Tess of the d'Urbervilles

Study Guide by Course Hero

What's Inside

Book Basics

AUTHOR
Thomas Hardy

YEAR PUBLISHED
1891

GENRE
Tragedy

PERSPECTIVE AND NARRATOR
Tess of the d'Urbervilles is told by a third-person limited omniscient narrator, who focuses on the thoughts and feelings of Tess, Angel, and occasionally Alec. This point of view presents the characters, even at times the antagonist Alec, sympathetically, and causes readers to withhold judgment.

TENSE
Tess of the d'Urbervilles is written in the past tense.

ABOUT THE TITLE
Tess Durbeyfield, the protagonist of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*, learns her family name was originally d'Urberville—the name of an ancient noble family long extinct. The subtitle—*A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*—is a social comment indicating the author's belief that Tess, a rape victim, is "pure" despite being a fallen woman by the standards of the day.

In Context

Critical Reception

Tess of the d'Urbervilles inspired a great deal of criticism, much of it negative, because of its controversial stance on fallen women, its relative openness about sex and the female body, and its criticism of religion. *The Saturday Review* indicates Hardy "tells an unpleasant story in an unpleasant way." *The Spectator* acknowledges the book as a "powerful novel" but "cannot admire [Hardy's] motive in writing" it.

However, not all reviews were negative. According to *The Pall Gazette*, Hardy had "never exercised [his art] more powerfully—never, certainly, more tragically—than in this moving presentment of a 'pure woman.'" *The Atlantic Monthly* called *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* "Hardy's best novel yet." The reviewer for *The Athenaeum* went even further, saying that *Tess* was "destined, there can be no doubt, to rank high among achievements of Victorian novelists."

In general critics admired the quality of the writing, the skill, and the execution. However, other critics—or sometimes the same ones—took issue with Hardy's implicit condemnation of

religion and society in the way fallen women such as Tess were treated.

Gender Issues in Victorian England

The Victorians held the notion that moral purity was tied to physical virginity or sex within wedlock—not one's character or state of mind. This definition did not exempt victims of sexual violence. Whether a woman was seduced, raped, prostituted herself, or chose to have a sexual relationship, she was considered "fallen" if she engaged in such activities outside of marriage. Charities existed for the purpose of rehabilitating and reforming "fallen" women, including the Highgate House where Victorian author Christina Rossetti volunteered from 1859–70. Activists employed various tactics, such as providing pamphlets on morality and running homes like St. Mary Magdalene (also called Highgate House) where women could live in a community and learn skills to help them earn a living. Modern readers will note that responsibility for a woman's lack of virginity fell solely on the woman; men had no responsibilities toward former partners and frequently failed or refused to provide for their own illegitimate children.

Similarly, in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Tess repeatedly bears the responsibility and the consequences for her fallen state. Angel accuses her of being a flirt when she refuses his advances. On hearing of her past he acknowledges she was "sinned against," but he has envisioned her as "pure" and according to his definition—and society's—she is not. When her former rapist, Alec, becomes devoutly religious, he suggests she veil her face and asks her to swear not to lead him astray. In Victorian England Tess is as guilty as the perpetrator.

The novel also raises the topic of divorce, a thorny issue in Hardy's England. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 was the first significant revision to the laws governing the ability to obtain a divorce. The 1857 act required a man only to prove his wife had committed adultery. A woman, however, had to prove adultery as well as cruelty, bigamy, incest, or desertion. Hardy tackles issues of marriage and divorce in both *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Tess mistakenly believes Angel can divorce her. However, because the event occurred before her marriage, her failure to tell him before the wedding and his refusal to let her tell him mean they no longer have the solution of ending their marriage when Angel reacts so callously to her revelations.

Classism and Rural Decline in Victorian England

Hardy's background is important in his representations of social class. Hardy's mother worked as a maid, and his father was a master mason. Because they provided him with as many advantages as they could, he had opportunities to move to a higher social position. Hardy's awareness of the problems of rural life, classism, and morality is often reflected in his fiction; poverty, job instability, and a generally hard life are more responsible for lower morality—if it is lower indeed—than class. This concept is shown in the portrayal of Tess. She is not impure because she is poor; rather she is exposed to dangers that arise because her family's poverty places her in a vulnerable position.

Moreover, both the wealthy Alec d'Urberville and the more philosophically inclined middle-class Angel Clare commit immoral, irresponsible, and cruel acts, further imperiling Tess. Alec rapes her and leaves her pregnant; Angel admits to sexual relations before marriage—his doing, unlike Tess's—and then abandons her when she admits to a similar event.

Hardy highlights the lost aristocratic history of Tess's ancestral family: their ancient nobility and its possessions are in ruins, and its surviving son, Jack Durbeyfield, is a lazy drunk with few, if any, morals.

Although Angel is a critic of the nobility, he is impressed by Tess's lineage. But because Angel comes from a class that tends to regard rural laborers as simple, he places them only slightly above farm animals. Angel is even surprised when Tess has complex thoughts. But when Angel learns about Tess's past, he blames her behavior on congenital weakness: essentially, since her formerly noble family fell into decline and poverty, he thinks that she must have a genetic tendency toward moral weakness.

Related to the issue of classism is the rise of industrialization, which Hardy viewed as causing a problematic mobility and a loss of connection to nature and local identity. This is represented especially by the threshers at Flintcomb-Ash, the least vibrant farm in the novel. Changing demands created the necessity for rural itinerancy. Tess works at multiple farms

throughout the novel. Her family must relocate from their farm after her father's death. Car Darch and her sister Nancy, Marian, and Izz all work at multiple farms, and at the end of the season they are left to seek work elsewhere. The inability to remain stationary destabilizes an area and results in a loss of community. In addition technology, which Hardy represents as dangerous and disturbing, causes farm workers to be disconnected from the land that they work. There is a notable contrast between the idyllic work at the Talbothays Dairy, in which milkmaids even have a preference for particular cows, and the unpleasant, depersonalized labor at Flintcomb-Ash.

Real-Life Models for *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

Hardy's letters and autobiography offer insights into real events that influenced the creation of the novel. In mid-1877 Hardy visited Marnhull (the fictional Marlott of the novel) where he witnessed a celebration that included girls dancing much as they do at the start of the novel. Not long after Hardy and his wife caught their servant, Jane Phillips, attempting to bring a man into the house. The Hardys went to see her parents when she ran away soon after. Research indicates the unwed Jane Phillips baptized her newborn child who died at the age of two days. Like Tess in the novel, Jane Phillips also sang and, according to Hardy, had a memorable voice. Another real-life influence was Augusta Way, whom Hardy apparently saw milking cows at her grandfather's farm as a teenager. He was struck by the image, and he may have invoked it for the novel.

Hardy's Wessex

Thomas Hardy's Wessex is a fictional region of England that strongly suggests the real landscapes of the southern and southwestern parts of the country. Keeping some real place names but changing others, he established boundaries that stretch along the coast north to Oxford (which he calls Christminster) and from Windsor (which he calls Castle Royal) to Taunton (which he calls Toneborough) in the west. Marnhull is the real-world location of Marlott, and the Isle of Wight (the British island in the English Channel) was renamed as "The Island"; Slepe Heath is believed to be the source of Egdon Heath in Hardy's 1878 novel *The Return of the Native*. Hardy did not mind if readers matched up real and imaginary places but cautioned them that his landscape was fictitious and he would not guarantee the "details" to be correct. He used this setting in his best-known novels, including *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Return of the Native*, and *Far from the Madding Crowd.*

Author Biography

Early Life

Thomas Hardy was born in Bockhampton, Dorset, in southwestern England, on June 2, 1840. He was the first child of Jemima and Thomas Sr., arriving five months after his parents' marriage. His mother, a domestic servant, and his father, a stonemason, were working-class country people. Nonetheless, Hardy's intelligent and ambitious mother sent him to the best school available, in the nearby town of Dorchester. Hardy's family could not afford a university education, but after he graduated at 16 his mother arranged for him to be apprenticed to an architect so that he could transition into the professional class. Masons, like his father, were considered working class. Hardy's working-class origins caused him anxiety, but his early immersion into the rhythms of nature, oral culture, and folk traditions had a profound effect on his second and third careers as novelist and poet.

Early Career

After leaving school Hardy became an apprentice to local architect John Hicks in 1856. In 1862 he moved to London, where he was employed as a draftsman in the office of a leading ecclesiastical architect, working on Gothic churches and rectory houses and participating in the culture of the great metropolis of London. Hardy spent his spare time teaching himself about poetry, experimenting with verse forms, and studying Greek. For a time he had ambitions of obtaining a university education and becoming an Anglican priest, but he realized in 1866 the notion was "far-fetched," as he told his sister Mary. Ill health drove him back to the country in 1867, and he was rehired by Hicks. He then fell in love with his 16-year-old cousin, Tryphena Sparks, an apprentice teacher who later became headmistress at a girls' school in Plymouth. The relationship eventually faded as they spent less time together.

Early Prose Works and Marriage

Hardy wrote poetry in the 1860s—in fact he considered himself primarily a poet, not a novelist, throughout his career—but could not get any poems published, so he turned to novel writing in 1867. *The Poor Man and the Lady*, his first attempt in the genre, was rejected because it was too critical of the status quo—Hardy called it a "striking socialistic novel." His second attempt was meant to be commercial and sensationalistic; *Desperate Remedies* was published in 1871. Hardy slowly began to build his reputation, publishing *Under the Greenwood Tree* in 1872. He was still working as an architect in 1870 when he met his wife, Emma Lavinia Gifford, but he had to wait four years to marry her because her family did not approve of her marriage to someone of a lower class. Emma was the daughter of a lawyer, which put her socially above Hardy, an architectural skilled laborer. They married in September 1874. Initially a happy couple, they remained childless and eventually became estranged. Toward the end of her life, Emma became a devout Evangelical, a troublesome issue in the marriage as Hardy moved toward skepticism and atheism.

Literary Success

Hardy became a full-time writer in 1872 when he serialized his next novel, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. The next work, *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), introduced Wessex, the fictional region—but full of real cities and places—where his mature novels would be set. From then on Hardy became more and more successful as a fiction writer, publishing 10 novels and 50 short stories from 1876 to 1895. His later and most famous novels come from this period: *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895).

As a novelist Hardy was forced to tone down his work so as not to offend readers with his frank depictions of sexual relationships and criticism of Victorian hypocrisy, but his serialized novels were less explicit than the published volumes, and he allowed his editors, in some instances, to pare away what the public might find objectionable in the published volumes. Although *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* did receive some good reviews, it was widely criticized for its perceived sexual immorality. But if some critics were repelled by *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* with its pessimistic determinism and overt sexual subject matter, most critics were outraged by *Jude the Obscure*, which was darker, more shocking, and overtly condemnatory of both class structure and conventional morality.

Later Years

Beginning in 1885 Hardy lived in Max Gate, a house he designed, that was built by his father and brother. His wife, Emma, died in November 1912, after a long period of estrangement between the couple. Hardy was much affected and tended to idealize their early relationship in subsequent poetry, to the mortification of his second wife. After the reception of *Jude the Obscure*, which was materially successful but much maligned by the critics, Hardy abandoned fiction and wrote only poetry.

Fourteen months after his wife's death, he married his secretary, Florence Dugdale, nearly 40 years his junior. She had worked for Hardy for about 10 years and was his nominal biographer—although Hardy really wrote most of his biography. Hardy in all produced eight volumes of poetry and some 900 poems over more than 30 years. He was fortunate to gain recognition as a great writer and an early modernist in his lifetime and was courted by the next generation of writers—including English poet Robert Graves and English novelist Virginia Woolf. He received honorary doctorates from Cambridge and Oxford as well as other literary honors. He died on January 11, 1928. In a macabre turn of events worthy of Hardy's fiction, his heart was buried with his first wife, Emma, among the family graves, while the rest of his remains were cremated and then interred in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, next to English novelist Charles Dickens.

Characters

Tess Durbeyfield

Tess Durbeyfield is a child of poverty, inept parents, and minimal education, although she is intelligent and would have continued at school had circumstances allowed. At 16 she is

inexperienced in the ways of men, especially those with money and power. She is highly principled, honest, and nonjudgmental. Hardy represents her as a kind of natural Eve figure: genuine, in touch with the countryside and wilderness, and physically voluptuous. Tess is a victim of fate and of two men in her life. She is raped by Alec d'Urberville and has a son who dies soon after birth. Although she wants nothing to do with Alec, he returns to her life and pursues her until necessity forces her to relent. Tess is also the victim of Angel Clare whose cruelty is as crushing as but different from Alec's. Angel flees, leaving Tess alone and vulnerable. Tess's love for Angel reflects deep and abiding passions accompanied by a destructive sense of pride.

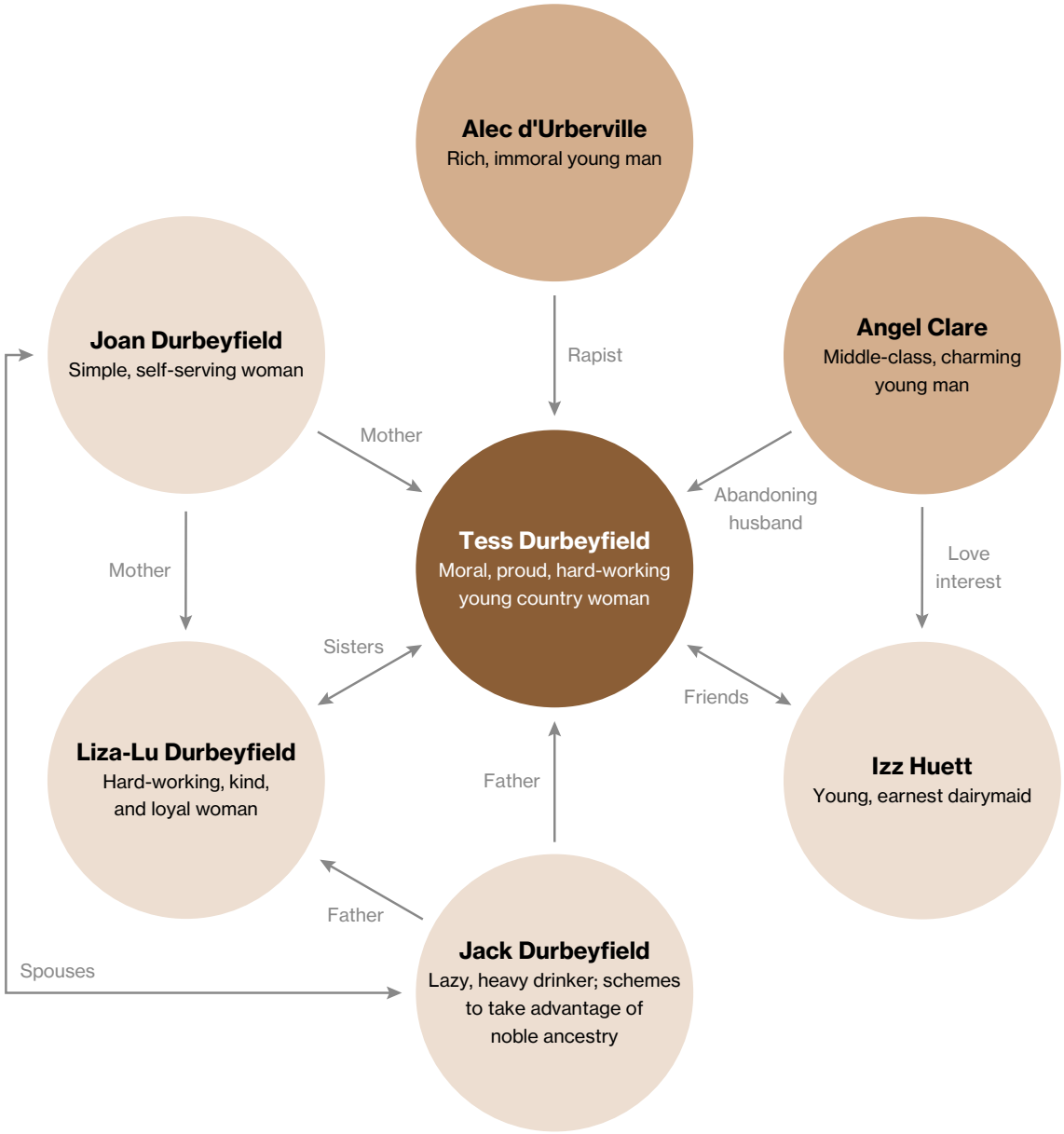
Angel Clare

Angel Clare has strong opinions on religion, class, and morality. Part of his attraction to Tess is her authenticity and purity as a "simple" country girl. Angel rejects a number of the religious beliefs his father and brothers endorse, and his father has thus denied him a university education. Despite disapproval of his family's rigidity and snobbishness, Angel is as rigid as they are, although he would not see himself as such. When he learns about Tess's past, Angel is unyielding and harsh because his vision of her is altered: he cannot accept a "fallen woman" despite her innocence in the event and proof of the purity of her character. His rejection and abandonment of her diminish his character. Although he eventually sees his actions as extreme and realizes that Tess deserves better, he is too late to make amends for having ruined Tess's life.

Alec d'Urberville

Sexually aggressive and entitled, he pursues Tess, who has no interest in him. When he cannot have what he wants from her—as he easily seems able to obtain from other women—he rapes her. Not proud of his behavior, he later offers to marry Tess, but she refuses. Several years later Alec claims to have changed his ways and has become a preacher. However, he gives up his faith to pursue Tess, which he does relentlessly. His exact feelings for Tess are never clear, but he does support her family and provide her with material comfort. Whether he is repentant, evil, or merely arrogant and spoiled is also debatable. What is clear, though, is his generosity comes at a price—possession of Tess.

