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# Romantic Notions of Love and Desire in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891)

*An Analysis of the Novel with Focus on Plotting and the Reader's Anticipation of Retrospection*

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# Introduction

In 1881, Thomas Hardy notes how “Romanticism will exist in human nature as long as human nature itself exists. The point is (in imaginative literature) to adopt that form of romanticism which is the mood of the age” (1928, p. 329). Ten years later, in his late-Victorian novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy illustrates his ‘form of romanticism’ through its notoriously tragic love-plot and its strong critique of the Victorian moral view of desire, love and marriage – a form that was to divide the opinions of readers and critics alike.

The full title *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*, with its last-minute sub-title, hints at the controversy that affected the novel's publication. Largely censored and dismembered during the serialization in the *Graphic*, Hardy was able to put together his version – although revised several times since – in 1891. The question of Tess's ‘purity’ and innocence became a topic for heated public debate. In his autobiography, Hardy describes a dinner-party at the Duchess of Abercorn's where the guests had been “‘almost fighting across the dinner-table over Tess's character’. Those who thought the ‘little harlot deserved hanging were put in one group; those who pitied her as a ‘poor wronged innocent’ sat in another, together with the Duchess” (Higonnet, 2008, p. xix).

The literary movement from Romanticism to Victorian Realism during the nineteenth century includes a movement from creative imagination, passionate overflow of feelings and elaborate nature imagery to portrayals of life in the real and social world as it appears to the common reader (Greenblatt & Abrams, 2006). Realism, it is important to note, does not portray a more ‘real’ view of

life than Romanticism, but rather, it forms a literary corrective to Romantic literature as it was felt that “plots could no longer be resolved in sentimental terms” (Lehan, 2005, p. xi). As the quote above indicates, Hardy portrays a belated Romanticism in his work – that is, he employs romantic literary elements in his work from the point of view of a late-Victorian realist. Though often criticised for having a pessimistic outlook on the world, Hardy believed himself to be a realist or a meliorist (Greenblatt, 2006, p. 1851) – elements that are also evident in *Tess*. Like many of Hardy's characters, Tess seems at the mercy of an indifferent force that influences her surroundings, behaviour and relationships, and she is often the victim of cruel misfortune. She finds herself in the conflict between Nature's law and social law; between her passionate and sexual nature on the one hand, and the social conventions of the strict sexual morals in Victorian England on the other. Importantly, she is, however, still able to achieve a sense of dignity throughout the plot through her loving nature, endurance and self-sacrifice (p. 1851).

The realism and tragedy of Hardy's novels form a corrective to the optimism of the romantic age. This was a result of the immense changes that influenced the mood of this literary age such as industrialisation, urbanisation, Darwin's theories of evolution, and religious doubts (Greenblatt & Abrams, 2006). These changes heavily influence Hardy's *Tess* as well, not only in his romanticised love for the landscape of Wessex (as a reaction to the growing industrialisation), but also in his philosophical narrative comments on subjects like heredity and religion. As Stephen Greenblatt notes “all the Victorian poets show the strong influence of the Romantics,” but due to this unsettling of faith and strain on social conditions, “they cannot sustain the confidence that the Romantics felt in the power of the imagination” (p. 996). Instead, their works often form a critique of the social conventions of everyday Victorian life.

The idea of realism as a corrective to romanticism is also reflected in Hardy's reluctance to follow traditional, romantic narrative conventions throughout the plot. As expressed in his article

“Candour in English Fiction” (1890), Hardy believes the plot, and especially the ending, to be connected to the themes of love and desire in the sense that:

Life being a physiological fact, its honest portrayal must be largely concerned with, for one thing, the relations of the sexes, and the substitution for such catastrophes as favour the false colouring best expressed by the regulation finish that ‘they married and were happy ever after’, of catastrophes based upon sexual relations as it is. To this expansion English society opposes a well-nigh insuperable bar. (pp. 97-98)

In this way, Hardy feels that literary conventions are dictated by social conventions rather than by real life. He notes in an interview: “I hate the optimistic grin which ends a story happily, merely to suit conventional ideas. It raises a far greater horror in me than the honest sadness that comes after tragedy” (Elledge, 1892, p. 388). Thus, rather than letting Tess have the salvation of Angel’s love, Hardy portrays the difficult conditions for women in the nineteenth century by creating a tragic end caused by double standards in sexual relations. Margaret R. Higonnet recounts Hardy’s opinion that “Weak writers of ‘rigidly good family and rigidly correct education [...] mostly treat social conventions and contrivances – the artificial forms of living – as if they were cardinal facts of life.” These ‘artificial forms of living’ include the romantic notions of love, desire and marriage that dictate the regulation finish of ‘they lived happily ever after’. “In Hardy’s view,” Higonnet continues, “these artificial forms, which he called the ‘doll’ of English fiction, must be ‘demolished’” (she quotes Hardy’s *Collected Letters*, 1998, p. xxix).

I am interested in the way that Hardy’s “specific vision of reality” (Greenblatt, p. 995) forms a critique of the romantic notions of love and desire by introducing these notions into the plot of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and then demolishing them through plot developments and the cruel ironies of the characters’ fates. I will explore how Hardy challenges the reader’s expectations, formed by

traditional romantic love-plots, in his construction of a more tragic and realistic plot. Which romantic ideas does he evoke through the plot? And how does he challenge the reader's romantic anticipation?

In this way, my analysis will attempt to answer the question:

How does Thomas Hardy present and demolish romantic notions of love and desire through plotting in his novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891)?

## Methodology

In my thesis, I will take a formalist approach and analyse *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* with focus on *plot* and, more particularly, Peter Brooks's concepts of *plotting* and the reader's *anticipation of retrospection*.

In 1878, Thomas Hardy notes how "A Plot, or Tragedy, should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions [...]" (1928, p. 328). This 'gradual closing in of a situation', driven by the characters' passions, reflects the teleological progression of a plot – that is, where the end itself is the place to get to, the place of revelation and – in Hardy's case, often tragic – meaning (Bennett, 2009, pp. 56-57). In his book *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (1984), the narrative theorist Peter Brooks examines how the reader's desire is structured towards the end of the plot. Brooks describes *plot* as "the design and intention of narrative, what shapes a story and gives it a certain direction or intent of meaning" (p. xi). However, in an attempt to move beyond pure formalism and the notion of plot, Brooks is more concerned with *plotting*, with "the activity of shaping, with the dynamic aspect of narrative – that which makes a plot 'move forward,' and makes us read forward" (p. xiii).

Thus, in order to loosen the grip of formalism, Brooks grounds his examination of plotting as a human activity in the field of psychoanalysis and the work of Freud. He searches for a connection between the dynamic aspect of narrative and the dynamic aspect of human desire, and proposes “that by attempting to superimpose psychic functioning on textual functioning, we may discover something about how textual dynamics work and something about their psychic equivalences” (p. 90). In his chapter “Freud’s Masterplot: A Model of Narrative” (p. 90-112), Brooks accordingly analyses Freud’s essay “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920) “in intertextual relation to narrative fictions and the processes of plotting as we have begun to understand them [in previous chapters]” (p. 96). Brooks’s essential finding, in this chapter, is that desire – both in narrative and in life – is the wish for fulfilment and satisfaction; the wish for the end (p. 111). This reflects the reader’s desire for knowledge and meaning through the revelation of the end – what Bennett calls ‘the satisfaction of epistemophilia’ (p. 57). Here, Brooks references Barthes in his thoughts on narrative structure – considered syntactically – where “meaning (in the ‘classical’ or ‘readable’ text) resides in full predication, completion of the codes in a ‘plenitude’ of signification, which makes the ‘passion for meaning’ ultimately desire for the end” (p. 92). In this way, we desire the final coherence that the actions of the plot promise to give us: “It is at the end [...] that recognition brings its illumination, which then can spread a retrospective light” (p. 92). Plotting is thus about the reader’s expectations to the plot and to the ending: how the “meaning plotted through sequence and through time depends on the anticipated structuring force of the ending” (p. 93). In this way, the dynamic and teleological structure of the plot is motivated by the reader’s *anticipation of retrospection*:

We might say that we are able to read present moments – in literature and, by extension, in life – as endowed with narrative meaning only because we read them in anticipation of the structuring power of those endings that will retrospectively give them the order and significance of plot (p. 94).



In my analysis, I will examine how Hardy challenges the reader's anticipation of retrospection by presenting elements of romantic love plots, only to demolish these elements through later plot developments and the ending.

In his examination of the relation between narratability and life – between the narrative end and the human end – Brooks quotes Frank Kermode. Kermode notes how “man is always ‘in the midst’ [of life]” without any knowledge of the end, and, accordingly, we seek meaning in “the imaginative equivalents of closure that will confer significance” (p. 95). This fits in with Walter Benjamin's claim that “a man's life ‘first assumes transmissible form at the moment of his death’” (Brooks, p. 95); a life does not become narratable until after death, because a beginning presupposes an end. Benjamin concludes that this owes to the way that death gives ‘authority’ to the narrative: “since as readers we seek in narrative fictions the knowledge of death which in our own lives is denied to us” (p. 95). As Brooks points out, this does not have to be a literal death, but – as we see in *Tess* – it very often is. Moreover, it often carries great significance for the plot, as we see “in the nineteenth-century novel [where] the deathbed scene repeatedly stands as a key moment of summing-up and transmission” (p. 95). In my analysis, I will look closer at the way that Tess's tragic death in the end provides narrative meaning and significance to her life and to the plot in relation to the demolition of the romantic notions of love and desire.

Brooks substantiates this theory of a desire for the end by pointing to Freud's theory of the death instinct. In his essay, Freud presents the contentious view that “the aim of all life is death” (Brooks, p. 102) and places the death instincts in opposition to life instincts (p. 106). Freud defines an instinct as “an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things” (Brooks, 102); the wish for a return to origin. Contrary to ordinary belief, instinct is thus the wish to avoid change. External stimuli, however, demand modifications on the part of the organism and this is why it is

brought into action despite the fact that it is “merely seeking to reach an ancient goal [death] by paths alike old and new” (p. 102).

However, this ancient goal, this ending and satisfaction that we desire – both in life and in narrative – must not come too soon. Just like Tess's sense of self-preservation leads her to stall for several chapters before relating her past to Angel Clare, Freud notes how “the self-preservative instincts function to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death” (Brooks, p. 102). Put another way, “the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion” (p. 102), just like the narrative will reach its end through more or less complicated plot conflicts. Thus, Freud presents a portrayal of the organism where “tension created by external influences has forced living substance to ‘diverge ever more widely from its original course of life and to make ever more complicated *détours* before reaching its aim of death’” (p. 102). Similarly, Brooks analyses the paradoxical way that a narrative plot moves toward the end through a series of digressions or detours. Though we feel annoyed if a plot has too many detours, it also creates suspense by delaying the ending through plot developments. One of the paradoxical attractions of a good story is the way that it builds suspense by balancing “digression, on the one hand, with progression towards an end, on the other” (Bennett, 2009, p. 57). These digressions are, what Brooks calls, the ‘deviant middle’ of the plot. Pursuing Freud's notion of the organism's inherent urge to restore an earlier state of things, Brooks explains how a narrative moves from a state of quiescence in the beginning to a disturbance of this stability – through progressions and digressions – in the middle and back to quiescence again in the end. “Between these two moments of quiescence,” Brooks notes, “plot itself stands as a kind of divergence or deviance, a postponement in the discharge which leads back to the inanimate” (p. 103).

In this middle – that which Barthes calls ‘the dilatory space of suspense’ (Brooks, p. 18) – the organism and the narrative “must struggle against events (dangers) that would help it to achieve its goal too rapidly – by a kind of short-circuit.” (p. 102). As mentioned above, the anticipation of

retrospection arises in the expectation that the plot must “seek illumination in its own death” (p. 103); the end must be revelatory. “Yet this must be the right death,” Brooks warns, “the correct end” (p. 103). The improper and early end, the short-circuit, is always present as a threat in the plot, which helps create suspense, and “it most often takes the form of temptation to the mistaken erotic object choice” (p. 109). In my analysis, I will examine how the relationship between Tess and Alec d'Urberville constantly threatens the plot to reach the end too quickly; to reach the incorrect end seen in the light of a romantic point of view.

In this way, we see how Freud's masterplot, with the death instinct, “generates a certain analytic force in its superimposition on fictional plots. What operates in the text through repetitions is the death instinct, the drive toward the end” (p. 102). Repetition is an essential part of fictional plots, which lets us “make connections, conscious and unconscious, between different textual moments” (p. 99). In this way, repetitions work as a *binding* “that allow us to bind one textual moment to another in terms of similarity or substitution rather than mere contiguity” (p. 101). In his essay, Freud finds that his patients repeat former traumatic events until they are able to bind them and master them in a narrative. This is what leads Brooks to note how “Psychoanalysis [...] is a primarily narrative art, concerned with the recovery of the past through the dynamics of memory and desire” (p. xiv). Repetition thus has to do with repression and return: “Repetition creates a *return* in the text, a doubling back. We cannot say whether this return is a return *to* or a return *of*: for instance, a return to origins or a return of the repressed” (p. 100). In my analysis of *Tess*, I will examine how the plot repeatedly returns to the moral question of Tess's purity, and thus lets her relive the pain of her trauma; and how the trauma is repressed by the narrative voice in the way that the reader never learns what truly happens in the Chase; and, finally, how Tess's desire for a return to origin, a return to her lost chastity, drives her plot towards the end.

To sum up, Freud's "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" provides a dynamic model of narrative plot that structures the ends in relation to beginnings and with the middle as detour. In this way, Freud's model is "suggestive of what a reader engages when he responds to a plot" while it also "speaks to the temporality of desire, and speaks to our very desire for fictional plots" (p. 112). It is the reader's dynamic process of plotting, the influences on the reader's anticipation of retrospection, that I will analyse in *Tess* in relation to the plot's presentation and demolition of romantic notions of love and desire.

## Structure of Analysis

In an introductory chapter, before the analysis, I will explain what I mean by romantic notions of love and desire in literature, and relate these notions to the reader's narrative desire and plotting.

Plotting constitutes "the moments where we seize the active work of structuring revealed or dramatized in the text" (Brooks, 1984, p. 35). My analysis of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is therefore structured into chapters, which will each deal with a defining moment or plot event of the novel.

The first chapter, "Plotting the Master Narrative – The d'Urbervilles", will thus analyse the opening of the novel when Mr and Mrs Durbeyfield realise that they are of noble blood. It will examine how this intentional structure of the beginning motivates the tragedy of *Tess*.

The chapter "Plotting the Romantic Love Triangle" will analyse the way Hardy presents the romantic elements of a love triangle through plotting in the opening chapters of *Tess*.

The chapter "The Repressed Plot Event – The Night in the Chase" will analyse this pivotal scene when Alec seduces or rapes Tess. I will examine Hardy's use of narrative voice, symbolism and the sequence of events in his plotting of Tess's trauma as a repressed plot event.

The chapter "Plotting the Romantic Courtship – Talbothays" will analyse the way that Hardy portrays romantic notions of love and desire in the passionate courtship between Angel and Tess. Furthermore, it will examine how Hardy demolishes the romantic notion of a direct link of desire between the subject and the object by presenting the idea of triangular desire.

The chapter "Demolishment of Romantic Illusions – The Confessions" will analyse this important scene as a turning point in plot of *Tess*. Moreover, it will comment on the way *Tess*'s plot continues *after* Tess and Angel are united in marriage. Finally, it will examine the homosocial desire between Alec and Angel as Hardy begins to demolish the notions of a 'right object' and a 'wrong object' for Tess.

