شبكة المعلومات الجامعية

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

شبكة المعلومات الجامعية

التوثيق الالكتروني والميكروفيلم

شبكة المعلومات الجامعية

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التوثيق الالكتروني والميكروفيلم

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The Female Characters in Hardy and Conrad : A Study in Cosmic Outlooks, With Special Reference to The Return of the Native, Tess of the d'Urberville, Jude the Obscure, Lord Jim, Nostromo and Chance

A Thesis
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their dependency but chose instead to help them. Hardy gives her a sense of duty, thus she often bears too heavy burdens. She is physically strong - no fainting Victorian dove - she works long hours under exhausting conditions at Flintcomb - Ash and she is honest about herself and others. The fact that Tess endeavours to assert her identity to the men who loved her disavow the claims of the Victorian critics who tried to exonerate her on presuppositional grounds that voluptuousness went hand in hand with enfeebled powers of will and reason.[39] But Tess is not weak or passive to her fate. She asserts herself as an individual at different key points throughout the novel.

It is this sense of her self that she tries to assert over and over again to both Angel and Alec who always see her as something she in reality is not or interpret her through stereotypical codes. Angel embraces stereotypes of femininity. When he idealizes her as Demeter and Artemis, she responds, "Call me Tess." "Yet the slave to custom and conventionality", he translates her "no" into "Yes"! "his experience of women was great enough for him to be aware that the negative often meant nothing more than the preface to the affirmative" (224). He condescendingly interprets her "self-suppression," as if he were interpreting a text.

> "She is a dear dear Tess, "he thought to himself, as one deciding on the true construction of a difficult passage. "Do I realize solemnly enough how utterly and irretrievably this little womanly thing is the creature of my good or bad faith and fortune? I think not. I could not, unless I were a woman myself." (278)

To Alec, also, she is like every woman. In one of the most dramatic scenes in the novel, Alec argues that women do not mean what they say:

> "I didn't understand your meaning till it was too

> late."
> "That's what every woman says."
> "How can you dare to use such words!" She cried turning impetuously upon him, her eyes flashing as the latent spirit (of which he was to see more some day) awoke in her. "My God I could knock you out of gig ! Did it never strike your mind that what every woman says some women may feel?" (97)

Tess, like Grace and Eustacia before her, is trapped by the masculine gaze. Each man she meets demands that she should be seen only by him and treats her according to his vision of her - idealized virgin, sexual object. This visual entrapment Wotton says. has the result of a forced and often disastrous commitment on part of the woman.[40] This brings us to the so called rape-seduction scene.

Critics have argued whether Tess was seduced or whether. in fact, she was raped. Their discussions often sound as if the question might in some way influence their judgement of her character. It is clear, however, that Hardy deliberately obscured this question. In describing the scene he uses words that display Tess's rejection and surrender:

> She has dreaded him, winced before. him. succumbed to adroit advantages he took of her helplessness; then, temporarily blinded by his ardent manners, had been stirred to confused surrender a while; had suddenly despised and disliked him, and had run away. That was all. (110)

A clearer note of Tess's position, however, is sounded in the passage where Alec offers her a strawberry from his greenhouse. obviously a symbol of nature forced before its natural ripening :

> He stood up and held it by the stem to her mouth. "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. They had spent some time wandering desultorily thus, Tess eating in a half - pleased, half - reluctant state, what ever d'Urberville offered her. (66)

There is no hint of coquette in Tess, but that description of being "half-pleased, half - reluctant" is illustrative of a conflict typical of her character.[41] Alec represents an irresistible source of power to Tess, symbolizing as he does aristocracy, wealth and virility all at once. Drawn to him both by her heritage, her sex and her fatalism, she wavers between her sexuality and her survival. Clearly, thus, Alec's later action is both seduction and rape, and it is Hardy's understanding of this duality, and his awareness of the burden of sexuality to women that makes him such a master of the portrayal of the psychology of women.

