VICISSITUDES AND DETERMINISM:
A Study of Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles

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I

Hardy asserted in his preface to Tess of the d'Urbervilles in 1891 that the story was sent out as "an attempt to give artistic form to a true sequence of things". A true sequence of things is some actual happenings which stirred Hardy's imagination, but he was not bound by the monotonous fact. A writer is a seer "who should watch that pattern among the general things which his idiosynaracy moves him to observe and describe that alone. This is, quite accurately, a going to Nature, yet the result is not mere photography, but purely the product of the writer's own mind." Each novel is a work of art conveying the particular concept of life, either "a criticism of life" or "a revelation of life" of the artist to his reader, and the novelist should not limit himself to a strict aesthetic system in approach to his subject. A novelist should be one who can "throw a stronger irradiation" over subjects with which the reader is already familiar.

Tess Durbeyfield is seen as a nineteen-century Victorian woman whose personality development as a woman becomes blighted by cultural pressures. At that time, the class-conscious society regarded the peasant as an inferior member of society and woman as inferior to man. Tess was unfortunately a woman, and her family, the Durbeyfields, was once part of the aristocratic d'Urbervilles, and now only a decaying peasant family. Tess's misfortune came partly from weak parents, being the eldest of seven children. Both factors forced her into a position of responsibility. Added to her character, which is daydreamy, proud, conscientious, strong and loving, this makes her vulnerable to the family's needs. The emphasis everywhere in the novel is on Tess — "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented", as Hardy subtitled the story. The novel, like Hardy's two other "portrait" novels, The Mayor of Casterbridge and Jude the Obscure, focuses on the exploration of the central figure. We see how Tess
is caught between and compromised by these conflicting values—values inherent in Nature, in the "heart of things" or of "human institution". Her low social status, family shiftlessness, her seduction by Alec d’Urberville and the view of society as represented by Angel Clare about her as a "fallen" woman, and the way Hardy presents her as a pure woman in spite of her loss of virginity.

II

The central theme of Hardy's novels, as explained by Hardy himself, is about life; so is *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*. In his transferring life to art, Hardy constantly shows the different levels of perception of Tess's situation. He presents Tess's situation with a contrast: her natural purity is sinful and unforgivable in the eyes of the social conventions. The contrast is complicated and intensified by Hardy's artistic construction on her: "both as she is and she is seen." Hardy continually emphasizes that presenting Tess is presenting no more that the tragic complexity of ordinary human nature. Hardy does not make Tess's character real by the accuracy which he portrays her appearance, conversation or the working of her mind. Instead, he deliberately shows her as objectively as others see her. Hardy's introduction of her is completely casual, she appears, among the white-clad village girls, merely as "a fine and handsome girl — not handsomer than others" taking part in the traditional May-Day "club-walking". Our attention is drawn to her because one of the women exclaims to her: "The Lord—a—Lord! Why, Tess Durbeyfield, if there isn't thy father riding in carriage!" (p. 12). And because her father riding in a carriage has evoked such an exclamation which produces a rough impression on the reader of the poverty of her family. At this moment we notice she is the only one of the white company wearing a red ribbon in her hair to "boast of such a pronounced adornment." (p. 12) She is a "mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience" (p. 13), and her appearance can not arouse general attention: "A small minority, mainly strangers, would look long at her in casually passing by, and grow momentarily fascinated by her freshness ... but to almost everybody she was a fine and picturesque country girl and no more" (p. 14). Angel Clare's first glimpse of her is similarly casual: "she had
looked so soft in her thin white gown" (p. 17), and then dismisses the thought of her from his mind. So when Angel met her again two years later, he could not remember where he had seen her before.

For Hardy, "the uncommonness must be in the events, not in the character." For his art is to "juxtapose plausible human beings and strange uncommon events, the real and the fantastic." Tess is first seen as a credible common character, and her misery seems to have its source in a twist of luck and ill omens. If Parson Tringham had not revealed to John Durbeeyfield his great ancestors—the d'Urbervilles with their heraldic tombs in the church of Kingshere, the useless piece of information is now only a burden and a hindrance to her family; if the natural indolence had not made John Durbeeyfield absurdly believe his ancestors could do them good; if Mrs. Durbeeyfield had not taken this advantage to let Tess to "claim kin" of the spurious d'Urbervilles; if Tess had not taken over her father's job of transporting bee hives because he was too drunk to do it and because of her own pride of not allowing others to help them—Durbeeyfield's horse, Prince, would not have been killed, Tess would not have visited the d'Urbervilles and she might have lived as peacefully as the country folks. In the novel, Tess's life is full of vicissitudes, any tiny incident having its great effect on her. Hardy retreats to the "oddities of life which determine man's frail existence" which backs up his way of working, and chance is his weapon to attack his "anti-realism of implausible events."10

