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Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles: interpretations, evaluations and analyses since 1891

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Boston University

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Thomas Hardy's TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES: Interpretations, Evaluations and Analyses since 1891

by

Phoebe Forrestine Keeler
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Thesis

THOMAS HARDY'S TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES:
INTERPRETATIONS, EVALUATIONS AND ANALYSES SINCE 1891

by

Phoebe Forrestine Keeler
(A.B., Duke University, 1942)
submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts
1943
Approved by

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Second Reader  Thomas R. Nather  Professor of English
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INTRODUCTION

I have attempted to make as complete an examination as possible of all reviews, criticisms and comments in both England and America which have been made concerning Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* since its publication in November, 1891. Most of this material has been located through the aid of the recent bibliography of Thomas Hardy compiled by Carl J. Weber.

When I first began this study of *Tess*, I had hoped to present a continuous picture of the changing critical attitude toward the novel. I had been under the false impression that *Tess* had been received harshly by all critics and readers at the time of its publication and I had wanted to ascertain just when and why the attitude changed toward the novel. I had not gone far in my research, before I discovered that *Tess* was far from having had a cold reception from all reviewers. True, there were some bitter attacks, but there were some lavish praises from others. There has been at no time an agreement of opinion among critics of *Tess*, although after the attack
by George Moore in 1924 in which he classed *Tess* as a "Mother Goose" story, the novel has been generally conceded by most critics to have an established place in English literature.

After reading and re-reading the reviews and criticisms of *Tess*, I realized that there were certain approaches to *Tess* which were common to the majority of the criticisms. It became obvious that for understanding *Tess* and the critical background of the novel, it was advisable to break down the opinions expressed in *Tess* into certain categories. After making a checklist of all points brought out about the novel, I found that these items could be classed conveniently under six headings: 1) Interpretations, 2) "a Pure Woman" and the moral aspect of the novel, 3) Characterization of the supporting characters, 4) Setting and background of story, 5) Structure of story, and 6) Evaluations. As many critics expressed a like for some phase of *Tess* and a dislike for another, one can get a more complete picture of the critical background by this separation of the criticisms into their constituent parts. I have devoted a chapter to each of the topics.

The material is presented in each chapter chronologically as far as practicable. Each chapter is divided into four periods. The first period, 1891-1893, I have decided upon because during that time the first flood of reviews came. All the criticisms of these years were gathered either from periodicals or letters. In this period I have not always adhered to
chronology, because it was often impossible to tell by the date of the magazines, which one actually followed the other. The second period, 1893-1912, I have selected because during those years appeared the first critical studies of the whole of Hardy's novels. During this period his last novel *Jude the Obscure* appeared and also Hardy made his transition from prose to poetry. Not until 1912, however, with the critical study made by Lascelles Abercrombie was he considered seriously as a poet as well as a novelist. From 1893-1912, Hardy's powers as a magnificent story-teller were dwelt upon more than his powers as a philosopher and thinker. After Abercrombie's story there appeared an unending line of books on Hardy's life and works. Almost all of the comments on *Tess* since 1912 have been found in books on English literature in general and books on Hardy specifically, rather than in periodicals. The best dividing line between 1912 and the present was the year 1928, the year of Hardy's death. Thus, the last two period I have chosen were: 1912-1928 and 1928-1942. Between 1912 and 1928, Hardy was considered by most critics the greatest living English novelist. When he died, the critics began to get a perspective of his works as a whole; therefore, from 1928-1942, were found the more rational criticisms of Hardy and *Tess*.

In the first chapter I have endeavored to present the various interpretations which have been given of *Tess*. One of the favorite themes of the critics was trying to tell the reading public what Hardy's purpose had been in writing *Tess*.
and what ideas he had tried to inculcate. Oftentimes the critic gave what he considered the actual effect of Tess as well as the intended effect.

The second chapter deals with the most controversial theme in the criticisms; namely, the sub-title. It has been the literary debate of half a century whether Tess was a "pure woman." The opinions on this question were varied and they often involved the consideration of the whole moral aspect of the story. In this chapter I have set down all the opinions expressed on this subject as well as the sentiments concerning the artistic creation of Tess as a character.

The third chapter is devoted to discussion of the various views on the artistry of the presentation of all the supporting characters. I have included Angel Clare in this chapter, although he is what is popularly termed the "hero" of the story, because he is subordinate in the story to Tess, as are, indeed, all the characters.

As Hardy is connected in the mind of all who know his works with the Wessex country, it is only natural that consideration of Tess by the critics should include discussion of his description of this land and the way in which he so closely related the background of nature to the lives of his characters. Chapter five is concerned with this discussion.

The criticisms of Tess dealt also with the mechanical side of the novel: the style of Hardy's writing and the structure of his novel. Chapter six presents the various
opinions of the artistic or inartistic quality of certain scenes and incidents in *Tess* and the convincing or unconvincing nature of certain parts.

In the seventh chapter I have given the various evaluations of *Tess*. What different critics found was unique or new in fiction with the advent of *Tess* was included. Most of the chapter is concerning with the place of Tess among novels of other pens than Hardy's, as well as its position among his own novels.

Much more than the interpretations, evaluations and various analyses of *Tess* could be written about this novel. The history of the novel itself is an interesting story, which has been written about extensively in Carl J. Weber's *Hardy of Wessex* and was again reviewed by Harold Child in his article "Adventures of a Novel: *Tess* After Fifty Years" which appeared in the London *Times Literary Supplement* (July 5, 1941). Since the story of *Tess* "from serial to novel" has been adequately covered by others, no attempt is made to repeat the facts here. Neither have I touched upon the stage history of *Tess*, nor the interesting articles on the illustrations for *Tess*. In this study I am concerned only the the critical opinions expressed about the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* from its publication until the present day.

I have not included a detailed, formal conclusion since this study did not demand one, and since each point has been concluded throughout the various chapters.
CHAPTER I

INTERPRETATIONS

What Thomas Hardy had intended to accomplish in his novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and what impression he had desired his readers to have after completing the story were questions which have been much mooted by critics since the publication of the novel. Before giving the sundry interpretations of Tess which have found their way into print since 1891, it would be well to present what evidence there was of the author's own idea about his intentions. The first statement which Mr. Hardy made was in his explanatory note to the first edition:

... the story is sent out in all sincerity of purpose, as an attempt to give artistic form to a true sequence of things; and in respect of the book's opinions I would ask any too gentle reader who cannot endure to have said what everybody nowadays thinks and feels, to remember a well-worn sentence of St. Jerome's. "If an offence come out of the truth, better is it that the offence come than that the truth be concealed."

After the first rain of criticisms which greeted *Tess*, Thomas Hardy added a Preface to his fifth (English) edition in July, 1892, in which he answered some of his attackers and expressed
appreciation to the other reviewers—"by far the majority"—who welcomed his tale.

1891-1893

The earliest review of *Tess* appeared in *The London Speaker*, December 26, 1891. The critic believed that it had been the purpose of Thomas Hardy to present the ever-recurring problem of social conduct to us in a new aspect. "In all this he has done well, and the book is none the less valuable or the less to be praised because it is a daring and brilliant presentation of one side of the most difficult of our social problems."

The reviewer, however, remonstrated with the author for his inexorable following of Fate, although that was what made his treatment of the subject new. "New once does he falter as he leads his heroine from sorrow to sorrow, making her drink to the last drop of the cup of suffering. He is as remorseless as Fate itself in unfolding the drama of her life." Despite this, the critic found *Tess* powerful and valuable as a contribution to the ethical education of the world. He continued:

1 *The Speaker* (London), IV (December 26, 1891), 771.
2 Ibid., 771.
And yet the mere human reader, who knows of the sorrows but who would fain dwell in a brighter world than that of everyday life, cannot but utter a protest against the unredeemed sadness of this story, the lurid characters in which the dealings of fate with poor Tess of the D'Urbervilles are inscribed, the anguish and the horrors in which her young life comes to its appointed close . . . . The irresistible feeling is borne in upon the mind as one reads, that thus, and thus only could the life of Tess Durbeyfield have shaped itself; that when once she had suffered in her innocent youth the cruel wrong which changed her whole career, no other end was open to her than that which she ultimately reached.

