

English Studies Degree

Final Undergraduate Dissertation

Self-Sacrifice vs Self-Preservation in
Tess of the D'Urbervilles



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Abstract

*Thomas Hardy is distinguished by the controversy created by his special portrayal of the Victorian woman. Aiming at detaching the female figure from the contemporary ideal of the perfect and pure woman, his heroines are imperfect characters who commonly experience a process of suffering all throughout the book. This research paper examines the close connection between self-renunciation and self-preservation that the protagonist of Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* has, due to the nineteenth-century social judgement and prejudices. Consequently, her major decisions are analysed in order to find out whether her behaviour is determined by her blame or her natural instincts of survival. In addition, the BBC adaptation of the novel is compared and contrasted with the original literary version, taking into account the main findings regarding Tess' feelings of self-sacrifice and self-defense. As a result, it can be assumed that depending on the conveyance of these emotions, the inner motives of the heroine as well as the audience's perspective on this particular character may vary significantly.*

Keywords: innocence, gender, self-renunciation, self-preservation, female bonds, and social repression.

1. Introduction

For centuries, the role of men and women has been depicted as belonging to different and separate spheres. This distinction between both genders was specially stressed during the nineteenth century in England. Resigned to the expectations created for them, women were strictly confined to the boundaries of their homes without even contemplating the possibility of exploiting their potential as individuals. Not only were they affected by this repression, but their position within the literary field was also complicated.

Nevertheless, it was with the rise of the novel when the portrayal of women experienced a considerable change. With the appearance of women writers, the image of women began to be described from a woman's perspective leading to the creation of powerful heroines that would defy social conventions. 'The Girl of the Period,' as it is referred to Linton, aimed at detaching herself from the social constraints and "creat[ing] another nation altogether" (1883: 2).

In addition to women, there were also male writers that were concerned with these issues and attempted to depict unconventional female characters such as it is the case of Thomas Hardy. Particularly interested in gender, this British author focused on female emotions and instincts, an aspect that was recurrent within feminine writers' works. His oeuvre was distinguished by the controversy his themes created as he was frequently labelled as a pessimistic author owing to the influence of Naturalism and his agnosticism. However, his portrayal of women receives generally special attention as they underline either women's self-determination or self-renunciation as it is the case in his novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

Taking into account this ambiguity, the aim of this paper is to analyse the inner struggle of Hardy's heroine, Tess, regarding her feelings of self-sacrifice and self-preservation. Moreover, the boundaries between both emotions will be examined aiming at distinguishing whether her actions are motivated by her sense of guilt or by her survival instinct. In order to observe the realisation of this inner struggle in the film adaptation of the novel, the series broadcasted by the BBC will also be analysed in detail.

2. Thomas Hardy, a naturalist and agnostic writer

Largely praised during and after his lifetime, Thomas Hardy is acknowledged as one of the major writers of the English literary history. In fact, it was this public reputation one of the factors that stimulated his interest in protecting his personal privacy and triggered the elimination of a considerable part of his private documents. Nonetheless, this concern did not prevent the British author from writing his own official biography in collaboration with his second wife Florence Emily Hardy. Therefore, in 1928 and 1930, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891* and *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892-1928* were respectively published. Despite having access to various letters and contemporary documents related to the artist, these posthumous books have become significant biographical sources as they disclose intimate details about his life and professional career (Millgate 1999).

It is acknowledged, hence, that Thomas Hardy was born in 1840, in the English village of Higher Bockhampton, Dorset. Aiming at improving their son's social status, Thomas and Jemima Hardy enrolled him in the local school and paid his internship to the architect John Hicks. At the age of twenty-one, Hardy started to work as assistant architect in London where he became interested in literature and started writing poems and essays that were not successful among the local journals by 1866. However, he did not abandon his literary concerns. In fact, in the summer of 1872, the aspiring author devoted himself entirely to writing combining, thence, this engagement with his profession. Additionally, the support of his future wife at that time, Emma Lavinia Gifford, also encouraged Hardy to immerse himself in his literary career (Millgate 1999).

In spite of his initial attention to poetry, he decided to focus on the production of novels owing to the popularity of this genre among the contemporary readers. Even though *Desperate Remedies* (1871) is conceived as his first published novel, his prime one dates presumably from 1868 entitled "The Poor Man and the Lady." Nevertheless, because of its explicit criticism against the upper class, the novel was never published (Millgate 1999). His work was not appreciated until 1872 when *Under the Greenwood Tree* was published.