The chapter "Construction of Retrospective Meaning – The Ending" will look closer at the tragic end of *Tess*, and analyse the plot ellipses of Tess's return to Alec and Tess's murder of Alec, as well as the important scenes of Stonehenge and Tess's hanging. It will look at the way Hardy rejects the romantic regulation finish of 'they lived happily ever after'.

Finally, in the last chapter, I will reflect on the use of Brooks's model of plotting in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

The narrative structure of *Tess* has, of course, been examined before – most notably within the critical fields of Social Darwinism, Feminism and Poststructuralism. Within the Darwinian field, Gillian Beer has written the essays "Descent and Sexual Selection: Women in Narrative" and "Finding a Scale for the Human: Plot and Writing in Hardy's Novels" (1983) on Hardy's work. She connects Hardy's dynamic of plot to the theory of natural and sexual selection, and examines how

Hardy and Darwin's methods of recording phenomena and impressions are similar. In my formalist approach and close-reading of *Tess*, however, I will look more to the feministic and structuralist readings of the novel, due to my focus on how romantic and realistic notions of love and desire are presented within literature and, to a slighter degree, how these are affected by the sexual ideology of Victorian society. Here, I will especially draw on the essays "'Tess of the d'Urbervilles': Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form" (1982) by Penny Boumelha; "Tess: A Less than Pure Woman Ambivalently Presented" (1986) by Laura Claridge; and "Fallen Woman as Sign, and Narrative Syntax in 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles'" (1989) by Patricia Ingham. All of these essays touch upon Hardy's ambiguous presentation of Tess as a pure woman through plot, and this is relevant in my argument that Hardy demolishes the romantic plot of 'female virtue rewarded by a happy ending' through characterisation (cf. Higonnet). Finally, I will refer to Margaret Higonnet's "Introduction" in the Penguin Classic Edition of *Tess* (1998) as this is one of the few critical texts that remarks upon Hardy's use of anti-romantic elements and his disintegration of the romantic tone and plot conventions.

In his book *Hardy: Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1991), Dale Kramer includes a short chapter on plot in *Tess* where he applies some aspects of Brooks's approach. Kramer's main focus is on the adumbrations that Hardy uses "to guide readers indirectly along the complex unravelling of motive and responsibility, to enhance emotional coherence in a plot whose narrator seems to be insisting on the centrality of outside forces" (p. 60). Kramer argues that these adumbrations give *Tess*'s plot the narrative coherence that other critics have deplorably declared as missing. I will draw on Kramer's observations in some parts of my analysis of Hardy's evocation and demolition of romantic plot patterns.

Furthermore, I will examine some of the *paratexts* of the novel. My discussion of Tess's purity will look closer at the title page with the controversial sub-title "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented,"

while my analysis of the narrative voice in *Tess* will include some comments from Hardy's prefaces on the function of the narrative ambiguity that affects the plot.

As a more general point of reference on the topics of narrative, desire, tragedy and the end, I will make use of Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle's helpful book: *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (2014).

## Romantic Notions of Love and Desire

"Happy love has no history," declares Denis de Rougemont in his book *Love in the Western World*, "Romance only comes into existence where love is fatal, frowned upon and doomed by life itself" (1940, p. 15). In other words, the romantic love-plot is always structured around a conflict that threatens or prevents the union of love between the two main protagonists. This chapter will establish the characteristics of such a love-plot and its conflicts in order to analyse its presence and demolition in the plot of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

Romantic love includes the ideas that each subject has one true object of desire; that love will strike at first sight; that love is reciprocal; and that love, ultimately, unites you with your object of desire (Boone, 1987, pp. 6-7). This understanding of romantic love is a great part of our cultural consciousness. Taking his starting point in the myth and the twelfth century romance of *Tristan and Iseult*, de Rougemont observes, importantly, that this understanding of romantic love is a phenomenon of the *Western* world with "its invention of passionate love in the twelfth century and the secular elaboration of conjugal love" (p. 5). Through a formalist reading and analysis of *Tristan and Iseult*, de Rougemont is thus able to list the characteristics of love and passion in the romance.

Furthermore, he connects the passion of the characters, and the wish for obstruction or delay in their happy fulfilment of love, to the narrative desire of the reader. As Brooks notes, we can

conceive of the reading of plot as a form of desire that carries us forward, onward, through the text. Narratives both tell of desire – typically present some story of desire – and arouse and make use of desire as dynamic of signification” (1984, p. 37).

That is, both in our romantic desire in life and in our narrative desire in reading, we desire some kind of obstruction or digression before reaching the happy fulfilment of the end.

Similarly, Catherine Belsey, in her book *Desire – Love Stories in Western Culture*, finds that one cannot talk about desire outside of one's culture and that desire is discussed most seriously in fiction. In her poststructuralist approach, she argues that desire challenges the way that we place culture and nature, or mind and body, in opposition to each other. Belsey, however, does not look back as far as de Rougemont. She takes her starting point in popular fiction and analyses the Harlequin romances, which have been published since the 1960s, and argues that this “popular romance is clearly rooted in the nineteenth-century novel, with its recurring commitment to the project of disentangling true love from false” (p. 31). She gives as examples the romantic novels *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Jane Eyre* (1847). Like de Rougemont, her formalist reading and analysis of the Harlequin romances provide common characteristics of the romantic love-plot.

In this way, though notions of romantic love and desire go back to the twelfth century, the Romantic Period (1785-1830) embodies the optimistic and passionate spirit of romantic love. This ‘spirit of the age’ was a result of the literary renaissance that emerged from the excitement of the French Revolution, and helped the writers free their creative imagination (Greenblatt, 2006, pp. 6-7). One of the main traits of this literary period is the focus on the poet's, or a character's, passionate feelings. William Wordsworth declares in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) that, “all good poetry



is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (p. 246). In the category of romantic poetry of love between man and woman, we find the works of John Keats, who – in line with Belsey’s notion of romance as a struggle between mind and body – presents “all experience as a tangle of inseparable but irreconcilable differences” (Greenblatt, 2006, p. 879). Thus, though this is “emotion recollected in tranquillity” (p. 266), the poetry portrays the essential role and struggle of passion: “What stirs lyrical poets to their finest flights,” de Rougemont argues, “is neither the delight of the senses nor the fruitful contentment of the settled couple; not the satisfaction of love, but its *passion*. And passion means suffering” (p. 15). As mentioned above, this suffering is caused by some kind of obstruction, a threat to the unity of true love, creating the conflict of the plot. This obstruction can take the form of an inner conflict, death, a rival or the society or family’s disapproval of the union. Though our desires, as romance readers, are directed toward the happy end of true love, “this has to be a love delayed in its happy fulfilment by some obstruction” (de Rougemont, p. 52) – an obstruction that will give us the anticipation of meaningful retrospection. In fact, de Rougemont, like Brooks, argues that this is the way our mind works – both in life and in narrative:

Whether our desire is for the most self-conscious or simply for the most intense love, secretly we desire obstruction. [...] Unless the course of love is being hindered there is no ‘romance’; and it is romance that we revel in – that is to say, the self-consciousness, intensity, variations, and delays of passion (p. 52).

This relates to Belsey’s assertion that the romantic love-plot centres on an inner conflict between mind and body; between morality and desire. The disunity of these opposites creates the passionate suffering of the romance. Only *true* love can bring about a happy ending as it “offers to unify mind and body, to overcome the division Western culture has created between two kinds of feeling, caring on the one hand and desire on the other” (p. 23).

Furthermore, in an attempt to undo the harmful effects of urbanisation and industrialisation, the poets of the Romantic era turned to nature imagery in their expressions of passion. M. H. Abrams observes how “to a remarkable degree external nature – the landscape, together with its flora and fauna – became a persistent subject of poetry” (2009, p. 214). This use of nature metaphors has continued in romantic love-plots since the Romantic period. “Passion in romance is commonly a storm, a flood, a tidal wave [...],” observes Belsey, and, in line with de Rougemont’s argument that passion means suffering, she remarks how “curiously, the metaphors of desire repeatedly invoke not pleasure, but various kinds of disturbance or disaster” (p. 27).

A common conflict in the love-plot is the introduction of a rival. Within romantic ideas of love, we find that each subject has one true object of desire, and that love will – in the end – unite the subject and object. In this perspective, there is a direct link between the subject and object, and this is why the rival constitutes an obstacle to this direct unity. However, both in life and in narrative, desire is often structured by a triangular relation of rivalry, where the route of desire between the subject and object is non-linear. That is, the rival helps determine the subject’s object-choice. These observations on object-choice are presented in Freud’s article “A Special Type of Object Made by Men” (1910). Interestingly, Freud takes his starting point in fiction as he remarks how “Up till now we have left it to the creative writer to depict for us the ‘necessary conditions for loving’ which governs people’s choice of an object” (SEK 163a15). Due to the creative writer’s “necessity to produce intellectual and aesthetic pleasure,” however, he or she “cannot reproduce the stuff of reality unchanged,” and Freud therefore argues for the need for a scientific treatment of human love (163a15).

He lists four preconditions for loving and choosing your object that occur in men. The first one, as mentioned above, is the precondition that there should be ‘an injured third party’, that “the person in question shall never choose as his love-object a woman who is disengaged,” rather she

“becomes the object of passionate feelings immediately she comes into one of these relationships with another man” (163a18). This we see in *Tess* when Alec learns that Tess has married Angel, and his passionate feelings for her flare up again. The second precondition prescribes that the object of desire must be “a woman who is in some way or other of bad repute sexually, whose fidelity and reliability is open to some doubt” (163a19) and who therefore induces the strong feeling of jealousy. The third precondition concerns the compulsive nature of a love-relationship, and how these “are carried on with the highest expenditure of mental energy, to the exclusion of all other interests” (163a23). This reflects Angel's love of Tess at Talbothays Dairy. Finally, the fourth precondition portrays “the urge [men] show to ‘rescue’ the woman they love. The man is convinced that she is in need of him” (163a26). This final precondition will be analysed in relation to the subtext of the defence of Alec d'Urberville, as he offers to take care of Tess and her family in the end.

In this scientific treatment of love, Freud, naturally, ignores common romantic ideas and analyses the collected impressions of his extensive psychoanalytic treatment of male patients. However, as his opening line indicates, he must have observed these preconditions in romantic love-plots – though slightly disguised in the writer's endeavour to create “aesthetic pleasure” (163a15). I will examine Hardy's portrayal of the love triangle between Tess, Angel and Alec, as well as their character motivation, in relation to Freud's observations – that is, I will observe how Freud's theory reflects the presentation and demolition of romantic notions of love and desire in the plot of *Tess*.

In her book *Between Men – English Literature and Homosocial Desire* (1985), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick introduces her theory of *homosocial desire* between men, which develops Freud's argument that the subject chooses his object of desire based on the condition that this object is already involved with another man. Taking her point of departure in René Girard's idea of ‘mediated desire’, Sedgwick argues that desire itself is structured by this triangular relation of rivalry. This owes to the

way that we “learn to desire [...] by copying others’ desires, and our desire is produced, fundamentally, in response to the desire of another” (Bennett, 2014, p. 213). Homosocial desire is thus the bond between the two male rivals, which, Sedgwick argues, is “as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved” (p. 21). Like Boone below, Sedgwick takes a feminist and ideological approach as she notes how “within the male-centered novelistic tradition of European high culture, the triangles Girard traces are most often those in which two males are rivals for a female” (p. 21). She notes how desire is linked to patriarchal structures of society, seeing that “in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (*including* homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power” (p. 25). Accordingly, Bennett and Royle find that *Tess* is “a novel that appears to focus on the eponymous and tragic heroine, [but] is also structured by rivalry between two men who desire her, Angel Clare and Alec D’Urberville” (pp. 214-215). I will analyse how the workings of homosocial desire in the plot – the triangular route of Angel and Alec’s desire – break with the reader’s anticipation of a direct, romantic link of desire between Tess and Angel.

Characterisation in the twentieth-century popular romance, Belsey notes, also finds its roots in the nineteenth-century novel in that “they [often] feature governesses or nannies far from home, who fall in love with their dark Byronic, brooding employers” (p. 12). I will analyse this romantic set up of a ‘Plain Jane’ opposite a Byronic hero in the initial chapters of *Tess*.

The romantic plot follows a well-known structure that Belsey infers from her reading of many Harlequin romances, but can be applied just as well to a classic novel like *Pride and Prejudice*. “According to the formula,” Belsey argues, “the relationship between the central figures often begins in antagonism. One or both may have been hurt by life, and they resort to attack, we are to understand, as the best means of defence” (p. 21). Suspense builds as “they begin to awaken in one another a new warmth, or maturity, or trust, which is identifiable as the transforming and

revitalizing effect of love” (p. 21). The threat of short-circuit, of reaching the end too quickly, is illustrated in the way that “their deepening desire for each other, which the reader recognizes long before the characters do, is constantly on the brink of discovery or revelation” (p. 21). However, as a plot is structured as a series of digressions from the (happy) end, “delays and misunderstandings intervene, until in the final chapter circumstances, often in the form of a happy accident, dispel all uncertainty, and the couple know beyond any further shadow of doubt, that this really is true love” (p. 22). Quiescence, the return to a state of stability, is thus reached through this revelation of true love and culminates, naturally, in marriage. Here, Belsey's book includes references to a classic study made by Janice Radway concerning a group of regular romance readers in a mid-western city called Smithton. The study finds that these women “read in quest of happiness” (p. 22) through the activity of plotting. Their desire for something “Optimistic! That's what I like in a book. An optimistic plot,” reflects their anticipation of retrospection during reading – their hope that they can look back at the struggle and suffering of the plot from the point of a romantic unity of the main protagonists in the end. Belsey notes how the women read toward an ending of true love in the way that they “often checked the ending before buying the book, in order to make sure that the narrative was satisfactorily resolved. And a satisfactory resolution is synonymous with true love” (p. 22). In this way, happy love has no history: the moment the two lovers are joined in unity, the story ends.

This teleological structure of the plot, with true love and marriage as the romantic resolution in the end, is also the focus of Joseph Allen Boone's book *Tradition Counter Tradition – Love and the Form of Fiction* (1987). Boone takes an ideological approach to plot and examines “the complex interchanges whereby ideological structures of belief – of which the ideal of romantic wedlock is a prime example – are translated into narrative structures that at once encode and perpetuates those beliefs” (p. 2). In other words, Boone looks at how the structure of the conventional nineteenth-century love-plot is connected with the Victorian social dynamics of courtship and marriage. He

gathers the results of his formalist reading of various love-plots in his third chapter "Narrative Structure in the Marriage Tradition: Paradigmatic Plots of Courtship, Seduction and Wedlock". This understanding of the connection between narrative structure and the marriage tradition will thus help me in my formalist analysis of the thematic relation between Hardy's demolition of the romantic plot and his critique of the social conventions of love and desire in Victorian society.

"Desire in Western culture," Belsey remarks, "is inextricably intertwined with narrative" (p. xi). Even if one has never read *Tristan and Iseult* or a Harlequin romance, the romantic ideas and plot elements are so common to our cultural consciousness in Western society that they influence the way we think about love and desire today: "what makes romances so *easy* to read, and consequently so easy to despise, is precisely their familiarity. We *know* all this already" (Belsey, p. 31). It is this intertextual knowledge of romances that helps build the reader's anticipation of retrospection when reading *Tess*. Thus, we see a connection between the reader's narrative desire for the end, and the reader's romantic desire for a happy end of true love. Just as the passion of the romance will be intensified by obstruction and separation of the lovers, so will the reader's pleasure in reading be prolonged through obstructions and digressions in the plot.