After conceding that Mr. Hardy in Tess had told "an unpleasant story in a very unpleasant way," the critic of The London Saturday Review (January 16, 1892) questioned Mr. Hardy's accurate delineation of the purpose set forth in his preface:

He says that it "represents, on the whole, a true sequence of events"; but does it? The impression of most readers will be that Tess, never having cared for D'Urberville even in her early days, hating him as the cause of her ruin, and, more so, as the cause of her separation from Clare, whom she madely loved, would have died by the roadside sooner than go back and live with him and be decked out with fine clothes. Still, Mr. Hardy did well to let her pay the full penalty, and die among the monoliths of Stonehenge, as many writers would have done.

Like the critic of The Saturday Review, the reviewer of The New York Independent (February 25, 1892) decried Mr. Hardy's avowal of his aim:

It is sent forth as a presentation of truth through art.

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3 The Speaker (London), IV (December 26, 1891), 771.
4 The Saturday Review (London), LXXIII (January 16, 1892), 74.
5 Ibid., 74.
Accepting this as the author's aim we do not hesitate to say that he has violated the fundamental purpose of the art of fiction.

The end of all valuable art is to refine and ennoble while it attracts and entertains the human soul. A picture like this of Tess attracts and entertains; but it does not refine and ennoble.\(^6\)

This reviewer also criticized Mr. Hardy for having adultery as the dominant theme of the story. Although he admitted that "unholy love between man and woman" does exist, he resented a novelist's abandoning every other subject, such as "religion, philosophy, commerce," and showing, instead, "illicit intercourse between the sexes as the largest, most important and most interesting fact affecting society."\(^7\)

The reviewer for Blackwood's Magazine (March, 1892) did not attempt to define Mr. Hardy's motive in writing Tess. However, he did submit several questions for the reading public's consideration in arriving at their own interpretation:

Mr. Hardy's indignant anti-relltion becomes occasionally very droll, if not amusing. Against whom is he so angry? Against "the divinities," who are so immoral--who punish the Vices of the fathers on the children? Against God--who does not ask us whether we wish to be created; who gives us but one chance, &c. But then, if there is no God? Why, in that case should Mr. Hardy be angry? We know one man of fine mind whom we have always described as being angry with God for not existing. Is this perhaps Mr. Hardy's case? But then he should not put the blame of the evils which do not exist upon this imaginary Being who does not.\(^8\)

The critic of The Athenaeum (January 8, 1892) believed

\(^6\)The Independent (New York), XLIV (February 25, 1892), 276.
\(^7\)Ibid., 276.
\(^8\)Blackwood's Magazine (Edinburgh), CLI (March, 1892), 474.
Tess was an illustration of the philosophy of Huxley:

Prof. Huxley once compared life to a game of chess played by a man against an enemy, invisible, relentless, wrestling every error and every accident to his own advantage. Some such idea must have influenced Mr. Hardy in his narrative of the fortunes of Tess Durbeyfield. The accident of birth and the untowardness of circumstances conspire to lay her once and again at the mercy of a scamp, whilst her own struggles and inclinations are always toward honorable conduct. "As Tess's own people down in these retreats are never tired of saying among each other in their fatalistic way 'It was to be.' There lay the pity of it." In dealing with "this sorry scheme of things entire" Mr. Hardy has written a novel that is not only good, but great.

The reviewer of The London Spectator (January 23, 1892) saw the novel as an expression of Mr. Hardy's conception of a godless world:

Mr. Hardy has written one of his most powerful novels, perhaps the most powerful which he ever wrote, to illustrate his conviction that not only is there to Providence guiding individual men and women in the right way, but that, in many cases at least, there is something like a malignant fate which draws them out of the right way into the wrong way . . . . We confess that this is a story which in spite of its unrivalled power, it is very difficult to read, because in almost every page the mind rebels against the steady assumption of the author, and shrinks from the untrue picture of a universe so blank and godless,—Shelley's "blank, grey, lampless world."

In The London Bookman (February, 1892) the reviewer considered Tess as a passionate appeal to humanity. He found that Hardy had concerned himself deeply with the problem of

9 The Athenaeum (London), January 9, 1892, p. 49.
10 The Spectator (London), LXVIII (January 23, 1892), 121-122.
life and had explored the questions of theology and philosophy "with an 'anxiety' foreign to this generation." This critic believed that the first aim of Hardy was neither to upset nor to establish any system of theology or ethics, not did he try to deny the reality or the terror or the inevitableness of "the transgressor's penalty," instead his aim was:

a faithful presentment of one whom the writer judges to be a pure woman—a woman true to the idea of sex in his first book, "a child of pleasure, a woman in pain." The book is an argument for Tess—an argument steeped in passion, an argument by one who know that the coarse facts are against him and who does not try to hide them. He hopes by revealing the soul and the history behind the facts to win the reader's verdict, and his appeal is to humanity in every camp of thought. This critic though that Mr. Hardy would be much misunderstood if in the tragedy of Tess he were taken as dealing primarily with moral problems:

He appeals to the most rigid purists, to the most orthodox theologians. The dominant idea of present-day orthodox morality—"the woman pays"—is indeed adopted and enforced. But the history of Tess is the argument which Mr. Hardy addresses to his readers—perhaps half despairingly as far as they are concerning—certainly hoping nothing from the pedant or the Pharisee. For the lax or the prurient there is nothing here. The book is as pure as it is passionate . . .

11 The Bookman (London), I (February, 1892), 179.
12 Ibid., 179.
13 Ibid., 180.
Sir William Watson in The London Academy (February 6, 1892) interpreted Tess as a protest against laws of existence—both those which could be controlled by man and those which could not. He wrote that the great theme of the book was "the incessant penalty paid by the innocent for the wicked, the unsuspicuous for the crafty, the child for its father." The triumph of such wrong, Watson believed, provoked Hardy "to a scarcely suppressed declaration of rebellion against supermundane ordinance" that would decree or permit such spectacles. He continued:

The book may almost be said to revolve itself into a direct arraignment of the morality of this system of vicarious pain—a morality which as he bitterly expressed it, "may be good enough for divinities," but it "scorned by average human nature" . . . . In one way or another, this implicit protest against what he cannot but conceive to be maladministration of the laws of existence, the expostulation with "whatever god there be" upon the ethics of their rule, is the burden of the whole strain.15

Watson felt that not even the dullest reader could fail to recognize "the persistency with which there alternately smoulders and flames through the book Mr. Hardy's passionate protest against the unequal justice meted by society to the man and the


15 Ibid., 126.
woman associated in an identical breach of moral law." He believed that Mr. Hardy in his wrath at time seemed to forget that society was scarcely more unjust than nature. Hardy suggested no solution to the problems. He seemed content to make his readers pause, and consider, and pity. He proposed no means of escape to the problem which he presented "with such disturbing power" and clothed "with a vesture of such breathing and throbbing life."

Previous to Andrew Lang's attack on Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in *The New Review* (February, 1892), specific reference to Hardy's famous sentence "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in AEschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess," was not made. Lang wrote that this sentence aroused his "virtuous indignation." He exclaimed that he could not give adequate expression to his horror at such an insult to the Diety. Hardy in his preface to the fifth English edition answered this rebuke:

In the introductory words to the first edition I suggested the possible advent of the genteel person who would not be able to endure something or other in these pages. That person duly appeared among the aforesaid objectors. In one case .... In another place he was a gentleman who turned Christian for half-an-hour the better to express his grief that a disrespectful phrase about the Immortals should have been used; though the same innate gentility compelled him to excuse the author in words of pity that one cannot be too thankful for: 'He does

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17 Ibid., 126.
but give us of his best.' I can assure this great critic that to exclaim illogically against the gods, singular or plural, is not such an original sin of mine as he seems to imagine. True, it may have some local originality; though it Shakespeare were an authority on history, which perhaps he is not, I could show that the sin was introduced into Wessex as early as the Heptarchy itself. Says Glo'ster in Lear, otherwise Ina, king of that country:

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;  
They kill us for their sport.