Twenty years later, approximately, the name of Thomas Hardy was widely acknowledged since some of his most popular works were published: *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* (1892), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895).

By 1898, the Victorian novelist shifted his literary focus towards the composition of poetry which was his personal preference (Mermin & Tucker 2002). Therefore, Hardy is perceived as an author who belongs to two different periods since the themes developed in major part of his poems suited the modernist awareness as well as they were mostly published in the twentieth century. Once his first volume of poetry was published, *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* (1898), seven more volumes were printed: *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901), *Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses* (1909), *Satires of Circumstance* (1914), *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses* (1917), *Late Lyrics and Earlier With Many Other Verses* (1922), *Human Shows, Far Phantasies, Songs, and Trifles* (1925), and *Winter Words in Various Moods and Metres* (1928) published posthumously.

Throughout the considerable amount of poems that he composed, Thomas Hardy developed a distinctive style that was both acclaimed and criticised by the contemporary audience. The rhythm of his poems may be distinguished by the emphasis on stress instead of the syllable attempting to provide a touch of spontaneity and naturality (Mermin & Tucker 2002). In addition, with the aim of portraying the rural environment where he was raised, Hardy recurrently employed colloquial diction including diverse invented words along with dialect terms that contributed to convey this quotidian essence to his poems. Due to his awareness of the harshness of this humble context, he used to explore pessimistic themes incorporating ironic and fatalistic comments about the society and culture of his time, human existence, and other contemporary issues. These concerns lead critics and publishers to label Hardy as a controversial author since:

“[his works] publically disrupt the culture in which they are *already inserted*. (...) Hardy *enters* the culture, by writing, that is writing gives him access. (...) But he

enters it as a *poet* claiming his own voice, which turns out to involve the rejection of the given voice of poetry” (Goode 1988: 4)

Consequently, by analysing the British author’s oeuvre, it might be examined the significant influence of naturalism on his writing. Naturalism was a reaction against the traditional belief that supported the existence of a divine Creator governing the universe. It emphasised the restriction of individuals’ freedom as they are unable to decide their fate. “[People] are not masters of the circumstances that create the make-up of [their] own wishes and motives” (Davis 2002: 75). Consequently, human beings are controlled by their natural instincts together with their social and economic environment. This sense of dependence on nature might provide a pessimistic perspective on reality since life is determined by natural forces beyond human control (Laubová 2010).

The publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) caused a considerable change of reasoning. According to his revolutionary theory, life is presented as a continuous struggle for survival in which there are no “favoured origins’ wrought by acts of separate divine fiat ”(Davis 2002: 62). This rejection against the traditional conception of social stratification was reflected on the literary domain. As it was suggested that every individual was allowed the possibility for evolving, the naturalist authors considered wider themes in which the middle and the working class were recurrently portrayed as protagonists. This may be identified in Thomas Hardy’s compositions whose characters commonly experienced social oppression and acted instinctively according to their heredity. For instance, the protagonist of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* is profoundly influenced by this hereditary fate. In the novel there are, indeed, several references to a legend involving this ancient family which was known as “the D’Urberville Coach” (Hardy 1981: 354). According to Alec D’Urberville:

“One of the family is said to have abducted one beautiful woman, who tried to escape from the coach in which he was carrying her off, and in the struggle he killed her—or she killed him (...)” (Hardy 1981: 354).

The conscious doubt concerning the gender of the murderer conceives Tess' implication in Alec's murder not as a coincidence but as a result of her family origins. In this way, the protagonist is presented as a victim of inevitability since, from this moment on, Tess is aware that she cannot escape from her own destiny. In fact, during their fleeing, she requests Angel to marry her sister foreseeing that she was going to die: "(...) if she were to become yours it would almost seem as if death had not divided us (...)" (Hardy 1981: 394).

Owing to this sense of melancholy and pessimism combined with the social critique present in his texts, some of the author's novels were condemned as immoral and, thence, rejected by the editors of several journals, as it is the case of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. However, before making further reference to this novel, it is necessary to introduce the context in which the work was developed.