Tonny Tanner has suggested that "the destiny of Tess comes to us as a cumulation of visible omens!" He points out that the color of red and the significance of blood are firmly associated with Tess from the beginning to the end. When she is first introduced to us, she is the only one of the dancing women wearing a "red ribbon" in her hair. When she for the first time saw Alec d'Urberville, "who stood fair to be the blood-ray in the spectrum of her young life" (p. 47); and then one of the roses given to her by Alec pricked on her chin, she thought "this is an ill omen" (p. 50). Then Tess was splashed with blood of Prince, which was killed by an oncoming coach. The wild luxurious flowers in the garden at Talbothays blighted her with red stains as she walked near to listen to Angel's playing on the harp. Later as an act of mercy, she strangled the bleeding and dying pheasants in the wood on her way to Flintcomb-Ash. And when Alec insulted her, she slashed him with her heavy leather
gauntlet, and the blood began dropping from his mouth upon the straw, and it was the same blood on the ceiling, which had "the appearance of a gigantic ace of hearts". The red images bring out at last the murder of Alec and Tess's execution. All these are but a random succession of incidents firmly placed in a background of solely observed facts, which in retrospect take an ominous significance. Almost every detail in the novel, imaginative or descriptive, alludes to the inevitability of Tess's tragedy. For instance, after her seduction by Alec, Tess saw "before her a long stony highway which she had to tread, without aid, and with little sympathy. Her expression was then terrible, and she could have hidden herself in a tomb" (p. 106). When Angel was, at first, attracted to Tess's fanciful thinking, Hardy uses a symbolic detail to point out the tragic end of Tess's life: Dairyman Crick's knife and fork "planted erect on the table, like the beginning of a gallows" (p. 154). Vigar suggests that the oddities and coincidences of Hardy's plot is acceptable because Hardy has merely exaggerated the qualities of the picture which are "latent", without sacrificing the apparent and recognizable fact. In the description of a scene at half-past six in the evening, as seen through Tess's eyes, the sun, setting down upon the level, is "a great forge"; the moon, arising in the other direction, is "monstrous pumpkinlike" (p. 229).

III

It seems to me that "Tess is deposited in one situation after another, none of them really of her choosing, for the most important incidents are accidental." In fact, the development of Tess's tragedy does not depend entirely on these external factors. Although physically a member of the rural community, she is nevertheless singled out and alienated from its society. She has a special quality of "reveries" which results in her alienation and also is our primary source of understanding her character. The special quality of her "dreamy unreality" is disclosed early in her trip. Her abstract state of mind brings about the accidental death of Prince:
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... Tess fell more deeply into reverie than ever, her back
leaning against the hives. The mute procession past her
shoulders of trees and hedges became attached to fantastic
scenes outside reality, and the occasional heave of the wind
became the sigh of some immense sad soul, conterminous
with the universe in space, and with history in time.

Then, examining the mesh of events in her own life, she
seemed to see the vanity of her father's pride; the gentlemanly
suitor awaiting herself in her mother's fancy; to see
him as a grimacing personage, laughing at her poverty and
her shrouded knightly ancestry. Everything grew more and
more extravagant, and she no longer knew how time passed.
A sudden jerk shook her in her seat, and Tess awoke from the
sleep into which she, too, had fallen. (pp. 34-35)

Not only "the personal charms which Tess could boast of were
in main part her mother's gift" (p. 20), but Tess's dreaminess was
also inherited from her mother. With the effects of alcohol, Mrs.
Durbeyfield could leave the world of hard fact into the world of
fancy:

This going to hunt up her shiftless husband at the inn
was one of Mrs. Durbeyfield's still extant enjoyments in the
muck and muddle of rearing children. To discover him at
Rolleiver's, to sit there for an hour or two by his side and
dismiss all thought and care of the children during the inter-
val, made her happy. A sort of halo, an occidental glow,
came over life then. Troubles and other realities took on
themselves a metaphysical impalpability, sinking to mere
mental phenomena for serene contemplation, and no longer
stood as pressing concretions which chafed body and soul.
The youngsters, not immediately within sight, seemed ra-
ther bright and desirable appurtenances than otherwise; the
incidents of daily life were not without humorousness and
jollity in their aspect there. She felt a little as she had
used to feel when she sat by her now wedded husband in the
same spot during his wooing, shutting her eyes to his defects
of character, and regarding him only in his ideal presentation
as lover (p. 23).
Mrs. Durbeyfield is relatively satisfied with her situation because she faces life with exceptional calmness. But Tess does not see life as her mother does. She refuses to accept the natural habits of resilience and blindness of her parents' folk culture. "She has regrets, she reasons."

The highway accident makes her become more responsible to her family than ever and causes her to visit the spurious d'Urbervilles and thus to meet Alec. Hardy scarcely mentions Tess's attitude at this moment except that:

Having at last taken her course, Tess was less restless and abstracted going about her business with some self-assurance in the thought of acquiring another horse for her father by an occupation which would not be onerous. She had hoped to be a teacher at the school but the fates seemed to decide otherwise (p. 55).

As Tess rides away from home with Alec, the landscape performs a dual function, both actual and symbolic:

.... Rising still, an immense landscape stretched around them on every side; behind, the green valley of her birth, before, a gray country of which she knew nothing except from her first brief visit to Trantridge. (p. 62)

And at the close of her first meeting with d'Urberville, Hardy furnishes one of his conceptual commentaries, which implicitly addresses to the tensions among Tess, Angel and Alec:

In the ill-judged execution of the well-judged plan of things the call seldom produces the comer, the man to love rarely coincides with the hour for loving. Nature does not often say 'SEE!' to her poor creature at a time when seeing can lead to happy doing; or reply 'Here!' to a body's cry of 'Where?' till the hide-and-seek has become an irksome, outworn game. We may wonder whether at the acme and summit of the human progress these anachronisms will be corrected by a finer intuition, a closer interaction of the social machinery than that which now jolts us round and along; but such completeness is not to be prophesied, or even conceived as possible. Enough that in the present case, as in millions, it was not the two
halves of a perfect whole that confronted each other at the perfect moment; a missing counterpart wandered independently about the earth waiting in crass obtuseness till the late time came. Out of which maladroit delay sprang anxieties, disappointments, shocks, catastrophes, and passing-strange destinies (pp. 48-49).

Just before the seduction scene, Alec catches his opportunity because Tess can not be a part of the drunkards walking across the fields at night. And again, at this crucial moment, Tess falls into "reverie" (P. 89). It is not an "arguement" but simply an "impression" that such a "beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically as blank as snow as yet to be traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive" (p. 91). Her seduction is another accidental incident; from Mrs. Durbeyfield's view, it is an acceptable matter, the only mistake Tess has made is not getting Alec to marry her. She insists to let things go in a natural way: "Well we must make the best of it, I suppose, 'Tis nater, after all, and what do please God!" (p. 104). But the daughter can not agree to the mother's view. She struggles against the country folk attitude toward love and marriage, but the result is that her attempt at culture transition contributes to her conflicts. She later rejects her mother's guidance by confessing her misfortune to Angel. "Tess's tragedy turns on a secret revealed, that is, on the substitution in Tess of an individualizing morality for the folk instinct of anonymity and concealment."

From Tess's point of view, the seduction changes her situation rather than it changes her. Her internal state is contained in the Phase headed "Maiden No More": While unconsciously "her quiescent glide was of a piece with the element she moved in. Her flexuous and stealthy figure became an integral part of the scene." But her innate dreaminess alienates her from the environment; she imagines natural sights and sounds as proclaiming her guilt:

... At times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her till they seemed a part of her own story. Rather they became a part of it; for the world is only a psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were. The midnight airs and gusts, moaning amongst the tightly-wrapped buds and bark of the winter twigs, were formulae
of bitter reproach. A wet day was the expression of irre-
mediable grief at her weakness in the mind of some vague
ethical being whom she could not class definitely as the God
of her childhood, and could not comprehend as any other (p.
108).

