine)[1]

I have emphasized these lines to show that Bathsheba is constructed as a 'subject' who claims to have always maintained her subjectivity in relation to Gabriel, first, and second to Troy, the man she wrongly married. Here we see her regretting in a rebellious and wild manner like a caged and strong leopard marrying the wicked man Troy; how her whole soul was in arms, and the blood fired her face in real anger at losing her

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1 Thomas Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (Beirut: York Press, 1989), p. 220. Further references to this edition will be quoted within parentheses in the text of the article.

womanhood. All her life Bathsheba was a proud woman and who always insisted on her strong position as a woman until she had met Troy who degraded her. We see also her naïve and girlish pride when she feels glorious to know that her lips had not been touched by any man's on earth—that her waist had never been encircled by a lover's arm. She hated herself now because Troy destroyed this angel-like image of hers.

From the outset, the story of Bathsheba, or the whole story of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, revolves around the split subjectivity of Oak and Bathsheba. There are many questions that can be asked about the nature of Oak's psyche and how he could have waited all these years to marry Bathsheba after she has refused him many times and married once to Troy and nearly twice to Boldwood and yet he was still waiting for her. What kind of man is he then? And how and why did he accept to marry her at the end? Was it as a last resort and no-one was there to compete with him? Or was it something else we cannot see easily at the surface? Or was Oak Hardy in the real sense in waiting to marry his cousin for more than twenty years without success? And was Bathsheba really a strong woman or not? Was she just a girl who is building up her own character and female voice in her Victorian and patriarchal society? Or was she a split subject, a hysteric, who is trying to unite herself metaphorically and socially? And were Troy and Boldwood only a means of her punishments or maybe she is growing up into a mature woman? Or was she undergoing a treatment of emotional and psychological disorders? And was Troy's marriage from Bathsheba a sort of revenge against Fanny and at the same time leaving Bathsheba after Fanny's death as a sort of guilt and a punishment for him and her as well? In the same way was Gabriel's marriage at the end a sort of revenge or a cure? I have posed all these questions here in order to emphasise the question of psychoanalysis which I am proposing in the novel and which functions as the basis for answering most of the novel's problems. In other words, Lacanian psychoanalysis seems the proper tool for a better understanding of this novel in all ways. Lacanian psychoanalysis is first and foremost a "talking cure", for it is out of the dialogue between patient, the hysteric, (Bathsheba) and analyst (Oak) that the therapy proceeds, the cure is largely linguistic and social. These many questions, which will be answered in the body of this paper, reveal psychological divisions within all the main characters of the novel.

The question of split subjectivity is at the heart of Lacanian psychological theory. Jacques Lacan, a famous twentieth-century French psychiatrist and doctor, focused in his psychoanalytical theory on the connections between author, reader, text and language. Lacanian psychoanalytic criticism is not only concerned with reading a literary text as envisaged by the unconscious, but also to uncover the processes in which human subjects are revealed as split from within and often undermined from below. Lacan revised and expanded Freud's theories in the light of linguistic structuralism, and thereby re-vitalized psychoanalytic criticism and ensured its continued influence on literary criticism today.

Lacan refashioned Freudian psychoanalysis and suggested that the unconscious was structured like a language, thereby giving a key role to semiotics and dissolving the usual boundaries between the rational and irrational. This entailed a renewed concentration upon the Freudian concepts of the unconscious, the castration complex, and the ego conceptualized as a mosaic of identifications, and the centrality of language to any psychoanalytic work. Lacan declares that the unconscious is actually structured and systematized much like the structure of language. That structure is a discourse that operates across the unconscious-conscious divide. It gives language a key role in constructing our picture of the world, but also allows the unconscious to enter into that understanding and dissolve essential distinctions between fantasy and reality. According to Lacan, and many critics after him, this highly structured part of the human psyche can then be systematically analyzed just like any linguistic construct.[2]

In his own way, Lacan adopts Freud's division of Id, Ego and Superego. In fact, with the early Lacan, the 'subject' has to be understood in its radical opposition to the ego. The 'ego' belongs to the imaginary order, whilst the 'subject' belongs to the symbolic. The 'subject' is the subject of the unconscious, as described by Freud with his notion of the

2 Joel Dor, *Introduction to the Reading of Lacan: The Unconscious Structured Like a Language* (New York: Other Press, 2001), pp. 7-26.

id, whilst the ego is a mere concatenation of alienating identifications.[3] Until the early 1960s, Lacan focused upon this opposition between the imaginary and the symbolic. Yet there is a shift in attention: instead of the opposition and division between ego and subject, the division and splitting within the subject itself comes to the fore. Instead of the term 'subject,' the expression 'divided subject' appears—that is, divided by language. Indeed Lacan insists that our continual attempt to fashion a stable, ideal ego throughout our adult life is self-defeating. If the unconscious is structured like a language, Lacan argues, then the self is denied any point of reference to which to be "restored" following trauma or "identity crisis". Such analysis, Lacan claims, reveals to us that all individuals are fragmented: no one is whole. Certainly we can recognize a 'subject', ourselves, provided we remember that this centre of our being is not a fixed entity, but simply something that mediates our inner discourses.

For Lacan, the function of language is thus not to communicate but to give the 'subject' a place from which he or she can speak. The central opposition operative, according to Lacan, at the very heart of human subjectivity itself is the split between language and the body—the latter decisively shapes the human relationship to the former, while, at the same time, resisting unproblematic integration into the former. In more concrete terms, Lacan insists that the individual's "corporeal" condition (needs, urges, wants, emotions, desires, requirements and enjoyments) inevitably propels him/her to enter into a socio-symbolic order organized by (primarily linguistic) trans-individual systems of representation and exchange. And yet, this embodied point of departure, this bodily origin of mediated subjectivity, is worked over and irreversibly transformed in its very being by this "anatomically destined" propulsion into the *Geist* (mind, spirit, ghost, holy-spirit) of human collective existence. Indeed for Lacan the 'subject' is made and re-made in our confrontation with the Other, a concept which in turn shifts with context. The Other is "the locus in which is constituted the I who speaks along with he who hears, what is

3 See Jacques Lacan, "The Freudian Thing, or the Meaning of the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis", (1955), in *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), pp. 334-363.

said by the one being already the reply, the other deciding, in hearing [*entendre*] it, whether the one has spoken or not."[4] The Other is the father figure within the Oedipal complex who forbids incest. The Other is ourselves as we accept the restraints of adulthood. The Other is also that which speaks across the split we carry within ourselves between the unconscious and conscious—naturally, it is bound up with language itself. Thus, and as Bressler puts it, "the ideal concept of a wholly unified and psychologically complete individual is just that: an abstraction that is simply not attainable."[5] In more concrete terms, this is exactly what we see with Bathsheba who never achieved wholeness throughout her life. For Lacan, the total unity and wholeness is in itself an illusion for we will continually misperceive and misrecognize ourselves. This is very close to how Catherine Belsey defines the Lacanian 'subject' as "the site of contradiction, and is consequently perpetually in the process of construction, thrown into crisis by alterations in language and in the social formation, capable of change. And in the fact that the subject is a *process* lies the possibility of transformation."[6]

The sense of fragmentation is then at the heart of Lacan's psychoanalytic and linguistic theory. We have a deep schism, sharp division and an acute split within us, within ourselves, our subjectivity; we can never have what we deeply want. We are the bereaved ever-lacerating subjects. We long for so many things in our life but we can never have what we desire and crave for: the complete unified subject of the Imaginary Order. Indeed the mediating system of representations structuring subjectivity contains its own set of impasses, contradictions, and instabilities that make it ill-suited to provide the individual with a lasting set of stable "existential anchors" introducing order into corporeal chaos. It is this chaos, this fragmentation, split self, that concerns Lacan when he examines a literary text and which concerns us as literary critics, as the entire story of Bathsheba vividly enacts this fragmentation process. We learn that there is a difference between the "I" as the subject of the

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4 Ibid., p. 358.
5 Charles Bressler, *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, Second Edition (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1999), p. 156. See also Dor, *Introduction to the Reading of Lacan*, pp. 14, 19, 29, 35-40.
6 Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 65.

énoncé and the "I" as the subject of the enunciation, the "I" who speaks and the "I" who is represented in the speech or the discourse. What is important for Lacan here is the constant "sliding and fading" of the "I" as represented in discourse (subject of the enounced) from the "I" doing the speaking (subject of the enunciation).

