

'TEARS IN OCEAN'
A PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE OF WOMEN IN
HARDY'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Hardy made his women speak the language often thought to be a taboo. In this context this paper attempts to study the psychological state of women in Hardy's novels. Hardy offered his women a voice reflecting the anxiety and ambiguity of their changing role in society. Hardy held no firm stance on women's rights, but wrote primarily on the prohibiting artifice found in Victorian standards. His fictional characters depict a longing for a return to a natural existence in their intimate relationships, with each of his novels unfolding more defined New Woman heroines. He wanted to portray women as strong and capable, but he shared in Victorian society's anxiety about the changing traits of women and her "disruptive potential," The protagonists Cyntherea, Tess ,Sue ,Bathsheba ,etc. have been through crux in life from all spheres .They deserted to have positive relationships with people who will accept them without judgment Hardy empowers women, presenting the sexual act as neither a sin nor an ideal, but rather as a relinquishing to a natural weakness, an element of nature. He realistically depicted women in the world in which they lived—a world that was not always favourable. Through his novels, Hardy simply wanted to modify social expectations regarding sanctioned relationships, which would create a mutual loving relationship inside marriage, making it stronger and less susceptible to societal expectations and judgments. The author being witness to the tragic and brutal, used his voice to convey the screams of the powerless with the mutability of natural law.

Key Words : Taboo, Ambiguity, Disruptive Potential, Crux, Less Susceptible, Screams of the powerless

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Caricature of Hardy’s Woman: Hardy’s women are pre-eminently sublime victims. Clarice Short remarks that, ‘ In his major novels Hardy ascribes much of the unhappiness of human life to the character of women, who are more than men, are tools of the life force’.

Calling Thomas Hardy’s female characters ‘heroines’ might seem a little controversial to those who have been brought up on the most popular and traditional literary women, such as Jane Eyre, Lizzie Bennet, Scarlett O’Hara, Anne Shirley, etc. They don’t particularly achieve anything great, nor have positive or greatly empowering character arcs. Hardy’s women are strangely hybrid – they are women with modern mindsets who struggle with living under medieval and stifling gender norms, women who belong to the future but suffer because they are stuck in their present. They are normal, everyday women with ordinary and traditional goals. But Hardy never attacks them for the misfortunes that befall them – he mostly attacks the society that holds them back and condemns them. Hardy had some great, superseding affection for his female characters which greatly overpowered that of his male ones. Hardly any of the men in Hardy’s novels are as interesting or as sympathetic as his women, and that is something that has always made him my favourite Victorian author

Tess is a character constantly at war with the expectations that society had for a woman of her class. She is an honest, hard-working and exceptionally intelligent woman for

someone brought up in her simple society; she is deeply caring and loving towards her family, to her own detriment. She stands far apart from the old fashioned ideals that her mother upholds about love and marriage, and does not share the indolent or drunken habits of her father's in the slightest. Indeed, the incident by which Tess actually 'falls' is purely causal and nothing which she herself helped bring about, other than being remarkably beautiful towards men.

Sue is the most intellectual, well read, well spoken and high minded. She is of dreamy, free spirited nature and is the most complex female character that Hardy ever created. She's a study in contrasts, and it's easy to see how she might come off as unlikeable to some. But I think she is the most modern minded and androgynous female character in Victorian literature

Bathsheba is a rich, ripe character. She's somewhat a mixture of both Tess Durbeyfield and Sue Bridehead – a country girl with a huge amount of spirit, independence and intelligence. Despite being arguable the most conventionally developed out of all his heroines, Hardy empowers her by making her a young woman in charge of a farm, a position which attracts no shortage of derision or mockery from the men within the community

EVOLUTION OF NEW WOMEN:

Hardy redefines the role of women in his novels, focusing on sexuality. By emphasizing the physical aspect of femininity in his unorthodox representation of the sexual female, Hardy threatens the Victorian model of women. In an age that placed a high value on reticence, self-restraint, and certain feminine qualities such as delicacy of health, a retiring disposition, a physical and intellectual timidity, and so forth. Hardy's women, with their admixture of qualities—transcending the stereotypes of madonna and whore—must have confused many readers caught with mixed feelings of admiration and alarm. Indeed, for removing the paragon from her pedestal and for raising the fallen woman from the

gutter, for presenting humanly imperfect but lovable heroines, Hardy was, charged with misrepresenting womankind. Hardy abhorred what he called the 'perfect woman in fiction'. On the contrary, his heroines' best faculties are presented in the context of their less-than-perfect natures in a less-than-perfect world. The 'prosaic reality' in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, where two aspiring farmers rise to prosperity but only the female contender is denied legal rights and privileges, constitutes a primary motif modulating into a dominant theme in the darker work of *Jude the Obscure*.

Independence and strength separate Hardy's heroines from the previous idea of the Victorian heroine. The combination of sexuality and masculine qualities in Hardy's passionate heroines exemplifies a new characterization of women. A similar conflict occurs in *Tess*. In her defiance of the Victorian ideal, Tess is empowered and strengthened. This passionate sexuality also results in her isolation from society and ultimately her death. Probably Hardy's most challenging rejection of 'Victorian dichotomy' was to give Tess the subtitle "A Pure Woman". This little phrase caused a great scandal, for Tess bears a child out of wedlock—and so, respectable opinion held, she could not be 'pure'. Hardy challenges the idea of female purity and calls Tess 'pure' on the basis of her moral integration .