Hardy not only presents what is going on in Tess's mind,
but also criticizes it. He then clearly informs the reader that Tess
is wrong in feeling this way:

But this encompassment of her own characterization,
based on shreds of convention, peopled by phantoms and
voices antipathetic to her, was a sorry and mistaken crea-
tion of Tess's fancy — a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which
she was terrified without reason. It was they that were out
of harmony with the actual world, not she. Walking among
the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rab-
bbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden
bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding
into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was
making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling
herself in antagonism, she was quite in accord. She had
been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known
to the environment in which she fancied herself such an
anomaly (p. 108).

If she sees things as "essentially naturalistic" as that of the
country folks, she might take things easy as they come, and live in
harmony with her environment. But her dreaminess makes her com-
pletely confused between "Guilt" and "innocence". This confusion
is really, in my opinion, central to the theme of the novel. Tess,
in spite of her conventional desire to baptize her dying baby, reveals
her tragic rebelliousness in her makeshift ritual. Though her "in-
stinctive solution" to this problem is surely the right one:

.... she had no uneasiness now, reasoning that if Provi-
dence would not ratify such an act of approximation she,
for one, did not value the kind of heaven lost by the irregu-
larity — either for herself or for her child. (p. 120)

Tess suffers and changes internally at this stage, but Hardy
does not focus on these:

Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed in her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice. Her eyes grew larger and more eloquent. She became what would have been called a fine creature; her aspect was fair and arresting; her soul that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize.... (p. 125).

Tess's separation from the community does not result in the birth of her illegitimate child. The country folks think of the girl-mother only as a social warning that "they could not refrain from mischiefously throwing in a few verses of the ballad about the maid who went to the merry green wood and came back a changed state" (p. 116). And it is a social sin only in the eyes of someone like Angel Clare.

It is Tess's own "keen consciousness" of her trouble that makes her decide to leave home to "escape the past and all that appertained thereto was to annihilate it" (p. 126). When she sets out going to Talbothays dairy, in spite of her social handicap, she still "was unexperienced youth, surging up anew after its temporary check, and bringing with it hope, and the invincible instinct towards self-delight" (p. 127). At Talbothays, Tess begins her "rally" that "the irresistible, universal automatic tendency to find sweet pleasure somewhere, which pervades all life, from the meanest to the highest, and at length mastered Tess" (p. 134).

IV

Angel Clare is an intellectual idealist, a modern man inexperienced in human matter. He has all the intellectual qualifications for being "advanced", but is shattered when his ideals are confronted
by reality. When Tess meets Angel again, she finds him "educated, reserved, subtle, sad, differing" (p. 144) and "nebulous, preoccupied, vague, in his bearing" (p. 147). His early association with country solitudes has "bred in him an unconquerable, and almost unreasonable, aversion to modern town life" (p. 150); therefore he serves his apprenticeship at Crick's Dairy — the vocation, he thinks, will keep his "intellectual liberty" (p. 151). He is attracted by Tess' special quality of reveries when he first sees Tess among the dairymaids:

Clare looked round upon her, seated with the others.

She was not looking towards him. Indeed, owing to his long silence, his presence in the room was almost forgotten.

'"I don't know about ghosts," she was saying; 'but I do know that our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive.'

The dairyman turned to her with his mouth full, his eyes charged with serious inquiry, and his great knife and fork (breakfasts were breakfasts here) planted erect on the table, like the beginning of a gallows.

'What — really now? And is it so, maidy?' he said.

'A very easy way to feel 'em go,' continued Tess, 'is to lie on the grass at night and look straight up at some big bright star; and, by fixing your mind upon it, you will soon find that you are hundreds and hundreds o' miles away from your body, which you don't seem to want at all' (p. 154).

All are surprised at her talking, Tess remarks evasively that '"it was only a fancy!"', but already deeply impresses Angel and leads him to select her in preference to the other pretty milkmaids. Angel is so surprised at "such a daughter of soil" who feels what he thinks:

'The trees have inquisitive eyes haven't they? — that is, seem as if they had. And the river says, — "Why do ye trouble me with your looks?" And you seem to see
numbers of to-morrows just all in a line, the first of them the biggest and clearest, the others getting smaller and smaller as they stand further away; but they all seem very fierce and cruel and as if they said, "I'm coming! Beware of me! Beware of me!"... But you, sir, can raise up dreams with your music, and drive all such horrid fancies away!