In simpler terms, the process of fragmentation is the key point throughout *Far from the Madding Crowd* and underlies the politics of its own conception by Hardy. Hardy's novel and his own personal life seem to me to fit Lacan's theory of the divided subject in relation to the Other and also his theory on femininity.[7] John Fowles, the postmodernist novelist, suggests that Hardy himself has suffered from the same trauma as Oak by waiting to marry his own cousin for more than ten years without success, and he compensates for her loss in writing fiction. Thus, fiction for him becomes a source of consolation for the loss of the loved one, the mother. For Freud, lost objects are a cause of anxiety to us, symbolizing certain deeper unconscious losses, and it is always pleasurable to find them put back again in place. If this does not happen in the conscious life, it happens in the imagination through art. Hardy then wanted to marry his cousin but she refused his offer and then he lost her for ever when she married another man. Like Oak, he did not give up—Oak waited and was finally rewarded; Hardy waited for her own daughter to marry, as a replacement for the old mother (her mother, his mother!), but she also refused his proposal. This has been reflected in this novel, in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved*, and in *Jude the Obscure* which all somehow reflect his dissatisfaction with his own marriage. Indeed John Fowles and Claire Tomalin suggest that had his cousin Tryphena married him we would not have had Hardy today as we know him. Thanks then to Tryphena who inspired Hardy to write such great Victorian novels through her own loss and his psychic torture and hysteria.[8] It is the original lost object (the muse, the lover, the mother) which drives forward the narrative of our lives, impelling us to

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7 See Hardy's most recent biography, Claire Tomalin, *Thomas Hardy* (London: The Penguin Press, 2007), pp. 17, 139-143, 302, 435.

8 John Fowles, "Hardy and the Hag," in *Thomas Hardy After Fifty Years*, ed. Lance St. John Butler (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 28-42; see also Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969; rpt., London: Triad/Granada, 1977), p. 236. See also Tomalin, *Thomas Hardy*, pp. 94, 241-43, 404.

pursue substitutes for this lost haven of desire. If everything stayed in place for Hardy there would be no story for him to tell. This loss, in Lacanian theory, the original lost object, the mother's body, is then distressing, but the search, the quest for it is exciting at the same time and is one source of narrative satisfaction.

A psychoanalysis of Bathsheba reveals a lot of insight into understanding the novel as a whole. Bathsheba seems to have acted upon the dictates of Lacan's theory on *hysteria* and *desire*; we know that she is a woman who always insisted upon her *subjectivity*, her *desire*, her *need* and *demand* to be a strong farmer, and ultimately her *enjoyment* of being a wife. Indeed Lacan's theory on hysteria and the 'hysteric discourse' depends upon his ideas on the fragmented subject, and how the concept of the Other is so significant in the process of identifying and manufacturing the subject, a subject which is coming out of a hazy misrecognition. Lacan radically considered the self as something constituted in the "Other", that is, the conception of the external. This belief is rooted in Lacan's reading of Saussure and structuralism, and more specifically his belief that Freud's concept of the unconscious prefigured structuralist linguistics and in so many forms lead to Saussure's paradigm of the signifier and the signified and their arbitrary relation. As a result, language is never completely contained—it always contains things beyond what is intended, and these things form an endless chain of signifiers. This signifying chain, and more broadly the ordering structures of language in general constitute the Other. Such signifiers, for example, become central when we think of characters in the novel named Gabriel Oak, Boldwood, Bathsheba and Troy and what they signify in the novel—each name has certain signifiers, as we shall see in this study. The name "Gabriel Oak" has a double allegorical significance: Gabriel, the angel-like figure, who is extremely good and honourable, and "Oak," which symbolizes his solidness, extreme strength and unique endurance and patience. Boldwood is also bold, brave, solid and strong like a stump of wood. Bathsheba is the name, according to *Collins English Dictionary*, taken from old biblical mythology, of "the wife of Uriah, who committed adultery with David and later married him and became the mother of his son Solomon (II Samuel 11-12)". And Troy is the name from Greek mythology of the city of Troy, destroyed in the Trojan War in the mid-

13th century BC, and which symbolizes here in the novel the destruction and decay of love, marriage and everything sacred. The existence of the Other, then, leads to a disconnection between the ego and its desire, leads to discipline and maturity. Lacan believes that the Other will always be present in the hope of offering a "cure" of the psychic symptoms or at least altering such symptoms. For Lacan our unconscious desire is directed towards the Other, in the form of some reality which we can never have. Yet for Lacan that desire is in some way always *received* from the Other too. We desire what others—our parents, for instance—unconsciously desire for us; and as Terry Eagleton argues, "desire can only happen because we are caught up in linguistic, sexual and social relations—the whole field of the 'Other'—which generate it."[9] Thus, human beings, Lacan believes, are fundamentally and constitutively maladapted in relation to their "reality," to their natural/material as well as social/cultural *Umwelt*, milieu.

From the very beginning of the novel Bathsheba seems to have been fundamentally and constitutively maladapted, who cannot cope with her reality as a woman farmer. She has been in an identity crisis; she is seen as a narcissistic girl who is still in her mirror stage: "At length she drew the article into her lap, and untied the paper covering; a small swing looking-glass was disclosed, in which she proceeded to survey herself attentively. She parted her lips and smiled" (p. 7). The narrator commented that this is related to "woman's prescriptive infirmity," and that she is still growing up. A result of her complicated, mixed and contradictory character Bathsheba is seen in many places in the novel as "a nymph" (p. 17), and a seducer of men. She will not tell Oak her name

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9 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 174. See also Philippe Van Haute's good book on this subject, *Against Adaptation: Lacan's Subversion of the Subject* (New York: Other Press, 2002), where he argues that Lacan's 1960 essay "Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" reveals it as a paradigmatic example of Lacan's writing. Van Haute's close reading shows readers how to see the Lacanian universe in a textual grain of sand. Van Haute testifies that in the "Subversion of the subject" essay, Lacan discusses his notion of the signifying system, how concrete meanings are shaped or conditioned by signifying units situated in a shared network of significance, a network of signifiers. This essay is also reprinted in Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, pp. 672-702.

when they first meet: "you can inquire at my aunt's – she will tell you," she says (p. 21). Bathsheba seems seducer when she gave him her hand and withdrew it twice and when she ran away inviting him to find her name. She was called by the narrator as "the sweet mixture," a reflection of what Oak feels about her (p. 23). In a masculine voice Bathsheba was described by her own aunt as promiscuous who had several boyfriends: "but, Lord, in the nature of women, she must have a dozen!" (p. 25) In the same context she is seen as contradictory in her behaviour when she ran after Oak to tell him that she had no boyfriends at all and that her aunt had made a mistake by sending him away believing so. Oak describes her as contradicting herself, or she has a double character.

The contradiction in her character continues with her all her life. At first she said that she does not want to be owned by men as a way of rejecting the Victorian dominating ideology over women through the category of marriage: "I *hate* to be thought men's property in that way, though possibly I shall be had some day. Why, if I wanted you I shouldn't have run after you like this; 'twould have been the *forwardest* thing! But there is no harm in hurrying to correct a piece of false news that had been told you" (p. 26). In fact, she is not certain, unsure about herself and about what she wanted, to marry him now or not, a factor which shows that she has a split subjectivity. She argues that her first real reason for rejecting marriage from Oak was feministic: "I don't want to marry you…. I've tried hard all the time I've been thinking; for a marriage would be very nice in one sense. People would talk about me and think I had won my battle, and I should feel triumphant, and all that. But a husband—" (p. 27). This shows the dominant Victorian ideology and the terrible feelings that women feel that they exist in a battlefield and there are winners and losers in marriage. Then she argues that love for her is essential for marriage: "Because I don't love you" she said she cannot marry him (p. 28). Here Oak said so strongly that he will love her all his life. Then she was distressed and "looking hopelessly around for some means of escape from her moral dilemma." Then she said in a contradicting way: "It wouldn't do, Mr Oak. I want somebody to tame me; I am too independent; and you would never be able to, I know" (p. 28). Throughout the novel Bathsheba seems independent but in real sense she is not and is easily led by others and not as strong as she believes.

She enacts her independence and strength through managing her farm by herself. She seems so strong when she said to her workers in the farm: "Now mind, you have a mistress instead of a master…. Don't any unfair ones among you … suppose that because I'm a woman I don't understand the difference between bad goings-on and good" (p. 68). The farmers at the corn market admired her position, but they felt that "it's a pity she's so headstrong … but we ought to be proud of her here – she lightens up the old place. 'Tis such a shapely maid, however, that she'll soon get picked up" (p.74). But her appearance in the market was "unquestionably a triumph to her as the maiden. Indeed, the sensation was so pronounced that her instinct on two or three occasions was merely to walk as a queen among these gods of the fallow, like a little sister of a little Jove" (p. 75). Her own men in the farm thought that she is very determined. Towards the end of the novel, moreover, we are told that she is so determined to care for her dead husband despite all: "But she said law was nothing to her, and she wouldn't let her dear husband's corpse bide neglected for folks to stare at…" (p. 305). Then the doctor wonders, and again reflecting the domineering masculine ideology, "Gracious Heaven– this mere girl! She must have the nerve of a stoic!" For Bathsheba this action was then "more of will than of spontaneity"(p. 306).