In my analysis, I will examine how Hardy portrays the shortcomings, and devastating outcome, of these romantic ideas through plotting.

# Analysis

## Plotting the Master Narrative – The d'Urbervilles

According to Brooks, an analysis of the opening of any novel will provide “the image of a desire taking on shape, beginning to see its objects, beginning to develop a textual energetics” (1984, p. 38). Therefore, this chapter will examine how the intentional structure of the beginning in *Tess of the d'Urberville* reveals this narrative desire for the end in relation to romantic notions of love and desire.

In addition to establishing the Wessex setting of the novel, the first lines of *Tess* describe John Durbeyfield's drunken walk home from The Pure Drop Inn in a tone of comedy that continues throughout the chapter:

On an evening in the latter part of May a middle-aged man was walking homeward from Shaston to the village of Marlott, in the adjoining Vale of Blackmore or Blackmoor. The pair of legs that carried him were rickety, and there was a bias in his gait which inclined him somewhat to the left of a straight line. He occasionally gave a smart nod, as if in confirmation of some opinion; though he was not thinking of anything in particular. (Hardy, 1891, p. 1)

Meeting Parson Tringham on his way, who spends time as an amateur antiquary, Durbeyfield is told that he is a descendant of the ancient, but decayed, aristocratic family of the d'Urbervilles (p. 1). The

thought of noble blood instantly goes to Durbeyfield's head, and he orders a horse-and-carriage to drive him the rest of the short way home.

The beginning thus provides a metanarrative element in the sense that Durbeyfield is plotting his own life story – within the plotting of *Tess* – by placing himself within the master narrative of the knighted d'Urbervilles: ““Sir John d'Urberville – that's who I am [...]. There's not a man in the county o' South-Wessex that's got grander and nobler skillentons in his family than I”” (p. 4). As explained above, man longs for the meaning of life that he will only get through the retrospection of the end – that is, death. By seizing this narrative of his family's past glory, Durbeyfield can suddenly picture and imitate the grand life of a nobleman who will be remembered after his death, and he begins to live his life retrospectively as a man of higher class: “Durbeyfield put his hand in his pocket and produced a shilling, one of the chronically few that he possessed. ‘Here's for your labour, lad’” (p. 4). In this way, Hardy portrays the danger of stories, the danger of trusting your blood, as Durbeyfield – who believes that he has moved up in social rank – begins to trust his glorified past to atone for his family's failures at present.

This initial meeting between Durbeyfield and Parson Tringham thus presents a prominent theme of *Tess*: the important relationship between past and present. As part of Hardy's demolition and satirising of romantic elements, Parson Tringham and Durbeyfield both show a desire for the idealised and romanticised past to such a degree that they are indifferent to the time in which they live. Tim Dolin notes how “the amateur antiquarian was often a scorned figure in the nineteenth century” (p. 401), and this we sense in Hardy's comic portrayal of the parson's self-importance: “‘In short,’ concluded the parson decisively smacking his leg with his switch, ‘there's hardly such a family in England!’” (p. 2). It is Durbeyfield's reaction to these news – his failure to understand the insignificance of the exalted past in relation to the hardships of the present – that sets the plot in



motion: “‘Daze my eyes, and isn’t there,’ said Durbeyfield. ‘And here have I been knocking about year after year from pillar to post as if I was no more than the commonest feller in the parish’” (p. 4).

Remembering Brooks’s opening quote, we thus see an image of desire reflecting – however satirical – the plot of ambition in the opening of *Tess*. “By the nineteenth century,” Brooks argues, the basic dynamic of plot “has typically taken a more elaborated and socially defined form: it has become ambition” (p. 39). The reader will thus recognise the armature of this kind of plot and construct meaning accordingly (p. 39). As the reader will realise retrospectively at the end of *Tess*, it is Mr and Mrs Durbeyfield’s plotting of their own life within the grand narrative of their newfound ancestry – their strong wish to move up the social ladder – that initiates and motivates the tragedy of Tess. The Durbeyfield’s desire for a higher social standing drives the plot forward as ambition constitutes “the energies vitalised into ineffectual action by Mrs. Durbeyfield” (Kramer, 1991, p. 57). When Tess inadvertently kills the family horse, Prince, Joan ambitiously sends Tess to their rich kinship, the d’Urbervilles, in the hope that she will restore the family’s fortune. Here, in addition to ambition, the narrative desire similarly reflects the plot of romance in *Tess*. Joan is plotting her own romantic fairy tale, as she desires the traditional romantic end of poor Tess’s marriage to a rich gentleman: “‘Well, Tess ought to go to this other member of our family. She’d be sure to win the lady – Tess would. And likely enough ’twould lead to some noble gentleman marrying her’” (p. 17). Despite Tess’s reluctance to go, the reader will recognise the armature of the romantic love-plot in Joan’s words, and begin to construct the novel’s meanings through this prism – and will therefore anticipate the introduction of a second love interest as a step towards the romantic end of marriage. Tess’s guilt about the loss of Prince makes her acquiesce to her mother’s wishes: “to please her parent the girl put herself quite in Joan’s hands, saying serenely, ‘Do what you like with me, mother’” (p. 35). This submission and later victimisation, as Higonnet notes, makes Tess a part of Joan’s romantic

plotting as “her feckless parents casts her in the role of this fairy-tale heroine, able to preserve her purity even while submitting to violence and exile” (1998, p. xxxiii).

Importantly, at the end of this chapter, when Tess has been sent on her way to the d'Urbervilles, Hardy presents a plot element that demolishes this initial anticipation of a romantic love-plot and forces the reader to reconsider the story. Joan begins to have doubts about the sagacity of sending Tess to an unknown gentleman. Joan, however, “always managed to find consolation somewhere: ‘Well, as one of the genuine stock, she ought to make her way with ’en, if she plays her trump card aright. And if he don’t marry her afore he will after’” (p. 38). This quote – naturally, implying that if Alec will not marry Tess before he sleeps with her, he will after – portrays a “placidly pragmatic opinion, which caused some controversy when the novel was first reviewed, [and] was omitted from *Graphic*” (Dolin, p. 411). The example illustrates Joan’s social awareness, and her plan of sending her daughter off to temporary sexual disgrace – and possible violation – at the prize of her becoming a lady of the d'Urberville house. Joan recognises the power of desire and sexuality as we see the moment after when John asks her: “‘What’s her trump card? Her d'Urberville blood, you mean?’” and she answers, “‘No, stupid; her face – as ’twas mine’” (p. 38). In her plotting of Tess’s fate, Joan thus notes the authority of marriage in love-plots and dissipates the traditional romantic idea of female virtue rewarded by a happy ending. Put another way, the narrative desire for a romantic end – that is, marriage – can be satisfied if not ‘before’ then ‘after’.

Indeed, Boone notes how marriage, in the romantic love-plots, prevents every social disgrace as the “sexual tragedy need only be followed by marriage, in society’s eyes, to be transformed into its seeming opposite, comedy” (1987, p. 77). This we see for example in Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* where George Wickham runs away with Elizabeth’s younger sister, Lydia, without meaning to marry her. The Bennett family is saved from social disaster as Darcy bribes Wickham to marry Lydia – and not much further consideration is given to Lydia who is locked in marriage for the rest of her life with

this dishonourable man. It is this ideological paradox that Hardy questions in his portrayal of Joan's acute – and unromantic – awareness of sexual politics and social conventions within the Victorian rural society. In this way, this plot element is present in many romantic plots, but never explicitly commented on as in Joan's pragmatic way.

Joan's plotting does not go according to plan, however, as Tess returns home after being seduced or raped by Alec, but without an intention to marry him: “‘And yet th'st not got him to marry 'ee!’ reiterated her mother. ‘Any woman would have done it but you, after that!’” (p. 63). In addition to blaming Joan, however, Tess laments her own ignorance concerning the plotting of seduction and marriage in romantic literature, which she blames as well for her misfortune:

Why didn't you tell me there was danger in men-folk? Why didn't you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hands against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance o' learning in that way; and you did not help me. (p. 64)

Tess's dignity and her refusal to follow Joan's romantic plot form a resistance to the usual, social customs of love and marriage in the Victorian age. As Higoumet notes, Tess “rejects the trite social solution to her story just as Hardy in his essay ‘Candour in English Fiction’ rejects the ‘regulation finish’ that ‘they married and were happy ever after’” (p. xxxiv). Moreover, Joan recognises how her plotting of the romantic fairy tale has been short-circuited, and she chastises Tess: “‘It would have been something like a story to come back with, if you had [married him]!’” (p. 63). In this way, the reader has to readjust his or hers anticipation of retrospection as the sexual tragedy is not turned into comedy, and – as we will see in the analysis below – the comedic and romantic tone of these initial chapters with the Durbeyfields is dissipated through later plot developments, where Hardy portrays the consequences of Tess's seduction and refusal to stay with Alec.

In conclusion, this chapter shows how Mr and Mrs Durbeyfield – in a metanarrative element of *Tess* – are plotting their own life stories by placing themselves within the master narrative of the d'Urbervilles. Moreover, it looked at the dynamic aspects of Joan's plotting as she both presented romantic elements, but also demolished these elements through awareness of social rules. Furthermore, it found that the image of narrative desire, which is displayed in the opening of *Tess*, is that of ambition and of romance. This leads us to the next chapter, which will look closer at this narrative desire of romantic love in the plotting of the romantic love triangle in the beginning of *Tess*.

## Plotting the Romantic Love Triangle

This chapter will analyse how Hardy presents the romantic elements of a love triangle in the opening chapters of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* through plotting. That is, I will look at the way the romantic indications of a love triangle not only provide a theme of desire in the novel, but also a dynamic in the plot, which influences the reader's anticipation of retrospection.

In these opening chapters, Hardy evokes the reader's architextual knowledge of romances and love triangles through the initial characterisation of the three main characters – Tess, Angel and Alec – and their relations. We first meet Tess at the May-Day dance of Marlott as she goes 'club-walking' with a group of "genuine country girls" (Hardy, 1891, p. 6). A Wessex setting, which in itself has the romantic feel of a pastoral tradition as "the club of Marlott alone lived to uphold the local Cerealia<sup>1</sup>" in "a Georgian style" (p. 6). In this early scene, Tess – though never fully a 'Plain Jane' – does not

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<sup>1</sup> Ceremony of honour of the Ceres, the goddess of agriculture (Elledge, 1991, p. 6).

stand out particularly from the group in the portrayal of her as “a fine and handsome girl – not handsomer than others, possibly – but her mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes added eloquence to colour and shape” (p. 7). This, and her poor, rural background as well as her ignorance of her own sexual nature, as we will see below, place her among the heroines “common in romantic fiction [...] who do not consider themselves beautiful and who have to make a living” (Belsey, 1994, p. 12). Moreover, in his realistic depiction of country folk, Hardy displays their direct speech with a dialect. Tess, however, has “passed the sixth standard in the National School under a London-trained mistress, spoke two languages; the dialect of home, more or less; ordinary English abroad and to persons of quality” (p. 12). This piece of information forms an important part of plotting as it reveals Hardy's complex structuring of Tess's personality. He leaves this note of her education for the reader to bind to later moments when she is placed in situations of moral difficulties, “in order to make more plausible her role as a country girl, not a mere dumb [and inferior] victim of incomprehensible social forces [...], but a figure with some articulateness and awareness.” (Howe, 1967, p. 411).

Furthermore, in the description of the club of Marlott, we learn that the band of women “were all dressed in white gowns – a gay survival from the Old-Style days” (p. 6). Here, Hardy shows his flair for symbolism, as the white gown on Tess represents her innocence and purity, since she “at this time of her life was a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience” (p. 8). What is more, Hardy recognises the complexity and ambiguity of these concepts of innocence and purity, when he observes how the “Ideal and real clashed slightly as the sun lit up their figures [...] for, though the whole troop wore white garments, no two white were alike among them” (p. 6). The ambiguity of the moral conception of purity is illustrated in this broad spectrum of white as “some approached pure blanching; some had bluish pallor; some worn by the older characters [...] inclined to a cadaverous tint” (p. 6). Finally, when Tess returns home later that evening feeling “a chill self-reproach that she had not returned sooner, to help her mother in these domesticities, instead of indulging herself out-

of-doors" (p. 11), her sense of guilt is reflected upon the colour of her white gown "which she had so carelessly greened about the skirt on the damping grass" (p. 11). Hardy's conception of purity will be examined further in the next chapter, when I will look closer at the sub-title of *Tess*.

Looking in at the May-Day dance are Angel Clare and his two elder brothers, "three young men of superior class" (p. 8), who are on a walking-tour through the Vale of Blackmoor. Here, Angel appears as a free-spirited young hero who escapes definition, as there is "an uncribbed and uncabined, aspect in his eye and attire, implying that he had hardly as yet found the entrance to his professional groove" (p. 8), and who – to his brothers' snobbish disapproval – decides to dance with the girls. However, the narrator also leaves hints of Angel's later philosophical confusion and moral hypocrisy in his remark: "that he was a desultory, tentative student of something and everything might only have been predicated in him" (p. 8). Chapter XVIII of *Tess* forms a digression from the plot, as it is almost fully dedicated to the characterisation of Angel and his family, and here we learn that he has "fixed, abstracted eyes, and a mobility of mouth, somewhat too small and delicately lined for a man's" (p. 89), while the omniscient narrator later remarks, with a slight criticism, how he is "less Byronic than Shelleyan" (p. 151).

At the dance, Angel has to choose a girl to dance with and takes "almost the first that came to hand" (p. 9); another girl than Tess. "Pedigree, ancestral skeletons," the narrator notes satirically of Tess's new-found relation to the old county family the d'Urbervilles, "did not help Tess in her life's battle as yet, even to the extent of attracting to her a dancing-partner over the heads of the commonest peasantry" (p. 9). Nevertheless, we observe something close to the romantic notion of 'love at first sight' when Angel notices Tess:

As he fell out of the dance his eyes lighted on Tess Durbeyfield, whose own large orbs wore, to tell the truth, the faintest aspect of reproach that he had not chosen her. He too was sorry

then that, owing to her backwardness, he had not observed her; and with that in his mind he left the pasture (p. 10).

As Kramer notes, “the narrator’s choice of terms and phrases registers their extraordinary sensitivity towards each other” (1997, p. 61) as Tess is charmed by Angel’s speech, and Angel who “instinctively felt that she had been hurt by his oversight” (p. 10) lingers to look back. There is thus clear romantic indications of a prospective unity of true love. Furthermore, in a later retrospection, the reader will be able to see this textual moment in connection to another – as a form of repetition in the drive towards the end – that will link the beginning of Tess and Angel’s love-plot to the end. That is, Tess’s reproach here reflects the way she blames Angel in the end for staying so long in Brazil rather than choosing to come back to her.

By in this way planting Angel at the May-Day dance well before Talbothays, and, crucially, before Tess meets Alec d’Urberville, Hardy leaves hints of the ‘right man’ and ‘true love’ out there for Tess and the reader. When Alec enters the plot in Chapter V with the flirtatious question ““Well, my beauty, what can I do for you?”” (p. 28) to Tess, the reader is therefore alerted to the narrative structure of a love triangle. Tess, who is inadvertently at fault for the death of the Durbeyfield’s horse, Prince, has come to Alec for economic help after learning of her family’s relation to his old county family. Here, Alec is characterised as having “an almost swarthy complexion, with full lips, badly moulded, though red and smooth, above which was a well-groomed black moustache with curled points,” and despite “the touches of barbarism in his contours there was a singular force in the gentleman’s face, and in his bold rolling eye” (p. 28). A description which makes him appear not only Byronic, but like a ‘stagy, melodramatic villain’ (Howe, p. 411). Contrary to Angel who has the initial appearance of the ‘right object’ – of the husband – in his “gentle, caring, reliable, responsible” characteristics (Belsey, 1994, p. 25), Alec has the dangerous charms of the wrong object whose “sexuality is felt as almost irresistible” (Belsey, p. 25). In this way, Hardy portrays the two rivals “in

keeping with the romantic motif of the dark and light heroes, Alec is the dark, carnal, Byronic hero [...]; and Angel is the fair intellectual, Platonic idealist, Shelleyan hero" (Dolan, 1998, p. 436).

