

Exploring The Skirmish And Tragic Encounters In Thomas Hardy's Tess Of The D'urbervilles

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the tragic elements in the novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy. The characteristics of the characters, the social context, and the ancient, traditional religion will all be examined in this paper's analysis of Tess of the d'Urbervilles. The article explains the factors that led to Tess's tragic destiny, including the main characters' contradictory morals, unfair laws, and the downturn of capitalism. This research is qualitative in nature. Tess of the D'Urbervilles is a tragedy about life and love at the same time. The process of conflict between the protagonists and the societal setting is what defines a tragedy. Either the character acting as the primary factor, the environment acting as the primary guide, or the outcome of the interaction between the two, is the cause of the tragedy. Tess is merely one of the victims going through hardships. Tess allows us to observe women's inferior status simultaneously, demonstrating the need for us to cultivate a revolting attitude and a habit of economic independence.

Keywords: Society, Victorian Era, Women, Patriarchy, Oppression.

1.1 Introduction

Many consider Hardy's Tess of D'Urbervilles to be his melancholy best. It tells the tale of a peasant girl who, although initially seen as young, develops into a tragic heroine. Hardy argues that Tess is not responsible for the consequences of her actions. She suffers from a string of unfortunate events that gradually ruin her personality. The book is divided into seven chapters, each of which reflects a stage in Tess's development as she grows. Despite her life being a succession of disasters, Tess fights to overcome her circumstances and live a victimless existence. The melancholy novel Tess of D'Urbervilles tells the story of Tess, a young country girl who faces many hardships before being "violated by one man and forsaken by another" (Heap). Tess's father realizes that his daughter is a poor country girl and that he is descended from the d'Urbervilles, a Norman noble family. Tess's parents send her to live with her new cousins since they are extremely impoverished and want her to marry a prince. Tess is unfortunate as the new "relatives" adopted the name since it sounded nice. She meets Alec there, the man who harms and tempts her. After seeing her parents again, Tess gives birth to a child who passes away shortly after. Once more leaving her family, Tess goes to work as a milkmaid on a farm, where she meets Angel Clare, and the two fall in love. Scared of losing him, Tess keeps her past from him. On their wedding night, though, Tess opens up to her husband about her previous actions when Angel admits to having an affair. Angel departs from Tess for Brazil because he is unable to bear the idea that she is not as flawless as he thought. Tess battles poverty but ultimately decides to take Alec's support. When Angel ultimately arrives back, Tess is living with Alec. Since Tess

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still has feelings for Angel, she kills Alec and departs with him. The police track them down at Stonehenge, where Tess is executed.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles is a tragedy about life and love at the same time. The process of conflict between the protagonists and the societal setting is what defines a tragedy. Either the character acting as the primary factor, the environment acting as the primary guide, or the outcome of the interaction between the two, is the cause of the tragedy. Hardy views the heroine's affliction as a cosmic joke, but Tess's suffering stems from her political, social, and economic contexts. Given her upbringing in a rural household and her advanced age, Tess is inevitably shaped by a combination of traditional morality and fatalistic beliefs. The book is one of Hardy's "Character and Environment" works. Tess is shown as a contemporary agricultural worker who is under the same moral condemnation as her predecessors. As a character, Tess played a typical role in exposing and denouncing the entire system at the time.

As a result of being brought up in a rural household and having some outdated moral and fatalistic beliefs, Tess had a weak spot when it came to her opposition to conventional mortality. She believed herself to be guilty when she was assaulted by social pressure and conventional morality. Her lover's virginity complex and the deeply ingrained feudal view of society led to the later disaster. She believed that she was the embodiment of sin and that people were perpetually taking notice of her predicament around the globe. More than anybody else, she was unable to let go of her disgrace. Tess encased herself with the net of her ethical behavior. Her self-binding consciousness has a deep historical foundation and is the tangible manifestation of the collective social consciousness. As a person inhabiting a particular historical era, Tess unavoidably acquired a social consciousness and moral idea unique to that historical era, and the social mores and moments she lived in unavoidably shaped her opinions and actions. As Joan Perkin in *Victorian Women* says:

“Girls learned early in life that they were less important than boys, and the welcome a girl could expect when she was born depended to some extent on social class. The vast majority of English girls, however, were born to working-class parents, who accepted whatever God sent, but were somewhat disappointed if it was a girl. Any child was an extra mouth for a poor family to feed, but also a potential wage-earner.”