Character Map



- Main Character
- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

Full Character List

Character	Description
Tess Durbeyfield	Inexperienced, hard-working, moral, and proud, Tess Durbeyfield is a poor country girl whose life takes unfortunate, and ultimately tragic, turns through no fault of her own.
Angel Clare	Angel Clare, a proud and opinionated middle-class young man, has refused a religious vocation and is leaning toward becoming a farmer.
Alec d'Urberville	Rich, cynical, and arrogant, Alec d'Urberville is an amoral, devious, and persistent young man who ruins Tess's life.
Mrs. Brooks	Mrs. Brooks is the householder, or landlady, at The Herons in Sandbourne, where Tess is staying with Alec.
Mercy Chant	The Clares' neighbor, Mercy Chant is a religious young woman who, expected to marry Angel, eventually becomes engaged to his brother Cuthbert.
Mr. Clare	Angel's inflexible father, Mr. Clare is a low Church clergyman who punished his son by refusing to send him to university because he refused to take religious orders.
Mrs. Clare	Angel's snobbish and class-conscious mother, Mrs. Clare is basically kind and religious. Her one point of contention is that Mr. Clare refused to pay for Angel to go to university, and she nags her husband about it.
Cuthbert Clare	Angel's brother, Cuthbert Clare is a snobbish scholar at Cambridge who has taken religious orders and will marry Mercy Chant.
Felix Clare	Angel's brother Felix Clare is a curate, or assistant clergyman, in the adjoining town.
Dairyman Crick	Dairyman Richard Crick, a kind dairy farmer who treats his workers well, is Tess's employer for several years, the happiest of her life.
Mrs. Crick	Dairyman Crick's wife, Mrs. Crick is a kind, respectable, generous, and observant woman.
Mrs. Darch	Car and Nancy's mother, Mrs. Darch observes the altercation at the Flower-de-Luce and hints at more trouble as Tess leaves with Alec.
Car Darch	A favorite of Alec d'Urberville, Car "Queen of Spades" Darch, also called Dark Car, is a physically strong, dark-haired, dark-complexioned woman.
Nancy Darch	Car's younger sister, Nancy "Queen of Diamonds" Darch works at Trantridge and later in Chalk-Newton; an Amazon, she does the work of men.
Mrs. d'Urberville	Old, blind, and widowed, Mrs. d'Urberville has Tess look after her chickens, which she can identify by touch; she is said to be fonder of her chickens than of the people in her household.
Abraham Durbeyfield	Abraham Durbeyfield, Tess's brother, is seven years younger than Tess.
Hope Durbeyfield	Hope is one of the two Durbeyfield girls younger than Abraham.
Jack Durbeyfield	Tess's drunk and lazy father, Jack (John) Durbeyfield becomes overly proud when he discovers his noble lineage and quickly begins seeking ways to leverage it. With his excuses, grand ideas, and schemes—the first of which is to send Tess to the d'Urberville home—he has a limited work ethic, does not provide for his family, and is a laughingstock in Marlott.

Joan Durbeyfield	Tess's ineffectual mother, Joan Durbeyfield frequently protects her own interests, not her children's. She doesn't warn Tess of Alec's intentions in the hope Tess will marry him and thus support the family. Lacking Tess's moral code, she recommends Tess not tell Angel about her past; nevertheless, Joan is forgiving, as helpful as she can be, and saddened by the events in Tess's life.
Liza-Lu Durbeyfield	Four years younger than her sister Tess, Eliza-Louisa "Liza-Lu" Durbeyfield, according to Tess, is as good, hardworking, and loyal as Tess, but without Tess's unfortunate past. At the end of her life Tess asks Angel to marry Liza-Lu.
Modesty Durbeyfield	Modesty is one of the two Durbeyfield girls younger than Abraham.
Elizabeth	Elizabeth is Mrs. d'Urberville's maid; she helps Tess with the chickens.
Frances	Frances is a light-haired employee at the Cricks' dairy.
Fred	Fred is the boy whom Jack Durbeyfield, just after learning of his ancestry, sends to request a horse and carriage and his evening meal.
Deborah Fyander	Deborah Fyander is an older milkmaid at the Cricks' dairy.
Farmer Groby	Tess's employer at Flintcomb-Ash, Farmer Groby is a dislikable man who knows Tess's disreputable past and makes extra demands on her. He appears earlier as the man who insults Tess and with whom Angel fights.
Izz Huett	An honest and hard-working milkmaid at the Cricks' dairy, Izz Huett is loyal to Tess but in love with Angel Clare and later accepts his short-lived invitation to accompany him to Brazil. She later writes Angel telling him of Tess's despair.
Jonathan Kail	An employee at the Cricks' dairy, Jonathan Kail brings Angel and Tess their luggage and word of the milkmaids' reactions to their leaving.
Beck Knibbs	Beck Knibbs is a married employee at the Cricks' dairy.
Bill Lewell	Bill Lewell is an employee at the Cricks' dairy.
Marian	A milkmaid at the Cricks' dairy, Marian is also in love with Angel; she loses her job because of her excessive drinking after Tess and Angel marry. She and Izz write to Angel to tell him of Tess's despair.
Painter	The sign painter, whom Tess meets on her way home from Trantridge after Alec has raped her, directs Tess to the Reverend Mr. Clare as a source of wisdom who can answer her questions.
Postman	The postman at Sandbourne directs Angel to The Herons, the house at which the d'Urbervilles are staying.
Retty Priddle	The red-haired milkmaid at the Cricks' dairy, Retty Priddle is in love with Angel Clare and attempts suicide after he and Tess marry.
Mrs. Rolliver	Mrs. Rolliver is the owner of Rolliver's Inn, an ale house where the Durbeyfields drink. It is technically illegal for Mrs. Rolliver to sell alcohol, but she does.
Amby Seedling	Amby Seedling is Izz Huett's admirer, to whom she finally pays attention after Angel leaves for Brazil.
Sexton	The sexton meets Angel at Jack Durbeyfield's grave and informs him the gravestone wasn't paid for.
Shepherd	The shepherd tells Tess the stone on which Alec d'Urberville made her swear not to tempt him was a torture site, not a holy place.

Sorrow	Sorrow is Tess's infant son whom she baptizes herself before he dies.
Parson Tringham	Parson Tringham is the man who informs Jack Durbeyfield about his noble ancestry.
Turnpike-Keeper	After Angel sends Tess away, the turnpike-keeper updates her on Marlott news as she returns to her parents' home.
Vicar	The vicar, new in the village, refuses to give Tess's son a Christian burial; he later relents and does so for a little money and with no one else present.

Plot Summary

Phase the First: The Maiden

The novel starts with Parson Tringham informing Jack Durbeyfield, the drunken father of a large, poor family, that he is actually the descendent of the d'Urbervilles, an ancient noble family. Durbeyfield celebrates this discovery with more drink and the hiring of a carriage he cannot afford. His daughter, 16-year-old Tess Durbeyfield, is embarrassed by his behavior. She is with other young women of the village for a celebration consisting of a procession and then a dance. At the dance on the village green, Tess sees a man readers know to be Angel Clare, who, with his brothers, is passing through the village of Marlott. While Angel dances with the local girls, he notices Tess only as he is leaving and does not dance with her.

Later that night Tess goes to the pub to retrieve her father. He is to set out to market that night with the family's beehives, but he is too drunk to go. Tess and her nine-year-old brother Abraham go instead. Abraham falls asleep, and with no one to talk to Tess falls asleep as well. The horse drifts from the road and is killed in an accident. Jack refuses to sell the horse's corpse despite the family's need of money. With no horse and with Jack's newfound sense of entitlement from his noble ancestry, he and his wife come up with the solution to send Tess to their newly discovered d'Urberville relations.

Tess goes reluctantly, feeling responsible for the horse's death. There she meets Alec, her supposed cousin. The present d'Urberville family is really Stoke-d'Urberville, and no relation to the d'Urbervilles, although Tess's family does not know this. Simon Stoke, having made a great deal of money, added the name of a defunct aristocratic family to his own. Alec d'Urberville, Tess's "cousin," is flirtatious and offers Tess a job caring for his mother's chickens. When Tess goes to Trantridge to begin her job, Alec arrives to give her a ride in his carriage. He uses the opportunity to be physically aggressive. At a loss as to how to deal with him, she resists and implores him to respect her wishes. Over the next four months, Alec continues to be forward, and Tess continues to reject him.

One night when Tess is in town with a group of fellow workers, he confronts her again. She leaves with some of the others, but a verbal altercation with one of them prompts her to accept a ride from Alec when he appears again. Alec intentionally takes her off the path, and they get lost. While he is out trying to find out where they are, Tess falls asleep. When he returns and sees her there asleep, he rapes her.

Phase the Second: Maiden No More

Tess decides to leave Trantridge and the d'Urbervilles. Alec comes after her, going so far as to suggest marriage, but she will not accept his proposals. She returns to her parents' house and tells her mother what has happened. Her mother suggests she marry him, but Tess refuses.

The novel jumps forward to August. Tess is in the field working, and a baby is brought to her by her sister Liza-Lu. Tess nurses the infant, for whom she has mixed feelings, but as the story progresses she wants her son to thrive. Unfortunately he soon becomes seriously ill. She wants the parson to baptize him, but her father refuses, saying that she's disgraced the family enough and he doesn't want the parson involved. So Tess herself baptizes her son, calling him Sorrow, before he dies. When she asks the parson if her baptism will save her son's soul, he is moved by her tears and, against church dogma, tells her that the baptism is legitimate. She also persuades him to let her bury her son in the churchyard at night, when no one can see.

Phase the Third: The Rally

Two years have passed, and Tess, now 20, has decided to move forward with her life away from Marlott. She takes a position as a dairymaid at Talbothays, a farm some distance away from both Trantridge and Marlott. Tess settles in, getting along well with the other dairymaids and her employers. Also at the farm is Angel Clare, whom she remembers from the dance at Marlott four years ago. He is learning about dairy farming as he wants to become a farmer.

Tess and Angel share a mutual attraction, which grows steadily. The other milkmaids—Retty, Marian, and Izz—all believe themselves in love with Angel, who is handsome and personable; adoring him is something of a group sport. At first Tess resists her feelings, having decided never to marry. Eventually however, when Angel embraces her she weeps, and he declares he loves her.

Phase the Fourth: The Consequence

Angel visits his parents, whereupon he hears a story about his father's encounter with a young, wealthy man falsely claiming to be a d'Urberville. Angel tells them about Tess, too. Shortly after his visit home he returns to the dairy farm and proposes to Tess, who refuses. Angel continues to court her, and although she admits loving him she continues to refuse marriage.

Eventually Angel's affection and Tess's own affection for him wear down her resistance, and Tess agrees to marry him. She tries on several occasions to tell Angel about her past as she doesn't want to deceive him, but she can't bring herself to confess. Instead of her real secret, she tells him she is a d'Urberville. She later writes him a letter explaining what happened to her and slips it under his door. When he treats her as if nothing has changed, she thinks all is well at first. But soon after, having heard nothing from Angel, Tess goes to his room and finds the letter under the carpet. The wedding is set for New Year's Eve, and right before it she tries again to tell him. He dismisses her worries and then says he doesn't want to know.

They are married and head to the house he has rented for their honeymoon. Their luggage is delayed, and when it arrives they discover that Retty and Marian, devastated by the marriage, have taken bad turns. Retty has attempted suicide, and Marian has begun to drink heavily. Tess is saddened by their reaction to Angel being out of their reach, and she decides to tell him her secret.

But first, Angel too has a secret. He confesses he spent 48 hours in debauchery with a woman. Tess brushes it off as the past and is not bothered by it. In fact she thinks he will be more accepting of her secret, which she starts to tell him.

Phase the Fifth: The Woman Pays

While Tess thinks that Angel's confession places them on the same footing, Angel feels that Tess's shameful past is far worse than his. He rejects her, claiming that her early seducer is her true husband, and she is desolate. Admitting that she was more "sinned against" than a sinner, he nonetheless maintains she is not the woman he fell in love with and insists they part ways. He cannot bear the thought of her impurity. For two days they remain at the rented house. Angel goes out, and she acts as if she were his servant. She offers to kill herself, and he orders her not to do so.

Angel has a strange sleepwalking episode in which he wraps Tess in a sheet and carries her to the abbey. He crosses water and, in that moment, considers drowning them both. He does not, and the sleeping Angel deposits her in a grave. Tess worries the night air and dampness might make Angel sick.

Angel and Tess leave, stopping at the dairy, and Tess then goes to her parents' house. Angel visits his parents, too, and then prepares to leave for Brazil. He gives Tess 50 pounds, with another 30 to follow, and tells her to contact his father if she needs anything. He orders her not to follow him and to write to him only in an emergency.

Before Angel leaves he encounters both Mercy Chant (whom he was expected to marry) and Izz Huett (from the dairy). He asks Izz to go with him to Brazil; she accepts, but he retracts his invitation almost immediately when Izz lets slip how deeply Tess loves him.

Eight months later Tess has run out of money. She gave 45

pounds to her parents. The dairy where she has been working has let her go, and she is at a loss. Her friend Marian from Talbothays Dairy has told her of a farm where she has found work, and Tess joins her there, signing a contract to work there until March.

Izz also joins them briefly, and Marian reveals to Tess that Angel asked Izz to go to Brazil with him. Tess once again blames herself for Angel's behavior and decides she ought to have written to him more often. She decides she will go see his parents. She walks the 15 miles to where they reside. When she gets there, she overhears his brothers discussing Angel's unfortunate marriage, and consequently she decides not to approach the Clares. As she leaves she sees the local "ranter" (a kind of preacher) who, to her shock, is Alec d'Urberville.

Phase the Sixth: The Convert

Alec follows Tess. As she did four years ago, she tells him she is not interested in his attentions and rebuffs him repeatedly. He has become an evangelist preacher who delivers fiery sermons, influenced by none other than Mr. Clare. Tess tells him about Sorrow, and he chastises her for not coming to him. She asks him to leave her in peace, and he asks her to vow not to tempt him into sin.

Appearing at the farm where Tess works, Alec offers to take her away and shows her a marriage license. She refuses and tells him she's already married. Alec tears up the license but still wants to take care of her. Tess refuses, even as Alec points out she is a deserted wife. Tess slaps him with her glove, and he leaves.

He returns later to her cottage, where they discuss religion. Tess parrots Angel's words, admitting she doesn't understand much but thinking if Angel says it, it must be right. Between his interest in Tess and what she shares about religion, Alec loses his faith and surrenders his role as a preacher, returning to his former worldly ways. He offers to help Tess's family, and again she asks him to leave her in peace.

The latest encounter with Alec spurs Tess to write to Angel begging him to return or let her come to him. She asks him to save her. But she receives no reply.

At this time Tess also gets a visit from her sister Liza-Lu, who informs her their parents are ill. Tess abandons her contract and goes home to look after them. She tends the farm and soon discovers her father's "illness" seems his usual one: alcohol and laziness. Joan recovers, but Jack dies suddenly from an existing heart condition. Alec appears again offering help.

The Durbeyfields' lease on their house is not renewed partially because of Tess's status as a "fallen woman," and Joan has taken rooms in Kingsbere, the d'Urbervilles' ancestral seat. When they go there, however, there are no rooms. They take shelter for the night at the d'Urberville tomb, although Alec again offers to look after Joan and the children. In her desperation Tess laments she is "on the wrong side" of the tomb.

Meanwhile Izz and Marian write to Angel to tell him of Tess's despair and her family's dire circumstances.

Phase the Seventh: Fulfilment

Angel returns from Brazil, looking sickly from the illness that has not left him completely, and begins to seek out his wife. Joan Durbeyfield is not very forthcoming to his initial inquiry, so he goes to see her in person. She is reluctant to reveal Tess's whereabouts but says the family has a provider, eventually telling Angel that Tess is now living in Sandbourne.

When Angel finds Tess—in a wealthy area—he is surprised. He shows up at her apartments and finds her beautifully dressed, but she is not happy to see him and tells him that he has come too late. He asks if she rejects him because of his health and tells her he has come for her, adding his parents now will welcome her. She continues to insist he is too late, reminding him that she wrote and he didn't come to her. As she finally explains, she has gone back to Alec, who has been as a husband to her, even though she hates him.