In this important example of the first meeting between Tess and Alec, we see how the text operates through repetition in the drive towards the end of "Phase the First: The Maiden". That is, the garden scene portrays an effective use of symbolism that binds the scene to Alec's later seduction or rape of Tess in the Chase at the end of this phase. Alec is gathering strawberries for Tess, and finding a specially fine one,

[...] 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.

(p. 29)

A notable part of the romantic plot and the conflict between mind and body is exactly this way that "desire constantly threatens to betray morality, to subject the heroine to the wrong man" (Belsey, p. 25). The scene illustrates this inner conflict between desire and morality as Tess continues "eating in a half-pleased, half-reluctant state whatever d'Urberville offered her" (p. 29). Claridge argues that it is exactly the "sense that Tess chooses her sexual initiation – that she knows what she is about – that makes this scene erotic" (p. 69). One could however also argue that Tess's 'slight distress' and 'half-reluctance' portray her as a victim of confusion, and this ambiguity indicates that "Hardy intended the tension between Alec's violation of Tess and her physical compliance to remain unresolved" (Higonnet, p. xx). Regardless of which, we see the first indications of the demolition of Tess as a traditional romantic heroine in the way that she is affected by Alec's charms and that she "is to be more than a stiff bundle of virtue" (Howe, p. 412). It is this strong imagery, which prompts Kramer



to make the important observation that “the novel’s opening draws the reader onward, in anticipation of the inevitable seduction of the heroine” (p. 64).

The scene thus functions as a forewarning of later events in the plot. In his role as the wrong object, Alec constitutes the threat of short-circuit – a version of temptation – which Tess and the plot must be led away from, into detours and delays that will prolong the narrative (Brooks, p. 109). In the end of this first ominous meeting between Tess and Alec, Hardy shows awareness of these narrative conventions as we encounter one of “the moments where we seize the active work of structuring [of the romantic love triangle] revealed or dramatized in the text” (Brooks, p. 35) through the omniscient and foreshadowing narrator of *Tess*:

Thus the thing began. Had she perceived this meeting’s import she might have asked why she was doomed to be seen and coveted that day by the *wrong man*, and not by some other man, the *right and desired one* in all respects – as nearly as humanity can supply the right and desired; yet to *him* who amongst her acquaintance might have approximated to this kind, she was but a transient impression half-forgotten. [...] 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 maladroitness sprang anxieties, disappointments, shocks, catastrophes, and passing strange destinies. (pp. 30-31, my emphases)

This ‘maladroitness delay’ is the delay of the union of ‘two halves of a perfect whole’, of Angel and Tess, and the example thus adumbrates all the suffering that Tess will have to go through due to the ‘wrong man’ before she meets ‘the right and desired one’ again. In this way, the narrative drive towards the

end of phase the first – that which moves the readers forward in the plot – anticipates the imminent catastrophe of Tess's seduction or rape by the mischievous Alec.

In conclusion, we see how *Tess*'s initial "unfolding of the narrative" presents the "line of intention and a portent of design" (Brooks, p. xiii) of the romantic love triangle. It does this through the traditional, romantic characterisation of the subject, object and rival where the female heroine, Tess, is a genuine and common country girl who has to make a living; and the two rivals are opposites of light and dark, gentle and dangerous, characteristics. Alec, as the rival, forms the obstruction to the union and alerts the reader to anticipate the seduction of Tess. In this way, the 'image of desire' that we find in the opening chapters of *Tess* – that which drives the plot forward – is the romantic, sexual and, later on, homosocial desire between the three main characters, which is narratively structured within the love triangle. As we will see in the analysis below, this romantic set-up will soon be demolished into a darker, and more ambiguous, tone and take on some characteristics of the tragedy.

As a final note to this chapter, we can see that the love triangle structures the overall plot of *Tess*. That is, *Tess*'s traditional, linear plot, consisting of seven phases, is formed by a series of meetings between Tess and Angel, and Tess and Alec that we follow in "anticipation of its larger hermeneutic structuring by [its] conclusions" (Brooks, p. 23). The structure of the love triangle becomes evident in the four different settings, what Howe terms the "four sections or panels of representation" (p. 410) that shapes the plot in *Tess*. The four sections are Tess at Marlott and Trantridge with Alec; Tess at Talbothays with Angel; Tess at Flintcomb-Ash and Sandbourne with Alec; and finally Tess on the run and at Stonehenge with Angel. In this way, Angel and Alec never actually meet. However, as we will see in the analysis below, this does not prevent them from being strongly affected by each other's presence in the plot.

## The Repressed Plot Event – The Night in the Chase

This chapter will analyse the pivotal scene of the night in the Chase when Alec seduces or rapes Tess at the end of Phase the First in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. In addition to the course of events, I will examine Hardy's use of narrative voice and symbolism in his plotting of Tess's trauma as a repressed event in the plot. Moreover, I will look at how the text is bound by repetitions of and returns to Tess's repressed trauma in its drive towards the end. Finally, I will illustrate the way this plotting of the seduction or rape of Tess demolishes the romantic elements presented in the opening of the novel.

As we saw above in the strawberry scene, the opening of *Tess* draws the reader onward in anticipation of Tess's imminent seduction. That is, the textual energies of this seduction plot are shaped through repetitions that allow the reader to construct thematic wholes and narrative orders within the text (Brooks, p. 123). Thus, Hardy encourages the reader to read these early scenes between Tess and Alec retrospectively and connect them thematically to the rape/seduction scene. In addition to the strawberry scene, we see this when Tess rides with Alec to Trantridge for her new job as a poultry caretaker, and she begins "to get uneasy at a certain recklessness in her conductor's driving" (Hardy, 1891, p. 39). The scene reflects Alec's courtship of Tess and the dangerous attraction of the wrong object choice. As Howe notes, "if there is something ominous in the air, there is also fun and youthful zest in their sparring" (1967, p. 412). This is especially evident when Alec teases Tess that he will only slow down if she gives him a kiss: "'Let me put one little kiss on those holmberry lips, Tess; or even on that warmed cheek, and I'll stop'" (p. 40). She lets him kiss her, but when he asks for a second kiss at the next declivity, she tricks him by letting her hat drop to the ground, and refusing

to return to the carriage: “‘No, sir,’ she said, revealing the red and ivory of her mouth as her eye lit in defiant triumph. ‘Not again, if I know it!’” (p. 41). In this anticipatory scene, there is thus a sense of mutual flirtation or, at least, a sense that Tess can match Alec’s wit and is by no means a passive victim.

However, looking closer at the kiss on the carriage, we see how Hardy presents the possibly symbolic repetition of what will happen later in the Chase:

‘But I don’t want anybody to kiss me, sir!’ she implored, a big tear beginning to roll down her face [...].

He was inexorable, and she sat still, and d’Urberville gave her the kiss of mastery.

No sooner had he done so than she flushed with shame, took out her handkerchief, and wiped the spot on the cheek that had been touched by his lips. (pp. 40-41)

This wiping away of the kiss reflects in itself Tess’s later desire for a return to origin; for a return to her lost chastity and the time before her trauma. Furthermore, when Hardy remarks, “She had, in fact, undone the kiss as far as such a thing was physically possible” (p. 41), he suggests that Tess’s grief is rooted in the mind and the moral world of society, rather than in the body and the physical world of nature.

Through these repetitions, or adumbrations, Hardy creates the suspense of the seduction plot as they allow the reader to make conscious or unconscious connections between these different – yet semantically similar – textual moments. Hardy guides the reader’s narrative desire to what is important in the plot – that is, the romantic and sexual desire of the characters that drives the plot of Phase the First towards the end of sexual intercourse. Through these repetitions, Boone argues, Hardy thus “upholds many of the sexual stereotypes and structural conventions embedded in the closed format of seduction” (1987, p. 108). For example, in the role of the wrong object, Alec is portrayed

as a dangerous rake – not just by his desire to master the wild mare of the carriage, but also in the hints that he has a long series of love-objects behind him. On the night of the seduction, when Tess is walking home with the other Trantridge people, she accidentally insults the woman Car. Here, the omniscient narrator notes that Car's sister, Nancy, "who, having stood in the relations to d'Urberville that Car had also been suspected of, united with the latter against the common enemy [Tess]" (p. 52). This description of Alec's reputation reflects Freud's third precondition for men's object choice, which is the compulsive nature of their love-relationships. These "passionate attachments of this sort are repeated with the same peculiarities again and again in the lives of men of this type [and] the love-objects may replace one another so frequently that a *long series of them is formed*" (Freud, 1910, SEK163a25, his emphasis). In this way, Alec differs from the romantic hero who is looking for a monogamous relationship of true love, and rather fits the description of "the wrong man [who] is all body: phallic, hard, unromantic" (Belsey, 1994, p. 25). In his ideological approach, Boone points out the way that this structure of the seduction plot – of the double-suitor convention – reflects the belief in female inferiority in the patriarchal society. He references Jean E. Kennard as he explains how the heroine in courtship plots "must be weaned from an initially mistaken male object of desire by a second, more responsible wooer, who, as her mentor figure, provides a model of the correct behaviour to which she herself needs to aspire in order to become an autonomous adult" (p. 75). As we will see later, Angel will initially fill the role as this 'mentor figure'. When recognising these characteristics of the romantic love triangle and the dynamic of the seduction plot, the readers will construct their anticipations of Alec's seduction of Tess.

In the scene leading up to the seduction, Alec rides by the Trantridge people and offers to save Tess from the situation of Car and Nancy: "'Jump up behind me,' he whispered, 'and we'll get shot of the screaming cats in a jiffy!'" (p. 52). The scene illustrates the painfully ironic course of events and the injustice of fate as Tess's one moment of weakness and pride seals her fall. She instinctively

knows that she cannot trust Alec and “at almost any other moment of her life she would have refused such proffered aid and company” (p. 52). However, “coming as the invitation did at the particular juncture when fear and indignation at these adversaries could be transformed by a spring of the foot into a triumph over them she abandoned herself to her impulse” (p. 53). This moment in the plot connects retrospectively to Parson Tringham’s earlier ominous observation that “our impulses are too strong for judgments at times” (p. 2) when he tellingly doubts the wisdom of telling John Durbeyfield of his d’Urberville ancestry. Mounting the young d’Urberville’s horse, Tess misses the laugh and words of “dark Car’s mother, stroking her moustache as she explained laconically, ‘Out of the frying-pan into the fire!’” (p. 53). This structuring moment of dramatic irony forms the reader’s anticipation of retrospection, as we now know Tess has placed herself in a situation far more dangerous than the quarrel with the Trantridge people, and we – together with Tess – are driven towards the inevitable end of seduction.

Despite this strong symbolic and narrative construction of anticipation, the seduction at the end of Phase the First is described only circuitously and ambiguously. Boumelha notes how the seduction can hardly ever be out of the reader’s mind in the initial chapters and “it is all the more noticeable, then, that after this build-up, the seduction itself is given only obliquely and by implication” (1982, p. 53).

This ambiguous presentation has to do with the authoritative role of the third-person omniscient narrator of *Tess* who is “arguably, the most important character in this novel” (Watts, 2007, p. 39). There is a clear sense of Hardy’s moral sensibility in the plotting of *Tess* – as mentioned above, in the link between his view of love and marriage and his construction of the narrative end – and this moral sensibility is reinforced by the intrusive narrative voice. Though the narrator presents much of *Tess*’s plot in an inconspicuous and descriptive manner through dialogue and explanations, he is always a strong narrative presence. Thus, he becomes very noticeable when he regularly

intervenes and comments on the action and the characters' motives and virtues. Here, we recognise, what Watts terms, the "characteristically Hardenian attitude" in his philosophical digressions and his "narrational criticisms of providential beliefs and of puritanical morality" (p. 39). The narrator thus judges and reports on the events of the plot, and is, much like Tess, "inflected by the nature of the unfolding narrative" (Watts, p. 39). To sum up, *Tess* presents both an inconspicuous and conspicuous mode of narration. Put another way, the characterisation in the symbolic scene of the kiss above, for example, chiefly makes use of *showing* in its portrayal of Tess and Alec's behaviour and direct speeches. The scene in the chase, however, mixes the use of *showing* and *telling*, but with *telling* – the narrator's intrusive judgements of events – as the most distinctive feature.

In this way, the plotting of the night in the chase begins with the inconspicuous narration of showing, where Alec courts Tess, and we learn of a passion that – in the spirit of de Rougemont – has only grown stronger in Tess's denial of him:

'For near three mortal months have you trifled with my feelings, eluded me, and snubbed me; and I won't stand it! [...] We know each other well; and you know that I love you, and think you are the prettiest girl in the world, which you are. Mayn't I treat you as a lover?' (pp. 54-55)

Tess's answer reflects her doubt of Alec's character: "'I don't know – I wish – how can I say yes or no, when –'" (p. 55), and when he reveals that he has given her family a new cob as well as some toys, her inner conflict between gratitude and her not true love for him shows: "'I am grateful,' she reluctantly admitted. 'But I fear I do not [love you]'" (p. 56). As he sees her distress, Alec comforts her. He realises that they are lost and leaves the horse and an exhausted Tess among the trees to go and look for their way. Sensing that she is cold, "he pulled off a light overcoat that he had worn, and

put it around her tenderly. 'That's it – now you'll feel warmer,' he continued. 'Now, my pretty, rest there: I shall soon be back again'" (p. 56).

This showing thus presents a subtext of demolishment of romantic notions of love. Not only is Alec's genuine love and care for Tess an incongruous trait for the *wrong* object of the romantic love triangle, but the idea of Alec's passionate love as unreciprocated is anti-romantic as well. These indications force the reader to reconsider the story of Alec as the villain. Hardy is plotting the defence of Alec through these subtle negations of the traditional romantic plot, which are "evidence of Alec's desire to make human connections – to make contact emotionally as well as sexually" (Claridge, 1986, p. 74).

However, as mentioned above, the plot begins to display narrative ambiguity here in the possibility of multiple interpretations. If we instead read the scene through the prism of the romantic love triangle – the plot that Claridge terms "the dominant narrative line" (p. 71) – with Alec as the wrong, dangerous object, the final line of Alec's quote above will seem threatening rather than comforting. In this view, with our narrative desire directed towards the ultimate romantic end of Tess and Angel's union, Alec's kind gestures and flattering remarks appear as an evil scheme to lure Tess into a trap of rape and later abandonment. The earlier mentioning of Alec's many love-objects and the remark from Car's mother support this interpretation. In this romantic view, Tess is an innocent victim and Alec a callous predator. Cedric Watts believes that "the evidence predominantly indicates an initial act of rape," and he judges that "in the time before the crucial incident in the Chase, the narrative has emphasised Tess's exhaustion and Alec's predatory resourcefulness" (2007, p. 30). With this view in mind, the opening lines of the incident takes on a menacing aspect:

'Tess!' said d'Urberville.

There was no answer. The obscurity was now so great that he could see absolutely



nothing but a pale nebulousness at his feet, which represented the white muslin figure he had left upon the dead leaves. Everything else was blackness alike.