Nine months after his first attack, Lang wrote once more against Hardy's novel, this time in answer to the new preface:

Mr. Hardy's argument is logical indeed. "I said from the first," he observes, "that the genteel person"—meaning the Snob—"would not like my book." Some people did not like my book, therefore they are genteel persons. Nothing can be more convincing. Then Mr. Hardy selects myself (as I signed my notice in the New Review), and he makes a reply which, I am sure, is only a petulant expression of annoyance, and does not seriously signify what it seems to signify. Mr. Hardy has no means of knowing what my private shake of theological dogma is. He cannot tell whether I am, as a matter of creed, a Christian or not. Nor can he really suppose that I, being, ex hypothesi, an unbeliever, pretended for half-an-hour to belief, in order that I might pick a hole in a phrase of his. The charge of so superflously playing the part of Tartuffe for a critical and literary purpose is comic or melancholy according to your humour. As Mr. Hardy says, he "exclaimed illogically against the gods" in the phrase, "The President of the Immortals (in AEschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess." This was the moral and marrow of his romance, as I supposed, and the phrase must seem equally illogical to an Atheist and a Christian, to a Buddhist and a Bonze. For nobody in his senses now believes in a wicked malignant President of the Immortals, whatever Glo'ster may have said in his haste while Ina was a monarch of the West Saxons. No; one need not be a Christian, before resenting a comment on the "President of the Immortals" which is confessed to be illogical, and which—if Mr. Hardy does not believe in a malignant "President"—is insincere and affected.18

In December of 1892, D. F. Hannigan defended Hardy against this second attack of Lang. He wrote that Hardy was an exceedingly modest author and he refers to his book as an "unequal and partial achievement," and seems to be utterly unconscious of the fact that he has written one of the greatest novels of this century. What he tries to avoid is not disparagement but misrepresentation. . . . Really it is no wonder that the novelist should protest against the assumed wrath of the "gentleman who turned Christian for half-an-hour." 19

1893-1912

Lionel Johnson in his The Art of Thomas Hardy, which was the first critical analysis of Hardy, wrote that human life in the eyes of Thomas Hardy was too sacred a thing to be treated lightly. However, he felt that at times his passion seemed to break out in fitful phrases which impeded his story "without the justification of being solid argument." Johnson continued, "The Novels, which 'vindicate the ways of God to man,' are indeed wearisome: but fully as wearisome are those, which vindicate the ways of man to God." Johnson found that Tess contained too much "insinuated argument." He wrote that one could not accept Tess alone for its simple pity and moving

21 Ibid., 236.
passions, because through out the book the author had expressed his personal convictions in irony and in anger. Tess was, therefore, more than the history of a woman's life and death; it was also "an indictment of 'Justice,' human and divine."

"Either the story should bear its own burden of spiritual sorrow, each calamity and woe crushing out of us all hope, by its own resistless weight; or the bitter sentences of comment should be lucid and cogent." Johnson criticized Hardy for not defining his use of such terms as nature, law, society, justice. Johnson believed,

had Mr. Hardy denied himself all commentary, and left the story to carry its own moral into our hearts, I doubt, whether we should all have received quite the same moral: to prevent any such "perverse" resistance to his intended moral, Mr. Hardy has not denied himself the luxury, or perhaps the superfluity, of comments at once inartistic and obscure. The sincerity of the book is indubitable: but the passion of revolt has led the writer to renounce his impassive temper; and to encounter grave difficulties, in that departure from his wonted attitude toward art.

Johnson continued that he could not see in Mr. Hardy's indictment that the world was only a psychological phenomenon but a tangle of inconsistencies. Johnson thought that to Hardy "the First Cause is unsympathetic: nay, is fiendish, because

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22 Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (London: 1894), 246.
23 Ibid., 246
24 Ibid., 246.
the children suffer for the fathers; and sportive, because the fate of Tess was prolonged caricature of justice, ending in the supreme jest of violent death."

Annie MacDonnell stated in her book Thomas Hardy that the novelist had meant Tess to be a battleground. She believed that had he merely appealed to sentiment, had omitted the violent acts of the end and had made claims for Tess's loveableness, instead of her virtue, he would probably have carried all his readers with him and they would have been tender-hearted toward Tess instead of outraged. Instead, Hardy preferred to make war. The omission of the murder and its consequences would have left the problem stated, certainly, of the woman, undergoing her undue share of suffering; but Mr. Hardy does not feel his business stop at the statement of problems. He gives their working-out in individual lives. First he shows Tess as grievously wronged, and then how such wrong may be, by the meekest natures, thrown back with awful violence in the world's face, a fact worth exemplifying at the cost of readers' feelings.26

Miss MacDonnell did not believe that Hardy desired to substitute an easier code of conduct for the conventional one. On the contrary, she thought he had, "inferentially, adopted a harder one and a higher one than the world is likely to reach for some time," which was that purity, and the reverse, should be measured by the heart's intentions and desires. Miss

26 Annie MacDonnell, Thomas Hardy (New York: 1895), 59.
Macdonnell concluded her conception of Mr. Hardy's purpose in writing *Tess* by saying:

> Whether he has proved his case or not, he has, with more courage and chivalry than any other, thrown down his glove in defence of woman who, be she good or bad, in the particular catastrophe, always pays the whole penalty of suffering and disgrace. He has titled hard against conventions and rigid silences, and he has made himself be listened to. It is not pity he asks for *Tess*. Philanthropy has long pitied her. He would draw her "poor wounded name" from obloquy, and raise her to the level where the innocency of her intentions gives her a right to dwell. But if he claims justice rather than pity, he bestows pity on her abundantly himself, and on *Tess*, more than any other of his creations he has poured out his humanity.  

William Lyon Phelps in his Essays on Modern Novelists (1910) wrote that in *Tess* Hardy had issued defiantly the thesis "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented" and that his purpose in writing the novel was to defend that thesis.

Although Thomas Hardy and his novel *Tess*, were written about frequently between 1893 and 1912, the two critical studies of Hardy made by Johnson and MacDonnell and the essay on Hardy by Phelps represented the only attempts during this period to interpret *Tess*.

1912-1928

Lascelles Abercrombie stated in *Thomas Hardy* (1912) that

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Tess contained more of Hardy's personal feeling than any of his previous novels. In Tess Hardy not only presented objectively the struggle between the personal desires of humanity and the "unconcerned current of existence," as he had done in earlier novels, but besides setting forth this inevitable agony, he also judged it. Tess represented the working out, as far as it could be carried, of this "prime antagonism." It was worked out "simultaneously in artistic statement of life, and of the author's attitude to his own statement." It was, in fact, a modern version of the oldest and most unshakable of doctrines, the doctrine of original sin, which is "the fatal antinomy between man's nature and the divine impulse of the world." However, in this modern version, man was not punished because of his wilfully having gone against the nature of the divine world, although "it is certainly man's self-will that causes the antinomy." The answer to this seemingly paradoxical statement has been found in the quested "did man make himself self-willed?" Self-will was the center of man's personality and without it he was no longer man. His self-will seemed always to promise the accomplishment of some movement of his own, but it was for ever contradicted. "So the only final result of self-will for man is that the unrelenting motion of fate becomes a tyrannous agony; his continued existence is a tragedy without purpose and without end." The atmosphere of Tess is charged with a fierce indignation against the funda-
mental injustice of man's existence."\(^{29}\)

Harold Child in *Thomas Hardy* wrote that in the novels preceding *Tess*, Hardy had been implicit in presenting his views on life, but in *Tess* he became explicit. "He showed a lovely nature tortured by the action of circumstance--true; but circumstance working through the timidity and stupidity of man himself. And this timidity and stupidity he squarely arraigned." Judgments which Hardy had only implied before, he stated in *Tess*. "Although she was, in the common phrase, 'runied' when a very young girl, Tess might have lived a happy and beneficent life, had it not been for the sense of sin created in her by the collective timidity of society, and for the conventions that proclaimed her an outcast." These conventions were concentrated in her husband Angel Clare and they crushed her. Child believed that in *Tess* Hardy "brings definite charge against the collective judgment of society, which, in the belief that it can so protect itself, destroys some of its finest and most sensitive material."\(^{30}\)

\(^{29}\) Lascelles Abercrombie, *Thomas Hardy* (London: 1912), 135-137.