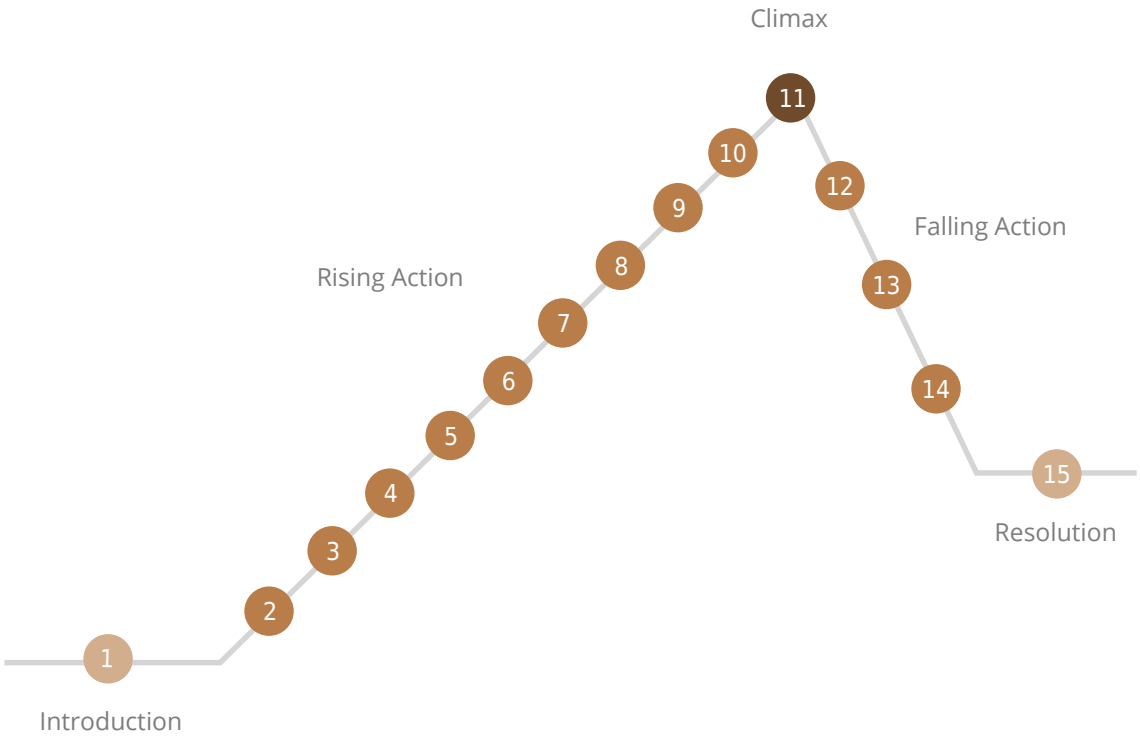
She goes back inside, and Angel leaves in shock. He goes to his hotel, where he receives the news his brother Cuthbert is engaged to marry Mercy Chant. After Angel leaves the hotel and the town, Tess overtakes him.

Tess has killed Alec. She explains that she felt she had to do it: Alec wronged her in the past, and now he has hurt Angel through her and torn them apart. She explains she was obliged to go to Alec because Angel had left her and she had nowhere to turn. On hearing Tess has killed Alec, Angel has a mixed

reaction. On one hand he is horrified by her actions, but on the other he is awed she did so for love of him. He promises not to desert her and to protect her.

They go away together, and for five days they remain shut off from the world. During this time she asks him to marry her sister, Liza-Lu, when she is gone. They reach Stonehenge, and Tess falls asleep on one of the flat stones. While she sleeps the authorities arrive, allowing her to wake up naturally before they arrest her. The novel closes with Angel and Liza-Lu hand in hand in the capital city of Wessex; as the black flag is raised to signify Tess has been executed for her crime, they sink down, but then rise up again and walk away together.

Plot Diagram



Introduction

1. Jack Durbeyfield learns the Durbeyfields are d'Urbervilles.

Rising Action

2. Alec d'Urberville rapes Tess, who becomes pregnant.

3. Tess baptizes her infant son, Sorrow, before he dies.

4. Angel courts Tess while she works as a dairymaid.

5. Tess and Angel get married after Tess's many refusals.

6. Angel rejects Tess when he learns of her past.

7. Alec d'Urberville begins courting Tess, who hates him.

8. Faced with her family's destitution, Tess accepts Alec.

9. Angel returns to England and finds Tess in Sandbourne.

10. Tess sends Angel away, saying he's arrived too late.

Climax

11. Heartbroken and feeling deceived, Tess angrily kills Alec.

Falling Action

12. Tess goes after Angel and tells him she has stabbed Alec.

13. On the run Angel and Tess spend five days together.

14. Tess is apprehended at Stonehenge.

Resolution

15. Tess is hanged for murder.

Timeline of Events

Early June

Tess moves from Marlott to Trantridge to work for Alec d'Urberville.

August

Tess gives birth to a sickly baby boy.

About two years later

Tess leaves Marlott to live and work at Talbothays Dairy.

October

After repeatedly refusing Angel's marriage proposals, Tess accepts.

Later that day

Tess and Angel confess the secrets of their past.

Late May

Jack Durbeyfield learns he is a descendent of the d'Urbervilles.

Four months later

Alec rapes Tess.

Several days later

Tess baptizes her son, Sorrow, shortly before he dies.

Several days later

Tess and Angel become acquainted, and their courtship begins.

New Year's Eve

Tess and Angel wed.

The next morning

Horrified, Angel suggests they part after he learns of Tess's past.

Eight months later

Tess goes to work for Farmer Groby, who treats Tess harshly.

A few days later

Tess writes to Angel desperately asking him to come back or let her join him in Brazil.

Late spring

Haggard but mellowed, Angel returns home and reads Tess's letter and the one from her friends.

The same day

Shocked at his return, Tess sends Angel away and kills Alec.

July

Tess is hanged for murder.

Four months later

Tess hears a preacher, whom she discovers is Alec d'Urberville.

Mid to late March

Tess's father dies, causing the family to lose their home.

Some days later

In Sandbourne Angel finally finds and talks with Tess, now Alec's mistress.

Later that day

Tess goes after Angel to tell him she has killed Alec so she could be with Angel.

Chapter Summaries

Phase the First, Chapters 1–3

Summary

Phase the First, Chapter 1

Jack Durbeyfield, drunk and walking home, meets Parson Tringham along the road. The parson greets him as "Sir John." When asked why, Parson Tringham reveals his discovery: the Durbeyfields are the last living descendants of the "ancient and knightly family of the d'Urbervilles." After conversing and learning no property still exists, Jack decides to act like a member of his class and sends for a carriage to take him home.

Phase the First, Chapter 2

Tess Durbeyfield is one of the members of the "walking club" out for May Day; the red ribbon in her hair distinguishes her from the other young women who wear white dresses for the event. When the women see Tess's father in a carriage, they tease her. Tess stands up to them, and the matter is dropped. The women reach the green where dancing will take place and where the village men will soon arrive, as it is the end of the workday. Among the men are three brothers: Angel, Felix, and Cuthbert Clare—middle-class young men, higher in rank than the villagers, who are passing through the town. Angel stays briefly to join the women in the dance. Although he does not dance with Tess, he notices her as he is leaving, and finds her "so modest, so expressive ... he felt he had acted stupidly." However, he dismisses the subject from his mind, although Tess does not, and she is less interested in dancing afterward.

Phase the First, Chapter 3

Tess remains with the other women on the green until dusk, thinking of Angel. When she returns, her mother is doing the wash, having postponed it for days, and rocking the baby. Joan Durbeyfield tells Tess about the discovery of their noble ancestry; Tess asks, "Will it do us any good, mother?" She learns her father, who is to take the beehives to market, is not in the best of health and is at the public house "to get up his strength." Her mother goes to fetch him. Tess removes the fortune-telling book her mother was consulting for Joan doesn't want it in the house overnight. When Joan does not return from the pub, Tess sends her brother Abraham after them. He also does not return, so Tess locks up the house, leaving Liza-Lu, Hope, Modesty, and the baby home while she goes to the pub after them.

Analysis

The novel starts by introducing the remaining members of a once great, noble family whose property and heritage have been lost or obscured over time. John, usually called Jack, Durbeyfield is drunk, lazy, and conniving; he has a brood of children but makes little effort to provide for them. Joan Durbeyfield, his wife, is a simple woman. She supports her husband's many excuses and fancies, even as she does the wash and takes care of many children. At this point she seems easygoing, to the point of laziness, and would rather be out drinking with her husband than attending to her family. She also is superstitious, as evidenced by her consulting a fortune-telling book and fear of leaving it in the house.

At her first appearance in the story Tess Durbeyfield is wearing a white dress, like the other women, and "a red ribbon in her hair ... the only one of the white company who could boast of such a pronounced adornment." The combination of the red ribbon and white dress introduces the color symbols of white and red; Tess's white dress represents her purity, whereas the touch of red in her hair represents a hint of sexuality.

Clearly Tess, the eldest of the children, is the exceptional member in the "shiftless house of Durbeyfield." She is practical, more educated than those around her, and looks to the care of the family while her parents are at the pub. Tess is only 16 and certainly the most responsible member of the family.

This section of the book introduces Angel Clare and his brothers, showing the rigid and righteous Cuthbert and the more easygoing, spirited Angel as foils—at this point. Angel and Tess notice one another, but their meeting is a chance encounter. He is passing through Marlott, and he does not ask Tess to dance. When Tess encounters him later in the story,

this first meeting will be something she remembers in the sense that if only a small thing had happened differently here, how everything else would have changed for her.

Tess's remembrance addresses the theme of fate—that their meeting is predetermined, that their brief connection will be lasting. Indeed the narrator reveals their reactions to the meeting, which foreshadow the course of their lives. Events that echo these sentiments and that will determine the course of their lives will fall into place in a chain of circumstances leading to their unhappy destinies. It's worth noting at the outset that Tess's fate turns on a series of small, random moments, each of which leads her further down an unhappy path.

Phase the First, Chapters 4–5

Summary

Phase the First, Chapter 4

At the pub the Durbeyfields are discussing the idea of sending Tess to meet their newly discovered relation, the rich Mrs. d'Urberville, to ask for support. They voice their hope that through her Tess could marry well and therefore ease their poverty. Tess retrieves them, unaware of their plans.

Her father is too drunk to take the beehives to market, so Tess volunteers, taking nine-year-old Abraham with her. Before he falls asleep in the wagon, he tells her of their parents' plan for her to "marry a gentleman." Tess also falls asleep while driving the wagon, and the horse veers into the path of the mail carriage, causing an accident in which the old animal is killed.

Jack decides against selling the carcass, thinking it beneath his new status to do so, and instead the family members bury the horse. Tess is so distraught at her part in the horse's death she cannot participate in the burial and thinks of herself "in the light of a murderess."

Phase the First, Chapter 5

Feeling responsible for the loss of their only horse, on which her father has depended for his work, Tess agrees to her mother's proposal she introduce herself to Mrs. d'Urberville. She travels there and is struck by the new and impressive country house, not the ancient baronial manor she was expecting.

The narrator then reveals the history of the Stoke-d'Urbervilles, who are not relations of the Durbeyfields at all. The late Simon Stoke, a rich merchant and likely a moneylender, had gone to the museum, researched families, and chosen *d'Urberville* to affix to his name to make him sound like ancient nobility. The Durbeyfields have no idea of this history, however.

Tess is greeted by Alec d'Urberville. She tells him her story, and he invites her into the gardens. Tess is innocently unaware of Alec studying her. He gives her roses for her bosom, tucks roses into her hat, feeds her a strawberry, and fills her basket with berries. He says he'll see what he might do, that his mother might help find her a "berth," but he also tells her "no nonsense about 'd'Urberville.'"

Analysis

At only 16 Tess seems burdened with responsibility. In addition to getting her parents out of the pub, she must deliver the hives to market and then present herself to their recently discovered rich "relatives" and secure the family's fortunes. Proud and highly moral, Tess does not want to ask for handouts; she hopes instead for a job. Her attitude is a sharp contrast to her father's, who always wants a quick and easy answer. Their pride, too, is at the heart of the contrast. Tess is proud of her high standards and her ability to work and do what she can to help support her family. She is proud in that she would not consider accepting charity. Jack, on the other hand, has pride that is now focused on the entitlement his newly discovered ancestry affords him: nobility does not work for a living. Both attitudes contrast with Joan's as well; Joan, whose sense of pride is far below those of Tess and Jack, sees no harm in using wiles to secure a future. She will reaffirm this attitude later when Tess seeks her advice.

Tess, for her part, is not interested in handouts or in marrying a gentleman. Further, despite the circumstances she is facing, she feels responsible for the horse's death and consequently her father's inability to work, even though his working has been sporadic and halfhearted. For Hardy to make his case that Tess is "a pure woman," she needs to have a strong moral character that transcends her lack of physical virginity.

At the end of Chapter 4 Tess sadly and innocently compares herself to a murderess, foreshadowing the end of the story when her comparison becomes a reality. Hardy continues the symbols of color in Chapter 5 with Alec giving her roses and feeding her strawberries as he toys with her during their first encounter.

Phase the First, Chapters 6–7

Summary

Phase the First, Chapter 6

Tess travels back home, suddenly aware of the "spectacle she presented" with roses in her hat and bosom. On Tess's return Joan says she has received a letter informing her Tess has been offered a place looking after "a little fowl-farm" for Mrs. d'Urberville. Tess continues to dismiss the idea of marriage, saying instead, "I hope it is a chance for earning money." The note regarding her hiring indicates a cart will be sent for her in two days. The narrator notes, "Mrs. d'Urberville's handwriting seemed rather masculine." And Alec d'Urberville apparently has already called on the Durbeyfields.

Phase the First, Chapter 7

With high hopes for an advantageous match for Tess, Joan dresses her daughter, who is reluctant about living with the d'Urbervilles but has been unable to find another option. Tess, obedient and resigned to her situation, consents: "Do what you like with me, mother." With her mother insisting she look her best, Tess wears the white dress she wore for the ceremony in the opening chapters, and Joan fixes her hair so that it looks fuller than usual.

When the cart arrives, so does a two-wheeled one-horse carriage driven by Alec. The youngest Durbeyfield child asks, "Is dat the gentleman-kinsman who'll make Sissy a lady?" Tess goes with Alec to Trantridge, and her mother has some misgivings about Alec's intentions toward her daughter, but she comforts herself that "if he don't marry her afore he will after."

Analysis

Tess seems to be indifferent to ambition and uninterested in change, and would happily live in her rural village indefinitely. She is a model for Hardy's ideals about country life: connected to the land on which she works, uninterested in wealth, and innocently happy. However, her parents have other ideas, eagerly anticipating the idea of Tess marrying a rich man. With Tess's obedience, her sense of responsibility, and her position in the world, she has little choice but to comply with her parents' wishes. Her involvement with Alec is beginning, and her fate is sealed. The random events conspiring to bring Alec and Tess—the pub, the beehives, the dead horse, the job caring for chickens—together highlight the theme of fate, or predestination, as being responsible for what happens to the characters.

Joan Durbeyfield's misgivings here are important, for they contradict the previous conversation with her husband—and contradict some later actions as well. Her brief moment of conscience does not hide the fact that she says nothing to her daughter about Alec's intentions, and seems to be banking on Tess's ignorance to entrap her into marriage. Tess may have family responsibilities and a highly developed sense of right and wrong, but she knows little about men.

It is also noteworthy that although Tess has accepted flowers and fruit from Alec, she has not done so with the intent to seduce him. Tess is described, both here and as the story progresses, as innocent and artless. Alec, however, is assertive in attempting to seduce Tess. The danger she faces is palpable, as are her own ignorance and defenselessness. Hardy may value innocence, but he knows that it is no match for deviousness. Tess's family has treated her poorly by making her carry such responsibilities and by sending her unprepared into danger.

Phase the First, Chapters 8–9

Summary

Phase the First, Chapter 8

Alec is a reckless driver, insisting Tess hold onto him "round the waist" as they careen down a hill. At the second hill he instructs her to do so again. When she resists, he says he would like to kiss her lips or cheek. She resists again. When he shows no regard for her feelings, Tess notes, "I—thought you would be kind to me, and protect me, as my kinsman!" He dismisses this statement, and again she insists, "I don't want anybody to kiss me." He presses a kiss to her cheek, and she wipes off the trace of him. Offended by her gesture, he tries yet again to get her to let him kiss her.

Tess uses the excuse of retrieving her hat, which has blown off, and disembarks. Once out of the carriage, she refuses to get back in, choosing to walk the remaining "five or six miles." Alec's temper evaporates as Tess gets angrier, and he offers he will "never do it any more against your will," but she doesn't believe him. She contemplates returning home but doesn't want to break her promise.

Phase the First, Chapter 9

Tess settles in at the gardener's cottage, rearranging things. She is summoned—with the birds—to see Mrs. d'Urberville, who is blind and wants to inspect her fowl. The older woman would like Tess to whistle for the birds, so Tess sets out to learn to do so. Tess meets Alec again, who asks about her thoughts on his mother, tries to teach her to whistle, and invites Tess to come to him if she has difficulties or needs help. Unaware Mrs. d'Urberville has not been told that Tess is a relative, Tess settles into a routine.

Analysis

No sooner is Tess out of Marlott when Alec increases his seduction attempts. Tess is torn between anger, frustration, and fear in her reactions. She tries to reason with him and appeal to his good conscience—a limited asset in Alec. She expresses her lack of interest, and she ultimately opts to walk rather than be in his reach, demonstrating her resolve as well as her adherence to a proper Victorian young woman's moral code, whereas Alec is behaving as he might toward a woman with looser morals.

Given who he is, Alec is largely unmoved by her resistance. Tess is at his home, unprepared for what to expect, and very young. The only other adult she could appeal to is Alec's mother, who is both old and blind—and much more invested in her chickens than a young woman in her employ. The implication is, therefore, she would be of little use and would likely defend her son against a person like Tess—a mere servant but an extremely attractive young woman. Tess may settle in and do her work, but with Alec lurking in the background the sense of peril and foreboding remains.

Phase the First, Chapters 10–11

Summary

Phase the First, Chapter 10

Eventually Tess joins the local workers in going into Chaseborough every Saturday night. This routine continues for "a month or two" until one Saturday in September when she leaves late only to find the other workers have gone to a "private little jig." She attempts to find her way there and encounters Alec, whom she brushes off. Eventually he sees her again and offers to take her home, going as far as to offer to rent a trap (a carriage) to take her. Tess refuses again, and she sets off with the others.