3. England in the Victorian period

In the nineteenth century, Britain experienced an impressive industrial development that fomented the growth of major cities such as Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester or London. Additionally, the British influence overseas as well as the appearance of the railway in the 1930s contributed to enhance the country's prestige. Nevertheless, despite this economic improvement, industrialization entailed the significant depopulation of the rural areas. This rural exodus along with the mechanisation of the countryside provoked the decrease of the agricultural salary. As a result, the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834) was stated with the aim of helping the disadvantaged people by covering their basic necessities and schooling their children. In exchange, the workers were expected to work arduously.

Even though the nineteenth century is characterised by this process of evolution, there is no evidence concerning the British industrialisation in Hardy's Wessex. The author developed his novels in a fictional environment that he himself had created. Having been elaborated throughout his works, this fictional Wessex was also influenced by factual places and other issues such as it is the case of the social stratification and women condition in Victorian England.

In relation to the social class differences, Thomas Hardy recurrently expresses the discrimination of the lower sphere. This may be illustrated by the episode in which Angel's family, belonging to the upper class, refuse to accept his marriage with Tess due to her inferior status: "Is she of a family such as you would care to marry into—a lady in short?" (Hardy 1981: 163). Moreover, it was because of the author's rejection against this traditional division, that he was highly concerned with "cross-class romance" (Boumelha 1999: 132) in order to portray the struggle between desire and social prejudices. Therefore, when Tess tells Angel about her ancient roots instead of rejecting her, as the protagonist expects, he says:

"I do hate the aristocratic principle of blood before everything, (...). But I am extremely interested in this news (...). My mother too, poor soul, will think so much better of you on account of it. Tess, you must spell your name correctly—D'Urbervilles—from this very day" (Hardy 1981: 188-9).

Another aspect that conveys a Victorian flavour to Thomas Hardy's novels is the parallelism between women's condition in the contemporary England and the one that is described in his novels. Similar to the stratification of society, gender relations were distinguished in "separate spheres" (Mermin & Tucker 2002: 80): men pertaining to the public sphere, while women were confined to the private one. In the nineteenth century, women were expected to be delicate creatures devoted to domesticity that should beware of preserving their purity. As Eliza Lynn Linton depicts in her work *The Girl of the Period and other Social Essays* (1883):

"'a fair young English girl,' meant the ideal of womanhood, (...) a creature generous, capable, and modest, something franker than a Frenchwoman, more to be trusted than Italian, as brave as an American but more refined, as domestic as a German and more graceful. It meant a girl who could be trusted alone if need be, because of the innate purity and dignity of her nature, but who was neither bold in bearing nor masculine in mind (...)" (Linton 1883: 1)

In opposition to this traditional conception of women, Hardy depicted his heroines as human beings that may have doubts as well as commit errors. He combines this emotional

instability with “unusually explicit descriptions of female desire” (Brady 1999: 94) which arose controversy among his contemporaries. Contrary to the Victorian ideal of femininity, women were, hence, portrayed as characters who rely on their natural instincts and might be imperfect. Taking into consideration *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy presents an innocent woman who was “morally ‘pure’ precisely because she was considered to be physically impure (...)” (Brady 1999: 96). From the moment she loses her innocence, Tess experiences a process of evolution that leads the character to increase her psychological strength in spite of not being a ‘proper woman’, according to Tess’ social environment:

“It is Tess Durbeyfield, otherwise D'Urberville, somewhat changed—the same, but not the same; at the present stage of her existence living as a stranger and an alien here, though it was no strange land that she was in” (Hardy 1891: 89)

In this way, Hardy develops female personages whose hearts remain pure, meanwhile their bodies are condemned as immoral by a series of events to which they have fallen victims to. For example, once that Tess confesses Angel her secret and tells him about the rape and her deceased baby, he admits: “You were more sinned against than sinning” (Hardy 1891: 232). Angel acknowledges, thence, that she has been a victim, although he eventually despises her for her lack of ‘purity’.

Nonetheless, despite the female situation in Hardy’s Wessex, during the nineteenth century, women also vindicated their rights to be treated as equal individuals. Consequently, diverse notable measures were adopted such as the Matrimonial Causes Act (1857) which ameliorated the conditions to obtain divorce. It is also worth mentioning the rise of women organisations fighting for suffrage by 1866 and 1888. However, it was during the twentieth century when their right to vote was achieved in the introduction of the People Act (1918). In education, women also increased their attendance at schools which is also noted in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as the protagonist “assisted a little by her Sixth Standard training” (Hardy 1891: 124).