Indeed on many occasions she claims to be strong. For instance she is very strong in her defence against Boldwood when she said that she is only a girl: "You are taking too much upon yourself … Everybody is upon me – everybody. It is unmanly to attack a woman so! I have nobody in the world to fight my battles for me; but no mercy is shown. Yet if a thousand of you sneer and say things against me, I *will not* be put down!" (p. 165) And when Boldwood confronted her that Troy had kissed her she admitted defiantly in the same tone: "I am not ashamed to speak the truth" (p. 165). She wished to have attracted Boldwood naturally not artificially through her letter:

> His eyes, she knew, were following her everywhere. This was a triumph; and had it come naturally, such a triumph would have been the sweeter to her for this piquing delay. But it had been brought about by misdirected ingenuity, and she valued it only as she valued an artificial flower or a wax fruit (p. 96).

But Bathsheba "genuinely repented" and considered herself a "freak" to have disturbed "the placidity of a man she respected too highly to deliberately tease" (p. 96). Even she thought of apologizing to him, but she considered it improper. She admits that her letter was "the childish game of an idle minute. I have bitterly repented of it – ay, bitterly, and in tears" (p. 162). She knew she was responsible for Boldwood's appearance in her field when he decided to face her with the Valentine card; the narrator judges her that she "was no schemer for marriage, nor was she deliberately a trifler with the affections of men, and a censor's experience on seeing an actual flirt after observing her would have been a feeling of surprise that Bathsheba could be so different from such a one, and yet so like what a flirt is supposed to be" (p. 99). But "She resolved never again, by look or by sign, to interrupt the steady flow of this man's life" (p. 100). She was so determined in rejecting Boldwood's offer of marriage when she said to him: "I mean my meaning; that I am afraid I can't marry you, much as I respect you…. I have not fallen in love with you, Mr Boldwood – certainly I must say that" (p. 103). The narrator commented that "Bathsheba's heart was young, and it swelled with sympathy for the deep-natured man who spoke so simply" (p. 103). When he finally begged her to promise to marry him she answered that "I must think" (p. 104). Thus, she refused Boldwood's offer of marriage because she enjoys her independence as the mistress of her farm, her own self, and her own decisions: "Bathsheba's position as absolute mistress of a farm and house was a novel one, and the novelty had not yet begun to wear off"; and she has "an impulsive nature under a deliberate aspect" (p. 105).

Bathsheba's split self split and Fragmented Self is also reflected in her asking of Oak to defend her name in front of people concerning her meeting with Boldwood, he said to her: "if Mr Boldwood really spoke of marriage, I bain't going to tell a story and say he didn't to please you. I have already tried to please you too much for my own good!" (p. 107) As we know of her relations to Oak, she was also lost to understand him: "Bathsheba regarded him with round-eyed perplexity. She did not know whether to pity him for disappointed love of her, or to be angry with him for having got over it – his tone being ambiguous." She concluded: "I said I wanted you just to mention that it was not true I was going to be

married to him" (p. 107). Of course Bathsheba was so sure of herself and too demanding in her girlish behaviour towards Oak and all the other men in the novel. For example, when Oak criticized her conduct towards Boldwood she was so angry and defended her position by telling him to leave the farm: "'I cannot allow any man to – to criticize my private conduct!' she exclaimed. 'Nor will I for a minute. So you'll please leave the farm at the end of the week!'" But Oak was even stronger than her when he said that he was not so worried to leave her at once (p. 109). To support Oak's solid character the narrator here employed a suitable metaphor in describing the end of this scene: "And he took his shears and went away in placid dignity, as Moses left the presence of Pharaoh" (p. 109). We notice here the sympathy for Oak facing the arrogance and vanity of Bathsheba. Even when she needed him to come back to save her sheep she was so stubborn to send for him: "I won't send for him. No, I won't!" (p. 111) She fancied herself to have been ill-treated by him when he gave her his opinion about her conduct: "Who am I, then, to be treated like that? Shall I beg to a man who has begged to me" (p. 113). Indeed, many of her own workers wondered about her behaviour with Boldwood, when one of them said: "I don't see why a maid should take a husband when she's bold enough to fight her own battles, and don't want a home; for 'tis keeping another woman out" (p. 120). Here again she is described as "decided character" who wanted to prove her own self-determination when we know that she is hysteric about her own will; she has always acted as a teacher to her employees: "Bathsheba, after throwing a glance here, a caution there, and lecturing one of the younger operators," who were all following her orders, even Oak (p. 117). Indeed, the first change in her mood towards Oak happened when he saved her sheep: "'Gabriel, will you stay on with me?' she said, smiling winningly, and not troubling to bring her lips quite together again at the end, because, there was going to be another smile soon. 'I will,' said Gabriel. And she smiled on him again" (p. 114).

This reflects Lacan's theory that the subject, Bathsheba, is controlled by drives, needs, demands and urges; and "every drive pulsates around an original loss and thus around an irreversible lack," which puts

object relations theory in a totally different light.[10] This original loss is assumed by Freud to be an original state of primary satisfaction, which he considered to be a state of "homeostasis," the state of psychological equilibrium obtained when tension or a drive has been reduced or eliminated. In a good study of this point by Paul Verhaeghe "Causation and Destitution of a Pre-ontological Non-entity: On the Lacanian Subject", he points out that Lacan's 'subject' has an "ontological" identity (an essence of being), and this identity is an "alterology", by which he means that "alienation being the grounding mechanism and identity always coming from the Other."[11] This is true when we know that Bathsheba's real identity does come from the identity of the other men she meets all her life. As a 'subject,' Bathsheba "has a mere pre-ontological status," a metamorphosis status which is constantly changing and gaining entity and being, "which is again closely linked to the status of the unconscious. The ever divided subject is a fading, a vacillation, without any substantiality."[12] Thus, the inevitable loss of this identity sets the development in motion and provides us with the basic characteristic of every drive: the tendency to return to an original state. Again, as Verhaeghe puts it, "the entire development is motivated by a central loss, around which the ego is constituted."[13] We will never regain this state; the emphasis will be instead "upon the installation of substitute satisfactions, ranging from neurotic symptoms and fantasies to sublimation. Yet these substitute satisfactions are never satisfactory enough. The lack is irrevocable."[14]

For Freudian psychoanalysis the 'lack' is embodied in castration. Desire and castration are in fact Lacan's starting-point of discussion about the idea of lack and loss; he recognized a double loss and a double lack. For Lacan the interaction between those two losses determine the

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10 This had already become clear from Lacan's fourth seminar, *La relation d'objet* (Object-relation), in which he had developed a theory of the *lack* of object.

11 Paul Verhaeghe, "Causation and Destitution of a Pre-ontological Non-entity: On the Lacanian Subject," in *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, ed., Dany Nobus (London: Rebus Press, 1998), p. 165.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 167.

14 Ibid.

constitution of the subject. The duality also corresponds to the double level of desire and *jouissance*. *Jouissance*, for Lacan, is impossible; it is unattainable for the human subject; it is an ultimate and exhaustive state of the desire characteristic of the human libidinal economy. Indeed this duality lies at the heart of Lacan's discourse theory, which is expressed by means of the two disjunctions (impossibility and impotence) governing each discourse. Lacan declares that there are two lacks. The first one, as Verhaeghe argues, "is the lack in the chain of signifiers, the interval between two signifiers. This is the typically hysterical—and thus Freudian—level in which desire can never be fully expressed, let alone satisfied."[15] The Lacanian subject, thus, "confronted with the enigma of the desire of the Other, tries to verbalise this desire and thus constitutes itself by identifying with the signifiers in the field of the Other, without ever succeeding in filling the gap between subject and Other."[16] This achieves a solid ground when we see how Bathsheba, as a split subject, exists in a continuous movement from signifier to signifier, in which her 'subjectivity' alternately appears and disappears. And her ensuing alienation (not to mention the alienation of other male characters), as Verhaeghe would argue, "is a continuous flywheel movement around the lack in the chain of signifiers, resulting in what Lacan called the advent of the subject."[17]

Throughout the novel we clearly see how Bathsheba has many "elements of folly" or split elements in her character. The narrator describes her: "Her love was entire as a child's, and though warm as summer it was fresh as spring. Her culpability lay in her making no attempt to control feeling by subtle and careful inquiry into consequences. She could show others the steep and thorny way, but 'reck'd not her own rede" (p. 151). This also happened through her second confirmation to Boldwood that she will marry him only when she is sure: "And if I can believe in any way that I shall make a good wife I shall indeed be willing to marry you. But, Mr Boldwood, hesitation on so

15 Ibid., pp. 168-9.
16 Ibid., p. 169.
17 Ibid.; see also Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed, Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 205.

high a matter is honourable in any woman, and I don't want to give a solemn promise to-night. I would rather ask you to wait a few weeks till I can see my situation better" (p. 128). But she goes on to give him false or unsure promises of marriage: "at the end of five or six weeks, between this time and harvest … I shall be able to promise to be your wife … But remember this distinctly, I don't promise yet." And Boldwood accepted this and said: "It is enough; I don't ask more. I can wait on those dear words" (p. 128). She admits later that she loves Troy not Boldwood: "O, I love him to very distraction and misery and agony!" (p. 158). She goes on to convince herself that Troy is a good man: "He is not bad at all …. My poor life and heart, how weak I am!... O, how I wish I had never seen him! Loving is misery for women always" (p. 159). Here we clearly see how she knows herself to be a divided and lost woman, in a state of continuous lack: "Dear, dear – I don't know what I am doing since this miserable ache o' my heart has weighted and worn me so! What shall I come to! I suppose I shall get further into troubles" (p. 159). In this lost and yet another miserable situation she writes a letter to Boldwood telling him that she decided not to accept to marry him. Indeed she describes herself as "wild in a steady way" unlike Troy who for her is "steady in a wild way" (p. 159). But of course we know that she does not know him at all, which also reflects her state of lack.