Car Darch, a fellow laborer, is a dark, attractive young woman and a former mistress of Alec's. A jar of treacle leaking from the basket on her head leaks down her body, causing her companions to roar with laughter. Tess laughs too, at which point Car accuses her of putting on airs because Alec likes her, and puts up her fists to fight. Tess, unnerved by Car's attack, accepts a ride from Alec, who appears again. Notably the conflict with Car is sparked when someone remarks it's "her hair falling down." Car's mother observes Tess's descent "out of the frying-pan into the fire!"

Phase the First, Chapter 11

Alec presses his affection on Tess, who continues to refuse it. He angrily points out he's been rejected by her for "near three mortal months." He continues, and Tess eventually allows him to put his arm around her. When she notices they are "quite out

of the road," she asks him to let her go and she will walk home. He refuses. He tells her he's given her father and siblings gifts, and she "almost wish[es]" he had not. They are now lost in the woods, and she has been rebuffing his advances for months. Tess falls asleep while he explores to figure out where they are; when he sees her asleep, he rapes her.

The narrator notes, "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. 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."

Analysis

Despite Alec's pursuit, Tess has continued in her work, refused his unwelcome attentions, and attempted to make friends as she had in Marlott. For these months she has been successful. This section marks a turning point.

The Victorian audience was aware of the symbolism of fallen women. The idea of a woman loosening her hair—an image still used in modern film and art—was associated with loosened morals. When the argument with Car Darch takes place, the treacle streaming from her head looks like loose hair; to compound the point she takes off her bodice in public when she discovers the mess. As Alec's former mistress, this image of loose hair and missing clothing—which shocks Tess—makes Car an archetypal fallen woman.

The theme of fate once again is revisited in this section. Tess is a d'Urberville, and her ancestors—according to the class bias in the novel—surely were guilty of the same thing that happened to Tess. The idea of "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children" is a reference to Classical tragedy, which was based on the idea that a sin committed stained a family, all of whom bore responsibility and would be punished by the gods.

Alec's attack on the sleeping Tess is implied rather than stated. Such graphic details are left unwritten; the reader has to infer that the rape has taken place. Modern readers will understand there is no possibility of Tess's having consented, as she is not awake. Further she has resisted his advances up to now, and nothing indicates she has changed her mind. But the following section, "Maiden No More," tells us that regardless, Tess is no longer a virgin and will suffer the consequences. While other writers of the time portrayed innocent women who succumbed to seduction, Hardy complicates the issue. A woman who consents bears some of the responsibility, although she is often inappropriately punished. But Hardy draws attention to the peculiar circumstances of rape: Tess is physically no longer a maiden—the only thing society cares about—but not consenting means she cannot actually be guilty of sexual activity.

Phase the Second, Chapters 12–13

Summary

Phase the Second, Chapter 12

A month later after the attack, Tess leaves Trantridge and her job at the d'Urberville home. Alec overtakes her, asks her to return, and says if she won't he'll take her the rest of the way to Marlott. He admits he was wrong and offers her money, "ready to pay to the uttermost farthing. You know you need not work in the fields or the dairies again. You know you may clothe yourself with the best, instead of in the bald plain way you have lately affected, as if you couldn't get a ribbon more than you earn." Tess refuses. After Alec drops her off, she meets a painter, who is painting gloomy religious texts. She asks him, "Suppose your sin was not of your own seeking?" whereupon the painter directs her to Mr. Clare for guidance.

When Tess returns home, she tells her mother what Alec did to her. Joan chastises Tess for not getting Alec to marry her. She points out they are struggling and accuses Tess of caring only for herself. Tess is appalled by the idea of marriage to Alec and counters her mother's complaints by asking why her mother hadn't better prepared her for the dangers of men. Her mother admits she was afraid Tess would push Alec away if she were aware of his interest. "I thought if I spoke of his fond feelings and what they might lead to, you would be hontish wi' him and lose your chance."

Phase the Second, Chapter 13

Driven by curiosity and rumors, people come to visit Tess and talk about her behind her back. Tess falls into depression. After several weeks she attends church and starts going on solitary walks to be alone with the landscape and nature.

Analysis

Tess does not change her moral stance after the loss of her virginity. Her steadfastness is an important detail as it is contrary to the Victorian belief that once a woman has fallen, she is a sinner. Hardy is making a point about rape: it may change Tess's physical status, even impregnate her, but she is still the same moral young woman. Her rejection of wealth, even of help to her family, drives the point even further: allowing herself to be seduced in order to provide for a destitute family would be sympathetic and even forgivable, but Tess is too upright and pure even for this.

The section also contains one of the few scenes in which Tess asks why her family has failed her. Overall she has paid little heed to their negligence, but on her return from Trantridge she asks her mother why she didn't warn her of the dangers. Her mother's response makes clear that she cares primarily about her daughter's ability to benefit her family—not her happiness or well-being.

Here, also, is the question at the center of the novel: What if the sin is not something the sinner has sought out? Tess is asking the question that—to modern readers—is much clearer. She did not choose to lose her virginity. How then is she to be judged for it? The sign painter has no answer for Tess, although in an instance of foreshadowing he supplies the name of the Reverend Mr. Clare as someone who might help her. In time Tess starts finding solace in the church and in nature.

Phase the Second, Chapters 14–15

Summary

Phase the Second, Chapter 14

The narrator describes the landscape, the fields, and the work of harvesting corn with a threshing machine. Tess is in the field working along with others. During a break Tess's sister brings a "bundle" to Tess. The bundle is Tess's child, whom she unwraps and nurses, then begins to kiss "violently." One of the women remarks Tess will eventually stop saying she wishes she and the child were in the churchyard—despite Tess's despair, she is fond of the baby. The narrator notes that although Tess feels censure and shame, these feelings are only hers, for "To all humankind ... Tess was only a passing thought."

No sooner does she arrive home than disaster strikes: her child, who has been sickly since birth, is very ill and "about to die." Tess is frantically worried for the baby, who has never been baptized (in Anglican Christianity, baptism is required to enter heaven). Her father refuses to allow the vicar in and locks the doors, so she decides to baptize her own child. With her family as witnesses, Tess baptizes her son, christening him "Sorrow." He dies in the morning. She goes to the vicar to ask if her baptism will be "the same" as if he himself had performed it; although the answer is clearly "no" in Christian doctrine, he is moved and tells her it will be "just the same." She asks for a Christian burial, and he initially refuses, thinking that it was Tess, not her father, who refused the baptism. Eventually, for "a shilling and a pint of beer to the sexton" the child is buried in the churchyard at night in secret.

Phase the Second, Chapter 15

The events of the last "year or two" have changed Tess, and she has become a "complex woman." She decides to leave her village for a new life and in doing so makes plans to work as a dairymaid at Talbothays, a farm near the former estates of the d'Urbervilles. Tess has matured physically as well, becoming "what would have been called a fine creature; her aspect was fair and arresting; her soul that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize."

Analysis

Much like the rape, the birth of Tess's child is not detailed. Readers know it happened because there is a baby—physical proof of the event at Trantridge. Tess, still a teenager, is both resentful of that proof and at the same time loves her child. Despite her general respect for conventions and norms, Tess, in her most rebellious act to date, baptizes her son. She does not do this as an act of defiance, however. She does it because the child is dying, and she is desperately afraid for him.

She demonstrates her courage and the beginnings of independent thought in her attempt to convince the vicar to allow her son to be buried in sanctified ground, for he has been baptized. She achieves this request, but only by way of bribery—a clear argument for a disingenuous, hypocritical clergy.

Tess, rather than being defeated by the onslaught of bleak events in her life, continues on. Unlike her father, who turns to drink, or Alec, who sins and tries to pay his way out of sin, Tess elects to try again, moving somewhere she won't be known and leaving her past behind her.

Phase the Third, Chapters 16–18

Summary

Phase the Third, Chapter 16

"Between two and three years" after her return home, Tess, now 20, leaves again. Her journey through the landscape is detailed, and the narrator notes she "felt akin to the landscape" near the tombs of her d'Urberville ancestors.

Tess's mood and outlook improve with the lush landscape and its clean air and water. As she nears the dairy she is energized by the activity on the farms. The narrator comments on Tess's spirits: "Let the truth be told—women do as a rule live through such humiliations, and regain their spirits, and again look about them with an interested eye."

Phase the Third, Chapter 17

Tess joins the other dairy workers; maids milk the gentle cows and men the tougher ones. She sees Angel Clare, whom she saw at the May Day dance at the beginning of the novel. Tess learns that he is a parson's son and is there to learn about dairy farming.

Phase the Third, Chapter 18

Angel is now 26. Despite being the most gifted of the brothers, Angel has not gone to university because his father saw no need to send him if he didn't intend to enter the clergy like his siblings. After some time in London, where he was involved with an older woman, Angel has decided to pursue a career in agriculture and is boarding in the dairy farmer's attic, where he spends much of his time reading.

Angel plays a harp and is coming to "like the outdoor life for its own sake." Initially he doesn't notice Tess, but her speaking voice draws his attention one morning at breakfast. Tess explains to another worker she believes the soul can leave the body by way of staring into the stars. She blushes when the dairyman belittles her, and Angel notices her: "What a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature that milkmaid is." He has a vague inkling she is familiar, but nothing more.

Analysis

Tess's time at the dairy farm is the only extended time in her life when she is happy. The people, the landscape, and the work are all pleasant and satisfying. She has noticed Angel, but he is not pressing her for a relationship. Her past is a secret; her present is fulfilling.

Here, as he does in other novels, Hardy presents nature as a strengthening and enlightening force. This concept is one of the basics of pastoral literature: the country is purer, more honest, and generally superior to the city, which is associated with immorality, problematic technology, poor health, and social isolation. Moreover, pastoral writers often reveal that truths come from nature. That Tess finds peace and contentment within the land and as a milkmaid supports this classic binary. "When Tess had changed her bonnet for a hood, and was really on her stool under the cow, and the milk was squirting from her fists into the pail, she appeared to feel that

she really had laid a new foundation for her future. The conviction bred serenity, her pulse slowed, and she was able to look about her." Being a part of the landscape and completing her task allow her contentment.

Angel, too, finds peace in nature. "Unexpectedly he began to like the outdoor life for its own sake, and for what it brought." Moreover, he is starting to feel connected to nature, making "close acquaintance with phenomena which he had before known but darkly—the seasons in their moods, morning and evening, night and noon, winds in their different tempers, trees, waters and mists, shades and silences, and the voices of inanimate things."

In addition to his new connection to nature, Angel begins to come out of his shell, finding that he prefers the company of those at the farm to solitude in his room, taking "a real delight in their companionship. The conventional farm-folk of his imagination ... were obliterated after a few days' residence."

Phase the Third, Chapters 19–21

Summary

Phase the Third, Chapter 19

The narrator explains that although cows have preferences in milkmaids, Dairyman Crick objects to such favoritism, but instead of following his orders to change cows every so often the milkmaids tend to select their favorites. Tess discovers Angel has arranged the cows so she gets those that prefer her—as this makes her work easier.

Tess and Angel have several conversations, and he is surprised by the depth of Tess's thoughts, "expressing in her own native phrases ... feelings which might almost have been called those of the age—the ache of modernism." Tess is afraid she seems simple. Angel also finds Tess's sadness strange for someone young and beautiful. She learns Angel has class issues and is negative about "old families"—he thinks that their descendants are unproductive and unfit for hard work. Tess is relieved she hasn't shared her family history.

Phase the Third, Chapter 20

Tess and Angel continue to see one another, by chance or, perhaps not always by chance, as both are the first to wake up in the morning. The narrator notes the attraction and comments that are in the nebulous space between interest and love, "where no profundities have been reached; no reflections have set in, awkwardly inquiring, 'Whither does this new current tend to carry me? What does it mean to my future? How does it stand towards my past?'" The narrator describes the morning routines: Tess wakes Angel and the others, for she doesn't sleep through the alarm, and then they all gather for the substantial breakfast Mrs. Crick prepares.

Phase the Third, Chapter 21

The butter will not churn, and the dairy is in disarray as a result. Dairyman Crick makes plans to see a conjuror. His wife suggests the butter will not churn because "somebody in the house is in love ... I've heard tell in my younger days that that will cause it." Dairyman Crick uses her comment to explain it was not love that made the churn fail to work but the actions of a man. He tells a story of a woman wronged by a man—Jack Dollop—who left her and how she and her mother came after him. Tess is shaken by the story, although no one notices or suspects anything.

The butter churns finally. Afterward Tess hears three of the maids talking about Angel and how they all fancy him, but he fancies Tess. She feels guilt on learning of his feelings because she has resolved never to marry.

Analysis

Part of the reality of rural life is superstition. When the butter does not churn, Dairyman Crick attributes the problem to something beyond his control and immediately thinks to go to a conjurer as his ancestors have done: "My grandfather used to go to Conjuror Mynterne, out at Owlscombe, and a clever man a' were ... but there's no such genuine folk about nowadays!" If Dairyman Crick has the solution, Mrs. Crick offers the cause: someone in the house is in love—being in love prevents butter from churning. The lamentation of the past and reliance on superstition are rural traditions Hardy captures poignantly—they are charming, but these superstitions are disturbingly close to home for Tess.

Dairyman Crick's realistic story of a "fallen woman" perturbs Tess. The idea of a man who seduces a woman and abandons her is an all-too-common-motif, although she takes it personally. The story is likely one of many about "fallen women," for the topic was widespread in Victorian England, often as cautionary tales. Hardy, however, bluntly addresses a side of the story that received less attention in society: the responsibility of men. Although he does this humorously via Dairyman Crick's anecdote, it is also the center of the novel.

As a lover of nature, Hardy is a realist as well. In these chapters he explores the daily routines of a dairy farm. Rural workers at this time were often itinerant, displaced from more permanent positions by new agricultural technologies and taking on contracts for limited time periods. Because of the transience of the workers, it would be prudent to discourage the cattle from developing favorites among the milkers—hence Dairyman Crick's reluctance to allow cows to have favorite milkers. This decision may make the work harder, but a wise farmer must take the long view.

Phase the Third, Chapters 22–24

Summary

Phase the Third, Chapter 22

Dairyman Crick has received a letter in which a customer complains the butter has a tang, which he determines to be a result of garlic. He sends the workers out to find the invasive garlic weeds in the field. Angel has offered to help and "not ... by accident that he walked next to Tess." When they have a moment of privacy—afforded to them by Dairyman Crick who suggests she rest for a while—she draws his attention to the dairymaids Izz Huett and Retty Priddle. Bluntly Tess suggests he "marry one of them, if you ... want a dairywoman and not a lady; and don't think of marrying me!" She then keeps her distance from him.

Phase the Third, Chapter 23

It is July, and Tess has been at Talbothays for two months. She and the other three maids are going to Mellstock Church, three to four miles away. On the way they discover the road is flooded. They come across Angel, who pauses to look at the four women and offers to carry them across the water. He carries the first three across, leaving Tess for last in order to have time alone with her, unseen by the other girls. Afterward the others tease Tess; she admits to herself she loves him but tells the others she'll stay out of their way. However, it is obvious Angel is only interested in Tess.

In conversation Izz wonders about the woman Angel's family has chosen for him to marry. On hearing this Tess decides his interest in her is no more than fleeting.

Phase the Third, Chapter 24

July passes, and Angel is troubled by his interest in Tess, who is silent to him. One morning as Tess is milking her cow and looking far away into the meadow, Angel studies her at length and in detail. Moments pass, and suddenly he embraces her. He stops before kissing her and apologizes for not asking. He professes devotion to her. The cow, Old Pretty, is startled and lifts her foot to kick the milk. Tess starts crying. Angel explains his feelings, adding he won't press her if these feelings upset her.

Analysis

The growing attraction between Angel and Tess is so strong even Dairyman Crick notices. When the workers and Crick himself are scouring the field to find the garlic that has tainted the butter, Crick withdraws to give Angel and Tess time alone.

The pattern of Angel's attentions echo the pattern Tess experienced with Alec four years before. She steadfastly refuses the attention the male admirer continues to offer. The more she ignores it, rebuffs it, and avoids it, the more ardent the pursuer becomes. The significant difference here is the attraction is mutual; she is attracted to Angel and in love with him as much as he is with her. But the echoes of her former, disastrous encounter give this ostensibly positive romance a foreboding note.

However, realizing she loves him does not change Tess's reasons for avoiding marriage. At this point in her life, she is well aware women who are fallen are judged harshly. Avoiding marriage enables her to keep her past a secret. Additionally Tess's only sexual experience ended in tragedy. It is not unreasonable to infer her own experiences of trauma as a component of sexuality play a part in her refusal of Angel's affection. In any case, in "the interval since Crick's last view of them something had occurred which changed the pivot of the universe for their two natures," and the happiest period of Tess's life is about to end.

Phase the Fourth, Chapters 25–26

Summary

Phase the Fourth, Chapter 25

Angel returns to see his family, and the narrator recounts the Clare family history. While at his parents' home, Angel thinks about marrying Tess, whom he loves, for he is a man of conscience and will not mislead her. His brothers Cuthbert and Felix, both clergymen, are there. Cuthbert is an academic and Felix a curate. Angel finds his brothers changed somewhat; they seem more rigid, and his parents, who are snobbish in their middle-class way, find Angel more "countrified" than they would like their son to be. Mrs. Clare does not serve the blood pudding and mead that Angel carried to them from Mrs. Crick, which upsets him. The food is to be given away and the mead set aside for medicinal use.