D'Urberville stooped; and heard a gentle regular breathing. He knelt, and bent lower, till her breath warmed his face, and in a moment his cheek was in contact with hers.

She was sleeping soundly, and upon her eyelashes there lingered tears. (p. 57)

However, in this example, the narrator still presents the action through showing and leaves it to the reader to infer Alec's motives. Tess, on the other hand, disappears from view in the 'blackness alike' and is thus not narratively present at one of the most crucial moments of her life.

This we see in the next couple of lines when "the text pans back from Tess", as Widdowson describes it in his examination of Hardy's proto-cinematic techniques (1993, p. 1): "Darkness and silence ruled everywhere around. Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks of The Chase, in which were poised gentle roosting birds in their last nap; and about them stole the hopping rabbits and hares" (p. 57). In this panning away from the action, the characterisation of events moves from showing to telling as the narrator now intervenes authoritatively to describe the rape/seduction through philosophical implications. Throughout the plot, the narrator is portrayed as Tess's only true friend and defender, and here he questions the justice of Tess's fate:

But, might some say, where was Tess's guardian angel? where was the Providence of her simple faith? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked.

In this intertextual reference to the Bible, the ironical Tishbite is "the prophet Elijah, who, according to 1 Kings 18:27, mocked the worshippers of Baal for their belief" (Watts, p. 31). The narrator thus suggests the worthlessness of Tess's simple faith in the Christian God and religion when it comes to

a situation of human passion and cruelty. This leads him to ask the question – by use of nature imagery and, more particularly, similes – “Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive [...]” (p. 57).

Here, among these ‘primeval yews and oaks’, the narrator evokes a sense of history and perspective; a sense that the misdeeds of human passion have existed as long as human nature itself: “why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order” (p. 57). He attempts to find justification in the grand narrative of Tess’s ancestry and the greater meaning of this, as he admits the “possibility of a retribution lurking in the present catastrophe. Doubtless some of Tess d’Urberville’s mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time” (p. 57). However, he once more demolishes this romantic notion of an idealised past affecting the present in his mocking, but pragmatic, argument: “But though to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children may be a morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature; and it therefore does not mend the matter” (p. 57).

Greenblatt notes how the characters in “Hardy’s fiction are not masters of their fates; they are at the mercy of indifferent forces” (2006, p. 1851). As a concluding remark on the incident, the narrator displays this well-known fatalism as he notes, “As Tess’s own people down in those retreats are never tired of saying among each other in their fatalistic way: ‘It was to be.’ There lay the pity of it” (pp. 57-58).

In the following transition from the well-named “Phase the First: The Maiden” to “Phase the Second: Maiden No More”, we find an ellipsis in the plot as the second phase begins “some few

weeks subsequent to the night ride in the Chase" (p. 58). Moreover, the very last line of the first phase forms a forewarning of the change in Tess's character as "an immeasurable social chasm was to divide our heroine's personality thereafter from that previous self of hers who stepped from her mother's door to try her fortune at Trantridge poultry farm" (p. 58). In this way, without revealing specifics of Tess's trauma, the narrator expresses her loss of innocence and her fall in the eyes of society. Accordingly, the first lines of the second phase portray her as "a person who did not find her especial burden in material things" (p. 58). Besides his critique of the social condemnation, Hardy illustrates an irony to this development in Tess's character because in many ways "it has been a fortunate fall. Tess's eye is now keener, her tongue sharper, her mind quicker. Innocence lost, she takes upon herself the weight of awareness" (Howe, 1967, p. 413). Thus, Hardy demolishes the romantic characterisation of Tess as a virtuous heroine. By repressing the plot event of the Chase through symbolism, ellipsis and the narrator's reflections, he leaves questions concerning Tess's innocence in the matter. Rather, he portrays her as a complex character who "had learnt that the serpent hisses where the sweet birds sing, and her views of life had been totally changed for her by the lesson" (pp. 58-59). In the dynamic aspect of plotting, the reader will thus have to reconsider the story of Tess as a romantic heroine. As we will see in the later characterisation of Alec and Angel as well, "Hardy's focus on this principle of growth informs his resistance to insular categories and many of his breaks with established plot conventions" (Higonnet, 1998, p. xxiii).

As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, repetition creates a return in the text, a doubling back, and this is often a return of the repressed. Later in the plot of *Tess*, we thus see how the repressed trauma of the Chase repeats itself through more plot ellipses. As noted above, Freud believes that his patients must repeat former traumatic events until they are able to bind them and master them in a narrative. This we see when Tess writes her confession to Angel in a letter: "Declare the past to him by word of mouth she could not, but there was another way. She sat down and wrote on the four pages

of a note-sheet a succinct narrative of those events of two or three years ago" (p. 164). However, in a Hardenian moment of cruel misfortune, Tess thrusts the letter not just beneath Angel's door, but beneath the carpet as well, and Angel and the reader thus never learn its contents.

In fact, the continuous repression of Tess's trauma defines the structure of the plot in *Tess*, as it is shaped by these seven "discontinuous Phases which repeatedly edit out the most crucial episodes of the plot" (Boumelha, 1982, p. 52). This we see again in Tess's spoken confession to Angel, which forms a plot ellipsis between the two phases: "Phase the Fourth: The Consequence" and "Phase the Fifth: The Woman Pays". Thus, the fourth phase ends: "pressing her forehead against [Angel's] temple she entered on her story of her acquaintance with Alec d'Urberville and its results, murmuring the words without flinching, and with her eyelids drooping down"; while the fifth phase begins: "Her narrative ended: even its reassertions and secondary explanations were done" (pp. 177-178). Once again, the reader is left in the unknown with only Angel's later words "'You were more sinned against than sinning, that I admit'" (p. 182) as a hint to what has been narrated. Here, Hardy uses imagery in his avoidance of narrating the actual events of the trauma, as "the complexion even of external things seemed to suffer transmutation as her announcement progressed. The fire in the grate looked impish, demonically funny, as if it did not care in the least about her strait" (p. 178). In this way, he demolishes Tess's romantic illusion and makes her return to the social reality where 'the woman pays'.

In this way, the rape/seduction scene continues to be an ambiguous and repressed plot element for the reader, but by resurfacing through repetition creates an emotional coherence in the novel. These repetitions of her trauma illustrate the way Tess is haunted by the past, and how her past drives her and the reader towards the end – that is, towards her death. As she realises after her split with Angel: "the break of continuity between her earlier and present existence, which she had hoped for, had not after all taken place. Bygones would never be complete bygones till she was a bygone herself" (p. 240).

The analysis above illustrates the way Hardy uses the narrative voice and symbolism to form plot ellipses or, what Boumelha calls, “gaps in the reader’s knowledge” (p. 53). That is, the rape or seduction scene becomes a repressed episode – not just in Tess’s mind, but in the reader’s plotting of *Tess* as well, because we do not know what truly happens in the Chase, but only by implications. In this way, the reader’s anticipation of retrospection will be determined by his or hers interpretation of the event in the Chase. Thus, the construction of meaning towards the end does not necessarily follow the romantic love-plot anymore, but will have multiple variations. As Higonet succinctly puts it:

The complexity of Tess and of the determining event in her brief life exemplify some of Hardy’s most powerful strategies in the novel: ambiguous definition and multi-layered characterization, the highlighting of interpreters as those who shape meaning, and resistance to narrative conventions about the relationship between events and endings (p. xxii).

This narrative ambiguity regarding whether it was an incident of seduction or rape – whether Tess is innocent or not – continues throughout the plot, as we learn that Tess “had dreaded [Alec], 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 awhile” (p. 64). In this discussion of Tess’s innocence and her purity, it is important to take a look at the full title of the novel: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*. The notion of Tess as a pure woman guides the reader’s anticipation of retrospection from the very beginning. As Ingham notes, “it is itself already a direction to read the text as an over-writing of the traditional fallen-woman-atonement-stories” (1993, p. 85). This means that, due to the sub-title, no matter what Tess goes through in the plot – no matter which sins or crimes she commits – the reader will always have the anticipation of seeing her essential purity retrospectively in the end. However, Claridge argues that in order for us

to uphold the image of Tess as a pure, romantic heroine, we must equally maintain the image of Alec as the wrong object and villain:

In order to maintain Tess's sexual and psychological purity, a purity necessary (indicated even in the subtitle) for the novel to cohere, readers must condemn Alec as the worst sort of villain and allow Tess her occasional weakness at most. (1986, p. 71)

This is problematic because, as shown above, Hardy begins to demolish this initial classic, romantic characterisation of Tess and Alec as early as the rape/seduction scene. The second half of the subtitle, "Faithfully Presented", has been equally contested, as Hardy in this way claims to give a truthful definition of purity. As the often-cited Havelock Ellis notes in 1896:

I was repelled at the outset by the sub-title... I have always regarded the conception of *purity*, when used in moral discussions, as a conception sadly in need of analysis [...].

I can quite conceive that the artist should take pleasure in the fact that his own creative revelation of life poured contempt on many old prejudices. But such an effect is neither powerful nor legitimate unless it is engrained in the texture of the narrative; it cannot be stuck on by a label. (cited in Ingham, 1993, p. 85)

Though Ellis seems to agree that the creative artist should challenge the common understanding of 'purity' and present a new perspective – or analysis – of the concept, he misses Hardy's portrayal of 'purity', throughout the narrative texture of *Tess*, as an equivocal idea rather than a clear-cut concept. For example, in the analysis of the very first scene in the novel, we saw how Hardy uses symbolism to illustrate the ambiguity of the moral conception of purity and innocence by portraying the women's gowns in a broad spectrum of white colours. Similarly, the scene of the night in Chase leaves the construction of meaning to the individual reader's own understanding of purity. In this way, Hardy argues that moral judgements in regards to purity are never fixed. To Hardy, this is a faithful

presentation of purity and, for the same reason, he finds “the optimistic grin” and virtuous heroine of romantic love-plots unfaithful (Elledge, 1892, p. 388).

In conclusion, we see how Hardy uses the sequence of events, the narrator's philosophical voice and nature imagery in the plotting of the rape/seduction scene as a plot ellipsis – that is, as a repressed event in the plot. Thus, through the plotting of *Tess*, Hardy uses repression as a form of binding of textual moments to create emotional coherence in the plot and illustrate the theme of the past's influence on the present. This binding is seen in the repetitive, ominous and symbolic moments of the strawberry scene and the kiss scene before the rape/seduction, but also, and perhaps more importantly, in the constant return to the trauma through later repressed moments of revelation like Tess's letter to Angel and her spoken confession. The thematic function of this repression through plot ellipses is to create doubt about Tess's innocence and purity, and in this way demolish the romantic characterisation of Tess as a virtuous heroine and Alec as the stock villain of melodrama. By creating this possibility for multiple interpretations, Hardy lets each reader create his or hers own anticipation of retrospection based on moral codes. Readers who believe that Tess is guilty of sin will thus expect some sort of retribution in the end, while readers who believe that she is an innocent victim will maintain the romantic plotting of Tess and Angel's happy unity in the end. In this way, Hardy's main point in *Tess* is that moral judgements are not fixed.

The next chapter will look closer at the romantic courtship between Tess and Angel.

## Plotting the Romantic Courtship – Talbothays

The first part of this chapter will analyse the way that Hardy applies romantic notions of love and desire in the passionate courtship between Angel and Tess at Talbothays while also partly demolishing them along the way through plotting. In accordance with the observations of Belsey and de Rougemont, it will examine how Tess's repressed trauma functions as an obstruction to the union of true love, and thus creates the suffering that is an inherent part of passion. The second part of this chapter will look at the way Hardy demolishes the romantic notion of a direct link of desire between the subject and the object by presenting the idea of triangular desire. In addition to Tess's relation to the other milkmaids' desire for Angel Clare, I will examine the love triangle between the narrator, the reader and Tess. Thus, the chapter will look at Hardy's use of narrative voice and symbolism, as well as the sequence of events in the plot.

In the initial depiction of Angel and Tess's love, Hardy applies the romantic ideas that each subject has one true object of desire and that love is reciprocal. Furthermore, we find Freud's third precondition of object-choice as both Tess and Angel's passion shows the compulsive nature of love where the relationship is "carried on with the highest expenditure of mental energy, to the exclusion of all other interest" (1910, SEK163a23). Thus, Tess's love for Angel takes on an illusory sense of sublimity, as "there was hardly a touch of earth in her love for Clare" (Hardy, 1891, p. 151) as well as a compulsive passion as "her affection for him was now the breath and life of Tess's being; it enveloped her as a photosphere, irradiated her into forgetfulness of her past sorrows" (p. 153). In this way, we see how she – during their initial courtship – excludes the past from her mind, how she represses her trauma, as nothing else than her love for Angel matters: "She dismissed the past; trod upon it and put it out, as one treads on a coal that is smouldering and dangerous" (p. 151).



As mentioned above, Tess's meeting with a second love-object – within the plot structure of the romantic love triangle – reinforces the belief in female inferiority, which is present in a patriarchal society. These romantic love-plots portray a heroine who

must be weaned from an initially mistaken male object of desire by a second, more responsible wooer, who, as her mentor figure, provides a model of the correct behaviour to which she herself needs to aspire in order to become an autonomous adult.

(Kennard, cited in Boone, 1987, p. 75).

This is reflected in Tess's passionate admiration and love for Angel because "to her sublime trustfulness he was all that goodness could be, knew all that a guide, philosopher, and friend should know" (p. 151). Thus, when she spends more time with him, she copies his manners in an attempt to build her own autonomous selfhood, and this leads "her to pick up his vocabulary, his accent, and fragments of his knowledge, to a surprising extent" (pp. 137-138). Thus, Tess's romantic illusion of Angel makes her think of him as "the perfection of masculine beauty; his soul the soul of a saint; his intellect that of a seer" (p. 151).

Importantly, Hardy employs the dynamic aspect of plot when he immediately after – in an example of dramatic irony – dissolves Tess's romantic illusion of Clare by letting the intrusive, omniscient narrator correct her:

Angel Clare was far from all that she thought him in this respect; absurdly far, indeed; but he was in truth more spiritual than animal [...]. He could love desperately, but with a love more especially inclined to the imaginative and ethereal. (p. 151)

In this way, Hardy portrays Angel's love for Tess as based on a romantic illusion as well, and even indicates that Angel's love is not real: "He loved her dearly, though perhaps rather ideally and fancifully than with the impassioned thoroughness of her feeling for him" (p. 159). Angel falls in love

with the image of Tess as a pure and innocent milkmaid, and he refers to her as “a daughter of the soil” (p. 100). His romantic ideal of her is thus tied up in social conventions of virginity and purity: “How very lovable her face was to him. Yet there was nothing ethereal about it; all was real vitality, real warmth, real incarnation” (p. 118). Nonetheless, he is attracted to her “exceptional physical nature” (p. 191) and sexuality, and it is this response in men, Boumelha argues, that, throughout the novel, binds Tess to “male images and fantasies: to the pink cheeks and rustic innocence of Angel’s patronising pastoralism” (1982, p. 52). However, ironically, it is Tess’s fall, her repressed suffering, that attracts Angel as well. As analysed in the chapter above, Tess has gained an acute awareness of life, a complexity of character, since the night in the Chase. When she talks to Angel in the garden at Talbothays, he is surprised to find her “shaping such sad imaginings. She was expressing in her own native phrases [...] feelings which might almost have been called those of the age – the ache of modernism” (p. 98). An ache that reflects the period’s “widespread modern melancholy associated with loss of faith” (Watts, 2007, p. 54) as mentioned in the Introduction; a melancholy reflected earlier in the novel as well in Tess’s words to her younger brother Abraham that they live on ‘a blighted star’ (p. 21).