Although this may be a similarity between Hardy's novel and the women condition in the nineteenth-century England, the novelist did not portray this progress since his intention was different. He attempted to portray Tess as a victim of social oppression who represented both modernism and moral purity in spite of her loss of physical innocence. A proper instance of this assessment might be the subtitle that Hardy chose for his novel in the first edition (1891): *A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*.

4. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

John Goode claimed that Hardy opted for an "open confrontation" not only by entitling his novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*, but also by portraying women from an unconventional perspective (1998: 3). Being these aspects some of the reasons for the novel's complex reception at that time, the elaboration of this masterpiece took Hardy over four years, since 1887 until its first publication in 1891 (Dolin: 1998).

Relevant information that should be mentioned is that the novel was originated by the proposal made by Tillotson and Son in 1887. They contacted the writer and offered him to publish a novel having a length similar to *The Woodlanders*, published the same year. Three months later, he agreed and, according to Dolin (1998), Hardy had started the elaboration of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by 1889. However, once he had sent part of his novel (firstly entitled "Too Late Beloved") to the magazine, diverse episodes were bowdlerised provoking Hardy's disapproval and the subsequent rejection of his novel by Tillotson and Son. Although the British novelist had been used to delete scenes from his works in order to get them published, in the case of this novel, it was different. Maybe because of his close attachment to this particular heroine, Hardy decided to wait until he finished the book proceeding, hence, with the self-censorship of his own work. In spite of these adjustments, his novel was both unwelcomed and rejected by the contemporary journals, except from *The Graphic* that had accepted to publish it in a serialised form by 1889. A few years later, the firm 'James Osgood, McIlvaine' proposed him to publish the novel (1891) allowing Hardy to incorporate some of the episodes that were erased during the aforementioned process of bowdlerisation (Dolin 1998).

As it may be expected by the prior controversy it caused, “his figure of a sexualised young girl provoked scandal about its ‘improper explicitness’ and an objection to the excessive ‘succulence’ both of his heroine and of her rural environment” (Higonnet n.d.). In fact, the presentation of his protagonist as ‘*A Pure Woman*’ might also vindicate Hardy’s intention of defending this female character against the Victorian judgement on the loss of virginity. Consequently, the initial depiction of this character provides the reader an image of innocence which would be later snatched by “the hands of the spoiler” (Hardy 1891: 74):

“[s]he was a fine and handsome girl (...), but her mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes added eloquence to colour and shape. (...) Tess Durbeyfield at this time of her life was a mere vessel of emotion untinged by experience” (Hardy 1891: 14-5).

It is at the end of ‘phase the first’ when the narrator wonders why Tess has to suffer such a fate that would determine her situation as ‘fallen woman’:

“[w]hy it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive (...)” (Hardy 1891: 74).

4.1. Analysis of the novel

Therefore, Hardy presents the story of Tess D’Urberville, a countryside innocent girl that is deprived of her virginity but that experiences a subsequent process of evolution. Indeed, at the beginning of ‘phase the third’, the narrator depicts this heroine as:

“(...)only a young woman of twenty, one who mentally and sentimentally had not finished growing, it was impossible that any event should have left upon her an impression that was not at least capable of transmutation. And thus her spirits, (...) and her hopes, rose higher and higher.” (Hardy 1891: 103).

Nonetheless, her transformation also presents, at some point in the novel, diverse variations that may indicate a process of moral degradation originated from a deep feeling of self-sacrifice. In order to understand this ambivalent evolution, it is necessary to introduce some of the characters that play an essential role throughout the story, especially two of the most decisive ones for the protagonist: Alec D'Urberville and Angel Clare. Regarding the former one, Alec is the character that corrupts her innocence becoming, thence, the trigger of Tess' misfortunes:

“(...) as she innocently looked down at the roses in her bosom, that there behind the blue narcotic haze sat the ‘tragic mischief’ of her drama—he [Alec] who was to be the blood-red ray in the spectrum of her young life.” (Hardy 1891: 42).