Bathsheba's "irrevocable lack" is indeed always constructed through Hardy's masculine Victorian ideology, which sees her as "inherently the weaker vessel. She strove miserably against this femininity which would insist upon supplying unbidden emotions in stronger and stronger current" (p. 163).[18] And within this concept she

18 See Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Women's Lot in Seventeenth-Century England* (Heinemann, 1984; rpt., London: Phoenix Press, 2002), pp. 1-9, where she argues how women were described at that time as a weak side of society and how men should protect them. In her 640-page book she gives a nice introduction about this notion, especially how women were seen as a threat to men: "to present women as physically inferior to the male was to ignore one potentially menacing aspect of her strength well known at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This was woman's carnality. 'Though they be weaker vessels, yet they will overcome 2, 3 or 4 men in satisfying of their carnal appetites.'" Indeed "female sexual voracity was a subject of frequent comments. It was axiomatic that a woman who had once experienced sex would wish to renew the pleasure as soon as possible and as often as possible—hence the popular concept of the 'lusty widow'."

openly said the most important message to Boldwood: "I am only a girl – do not speak to me so!" (p. 165) She confirms this weak characteristic of her position as a female when she confesses to Oak how she married Troy as sign of "jealousy and distraction" in an unusual single-mindedness (p. 203). Of course she said that because she knows that Gabriel was totally devoted to her, and will never abandon her. She knows that Oak and Boldwood are definitely wiser than her in their behaviour and surer of themselves than her: "Oak was not racked by incertitude" as she has always been (p. 236). This 'incertitude' soon surfaced when she suspected Troy's relationship to Fanny: she and Troy repented getting married: "I only repent it if you don't love me better than any woman in the world! … I am not a fool, you know, although I am a woman, and have my woman's moments" (p. 219). She regrets her position now and she knows how Troy has humiliated her through his illegal marriage to Fanny: "Now, anything short of cruelty will content me. Yes! the independent and spirited Bathsheba is come to this!" (pp. 219-20) Bathsheba does not believe how she is badly treated now by Troy when she knows that she had exchanged him for two good men at different times. She fully realized now how she has always been demonized by society: "Bathsheba's beauty belonging rather to the demonian than to the angelic school" (p. 110).

This sense of demonization enhances Lacan's theory on hysteria and the 'hysteric discourse' as embodied in Bathsheba's stooping into folly and disrespect in her marriage relation with Troy:

Fraser concludes this point that although "women were regarded as undeniably weaker—yet in certain circumstances insatiably stronger." pp. 4-5. See also how in 1869, John Stuart Mill, with the help of his wife Harriet Taylor (1807-58), who was also involved in the Unitarian and Utilitarian philosophies and feminist movements of nineteenth century Britain, published his *The Subjection of Women* in order to argue against the strict Victorian "legal" and even "scientific" subordination of one sex to the other. Mill was probably forecasting Darwin's racist and dehumanizing notions concerning women in his book *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), especially in chapter 19: women are of a "characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization. … The average of mental power in man must be above that of woman … it is probable that man would have become as superior in mental endowment to woman, as the peacock is in ornamental plumage to peahen." An Internet reference: http://www.und.edu/instruct/akelsch/399/darwin.htm.

> In those earlier days she had always nourished a secret contempt for girls who were the slaves of the first good-looking young fellow who should choose to salute them. She had never taken kindly to the idea of marriage in the abstract as did the majority of women she saw about her. In the *turmoil of her anxiety* for her lover she had agreed to marry him; but the perception that had accompanied her happiest hours on this account was rather that of self-sacrifice than of promotion and honour. Although she scarcely knew the divinity's name, *Diana* was the goddess whom Bathsheba instinctively adored. That she had never, by look, word, or sign, encouraged a man to approach her - that she had felt herself sufficient to herself, and had in the *independence of her girlish heart* fancied there was a certain degradation in renouncing the simplicity of a maiden existence to become the humbler half of an indifferent matrimonial whole - were facts now bitterly remembered. *O, if she had never stooped to folly of this kind, respectable as it was, and could only stand again, as she had stood on the hill at Norcombe, and dare Troy or any other man to pollute a hair of her head by his interference!* (p. 220; italics mine)

This passage reveals that she committed a terrible mistake by marrying Troy and distorting her Diana-goddess-image which she thought she always maintained. There is a deep contradiction and a double-facedness in her when she said that she "had never, by look, word, or sign, encouraged a man to approach her - that she had felt herself sufficient to herself, and had in the independence of her girlish heart fancied there was a certain degradation in renouncing the simplicity of a maiden existence to become the humbler half of an indifferent matrimonial whole." This is not true because that is exactly what she did with Boldwood when she deliberately and childishly led him to think that she wants to marry him when she sent him the Valentine card. Only now when it is too late does she feel that she had stooped to folly to have accepted to marry him. This indeed indicates her true desires and enjoyment of entrapping men, indicates her loss and hysteria about what to do to restore and preserve her femininity and power as an independent subject. This gets clearer and more interesting to remember the symbolism behind her name, mentioned earlier.

This sense of demonization was also enhanced when Bathsheba was completely destroyed after she realized that Troy never really loved

her: "'You are nothing to me—nothing,' said Troy heartlessly. 'A ceremony before a priest doesn't make a marriage. I am not morally yours" (p. 241). She is now completely lost about what to feel and how to respond to him and to the dead Fanny: "O, I hate her, yet I don't mean that I hate her, for it is grievous and wicked; and yet I hate her a little! O God, have mercy! I am miserable at all this!" (pp. 238-9) Her sense of loss here reminds her not only of her incertitude towards Oak but also towards her own wickedness towards Oak and Boldwood. When she was in trouble she always thought of Oak "in the light of an old lover, and had momentarily imaginings of what life with him as a husband would have been like; also of life with Boldwood under the same conditions" (p. 221). Bathsheba is so naïve and childish to ask Troy to kiss her instead of kissing the dead body of Fanny and her baby; it shows how shallow and stupid she is to ask this at this tragic moment, and which drove Troy, rightly or not, to respond to her in the most violent way:

> Ah! Don't taunt me, madam. This woman is more to me, dead as she is, than ever you were, or are, or can be. If Satan had not tempted me with that face of yours, and those cursed coquetries, I should have married her. I never had another thought till you came in my way. Would to God that I had; but it is all too late! I deserve to live in torment for this!' He turned to Fanny then. 'But never mind, darling,' he said; 'in the sight of Heaven you are my very, very wife!' (p. 241)

After this dramatic encounter with Troy, Bathsheba shows some maturity and that she had learnt from her mistakes. She tries to gather some of her self-strength and pride to stand her ground and not run away from her husband as a weak wife:

> It is only women with no pride in them who run away from their husbands. There is one position worse than that of being found dead in your husband's house from his ill-usage, and that is, to be found alive through having gone away to the house of somebody else. I've thought of it all this morning, and I've chosen my course. A runaway wife is an encumbrance to everybody, a burden to herself and a byword – all of which make up a heap of misery greater than any that comes by staying at home – though this may include the trifling items of insult, beating, and starvation. (p. 245)

Again this reflects some aspects of Victorian ideology against women, as I mentioned earlier in Antonia Fraser's book, as if this was spoken by a man not a woman. The idea that women prefer to live miserably with their husbands rather than run away from them is a male idea and part of masculine language. I agree here with Bathsheba that a woman should be far more patient to protect her family and try to fix things. But I would not agree with Hardy's Victorian narrator who classified 'insult', 'beating' and 'starvations' as just trifling items; they are in no way trifles. That is why Bathsheba remained loyal to her disloyal husband, thereby again overturning the patriarchal and mythological image of being an adulterous woman. Bathsheba was certain that her husband was not dead: "I am perfectly convinced that he is still alive" (p. 262). Bathsheba knows about such Victorian ideology and she openly tells Boldwood about such masculine language: "It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs" (p. 281). To support her Victorian upbringing she indeed remained hesitant about marrying Boldwood: "I cannot say. I shouldn't yet, at any rate" (p. 282). But still again she is learning, and still again she makes a mistake by promising to marry him; she clearly says that she does not love him but yet she promises to marry him: "O what shall I do? I don't love you, and I much fear that I never shall love you as much as a woman ought to love a husband. If you, sir, know that, and I can yet give you happiness by a mere promise to marry at the end of six years, if my husband should not come back, it is a great honour to me" (p. 283). Here the narrator tells in a revealing way her perplexity about this promise:

> Bathsheba was in a very peculiar state of mind, which showed how entirely the soul is the slave of the body, the ethereal spirit dependent for its quality upon the tangible flesh and blood. It is hardly too much to say that she felt coerced by a force stronger than her own will, not only into the act of promising upon this singularly remote and vague matter, but into the emotion of fancying that she ought to promise. When the weeks intervening between the night of this conversation and Christmas day began perceptibly to diminish, her anxiety and perplexity increased. (p. 283)

Gabriel Oak told her the honest truth about her bad behaviour concerning this and older promises to marry Boldwood: "The real sin, ma'am, in my mind, lies in thinking of ever wedding wi' a man you don't love honest and true" (p. 284). Of course Bathsheba knows that she is guilty and she admits her responsibility for damaging Boldwood's life:

> That I'm willing to pay the penalty of … you know, Gabriel, this is what I cannot get off my conscience – that I once seriously injured him in sheer idleness. If I had never played a trick upon him, he would never have wanted to marry me. O if I could only pay some heavy damages in money to him for the harm I did, and so get the sin off my soul that way! (pp. 284-85)

That is why she admits that she has "been a rake" all her life and that her promises of marriage are only "a sort of penance – for it will be that! I *hate* the act of marriage under such circumstances, and the class of women I should seem to belong to by doing it!" (p. 285) What made things worse for her at this sad moment and which made her angry is that Oak never hinted about his old love to her: "Oak had not once wished her free that he might marry her himself – had not once said, 'I could wait for you as well as he.' That was the insect sting" (p. 285).

Even the villagers testify for her mixed character and that she was wrong to have led Boldwood into his tragic end: "What a fool she must have been ever to have had anything with this man! She is so self-willed and independent too, that one is more minded to say it serves her right than pity her" (p. 295). This was the right judgment of the villagers that "she was no otherwise than a girl mind, and how could she tell what the man was made of? If 'tis really true, 'tis too hard a punishment." They went on to describe her rightly as "She's hot and hasty, but she's a brave girl who'll never tell a lie however much the truth may harm her" (p. 295). In the same context, Troy describes her as a "haughty goddess, dashing piece of womanhood, Juno-wife of mine" (p. 291). Indeed her total contradiction, psychological division, and hysteria appeared at the end of the novel when she gave up her strength and at last invited Oak to speak about their past relationship and begged him not to desert her lonely after losing everybody but him: "And what shall I do without you? Oh, Gabriel, I don't think you ought to go away. You've been with me so

long – through bright times and dark times – such old friends as we are – that it seems unkind almost" (p. 313). Indeed she has always felt that Oak was her "disciple" and she does not want him to desert her, like everybody else:

> It broke upon her at length as a great pain that her last old disciple was about to forsake her and flee. He who had believed in her and argued on her side and when all the rest of the world was against her, had at last like the others become weary and neglectful of the old cause, and was leaving her to fight her battles alone. (p. 314)

What is even worse is that she felt despised not only by the people around her but by Oak himself: "Poor Bathsheba began to suffer now from the most torturing sting of all—a sensation that she was despised" (p. 314). Here at last Bathsheba felt her own weakness the most when she received a letter from Oak saying that he is leaving her; she

> actually sat and cried over this letter most bitterly. She was aggrieved and wounded that the possession of hopeless love from Gabriel, which she had grown to regard as her inalienable right for life, should have been withdrawn just at his own pleasure in this way. She was bewildered too by the prospect of having to rely on her own resources again. (pp. 314-5)

Her life was becoming a desolation and that is why she finally visited Oak and blamed herself for nearly proposing marriage to him: "It grieved me very much, and I couldn't help coming" (p. 316). Then she said to him that she will marry him if had asked her:

> If I only knew one thing – whether you would allow me to love and win you, and marry you after all – if I only knew that!'
> 'But you never will know, she murmured.'
> 'Why?'
> 'Because you never ask.'
> 'Oh – Oh!' said Gabriel, with a low laugh of joyfulness. 'My own dear—' (p. 317)

After this she realized that Oak is still Oak, the man who has always loved her, and the narrator described her again in a very romantic fashion as a beautiful rose: "as though a rose should shut and be a bud again" (p.

321). But we really wonder about this bud again whether it is possible or not to relive what is already passed her, the many miseries that she showed this man Gabriel Oak that she finally married as the last and only left option of a man.

Throughout this we can then argue that Bathsheba does reflect Lacan's theory on hysteria and the hysteric discourse. Following Freud and Lacan, Gérard Wajcman, in his essay "The Hysteric's Discourse", defines hysteria (thereby reflecting Bathsheba) as "a figment of the imagination"; "it is multiple, it is one, it is nothing; it is an entity, a malfunction, an illusion; it is true and deceptive; organic or perhaps mental; it exists, it does not exist."[19] Also Mark Micale claims that hysteria has been "disarticulated" into its component psychopathologies: "factitious illness behavior," "dissociative disorder—conversion type," "histrionic personality type," "psychogenic pain disorder," and "undifferentiated somatoform disorder."[20] Indeed hysteria is a set of opposing and even contradictory statements. And "if hysteria is a set of statements about the hysteric, then the hysteric is what eludes those statements, escapes this knowledge." Generally, the hysteric or the hysterical subject asks the questions, demands answers about "the symptom that, unexplainably, riddles her body." Indeed the hysteric resists speech and causes it. For Lacan this ambiguity structures the enunciation of the assertive statements called knowledge. Lacan called this strange and disjunctive structure of speech the "hysteric's discourse." It is the discourse of the hysteric that establishes as irremediable the

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19http://www.lacan.com/hystericdiscf.htm

20 Mark Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Diseases and its Interpretations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 292. Here Micale, like so many other critics, puts hysteria studies at the centre of literary studies; it has been persistently linked to sexual discontent and social unrest, especially in Victorian and early modern culture, hence the relevance here of Hardy's novel. Micale discusses the many historical 'cultures of hysteria' by reconstructing in detail the past usages of the term as a powerful, descriptive trope in various non-medical domains such as poetry, fiction, drama, social studies, political criticism, and the arts. See also how Claire Kahane argues that the hysteric body, with its "convulsive gestures and agonized vocalizations," "its quieter interludes of inchoate muttering or outright mutism," has come to be regarded as "the theater where fascinating spectacle of repression is staged;" thus echoing Bathsheba in Hardy's novel. Claire Kahane, *Passions of the Voice: Hysteria, Narrative and the Figure of the Speaking Woman, 1850-1915* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. xii, 13-21.

disjunction between subject and object.

When Bathsheba demands love discourse from Oak she embodies Lacan's discourse of the hysteric: it is the system of the signifier and the signified, the signifier as subject and the signified as object. Lacan believes that a signifier (Bathsheba) has meaning only in relation to another signifier (Oak); since the signifier functions only differentially, we have to posit two signifiers rather than one. Suppose a single signifier (Bathsheba) stands isolated from the chain, then it has no meaning, signifies nothing; Bathsheba admits that she cannot survive without Oak. So the second signifier (Oak) becomes like an object, another signifier, Other, or the 'treasure of signifiers' from which, and with which, one (Bathsheba) speaks. Thus, the second signifier or Other (Oak) "is a network of inter-dependent signifiers, a battery of knowledge, with knowledge defined as linguistic articulation." Lacan defines the signifier thus: it "represents the subject for another signifier." This means that the second signifier, the Other, Oak, the *object* of Bathsheba's love, is extremely important in this signifying process of the hysteric discourse as advanced by Lacan.

According to Wajcman, Lacan insists that if hysteria has no symptoms and is an essential characteristic of the speaking subject, then its discourse exhibits the most elementary mode of speech: the speaking subject is hysterical as such. "The discourse of the hysteric is fundamental, first, because it discloses the structure of speech in general and, second, because it sheds light on dimensions of human discursive practice that no one would have related to clinical hysteria." Indeed the hysteric institutes a discourse when we do not cast out her question, a question that runs irrepressibly through history, despite all attempts to set it aside once and for all. What causes this history? If we can answer this question, we will have established the hysteric as agent of discourse. To put it yet in another way: what makes the hysteric, Bathsheba, so enticing to have induced all that literature, all those male discourses of Oak, Boldwood and Troy about her and even to tame her?

To answer all this seems difficult because, to Lacan, the hysteric, Bathsheba, is a chimera, a fantasy in these men's mind; she brings to mind the myth of the sphinx. Lacan argues that with the question she poses to man, "the sphinx not only institutes a certain relation of speech, but specifically the discursive relation of agent to other. The question is

the hysteric herself; she is the barred subject whose body is marked by unexplainable symptoms." These symptoms define her discourse as a question addressed to the other. Brandishing her suffering, she acts as the sphinx posing a riddle to man. And having acknowledged her question, man (Oak, Boldwood) raises to the position of master endowed with limitless power: he is the master of knowledge supposed to have the answer capable of silencing her. Indeed Bathsheba, the subject, poses the riddle and she supposes that the other (analyst, Oak, Boldwood, Troy) is capable of resolving it. As Wajcman puts it, "the history of hysteria can be seen as many Oedipuses lined up before the sphinx, each answering her riddle in his way, none conquering Thebes (it was his answer that made Oedipus into Oedipus, says Lacan.)"