Mr. Child decried those who called *Tess* a pessimistic book. He on the contrary found it an optimistic book, for he wrote:

Tess was no towering heroine of huge desires; she was a simple, humble, homespun girl who asked only for a quiet happiness. But if homespun humanity can be so beautiful as this, can so love and endure and trust, may we not feel joy and pride? To go one step farther: when we contemplate all this beauty slowly ruined by causes that man himself has it in his power to remove, what results but a determination, ever more clearly and more widely formed, to remove them as soon as may be, to let no stupidity or timidity stand in the way of such virtue as human nature may realise? It can never be perfect virtue, it can never be perfect happiness; but there is the true optimism— not that which counsels man to hold off from what he may here and now achieve because it can never be perfect, or because, if he shrinks up from imperfect life now, he will someday enjoy perfect life; but that which proclaims to him his own strength and beauty, and shows him how, though limited in scope and always under the shadow of a destiny that cares not whether he be happy or unhappy, he may strip away artificial causes of misery and waste.31

H. C. Duffin in *Thomas Hardy* interpreted *Tess* as a "Soul's Tragedy." Thenovel revealed a "comprehension of the highest, most secret and dreadful mysteries of the soul." Duffin found that Hardy bore a close kinship to Shakespeare for he wrote the "the agony of Tess of the D'Urbervilles is a thing that could only have been handled by one other among men." He observed that in certain of the greatest tragedies of Shakespeare not only did the progress of the action bring doom upon the characters themselves, but it also worked a mysterious and far more terrible ruin in their souls. Each of the plays was a

"Soul's Tragedy." Duffin found that this quality of Shakespeare's plays was unique among Elizabethan Drama and that there was not another "Soul's Tragedy" in the rest of English literature until one reached Hardy. "To be crushed to death by lead or grief is nothing; for 'a pure woman' to be crushed into impurity--there is a Soul's tragedy that has no equal in horror."

Later Duffin wrote:

The tragedy of Tess is largely the outcome of two fatal incongruities. If Clare could have come before D'Urberville--and we remember how close he did come, at the dance on the village green--the book would never have been written; and if, having come late, his nature could have been almost anything other than what it is, we should have been spared "The Woman Pays." Oh yes! if these things could have been. But they could not, because they never are.

Very many people condemn Hardy for this constant and relentless satiric flogging of the gods. The novelist himself has told us of the 'gentleman who turned Christian for half an hour the better to express his grief that a disrespectful phrase about the Immortals... should have been used.' It is protested that continual dissatisfaction with life is impious. Hardy, and those who think with him, are admonished to make the best of what is given them, and not to grumble. To make the best of things is a matter of policy, not of reverence or religion; but that the second exhortation, not to complain, follows from the first, or is a necessary article in the creed of righteousness, appears in no wise to be true. Indeed, I should rather say that a certain discontent with the world is as sure a piece of internal evidence as we have of the divine nature of the soul, as distinguished from the mass of sluggish and slavish existences which, as far as we know, accept their half-loaf without a murmur. No mere part of the older of things could thus recognize and rebel against its imperfections.33

32 H. C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy (Manchester: 1916), 10.
33 Ibid., 111.
Duffin disagreed with those who considered *Tess* a tale too cruelly ugly for art. He admitted that it was an "absolute, aching tragedy" and that all tragedy was cruel. But he did not believe *Tess* was more cruel than *Lear* or than life itself. He believed, in fact, that the story ended happily, for he wrote:

Of what import is physical death? If one clearly understands the inner beauty of those few days before her capture--particularly the time spent in the empty house--one is bound gladly to admit that *Tess* did actually come into her well-earned inheritance of joy, and die in content.  

Although Mr. Duffin, upon occasion seemed far-reaching in his appreciation of *Tess*, the passage which followed the one just quoted showed that he could not for long retain an objective attitude of viewing *Tess* from only an artistic standpoint:

Nevertheless, the retributive agony through which she has previously lived is so great that I cannot abandon my conception of the novel as, in part, a powerful practical sermon addressed to women, on the text, "The Wages of Sin is Death," and a passionate exhortation to walk circumspectly.  

He admitted, however, that the chief impression left by the tale was one of sympathy and love for Tess. The summation of his interpretation of *Tess* was that it was a book which taught dread and a tolerance of sin at the same time.


35 Ibid., 171.  

36 Ibid., 172.
Lina Wright Berle in her *George Eliot and Thomas Hardy: A Contrast* stated briefly her conception of Thomas Hardy's *Tess*. She believed that to him Tess was "a creature formed for love and the gratification of love, forced by an inevitable and inexorable chain of circumstances into actions which have for centuries borne the disapprobation of the world." Thomas Hardy's whole thesis was "the essential blamelessness of woman under all the 'bludgeonings of chance.'"

Joseph Warren Beach in his *The Technique of Thomas Hardy* (1922), besides finding *Tess* "a struggle of weakness and innocence in the clutch of circumstance," wrote that in it Hardy's pathos culminated. In *Tess* Hardy enveloped human nature with his yearning tenderness. It was not merely Tess and her misfortunes that moved Hardy. He took "every opportunity of extending his compassionate regard to any creature within his view." He loved to write about minor solacements which people found for anxiety and pain. He enlarged more than once upon the comfort of strong drink, "which while it only serves in the long run to deepen trouble, yet for the moment creates an illusion of well-being." Hardy dwelt also on the healthier solace of nature to sore spirits. Concerning the solace Tess found in nature, Beach wrote:

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38 Ibid., 52.
40 Ibid., 215.
Hardy loves to think of Tess, in the time when she hid her shame, watching from under her few square yards of thatch, "winds, and snows, and rains, and gorgeous sunsets, and successive moons at their full." He loves to think of her as taking her solitary walk at the exact moment of evening "when the light and the darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraint of day and the suspense of night neutralize each other, leaving absolute mental liberty," when "the plight of being alive becomes attenuated to its least possible dimensions." And he must have taken a sad joy in her moment of satisfaction when she lay before day break upon the stone altar of Stonehenge... "I like very much to be here," she murmured. "It is so solemn and lonely--after my great happiness--with nothing but the sky above my face. It seems as if there were no folk in the world but we two..."

And so it is that the poet throws about his pitiful creatures the purple mantle of his compassion. And we can almost forget the pain of the story in its loveliness. The rage and indignation pass; the tenderness remains. And if we say, how pitiful! it is to say, in the next breath, how beautiful!41

George Moore in his Conversations in Ebury Street in one talk with Mr. Freeman discussed with much vehemence his dis- like of Mr. Hardy in general and Tess in particular. After hearing Mr. Moore's turgid discourse on the contemptibleness of many scenes in Tess, Mr. Freeman said:

The subject of your charge is that Mr. Hardy is often melodramatic; but I don't think any of his admirers would deny that he does, on occasion, avail himself of exaggerations, and in his defence they would speak of the three witches in Macbeth... and other Shakespearean examples. It seems to me that you are bringing into this criticism a great deal of your own temperament. You don't like melodrama, and you are right not to like it, for whenever you get an effect it is by understatement rather than overstatement; but that is not a reason why you should condemn a method which is employed by both Mr. Hardy and Shakespeare.42

41 Joseph Warren Beach, The Technique of Thomas Hardy (Chicago: 1922), 185.
42 George Moore, Conversations in Ebury Street (London: 1924; 1930), 83.
Moore defended his melodramatic interpretation of Tess by replying:

The charge is often brought against the critic that his admonitions are no more than a reflection of his own temperament. Of course, since all he sees, hears, feels, and knows, is but a reflection of his temperament. Like his author, he speaks out of himself. But I think my best answer to your defense of melodrama is that there is melodrama that rises into the empyrean, and melodrama unredeemed by poetry. The first walks with divine gait, in silken raiment and with the stars in her hair, whilst the other proceeds with shambling gait from ale-house to ale-house, shouting stories in broken English out of her husky throat of murder, arson, robbery, rape and vengeance. Shakespeare appeals to all the senses, it is true, but he never fails to appeal to the mind.43

Cornelius Weygandt in his A Century of the English Novel (1925) in his chapter on "The Mastery of Thomas Hardy" wrote that Tess of the D'Urbervilles was the most discussed book of Hardy, largely because of the challenge of its title page, "a pure woman faithfully presented." He believed that one should avoid attributing too much significance to the controversial nature of the story.