He was surprised to find this young woman—who though but a milkmaid had just that touch of rarity about her which might make her the envied of her housemates—shaping such sad imaginings. She was expressing in her own native phrases—assisted a little by her Sixth Standard training—feelings which might almost have been called those of the age—the ache of modernism (pp. 159-60).

The "ache of modernism" which Angel discovers in Tess is a "nameless fear" of "life in general", the "gloomy spectres" and "shapes of darkness"—"doubt, fear, moodiness, care, shame" which haunt Tess in particular. And we see Angel is somehow free "from the Chronic melancholy which is taking hold of the civilized races with the decline of belief in a beneficent Power" (p. 152), he still looks "upon it as a mishap to be alive" (p. 144). He does not understand that "experience is as to intensity, and not as to duration" (p. 160). Tess's "mental harvest" is her passing corporeal blight. Angel has reached "modernism" only intellectually; "the real recognition" is possible, if he submits to actual experience.

At Talbothays Angel learns much. Removing from the cultivated middle class into the rural community, he discovers education and culture are of no use to human happiness. It is important to be oneself rather than society says what one should be:

.... He held that education had as yet but little affected the beats of emotion and impulse on which domestic happiness depends. It was probable that, in the lapse of ages, improved systems of moral and intellectual training would appreciably, perhaps considerably, elevate the involuntary and even the unconscious instincts of human nature; but up to the present day culture, as far as he could see, might be said to have affected only the mental epiderm of those lives
which had been brought under its influence .... (pp. 211-12).

At Talbothays, Tess attempts to come to terms with her unfortunate situation, and to live some kind of peaceful life with the terms offered by her environment: "On one point she was resolved: there should be no more d'Urberville's air-castles in the dreams and deeds of her new life. She would be the dairymaid Tess, and nothing more" (p. 126). In her second meeting with Angel, Tess is, at first, full of dismay that Angel might recognize her and discover her trouble. Both of her decision and situation have changed as a result of Angel's attraction to her. One day Angel intentionally arranges some cows for Tess to milk. Tess discovers his considerateness, but regrets afterwards because she thinks Angel might understand her "as if his presence were somehow a factor in her wish" (p. 157). In the same evening, Angel's playing on the harp, being described as "both instrument and execution were poor"; fascinates Tess who is "conscious of neither time nor space. The exultation which she had described as being producible at will by gazing at a star came now without any determination of hers ...." The description of the garden and the music, as seen through Tess's eyes, heightens Tess's dreamy disposition:

.... she undulated upon the thin notes of the second-hand harp, and their harmonies passed like breezes through her, bringing tears into her eyes. The floating pollen seemed to be his notes made visible, and the dampness of the garden the weeping of the garden's sensibility. Though near nightfall, the rank-smelling weed-flowers glowed as if they would not close for intentness, and the waves of colour mixed with the waves of sound. (p. 158).

Hardy shows us the worthlessness of the damp garden with its rank weeds and floating pollen, but in such a way that Tess is made relatively unaware of it. Tess's "dreamy unreality"—like Angel's love for her—has greater emotional reality than the actual. Tess, even "in an access of hunger for his good opinion" (p. 163), ventures to reveal to Angel the identity of her family with that of the knightly d'Urbervilles, which she has latterly endeavoured to forget. She holds her tongue after hearing that Angel hates most the "good old family".
The fullness of summer in the Var Valley comes, Hardy remarks that "The season developed and matured" (p. 165), and so does Angel and Tess's love. But Tess's inconsistency is comparatively increased; when dairymaid Crick's story of JackDollop reminds Tess of her unfortunate history, she feels that "The evening sun was now ugly to her, like a great inflamed wound in the sky. Only a solitary cracked-voiced reedsparrow greeted her from the bushes by the river, in a sad, machine-made tone, resembling that of a past friend whose friendship she had outworn" (p. 173). Compared with the other dairymaids, Tess knows that "she who cleverer, more beautiful than they, was in the eyes of propriety far less worthy of him than the homelier ones whom he ignored" (p. 189). And she is quite conscious of the futility of her infatuation being "its lack of everything to justify its existence in the eye of civilization (while lacking nothing in the eye of Nature)" (p. 187-88). Tess has screwed up her courage to tell Angel her horrible past, but shrinks back: "At the last moment her courage had failed her, she feared his blame for not telling him sooner; and her instinct of self-preservation was stronger than her candour" (p. 242). Tess struggles against her love for Angel, but "Every see-saw of her breath, every wave of her blood, every pulse singing in her ears, was a voice that joined with nature in revolt against her scrupulousness" (p. 228). Tess knows she would break down because Angel persistently woos her "in undertones like that of the purling milk — at the cow's side, at skimmings, at butter-makings, at cheese-makings, among broody poultry, and among farrowing pigs — as no milkmaid was ever wooed before by such a man" (p. 233). Tess finally throws off the constraint oppressing her love, because "the 'appetite for joy' which pervades all creation that tremendous force which sways humanity to its purpose, as the tide sways the helpless weed, was not to be controlled by vague lucubrations over the social rubric" (p. 244).