Phase the Fourth, Chapter 26

With his father Angel discusses his plans for getting a farm and his intentions toward Tess. When his mother joins the conversation, his parents discuss their neighbor's daughter, Mercy Chant, as a potential wife. Angel holds to the idea that as a farmer he ought to have a wife who would be knowledgeable about farming matters. His father's focus instead is on religion—the distinction between those who are high Church and low Church. His father offers Angel the money he had put aside for Cambridge so he can purchase a farm, and his parents agree to meet Tess, understanding she is a good Christian woman.

The conversation bridges to a discussion of a young man called d'Urberville, whom Angel's father rebuked for his immoral behavior. Angel, who knows the d'Urberville name, is intrigued, but his father says that this family seems to have artificially adopted the name. The man was unduly aggressive with Mr. Clare, who was not disturbed since he feels that dealing with abuse is part of his Christian duty.

Analysis

The issue of high and low Church surfaces several times in the novel. The high, or Anglican, Church is close to the "papists" (Catholics). It has more ritual and is more involved with education and politics than the low Church is. When Mr. Clare speaks of Mercy Chant, noting she had been "decorating the Communion-table" and called it an "altar," he is saying she is following high Church ways. Mr. Clare, however, is low Church and thus not inclined toward ritual and sacrament. Low Church, closer to the Methodists, is instead associated with a more evangelical Christianity, including personal salvation and conversion. It is also associated with a more literal reading of the Bible, the word of God.

This distinction between the two aspects of Protestantism leads to a conversation about Alec d'Urberville, who again turns up as a negative force. When Mr. Clare attempted to help him find faith and morality, Alec rebuffed him rudely. The encounter gestures toward the continuing relationship these families will have.

At the same time these chapters serve to reflect the differences between Angel and his brothers. Angel's denial of some precepts of the Church means he is unwilling to follow his father and brothers into the clergy and seeks to forge his own way as a farmer. From their perspective, though, he is taking on some of the rustic traits they belittle.

There is a divide into which Angel has fallen: he is neither one of the country folk nor one of his educated family members. His rusticity is an artificial adoption, not, like Tess, a part of who he is. The practical notion of a wife as an able helpmate in his chosen career matters less to his father than the issue of where she stands in regard to the Church's teachings, in

keeping with his general outlook on life. Angel also scorns social distinction and snobbery based on money or ancestry. However, it is worth noting that the family's Christianity does not eliminate their snobbery: they still clearly see themselves as better than rural folk and are disdainful of the food Mrs. Crick sends them.

Phase the Fourth, Chapters 27–29

Summary

Phase the Fourth, Chapter 27

Angel returns to the dairy where he sees Tess just waking from a nap. He is fervent in his admiration. He entreats her to call him his name rather than "Mr. Clare." He proposes to her, but she says she can't marry him. Angel attempts to understand why, asking if she loves him and if she's already engaged. She confirms she loves him and is not promised to anyone else. Tess, trying to avoid the subject, says his family wouldn't approve. They discuss religion as Angel tries to clarify if she is high or low Church; the issue is of little interest to her.

Angel accompanies her to skim the milk. As they talk he tells her the story of his father's encounter with d'Urberville, simply meaning to show his father's depth of piety. Tess's face grows worn as he speaks; when he asks again if she'll marry him she refuses.

Phase the Fourth, Chapter 28

Angel continues to pursue Tess, deciding her objection is coyness or otherwise temporary. Tess continues to object, saying she is not good enough and her refusal is for his own good. Eventually he accuses her of being a flirt. Tess breaks down and says she'll explain herself on Sunday. She is tempted, she loves him, and she is wearing down. The chapter closes with her lamenting she cannot help but give in to him.

Phase the Fourth, Chapter 29

Dairyman Crick picks up the story of Jack Dollop again. Jack married a widow, who didn't tell him until after the marriage her money would end when she got married. They all discuss it. Tess is, again, emotional about the story of Jack Dollop. "I think she ought—to have told him the true state of things—or else refused him—I don't know." Angel, seeking Tess out, suggests that the "tremulous lives" they both lead are very different from the other dairy workers around them. She counters that most women's lives are tremulous and that there is more to the other milkmaids than he gives them credit for. Angel volunteers to drive the milk to the station and asks Tess to join him.

Analysis

Angel's pursuit of Tess grows more persistent, especially after telling his parents about her. He is resolved she will be his wife, and to his way of thinking there is no objection she can raise to negate his love for her and his decision to marry her. Tess is as powerless here as she has been for all of her life. She has tried consistently to refuse Angel's affections and his intent to marry her, but she cannot convince him to stop pursuing her. She cannot leave her job. She cannot change her past. There is nothing she can do but continue to refuse, and the Cricks seem to conspire to keep Tess and Angel in each other's path. Even her attempts to steer Angel to another woman result in nothing. It's worth noting that, for all of Angel's professions of love, he seems oblivious to her discomfort or to the internal conflict he causes. He isn't a rapist like Alec, or neglectful and selfish like Tess's parents, but his overinsistence on having his way—not making Tess happy—makes him part of the problem, not a solution.

In the same story of Jack Dollop continued here, Tess is aware of its personal significance. She notes the right thing to do is share secrets before the wedding. The repeated references to Jack Dollop and the dishonest circumstances around his marriage mirror Tess's own dilemma and foreshadow the disaster to come. It is also an opportunity to reaffirm Tess's morality: she is aware of the "right thing" and she sets forth to do it. Readers may find it useful to remember Tess at this point is still only 20. She faces the difficulty of admitting to something she knows will result in harsh judgment, but she is barely more than a child with no experience.

Phase the Fourth, Chapters 30–31

Summary

Phase the Fourth, Chapter 30

The drive to the station begins in silence. The milk jugs clatter, and Angel periodically plucks ripe berries for Tess. The rain starts and knocks down her hair. Angel wraps them both in a cloth, which Tess holds closed as he drives. They speak about old families and history, and Tess again tries to tell him of her past. Angel dismisses her need to tell him, and ultimately Tess loses her courage. Instead she tells him only that she is a d'Urberville by blood. His response surprises Tess, for she believes he has only contempt for the nobility. He admits, "I do hate the aristocratic principle of blood before everything, and do think ... the only pedigrees we ought to respect are those spiritual ones of the wise and virtuous, without regard to corporal paternity. But I am extremely interested in this news." She strongly rejects the suggestion she use the name d'Urberville. He again presses his proposal, and this time she agrees. Tess kisses him passionately.

At the close of the chapter, Tess says she must write to her mother and reveals to Angel she remembers seeing him in Marlott; she hopes that his failure to dance with her then is no "ill omen."

Phase the Fourth, Chapter 31

Joan Durbeyfield, in reply to her daughter's letter, advises Tess not to "say a word of your Bygone Trouble to him ... Many a woman—some of the Highest in the Land—have had a Trouble in their time; and why should you Trumpet yours when others don't Trumpet theirs? No girl would be such a Fool, specially as it is so long ago, and not your Fault at all."

Tess is struck by Angel's calm affection, more ethereal and imaginative than passionate. Angel and Tess both openly seek out the other's companionship. Angel finds the country courtship habit of spending time together outdoors peculiar initially but comes to appreciate it as they spend the month of October in this way.

One evening when they are inside, Tess exclaims she is not worthy of him. Angel tries to calm her, and she laments he wasn't taking notice of her when he was first in her village four years earlier. Angel presses for the date of the wedding, and she tries to stall. While they are talking, the Cricks, Retty, and Marian return. Angel tells them he is marrying Tess. Later when Tess is with the other dairymaids—Retty, Izz, and Marian—she again says Angel ought to marry one of them.

Analysis

Tess can no longer resist and gives in, both to her feelings and Angel's proposal. She does not, however, confess her secret; her "instinct of self-preservation" and her desire for happiness at last overweigh her moral instincts. Her mother's advice is not moral, yet Tess follows it for the moment, aware she and her mother differ in their moral codes. She even is willing to consider that her mother's lighter view of her past misfortune—as an unpleasant episode that need not affect her future life—is more accurate than her own. However, deceit is inconsistent with Tess's character. At this point in the story readers most likely will infer that Tess ultimately will choose morality, for she is "a pure woman." Moreover she has already said, regarding the sad story of Jack Dollop, the secret ought to have been revealed before the marriage.

Angel's character, with its flaws and contradictions, are further developed in these chapters. Despite his renunciation of things noble and his professed disdain for old families, he is the child of his parents, and to Tess's surprise he is quite interested in her ancestry. Although he fits in with the others at the dairy—which seems a kind of utopian paradise—he reflects his mother's snobbishness in being impressed with Tess's d'Urberville connection: "Society is hopelessly snobbish," he tells her, "and this fact of your extraction may make an appreciable difference to its acceptance of you as my wife, after I have made you the well-read woman that I mean to make you. My mother too, poor soul, will think so much better of you on account of it. Tess, you must spell your name correctly—d'Urberville."

While there is no doubt Angel loves Tess, he would be happier, as would his family, if she reflected her ancestry. In saying the only "pedigrees we ought to respect are those spiritual ones of the wise and virtuous, without regard to corporal paternity," he

seems to demonstrate a lack of snobbery. But his keen interest in this new information suggests an underlying respect for social rank, no matter how much he insists otherwise. Moreover, when later confronted with the very situation in which his respect for the spiritual pedigree is tested, he will fail.

Phase the Fourth, Chapters 32–34

Summary

Phase the Fourth, Chapter 32

As Angel continues to press for a wedding date, Tess agrees to marry him on the last day of the year. However, on a Sunday in mid-December, Izz pulls Tess aside and tells her the wedding banns were not called and only two Sundays remain before the wedding day. When Tess asks Angel about the banns, he tells her he's decided they'll be married with a license rather than banns, as it is more private. Angel gets Tess a dress, gloves, and handkerchief, and she worries that—like Queen Guinevere—her white dress will change color and betray her lack of purity. Tess is continually fearful of bad omens and actions that bring bad luck, like postponing the wedding.

Phase the Fourth, Chapter 33

Angel decides he would like a day out with Tess before they are wed, so on Christmas Eve they set out to town. There they encounter two men from Trantridge, one of whom insults Tess. Angel punches him. The man apologizes, saying it must have been a mistake, but after Angel and Tess leave the offender tells his friend it was not. When Tess, unnerved, asks to put off the wedding, Angel says they can't.

At the dairy farm they separate, and Tess hears a noise. When she goes to check on Angel, he tells her he dreamed of fighting the man they encountered earlier that evening. Tess returns to her room and writes four pages detailing the events of several years ago; she then slips the sealed letter under his door.

Angel greets her warmly the next morning and does not mention the letter. Worried he hasn't read it, Tess checks his room and does not see it. She thinks it means he has forgiven her. Angel continues this way up to the day of the wedding on New Year's Eve, when she discovers the letter still sealed and stuck under the carpet. Unable to let him read it on their wedding day, she destroys the letter. In a moment alone with him she says she wants to confess her faults and mistakes. He says they'll have time afterward. She presses to tell him, but he says no.

They go to the church, and Angel mentions the legend of the d'Urberville coach—a vaguely remembered tale of a terrible crime once committed in a d'Urberville's carriage, which descendants of the family see as an apparition. None of Angel's family come to the wedding; his parents are disappointed in his choice of a bride, and his brothers have not responded to his announcement and invitation. Nor are Tess's family and friends from Marlott present. Tess asks him to kiss each of the milkmaids once before the wedding, and he does. The rooster crows three times—a bad omen; Mr. Crick says he's never heard a rooster crow in the afternoon.

Phase the Fourth, Chapter 34

After the wedding Angel and Tess go to the bridal house—which is a former d'Urberville residence and has portraits of women from the family hanging on the walls. He notes she is clearly one of them, and they await their luggage. While they wait a package comes from Angel's father. In it are a necklace, earrings, and bracelets for Tess from Angel's godmother. Tess puts on the jewels, and Angel is struck by her beauty.

Jonathan delivers the luggage, along with the story of the dairymaids. Retty tried to kill herself, and Marian got drunk. Tess feels another swell of guilt because they are mourning the loss of Angel, and she resolves to tell him her story.

Angel tells her he hadn't wanted to confess until after the wedding, but he reveals he sinned, spending 48 hours in debauchery with a woman. Tess tells him she too has secrets, and the chapter closes with her revealing them.

Analysis

As the wedding draws near Tess tries repeatedly and more

seriously to reveal her past. She does, in fact, but her letter is not read. Further hints her secret will come out, whether or not she tells, come out when the couple encounters a man who recognizes her. After this point Tess says very definitely she wants to tell Angel, but he refuses to hear it. Her morality may be in question—to her—but it does not stop the wedding.

The absence of Angel's family causes him some sadness. Their reluctance to appear is most likely a result of their snobbery—too proud to accept a dairymaid as a daughter-in-law, no matter what her Church leanings or distant ancestry may be. Less rigid and less snobbish parents might be more forgiving, but the Clares are neither at this point, despite their piety. Angel's brothers do not even have the courtesy to respond, whereas his parents at least did, though with little joy and the same little joy with which they send Angel's godmother's jewels for Tess.

Significantly Angel's confession of his own past is similar to Tess's in its sexual nature, although his was consensual; readers therefore may expect that he will be sensitive to her secrets and treat the incident as something from the distant past with no bearing on the present or future. Readers also may note that whereas Tess has been trying to tell Angel—and wrote a long letter—before the wedding, Angel deliberately has waited until after, giving Tess no choice but to accept his actions. Tess begins her confession optimistically, with the understanding that both she and Angel have sinned—sinner and sinned against. However, as she tells her story, the diamonds glitter grotesquely, foreshadowing the end of her simple life to be replaced with something complex and less congenial with her character.

In this section the wedding is clouded with superstitious occurrences. With an odd sense of timing—on the way to their wedding—Angel tells Tess the legend of the d'Urberville coach, which is said to have originated because of a murder committed in that coach, either done by or done to a member of the family. Early in the text the narrator mentions the d'Urbervilles as having committed other crimes as well and implies the crime visited upon Tess was undoubtedly one her ancestors also committed. Additionally, after the wedding the cock crows three times in the afternoon. It is another bad omen, which neither the narrator nor the characters will explain as they try to ignore it, and it upsets Tess. The location of the "bridal house," which Angel has rented for their honeymoon, is a d'Urberville farmhouse. All d'Urberville associations, including ancestral portraits hanging on the walls, unnerve Tess. To underscore Angel's lack of understanding, despite his intellectual capabilities he has rented this house without considering its effect on Tess, who does not find amusement or value in her ancestral connections.

Two symbols play ominous roles in these chapters. Notably the rooster that crows in the afternoon is white with a red comb—reflecting the color symbols that define Tess's purity and sexuality. The rooster's presence seems like a direct challenge. The symbol of water as a purifier appears as well, as Tess and Angel wash their hands together in one basin. In demonstrating their unity as their hands touch, Angel asks, "Which are my fingers and which are yours? ... They are very much mixed." The inference is that the water purifies and the couple is united as one. However, Tess's response, "They are all yours," implies his domination rather than union, and later in the story they will wash their hands separately.

Phase the Fifth, Chapters 35–36

Summary

Phase the Fifth, Chapter 35

After Tess finishes her revelations, Angel stands and stirs the fire. He is shaken. He acknowledges she has tried to tell him; however, he is still cold. Tess implores him to be kinder. "Forgive me as you are forgiven! *I* forgive *you*, Angel." He says it's not about forgiveness: he thought she was one person, and she has turned out to be someone else altogether. Angel even acknowledges Tess was more "sinned against than sinning," but he withdraws from her nonetheless. His reaction is personal: he says that he loves not Tess but "another woman in your shape," and that he can't be in her presence right now. When she follows him and protests, he says that he thinks that her background has corrupted her: she is the morally weak descendant of a decayed lineage. He sends her back, and Tess eventually sleeps. When he returns he notices a portrait of a d'Urberville woman who resembles Tess and whose face he imagines wants to wreak vengeance on the male sex. The image hardens him against his wife, and he sleeps on the couch in the sitting room.

Phase the Fifth, Chapter 36

At dawn Angel wakes. He sends away the servant and prepares breakfast himself. When Tess joins him he asks her to say her revelations were untrue. She cannot. He then asks if "he" is alive. Tess says the baby has died, but Angel clarifies he meant the man.

Tess suggests he can divorce her, and Angel points out he cannot. She explains she thought he could "cast her off" if he chose to, her past giving him grounds for divorce. It does not, however. She confesses she thought of killing herself last night under the mistletoe over the bed. He says she is not to do so.

Angel comes and goes, and Tess waits on him as if she were his servant. He tells her the situation would be different if the man were dead. He also confirms he will not live with Tess—he claims that, no matter where they went in the world, her past would emerge to shame them and their future children. The narrator, however, makes it clear that this is a ridiculous idea: halfway across the world, who would know or care about Tess's past? But Tess contritely proposes she go home. He adds he, too, will go away; he thinks more positively of people when away from them. They pack up to leave.