There is no doubt of its power, just as a story, to move us, to harass us, to break our hearts. Yet we cannot help realizing its trutural quality, that the fate of Tess is made to point a moral, the unhappiness that man has made for man through moral laws that clash with natural instinct. So great, however, is Hardy's power over our emotions that we forget the thesis in following the suffering of the driven girl.44

43 George Moore, Conversations in Ebury Street (London: 1924; 1930), 83-84.
1928-1942

The first critical study of Thomas Hardy to appear after his death was *Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist* written by Samuel C. Chew. He called *Tess* "a tale of calamity as old as human nature, or at any rate as old as social conventions, which is told with tender and sympathetic sincerity." Chew believed that Hardy's abandoning of his former objectivity and his becoming explicit in *Tess* might "have been prompted by the reception of former romances by a public that greeted him as a capital story-teller while refusing to recognize the substratum of philosophic implication." The impression that *Tess* leaves upon the "candid and clear-sighted reader" is one of power, insight, sympathy--and hopefulness. Chew maintained that Hardy desired the reader to draw the conclusion that passivity, quietism, was the only remedy for the ills of human life. The reader, however, would not come to that conclusion "for these evils are not inherent in the nature of things," but "are open to cure." Chew stated that a world was not altogether wrong that had in it such a place as Talbothays's dairy, and a woman of such "native loveliness of

46 Ibid., 59-60.
character as Tess, and, indeed, a man of such qualities as he who tells her story."

Patrick Braybrooke in his book Thomas Hardy and His philosophy wrote nothing very profound; indeed, his book has been called by Chew and Robert Kissack, "inane." Despite their opinions the book cannot be over looked even though Mr. Braybrooke did not seem to be sure just what he did think of Tess. His chapter on Tess was filled with such expressions as "to a certain extent," "in a sense," "it appears," but he stated with little definiteness his own interpretation of Tess.

He first wrote that "to a certain extent, in Tess of the D'Urbervilles Hardy appears to be writing something that might be a plea for a very sincere and uncompromising form of Atheism, or, rather a subtle and almost dangerous Determinism." After he had made this vacillating statement he enlarged upon it by pointing out that the author seemed to take a pleasure in upsetting the pious beliefs of "good people." Braybrooke then began to sermonize about Tess by writing, "Of course, Tess is a book that may be interpreted as Anti-Christian, but it will have the supreme merit of being Anti-Christian because Tess is treated by some power that has no apparent semblance

48 Patrick Braybrooke, Thomas Hardy and His Philosophy (London: 1928), 47.
whatever to the God who is said to have walked this earth in
the form of a despised Carpenter, a despised Carpenter who has
eluded those who have been most zealous in His service." 49
Not wanting to appear prejudiced, however, Brabrooke in the
following paragraph wrote that there was much to be said for
such a philosophy as Hardy's for he "is drawing a woman who
all through her life met nothing that could give the faintest
inkling of a beneficent power behind the universe." 50 Mr. Bray-
brooke shifted from one side to the other and gave only one
statement of his opinion of Tess which he did not preface with
"some think" or "they believe": "The whole affair is hopeless.
Hardy does not allow a single ray of light to make any attempt
to penetrate the thick darkness." 51

Arthur McDowall in Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study believed
that in Hardy's Tess the ethical preoccupation of the Victorian
novelists had disappeared, for Hardy accepted the universe as
one rather than the dualistic concept of the Victorians. "One
feels that he had a delicate sense for good and bad in life
and it reappears in the book, but the emphasis is decidedly
not laid there." 52 McDowall wrote that what made the Vic-

49 Patrick Braybrooke, Thomas Hardy and His Philosophy
(London: 1929), 47
50 Ibid., 47-48.
51 Ibid., 54.
52 Arthur McDowall, Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study (London:
1931), 32.
torian attitude so wearying was not so much that it was ethical --"which all art that deals with life seriously must be in some ways"--as that it restricted the moral reference. "Hardy's revolt was itself moral, and at moments Victorian in its downrightness." McDowall pointed out that the general effect of Tess was "that art speaks in its own right there, from and to the imagination, and there it has an austerity of its own for the pressure of doom threatens the independence of his men and women more than any purely moral conflict could." McDowall continued:

No other book of Hardy's is so plainly written from the heart. Instead of composing a story he seems to be writing out one that already belongs to him, and he forgoes certain restraints and elaborations. He is visibly less detached, more expressive of Tess's feelings and largely through that, more self-expressive. His intuition of one suffering and loveable figure abolishes most of the distance at which he usually stands from his character.  

Clive Holland wrote in Thomas Hardy, O.M. that Tess was more of a "brief for the inexorableness of Fate" than a story which taught any one a particular moral idea, even though that might be inferred was the novelist's intention from the sub-title, A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented. "It is painful with the stern reality of recorded facts rather than with that

53 Arthur McDowall, Thomas Hardy; A Critical Study (London: 1931), 32.
54 Ibid., 79.
of so-called realism clumsily introduced." Holland thought that although Hardy seemed to suggest once or twice during the story that Tess's misfortunes were the outcome of heredity and what was usually know as "the sins of the father," it was almost impossible to consider the book as a study of hereditary consequences. "There is too little indication of the life of her ancestors to allow one to trace heredity as clearly as one should to enable one to accept the conclusion of the book as in the first place inevitable, and in the second as accounted for by the theory of heredity."

Ernest A. Baker in The History of the English Novel found that in Tess Hardy's resentment of both the divine and human dispensations was as movingly expressed as the pathos. "The accusation view in force with the tragedy, defying all the canons of artistic reticence." Hardy seemed to go out of his way to denounce social iniquities "not only man's unjust justice, the inequality of lot, the blindness and stupidity, the unfairness that lets the man off lightly and blasts the woman, the entrenched conventions and prejudices that hamper the consciences of even the liberal-minded; but also the cal-

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55 Clive Holland, Thomas Hardy, O.M. Order of Merit, (London: 1933), 294.
56 Ibid., 295.
lousness that tortures and murders 'harmless feathered creatures' for sport, and the law that in a final insult flings 'unbaptized infants, notorious drunkards, suicides, and all others of the conjecturally damned,' into the shabbiest corner of the churchyard, where the docks and the nettles grow."

Hardy seemed to have many grievances and was constantly in the role of a special pleader. There was, however, no inconsistency in the position he took up for the dual nature of his resentments ultimately resolved itself into one: "celestial injustice with man's infirmities as its tool"

William R. Rutland in his book Thomas Hardy observed that since the publication of Tess there had been much discussion of its argumentive aspect. Rutland summed up succinctly his interpretation of Tess:

The argument, which proceeds out of exceeding bitterness of heart, is made up of two related, but quite distinct, elements. One is a grievance against the organization of human society; the other, a quarrel with the ordering of the universe. In both of them, it is the heart which argues rather than the mind.

Carl J. Weber in his Hardy of Wessex observed that in no novel preceding Tess had Hardy shown moral indignation at social injustice. He interpreted the story of Tess as "a plea

59 Ibid., 70.
for charity, for a larger tolerance, for a repudiation of social hypocrisy."

Henry Nevinson in *Thomas Hardy* centered his interpretation of *Tess* around the sentence "...the President of the Immortals, in AESchylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess," for he wrote:

That sort of the Immortals is revealed in the most tragic of all tales. Step by step those pitiless hunters pursue a lovable and highly-tempered woman to so terrible a climax that I can still hardly endure to follow the infernal chase to the very end. . . .

It is a tragedy of a persistent and evil fate. Aristotle, "the master of those who know," tells us that the purpose of tragedy is to purge our emotions by means of pity and fear. But, in my case, the pity, far from purging my emotions of excess, remains so intolerable that, as I said, I can still hardly endure to read the final destruction of such a soul and body. 62

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When one considers seriously the various interpretations of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* which have been presented, one sees that although the different critics have clothed their interpretations in widely divergent language, there are in reality only two main schools of thought. And each one might

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be said to have, allegorically speaking, a motto to guide him in his belief. The first so-called motto would be the subtitle of the book: "a pure woman faithfully presented." Although the controversy over Tess's purity will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, the subtitle played a large part in giving the critics a key to the underlying meaning of Tess. The second statement in the novel which influenced the critics' interpretation of Tess was no doubt the famous sentence in the concluding paragraph of Tess: "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess." Although only a few of the critics alluded specifically to this sentence, the interpretation of many of the critics implied reference to this statement.

The theme suggested by the subtitle, was first introduced by the critic of The Speaker who believed that Hardy had presented a problem of social conduct in a new aspect. The Saturday Review and The Independent, too, were influenced by the subtitle, but they did not believe Tess had been "faithfully presented." They criticized Hardy for an inaccurate delineation of the purpose he had announced. The Bookman thought Tess was an appeal to humanity. Annie MacDonnell maintained that the novel was a battle-ground for the defense of Tess and William Lyon Phelps believed that Hardy's purpose was to defend the thesis set forth in the subtitle. Harold
Child thought Hardy's purpose was to bring a definite charge against the collective judgement of society. This line of interpretation was continued by Carl J. Weber who wrote that *Tess* was the result of Hardy's moral indignation at social injustice.