It seems, then, that Hardy's intent was that the truth of Tess's sin should have been unimportant not only to Angel Clare but to all society. Hardy makes a strong point for individual sexuality, which is part of what Kramer calls "subjectivity of experience and judgement."[42] According to Kramer Hardy was the first to structure a tragedy (for that what he believes Tess to be) upon the individual's comprehension of himself rather than upon his relation to a social world. "The world is only a psychological phenomenon," says Hardy - as - narrator early in the novel (108), and he demonstrates that the tragic emotion itself is subjective, its source lies within the human consciousness rather than within some sort of relationship between the individual and environment or between individuals or between an individual and the moral order of his world. Of course, Hardy can see the effects of these factors upon the individual consiousness, but the emotion itself comes from within.

Hardy states explicitly that the individual creates his own

world, that this view of the world may be in accord neither with preconceptions based on conventions nor with the other people's view:

> She might have seen that what bowed her head so profoundly - the thought of the world's concern at her situation was founded on an illusion. She was not an existence, an experience, a passion, a structure of sensations to any body but herself. To all human kind besides Tess was only a passing thought .... Most of the misery had been generated by her conventional aspect, and not by her innate sensations. (115)

Hardy by deflating the social significance of the individual, is obviously turning the individual upon himself for judgements and to deny the usefulness and trustworthiness of external perceptions and moralities in every situation.[43] Hardy intimates that society's reasons for rejecting Tess are not necessarily entirely wrong nor evil. Neither the regenerated Angel nor the besieged Tess permanently denies the validity of conventional views of chastity. The problem as Angel comes to see in Brazil, is precisely that society makes no provision for a case like Tess's whose justification rely upon the unique self (435). But Tess is still judged by a double morality which blames her for her own transgression whether she volunteered or not. Her own mother expresses that double morality when she says to Tess, "You ought to have been more careful if you didn't mean to get him to make you his wife!" (110).

It seems that in creating Tess Hardy was willing to expose his Victorian prejudices about women and their sexuality to the critical examinations of his mind and to show them as false. For Hardy, conventions are "the artificial forms of living" (Early Life, 279). He did not approve those who hold them to be facts of life. What is also included under these conventions the double - standard

that would not deny to the sexually active male the power of will and reason, and moral integrity that is so often denied to the sexually active female.

Hardy shows Tess also as the helpless victim of powers for which no human agency can be held responsible. Hardy puts into Tess's mouth early in the novel the portentous remark that we live in a "blighted world," and throughout his novel he seems determined to prove this point. Thus Chance as an instrument of hostile fate brings about most of the catastrophes that befall Tess. The final deplored comment that "Justice was done," rounds out this philosophical aspect of the novel, emphasizing the idea that Tess was not only beset by society but also by the very nature of the universe. In Jude the Obscure, Hardy's last polemical novel, he attacks once more the sexual codes and practices of the Victorian Age, emphasizing man's helpless existence in a hostile Universe through the last of his heroines Sue Bridehead.

Sue Bridehead was said to belong to the "New Woman" literary tradition that had become almost a cliche by 1895. The first readers of Jude would have every excuse for immediately identifying Sue, with her quivering nerves and anti-marriage sentiments, as a typical New Woman of the modern school. This apparent development towards a feminist position, coinciding with the widespread discussion of similar views by other writers, might suggest that Hardy's portrayal of women changed significantly under the influence of public debate. This is partly true. Sue Bridehead bears more than a superficial resemblance to other fictional New Women. But in fact Hardy arrived at his portrayal of advanced womanhood by a very different route from that of other feminist writers. The areas of interest which led his novels to resemble New Woman fiction were sexual morality in general, and

a pervading cynicism about marriage.[44] Neither of these need necessarily imply a specifically feminist approach. Moreover. Hardy's last three major novels clearly embody ideas of central interest to the New Woman. In The Woodlanders, for instance, a great deal is said in favour of divorce and Tess of the d"Urbervilles is a powerful indictment of the double moral standard. In other words, while Grace and Tess both pre - date the New Woman of popular fiction, each at various points expresses views which are certainly close to the New Woman heroines. Hence Sue Bridehead is the natural development of her predecessors.