Nature seems to give a hand to the lovers: "Amid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of Var Vale, at a season when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization, it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate" (p. 190). The quality of Angel's love is really fanciful — "he loved her dearly, though perhaps rather ideally and fancifully than with the impassioned thoroughness of her feeling for him" (p. 260). He is "in truth, more spiritual than animal ... with a love more especially inclined to the imaginative and ethereal" (p. 246). In the "mixed,
singular, luminous gloom" of early morning, Tess seems to Angel to shine above the mist with "a sort ofospherescence... she looked ghostly, as if she were merely a soul at large." In reality, her face, "without appearing to do so, had caught the cold gleam of day from the north-east"; Angel's face, "though he did not think of it, wore the same aspect to her" (p. 167). Clare's dangerous inexperience also shows itself in his view of Tess "no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form" (p. 167). For Angel, Tess is "a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature" (p. 155). Angel finds that her lips and teeth are like that "the old Elizabethan simile of roses filled with snow" (p. 192). While at cheese-making, her hands show themselves "of the pinkness of the rose amid the immaculate whiteness of curbs, and Angel kisses the inside vein of her soft arm which is "as cold and damp to his mouth as a new-gathered mushroom, and tasted of the whey" (p. 227). Nevertheless, Angel still has doubts in his love for Tess. Once he asks himself: "He loved her; ought he to marry her? Dared he to marry her?... What would he himself say a couple of years after the event? That would depend upon... whether it were a sensuous joy in her form only, with no substratum of everlastiness" (p. 201). He does not know the answer until he has his actual experience in Brazil. When declaring his love for Tess, he feels that his feeling has overcome his judgment: "'Well, I have betrayed my feeling, Tess, at last,' said he, with a curious sign of desperation, signifying unconsciously that his head had outrun his judgment" (pp. 193-94). Shortly afterwards, Angel asserts again that "his feeling had indeed smothered that day", because "the novelty, unpremeditation, mastery of circumstance disquieted him" (p. 197). His proposal of marriage is"...something of practical nature....I shall require for my wife a woman who knows all about the management of farms... Will you be that woman, Tessy? He put it in that way that she might not think that she might not think that he had yielded to an impulse of which his head would disapprove". (p. 219) The conflict of his consciousness between natural impulse and social tendencies comes to the climax with his rejection of Tess's bride-night confession of her past doing:

She broke into sob, and turned her back to him. It would almost have won round any man but Angel Clare. Within the remote depths of his constitution so gentle and affectionate as he was in general, there lay hidden a hard
logical deposit, like a vein of metal in a soft loam, which turned the edge of everything that attempted to traverse it. It had blocked his acceptance of the Church; it blocked his acceptance of Tess. (p. 308).

After the avowal of his two day’s dissipation with a woman in London, he could hardly stand for the same experience which overpowers the whole of his own experience. He keeps telling Tess and himself that she is another woman than the one with whom he falls in love. In his eyes, Tess is never a person, she has to fit a composite picture of purity, goddess, and natural beauty. His selfish behavior toward Tess is an expression of his own divided self:

....With all his attempted independence of judgment this advanced and well-meaning young man, a sample product of the last five-and-twenty years, was yet the slave to custom and conventionality when surprised back into his early teachings.... (p. 338).

It is the "shade of his own limitation" (p. 338) that hang over them as the cause of their suffering just as Tess’s dreaminess resulted in her meeting with Alec and her attraction for Angel. Tess can perceive clearly Angel’s limitations:

... she was appalled by the determination revealed in the depths of this gentle being she had married — the will to subdue the grosser to the subtler emotion, the substance to the conception, the flesh to the spirit. Propensities, tendencies, habits, were as dead leaves upon the tyrannous wind of his imaginative ascendency. (p. 313).