Analysis

As a writer Hardy is associated with realism. Literary realism (a literary movement that includes George Eliot, with whom Hardy is compared), and by extension social realism, is reflected in a text not only by details that approximate those in real life but also in its attention to social issues and their effects on characters' lives. That Tess could easily forgive Angel's transgressions, for which he was responsible, and Angel cannot forgive hers demonstrate Hardy's view of gender inequality and the injustice it perpetrates. Why are Angel's nights of debauchery more forgivable than being a victim of rape? In addition Hardy introduces the legal quandaries associated with marriage in his day—the idea of what it means to be married, and the legalities of marriage—emerges frequently from this point on in the text. Tess has believed, wrongly, that Angel could divorce her. "Can't you—now I have told you? I thought my confession would give you grounds for that." To obtain a divorce, a man had to prove his wife had committed adultery. Tess, in her ignorance, believes her fallen status would allow Angel to divorce her if he saw fit. It does not, as her rape occurred before she was his wife.

Significantly, only after Angel withdraws his affection does Tess consider committing a sin. She offers to commit suicide for Angel—a mortal sin, as she would not be able to repent. Her purity has finally been tainted as a result of her husband's choices. Until this point she has followed the dictates of religion as well as she could, but on accepting Angel's proposal and making a vow to him he becomes her guide. Angel's perspective is that her rapist is in effect her husband. He follows this idea with the issue that the perpetrator is still alive. In other words he would feel differently if Tess were a widow. Although he does not equate his prior sexual experience with matrimony, he does so with Tess's. Obviously he is perpetuating a double standard, and his pride and rigidity in this matter seem no less than his brothers' or his parents'. In these scenes it is difficult to see Angel empathically—his behavior is so rigid, and so based on his own unrealistic ideals, that he seems capable neither of intellectual honesty nor sympathy.

Phase the Fifth, Chapters 37–38

Summary

Phase the Fifth, Chapter 37

Shortly after one o'clock Tess hears a sound. Angel is sleepwalking. He comes into the room, wraps her in the sheet as if it were a shroud, and carries her outside. As they cross the river Tess considers toppling them so they can die together. He carries her to the abbey nearby and lowers her into an empty stone coffin. Tess worries the cold and damp will make Angel ill, so she rouses him enough to get him back to the house.

In the morning they finish packing and leave, pausing briefly to see Mr. and Mrs. Crick, with whom Angel has some remaining business. In front of the Cricks they try to behave normally, but the relationship is strained, and Mrs. Crick notices Tess is "not now quite like the proud young bride of a well-be-doing man." Angel tells Tess he feels no anger, but she must not come after him. He adds she can write if she is ill or wants anything. He takes her to the carriage and sends her on her way.

Tess accepts her punishment, thinking it harsh but offering no objection, despite her sorrow. The narrator, looking into her character—and Angel's—remarks, "If Tess had been artful, had she made a scene, fainted, wept hysterically ... he would probably not have withstood her ... Pride, too, entered into her submission—which perhaps was a symptom of that reckless acquiescence ... in the whole d'Urberville family—and the many effective chords which she could have stirred by an appeal were left untouched."

Phase the Fifth, Chapter 38

Tess worries about seeing her parents. She returns home and is greeted by her mother, who thinks she has been foolish for telling Angel and losing him. When her father returns, her mother tells him, and he wonders aloud if she's even married.

After a few days she receives a note from Angel informing her he has gone to look at a farm. She lets her parents believe she is going to join him, and she gives them half of the 50 pounds Angel gave her for her lodging and necessities in his absence.

Analysis

Tess, despite all evidence of her goodness and high moral code, is dismissed by her husband and judged a fool by her parents. She has somehow gotten in trouble both for deceiving Angel and being honest toward him. The consequences of honesty seem to have affected her: to make life easier for her parents, she decides to lie about returning to her husband. Again she has reached a threshold wherein her morality is compromised.

The narrator explores Tess's character and harsh judgment of herself, part of which results from pride. Had she objected to Angel's action, had she argued her case or behaved with less dignity—or would one call it passivity?—she might have touched Angel's compassion and averted the situation. However, pride can be harmful, as it is among the Durbeyfields and d'Urbervilles, and Tess's pride prevents her from behaving in self-serving ways, even from demonstrating real emotion and fighting for what is dear to her. The narrator seems almost to echo Angel's suggestion that she is tainted by her blood—although the narrator's interest is in her aristocratic pride, not her morality. As much as she behaves honorably, she expects it from others and, consequently, is hurt when their behavior falls short.

In keeping with her character, even though Tess has been treated unfairly by her husband and her parents, she speaks well of Angel and gives half of the limited funds she has to her parents. Indeed her reaction to being carried as if she were dead and deposited in a coffin is to worry about Angel's health. The small moral compromises Tess must make result from the judgments and censure of those who ought to protect her: family and husband. Even so she continues to put forth efforts, sacrifice, and to make choices to take care of their needs even as they do not care as much for hers.

In these chapters the d'Urberville tombs echo Tess's newfound desolation. In Angel's dream Tess is dead amid the ruins in the ancestral cemetery. The incident foreshadows Tess's future, as the association with the d'Urbervilles has brought nothing but violence and despair and finally will bring death.

Phase the Fifth, Chapters 39–41

Summary

Phase the Fifth, Chapter 39

Angel goes to his parents' house three weeks after the wedding. He has decided to go to Brazil, and he tells them Tess is at her parents' house because of this decision. His mother asks if they've quarreled, and he allows they have had a difference. His mother seems to be coming around to Tess, saying that there are worse wives than robust, virtuous farm girls, but Angel's behavior is so odd that she asks, intuitively, whether Tess is indeed virtuous. Angel bursts out that she is "spotless!"

Phase the Fifth, Chapter 40

Angel briefly encounters Mercy Chant, the girl his father hoped he would marry, and teases her. He then returns to Wellbridge Farm, where he and Tess spent the days after their wedding, to return the keys and attend to last-minute business. There he encounters Izz Huett, who has come to call on the couple. In

their few minutes of conversation she informs him she no longer works at the dairy and Marian has taken to drink. He knows Izz is in love with him and asks her to accompany him to Brazil. When she immediately accepts, knowing the situation and its consequences—and being an honest woman who became more so under Tess's influence—she tells him "nobody could love 'ee more than Tess did! ... She would have laid down her life for 'ee. I could do no more." Angel, deeply affected, withdraws his invitation and leaves her, but he is no less determined to go his own way.

Phase the Fifth, Chapter 41

Eight months have passed since Tess and Angel separated. Tess has left Marlott and is now alone and out of money. She has worked at a dairy but lost her position as autumn and the rains came. Out of pride Tess has hidden her situation from her family, so when Joan writes asking for help, Tess sends her 20 of the 30 pounds due her from Angel's banker. She considers contacting Angel's father but decides against doing so, again out of pride and the fear "they would despise her in the character of a mendicant."

Meanwhile, Angel is in Brazil and sick with fever.

Tess travels to a farm recommended to her in a letter from Marian. Along the way she encounters the man whom Angel fought with, who knew of her from Trantridge. She also comes across dead and dying pheasants, who have been shot by hunters. Several of these she puts out their misery, crying as she does so.

Analysis

Both Angel and Tess struggle with the revelation of her past. For Tess that struggle is all encompassing. She left the dairy where she had been happy, and she has no shelter there or at home without admitting her husband has deserted her. This is, arguably, the first time since the dance at Marlott at the beginning of the novel where Tess's pride is a major factor. Then she was defending her father; now she is defending her husband at the same time as she is demeaning and hurting herself.

She continues to be generous in the extreme, handing over two-thirds of the money from Angel's banker to her mother. Without money Tess is at a loss for options unless she is willing to sacrifice her pride and return to her parents' house or to the dairy. Whether or not this is simple pride is arguable. Tess knows judgment will await her at either place as it would at Angel's parents' house. Tess has faced judgment for Alec d'Urberville's actions some four years ago and more recently; now she faces judgment for her husband's behavior.

Facing the choice between being judged and finding a way to support herself, Tess chooses to find work. She has made this choice in the past, too: Tess went to the dairy to leave behind the judgment in Marlott. Twice now Tess has been put into difficult positions because of the actions of men who claimed to want to marry her. In both cases because of her nature she has been powerless. Tess's action is primarily reaction, repeating established patterns of obeying male authority figures. It is also her fate because she is a d'Urberville, the underlying impetus for the actions of the men dominating her life, beginning with her father's after learning of his lineage.

Once again Angel's character is questionable. By asking Izz Huett to go with him to Brazil, he is inviting her undoing and would make her a fallen woman—the same quality that caused him to cast off his wife. He is married, separated by his own hasty actions, he loves his estranged wife, and Izz is Tess's friend. To unthinkingly invite Izz to ruin her life is contemptible, hypocritical in the extreme, and disturbingly indifferent to an innocent young woman's unrequited feelings. For Izz to accept it reveals the depth of those feelings. Then to rescind the invitation, even though it is a wise decision—or barring wisdom, common sense—is equally hurtful.

Phase the Fifth, Chapters 42–44

Summary

Phase the Fifth, Chapter 42

Tess travels to Chalk-Newton. At an inn she is made uncomfortable by men commenting on her good looks—including the man from Trantridge whom Angel hit for making coarse remarks about her, who teases her about the

event. She goes outside, cuts off her eyebrows, and hides her face in a kerchief to stop men from looking at her, as she wants nothing to do with any of them. She reaches Marian, who presses her to find out what has happened; Tess refuses to give details and asks her to neither tell people that she's married nor say anything against Angel. Marian tells her the work on the farm is not pleasant and escorts her to the farmer's house. Tess signs a contract to stay until Old Lady-Day (March 25). After she finds a place to live, she writes to her parents to give them her new address but still does not tell them of her situation.

Phase the Fifth, Chapter 43

The farm, Flintcomb-Ash, is "a starve-acre place," farmed by the villagers and neglected by an absentee lord. Tess joins Marian in the fields. Work—cutting swedes (another word for rutabagas)—is hard and made harder with the rain. Marian offers some drink, but Tess refuses. They reminisce about working at Talbothays, and Marian decides to write to both Izz and Retty. Izz agrees to join them. Tess continues to refuse to talk about Angel, although she does blow a kiss in the direction she assumes South America to be.

Izz arrives as do Car Darch, the Queen of Spades, and her sister, the Queen of Diamonds, from Trantridge. Neither Darch sister seems to remember Tess. However, Tess is taken aback when she discovers her employer is Farmer Groby, the same man from Trantridge who made her uncomfortable on the road and the one with whom Angel fought defending her honor.

The subject of Angel's departure resurfaces, upsetting Tess. Izz and Marian offer to finish her task when she flags. Later when Izz leaves, Marian is still drinking and tells Tess about Angel inviting Izz to go with him. Tess blames herself and says she ought to have written to Angel more often, so she starts a letter. She fails to finish it because of doubt, but she wears her wedding ring all night.

Phase the Fifth, Chapter 44

A year has passed since Tess and Angel wed. Tess decides to visit his parents, some 15 miles away. When she arrives after having walked the distance, she hides her work boots and puts on the ones Angel bought for her. She overhears Cuthbert and Felix, who discuss Angel and his unfortunate marriage to a dairymaid—from whom, they muse, he seems to still be separated. They meet Mercy Chant, who sees the walking boots and assumes that a beggar has thrown them out in order to seem more destitute: she takes them to give away to charity. Tess does not speak to Mr. and Mrs. Clare, but instead she leaves. As she is leaving she hears of a "ranter"—an itinerant preacher—and upon overhearing the man in question delivering a fiery but not particularly eloquent sermon, she discovers him to be Alec d'Urberville.

Analysis

Tess cannot escape her past. The farmer who employs her to cut swedes (rutabagas) is the same man she sees on the road to the farm, a man who judges her for the events at Trantridge. The man seems to appear as a living representation of her inability to escape from the past. Wherever she goes he appears. Further, when she sees Marian and Izz she discovers they know about her marriage troubles, and even worse she learns her husband invited Izz to go with him to Brazil. The past is colliding with the present. Yet despite Angel's behavior, Tess continues to blame herself, this time for not writing to him. But why would she do that when he asked her not to? Tess would never go against his instructions, so to blame herself for not writing is inconceivable.

On the other side of her marriage to Angel, rural life looks much uglier as well: Tess loses her first job, and her new one, on an ugly farm doing difficult work under a hard master, is a complete departure from the Cricks' dairy. The small world of Wessex, full of people she knows, is no longer simply familiar: it is burdensome.

Tess is now becoming desperate enough to surrender what pride she has—and she has kept it for some time. She starts to write to Angel, but when her doubts increase to the point at which she stops writing the letter, she decides to seek out his parents. Tess is now all alone. Her parents are of no solace, and her friends are not much comfort. Marian has turned to drink; Izz was willing to go away with Tess's husband; her employer judges her for her past. Even her in-laws discuss her behind her back in rude, uncharitable terms. Tess is abandoned and weary.

Tess's failure to address Angel's parents is an ironic moment. The narrator attributes it to a "feminine loss of courage at the last and critical moment through her estimating her father-in-

law by his sons." Fate drew her in the wrong direction, however, for according to the narrator, her "present condition was precisely one which would have enlisted the sympathies of old Mr. and Mrs. Clare. Their hearts went out of them at a bound towards extreme cases." Despite the narrator's perception, Tess's timidity, self-loathing, shame, and remaining pride join the reasons for her action—or lack of it.

And it marks a critical turning point. Leaving the Clares, Tess encounters another preacher: the man whose actions have led to all of her troubles to date. Alec, approached by Mr. Clare in the past, has not only converted but also is preaching evangelically. Seeing the man who raped her now speak of religion shakes Tess. The censure of religious hypocrisy is evident here. Tess's unfortunate experiences with clergymen up to now include a parson who would not allow her child a Christian burial, a man raised by a clergyman who has judged her even as he was guilty of a similar sin and now has abandoned her, two other clergymen who judge her with no reason beyond her social class, and the man who took her virginity without her consent. Even the supposedly pious and virtuous Mercy Chant judgmentally assumes that a wild speculation about the boots is correct and steals them to punish the imaginary beggar. No religious figures in the novel show more moral fiber or Christian charity than Tess does. Yet fate dictates this new encounter. Had Cuthbert and Felix not been there, had they not been talking about her, had she mustered the courage to meet her in-laws, then she would not have encountered Alec d'Urberville and avoided all that happens as a result.

Phase the Sixth, Chapters 45–47

Summary

Phase the Sixth, Chapter 45

Alec pursues Tess, who is startled by the encounter and his changed appearance. Tess has not seen him since leaving Trantridge. She tells him of their child; he is disturbed that he knew nothing about this, and he tells her he was influenced to change because of Mr. Clare. Alec also tells her she is tempting him to sin; he asks her why she doesn't veil her face and then asks her to make a solemn vow not to lead him into sin. After they part she learns the cross he asks her to swear upon is not a holy site but a former site of torture.

Phase the Sixth, Chapter 46

Alec comes to the farm with a marriage license. He tells her what he did to her was the worst sin he has ever committed and asks her to let him set it right by marrying her. She scornfully reveals that she is married already. Alec presses the topic and points out she is a deserted wife. She slaps him with her glove, drawing blood.

Some time passes, and Alec shows up at her cottage. They speak of religion, and she shares the things Angel has told her about his religious ideas—effectively, that the Bible is nonliteral and that Christianity involves following the spirit of Christ's ideas, not adhering to dogma. Tess parrots Angel's words, admitting she doesn't understand everything but accepts them. Between his interest in Tess and the views she shares on religion, Alec quickly surrenders his faith and role as a preacher. He also calls her a temptress and blames her for his inability to stop thinking about her. Tess asks him to leave her in peace.

Phase the Sixth, Chapter 47

It is time for threshing of the last wheat. Tess engages in monotonous hard work, as Alec—no longer in clerical garb but in fashionable clothes—watches her. When Tess sees him, she is upset because he won't go away. His defense is that she "haunts" him. He reminds her she is "neglected by one who ought to cherish" her, and he offers to take her away. She refuses. He reminds her he has offered to marry her and echoes Angel's stance if she is "any man's wife," she is his.

Analysis

The pattern of pursuit that Tess has experienced with both Alec and Angel in the past is repeated here for a third time. Alec again accuses her of being a temptress, and Tess again stresses she is not interested in him or in tempting him. Tess's declaration does not dissuade him, however.

The idea of morality as solely the responsibility of the woman is part of the conversation surrounding the theme of purity and fallen women. Alec says, "Well, women's faces have had too much power over me already for me not to fear them! An evangelist has nothing to do with such as they; and it reminds me of the old times that I would forget!" For him women are temptresses and cause men's failings. Tess makes no effort to tempt Alec, just as she never tried to tempt him when she was 16 and just as she never tried to tempt Angel. However, Alec's insistence that Tess vow not to tempt him is representative of the Victorian view of sexuality. Hardy's critical stance is evident in Alec's insistence that Tess "haunts" him—when it is he who haunts her, repeatedly showing up at her home and place of work even though he is unwelcome.

The only exemption to this attitude is the duty of a father or husband to protect a woman, essentially from others like themselves. Tess's father did not protect her when she was a child; rather he sent her—although unknowingly—into danger. Angel is hardly an improvement, for he has deserted her, as Alec points out. Furthermore, Alec is pointing out that Tess is now vulnerable.

When threats do not work, when religion does not work, when offers of money do not work, Alec resorts to the same theory Angel held: Tess is his wife because he took her virginity. The question of what it means to be married is invoked again here. It seems ludicrous that Tess could be Alec's wife when marriage requires the consent of both parties, but for Alec, marriage, like rape, is a matter of possession.