Even though he is portrayed as the antagonist of this story, Hardy also provides this character a process of positive evolution as he admits to have been the source of Tess' troubles. Once that Alec is told about her deceased baby, he assumes his responsibilities and claims:

“[w]retch that I was to foul that innocent life! The whole blame as mine—the whole blackness of the sin, the awful, awful iniquity. (...) will you put it in my power to do my duty—to make the only reparation I can make for the wrong I did you: that is, will you be my wife, and go with me?” (Hardy 1891: 315).

On the contrary, the character of Angel Clare develops a different transformation since he evolves from being a “godlike” man, according to Tess (Hardy 1891: 181), into a husband who does not forgive his wife. Consequently, he abandons his unconditional love towards Tess, “her soul, her heart, her substance” (Hardy 1891: 165) and breaks his promise of “ever neglect[ing] her, or hurt[ing] her, or even forget[ing] to consider her” (Hardy 1891: 218) when Tess confesses her past. In order to create the impression of Tess as victim of injustice, Hardy allows his heroine to exclaim the succeeding extract reinforcing Angel's degradation:

“[i]n the name of our love, forgive me! (...) I have forgiven you for the same. (...) Forgive me as you are forgiven! *I forgive you, Angel*” (Hardy 1891: 228).

From this moment on, the relationship between the couple is converted to a relation based on “linguistic interactions” (Goode 1988: 123) which contributes to deteriorate the image of mercy and compassion that this male personage has at the beginning of the novel. In fact, when Tess suggests to commit suicide in order to avoid bringing shame to his name, he replies: “I don’t wish to add murder to my other follies, (...) [i]t is absurd to have such thoughts in this kind of case, which is rather one for satirical laughter than for tragedy” (Hardy 1891: 233)

Not only are these two men key in Tess’ development but the relationship she maintains with the rest of the female characters along the novel should be enhanced. It is in Talbothays Dairy where Tess meets Marian, Izz Huett and Retty Priddle. The strong bonds of female friendship forged among the milkmaids endures until the end of the book remarking the unity of women in Hardy’s Wessex. “[T]here was no enmity or malice between them” (Hardy 1891: 146) even after realising that Angel was in love with her. Owing to their affection towards Hardy’s heroine, they write Angel a letter as an attempt to persuade him to give Tess another opportunity in which they warn him: “[l]ook to your Wife if you do love her (...). A woman should not be try’d beyond her Strength, and continual dropping will wear away a Stone—ay, more—a Diamond” (Hardy 1891: 365).

However, this female friendship is ruined taking into consideration the relationship between Tess and her mother. Therefore, Mrs Durbeyfield constantly fails her daughter to provide the support she needs. This may be analysed in the letters that Tess writes “implor[ing] her advice” (Hardy 1891: 203) on revealing or not her past to Angel. Her mother disappoints her as “[Tess’] communication brought no reply” (Hardy 1891: 203). Additionally, the relation with this character also inspires a sense of blame on the protagonist becoming in another source of corruption of her daughter’s innocence. Taking advantage of the horse’s death, Mrs Durbeyfield presses her daughter to reclaim kin to the D’Urbervilles. Since she feels guilty, Tess eventually accepts and says with resignation: “I suppose you know best.(...) Do what you like with me, mother” (Hardy 1891: 49).

This is the moment when the sense of self-renunciation is propelled in Tess, as she feels obliged to sacrifice herself for the sake of her family. Even the narrator recognises that:

“[e]very day seemed to throw upon her young shoulders more of the family burdens (...)” (Hardy 1891: 37). Nevertheless, after the traumatic episode in Trantridge regarding the loss of her virginity, her family fails to appreciate her sacrifice and even her mother reproaches her current situation as ‘fallen woman’:

“[a]fter all the talk about you and him which has reached us here, who would have expected it to end like this! Why didn’t ye think of doing some good for your family instead o’ thinking only of yourself?” (Hardy 1891: 49)

Due to this lack of support and her isolation, Tess is immersed in a downward spiral of self-immolation in which she renounces her right to be happy. After the loss of her baby, she decides to start a new life as a milkmaid in Talbothays where she meets Angel, a young man who professes his love for her. Despite being a mutual love, she constantly represses her feelings and rejects his proposal. In the first place, this self-renunciation arises owing to the aforementioned friendship with Marian, Izz, and Retty who are infatuated with Angel. As Tess has internalised the Victorian conception of being an improper woman, she considers that her friends deserve more the love of a gentle man as Angel:

“why should she [Tess herself], who could never conscientiously allow any man to marry her now, and who had religiously determined that she never would be tempted to do so, draw off Mr Clare’s attention from other women, for the brief happiness of sunning herself in his eyes while he remained at Talbothays?” (Hardy 1891: 138).