During the first year following the publication of *Tess*, Andrew Lang was the only critic who made specific reference to Hardy's sentence about the President of the Immortals. But this sentence no doubt influenced Sir William Watson and the reviewers of *Blackwood's Magazine*, *The Athenaeum* and *The Spectator*. Sir William interpreted *Tess* as a protest against the laws of existence, both of man of nature. *Blackwood's Magazine* mooted the question was Hardy angry at God for not existing. In *The Athenaeum* the fatalism in *Tess* was pointed out and Hardy's philosophy was compared with that of Huxley. *The Spectator* thought *Tess* was the presentation of a godless world. Andrew Lang expressed his horror at Hardy's insult to the Diety.

Lionel Johnson maintained that *Tess* was an indictment of justice human and divine. Abercrombie, agreeing with Johnson, wrote that Hardy's purpose was to show his indignation against the fundamental injustice of man's existence. Duffin interpreted *Tess* as a Soul's Tragedy. In referring to the phrase "President of the Immortals," he, like D. F. Hannigan, defended Hardy from Andrew Lang's attack. He maintained that
discontent with the world was evidence of having the divine nature of the soul. Berle and Beach, somewhat combining the two interpretations, wrote that Tess showed the blamelessness of woman against chance. Weygandt, Baker and Rutland believed Hardy intended to show the conflict between man's laws and natural instinct or universal laws. Rutland gave an excellent explanation of Hardy's use of the phrase "President of the Immortals" which is worth quoting:

Now it is perfectly true that when Hardy translated the AEschylean phrase into "president of the Immortals," he did not, by those words, intend to signify what believers in a personal Deity signify by the word God. At the time when he wrote Tess he was no longer able to conceive the Prime Cause as a personal Deity; and to accuse him of blasphemy is, therefore, altogether beside the point. At the same time, his own explanation is not very helpful; for he was, when he wrote that famous sentence, doing much more than employing a mere figure speech. He was deliberately reviling, under the name "President of the Immortals," that which he afterwards came to call the Immanent Will.63

The latest interpretation of Tess, which was found in Nevinson's book, was completely colored by Hardy's AEschylean phrase and Nevinson pictured Tess as being pursued from beginning to the end by "pitiless hunters."

Thus, one sees that from the publication of Tess to the present day there have been two general interpretations of

63 William R. Rutland, Thomas Hardy, A Study of his Writings and Their Background (Oxford: 1938), 232.
the novel, although there have been variations and combinations of these two. One, that the novel was an indictment of the injustice of man's own moral and social laws; the other, that the novel was a treatise of indignation at the laws of the universe which were inexorable and beyond man's control.
CHAPTER II
"A PURE WOMAN" AND THE MORAL ASPECT OF TESS

When Thomas Hardy added "a pure woman faithfully presented" after the title Tess of the D'Urbervilles, he gave rise to some of the most heated comments of his day in the field of literary criticism. Of the many remarks and observations made in the reviews of Tess in the first year of its publication the discussion of the sub-title was the most prevalent. Whenever a critic discussed the heroine of the novel it was almost always in the light of her purity or impurity. Only a few of the early reviewers dealt with the artistic creation of Tess as a character of fiction.

1891-1893

The earliest reviewer of Tess (The Speaker, December 26, 1891) was among the early few who considered Tess as the conception of an artist's mind, for he wrote:
Never has he Hardy drawn a sweeter heroine than Tess .... We have said that, as a heroine, Tess will compare with any in Mr. Hardy's noble gallery. From the first moment at which she appears before us the reader is drawn toward her. But it is only after he has followed her through the greater part of her wanderings, in good report and evil, that he fully learns to know and love her. When he has finished the recital of her story, she is no longer the mere creation of the novelist's fancy, but a creature of flesh and blood, with noble instincts, high principles, and human infirmities, who appeal to us alike by her virtue and her misfortune.

The sub-title, however, did not escape the notice of this reviewer, although his discussion of it represented only a small portion of his article. Interestingly, this first criticism defended Mr. Hardy's title-page:

Mr. Hardy has called his story that of "a pure woman;" and no one will lay aside the book without feeling that he has rightly described it--though the purity of the heroine is not incompatible with a grievous fall, and with misfortune which in everyday life, and in society as it is now constituted, would have made her an outcast.

The second review appeared in The Athenaeum on January 9, 1892; again the reviewer seemed to agree with the epithet applied to Tess, for he wrote:

Tess her stands, a credible, sympathetic creature, in the very forefront of his Hardy's woman .... she is an imperfect women, nobly planned, who, like the geisha of the Japanese legend, has sinned in the body, but ever her heart was pure.

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1 The Speaker (London), IV (December 26, 1891), 770.
2 Ibid., 771.
3 The Athenaeum (London: January 9, 1892), 49.
The reviewer of The Athenaeum, however, went one step further and questioned the artistic value of the sub-title:

But was it needful that Mr. Hardy should challenge criticism upon what is after all a side issue? His business was rather to fashion (as he has done) a being of flesh and blood than to purpose the suffering woman's view of a controversy which only the dabbler in sexual ethics can enjoy. Why should a novelist embroil himself in moral technicalities? As it is, one half suspects Mr. Hardy of a desire to argue out the justice of the comparative punishments meted to man and to woman for sexual aberrations. To have fashioned a faultless piece of art built upon the great tragic model were surely sufficient. And, as a matter of fact, the 'argumentation' is confined to the preface and sub-title, which are, to our thinking, needless and a diversion from the main interest, which lies not in Tess, the sinner or sinned against, but in Tess, the woman.  

The reviewer of Blackwood's Magazine (March, 1892) questioned the consistency of Tess, if the reader was to consider her a "pure woman":

We have not a word to say against the force and passion of this story. It is far finer in our opinion than anything Mr. Hardy has ever done before...we do not object to the defiant blazon of a Pure Woman, not withstanding the early stain. But a Pure Woman is not betrayed into fine living and fine clothes as the mistress of her seducer by any stress of poverty or misery; and Tess was a skilled labourer, for whom it is very rare that nothing can be found to do. Here the elaborate and indignant plea for Vice, that it is really virtue, breaks down altogether. We do not for a moment believe that Tess would have done it. Her creator has forced the role upon her, which ought to make him a little more humble, since he cannot, it appears, do better himself...It is no use making men and woman for us, and then forcing them to do the last thing possible to their nature. If Tess did this, then Tess, after all her developments, was at twenty a much

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4 The Athenaeum (London: January 9, 1892), 50.
inferior creature to the unawakened Tess at sixteen who would not live upon the wages of iniquity; and thus two volumes of analysis and experience are lost, and the end is worse than the beginning—which after watching Tess through these two volumes, and following the progress of her thought much more articulately than she could have done herself, we absolutely decline to believe.5

The critic of The Quarterly Review (London) for April, 1892, questioned Mr. Hardy's usage of the phrase "a pure woman":

We are required to read the story of Tess (or Theresa) Durbeyfield as the story of "a pure woman faithfully presented by Thomas Hardy." Compliance with this request entails something of a strain upon the English language. . . . It is indisputably open to Mr. Hardy to call his heroine a pure woman; but he has no less certainly offered many inducements to his readers to refuse her the name.6

This reviewer like that of Blackwood's Magazine believed that the character of Tess did not represent a consistent study:

For the first half of his story the reader may indeed conceive it to have been Mr. Hardy's design to show how a woman essentially honest and pure at heart will, through the adverse shocks of fate, eventually rise to higher things. But if it were his original purpose he must have forgotten it before his tale was told, or perhaps the "true sequence of things" was too strong for him. For what are the higher things to which this poor creature eventually rises? She rises through seduction to adultery, murder and the gallows.7

In the New York Nation for April 28, 1892, as in The Quarterly Review, the definition of "pure" is disputed. The Nation reviewer, however, became more sarcastic in his view

5 Blackwood's Magazine (Edinburgh), CLI (March, 1892), 473-474.
6 The Quarterly Review (London), CLXXIV (April, 1892), 319.
7 Ibid., 322.
of the question:

In the light of this phrase the book must be read, and with the assurance that the author's definition will be found there. A definition is found, full and explicit, doubtless directly inspired, for it bears no resemblance to the common usage of our language, but is, on the contrary, a negation if not reversal of the definition we learned at school, and of the meaning impressed on us by the practice of living.  