Phase the Sixth, Chapters 48–49

Summary

Phase the Sixth, Chapter 48

The work continues, and afterward Alec offers to take care of Tess's family too. She is weakened by his offer, suggesting he could help them without telling but stops herself and says no. She tells him she'll take nothing from him for herself or for them.

However, in difficult circumstances, alone and vulnerable, Tess writes a long, desperate letter to Angel, asking him to let her come to him or to come to her. She implores him to save her.

Phase the Sixth, Chapter 49

The story switches to the Clare household where Angel's parents are discussing him. Mr. Clare notes a letter has arrived for Angel from his wife, and Mrs. Clare chastises her husband for not sending Angel to Cambridge.

The story switches then to an update on Angel. In Brazil he has had health troubles and met a much more worldly and realistic man who saw Angel's treatment of Tess as extremely harsh, and told him outright that his wife's past was irrelevant. Angel is thinking of his wife, her singing and her beauty and the way she loves him.

At this time Tess also gets a visit from her sister, Liza-Lu, informing her their parents are ill; her mother is dying, and her father has no desire to work. Tess abandons her contract and goes home to look after them.

Analysis

Tess is vulnerable to Alec because she has been abandoned and because she worries about her family. Tess's concerns and situation contrast strongly with those of Angel's family. They live in comfortable circumstances and have made no effort to contact their daughter-in-law. They believe the marriage to be a mistake but remain outside of the details, nor do they seek any. As hypocritical as ever, they would rather speculate about their daughter-in-law than know her or understand the situation.

In Brazil the absent and disillusioned Angel's change of heart toward Tess is also telling; he thinks mostly of how she loves him, reflecting his love as selfish in a way hers is not. This contrast is heightened by Tess's actions when she learns her parents are ill. She hastens home to them, even though they have treated her indifferently, asked for a fair portion of her money, and are now creating a legal conundrum: leaving her job violates her contract.

The way Tess responds to word of her parents' illnesses is also a cue that her parents are a vulnerable point. Tess's agreement to present herself at the d'Urbervilles at age 16, as

well as her willingness to give her parents more than half of her funds, and her unhesitating action in going to them now reflect her devotion.

Alec's passionate pursuit of Tess is a provocative mirror to Angel's passionate rejection of her. Both men are, or were, equally determined in their course of action, and neither concerns himself particularly with Tess's own feelings. Alec's frequent appearances disturb Tess. This time, however, when he appears in Chapter 48, the symbol of hair surfaces as Tess does not "hear Izz Huett tell her ... that her hair was tumbling down."

Phase the Sixth, Chapters 50–52

Summary

Phase the Sixth, Chapter 50

Tess tends her parents' farm; her father's "illness" is implied to be the same as ever: drink and laziness. Joan begins to recover, and Alec appears again offering help. Alec comes in disguise and helps Tess in the field. He compares himself to the serpent in the garden and Tess to Eve. Even now Alec pursues her. He asks if she will join her husband, and when she exclaims she has "no husband," Alec says she has a friend. He tells her he has tender feelings for her and would take care of her, adding if her mother dies, the children will need help because her father will not do much. He offers such help, which Tess refuses.

Alec is frustrated and retreats. At the same time Liza-Lu comes to tell Tess the news Jack Durbeyfield has just died from an existing heart condition. Joan, however, has improved and is out of danger.

Phase the Sixth, Chapter 51

Joan has taken rooms in Kingsbere, for they have lost the house in part because of Tess's being "fallen." When Alec learns this, again he offers to take care of Tess, her mother, and her siblings by housing them at his home in Trantridge where there is room and where he will place the children in a good school. Tess is unsure, asking herself, "How do I know that you would do all this?" Alec offers a guarantee in writing. Tess is wavering, and Alec suggests she tell her mother and let her decide. He also finishes the story Angel began about the d'Urberville coach: an ancestor of Tess's abducted a beautiful young woman; in her attempt to escape one of them killed the other—Alec can't remember which. Should a genuine d'Urberville—Alec points out this doesn't apply to him—hear the sound of the phantom coach, it is a bad omen.

Ultimately Tess still refuses. She pulls the bar holding up the window when he reaches for her, and in doing so drops the window so that his arm is caught between the stone and the casement. She tells him she will not come and that she has money at her father-in-law's if she asks for it.

After he departs Tess's self-imposed docility and discipline crack, and she writes an angry letter to Angel asking why he has treated her "so monstrously" and stressing she can "never, never forgive you." In the letter she voices the injustice he has inflicted on her.

Phase the Sixth, Chapter 52

The Durbeyfields set out for Kingsbere and on their way see Marian and Izz. The girls tell Tess that Alec looked for her but they didn't tell him where she was. Tess lets them know he has found her and, in reply to their questions, she tells them Angel has not come back.

When the Durbeyfields arrive at the outskirts of Kingsbere, there are no rooms. They shelter at the d'Urberville tomb, although Alec again offers to look after Joan and the children. In her despair Tess laments she is "on the wrong side" of the tomb.

Meanwhile Izz and Marian write to Angel, telling him that she is in danger from "an Enemy in the shape of a Friend," and that Angel's neglect of her puts her in an impossible position.

Analysis

Tess, by this point, has faced crisis after crisis. The combination of her poverty and the injustices she has endured has led her to a point at which she is overwhelmed and weakened. Still, though, she refuses Alec's offers of help, with

their clear implications. Despite these offers, which would ease Tess's situation as well as her family's, her moral code and pride prevent her from giving in to him. That she doesn't mention his offers to Joan further supports her resolve.

Alec disguises himself to work next to her, but this gesture is not for Tess's benefit. He uses the opportunity to tempt her once again. He even goes so far as to compare himself to Satan in Eden. It is not surprising Tess is tempted. She is greatly weakened, but she continues to implore him to do right. Conversely, Alec is the one who tempts, whereas Tess is now the one who is tempted.

When her father dies Tess is even more vulnerable, and she goes so far as to ask how she could believe Alec's offers are trustworthy, for it is obvious to her he is not. Despite this wavering Tess still does not accept his offer. When he touches her she recoils and strengthens her resolve.

By all standards of Victorian morality—aside from the loss of her virginity—Tess is a paragon of virtue. She withstands every challenge to her purity and strives to live a moral life beyond any reasonable modern reader's expectation. Hardy's use of the family poverty as part of Tess's temptation drives the point home: she succeeds even where another sympathetic heroine might fail. This extreme refusal to break her virtue is necessary to show even after she has been deemed "fallen" by society, has had no refuge in religion or love or family, and has been judged harshly and unjustly by friends, family, and spouse, she is a "pure woman."

But her purity no longer extends to unending self-castigation. Despite her efforts to protect his good name, Angel has treated her unjustly, and she finally expresses this to him. Her letter reflects a new direction, and her anger confirms she cannot remain as she has been. Foreshadowing Tess's future is Alec's relating the story of the d'Urberville coach—a bad omen indeed.

When her siblings are left sleeping at the family tomb, however, she sees no other paths to follow. She has endured privation when it was only she, but now she has the full weight of her family's safety and care. At this point Tess wishes for death.

Much like the rape and the birth of her child, Tess's acceptance of the bargain offered by Alec—care of her family in exchange for giving of herself—is not shown on the page. These three events, the hardest of Tess's experiences, occur between lines, or between sections. It is as though Hardy wants to protect the reader from the worst of what befalls Tess; we see only the fallout, not the tragic event itself.

Phase the Seventh, Chapters 53–54

Summary

Phase the Sixth, Chapter 53

Haggard and skeletal, Angel returns to his parents' house and asks if there are any letters. They give him the last letter from Tess, and he despairs she will not be reconciled to him. He expected an easy reconciliation, but on reading her letter he thinks it best to let her know he has returned. Thus he writes to Joan Durbeyfield, who responds to his initial inquiry informing him the family no longer lives in Marlott, and Tess is not living with them.

While waiting for more information, which Joan has promised him, Alec finally receives the long letter Tess sent when she was at Flintcomb-Ash, begging him for help. He asks his father if Tess has applied for money; when the answer is negative he realizes that her pride may have ended up placing her in a desperate situation and decides to set off to find her. His mother is upset to see him exerting himself over a mere "child of the soil," but he tells her of Tess's aristocratic lineage. As he is preparing he receives the letter from Izz and Marian informing him of Tess's dire situation and state of mind.

Phase the Sixth, Chapter 54

Angel goes to see Joan Durbeyfield in person and to ask again where to find Tess. He notes that a headstone—a significant expense at the time—has been erected for Tess's dead father, and that Joan, when he meets her, is respectably dressed. Joan is reluctant to tell him Tess's whereabouts, and when he offers financial help she says they are provided for. Eventually she reveals Tess is living in Sandbourne, although she doesn't know her address.

Analysis

The arrogance of Angel's position and sense of entitlement are a stark contrast to Tess's situation. He expects ease at reclaiming his wife. His general comfort as a man and a person of financial security has made him wholly unable to think beyond his own perspective. This attitude is exceptionally clear in that he does not seem to grasp the importance of the grave marker being paid for or Tess's family being secured in a home with comforts. There is no visible means of support for a woman with five children, and this does not alarm him. His arrogance and entitlement toward Tess seem equal to Alec's, even if Angel is less sarcastic and less sinister. And Alec has pursued Tess for a long time, never giving up, whereas Angel gave up after a few minutes, rigid and small minded. If he is moral, he is unjust; if Alec is immoral, he is steadfast in his attachment to Tess.

Moreover, Angel has neither asked if his parents have provided for his wife nor thought to send her more funds himself—in over a year. She is supposed to be in the degrading position of begging her husband and his family for money. While Angel may not be rich, he obviously has not known poverty or understood the reality of it for people like the Durbeyfields. This behavior reflects a pervasive attitude of the middle class of the era, and Hardy incorporates it realistically. Even Angel's mother feels that a "child of the soil" is less worthy of Angel's concern, when it is more likely that a poor and uneducated person would be more vulnerable. It is far easier to look at the poor and assume their failings result from low morals when the reality of desperate poverty is outside the scope of understanding, as it clearly is for Angel and his family.

Phase the Seventh, Chapters 55–56

Summary

Phase the Seventh, Chapter 55

Angel is surprised when he finds Tess in a wealthy area of Sandbourne, a resort town on the English Channel. When he finds out where she lives, he assumes she must be a servant in one of the lodging houses; when her landlady answers the door and he realizes she is a tenant, he tells himself she must have gotten hold of and sold the diamond jewelry. But Tess, when he sees her, is richly dressed and beautiful; her hands are no longer rosy from hard work. She is cold toward him and tells him "it is too late." He asks whether she rejects him because of his health, and tells her he has come for her, adding his parents will welcome her. She continues to insist he is too late; when she wrote to him begging for him to return, he did not come. Alec, she finally reveals, won her back to him by convincing her that Angel had abandoned her forever. Angel, stunned, does not even notice when she leaves the room, and he somehow finds himself walking down the street.

Phase the Seventh, Chapter 56

The chapter introduces Mrs. Brooks, the landlady to Mr. and Mrs. d'Urberville, who is intrigued enough by her tenant's guest to go listen through the lock after Angel leaves. She hears Tess wailing in despair, accusing Alec of depriving her of her husband forever, and frantic that Angel, who is clearly in poor health, will die from the shock.

Mrs. Brooks observes Tess depart and then resumes sewing. When she leans back in her chair, she sees a giant red heart in the white of her ceiling. She touches it and thinks it is blood. Unwilling to go into the room, she retrieves a workman from the street and lets him into the rooms. The man returns to report a gentleman has been stabbed in bed. Numerous people, including a surgeon, are summoned. The report is the wound is small but to the heart—and fatal.

Analysis

For all of her stalwart adherence to morality, Tess has made a devil's bargain. She has sold herself for the good of her family. She has also given way to Alec's vision of the world, not to her own, and Angel's return, which shows her she would have been right to be patient and faithful, shatters her. Readers can weigh the motivations for her final acts. The author establishes the possibility that murder is indeed part of her heritage—the d'Urberville coach exists because one of her noble ancestors either committed a murder or was murdered in it. The color symbolism of the heart-shaped blood stain on the white ceiling echoes Tess's red ribbon and white dress and the white rooster with the red comb who crowed in the afternoon: omens

of disastrous events: rape, abandonment, and murder.

The author also reinforces the theme of fate in determining events in Tess's life. No matter what she does, trouble falls in her path. At the moment when her father learned of the family's heritage and went to the pub to celebrate, the wheels of Tess's fate were set in motion. No matter how she tries to resist sin and be virtuous, she is powerless. Men treat her badly, events conspire to put her in situations in which she has no intentions to be in, and her docility and pride prevent her from determining her own course.

Readers might infer the censure of a society that judges her for being "fallen" even though she has not chosen to sin and has made it impossible for her to overcome the consequences of that judgment; this reading determines the novel as fatalistic. Readers might believe, instead, the burden of poverty and lack of support systems—resulting from the fractured family, religious judgment, spousal abandonment, or some combination thereof—mean she has run out of options; this reading determines the novel as a work of social realism. Hardy does not offer a simple answer to why Tess becomes a murderer. What he has provided are multiple reasons that could have led to this tragic situation.

Phase the Seventh, Chapters 57–59

Summary

Phase the Seventh, Chapter 57

Angel, in shock, goes to his hotel, where he receives a note informing him his brother Cuthbert will marry Mercy Chant. After Angel leaves the hotel and the town, Tess overtakes him.

Tess has killed Alec. She feared she would do it when she struck him with her glove some time ago. Alec has wronged her, and she says he's wronged Angel through her. She continues to explain she was obliged to go to Alec only because Angel left her. Now she forgives Angel all the same. Angel has a mixed reaction. On one hand he is horrified by her actions, but on the other he is awed she did so for love of him. He promises not to desert her and to protect her. They go away together, although it is clear that neither imagines that a permanent escape or a life together will be possible. They are simply taking a short interlude of time together, before the worst happens.

Phase the Seventh, Chapter 58

For five days Angel and Tess are together; they shelter in a vacant house, which is visited occasionally by a caretaker. They realize that it's time to move on; Angel momentarily conceives the desperate notion of escaping by ship, but Tess knows her life is almost over. Looking for a place to rest, they end up at Stonehenge, and although Angel points out they could be visible for miles, Tess wants to stay. She refers to herself as a heathen, and stretches out on a stone Angel thinks is an altar.

During this time she asks him to look after her sister, Liza-Lu, when she is gone. When he agrees she asks him to marry Liza-Lu, saying she has the best of Tess without the bad. He points out that marrying his sister-in-law is technically illegal, but she tells him that many people do it anyway. When Tess asks if he thinks they'll meet again after death, he does not answer.

Then she sleeps, and while she is asleep the authorities come. Angel implores them to let her finish sleeping in peace. When she wakes she says she is ready, that happiness could not have lasted, and they take Tess.

Phase the Seventh, Chapter 59

Angel and Liza-Lu are walking hand in hand out of Wintoncester, the capital city of Wessex. A black flag is raised over an ugly building, indicating that an execution has been carried out, and the narrator notes that "'Justice' was done." The pair sink down to the ground, overcome, but ultimately rise up and walk on, holding hands.

Analysis

Tess's nap on the altar at Stonehenge is an arresting image: the idea seems to be that this young woman, who has been pushed toward a violent act by desperate circumstances, is about to be sacrificed to the Victorian gods of social propriety, classism, and misogyny. Although Tess has committed murder

voluntarily, the reader knows enough to see that empathy is called for, since Tess has been burdened by poverty, oppressed by a sin not of her own doing, and pushed to submit to the priorities of others. To punish only the final act of murder, and none of Tess's wrongdoers along the way, cannot be "justice."

Does this excuse murder? Hardy does not imply lack of responsibility. Tess has a few brief days of happiness, but she does not escape to a different life where she and Angel can build a future. To do so would be out of character, for Tess accepts responsibility even for wrongs done to her, in which she herself has had no part. Angel believes a future may exist for them away from England, but much like his ignorance about the reality of poverty and the powerlessness of women, his belief is misguided and innocent. Tess does not expect to find the future he proposes; if she did she would not ask him to marry her sister, and she makes no concerted effort to hide from the authorities.

What Tess seems to find, to some degree, is peace. She has made it as Angel once said—if the man whom Angel believed to be more her husband by right of taking her virginity were dead, things would be different. Tess caused that to be true. They are able to be truly man and wife—by everyone's definition—for a few brief days. In the same way that Hardy has shielded the reader from some of the most difficult moments of Tess's life—the physical rape, the birth of the child, the final surrender to Alec—he now reveals nothing about Tess's execution, although she would almost certainly have been hanged.

The final chapter incorporates elements of the pastoral as well, as Angel and Liza-Lu, outside the walls of the city where the execution takes place, surrounded by yews and evergreens, are able to bend down to the earth in prayer.

The novel also sets forth the likelihood that Angel will provide for Tess's family; he is with Liza-Lu, who resembles Tess in looks and character, although she is "slighter"—Hardy famously hints that Tess is full figured and large bosomed, features associated with sexuality. It appears that Angel may have regained his faith, as he kneels in prayer when Tess dies. Although Hardy does not offer a happy ending, he does set things in order for the surviving characters.

“” Quotes

"Don't you really know, Durbeyfield, that you are the lineal representative of the ancient and knightly family of the d'Urbervilles ... ?"