Hardy’s presentation and dissipation of the romantic tone are seen equally in his plotting of the sequence of events. Thus, he introduces the romantic garden scene by use of nature imagery, which includes forewarnings of the sad outcome of Tess and Angel’s relationship, as Tess approaches Angel:

She went stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth [...], staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her naked arms sticky blights which, though snow-white on the appletree-trunks, made madder stains on her skins; thus she drew quite near to Clare, still unobserved of him. (p. 96)

Besides having an ominous effect as to later events, the imagery of the 'sticky blights' and 'madder stains on her skins' illustrate again her loss of innocence. This is what makes Higonnet note that the green world of Talbothays may be idyllic, but "it is also anti-romantic" (1998, p. xxxii) in its constant mix of misery and joy. Moreover, their meetings in the garden portray Angel and Tess growing close and forming a romantic bond, but are immediately followed, and disrupted, by a realistic portrayal of rural work as they hear "Dairyman Crick's voice, lecturing the non-resident milkers for arriving late, and speaking sharply to old Deborah Fynder for not washing her hands" (p. 103). Some few pages later, Tess and the other milkmaids discuss their romantic love for Mr. Clare, and Tess muses about the rightness of her "brief happiness of sunning herself in his eye while he remained at Talbothays" (p. 108). This scene is immediately followed by Dairyman Crick's discovery of a taste of garlic in his butter, and the whole farm is sent out to clear the fields for the weed. These quick narrative shifts force the reader to reconsider the story as a thoroughly romantic love-plot. As Higonnet notes, "the twang of the real briefly interrupts the transcendent movement of romance" (p. xxx).

In the portrayal of the courtship between Angel and Tess, the narrative desire thus reflects the plot of the romance as we follow the slow movements towards a romantic end. This is the point of the romantic plot where "their deepening desire for each other," Belsey notes, "is constantly on the brink of discovery or revelation" (p. 22). In this way, the digressive movements of passion make sure the end does not come too soon and create suspense: "No definite words of love had crossed their lips yet, and suspension at this point was desirable now" (Hardy, p. 114). Tess and Angel's romantic illusions as well as the reader's narrative desire are driven by "passionate love, the longing for what sears us and annihilates us in its triumph" (de Rougemont, 1983, p. 50). According to de Rougemont, it is this 'unhappy mutual love' that creates the romance: "To love love more than the object of love, to love passion for its own sake, has been to love to suffer and to court suffering all the way from Augustine's *amabam amare* down to modern romanticism" (p. 50).

When Angel does declare his love for Tess and asks her to marry him, Tess has to deal with the return of her repressed trauma:

With pain that was like the bitterness of dissolution she murmured the words of her indispensable and sworn answer as an honourable woman. 'O Mr Clare – I cannot be your wife – I cannot be!' The sound of her own decision seemed to break Tess's very heart, and she bowed her head in grief. (p. 134)

The social convention of chastity, Tess's wish to remain an honourable woman, dictates that she cannot marry Angel Clare. The repressed event of the night in the Chase thus creates an obstruction to the union of true love between Tess and Angel; and an inner conflict between Tess's passionate love for Angel and her moral conscience; between nature and society (Belsey, 1994, p. 23). In this way, Hardy presents the passionate suffering of the romance: "The struggle was so fearful: her own heart was so strongly on the side of his – two ardent hearts against one poor little conscience – that she tried to fortify her resolution by every means in her power" (p. 138).

By in this way binding this textual moment, this conflict, to the earlier repressed plot event, Hardy creates emotional coherence as the trauma repeats itself unremittingly for Tess and the reader through plotting. When Angel courts her, Tess is constantly in the conflict between the self-preservation of keeping the trauma repressed – the delay of events – and the social self-destruction of letting the truth be known: "She had not told. 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. 148). As Higonnet notes: "Each of Angel's slighting gestures re-enacts her repression; each attempt to retell her story attempts to voice a history that is socially inaccessible" (p. xxxviii). In this way, the silences – the plot ellipses – express Tess's repressed wound, and these return to the

repressed are what makes the plot move forward, what drives the reader towards the end, and “drives Tess forward toward her death” (Higonnet, p. xxxviii).

This paradoxical relation between passionate desire and suffering or death is also found in the romantic writings of John Keats who presents “all experience as a tangle of inseparable, but irreconcilable opposites,” and “finds melancholy in delight and pleasure in pain” (Greenblatt, 2006, p. 879). In a letter to Fanny Brawne, he thus expresses “I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your Loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute” (1819, p. 953). This reflects Tess's romantic wish that Angel and she will be united in death, when he carries her across a river in his sleep: “If they could only fall together, and both be dashed to pieces, how fit, how desirable” (p. 194). Furthermore, Hardy's presentation of Tess's suffering as “palpitating misery broken by momentary shoots of joy” (p. 139) thus elaborates on, what Higonnet terms, a Keatsian duality in the courtship (p. xxxii). During the days of Tess and Angel's flirting, she has never before “known a time in which the thread of her life was so distinctly twisted of two strands, positive pleasure and positive pain” (p. 138).

Finally, Hardy relates Tess's suffering, her inner conflict between morality and passion, to the conflict between social law and nature's law. When Tess finally gives in to Angel's proposal, we thus find an image of nature, which “runs close to a naturalist version” of Darwinist thought in its belief of an inherent will to enjoy (Boumelha, p. 56). Remembering Belsey's point that metaphors of desire often invoke not pleasure, but some kind of disturbance, we find that Hardy illustrates Tess's passion as 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” (Hardy, p. 149). Furthermore, Hardy often describes Tess as an inherent part of nature: “On these lonely hills and dales 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” (p. 66). It is this

strong connection to nature and her desire for a return to origin – for a return to the time before the night in the Chase – that makes her question the justice of social law: “Was once lost always lost really true of chastity? she would ask herself. She might prove it false if she could veil bygone. The recuperative power which pervaded organic nature was surely not denied to maidenhood alone” (p. 78). In this opposition between nature and social conventions, the narrator thus places Tess as part of nature in his defence of her: “She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment” (p. 67). Importantly, however, this view of nature, once again, displays the narrative ambiguity surrounding the question of rape or seduction and guilt or innocence. That is, if Tess is innocent in the eyes of the law of nature because she followed her sexual nature and ‘appetite for joy’ rather than a social law, then so is Alec.

When Tess’s passion for Angel reaches its height, Hardy portrays a demolition of the romantic notion of a direct link of desire between the subject and object. The other milkmaids at Talbothays have fallen in love with Angel as well, and Tess’s desire for him becomes only stronger with this obstacle of three rivals. This is consistent with Freud’s first precondition of object-choice that “there should be ‘an injured third party’” (1910, SEK163a18). Furthermore, as mentioned above, Sedgwick argues that we “learn to desire [...] by copying others’ desires, and our desire is produced, fundamentally, in response to the desire of another” (Bennett, 2014, p. 213). Though both Freud and Sedgwick’s writings concern love triangles where the two rivals are men, Hardy recognises that human passion is equally contagious among women:

Tess’s heart ached. There was no concealing from herself the fact that she loved Angel Clare, perhaps all the more passionately from knowing that the others had also lost their hearts to him. There is contagion in this sentiment, especially among women. (p. 114)

Noticeably, it is thus not Angel's romantic courtship of her, which finally makes Tess agree to marry him, but rather her strong sense of jealousy towards the other milkmaids. As reflected in Freud's second precondition, "it is only when they are able to be jealous that their passion reaches its height" (SEK163a20), and this brings about the important moment in the plot:

'I shall give way – I shall say yes – I shall let myself marry him – I cannot help it!' she jealously panted, with her hot face to the pillow that night, on hearing one of the other girls sigh his name in her sleep. 'I can't bear to let anybody have him but me!' (p. 140).

This triangular route of desire thus breaks with the reader's expectation of a direct, romantic link of desire between Tess and Angel.

This notion of the mimetic desire is also evident in Hardy's portrayal of the love triangle between the narrator, the reader and Tess. As noted above, the narrator appears as Tess's only true friend and defender, and this defence is founded on his recognition of the naturalness of her sexual nature. Through sexual imagery, the narrator thus presents Tess as a visual object of desire through his descriptions of her – as exemplified in this well-known erotic example of her:

She was yawning, and he saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake's. She had stretched one arm so high above her coiled-up cable of hair that he could see its satin delicacy above the sunburn; her face was flushed with deep sleep, and her eyelids hung heavy over their pupils. The brim-fullness of her nature breathed from her. It was a moment when a woman's soul is more incarnate than at any other time; when the most spiritual beauty bespeaks itself flesh; and sex takes the outside place in the presentation. (pp. 132-133)

Again, we are dealing with the textual 'presentation' of woman in, what Boumelha calls, "the narrator's erotic fantasies of penetration" (p. 47) as he enters 'the red interior of her mouth'. In this

way, the imagery does not only portray 'the brim-fullness' of Tess's sexual nature – which is ultimately her tragic flaw – but the narrator's desire for Tess. In the close relation – or identity – between Tess as a person and *Tess* as a text, the reader will copy the narrator's desire through the narrative desire of his or hers reading. As John Goode notes, "Tess is the subject of the novel: that makes her inevitably an object of the reader's consumption" (cited in Boumelha, 1982, p. 47). This desire can, naturally, only pique the narrator and the reader's curiosity, but can never be satisfied.

Tess is thus described almost entirely through the language of men throughout the novel; through the eyes of Angel, Alec or the narrator. This may explain the heterogeneity of her characterisation – as Kramer notes:

Hardy never reconciles Tess's ordinariness and her specialness; her simple-minded literalness and her sensitivity to the explicitly non-literal; her sexual 'purity' and innocence and her sensuality and flirtatiousness – all contradictions which of course enhance her lifelikeness. (1991, p. 60)

Claridge, along with other critics, however, deplores this narrative incoherence (1986, p. 77). Hardy defends himself in the preface to the fifth edition of *Tess* in his claim that "a novel is an impression, not an argument" (1892, p. xi). In this way, we can see that Tess's characterisation is formed by different (male) impressions throughout the plot, and this creates the narrative ambiguity. Furthermore, it substantiates the idea that judgements are not fixed.

In conclusion, Hardy's plotting of Angel and Tess's courtship at Talbothays illustrates the romantic ideas that each subject has one true object of desire, that love is reciprocal, and that passion means suffering. Furthermore, it found a Keatsian duality in courtship through Tess's inner conflict between pain and pleasure; misery and joy. It showed how Tess and Angel's love for each other is based on romantic illusions, and how these are demolished, for the reader, by the intrusive narrative



voice. Through the plotting of the sequence of events, Hardy dissipates the romantic tone as he shifts between idyllic scenes of romance and realistic scenes of rural work. Hardy uses nature imagery in his illustration of Tess's inner conflict between morality and passion as a conflict between social law and nature's law. Finally, in the scenes at Talbothays, Hardy furthermore demolishes the romantic idea of a direct link of desire between the subject and object in his portrayal of the role of Tess's jealousy in her decision to marry Angel, and in his presentation, through the narrative voice and sexual imagery, of the love triangle between the narrator, the reader and Tess. This sexual imagery shows the way Tess is characterised through different (male) impressions throughout the plot, and this, once again, creates narrative ambiguity through the heterogeneity of Tess's characterisation.

## **Demolishment of Romantic Illusions – The Confessions**

As we have already looked at the plot ellipsis of Tess and Angel's confessions above in relation to the repressed trauma, this chapter will analyse the way the scene functions as a turning point in the plot of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* through its demolition of the romantic illusions presented previously in the plot. Furthermore, it will comment upon the way this love-plot continues *after* Tess and Angel are united in marriage. Finally, it will examine how the shattering of these romantic illusions affects the reader's impressions of Angel and Alec's characters in the plotting of the love triangle, and how one can talk of a bond of homosocial desire between them in their desire for and victimisation of poor Tess.

Through his analysis of *Tristan and Iseult*, de Rougemont finds that the plotting of the “Romance is given its motive power by the repeated partings and reunions of the lovers” (1983, p. 42). As noted above, the reader prefers the obstruction of separation in the plot, as it will intensify the passion. In the suffering of her inner conflict between morality and passion, Tess is constantly delaying the revelation of her past since “her instinct of self-preservation was stronger than her candour” (Hardy, 1891, p. 148). She wants to remain in the romantic illusion without facing the consequences of her past: “I wish we could [go on like this forever]. That it would always be summer and autumn, and you always courting me, and always thinking as much of me as you have done through the past summertime!” (p. 159). In this way, the plot works through digressions up until the wedding night, where they confess their past sins. However, in their knowledge of romances, readers know and expect that the truth of Tess’s past will be revealed sooner or later as “secretly we desire obstruction” (de Rougemont, p. 52). Thus, rather than enjoying her married life with Angel, move to a farm far away, as they have discussed, and hope that her secret is safe, Tess decides to confess and create an obstruction in their passion; a new conflict in the plot that separates the two lovers. Tess’s motives thus again reflect Keats’s romantic motives. In the final lines of his letter to Fanny Brawne, he similarly creates an obstruction in order to intensify the passion of the romance, as he exalts Brawne to an unattainable position when he writes, “I will imagine you Venus tonight and pray, pray, pray to your star like a Hethen” (1816, p. 953).

When Tess and Angel sit in front of the fire on their wedding night, Angel surprises Tess by wanting to confess something to her: “How strange it was! He seemed like her double” (p. 176), and she hopes it to be her salvation: “This from him, so unexpectedly apposite, had the effect upon her of a Providential interposition” (p. 176). Like Tess, Angel has an immoral, sexual past from the time “when, tossed about by doubts and difficulties in London, like a cork on the waves, he plunged into eight-and-forty hours’ dissipation with a stranger” (p. 177).

As mentioned above, Angel imagines Tess as the romantic ideal of a pure and innocent milkmaid. This is connected to Hardy's characterisation of him as "less Byronic than Shelleyan" (p. 151), because both Shelley and Angel "are dreamers with an ethereal quality about them, Platonic Idealists looking for the ideal spiritual, not merely physical relation with woman" (Barrineau, 2005, p. 432). By portraying Angel's illusions and flaws in this manner, Hardy disassociates himself from these romantic aspects of Shelley's poetry. Consequently, when Tess confesses her sin, she shatters Angel's idealistic illusion of virginity and purity, and she becomes a different woman to him altogether: "'O Tess, forgiveness does not apply to the case. You were one person: now you are another'" (p. 179). In the light of his own confession, Angel's unforgiving disapproval of Tess's past represents the male chauvinism of the sexual double standard in Victorian society. The omniscient narrator later explains Angel's cruel and hypocritical motives through telling: "With all his attempted independence of judgment this advanced and well-meaning young man [...], was yet the slave to custom and conventionality when surprised back into his early teachings" (p. 208). This surprising sudden adherence to social customs and conventions is also evident when Angel connects Tess's trauma to her ancestry: "I cannot help associating your decline as a family with this other fact – of your want of firmness. Decrepit families imply decrepit wills, decrepit conduct" (p. 182). As seen in the analysis above, Hardy shows the danger – and the foolishness – of believing in stories of origin; of believing that blood and ancestry matter in the present hardships. Tess expresses a similar idea of the insignificance of the past in a later letter to Angel: "What was the past to me as soon as I met you? It was a dead thing altogether. I became another woman, filled full of new life from you" (p. 265). Again, we see Hardy demolish the romantic stereotype of a 'fallen woman' as he emphasises the growth and development of Tess's character. Furthermore, through this turn in the portrayal of Angel, Hardy challenges the initial characterisation of him as the 'right and desired object' of the romantic love triangle, and forces the reader to reconsider the story. In this way, the confessions create a

separation of the two lovers, and an intensification of the passionate suffering, as it is “Angel’s crude application to Tess of the hypocritical Victorian double standard of sexual morality that reengages Tess in a fresh cycle of suffering” (Harvey, 2003, p. 83). Tess is thus caught up by the moral standards of the past, and consequently she begins to work at Flintcomb Ash while Angel travels to Brazil.