Even though this is a contributing factor in Tess’ self-sacrifice, the main reason behind her refusals is the ‘impure’ loss of her virginity as a result of the rape. She does not want to ruin Angel’s reputation for her own desire to be with him. In fact, she remarks:

“it is for your good [referring to Angel], indeed my dearest! O, believe me, it is only for your sake! I don’t like to give myself the great happiness o’ promising to be yours in that way—because—because I am *sure* I ought not to do it.” (Hardy 1891: 175)

The usage of italics in the prior extract has a specific purpose. Hardy recurrently employs this device along his work in order to emphasise Tess' conception of herself as an unworthy woman. According to Tim Dolin (1998), it is suggested that maybe Tess refuses to get married not only because of the further consequences he might suffer as her husband if her past in Tantridge is discovered, but also because of her consideration about becoming his mistress. Hence, she is not refusing having a relationship with him but accepting a different type of union:

“I like being like this (...) to speak quite practically, wouldn't it be best not to marry till after all that?— Though I can't bear the thought o' your going away and leaving me here!” (Hardy 1891: 196-7)

Accordingly, Hardy presents in his novel a heroine who has explicit sexual desire as she contemplates the possibility of living her own life with her beloved without adhering to any conventional rules. Nevertheless, Angel's perseverance together with her inner desires demolish her “power to attempt self-immolation a second time (...),” (Hardy 1891: 183) and she eventually accepts Angel's proposal. Although this episode may inspire the reader to expect a good resolution, Tess' self-reproach does not allow her to repress her secret. It is in their wedding night, when the couple is communicated the unfortunate incidents that her friends suffered after they left the dairy, that Tess' sense of guilt is reawoken. Therefore, she thinks that:

“[s]he [Tess herself] had deserved worse—yet she was the chosen one. It was wicked of her to take all without paying. She would pay to the uttermost farthing; she would tell, there and then.” (Hardy 1891: 223)

Determined to tell him the truth about her past, she proceeds to make her confession which is, though, not welcomed by her husband. Due to Angel's rejection and her attitude of self-immolation, Tess even imposes her own punishment:

“I shan’t ask you to let me live with you, Angel, because I have no right to! (...) I shan’t do anything, unless you order me to (...) I will obey you like your wretched slave, even if it is to lie down and die” (Hardy 1891: 229-30)

In case she “may cause [him] to change [his] plans in opposition to [his] reason and wish” (Hardy 1891: 245), Tess herself suggests him to leave her, in spite of her unconditional love towards him. Not only is the manifestation of her self-sacrifice intensified from this moment on, but her process of degradation is also accentuated. For instance, in order to avoid having problems for her condition as a woman, during her departure towards Flintcomb-Ash, she alters her physical appearance aiming at being unattractive: “I’ll always be ugly now, because Angel is not here, and I have nobody to take care of me.” (Hardy 1891: 280).

Similar to the usage of italics, it should be noted the function and the position of the omniscient narrator as something more than a mere observer of events. It may be highlighted his subjective comments on Tess’ deplorable situation and Angel’s decision of leaving her such as the following rhetorical question: “[y]et could a woman who had done even what she had done deserve all this?” (Hardy 1891: 253). Besides, this narrator frequently uses an ironic tone so that he emphasises the protagonist’s self-chastisement. In the succeeding sample, further focus is directed towards the utterance after the colon: “[b]ut she did not tell them [her parents] of the sorriness of her situation: it might have brought reproach upon him.” (Hardy 1891: 284).