In The Spectator for January 23, 1892, another attitude toward the sub-title was expressed. Here for the first time the central theme of a review of Tess was concerned with the discussion of "a pure woman faithfully presented." Although most of this reviewer's argument was concerned with retelling the story to illustrate his position, his main assumption has been summed up in the following statements of his:

Tess of the D'Urbervilles is declared by Mr. Hardy to be "a pure woman," and as he has presented her, we do not doubt that her instincts were all pure enough, more pure probably than those of a great number of women who never fall into her disgrace and shame. She was, of course, much more sinned against than sinning, though Mr. Hardy is too "faithful" a portrait-painter to leave out touches which show that her instincts even as regards purity, were not of the very highest class. ... But she had no deep sense of fidelity in those instincts. If she had, she would not have allowed herself time after time to be turned from the plain path of duty, by the fastidiousness, of a personal pride which was quite out of proportion to the extremity of her temptation and her perils. It is no doubt true that her husband behaved with

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8 The Nation (New York), LIV (April 28, 1892).
even less fidelity to her than she to him. Perhaps that was
natural in such a pagon as Mr. Hardy depicts him. But we can-
not for a moment admit that even on his own portraiture of the
circumstances of the case, Tess acted as a pure woman should
have acted under such a stress of temptation and peril. Though
pure in instinct, she was not faithful to her pure instinct.9

In The Boston Literary World for February 13, 1892, appeared
the first criticism of Tess from a wholly moral point of view:

She [Tess] is represented, indeed, as a pious milkmaiden,
so to speak, with a praiseworthy habit of going regularly to
church. But of what use is church-going, if the cardinal rules
of morality, say the Ten Commandments, make no impression?
Tess begins her life with an unlawful connection with a man
whom she does not love, but who dominates her will by a sort
of cold-blooded masterfulness. Later, she deceives the husband
whom she does love, and then goes back, in a moment of exas-
peration and suffering, to her first lover. Lastly she murders
him, and is very justly hanged for it, leaving us not very
sorry for her. Her career ignores the plain, unwritten instincts,
of morality, which lie farther back than the Ten Commandments,
and which have kept innumerable women, no less fair and no less
ignorant than Tess, in honor, loyalty and purity, under circum-
stances quite as difficult as hers.10

The Independent for February 25, 1892 follows in the vein
of The Literary World, though not in quite such harsh terms.
After re-telling the story the reviewer stated tersely: "Tess
is not a pure woman. Pure women do not, save in novels, drop
into the arms of the men they do not love." 11

The reviewer of The Critic for July 9, 1892, made a caustic
statement concerning the sub-title, which perhaps, to a
large extent, summed up the why and wherefore of all the early controversy over the "pure woman":

It is always unfortunate for an author in a work of fiction to start out by assuming a position he is obliged to defend. To much of his time is taken up with the argument, and he is too much absorbed in establishing his position to note the false steps he takes in doing so. Our author's heroine is most faithfully presented; no one can question that for a moment—all tendencies of her nature toward good or evil, as well as all the incidents of her checkered, unfortunate and most pitiful career, are spread out before us in all boldness. If Mr. Hardy had been content to eliminate the word "pure" from the sub-title, and had confined himself to asserting that his book was the faithful presentation of a woman, there would have been no disposition to quarrel with him, and the ultimate judgment of Tess would probably have been more lenient, more humane and more sympathetic.  

The critic of *The Westminster Review* considered the character of Tess one of the most beautiful creations that Mr. Hardy had ever given to fiction.

Janetta Newton-Robinson was one of the few critics who did not consider the purity of Tess. She declared that in *Tess* Hardy developed a conception of woman as simple yet general in type as that of Venus or Diana, "for though Mr. Hardy's genius is immanently modern, there is, nevertheless, something of the Greek spirit in the large and typical handling of many of his characters." She found that the nature of Tess was charged with inarticulate poetry and that she fulfilled the

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12 *The Critic* (New York), XVIII (July 9, 1892), 13-14.
humblest duties with unconscious dignity. She was elemental and superior to all accidents of station or errors of inexperience.

With her muteness, her docility, her passionate eyes, and proud endurance, she pervades the book and attracts irresistibly. Her mind is so preoccupied by her essentials of the life of the emotions, that the incidental does not affect her. She exists in a state of dreamy exaltation, and though she may be driven to an act of desperation, there is no scheming in her; she shows rather an impassioned receptivity, a not unheroic submission to fate as interpreted by her husband's will.15

1893-1912

Concerning the sub-title Lionel Johnson wrote that the second and fourth words, pure and faithfully, "would be better for some definition." Johnson believed that the key-note of Tess's character and actions was her hereditary background:

Considering the great conflicts of opinion upon the matter of heredity among leading men of science, we can only assume the truth of it, in any one form, at some risk of reputation to it. But Mr. Hardy keeps ever in our view the inherited impulses of Tess: by hints and fanciful suggestions, he turns our minds toward the knightly D'Urbervilles, men of violence and of blood, lawless, passionate, rude. Whether she throws her glove in Alec's face, or stabs him with a knife, we are led to look upon her as an inheritor of ancestral passions: society demands her punishment, in reparation and in self-defence: but, since she was at the mercy of her inherited nature, she claims our pity and our pardon.17

17 Ibid., 263.
Annie MacDonnell believed that the chief cause of offence at the novel by previous critics had been Tess's return to D'Urberville in the light of the sub-title. It had been said to prove her impurity. Miss MacDonnell defended the purity of Tess by writing:

Surely here Mr. Hardy was pointing to one of the great facts of life which ethics are bound to face, a fact neither moral nor immoral, that the human will has limits of vitality, which means limits of resistance, that only let the struggle be terrible enough for any individual he will give in. The power of resistance varies infinitely in weak and strong, but so does the strength of the attack; and a sensitive nature has less chance of victory than a solid one. The surrender—in the virtuous chiefly physical—may mean, in fortunate cases, death, but it may mean, unless suicide be resorted to a continuance of exhausted life, in which circumstances easily win. And saints are subject in like manner, if not in like degree, as sinner, to this law of human limitations, which is as inevitable as the coming on of old age, and has its examples beyond what are known as the temptations of life. Every man who has given up, for weariness, the ideals of his youth, has experienced this mastery of the spirit by the weakness of the body. . . . Fatigue is not a condonation lightly to be put forward for weakness, but it is a cogent plea in that final court of appeal to which only the great efforts and struggles of life are carried.18

In 1899 the Reverend S. Law Wilson published a book called Theology of Modern Literature. He found that Hardy's conception of feminine purity was "decidedly peculiar." He wrote:

It is a heavy demand on our credulity when we are asked, in the face of all these wretched happenings to retain the conviction that this is the history of "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented." . . . When we have succeeded in persuading ourselves

that soot is white ... we may then go on to make ourselves believe that Tess of the D'Urbervilles comes within measurable distance of a saint. Her literary creator, however, sees in her no defect, save "some slight incautiousness of character inherited from her race." As for the manner in which the poor woman's sensual qualifications for the part of the heroine are paraded over and over again, we can only say it is too gross to be alluring—it is only disgusting.  

In an unsigned article in The Edinburgh Review (London: July, 1900) Tess was contrasted with some of the novels of manners by Mary Chalmondeley and Ellen Thorneycraft. The critic stated:

In Tess of the D'Urbervilles Mr. Hardy's object is to portray individual character ... to show us the nature of Tess shaking off alien accretions and shooting up into the final glory of its tragic blossom. Every other actor affects us in a way through Tess; we judge them by their dealings with her, by their contrast to her figure or their harmony with it. So true an artist as Mr. Hardy is indifferent to no form of human life, but he depicts the surroundings for the sake of Tess.

1912-1928

Lascelles Abercrombie wrote that the sub-title described Tess with a challenging defiance. The protest for which this prepared the reader was not, he believed uttered against the stupid logic of society, although he did ridicule it. It was

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S. Law Wilson, The Theology of Modern Literature (Edinburgh, 1899), 386.