Importantly, though “it is structured entirely by the sexual and marital history of Tess Durbeyfield” (Boumelha, 1982, p. 45), the plot of *Tess* thus continues after Angel and Tess are united in marriage. In this way, Hardy breaks with the traditional romantic sequence of events where the happy ending of true love “issues, of course, in marriage” (Belsey, p. 22). Boone observes how the nineteenth century’s “ideological structures of belief – of which the ideal of romantic wedlock is a prime example – are translated into narrative structures” (1987, p. 2) with marriage as the ultimate goal. It is this ideological belief in the institution of marriage, which Hardy criticises through the plotting of *Tess*. Here, the plot of ambition clashes with the plot of romance as Angel feels torn between his future work as a farmer and his love for Tess, when he realises “that he had utterly wrecked his career by this marriage” (Hardy, p. 207). He thus finds himself in a social disaster.

In his short story, “On the Western Circuit”, written the same year as *Tess*, Hardy similarly satirises the traditional, romantic, happy ending of marriage. This unhappy love story presents a love triangle between Charles, Anna and Edith. In spite of the good intentions of the three protagonists, Charles finds himself tricked into marrying the illiterate Anna, and finds himself in a social disaster, as he will not be able to mingle in the higher social circles. Hardy’s irony is, of course, that – as in all romantic love stories – there is a union between subject and object in marriage in the end, but it is the *wrong* union; it is the *unhappy* end. In this way, he criticises the way that man and woman, in Victorian society, are locked in marriage for the rest of their life – no matter how intolerable it is. It is the same dilemma that Tess and Angel find themselves in, as he is not allowed to divorce her due to Victorian law.

As pointed out above, through the plotting of the confessions, Hardy portrays Angel as an unsympathetic character, and thus demolishes the notions of 'a right object' and 'a wrong object' in the structure of the love triangle. In fact, Angel is just as bad as Alec – if not worse – in his cruel rejection of Tess. As Watts notes, Angel "violates her emotions and morality more harshly than Alec had once violated her body" (2007, p. 38). In this way, the two characters are not "the opposites that they might at first appear; they are precisely complementary" (Boumelha, p. 58). Therefore, though the two rivals never meet, I will argue that Hardy structures *Tess* through their rivalry and through their desire for Tess. That is, we see the bond of homosocial desire between the two rivals in the plotting of the novel, as Angel and Alec's victimisation of Tess reflects and maintains the patriarchal structures of Victorian society. That is, in his critique of the function of marriage in love-plots, Hardy equally criticises the way that women can only become autonomous persons through marriage. As Boone notes, "the climatic event of marriage confers on the heroine her entire personal identity (as wife)" (Boone, 1987, p. 74). Tess recognises the power that Angel and Alec's desire holds over her, as illustrated in her words concerning Farmer Groby: "'He won't hurt me. *He's* not in love with me'" (p. 250). Moreover, Angel and Alec are both much affected by each other's presence in the plot. Thus, Angel notes, after Tess's confession: "'How can we live together while that man lives? – he being your husband in Nature, and not I. If he were dead it might be different...'" (p. 190). When Alec learns about Tess's new husband, he immediately desires her once more – that is, Tess "becomes the object of passionate feelings immediately she comes into one of these relationship with another man" (Freud, 1910, SEK163a17). Furthermore, in accordance with Sedgwick's theory of homosocial desire, Alec is more influenced by his rival, Angel, than by his beloved, Tess, as it is the philosophical musings of Angel – recounted by Tess – that makes Alec renounce his religion. As Alec notes, "'That clever fellow little thought that by telling her those things he might be paving my way back to her!'" (p. 255).

In conclusion, Hardy is plotting the scene of the confessions as a defining moment in the presentation and demolition of romantic notions of love and desire through the sequence of events. Rather than ending the novel with Tess and Angel's union in happy marriage – which is the norm in romantic love-plots – he lets the plot continue and creates a new obstruction, a new conflict, that separates the two lovers once again, and thus intensifies their passion. Tess's repressed trauma finally catches up with her, and in the portrayal of the following social disaster, Hardy criticises the social convention of Victorian society where two people are locked in an unhappy marriage for the rest of their lives. The revelation of Tess's past shatters the romantic illusion that Angel held of Tess as a pure and innocent milkmaid – and in turn, this shatters the reader's romantic impression of Angel as 'the right object' in the love triangle, as he reveals an unsympathetic sexual double standard through his rejection of Tess. Finally, the chapter found that Hardy presents a critique of the patriarchal structure of Victorian society in his portrayal of the homosocial desire between Angel and Alec, which is expressed through their desire for, and abuse of, Tess.

## Construction of Retrospective Meaning – The Ending

This chapter will analyse the ending of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, "Phase the Seventh: Fulfilment", by examining the plot ellipses of Tess's return to Alec and Tess's murder of Alec as well as the two important scenes of Stonehenge and Tess's death.

As described in the Methodology chapter above, the reader's narrative desire for meaning is ultimately a desire for the end. The end is where we find final coherence and recognition, which then

“can spread a retrospective light” (Brooks, 1984, p. 92) on the foregoing plot. Thus, we read in the anticipation of the plot's larger hermeneutic structuring through its ending. In this way, in the reader's plotting of the romance, he or she seeks, in the unfolding narrative of the heroine's passionate suffering, a line of romantic intention that holds the promise of progress toward meaning – toward the happy union of true love. I will examine how Hardy both presents and demolishes the possibility of this romantic ending.

Before examining the important final scenes of Stonehenge and Tess's hanging, I will analyse the two plot ellipses leading up to Tess's tragic end. The first one takes place between “Phase the Sixth: The Convert” and “Phase the Seventh: Fulfilment”. As mentioned above, in the end of Phase the Sixth, Hardy again presents narrative ambiguity in the underlying subtext of the defence of Alec d'Urberville. After the death of John Durbeyfield, Tess and her family have lost their home, and Alec suggests: “Now why not come to my garden-house at Trantridge? [...] your mother can live there quite comfortably; and I will put the children to a good school. Really, I ought to do something for you!” (Hardy, 1891, pp. 279-280). In the plotting of the romance, however, Alec's offer appears as the threat of short-circuit. If Tess gives in to the wrong object, Alec, rather than waiting for the right object, Angel, to return, the plot will reach the end too quickly; it will reach the incorrect end seen in the light of a romantic point of view. In Alec's offer of financial help “lies Tess's chance for safety, but rather than seek refuge there, she (and the demands of the [romantic] text) insists that he remain a villain” (Claridge, 1986, p. 74). Thus, Hardy recognises the reader's narrative desire for a romantic end, and creates suspense through dramatic irony by relating Tess's temptation to go back to Alec while revealing to the reader that Angel is on his way home from Brazil. The omniscient narrator also describes Angel's change of heart as to the question of Tess's purity: “he now began to discredit the old appraisal of morality. He thought they wanted readjusting. Who was the moral man? Still more pertinently, who was the moral woman?” (Hardy, 1891, p. 267). In this way, Hardy presents the

possibility of a romantic end through the dissolution of Angel's inner conflict between passion and morality. The final pages of Phase the Sixth portray Tess and her family as homeless and in utter desperation, which inspires the narrator to remark:

[...] it behoved her to do something; to be their Providence; for to Tess, as to not a few millions of others, there was ghastly satire in the poet's lines:

Not in utter nakedness

But trailing clouds of glory do we come.

(p. 282)

In this intertextual reference to Wordsworth's "Ode. Intimations of Immortality", Hardy portrays his and Tess's religious doubts – "if she could only believe" that the children would go to heaven (p. 282), they would be all right – while giving the scene an anti-romantic feel through the 'ghastly satire'. This provides the following plot ellipsis between the two phases with an ominous feel because if Tess cannot trust in God to do something, she must take action herself. Tess's return to Alec is thus absent from the plot, and is not revealed until Angel finds Tess in Sandbourne a couple of chapters into Phase the Seventh. Here, Freud's observation that his patients repeat former traumatic events until they are able to bind them in a narrative is reflected in Tess's decision to go back to Alec: she is reliving her repressed trauma by becoming his mistress once again. This plot ellipsis is thus bound to the former plot ellipsis of the Chase, and these repetitions form the drive towards Tess's death.

Another plot ellipsis takes place when Tess, finally overwhelmed by passionate feelings of injustice, murders Alec. The event is narrated through the eyes of Mrs Brooks, the householder at Tess and Alec's lodgings. After Angel's visit, she catches snatches of Tess's cries to Alec, which present Tess's own justification for her crime: "you had used your cruel persuasion on me [...]. O you have torn my life all in pieces... made me what I prayed you in pity not to make me be again!"



(p. 301). The murder itself is discovered by Mrs Brooks, as she sees a spot of blood forming on the ceiling in her back room. Despite the narrative distance, and despite its textual bond to the other plot ellipses of Tess and Alec, this plot ellipsis leaves no doubt about Tess's guilt. However, through the plotting of the romance, the purity of Tess's intentions can still be justified, as she is motivated by her love for Angel: "He has come between us and ruined us, and now he can do it no more. [...] I was unable to bear your not loving me. Say you do now [...], now I have killed him!" (pp. 303-304). Tess thus fights for the romantic end of union. As Ingham notes, Tess has "formulated Alec's death to herself as logical," and through this mad logic, "she feels free even from guilt" (1993, p. 87). As critics have noted, with the murder of Alec, Tess takes her fate into her own hands, and thus "lives through a period of autonomy before she dies" (Ingham, p. 87). She is no longer the victim of the patriarchal powers of Alec and Angel, as mentioned above, but can in some sense free herself of her repressed past. "In a real sense", Kramer notes, "she is the essence of herself – self-realisation in passion and love – from this point on" (1991, p. 75). When they escape from the murder, Tess gets to experience the honeymoon that she was earlier denied in what Alan Friedman calls "a ghastly parody of a classic ending of a novel" (cited in Boone, 1987, p. 111). Through these scenes of love and union between Angel and Tess, Hardy presents the image of a romantic end to his story; a painful image of what could have been.

In the plotting of the end, Hardy thus portrays the possibility of a romantic end for Tess and Angel – that is, the romantic end of tragedy – at the altar of Stonehenge. When Tess lies down on the altar at Stonehenge, she says, "you used to say at Talbothays that I was a heathen. So now I am at home" (p. 311). In this way, Hardy uses symbolism to indicate that Tess is a heathen in the eyes of society, but at the same time, he presents her as a sacrificial victim of the unjust world. The background of this ancient monument reminds us, once again, of the way human passions have existed as long as humankind. At Stonehenge, Tess and Angel are thus united in true love and in

marriage. When Tess notes, "It seems as if there were no folk in the world but we two. And I wish there were not" (p. 311), she is however aware that she is enjoying a temporary romantic sanctuary. In this autonomous action, Tess is "choosing her place for surrender" (Ingham, p. 87). In this way, if Tess and Angel were to die at this moment at Stonehenge – as in the form of the ending in Shakespeare's tragic romance, *Romeo and Juliet* – they would have been united in death and would have had their romantic end. As de Rougemont succinctly describes the romance of *Tristan and Iseult*: "First, the love-potion; lastly, the death of both. In between, furtive meetings" (1983, p. 43).

Hardy, however, will not give his characters this salvation, and instead he creates one final obstruction and separation: the capture and death of Tess. Tellingly, as one of her final wishes, Tess asks Angel to marry her sister Liza-Lu, as in that way "it would almost seem as if death had not divided us" (p. 311). Tess's capture is portrayed through symbolism and repetition that retrospectively establish her role as a hunted victim throughout the plot: Angel sees the police officers as "they all closed in, with evident purpose" (p. 312). The capture thus mirrors an earlier event in Phase the Second when Tess is working in the field, and "the standing corn was reduced to smaller area as the morning wore on" (p. 68). In the field

rabbits, hares, snakes, rats, mice, retreated inwards as into a fastness, unaware of the ephemeral nature of their refuge, and shrinking to a more and more horrible narrowness, they were huddled together friends and foes, till the last few yards of upright wheat fell also under the teeth of the unerring reaper, and they were every one put to death by the sticks and stones of the harvesters. (p. 68)

Looking back, we see this animal imagery of hunting and capturing, this plotting of Tess as a defenceless and hunted victim, continuously, and always linked to the repressed plot event of the Chase. In her happy days with Angel at Talbothays, she is thus described as "a girl of simple life, not

yet one-and-twenty, who had been caught during her days of immaturity like a bird in a springe" (p. 154).

As illustrated above, Tess is haunted by the unceasing returns of her repressed trauma, and this is what drives her plot towards the end – towards her death – as she realises that "bygones would never be complete bygones till she was a bygone herself" (Hardy, p. 240). As Ingham notes, "Like all fallen women she dies; all she has really been able to choose is the particular form of her death" (pp. 87-88). When the police surrounds Tess, she thus accepts her tragic fate:

'What is it, Angel?' she said, starting up. 'Have they come for me?'

'Yes, dearest,' he said. 'They have come.'

'It is as it should be,' she murmured. 'Angel, I am almost glad—yes, glad! This happiness could not have lasted. It was too much. I have had enough; and now I shall not live for you to despise me!'

She stood up, shook herself, and went forward, neither of the men having moved.

'I am ready," she said quietly.'

(pp. 312-313)

In this way, Hardy illustrates the cruel conditions for fallen women in Victorian society through his plotting of the ending, in the portrayal of murder and execution as "the only available expression of autonomy" (Ingham, p. 88) for the fallen woman.

The narrator presents the events at Stonehenge in the mode of showing through the descriptive passages and the dialogue. In the portrayal of the hanging, however, he shifts to the intrusive narrative mode of telling as he once again defends Tess. Her death at the gallows dispels the temporary romantic pretence of Stonehenge and demolishes any idea of a romantic end:

Upon the cornice of the tower a tall staff was fixed. Their eyes were riveted on it. A few minutes after the hour had struck something moved slowly up the staff, and extended itself upon the breeze. It was a black flag.

‘Justice’ was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Æschylean phrase) 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 thus 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. (p. 314)

Noticeably, Tess, for the second time in the plot, disappears from view – her death, symbolised only by ‘the black flag’, portrays another form of plot ellipsis. In this way, the plot connects this scene retrospectively to the first time of her disappearance, when she is with Alec in the Chase, and binds the two textual moments together in the meaningful construction of cause and effect – that is, Tess’s repressed trauma drives her to her inevitable death. In the defence of Tess, the narrator displays his irony through the use of quotation marks in his indictment of the Victorian form of ‘justice’. Furthermore, in regards to the following intertextual reference, Johnson notes how “it is characteristic of Mr. Hardy to quote the *Prometheus*: that one play of Aeschylus, which may be thought to show a malevolence of God to man” (1895, p. 394). Thus, in addition to the condemnation of the social and lawful conventions of Victorian society, Hardy may suggest that Tess’s fate and suffering are caused by a malevolent God – ‘the President of the Immortals’ – and her execution is her final divine punishment. This moment again connects retrospectively to the trauma in the Chase, where the narrator asks, “where was Tess’s guardian angel?” (p. 57) and questions the worth of Tess’s simple faith in God.