Nonetheless, there is a specific part in the novel in which Tess’ behaviour evolves into a more resolute one. When she acknowledges that Angel had proposed Izz to accompany him to Brazil, she may seem to reach her limits of self-repression and recognises her penitential mood: “I have been living on in a thirtover, lackadaisical way, and have not seen what it may lead to!” (Hardy 1891: 294). Moreover, the narrator also reinforces this transformation by confirming:

“[t]his self-effacement in both directions had been quite in consonance with her independent character of desiring nothing by way of favour or pity to which she was

not entitled on a fair consideration of her deserts. (...) [T]here was a limit to her powers of renunciation.”(Hardy 1891: 295).

As a result, it could be considered that Tess’ motivation changes arising a sense of self-preservation which might be confounded, to certain extent, with that of self-sacrifice. Indeed, even Angel reflects upon this ambivalence after having been told the truth:

“(…) it strikes me that there is a want of harmony between your present mood of self-sacrifice and your past mood of self-preservation” (Hardy 1891: 230).

Once more, the difference between both attitudes is blurred when the reader discovers Tess living with Alec. Since her family is expelled from Marlott and they do not have anywhere else to go, Tess could have been compelled to accept his proposal for her family’s sake being, thence, an instance of self-sacrifice for her beloved ones. On the other hand, there are other signs that might indicate that it is not her sense of self-chastisement, but that of self-protection what prompts her to live with him as Tess D’Urberville. Aware of this ambiguity, Hardy decides to arrange certain variations in the episode in which Angel and Tess reencounter again (Dolin 1998). Consequently, he alters his 1891’s version: “I hate him [Alec] now, because he told me a lie—that you would not come again; and you *have* come!” (Hardy 1891: 379), and adds:

“[t]hese clothes are what he’s put upon me: I didn’t care what he did wi’ me! The step back to him was not so great as it seems. He had been a husband to me: you never had” (Hardy 1912 in Dolin 1998: 459)

In the latter excerpt the protagonist’s behaviour is completely conditioned since she reproaches Angel her decision to leave her and even seems to forgive Alec’s sins. Nonetheless, in 1891’s version, Tess is portrayed as a victim of social oppression owing to her sacrifice for her family’s welfare. This notable difference may even alter the reader’s conception of Tess after Alec’s murder. Taking into consideration the protagonist’s first portrayal as sufferer, Hardy depicts a female character who “is still the victim [of a] system which has entrapped her into such grotesque choices (...)” such as the assassination of Alec

(Shires 1999: 154). After her husband's second departure, Tess perceives murdering Alec as a reasonable possibility as he has been the source of her misfortunes. Owing to her love towards Angel and her resentment against Mr D'Urberville, she assassinates him in order to protect her deep attachment to her partner: "I owed it to 'ee, and to myself, Angel" (Hardy 1891: 384). Similar to previous examples, in this episode, Hardy establishes an undefined boundary between self-sacrifice and self-preservation due to the fact that Tess is moved by both her inner guilt and her natural instincts.

Desperate to live her happy ending with Angel, she sacrifices even her life for him since she knows that such a crime should bring consequences. The author concedes his heroine a last moment of delight in an inhabited mansion before she is finally captured. Tess is aware of her fatal fate and, therefore, she renounces to continue their fleeing. Considering this fact as a sign of sacrifice, she abandons her enterprise and decides to rest in Stonehedge, a key scenery to develop this character's end. Moreover, the portrayal of Tess lying on an altar conveys the reader an image of martyrdom which enhances the issue of self-renunciation and victimism. The penultimate episode of the novel concludes with Tess' acceptance of her fate recognising that "[t]his happiness could not have lasted. It was too much" (Hardy 1891: 396).

4.2. Film adaptation

Due to the popularity of the novel, there are different film adaptations that have attempted to portray faithfully Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Particularly, I have chosen the television series written by David Nicholls and directed by David Blair in 2008. Broadcasted by the BBC, this filmic production is comprised by four different episodes of sixty minutes each, approximately. As a result of its positive reception during 2009, this series was nominated for different awards such as the Broadcasting Press Guild Award, the RTS Craft & Design Award, and TRIC Award.

4.2.1. Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* vs BBC's film adaptation

Considering the main themes that have been analysed in prior sections, this film successfully conveys the drama and tragedy that are depicted in Hardy's novel. However, it

should be noted that there are some dissimilarities regarding the aforementioned topics of self-sacrifice and self-preservation characteristic of the protagonist of the novel.