At this moment, Hardy exhibits Tess's predicament obliquely instead of a head-on realistic scene:

Tess's feminine hope — shall we confess it — had been so obstinately recuperative as to revive in her surreptitious visions of a domiciliary intimacy continued long enough to break down his coldness even against his judgment. Though unsophisticated in the usual sense, she was not incomplete; and it would have denoted deficiency of womanhood if she had not instinctively known what an argument lies in propinquity.... (p. 311).
The tension raised by Angel's orientation to the conventional social code that his intellect rejects forms Tess's ordeal until their last meeting. In his wandering in Brazil, Angel has met a "large-minded" stranger whose death climaxes the wisdom he gives to Angel:

The stranger had sojourned in many more lands and among more peoples than Angel; to his cosmopolitan mind such deviations from the social norm, so immense to domesticity, were no more than are the irregularities of vale and mountain-chain to the whole terrestrial curve .... (p. 433).

Angel begins to realize that his "inconsistencies rushed upon him in a flood," Tess's sins "were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should she have been punished so persistently?" (p. 454). "... the wife of Uriah being made a queen"\(^{20}\), he feels regretfully "why he had not judged Tess constructively rather than biographically, by the will rather than by the deed" (p. 473). He learns that Tess is worthy of his love and respect.

Meantime, Tess shows an aspect of human nature which Angel lacks; "With the shortening of the days all hope of obtaining her husband's forgiveness began to leave her; and there was something of the habitude of the wild animal in the unreflecting instinct with which she rambled on — disconnecting herself by lillies from her eventful past at every step, obliterating her identity" (p. 351). In order to free herself of possible trouble she "took a handkerchief from her bundle and tied it round her face under her bonnet, covering her chin and half cheeks and temples, as if she were suffering from toothache. Then with her little scissors, by the aid of a pocket looking-glass, she mercilessly nipped her eyebrows off" (p. 356). Her tender strangling of the dying pheasants is a concrete symbol of her growing perception of innocence: "She was ashamed of herself for her gloom of the night, based on nothing more tangible than a sense of condemnation under an arbitrary law of society which had no foundation in Nature" (p. 355). At Flintcomb-Ash, the landscape reflects the psychological aspects of the novel: while the earth has previously been seen especially at Talbothays as a sort of fertile paradise; the "starve-acre place" is of unbarren and unyielding hell. But still "the two forces were at work here as everywhere, the inher-
ent will to enjoy, and the circumstantial will against enjoyment" (p. 365). Her dreams of green, sunny, romantic Talbothays and singing ballads, which Angel likes most, are her sublimation for the hope of Angel's return. She decides to visit Angel's parents in an effect to settle things, but again quails at the critical moment: "... she went her way without knowing that the greatest misfortune of her life was this feminine loss of courage at the last critical moment through her estimating her father-in-law by his sons" (p. 384). Thus, Tess meets coincidentally the transformed Alec, who has converted into a fantastic preach layer:

.... The lip-shapes that had meant seductiveness where now made to express supplication; the glow on the cheek that yesterday could be translated as riotousness was evangelized today into the splendour of piou shrhetics; animalism had become fanaticism; Paganism Paulinism... (p. 390).

But with the growing perception, Tess feels:

The lineaments, as such, seemed to complain. They had been diverted from their hereditary connotation to signify impressions for which nature did not intend them. Strange that their very elevation was a misapplication, that to raise seemed to falsify (p. 390).

For Alec's "self-righteous idealization"²¹, Tess is at first a victim whose body is his right to plunder when he gets religion, he seem to become confused as to who is victim and who is victimizer, and accuses Tess of being a temptress: "'You will never tempt me—by your charm or way" (p. 397). Soon he abandons his religion, but not without telling Tess that she is responsible for his fall from grace. He begins referring to himself as a Satan coming to tempt Eve: "'You are Eve, and I am the old Other One come to tempt you in the disguise of an inferior animal" (p. 444). It is as if Hardy wants us to understand the ridiculousness of the various societal-approved stereotype roles Alec plays. Tess's final response to him is a portrait of her fate in miniature:

"Now, punish me!" she said, turning up her eyes to him with the hopeless defiance of the sparrow's gaze before its captor twists its neck. "Whip me, crush me; you need
not mind those people under the rick! I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim — that's the law!' (p. 423).