Moreover, the final line of this reference, 'had ended his sport with Tess', once again evokes, and concludes on, the hunting imagery in the plotting of Tess as a victim. The line points retrospectively to the episode of the dying pheasants, which happens as Tess is on her way to Flintcomb Ash. These "harmless feathered creatures, brought into being by artificial means solely to gratify these propensities [of men]" (p. 218) are, like Tess, victims of human violence, but with the only purpose of aristocratic sport. Hardy thus portrays the cruelty and futility of Tess's fate in the way that the pheasants' "miseries are quickly relieved by a broken neck [while] Tess's greater potentiality for pain drives her on, but only to the same fate. The pointlessness is appalling" (Morton, 1974, p. 444). To Tess, however, this moment gives a temporary perspective on her situation. She realises that her suffering is due to the social customs of society, and not to earthly causes: "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. 219). Finally, the narrator's dry comment that 'the d'Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing' emphasises the uselessness and danger of the story of origin. The romantic glow of Tess's blood and name has gone into oblivion, as the narrator reflects in this earlier comment: "So does Time ruthlessly destroy his own romances" (p. 269).

As we saw in the first analysis chapter, the sexual tragedy of Tess is thus not turned into comedy, as she does not save her family from social disgrace by marrying Alec. Rather, her plot reflects the double meaning of tragedy in the way that it "engages our feelings of sympathy and identification" with Tess while, at the same time, the tragic end emphasises that "we have to suffer, we are going to die, there is no justice and there is no afterlife" (Bennett, 2014, p. 109).

In this way, Hardy does not satisfy the reader's romantic anticipation of a happy end of union, but instead divides the two lovers through death. Contrary to Jane Eyre who, after going through separation and suffering, is finally united with Mr. Rochester happily in the end, Tess does not get

the salvation of a final, lasting union with Clare. This demolition of the romantic end has, however, been forewarned throughout the plot, as Tess, and her sensual, sexual nature, is a far cry from the virtuous Jane, and Angel Clare, with his delicate manner and moral hypocrisy, is no Byronic hero. In an interview concerning the ending of *Tess*, Hardy explains how "One old gentleman of eighty implored me to reconcile Tess and Angel. But I could not. They would never have lived happily. Angel was far too fastidious and particular. He would inevitably have thrown her fall in her face" (Elledge, 1892, p. 388). Hardy thus faithfully presents the honest sadness of a tragic end, rather than the unfaithful construction of a romantic end.

Finally, we see how the beginning of *Tess* presupposes and connects to the end – how the desire of a return to origin is reflected in the plot's movement from quiescence, into a disturbance of this stability in the middle, and back into quiescence in the end. Remembering how the image of desire presented in the beginning reflects the plot of ambition in Mr and Mrs Durbeyfield's plotting of themselves as noble people, which sets the tragedy of Tess in motion, we see how Tess's death is not the result of her own ambition, but rather the result of her parents'.

Thus, we see how the ending works through repetition, the narrative voice and symbolism, and takes the form of a plot ellipsis in Tess's disappearance from view. The reader's narrative desire for knowledge and meaning through the revelation of the end – the satisfaction of epistemophilia – is thus only partly gratified. The ending does not provide an answer to the question of Tess's purity – to the question of whether she was raped or seduced by Alec in the Chase – but maintain the meaningful, emotional coherence that links the plot ellipses throughout the plot. That is, it maintains Hardy's portrayal of 'purity' as an ambiguous concept. As mentioned earlier, this ambiguity provides several, possible, retrospective interpretations in light of the tragic end. Readers may look back on the night in the Chase and Alec's murder, and infer that Tess is guilty of sin and deserves the punishment of hanging in the end. The ending thus takes on the meaningful aspect of retribution.

Other readers may, retrospectively, recognise Hardy's plotting of Tess as an innocent victim to the sexual double standards of a patriarchal society. Here, the ending portrays the cruelty of human passion.

## Reflection: Plotting in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

This final chapter will reflect on the use of Brooks's model of plotting in my analysis of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and comment on the modernist trait of narrative ambiguity in the novel.

After reading a particularly harsh review of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in *The Quarterly* in 1892, Hardy remarked:

How strange that one may write a book without knowing what one puts into it – or rather, the reader reads into it. Well, if this sort of thing continues no more novel-writing for me. A man must be a fool to stand up to be shot at. (1928, p. 336).

Consequently, *Tess* was Hardy's penultimate novel, followed by *Jude the Obscure* in 1895. *Jude* was severely criticised and made Hardy turn his back on prose and focus on poetry for the rest of his life (Greenblatt, 2006, p. 1851).

In my analysis above, I found that the multiple possibilities for what “the reader reads into it” are exactly what makes the plotting of *Tess* so complex and ambiguous. I found that the plotting of the romantic notions of love and desire in *Tess* works through the three parameters of narrative voice, symbolism and the sequence of events, and that these are most noticeable when Hardy portrays a plot event through ellipsis. By not letting the reader know exactly what happens in these repetitious plot

ellipses, most particularly in the scene of the night in the Chase, the novel creates narrative ambiguity, which leaves room for different anticipations of retrospection among the readers.

Thus, the thematic function of plotting in *Tess* is to portray an ambiguity in relation to Tess's purity; it is to illustrate that moral judgements are not fixed. Furthermore, in the analysis of the narrative ambiguity surrounding Hardy's portrayal of Tess's heterogeneous character, we found that Hardy is aware that Tess cannot be fully defined through men's language (Ingham, 1993, p. 82). A point that echoes Bathsheba Everdene's words in *Far from the Madding Crowd*: "It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs" (Hardy, 1874, p. 270). This reflects Hardy's comment that a novel is made up by multiple impressions in the way that *Tess* is "oftener charged with impressions than convictions" (1892, p. x).

Due to his demolition of the idea of marriage as the quintessence of a happily romantic end in his writings, Hardy was strongly criticised by his early editor Leslie Stephen in 1880. As Hardy's biographer, Michael Millgate, notes, Stephen believed it was a crime that Hardy was "allowing the heroine to marry the wrong man," and Hardy's objection, "that they mostly did," was met with "Stephen's ultimate editorial retort, 'Not in magazines'" (2004, pp. 196-197). Thus, while Hardy viewed the late Victorian Age as a time ripe for tragedy, his readers preferred his earlier, happier writings of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Under the Greenwood Tree*; they wanted comedy rather than tragedy. As mentioned in the Introduction, Hardy, however, found the happy romantic love-plots unfaithful, and referred to them as copying the 'artificial forms of living' of social conventions rather than the 'cardinal facts of life'. He therefore rejected the regulation finish of 'they lived happily ever after' (Higonnet, 1998, p. xxix).

In this way, as the quote in the beginning of this chapter indicates, Hardy was ahead of his time. His break with the narrative conventions of nineteenth century love-plots, through the



demolishment of romantic notions of love and desire – and, more particularly, his introduction of narrative ambiguity – casts Hardy as a modernist writer. As Widdowson notes, “it is a critical truism to say that he is a ‘transitional’ writer, but I wonder now just *how* transitional, or whether Hardy was not already *there*, already a modern” (1993, p. 11). Hardy is thus, even with *Tess* in 1891, a modernist writer of the twentieth century.

This is where Brooks's model of plotting and the reader's anticipation of retrospection becomes problematic. Recalling the dinner party of the Duchess, as presented in the Introduction, one group of readers had the retrospective impression of Tess as ‘a little harlot’ while another group had the retrospective impression of her as ‘a poor wronged innocent’ (Higonnet, 1998, p. xix). This is naturally due to the narrative ambiguity of the plot ellipses in *Tess*. In this way, the model of plotting is best suited to novels where the author guides the reader through the plot without the break of narrative conventions. In his analysis of Dickens's *Great Expectations* from 1861, Brooks admits that “some narratives clearly give us a sense of plotting and ‘plottedness’ more than others”, and that the model of plotting becomes problematic when “the novel [is] in its ‘modernist’ and ‘postmodernist’ phases, where there is a pervasive suspicion that plot falsifies more subtle kinds of interconnectedness” (1984, p. 113). Moreover, in his ninth chapter, “An Unreadable Report: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*”, Brooks addresses this problem himself in his reading of Conrad's modernist novel from 1899. The ‘crisis’ of plotting in *Tess* is that its ending gives no definitive answers as to Tess's purity or as to what happened in the Chase. So to read towards one meaningful ending would be to read *Tess* incorrectly as we would not recognise the complexity of the plot. That is, to designate the tragic outcome of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as either a justified punishment or a sad victimisation is “to posit for it a finality which its very forms subverts” (Brooks, 1987, p. 262).

# Conclusion

In my thesis, I found that the plotting of the presentation and demolition of romantic notions of love and desire in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) works through symbolism, narrative voice and the sequence of events. Furthermore, the thematic function of this plotting is to portray a narrative ambiguity concerning the question of Tess's guilt and purity, which in turn represents Hardy's main argument in the novel: that moral judgements are not fixed.

I found that in the reader's plotting of the romantic love-plot, the narrative desire for the end became the narrative desire for a happy end portraying the union of true love in marriage. I found that Hardy challenges the reader's anticipation of retrospection – the reader's plotting of the romance – by both introducing romantic elements and demolishing romantic elements in the plot. The narrative ambiguity is mainly created through plot ellipses, which leave it to the reader to interpret whether Tess was raped or seduced; whether she is pure or impure – and which thus form a demolition of the characterisation of Tess as a romantic, virtuous heroine. In this way, Hardy's point is that the concept of 'purity' is ambiguous and that is why Tess is *faithfully* presented as a pure woman through narrative ambiguity. Correspondingly, this portrays Hardy's view that the romantic love-plots of 'female virtue rewarded by a happy end in marriage' are *unfaithful*. In this way, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* forms a critique of the social conventions of late Victorian England, particularly in regards to the strict moral view on desire, love and marriage.

In the conclusions to the individual chapters, I found that *Tess* includes a metanarrative element in the way that Mr and Mrs Durbeyfield – in a satirical take on the plot of ambition as well as the plot of the romance – are plotting their own noble life after learning of their d'Urberville ancestry. It is this plotting that motivates the tragedy of Tess.

Moreover, Hardy is plotting the romantic love triangle in these opening chapters by portraying the traditional, romantic characterisation of the subject, object and rival where the female heroine, Tess, is a genuine and common country girl who has to make a living; and the two rivals are opposites of light and dark, gentle and dangerous, characteristics.

I found that Hardy uses the sequence of events, the narrator's philosophical voice and nature imagery in the plotting of the rape/seduction scene as a plot ellipsis; as a repressed plot event. The thematic function of this repression through several repetitive plot ellipses is to create doubt about Tess's innocence and purity. By creating this possibility for multiple interpretations, Hardy lets each reader create his or hers own anticipation of retrospection based on moral codes. Readers who believe that Tess is guilty of sin will thus expect some sort of retribution in the end, while readers who believe that she is an innocent victim will maintain the romantic plotting of Tess and Angel's happy unity in the end.

Hardy's plotting of Angel and Tess's courtship at Talbothays illustrates the romantic ideas that each subject has one true object of desire, that love is reciprocal, and that passion means suffering. Furthermore, the intrusive narrative voice shows that Tess and Angel's love for each other is based on romantic illusions. Hardy demolishes the romantic idea of a direct link of desire between the subject and object in his portrayal of the love triangle between the narrator, the reader and Tess, as he portrays Tess as a visual object of desire for both the narrator and the reader.

The confessions of Tess and Angel on their wedding night constitute a turning point in the plot as they demolish the romantic illusions of love that the two held about each other. This creates a new obstruction, a new conflict, and Tess and Angel are thrown into passionate suffering once again. In this way, Hardy does not end the novel with Tess and Angel's union in happy marriage,

but instead criticises the social convention of Victorian society where two people can be locked in an unhappy marriage for the rest of their lives.

The tragic ending of *Tess*, her execution, works through repetition, symbolism and the narrative voice, and takes the form of a plot ellipsis in Tess's disappearance from view. The ending thus maintains the narrative ambiguity of the repressed plot, and this means that the reader's desire for meaning and revelation through the end is only partly gratified. In this way, Hardy upholds the portrayal of 'purity' as an equivocal concept by allowing each reader to judge the moral fairness of Tess's death.

Finally, I found that, due to Hardy's break with narrative conventions in his demolition of romantic notions of love and desire, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* can be defined as a modernist novel. In this way, it problematizes the use of the model of plotting as the narrative ambiguity of the plot undermines the finality of the ending.

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# Summary

This thesis includes an analysis of plotting and the reader's anticipation of retrospection in relation to the presentation and demolishment of romantic notions of love and desire in Thomas Hardy's realistic and tragic novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* from 1891.

Peter Brooks's model of plotting is based on Freud's essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1910) which provides a dynamic model for narrative plots. It reflects the teleological progression of plot where the reader's desire is structured towards the end of the plot – towards the revelation and meaning of the end. Moreover, by reference to Catherine Belsey, Denis de Rougemont, Joseph Allen Boone, Sigmund Freud and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, I include a chapter on what is commonly understood by romantic notions of love and desire in literature, and relate these notions to Brooks's concepts of plotting and the narrative desire for the end.

The analysis of the opening of the novel shows how *Tess* includes a metanarrative element as Mr and Mrs Durbeyfield are plotting their own noble life – through the plot of ambition and the plot of romance – after learning of their d'Urbervilles blood. It is this plotting that motivates the tragedy of Tess. This is followed by an analysis of the initial plotting of the romantic love triangle between Angel, Alec and Tess.

In my analysis of the night in the Chase, I found that Hardy uses the sequence of events, the narrator's philosophical voice and nature imagery in the plotting of the rape/seduction scene as a plot ellipsis – that is, as a repressed event in the plot. In this way, he creates doubt about Tess's innocence and purity, and thus lets each reader create his or hers own anticipation of retrospection based on moral codes.

Hardy's plotting of Angel and Tess's courtship at Talbothays illustrates the romantic ideas that each subject has one true object of desire, that love is reciprocal, and that passion means suffering. Furthermore, he shows how Tess and Angel's love for each other is based on romantic illusions. This part of the analysis also examines the love triangle between the narrator, the reader and Tess, and finds that Tess is presented as a visual object of desire in the plot.

The following chapter examines the confessions between Angel and Tess as a turning point in the plot where the romantic illusions that the two characters held about each other are demolished. Moreover, it examines the way Hardy lets the plot continue after Tess and Angel are united in marriage, and thus forms a critique of the social convention of Victorian society where two people can be locked in unhappy marriage for the rest of their lives. Finally, it examines the homosocial desire between the two rivals, Angel and Alec.

My final analysis chapter examines the tragic ending of *Tess*. It finds that Tess's hanging works through repetition, the narrative voice and symbolism, and takes the form of a plot ellipsis in Tess's disappearance from view. In this way, the reader's narrative desire for knowledge and meaning through the revelation of the end is only partly satisfied, as Hardy never reveals what truly happened in the Chase. Moreover, Hardy demolishes the romantic regulation finish of 'they lived happily ever after' by dividing Tess and Angel in the end through the ultimate obstruction of death.

Finally, the thesis includes a reflection on the use of Brooks's model of plotting in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* with focus on its modernist trait of narrative ambiguity.

In conclusion, I found that the plotting of the presentation and demolition of romantic notions of love and desire in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) works through symbolism, narrative voice and the sequence of events. The thematic function of this plotting is to

portray a narrative ambiguity concerning the question of Tess's guilt and purity, which in turn represents Hardy's main argument in the novel: that moral judgements are not fixed.