(Perkin, 1994)

2.1 Literature Review

English language and literature hold significant importance (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022; Ramzan & Alahmadi, 2024; Ramzan et al., 2023), especially when examining historical contexts such as the nineteenth century, a period often referred to as the Second English Renaissance (Ramzan et al., 2023). English, as a global lingua franca, was crucial in documenting and disseminating ideas (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023), shaping public opinion, and fostering cultural and intellectual growth (Li & Akram, 2023; 2024). English literature, particularly during the Victorian era, became a medium through which writers and intellectuals could reflect societal changes, critique industrialization's impact, and address social issues like poverty, child labor, and the struggles of the working class (Amjad et al., 2021). The narratives and themes explored in English literature not only provided a mirror to the society of that time but also offered insights that remain relevant (Ramzan et al., 2023), highlighting the transformative power of literature in shaping human thought and values across ages.

Investigated as the Second English Renaissance, the nineteenth century saw Britain's eminence as the world's major economic power throughout an extremely complex interval. However, it also marks the beginning of the modern era, as demonstrated by Miller. The

"Victorian age," so-called in acknowledgment of Queen Victoria, spread over the years 1837–1901. Industrialization and colonialization were the two historical elements that made up nineteenth-century English society. Britain became the most dynamic economy of its age as a consequence of both of these notable expansions in wealth. It was a time of substantial political reform, imperial expansion, and prosperity. All around that span, the system of people working in small workshops or their homes gradually usurped the factory system. Britain set off the presiding economic power of its spell as a result of both of these remarkable growths in wealth. It was a spell of sizeable political reform, imperial expansion, and wealth. During that time, the system of people working in small workshops or their homes was gradually replaced by the commercial system. A notable swap in the class structure followed an increase in the power of professions and tradespeople owners. Scheduled for the industrial revolution, there was a great demand for child and female labour, and these employees were often forced to put in twelve or more hours a day. At that time, some intellectuals and writers were sickened by it. Although the working people acquired some rights, the reforms did not change their reality. There was an important population relocation in the nineteenth century from farming to urban areas. Families that desired better living conditions for their children rooted themselves out and progressed to big cities in pursuit of utilization. They had expanded employment hours and an exceedingly beggarly standard of living. Because many trusted that life had little to offer, drunkenness and abuse were ordinary in families. "The process of changing patterns in his life brings physical difficulty and psychological torture" (Zubair, 2021).

3.1 Research Objectives

- An effort to reveal the injustice of social law
- The goal is to demonstrate the terrible life of Tess, including her devastating contact with death, her catastrophic love lives, and her hard effort to become a "proper" woman.
- To project the arrogance of social prejudice in Victorian male-dominated culture

3.2 Research Questions

1. How Hardy has exposed the duplicity of morality and customs of Victorian society?
2. How tragedy of Tess reflect the sufferings of a humble-born girl in a patriarchal society?

3.3 Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The nature of this research is qualitative. By implementing Koul's suggested strategies for qualitative analysis, the information was studied to obtain responses to the concerns asked in the diagnosis of the problem. Since this was the field of study, libraries supplied the vast majority of the information. The methods used to collect the study's data could be varied. Several steps were taken by the rules to collect information:

- (1) Reading the book cover to cover and attempting to figure out it in its entirety
- (2) Discovering particular sections and provides connected to the aspects of the character's decline
- (3) Gathering the sections and provides related to the evaluation
- (4) Examining the plot of those components

4.1 Textual Analysis and Finding

Life's fate is regulated by one's personality. According to a quote by Carl Gustav Jung Hardy, tragedy "expresses a man's condition." The sad ending is the outcome of his instinct and desire. The characters Alec, Claire, and Tess are launched in this section. Tess is

steadily motivated to death by Alec's roughness, Claire's egotism, her compromise, and her inferiority.