Her final desperate condition, in which she is living with Alec when Angel returns, is forced upon her by the necessity of looking after her mother and her family. At their pitiful reunion, "both seemed to implore something to shelter them from reality" (p. 448). Angel is quite conscious that his original Tess has "spiritually ceased to recognize the body before him as hers — allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction dissociated from into living will" (p. 484). The stabbing is a last fierce outcry against being forced into the situation and position which Tess has no control of. Tess's few days of freedom together with Angel is the final payment for breaking, in mind as well as in deed, the conventions of so-called community.

V

The pre-requisite of a great literary work lies where there are a pursuit of the truth of life and a manifestation of the message of the age. What's more, it should also express faithfully the struggle, distress, mood, and dream of that age in which it is created. It shouldn't present everything as going on well in an age which is ugly. As Albert Gurard has said, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is the "most realistic" of Hardy's novels, the problem that Tess has encountered belongs not only to the nineteenth century, but to the twentieth century as well. It expresses an unfathomable gap between each individual and the society. This may well to compared to the subject which can mostly be found in present-day novels: the split between self and society.

*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* illustrates a woman who couldn't be accepted socially and morally, yet who still struggles bravely and tragically. She undertakes all the hard realities: home responsibility, her seduction by Alec d'Urberville, and desertion by Angel Clare. The contempt that the society inflicted on her doesn't subdue her. Although she dies finally, she dies without regret since Angel,
as a member of the civilized society, finally recognizes her purity. The part that touches us most in this novel is not Tess's execution, but the solitude and loneliness, which can't be understood by outsiders, in the course of her struggle.

As we have mentioned, Hardy is absolutely an "imaginative realist", his art is what he called "idiosyncratic mode of regard", as Virginia Woolf has pointed out that it is his "moments of vision" which illuminate a character, a scene, an episode with astonishing beauty, force, and insight. We see Tess, while baptizing her illegitimate child, momentarily apotheosized under the dim light, to her sisters and brothers, she "did not look like sissy to them now but a being large, towering, and awful—a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common" (p. 120). We see her idealization of Angel change ordinary details of dairy life into a sort of magic. We accompany her on those predawn walks with Angel, catch the sparkles of dew like "diamonds" on her eyelashes, and the diamonds later turn "into a sinister wink like a toad's" (p. 287). Sometimes we find that Hardy had used a very realistic way of representation, although he did not like it himself, yet he actually worked it out successfully. There is a detailed description of Tess working in the rain at Flintcomb-Ash, feeling the trickle of cold rain first on her legs and shoulders, then on her hips and head, then down the back, front and sides, and all the time the air getting chillier and chillier with the setting sun. Or there are the details of the work on the wheat rick: the engine humming, twanging and gulping the sheaves; men and women working on the wheat rick, their faces dyed coppery from the wild March sun; Tess standing on the machine; shaken by its vibrations and untying sheaf after sheaf in endless succession, unaware that her hair tumbled down or that Alec is watching. Albert Guerard has commented that at the poetic and imaginative level Hardy is capable of tragedy, but when he thinks philosophically he seems commonplace and his limitation becomes obvious. We can see him comment here and there in the midst of the action, especially when emphasizing on Tess's purity and Angel's narrowmindedness. Hardy must have perceived his own weakness because he reminds us twice in his preface to the novel that it is an "impression" not an "argument" or "convictions". Our final impression of this novel is that it mingles with Hardy's highest imagination and richest enthusiasm in expressing a girl's pursuit of the truth of life in the contradictory situation between herself and the society.
Notes:

1. Penelope Vigar, *The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality*. (Univ. of London, 1974), p. 5. This quotation originally appeared in Florence Emily Hardy *The Life of Thomas Hardy*.


3. Ibid., p. 373.

4. A term used by Penelope Vigar in his *The Novels of Thomas Hardy*. (Univ. of London, 1974), p. 146.

5. Ibid., p. 189.


11. Tony Tanner, 'Colour And Movement in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*', *Critical Quarterly* x (1968).


16. Hardy's Preface to Tess of the d'Urbervilles, 1892.


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