— Parson Tringham, Phase the First, Chapter 1

Parson Tringham's revelation of the family lineage is the start of everything that goes wrong for Tess Durbeyfield. Her father's drinking to celebrate means Tess must take the hives to market, even though she has not slept. The ill-fated trip leads to the death of the horse, which leads to Tess's parents sending her off in hopes of her marrying well or gaining money from the d'Urbervilles.

"'But I don't want anybody to kiss me, sir!' she implored, a big tear beginning to roll down her face, and the corners of her mouth trembling in her attempts not to cry."

— Tess Durbeyfield, Phase the First, Chapter 8

Alec d'Urberville regularly accuses Tess Durbeyfield of being a temptress, and later, she is accused by Angel Clare of being a flirt. However, Tess is neither. At the time of Alec's initial interest, she is a teenager. Only 16 years old, Tess was not prepared to handle Alec's advances, nor was she doing anything to encourage them.

"I was born bad, and I have lived bad, and I shall die bad in all

probability. But, upon my lost soul, I won't be bad towards you again, Tess."

— Alec d'Urberville, Phase the Second, Chapter 12

Alec d'Urberville admits he was in the wrong, but his admission does not change anything practical. In fact when Tess Durbeyfield encounters him several years later, he again pursues her. His integrity is absent, even after he has found religion. Alec's "badness" is oddly conditional, however: although his attempt to pressure her by offering to provide for her family is appalling, he actually remains steadfast toward her—unlike Angel Clare, who deliberately abandons her.

"Why didn't you tell me there was danger in men-folk? Why didn't you warn me?"

— Tess Durbeyfield, Phase the Second, Chapter 12

In this moment Tess Durbeyfield is aware her mother—and likely her father—knew the danger of her going to work for Alec d'Urberville. Her mother's desire to find a quick way to money meant she chose not to prepare Tess. Would such warnings have mattered? Perhaps not with a man like Alec. However, Joan Durbeyfield sent her daughter out to the wolves with no defenses at all.

"Suppose your sin was not of your own seeking?"

— Tess Durbeyfield, Phase the Second, Chapter 13

Tess Durbeyfield is asking the question many thinkers were asking—and one modern readers often struggle with. How can she be judged when she did not choose to sin? She did not seek out or consent to sex outside of marriage. The decision was not hers, and yet she is considered guilty of it all the same.

"The baby's offence against society in coming into the world was forgotten by the girl-mother; her soul's desire was to continue that offence by preserving the life of the child."

— Narrator, Phase the Second, Chapter 14

Initially Tess Durbeyfield was unhappy about her son, for obvious reasons. However, it was not the child's fault. Tess's love for her baby starts to outweigh the circumstances of his birth and proof of her status as "fallen"; she wants him to thrive. But he does not, and she finds herself choosing to act heretically to save his soul.

"'Was once lost always lost really true of chastity?' she would ask herself."

— Tess Durbeyfield, Phase the Second, Chapter 15

Tess Durbeyfield, for all of her simple upbringing and age, is contemplating a complex question. Is she irredeemably impure since she is "fallen"? This is, in essence, the question Hardy is asking by writing the novel. Moreover, he has answered it by choosing "A Pure Woman" as the subtitle.

"All the while they were converging, under an irresistible law, as surely as two streams in one vale."

— Narrator, Phase the Third, Chapter 20

Despite Tess Durbeyfield's decision never to marry, she is drawn to Angel Clare, and he to her. Hardy's wording here ties

that attraction to fate as well as to nature. Some things are, simply put, unavoidable in the fatalistic logic espoused in the novel.

"It is that this sound of a non-existent coach can only be heard by one of d'Urberville blood, and it is held to be of ill-omen to the one who hears it. It has to do with a murder, committed by one of the family, centuries ago."

— Alec d'Urberville, Phase the Fourth, Chapter 33

The legend of the d'Urberville coach is one of the superstitions in the novel. This one ties directly to the idea that there was a murder by a d'Urberville, and the novel ends with a murder by another d'Urberville. This story, as well as those told by Dairyman Crick, is not simply a story but foreshadowing in the novel and lessons within the story for Tess Durbeyfield herself.

"You were more sinned against than sinning, that I admit."

— Angel Clare, Phase the Fifth, Chapter 35

Angel Clare acknowledges Tess Durbeyfield is a victim. In this he agrees with a segment of society that says a victim ought not to be held to the same censure as a woman who "fell" on purpose. Despite this affirmation, however, Angel rejects and abandons Tess.

"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."

— Angel Clare, Phase the Fifth, Chapter 36

This comment foreshadows the novel's conclusion. Angel Clare has plainly stated he cannot live with Tess Durbeyfield—although they are married—because of Alec d'Urberville. He subscribes to the idea that marital relations are what make Alec, the man who raped her, her husband. To modern readers this idea of sex and marriage may seem extreme, but it is biblically accurate, which may factor into Angel's thinking.

"O, will you go away—for the sake of me and my husband—go, in the name of your own Christianity!"

— Tess Durbeyfield, Phase the Sixth, Chapter 46

Tess Durbeyfield is well aware Alec d'Urberville is relentless when he wants something. She has experienced it firsthand. It is the reason she lost her husband (theoretically), and it has haunted her for years. Tess is four years older now, and she appeals to his recent religious conversion in the hope it will make him go away.

"The oblong white ceiling, with this scarlet blot in the midst, had the appearance of a gigantic ace of hearts."

— Narrator, Phase the Sixth, Chapter 51

The stain of Alec d'Urberville's blood is heart shaped. This detail is somewhat melodramatic, but readers should keep in mind Hardy's novels were initially published as serials. Although the novel was not serialized in full, some sections were. This image also underscores the color symbolism of red and white. The red stain on a white background echoes the red ribbon in Tess's hair when she first appears as an innocent teenager in a white dress.

"Never in her life—she could swear it from the bottom of her soul—had she ever intended to do wrong; yet these hard judgments had come."

— Narrator, Phase the Seventh, Chapter 57

Thinking Angel Clare has judged her as so many others have, Tess Durbeyfield faces the reality that her actions are not responsible for the wrongs she has been judged for committing. She has been judged repeatedly despite her innocence. Her family has judged her, as have townsfolk. The parson has judged her and refused to give her son a Christian burial. Even after professing love, Angel has judged her. Through it all Tess has continued to try to do right, but her actions have not changed the way others see her.

"I do love you, Tess—O, I do—it is all come back!"

— Angel Clare, Phase the Seventh, Chapter 57

Angel Clare can forgive murder, but he cannot forgive Tess Durbeyfield for having been raped. The importance of physical purity is clear—it is more important even than an act that causes genuine harm. However, Angel also has expressed more than once that Tess regarded him as if he were godlike. She has just killed a man to be with him.

Symbols

Hair

Loose hair was a symbol of the so-called fallen women in the Victorian era. When Tess exchanges words with Car, separating her from the group and into Alec's clutches the night of the rape, the argument starts with someone mistaking the treacle pouring down Car's clothing: "'Tis her hair falling down." Car's morals are questionable as one of Alec d'Urberville's favorites.

Later when Tess is in the field with the others, the narrator notes that strands of her hair fell out from under her bonnet. When she baptizes her son, Tess is again noted as having fallen hair. "Her figure looked singularly tall and imposing as she stood in her long white nightgown, a thick cable of twisted dark hair hanging straight down her back to her waist." She is wearing white, a symbol of purity, but her hair is loose. Tess is, by Victorian standards, fallen, but Hardy symbolically and textually argues she is still pure. Just before Tess tells Angel her secret, the narrator notes her hair is loose. Later when Alec watches Tess in a field, Izz mentions her hair is "tumbling down." When Angel finds Tess at Sandbourne, she has been in the middle of dressing her hair: part of it is up but the other part falls over her shoulders, suggesting the fallen status underlying her respectable appearance. Loose hair means loose morals.

Water

Water is symbolic of purity. Like the white nightdress Tess wears for her son's baptism, the water with which she baptizes him is a sign of purification. "Here she dipped her hand into the basin, and fervently drew an immense cross upon the baby with her forefinger, continuing with the customary sentences as to his manfully fighting against sin, the world, and the devil, and being a faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end."

Later when Tess is going to church with Izz, Marian, and Retty, the group encounters Angel Clare "advancing along the lane towards them through the water." He carries the women across the flooded ground. "He came beneath them in the water, which did not rise over his long boots; and stood looking at the entrapped flies and butterflies." After carrying her last, he declares himself to Tess. In the pure flowing water, he says, "Three Leahs to get one Rachel." His reference is to the biblical figure of Leah, the woman Jacob married before he could marry her sister, Rachel. This event is notable because Tess is not necessarily purified by the water.

This moment is partly recreated on the night after Tess reveals her past to her husband. He sleepwalks, carrying her through a

river to a grave where he deposits her. Tess considers letting the river carry them both away where they will be dead but together, their sins purified.

On that same night before the telling of secrets, Angel touches her hand, entangling their fingers while both wash "their hands in one basin." "Which are my fingers and which are yours?" he asks. "They are very much mixed." The symbol of water as a purifier, or purifying ritual, is apparent here as it cleanses them together, seemingly echoing the wedding ceremony in uniting them as both wash away past transgressions. Tess's response—"They are all yours"—is telling in that Angel's sins, not hers, will be washed away.

Red and White

The colors of red and white are contrasted throughout the novel. Tess is often described as wearing white, a color associated with purity. At key points in the story, red is used to draw attention to sexuality. When Tess is initially described, she stands out because she wears "a red ribbon in her hair ... the only one of the white company who could boast of such a pronounced adornment." Tess also is described initially as having a "pouted-up deep red mouth."

When Tess is in Alec's carriage, she is noted, again, as wearing white. The house at Trantridge is "crimson brick." Alec's cigar has a red tip, and he feeds her red strawberries. After Tess leaves Trantridge, she encounters a man painting warnings in red paint. Her continued purity is challenged by red that contrasts with her white clothing or white surroundings. Even as she baptizes her son, she is wearing white.

Red and white appear together as part of an ill omen on Tess and Angel's wedding day. The cock crowing in the afternoon is "the white one with the rose comb." Red is also highlighted in the moment before Tess finally tells Angel of her past: "Imagination might have beheld a Last Day luridness in this red-coaled glow, which fell on his face and hand, and on hers, peering into the loose hair about her brow, and firing the delicate skin underneath."

The most striking red, however, is the scarlet heart-shaped stain of Alec's blood after Tess stabs him in the heart. It echoes the perversion of Tess's original purity in her first appearance in her white dress and red bow. Here it is blood on the ceiling of a greedy landlady's well-furnished house in which Tess is living as a rich man's mistress.

Themes

Pride

Tess, from the outset, is described as having pride. When her father is mocked, she loses her temper over the insult because "Tess's pride would not allow her to turn her head again, to learn what her father's meaning was, if he had any." Tess begins with pride as a positive trait, but it becomes something of a hindrance, leading her into destitution when she refuses to compromise by asking for the Clares' help, which Angel arranged for.

Tess's father's extreme pride leads him to respond to the discovery of their ancestry by spending money they can't afford and drinking so that Tess and her brother—both barely awake—are left to complete the work he fails to do. This leads to the death of Prince, their horse. The same pride over the discovery of their ancestry leads Mr. and Mrs. Durbeyfield to send Tess into Alec's clutches. Tess's pride makes her seek work rather than a handout, for "Tess's pride made the part of poor relation one of particular distaste to her."

It is not only the Durbeyfields who are guilty of pride. Angel's pride is stung by Tess's past, although he too comes to their marriage with a secret. His reaction, and the pride that won't let him stay and work things out, sends him away to Brazil, causing the ruin of Tess's life.

After Angel leaves, Tess lets pride keep her from returning to the employ of the Cricks as well as seeking money from Mr. Clare. Furthermore, she gives her money to her parents rather than admit she has no further funds, taking "twenty-five of the fifty pounds Clare had given her, and hand[ing] the sum over to her mother, as if the wife of a man like Angel Clare could well afford it, saying that it was a slight return for the trouble and humiliation she had brought upon them in years past." Tess's pride causes a duality in her character: for one so honest and moral, her exaggerated sense of pride impels her to

perpetuate a lie and causes hardship for herself and others. Indeed when the hardship is no longer bearable, she ignores her pride and demeans herself, according to her own moral standards, far more than seeking money due her as Angel's wife.

Fate

Fate, or destiny determined by a power beyond an individual's control, is a clear and pervasive theme in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.* No matter what Tess attempts, trouble follows and impedes her. From the moment her father learned of the family's heritage and went to the pub to celebrate, the wheels of Tess's fate were set in motion.

Seemingly random events—the pub, the beehives, the dead horse—happen on the day on which the Durbeyfields learn that they are d'Urbervilles. It is as if awareness of their ancestry sets their fate into motion. It is fate, or predestination, that Tess cannot escape.

In fact the narrator implies the crime Tess suffered at Alec's hands may have been her fate because of her ancestors. "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." At the same time the narrator opposes the idea that although "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." The acknowledgment is that her fate is unjust, but fate has little to do with justice.

Fate is also addressed in more subtle ways. Tess's goals are out of reach because of fate. "She had hoped to be a teacher at the school, but the fates seemed to decide otherwise." In reality the obstacles she initially faces—her family's poverty and her father's drunkenness—are fated. She was born into this family, and their situation is out of her hands. She may strive to change the course of her life, but the novel sets forth the idea that fate cannot be overcome.

Tess also looks at other characters' fate rather than merely bemoaning her own. When hearing of Retty's attempted suicide and Marian's drinking after Angel and Tess married, Tess is critical of their treatment by fate. "They were simple and innocent girls on whom the unhappiness of unrequited love had fallen; they had deserved better at the hands of Fate." But Tess, too, believes their actions are fated—they had no choice other than what they have done. To accept fate in such a way indicates determinism, that individuals have no control over their actions. And this is more or less Hardy's belief.

Ultimately the most direct statement about the inevitability of fate is made when Jack Durbeyfield dies: "Thus the Durbeyfields, once d'Urbervilles, saw descending upon them the destiny which, no doubt, when they were among the Olympians of the county, they had caused to descend many a time," says the narrator. And "severely enough, upon the heads of such landless ones as they themselves were now." Fate has dealt cruelly with the Durbeyfields, and whether or not it is a visiting of the "sins of the father," this final act of fate in Tess's life is the one that takes away her ability to follow her sense of morality. Responsibility for her family, foisted on her when her father dies, causes her to accept the only path left to her for providing for them. Accepting Alec's offers results in his fate—death—at her hands, much as in the legend of the d'Urberville coach, where the sound of an invisible coach serves as a bad omen.

Injustice

The theme of injustice pairs with both pride and fate. There is little justice in the lives of the rural classes in Hardy's novel. However, the leisure to ponder such things is not theirs to have. At Farmer Groby's farm, they "worked on hour after hour, unconscious of the forlorn aspect they bore in the landscape, not thinking of the justice or injustice of their lot." The ability to ponder such questions is a privilege that comes with financial security and leisure.

Conversely, for all his weaknesses Angel does consider what is fair and just in his courtship of Tess, even if he misjudges this. He is aware she is powerless because of her gender and economic status; therefore he treats her more justly than anyone else has done. "Their condition of domiciliary comradeship put her, as the woman, to such disadvantage by its enforced intercourse, that he felt it unfair to her to exercise any pressure of blandishment which he might have honestly employed had she been better able to avoid him." Indeed, even

after abandoning her unjustly, he thinks about being fair, becoming "weary and anxious" and wondering "if he had treated her unfairly." Whether these thoughts redeem him is another matter.

Any question he has on the matter is one Tess can answer when she reaches the end of her endurance and "a sudden rebellious sense of injustice caused the region of her eyes to swell with the rush of hot tears." Angel has abandoned her unfairly and has added to the many difficulties she has had to face. She writes to him eventually to tell him "You are cruel, cruel indeed! I will try to forget you. It is all injustice I have received at your hands!"

For Tess there has been no fairness, no justice. Hardy emphasizes this at the conclusion of the novel. "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess."

Purity and Fallen Women

The theme of purity and its inversion, fallen women, is central to the novel. Tess strives to maintain her purity, but it is under attack from the moment she meets Alec. However, the text hints at this from the first sight of Tess—in a white dress with a red ribbon. She is presented as "pure" (white dress), but there is a hint of sexuality (red ribbon). This is further addressed when Tess meets Alec—and he tucks flowers in her dress and feeds her red fruit (strawberries). Her initial appearances do not convey an awareness of the threat to her purity; however, a reader of the era would have seen it.

When Tess is aware of the threats to her purity, she is defenseless. "'But I don't want anybody to kiss me, sir!' she implored, a big tear beginning to roll down her face, and the corners of her mouth trembling in her attempts not to cry" (Chapter 8). After she has been raped, she is at a loss as to how to address the matter. "Suppose your sin was not of your own seeking?" (Chapter 13). The question of purity is not only thematic in the text; it is also a theme, a social issue, and a driving force behind the novel.

As part of this theme, addressing the topic of marriage is inevitable. Alec, Angel, and Tess all ponder whether or not Alec is her rightful husband. As the man who ended her purity, the only way to regain it to any degree is via marriage to Alec. Tess fears that her impurity will be exposed by her very clothing. "Suppose this robe should betray her by changing color, as her robe had betrayed Queen Guinevere" (Chapter 32).

When Tess attempts to right the situation, to end her ties to Alec and rejoin her rightful husband, the novel flips the colors that were the initial symbolic representation of the theme of purity and fallen women. Early on Tess is in a white dress with a red ribbon, and as the inversion happens, the white ceiling is covered by a red stain.

Suggested Reading

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