Thus it is only natural that Sue is described from the outset as unconventional. This is Aunt Drusilla's recollection of Sue at the age of twelve:

> "... I never cared much about her. a pert little thing. that's what she was too often with her tight - strained nerves. Many's the time. I've smacked her for her impertinence. Why one day when she was walking into the pond with her shoes and stocking off and her petticoats pulled above her knees afor I could cry out for shame, she said : Move on aunty ! T's no sight for modest eyes ! (160-61)

Sue obviously knew exactly what she was doing and saying even as a child. Another anecdote about Sue's childhood is recounted by the old woman's nurse :

> She described what an odd little maid Sue had been when a pupil at the village school across the green opposite, before her father went to London ... how when the vicar arranged readings and recitations. she appeared on the platform, the smallest of them all "in her little white frock and shoes, and pink sash"; how she recited "Exclsior," "'There was a sound of revelry by night'" and Poe's "Raven": and how during the delivery she would knit her little brows and glare around logically, and say to the empty air, as if some real creature stood there.
> "Chastly grim and ancient Raven,

> Tell me what thy lordly name is
> On the night's Plutoman shore!".
> "She'd bring up the nasty carrion bird that clear."
> Corroborated the sick woman reluctantly, as she stood there in her little sash and things (161-162).

Sue, in these recollections, becomes impressive even to Aunt Drusilla. We discover that she has always been strange, that even before she become a woman she was set apart by her different sense of propriety.

When she became a woman, she discarded the conventional identification and labels preferring her own ideas and views. She expressed her independence of action when she resolves to leave her boarding house and her occupation because of the intrusion of the land lady. She works as a paid employee in a shop, a job she has chosen in preference to the conventionally genteel ones of teacher or governess. She expresses also her independence of thought when she criticizes the moral models of her age:

> I fancy we have had enough of Jerusalem, considering we are not descended from the jews. There was nothing first rate about the place, after all - as there was about Athens, Rome, Alexandria and other old cities (128).

In short, she was a rebel. She has rebelled against the established roles for women in society. But above all she has rebelled against marriage and her own sexuality. "I have never yielded myself to any love," she says "I have remained as I began ... Better women would not". (168). She explicitly describes her attitude to her physical relationship with Phillotson:

> What tortures me so much is the necessity of being responsive to this man whenever he wishes ... the dreadful contract to feel in a particular way in a matter whose essence is its voluntariness! (230).

Sue places marriage and sex in opposition to freedom. She yearns

to be free, she likes being "outside all laws except gravitation and germination" (157). Her idea of freedom comes from childhood. She would like to "get back to the life of my infancy and its freedom" or somehow "remain as I began" (181, 191). She hates to see childhood go because she hates to see womanhood coming on. Sexuality heralds sexual oppression.[45] Consequently, through all her adult relationships she insists upon nonsexual relation. She yearns for an equal friendship with a man with whom she can be herself.

Sue has been judged harshly by male critics. Albert J. Guerard claims that Sue is "sexually maladjusted."[46] D.H.Lawrence speaks of the female in Sue as atrophied, although not quite defunct, he assumes that Sue was born thus atrophied.[47] I think that this is a misreading of Sue's character. It should be noted that Sue's character is revealed to the reader through other characters' eyes. And it is only Jude's eyes that enforce that frigidity on Sue. It is solely through Jude's ascetic eyes that the ethereal sexless Sue is apprehended. He has clear preconceptions about the woman he will love and that Sue could be anything other than the phantasmal, bodiless creature of his imaginings does not enter his head. He traps her in this image from the very first moment. As he gazes at her illuminating texts in an Anglican bookshop, she seems to personify the very essence, the very atmosphere of Christminster, his own atmosphere, he thinks. He then enters the bookshop containing,

> Anglican books, stationery, texts and fancy goods: little plaster angels on brackets, Gothic - framed pictures of saints, ebony crosses that were almost crucifixes, prayer - books were almost missals. He felt very shy of looking at the girl in the desk; she was so pretty that he could not believe it possible that she should belong to him. Then she spoke ...