Thus, these Oedipuses lining up before the sphinx, Bathsheba, do reflect the hysteric, the sphinx posing riddles, the enigma of a woman who is causing distress and agony to all these men around her, and interestingly to herself. She compels Oak and Troy, in a basic hysteric discourse, to respond to her *demands* or her injunctive enunciation: "Tell me!" Of course they could not tell her what she wanted; she wanted them to speak the truth, and she herself wanted only speech, which, for Lacan, is a fundamental aspect of the Demand: only speech is demanded, nothing else. The one who has the power to speak and to satisfy the Demand is then Oak, Troy, the Other or the analyst. Thus by posing the riddle, Bathsheba, the hysteric, commands Oak and Troy from her position as agent, and yet in so doing entirely surrenders to them whom she empowers to answer: she tells them, "Tell me! Answer me! Whatever you say I am!" Her demand compels speech and solicits answers. As Wajcman argues, it "requests virtually all of speech, all that can be answered, as if all of language carried the mute question: 'Who am I?'" Asked by Bathsheba, this question, essential for her, appears to arise from the structure of speech with which she identifies herself: "Tell me … who I am? à I am … who you say." Yes, despite all her subjective attempts to achieve freedom she only acquired what Oak and Troy allowed to her.

According to Lacan, the subject's dependence on the Other for an answer is only symbolic. When the hysteric (Bathsheba) demonstrates that all her speech (or power) proceeds from the place of the Other, then the Other is master, letting the as yet inarticulate subject come into being. Bathsheba plays it as though she commanded the Other, Oak, yet

symbolically she is entirely dependent on whom she begs to make her a free subject. She commands and at once surrenders to him. Then her question, "Who am I?" receives the answer "You are who I say." This is how Troy objectified her when he said that she is nothing to him. Indeed when she offers herself as a precious object, compelling Oak, Troy, the male Other to always generate more knowledge about her she remains ambiguous and enigmatic. When she finally "begged" Oak to marry her she accepts the hysteric's structure of discourse, its enunciation: "I am what you say," your good wife. In a revealing manner she, the hysteric, seems to be saying to Oak: "Look at my body, there you will find the answer to my question." Bathsheba thus offers herself to Oak (and before him to Boldwood and Troy) as a ravishing enigma, as the object of a knowledge that divides her from herself. She reflects the characteristics of the hysteric, where the subject-object division is revealed in a structural way, arising from the essential function of the enigma in the relation of speech.

This, moreover, connects well with Lacan's concept of *the Real*—the world as it exists before the existence of language, the *Ur*-existence of Bathsheba. Lacan analyses a literary text in the light of his division of the human psyche, the third and most ambiguous of which is the *Real Order*. The *Real Order* is the farthest and most unreachable part of the human psyche; it is the unnamable, the outside of language. Indeed when Bathsheba acts as the sphinx she embodies this element of the unnamable. As Bressler explains, "on one hand, the Real Order consists of the physical world" with all its materialism and realism. And "on the other hand, the Real Order also symbolizes all that a person is not. Or as Lacan would say, the Real Order contains countless *object a*—objects that continually function for us as symbols of primordial lack."[21] The Real Order is thus that which "lies beyond the insistence of the signs."[22] And "because these objects, and indeed the entire physical universe, can never be parts of us, we therefore can never experience or know them except through language. And as Lacan contends, it is language that

21 Bressler, pp. 158-59.
22 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, quoted by Elizabeth Wright, p. 121.

causes our fragmentation in the first place."[23] The Real Order, therefore, can never truly be grasped or engaged with; it never fits comfortably into any conceptualization—it is continually mediated through the imaginary and the symbolic. Lacan's notion of the Real is a very difficult concept which he deliberately left as ambiguous and as symbol for the similar difficulty one experiences when reading a novel or a play for example. For Lacan literature embodies such feeling of undecidability and unknowability of one's desires, joy or terror which all come from the Real Order. Literature embodies the *jouissance*, the brief moment of joy or terror or desire that somehow arises from our unconscious psyche, whether readers or authors of these texts.[24] Indeed, for a Lacanian psychoanalytic criticism a text will be first and foremost a discourse of desire, with the result that the emphasis will be not on an appropriation of the author's meaning but on an expropriation by the reader.

One important result of this division of the human psyche led Lacan, like Freud before him, to see mental illness as a product of early childhood difficulties (notably imbalance between the Imaginary and the Symbolic), but children progressively gain self-identity by passing successfully through pre-mirror, mirror and post-mirror stages of development. This is again how Bathsheba is still looking into mirrors and still exploring who she really is and what she really wants. It is also interesting to note how Lacan saw dreams (or art, or our emotional processes) as a system of signs which we can read as any other text. We analyze dreams in Saussure's manner with signifier and signified, and through Jakobson's system of metaphor and metonymy. Metaphor, for Lacan and Freud, means understanding the frequent combination of dream images, and metonymy to characterize displacement, the process by which images shift laterally in their significance. But whereas for Saussure the sign was culturally fixed, for Lacan the language of the unconscious (dreams, verbal plays and art) lacked any such stability. Language does not mimic the psychic processes of the unconscious, any reference it makes being entirely arbitrary. Language does not represent the exterior world, moreover, though of course we pretend otherwise.

23 Bressler, p. 159. See also Rex Butler and Scott Stephens, eds., *Interrogating the Real* (London and New York: Continuum Press, 2005).
24 See Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 4-17.

Words, as patients use them in Freudian analysis, take on multiple meanings, reach back to a plurality of determining factors, and are available permanently for new uses.

Thus, according to Lacan, language does not represent the exterior world; it cannot be understood from the outside, in terms other than just language. And we cannot shield it from the discourse of the unconscious. By its very nature, language forms a web of ever-elusive meaning, a free creation which provides no stability, ground or ultimate truth, a factor that enhances the structuralist and poststructuralist contentions. Ultimately, for Lacan, as Eagleton observed, language or "all our discourse is in a sense a slip of the tongue," slippery and ambiguous, and therefore "we can never mean precisely what we say and never say precisely what we mean. Meaning is always in some sense an approximation, a near-miss, a part-failure, mixing non-sense and non-communication into sense and dialogue."[25] This is very true when we think of Bathsheba that she never meant precisely what she said to her suitors, and her meanings were always illusive and slippery.

In this context, Julia Kristeva, among many other critics, is known for her views of the *subject* and its construction within Lacanian theory, and which suits my contention here. Briefly, Kristeva rejects the formal, systematical, or structuralist understanding of the subject and advances the idea that a subject is perpetually "in process" or "in crisis." Indeed Bathsheba is perpetually "in process" and "in crisis" about her choice of marriage. One of Kristeva's most important propositions is her idea of the *semiotic*. Kristeva's term "semiotic" should not be confused with the discipline of Semiotics suggested by Saussure. "Semiotic" for her is closely related to the infantile pre-mirror state in both Lacan and Freud; it is a pattern of forces which we can detect inside language, and which represents a sort of residue of the pre-Oedipal phase. The "semiotic" is an emotional force, tied to our instincts and hidden desires, which exists in the fissures and prosody of language rather than in the denotative meanings of words. The "semiotic" is the *other* of language which is nonetheless intimately entwined with it. Ultimately, Kristeva believes that *semiotic* is not inherently feminine but is socially constructed, and in this sense the 'feminine' is seen as existing on the

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25 Eagleton, p. 169.

border, always relegated to the margins and judged inferior to the masculine power. Such marginalization of the feminine is the target against which Bathsheba was always fighting: against Gabriel Oak, Boldwood and Troy.