4.1.1. The Persona of Tess

Tess was a nice, lovely, and hardworking country girl who aspired for the genuine compassion of life but was constantly under attack from the bad and fake. Tess was a fresh face in the tough world of women. She possesses two personalities. She ventured to challenge false religion and conventional morality on the one hand, but she was unable to free herself from the constraints of conventional morality on the other. Specifically, the latter is intimately connected to her untimely demise. The author describes her personality in the following words:

“She was a fine and handsome girl not more handsome than some others, possibly but her mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes added eloquence to colour and shape. She wore a red ribbon in her hair, and was the only one of the white company who could boast of such a pronounced adornment.” (Hardy, 2002)

4.1.2. Propensity for Compromises

Tess was an unbending resistance, even though she had the bravery to openly dare normal morality and pursue her joy. Tess did not, however, totally free herself from the restraints of normal morality. She was conscious that she had been the victim of brutality, but she also felt "guilty" because of the villagers' charges against her. It caused her pain and censure as a result. Her parents spurred her to move up to a noble family after their horse died. She declined to be there because of her simple arch, but she also felt deeply answerable and awful. This was something she had to do. The text said, "Her pallid face, devoid of expression, seems to think that her own murder." This marks a notable turning point in her life and will leave an enduring shadow for the rest of her days. Though she welcomed Alec's support, Tess grasped that he wasn't right for her. She was given threats by his parents to go to Alec's house, but she was unable to refuse. She agreed to live with Alec out of empathy and to help her family and the living. She asked Claire to join her sister because she thought her love for Claire lacked depth. Her emotions were subtle. Her relationship with Clare was an expression of this personality. While lovers ought to have equal rights, Tess constantly diminished herself and trained Clare. Clare has no tolerance for her gloomy background. She offered not the smallest complaint about Clare's betrayal. Even a string of heartfelt letters failed to win back Claire's love. Love had a clear sense of her dignity. Tess lost the ability to stalk happiness because of this kind of blind and unfair love. Rather, it made Tess's tragedy much more intense. “The female is objectified to fulfil the sexual desire of males. So, the writer challenges dominant social norms and values regarding women.” (Zubair, 2021)

4.1.3. The Absence of Self-Awareness

First, Tess's attitude towards love reflected her lack of self-analysis. She was in love with Claire's skill and elegance when she first saw him. Although Tess was portrayed by Hardy as the perfect woman, her characters did have certain faults. She would constantly bestride Alec and Claire. Despite her love for Claire, she allows Alec to seduce her due to ignorance. She rejected her own needs in favour of cognition about other people's needs. She had to give up everything for her family. Her lack of original thought pushed her into a pit of pain and eventually to the greatest tragedy of her life. She was quite grateful when Alec taught her how to whistle and executed some tricks for her. On the evening of the event, Tess unwisely skips Alec's carriage and falls off to avoid the language war. She wasn't set on leaving until she realized Alec was dishonest. Alec was given a chance by these details, which also led to her mishap. Quite the contrary, if she observed Alec's actions and continued to watch him. It was not unavoidable that she would lose her lover and her

reputation. In other words, the calamity won't happen. "Characterization is the key aspect of the mass appeal to enlighten and empower the women in their society that constructs the meaning, and norms and exercises them" (Zubair, 2020)

4.1.4. Profound Inferiority and Simple Thought

Tess was sweet but simple, gorgeous but deferential. She felt more hurt than she was who had fiercely decided that she would never be convinced to marry a guy, turn aside Claire's attention from other women, and who would never devotedly allow any man to marry her today. Her feelings were complicated because she wanted to tell Claire the complete story of what had happened to her. She wanted, on the one hand, to be unbound. However, she trusted that she was to be blamed for this. She was scared Claire would not miss her and would not forgive her. But her inferiority disappeared when Claire disclosed anything negative about her. She believed that they were on an equal toehold. She was therefore determined to tell the truth. But Alec broke up with her. She frequently misunderstood her typical psychological state and made decisions based on standard customs. When Tess bravely disobeyed tradition, she was held to its moral levels. At times, she would stand up for traditional ethics while also fighting for them. Tess enfolds her body in a large net and binds herself in. She tried to get away but was powerless. This self-control was a mirror of society as a whole and had a deep historical base. Tess's end can only be gloomy as a result. This means Hardy's ideal of purity is in his heart. Tess is a classic figure who is so unusual and well-known. However, due to the feeling of liability, Even as she started to recognize Alec's plan, she was overly innocent. "You have the same forgiveness from me!" That is to say, she dies because of her simple thinking.