In relation to the first manifestation of self-chastisement which has been previously suggested to arise after the horse's death, Mrs Durbeyfield's (Ruth Jones) pressure on Tess (Gemma Arterton) is portrayed differently. In fact, while in the novel she directly advises and prompts her daughter to reclaim kin to the D'Urbervilles, in the film this message is more implied by her pitch and her paralinguistic communication. In addition, in the novel, Tess appears more reticent to go to Tantridge, whereas in the film, she does not significantly oppose her mother's wishes. Regarding the issue of self-sacrifice, this difference may diminish considerably the concept of victimisation that the heroine suffers in the book, as she seems even delighted by Mr D'Urberville's (Hans Matheson) letter. Therefore, instead of having her "eyes (...) too full and her voice too choked to utter the bitter sentiments that were in her" (Hardy 1891: 51); in Nicholls' version, when she leaves to Tantridge, the actress that performs this personage is smiling. Despite not underlying the self-renounce of Tess, it highlights her innocence and unawareness that features this character.

With regards the theme of female friendship, it is beautifully preserved in the film adaptation. The dialogues coincide and even the mutual support and affection that the women confer to each other is highly remarked as well as it is in the novel. Accordingly, in the wedding night, Angel (Eddie Redmayne) tells her about Retty's (Emily Beecham) suicide attempt, she openly says that she "must pay" her friends' misfortunes. In this sense, the feeling of self-guilt that encourages her to reveal her past is faithfully portrayed.

In spite of the similarities between the novel and this adaptation, the issue of self-immolation is substantially reduced. This may be examined, specifically, in one of the scenes that best illustrates Tess' own punishment in the novel, i.e. the couple's argument after the revelation of Tess' secret. Although in the novel, it is Tess herself who suggests her husband to leave her, in the film, Angel is the one who decides his departure. Furthermore, when they are saying farewell, even the protagonist begs for a goodbye kiss which is denied by her husband, a symbol that is not mentioned in Hardy's work. As a consequence, in the

film adaptation, it is more highlighted the victimisation and martyrdom of Hardy's heroine rather than her sense of self-renunciation to be happy.

Taking into account the theme of self-preservation, it is more clearly remarked after the encounter between Angel and Tess when she holds the position of Alec's mistress. This emotion arises, hence, during the couple conversation and when she enters in Mr D'Urberville's apartment, in spite of being combined, in the latter case, with the topic of self-sacrifice. In this scene, it is explicitly suggested that Alec is using Tess as his mistress in exchange of supporting her family economically obliging her to be with him. In consequence, it is because of this subjugation and the explicit violence that seems to occur in the room, that she is moved to murder him as a result of her inner struggle to survive.

Regardless of certain dissimilarities between the novel and the film adaptation, the central themes that are dealt with in Hardy's book are similarly conveyed in the television series widening hence, the audience of this masterpiece of English literature.

5. Conclusion

All things considered, as it has been examined throughout this paper, there is a constant inner struggle between Tess' feelings of self-sacrifice and self-preservation that develops in the readers a deep sense of empathy with the protagonist. It is this innovative emotion what Thomas Hardy wants to emphasise in his novels. According to Shires, the writer aims at “demolish[ing]” the ideal Victorian stereotype of female personages “once and for all by not only rewriting the traditional heroine and her story, but also our relation to her”(1999: 151)

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the British author invites his readers to reflect upon controversial issues such as “the moral values” and the “aesthetic judgement” (Goode 1988: 110) that are still embedded in the nineteenth-century society. This may be one of the reasons why Hardy's oeuvre keeps on sparking the curiosity among readers. Who has the right to determine female purity or faithfulness? For the Victorian-Modernist writer the answer may be clear: women are creatures that may be imperfect as they are human beings that can also feel inner desire. It is this touch of imperfection and naturality that makes his feminine personages special and extraordinary. Nevertheless, it may seem contradictory that despite this feminist view, his female characters are commonly deprived of hope as it is the case of Tess. Therefore, this might be a motive for further analysis, i.e. to explore Hardy's conception of 'freedom' and the reasons of this apparent lack of hope.

Owing to the themes that he was concerned with, most of his works have been adapted into the big screen entailing the unavoidable increase of his public. Even three centuries later, Thomas Hardy's style, characters, and stories continue delighting readers becoming, thence, in a popular writer whose work enchants readers through time.

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