Looking at the character of Oak we find him throughout the novel as the epitome of psychological contradiction, semi-schizophrenia, and uneasiness although very solid in his stance and in his defense of her and remaining close to her all his life. As we know, no man will ever bear what Oak has always borne. From the very beginning of the novel we see a very revealing description of him:

> His Christian name was Gabriel, and on working days he was a young man of sound judgement, easy motions, proper dress, and general good character. On Sundays he was a man of misty views, rather given to postponing …. he went to church, but yawned privately by the time of the congregation …. he was considered rather a bad man; when they were pleased, he was rather a good man; when they were neither, he was a man whose moral colour was a kind of pepper-and-salt mixture. (p. 5)

His psychic stature was also revealed as a contradictory man earlier in the novel. He seems a man fragmented into pieces and hysterically trying to unite these fragments:

> He was at the brightest period of masculine growth, for his intellect and his emotions were clearly separated: he had passed the time during which the influence of youth indiscriminately mingles them in the character of impulse, and he had not yet arrived at the stage wherein they become united again, in the character of prejudice, by the influence of a wife and a family. (p. 6)

Oak embodies Van Haute's analysis mentioned earlier that man is "an 'in-between-being' whose existence is carried on in a dialectical relation between two antithetical terms: *jouissance* and castration. Human being is desire."[26] Oak has indeed lived all his life in this state of double being: in joy and in agony. In addition to his desires, impulses and feelings, Oak's psychological problem is also revealed through his placid and

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26 Van Haute, pp. 280-81.

static character: "his special power, morally, physically, and mentally, was static, owing little or nothing to momentum as a rule" (p. 12). Interestingly Oak seems to enjoy his loneliness and misery without Bathsheba:

> For a moment he seemed impressed with the speaking loneliness of the scene, or rather with the complete abstraction from all its compass of the sights and sounds of man. Human shapes, interferences, troubles, and joys were all as if they were not, and there seemed to be on the shaped hemisphere of the globe no sentient being save himself; he could fancy them all gone round to the sunny side. (p. 13)

Even Oak's music and existence are compared to Noah's Ark; his hut is like the ark as a sign of primordial existence (p. 11), the innocent, even primitive, existence of Oak, the unnamable, the outside of language existence; the existence as Lacan describes, as I mentioned earlier, which never fits comfortably into any conceptualization. Playing his flute as he tends his sheep, Gabriel evokes the carefree, flute-playing shepherds that populated the old traditional idyllic landscapes, the pastoral literary tradition, an ancient classical form that enjoyed new popularity during the Renaissance as nicely employed by Hardy in this novel. Throughout the novel Gabriel will occupy the position of the observer who watches others make mistakes without ever implicating himself in the action; the traditional pastoral lyric commented on the civilized world in a tone of similar detachment. Oak is described as a gazer, observer, voyeur: first looking from hiding at Bathsheba in chapter 1; then in chapter 2 looking at her and her aunt. He is also imaginative: if he cannot fully see things he would imagine them. He was indeed described as "a beholder"; Gabriel "blushes" rather than she (p. 17). And "Oak kept his usual watch upon the cowshed" (p. 19). Oak "continued to watch through the hedge for her regular coming" (p. 22). Indeed he had

> watched the blue wood-smoke curling from the chimney with strange meditation. At evening he had fancifully traced it down the chimney to the spot of its origin – seen the hearth and Bathsheba beside it – beside it in her out-door dress; for the clothes she had worn on the hill were by association equally with her person included in the compass of his

> affection; they seemed at this early time of his love a necessary ingredient of the sweet mixture called Bathsheba Everdene. (p. 23)

At the same time, the novel has the plot of a romance: a man meets a woman and falls in love. Hardy ardently analyses the way a person in love forms ideas about the loved one, even if the two share only the slightest acquaintance. He analyses the delusions of human psychology, particularly regarding love, concluding that love is rarely returned with equal intensity, despite what the lover leads himself/herself to believe. For Oak Bathsheba is this sweet ambiguous mixture of feelings that he had in his own imagination and away from her own reality. He always looked at her in his "hazy conceptions of her charms" (p. 17). His misconceptions of her started from the very beginning when he saw her as a vain woman. Twice Gabriel admits to Bathsheba that he was watching her: "How do you know", she asks, and he answers, "I saw you" (p. 18). The narrator mocks how Oak prepared for his first visit to Aunt Hurst, how for instance he "used all the hair-oil he had possessed upon his usually dry, sandy, and inextricably curly hair, till he had deepened it to a splendidly novel colour, between that of guano and Roman cement, making it stick to his head like mace round a nutmeg, or wet seaweed round a boulder after the ebb" (p. 23). This shows how determined a character Oak was to obtain the admiration of Bathsheba. In another form of mockery the narrator commented on Oak's chances of love and exchange of love with Bathsheba in a very interesting monetary images. He started calculating things to win her heart: "Love being an extremely exacting usurer … every morning Oak's feelings were as sensitive as the money-market in calculations upon his chances" (p. 22). We know that Oak started and remained a dreamer in his relationship with Bathsheba. From the very beginning he started to imagine things about love and marrying her; he isolated himself in thinking about her:

> Love is a possible strength in an actual weakness. Marriage transforms a distraction into a support, the power of which should be, and happily often is, in direct proportion to the degree of imbecility it supplants. Oak began now to see light in this direction, and said to himself, 'I'll make her my wife, or upon my soul I shall be good for nothing!' (p. 23)

He said all this while he was planning to visit her aunt and ask for her marriage. Indeed, Oak's first proposal of marriage was romantic but so real. Gabriel's conversation with Bathsheba shows her to be a capricious, spirited young woman who has never been in love. The two discuss marriage with remarkable frankness and realism. His reality continued all his life: after the death of his ewes Oak decided to become a bailiff and then a shepherd; and he was practically ready to change his life to fit circumstance. Gabriel has always been presented with a series of difficulties, and yet he consistently passes the test. Indeed, the way in which he repeatedly overcomes his challenges, honour intact, constitutes part of Gabriel's idealized portrayal in the novel as a whole. While Bathsheba and Sergeant Troy interest us precisely because of the ways in which each character's strengths and faults play against each other, Gabriel is almost utterly noble and reliable. He loses his sheep and reacts by mourning for the sheep rather than for himself; on his way to Weatherbury, Oak went in a wagon by chance and he heard people talking about Bathsheba and he was surprised to know that she is now a farmer; we also admire how he stopped the fire in Bathsheba's barn, of course by chance, when he was searching for a job: he comes across the fire and knows exactly how to stop it (pp. 39-41). Oak is indeed the idealized hero of the novel; he is described as "an epitome of the world's health and vigour" (p. 86).

Gabriel is characterized by an incredible ability to read the real and natural world and control it without fighting against it. He watches everybody throughout most of the book and he knows just when to step in and save Bathsheba and others from catastrophe. For example, Oak threatened everyone in the neighbourhood about gossiping about Bathsheba: "Now – the first man in the parish that I hear prophesying bad of our mistress, why' … he'll smell and taste that – or I'm a Dutchman" (p. 88). Moreover, Oak believes that Bathsheba "has a right to be her own baily if she choose" or to run her own farm her own way (p. 89). He is also described by the narrator during the sheep-shearing in romantic epithets: "Gabriel, who flitted and hovered under her bright eyes like a moth, did not shear continuously, half his time being spent in attending to others and selecting the sheep for them" (p. 117); Oak is so pleased to be admired by Bathsheba: "Poor Gabriel's soul was fed with a luxury of content by having her over him, her eyes critically regarding his skilful

shears" (p. 118). Moreover, Oak is still in love with Bathsheba when she meets Boldwood for the second time in the sheep-shearing session: "he inwardly said, 'I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets!'" But Oak "adored Bathsheba just the same" (p. 122). This shows the imbalances of affection in human relations as shown by Hardy in this novel; this imbalance of being in love but not loved characterizes the relationship between Gabriel and Bathsheba, as well as that between Sergeant Troy and Fanny Robin and others. Oak always remained the permanent teacher and her psychological mentor, her Other and analyst: he tells her that Troy does not suit her and that she treated Boldwood wrongly by shifting her attention to Troy (p. 153). He clearly warned her against Troy not just in jealousy but in real care for her and his real knowledge of the man:

> I believe him to have no conscience at all. And I cannot help begging you, miss, to have nothing to do with him. Listen to me this once – only this once! I don't say he's such a bad man as I have fancied – I pray to God he is not. But since we don't exactly know what he is, why not behave as if he *might* be bad, simply for your own safety? Don't trust him, mistress; I ask you not to trust him so. (p. 154)

Once again Oak admits that he loves her truly:

> You know, mistress, that I love you, and shall love you always. I only mention this to bring to your mind that at any rate I would wish to do you no harm: beyond that I put it aside…. But Bathsheba, dear mistress, this I beg you to consider – that, both to keep yourself well honoured among the workfolk, and in common generosity to an honourable man who loves you as well as I, you should be more discreet in your bearing towards this soldier. (pp. 154-55)

Again Bathsheba felt humiliated by his teachings to her and for telling her the truth about Troy, and that is why she asked him to leave the farm. But then immediately she changed her opinion and asked him to stay. As we have seen throughout the novel, Hardy has employed the traditional novel with the traditional theme of marriage in that a heroine is given a choice of two or more suitors, and at the end of the novel, she makes the "correct" choice. Indeed unlike a novel such as Jane Austen's *Pride and*

Prejudice or *Sense and Sensibility* which focuses on a girl who wants to find a husband, Bathsheba's economic and emotional independence allow her the choice of not marrying, and she has an interest in maintaining the farm and preserving her freedom. We know that many of Hardy's female characters show similar independence and interest in work or scholarship.