TRAGEDY:

He is known for his incisive delineation and description of the social and moral plight of the characters and their struggle against the oddities of life. The tragic occurrences and mishaps as occasioned by the changing world of nineteenth century England reveal the ill luck or fate of the characters. However, thoughts concerning human behavioral qualities and the notion of determining one's own individual character in the face of harsh realities of time and society also come to the fore as a positive emphasis on strong individuality on the part of the characters in the novels. Repudiation of self-imposed ignorance of knowledge of self and confirmation of practical existence in itself in the light of the experience and wisdom gathered from the sad occurrences of their lives teach them the importance of the individual's essential being

Tess was a woman who stood strong no matter how unlucky she had been presented as. For example, when her rich and cynical cousin Alec had seduced/raped her while she was sleeping she had still tried to go on with her life. This shows that Tess was innocent no matter what people thought about her and she only wanted to find happiness in her life. In addition, her child Sorrow had died because it was so unhealthy, but she did stay in remorse. Her baby's name also tells us that her relationship between her and Alec was built with sorrow and sadness and ended in that way all these unfortunate and tragic events occurred in the life of Tess in the direction of preparing herself to assume a new found individuality of her own. The christening of the baby all by herself, her sense of strong resistance against the danger of falling victim to rumor that was spreading around and her act of going out to the fields once again illustrate the instance of development of individuality. Incidentally enough, it was mischances and misopportunities that led to this development, and therefore they could be counted amongst blessings in disguise in this novel. Tess was meted out with capital punishment in the city of Wintonchester, where a black flag was raised signifying that Tess' death sentence has been carried out.

Hardy called his final novel 'Jude the Obscure' "a tragedy of unfulfilled aims," and critics have since interpreted Jude the Obscure as his most thoroughly pessimistic statement on the inability of human beings to escape the deterministic forces of nature, society, and internal compulsion. Jude's relationship with Sue Bridehead ultimately yields only futility and leads to another of the crucial conflicts critics perceive in the novel, that between the flesh and the spirit

At the beginning of the novel, Bathsheba is penniless, but she quickly inherits and learns to run a farm in Weatherbury, where most of the novel takes place. Her first characteristic that we learn about is her vanity, and Hardy continually shows her to be rash and impulsive. However, not only is she independent in spirit, she is independent financially; this allows Hardy to use her character to explore the danger that such a woman faces of losing her identity and lifestyle through marriage. Bathsheba Everdene is an

exemplary character in "Far From the Madding Crowd". Though she has her faults and makes many wrong and disastrous decisions, she is always eager to correct her mistakes. Her good characteristics by far outweigh her bad ones and she is the most engaging and lovable character in the novel.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

James A. W. Heffernan (2010) The key to Hardy's conception of purity lies, I believe, of Tess in the novel itself just after she has buried her infant child: "Almost at a leap Tess . . . changed from simple girl to complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy into her voice" (p. 77). A complex woman cannot be "pure" in the scientific sense because she is no longer simple, homogenous, unmixed. She is rather "good" in the sense that Aristotle intends when he says that the protagonist of a tragedy must be "first and foremost good." "The virtue of a tragic character cannot be absolute and unassailable, for the passage of such a character from "good fortune to bad" would then be "simply odious to us." 24

Hina Shahid, (2008) 'Hardy's Tess is an individual who is constantly rendered defenseless against fate. Her ideals and sense of individuality are constantly tested by series of misadventures and accidents. It proves cruel for her and destroys her flourishing innocence.' **Diana Ellison**, (2006) 'The grimy features of the story' Jude the Obscure' show the contrast between the ideal life a man wishes to live and the squalid life he was fated to lead. It is in fact discovered in everybody's life. It lies less on the surface but if can be seen through puppets in the novel.' **W. R. Herman** notes, Tess rejects both the past and the future that threaten to "engulf" her in favour of "the eternal now" (Explicator 18, 3: item no. 16), but these inexorable forces close in on her nonetheless at Stonehenge, symbol of the ever-present past.

Tears in the Ocean :As a realist, Hardy felt that art should describe and comment upon actual situations, such as the heavy lot of the rural labourers and the bleak lives of oppressed women. Though the Victorian reading public tolerated his depiction of the

problems of modernity, it was less receptive to his religious scepticism and criticism of the divorce laws. His public and critics were especially offended by his frankness about relations between the sexes, particularly in his depicting the seduction of a village girl in Tess, and the sexual entrapment and child murders of Jude. In Hardy's novels female principals differ from one another far less than do his male principals. Hardy's women rarely engage in such intellectual occupations as looking ahead. Of all of Hardy's women, surely it is Tess who has won the greatest respect for her strength of character and struggle to be treated as an individual. Hardy's attitudes towards women were complex because of his own experiences. Even modern female readers accept the truth of Hardy's female protagonists because, despite his implication that woman is the weaker sex, as Hardy remarked, "No woman can begrudge flattery." Hardy wrote truthfully and realistically, allowing his heroines' sacrifices to facilitate an alteration of social expectations, creating a new world for those who would follow in their path of ingenuity, intellect, and independence. Tess is hanged for murder and Sue descends into guilt-ridden madness, their personal struggles help form an altered perspective for those living independently from socially defined norms.

Virginia Woolf writes, 'Vain might their beauty be and terrible their fate, but while the glow of life is in them their step is free, their laughter sweet, and theirs is the power to sink into the breasts of Nature and become part of her silence and solemnity, or to rise and put on them the movement of the clouds and the wildness of the flowering woodlands'. (250-51)

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