4.1.5. Character of Alec

The character of Alec has played an important role in leading Tess's life toward destruction. Alec belongs to the elite class and falls in love with Tess at first side of their meeting. He tried his best to seduce her and destroyed the happiness from her life for a lifetime. In his first meeting with Tess, he tries to seduce her while offering her strawberries, he stands up and tries to put a stem in her mouth. At this Tess reacts: "No -no!" She said quickly, putting her fingers between his hand and her lips. "I would rather take it in my own hand." "Nonsense!" he insisted; and in a slight distress she parted her lips and took it in" (Hardy, 2002). When Tess leaves him, he feels guilty and decides to become a priest. But his exploitation did not extirpate. When he meets her after a long time, he again starts seducing her and gives her a helping hand, and at last, she ends up coming back to him as his inamorata.

4.1.6 Character of Claire

Claire after Alec made her life merciful. He wanted to become a great farmer. He wanted to marry a simple girl. When they met he fell in love with her and proposed to her. His love for Tess is unreal and is based on imaginary feelings, because when she reveals her past to him, he tells her that she is not the same person now, at Tess remarked "I agree to the conditions, Angel; because you know best what my punishment ought to be; only - only - don't make it more than I can bear!" He leaves her with no guarantee that they will meet again. Tess says to Angel when he leaves her alone "O why have you treated me so monstrously, Angel! I do not deserve it. I have thought it all over carefully, and I can never, never forgive you!" Some critics said that "Claire is a real poison to Tess's life." (Hardy, 2002)

4.1.7 In-depth Diction

Tess's tragedy was caused by several factors outside the personalities of the major protagonists. The profound shifts in politics, morals, social economics, and customs brought about by capitalism's arrival in British rural towns were mirrored in Hardy's

writing. The duplicity of laws, religion, and bourgeois morality was exposed in his situation. This section will cover Tess's upbringing and the milieu in which she was raised.

4.1.8. The Parents' Vanity

Her parents were materialistic and conceited. Tess's sentiments were unconsiderable to her mother. She wished Tess would wed a wealthy man and lead a pleasant. When Alec seduces her her mother blames for being careless so Tess replies in Agony:

“O mother, my mother! Cried the agonized girl, turning passionately upon her parent as if her poor heart would break. How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house four months ago. Why didn't you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hands against because they read novels that tell them of these tricks, but I never had the chance o' learning in that way, and you did not help me! Her mother was subdued” (Hardy, 2002)

When it comes down to it, Tess's tragedy was made possible by her mother's conceit.

4.1.9. A Society of Ruthless Capitalism

Following the Industrial Revolution, rural areas were gradually included in the capitalist economic model. Individual farmers become bankrupt according to the extensive use of modern farming techniques. The hired labourers were represented by Tess and her coworkers. They had to labour for a living everywhere. They waited till the autumn to go. They endured suffering while performing the same tasks as men. Tess was deprived of her life by societal injustice and was one of the victims of this really brutal portrayal.

4.1.10. Unfair Law

Tess of the d'Urbervilles shows how the ruling elite upheld all national laws in the late nineteenth century Tess was not given the protection of the law and society when Alec had her. She dealt with rumors on her own but after when Tess killed Alec out of rage, the law upheld justice and Tess was hanged. Being a member of a lower social class, Tess was bound to experience injustice, and this injustice brought misfortune upon her. Thomas Hardy wraps up the novel with these lines;

“Justice was done, and the President of the Immortals had ended his sport with Tess. And the d'Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing. The two speechless gazers bent themselves down to the earth, as if in prayer, and remained there a long time, absolutely motionless: the flag continued to wave silently. As soon as they had strength they arose, joined hands again, and went on.” (Hardy, 2002)

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that Tess was a lovely and charming girl. She had no repulsive nature. Her tragedy is sealed by all these causes like social conviction, hypocritical laws, her parent's conceit, Alec's evilness, Claire's hypocrisy, Tess's surrender, and inadequacy. Being a long-suffering woman in a patriarchal society where males rule, Tess is unable to escape and can only find tranquility and solace in the natural world. Tess set herself apart by having a keen awareness of nature. This essay examines the novel Tess D'Urbervilles from a feminist perspective to stimulate careful examination of the connection between nature, men, and women.

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