Ultimately, Gabriel Oak embodies Hardy's ideal of a life in harmony with the forces of society and the natural world. In the last few chapters of the novel we notice how Oak fulfills his classic role of the intelligent, sensible observer, who does not take part in the action, but who finally saves Bathsheba from desolation and marries her. Indeed her trip to Gabriel's cottage is the final instance of the series of intimate discussions about marriage the two have from the very outset of the novel, beginning with Gabriel's first proposal. In the previous scenes, Bathsheba has been hurt when Gabriel has not confessed his devotion to her. Here, finally, she is driven to admit her own love for him. This time, she, in tatters, is the one who introduces the notion of their marrying. But we clearly notice how Hardy is careful to show that the love that Gabriel and Bathsheba share is not the passion of a first love but a sadder and wiser connection. In the final scene, Jan Coggan makes a joke, and the narrator tells us, "Then Oak laughed. Bathsheba smiled (for she never laughed readily now), and their friends turned to go" (p. 322). While the ending is ostensibly a happy one, that happiness is tempered by all that has happened.

Next to Oak's strange characteristics are Boldwood's and Troy's whose main function in the novel is to give more psychological insight on Bathsheba herself. They are 'subjects', second signifiers, or the Other, who are developing her maturity in a network of inter-dependent signifiers, and inducing her knowledge embodied in linguistic articulation. As his name signifies, Boldwood is indeed a bold and solid man, but somewhat wooden and reserved—Gabriel Oak is the same oak man, strong and patient angel-like man. Boldwood's "wood" was burnt down and his life was devastated into contradiction and psychological dilemmas which finally led him to crime and real torture. Boldwood is an extreme case of psychological disequilibrium in the novel (p. 97); his hysterical case finally led him actually to kill Troy in a wild fit of hysteria at the end. Indeed Boldwood was so direct and bold to ask her for marriage: "My life is a burden without you … I want you – I want you to

let me say I love you again and again!" (p. 102) But deep down Boldwood feels that he is humiliated by her: "Now the people sneer at me – the very hills and sky seem to laugh at me till I blush shamefully for my folly. I have lost my respect, my good name, my standing – lost it, never to get it again. Go and marry your man – go on!" (p. 165) This shows Boldwood's real anger for losing her to Troy, and he gave us his most passionate speech in this context: "I'll punish him – by my soul, that will I! I'll meet him, soldier or no, and I'll horsewhip the untimely stripling for his reckless theft of my one delight. If he were a hundred men I'd horsewhip him" (p. 166). Boldwood blames Troy for destroying his chances of marriage with Bathsheba and he acted in a funny way when he tried to bribe Troy to leave Bathsheba:

> I'll pay you well now, I'll settle a sum of money upon her, and I'll see that you don't suffer from poverty in the future. I'll put it clearly. Bathsheba is only playing with you; you are too poor for her as I said; so give up your wasting your time about a great match you'll never make for a moderate and rightful match you may make tomorrow; take up your carpet-bag, turn about, leave Weatherbury now, this night, and you shall take fifty pounds with you. (p. 183)

But of course Boldwood was so disappointed, and he changed his mind after hearing how Bathsheba loves Troy; he turned romantic, self-sacrificing and even masochistic when he told Troy to love her truly (p. 186). Of course both Boldwood and Troy serve as agents in probing the inner psyche of Bathsheba in the real sense of the word. We know how sensitive, vulnerable, weak, shallow, mixed and split a character Bathsheba really is through her relationship with these men. Bathsheba's first view of Troy is a perfect example of how Hardy conveys to us the sensory misconception and misunderstanding of character; after utter darkness, Bathsheba sees a handsome man in scarlet and brass, who later turned out to be ugly inside. This symbolizes how she was misled by his soldiery looks but deep down he is rotten. The sword exercise is another example of how Bathsheba is overpowered by the sensory experience of having the blade surround her from all directions, nearly touching her. In Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, the blade has a phallic function, and it is interesting to see how Bathsheba is surrounded by blades, penises which would want to penetrate her. We notice how Sergeant Troy is repeatedly linked to a bright, burning colour of scarlet. Bathsheba can spot his red uniform in the field with ease. There is a deep irony here in

this phallic association of Troy when Bathsheba immediately changes her mind towards promising Boldwood to give him an answer to his proposal in six weeks. Thus, when she sees Sergeant Troy and imagines her blissful sexual life with him she immediately decides that she no longer wants Boldwood.

The speed of this growing intimacy contrasts strongly with the slow development of Bathsheba's relations with Oak and then with Boldwood. Indeed, we see the meaning of how Troy meets her in the wood, another phallic symbol, the womb, an ambiguous sign of knowing Troy and his intentions. This narrative situation creates in the reader a tense feeling of frustration as we watch Bathsheba enter Troy's trap. Through Troy we fully see the inner faults and weaknesses of Bathsheba and at the same time the real strength of Oak as exhibited throughout the novel. Throughout the novel we see Troy as a man who is lost and who is inferior and who is a psychic and schizophrenic who was shot dead for his dark, hidden and forbidden drives that actually destroyed the happiness of other people.

Moreover, Fanny is described in the novel as a mere shade, another riddle, or just a spot upon the earth, in the same way that Troy was described as a wall speaking to her across the barracks (p. 71). Throughout the novel, Fanny is constructed as a type of person who slips through the cracks in society; we hardly know what kind of person she is; she is neglected by others, forced to live a transient and impoverished life; she is seen as ignorant and naïve. That is why Hardy uses an anonymous and distanced tone to describe her, thus, conveying the lack of attention that others pay her. Although Bathsheba resents Fanny, her sympathy towards her shows her to be far more sensitive than she has previously appeared; her dependence on Troy has brought her humility. Bathsheba has learned generosity and sympathy through her own weakness for Troy, a trait she did not possess at the beginning of the novel. Troy's regret does not benefit Fanny, serving only to hurt Bathsheba. Thus, he is not worthy to decorate Fanny's grave, and maybe worthy of his own punishment at the end of the story.

Thus, psychoanalyzing *Far from the Madding Crowd* reveals that both Fanny and Bathsheba are constructed as riddles, enigmas that cannot be understood by men, but compel them, their analysts, to venture

answers.[27] They truly embody the hysteric discourse with their place as determined by the function of teasing knowledge (*pousse-à-savoir*) attributed to them, to the hysteric. After all, Fanny and Bathsheba always tried to seduce the desiring man to learn about them, about the object that causes their desire. And this object, which has dropped out of the speech cycle set in motion by the Demand, is the hysteric herself (as we have seen, she is both the object which causes man's desire and the object of this desire). Indeed, for Lacan, the discourse of the hysteric bears a strong relation to the notion of the Demand, which Lacan previously called the "gap of desire" and now appears as *objet petit a*, or dropout from the signifying relation, inasmuch as the quest for satisfaction necessarily receives an inadequate answer. The hysteric discourse, therefore, arises with the non-response of the analyst to the hysteric's demand: Bathsheba, or Fanny, will never receive adequate answers from their male analysts. It seems that true knowledge of these women is possible only if we let them, the riddle, speak by her/itself.

Finally, we have seen throughout *Far from the Madding Crowd* that the hysteric, Bathsheba (or Fanny), embodies such division in her own subjectivity, between subject and object in a particular way; as 'subject' she incites desire but when this desire moves towards the object that causes it, the hysteric cannot condescend to be this object. Bathsheba particularly incites man to know what causes his desire, inciting him to acknowledge her as the inaccessible object of his desire. Thus, as Lacan argues, hysteria is a riddle, and remains a riddle; nothing truer to be stated of a riddle than: "It is a riddle." Bathsheba offers her charms; she captivates the men around her. She provokes the man's desire and then suddenly disappoints it; she retreats at the very moment when he risks a response to her advances: being the object of his desire is the position she cannot endure. Her game is to present herself as desirable; but when this offer is taken seriously, she withdraws and will not have been what one thought she was. This tenuous and non-negotiable position between subject and object is always expressed in her acceptance then rejection of Oak, then acceptance and rejection of Boldwood and again Oak and again

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27 It is very interesting to compare all this to Hardy's poem "The Riddle" in which he talks exactly about such female figure, a sphinx-like woman who is always stretching her eyes west over the sea in a transfixed manner. Thomas Hardy, *Collected poems of Thomas Hardy* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), p. 420.

Boldwood let alone Troy. This seems Bathsheba's game in the novel, the castrating dimension of her behaviour, which becomes evident till the end. She pushes man towards knowledge and then she also pushes him towards failure (with Troy it is even death, and indirectly death to Fanny). These men who got involved with her always find themselves stupid, humiliated, abandoned and even killed. But it seems that "the erratic quality of the hysteric's discourse," as Wajcman puts it, "derives more from the structure which necessitates hysteria than from the hysteric who asks to be interpreted in terms of the structure." To reveal herself as the speaking subject in her narratives, then, Bathsheba appears as fundamentally hysterical; as Lacan concludes, the only subject of psychoanalysis is the barred, unconscious, hysterical subject. Thus, the question of subjectivity and hysteria is only structural and not historical: when the subject demands to be recognized as an effect of language, it lines up with the analyst, whose existence is also sustained by the fact that language has effects. The hysteric, Bathsheba, does not only resist being apprehended by men, but she cannot accept to be an object of investigation because she is simply unknowable.

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