20
The Edinburgh Review, "Some Recent Novels of Manners," (London), CXI (July, 1900), 211.
much more than that, however, "Tess's tragedy is a specimen syllogism on the cruel reasoning of universal fate." Abercrombie went on to add:

Her tortured life, unnecessarily sensitive, is nothing but the symbolic language wherein the premises of fate are quietly and ruthlessly working out, for its rapt arguing with itself, has invented the medium of human life, utterly careless that it is a medium exquisitely tormented by the processes of this transcendent reasoning--it is this useless fact which stirs Hardy to fill the record of her life, not with pathos or pity, but with irreconcilable indignation against the prime, tragic condition of life.21

Abercrombie maintained that Hardy did not attempt to defend Tess, but he accepted her with all the perfect sympathy and understanding of love. Her story was accompanied by a charity infinitely larger than forgiveness, for Hardy loved her weakness as well as her strength and he exquisitely understood how her beautiful nature was forced by anoy into crime.

Abercrombie found that such intense and personal regard on the part of the author for his own creation was decidedly uncommon in a work of art.

H. C. Duffin devoted a great deal of space in his study of Thomas Hardy to the controversy over the purity of Tess. He first tried to ascertain Hardy's use of the word "pure." If taken in the "aesthetic sense" it could be inferred that

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21 Lascelles Abercrombie, Thomas Hardy (London: 1912), 137.
22 Ibid., 144-145.
Tess was submitted as Hardy's type of unadulterated womanhood, his representative woman. Duffin declared that Tess was a soman whose mind was slightly at variance with her flesh; "whence her fall, and the greatness therof." With a spiritual, no-physical, reference, he asserted that the word pure could be unconditionally applied to Tess in the moral sense. He continued:

She is as moral as any prude. Her behavior, her thought, her desires, on all perilous occasions—with D'Urberville, early and late; with Clare; with her other admirers—are unimpeachable, considered from the most critical code and point of view. Moreover, her shame and remorse are infinite. Mentally and morally she is stainless, with strong intent to keep so, and probably continues so from first to last, even during the later period of dissipation with D'Urberville her mind is drugged and dead with weariness, pain and despair, and so guiltless.

Since in the "moral sense" Duffin found Tess "pure," he then tried to explain her fall. He pointed out that Hardy emphasized "the splendid animal nature of Tess." But, if it were only her animal nature she had to fight, he believed that "her perfectly pure mind would have upheld her faintly impure (or sensual) flesh." The remaining factor, however, was hinted at when the reader was told of her "slight incautiousness of character inherited from her race," which Duffin

23 H. C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy (Manchester, 1916), 144.
24 Ibid., 145.
25 Ibid., 145.
26 Ibid., 146.
interpreted to mean that "her mind has the touch of animalism in her flesh to respond to great external pressure." 27

From this point Duffin went on to trace the evidence found in the book which would settle the question of Tess's own part in her fall. He found that although the evidence was to some degree conflicting, its general tendency was to show that Tess submitted and that "this business is not to be included in the class of absoluterapes." 28 Duffin terminated his discussion by writing:

On the impartial weighing of the evidence it seems necessary to admit that she submitted--acquiesced, however passingly. And submission--involving the absence of hate--is the damning fact. Only love or hate can render undefiling emotions attached to sex-intercourse. Tess herself puts in a very powerful charge against her mother's neglect to warn of the danger... Submission being granted is it to be excused on the plea of ignorance? "Ignorant" she certainly was, yet, apart from actual knowledge or acquired information, she seems to have had the pure woman's instinct of honour. It was against this that she sinned, and if that be so all "the woman pays" is justified. 29

Concerning the moral aspect of Tess, Lina Wright Berle wrote:

Hardy recognizes no sin, therefore, there can be neither condemnation nor retribution. There can only be the mantle of charity which recognizes an alien condition and seeks by its own act to remove the barriers which separate the outcast from the ninety and nine who need no repentance. This is not

27 H. C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy (Manchester, 1916), 146.
28 Ibid., 160.
29 Ibid., 161.
the keynote struck by the "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone," be it observed; it is rather the yielding to the inevitable which makes the fatalist. It is not necessary to carry the principle as far as in Tess to see the outcome.30

Previous to Beach's The Technique of Thomas Hardy most critics when discussing Tess invariably became involved with either denouncing or defending the appellation "a pure woman." Beach, however, discussed her as a creation from the author's pen:

Moving as is the history of Tess in its mere incidents, it is made doubly moving by the beauty and strength of her personality. Hardy's characters are in general remarkable for their vitality; they are picked specimens of the fruit of human kind, whom we recognize as fit to represent us. But Tess is, of them all, the most full of life. With her somewhat exceptional physical endowment, she was more than usually susceptible to those sensations in which the beauty of sound and color and smell comes to us as the voice of our spirit. . . . She is beautiful, and real, too. For her beauty is not too perfect, and not too fully inventoried.31

Beach ascertained that Tess had every quality to make the reader admire her:

her modesty, her sentiveness to the disgrace of her father's drunken ways, her motherly concern for her brothers and sisters, the simple earnestness and patience for her brothers and sisters, the simple earnestness and patience with which she performs the hard tasks imposed upon her, and the scrupulous conscience that brings her so much pain. Above all we find beautiful the wholeness of her devotion to the man she loves, in its combination of qualities traditionally distinguished as proper to woman and to man.32

31Joseph Warren Beach, The Technique of Thomas Hardy (Chicago: 1922), 206-208.
32Ibid., 202-209.
In the novels previous to *Tess*, Beach asserted that Hardy had been content to make a "tacit assumption" of the conventional standards of morality. But in *Tess*, in the interest of truth or of his story, he was impelled to interpose over and over again his own passionate defence of his heroine's character.

Grimsditch believed that all the resources of Hardy's art were lavished on the picture of Tess. She stood apart from the other heroines of Hardy in having nothing of the coquette in her composition. "The reason for this is probably that Tess is to be shown as a thoroughly genuine woman who is cruelly punished both by nature and society for a lapse committed in extenuating circumstances . . . . Why do social law and natural law contradict one another? Hardy would say that it is not the novelist's business to answer that question. He can only show in his work that the opposition exists and brings about tragedy."

1928-1942

It was interesting to note that in the first critical study of Hardy after his death, Chew's *Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist*, there was no mention of the purity or impurity of *Tess*. This controversy completely disappeared in Chew's study.

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Neither was any phase of the moral aspect of the novel considered. Braybrooke by picking out different incidents in the life of Tess tried to determine "whether Tess in her experiences was apparently a mere automaton driven hither and thither or whether she seems to have fashioned her own tragic destiny." He came to the conclusion that Tess was something of an instrument through which Hardy could express his point of view.

Pierre D'Exideuil in his The Human Pair in the Work of Thomas Hardy gave no critical estimates of Tess. He merely went through Hardy's novels, tales and poems and showed how the divers sexual problems were treated. Of Tess he wrote:

Of all his women characters Tess is undoubtedly the most sympathetic and the most complete expression of woman as conceived by Hardy. . . . she is conscious of her invincible repugnance towards the man who has corrupted her. It is this sentiment which guides the whole of her conduct and inspires her flight from Alec's acts of generosity.

Arthur McDowall wrote of Tess simply that she was slightly, though not greatly, idealized. "We are only made to feel that, besides her beauty, she is of a finer and more thoughtful nature than the other girls. Pure at heart, generous and devoted, she has still the acquiescent and drifting disposition.

34 Patrick Braybrooke, Thomas Hardy and His Philosophy (London: 1928), 48.
35 Ibid., 59
36 Pierre D'Exideuil, The Human Pair in the Work of Thomas Hardy (London: 1929), 108 (Translated by Felix W. Crosse.)
of her family, with an impetuous streak from the D'Urbervilles of long ago."

Carl J. Weber wrote that Tess was an inspiring figure:

Steadfast, loyal, self-effacing, brave . . . with none of the vanity or deceitfulness so often found in Hardy's heroines, with an emotional fire that would have melted any man's heart except Angel Clare's, with a fortitude in the face of adversity and a self-sacrificing devotion to others that makes her the finest woman in all the Wessex Novels, Tess is a figure of tragic strength. In her love for Clare, Hardy truly declares, "There was hardly a touch of earth." She is beaten and crushed at last, but not until she has to choose between her own seemingly worthless body and the life of her mother and her destitute brothers and sisters. Her desperation at Bere Regis, when reduced "to almost her last shilling," sounds in her tragic cry at the entrance to the tombs of the D'Urbervilles: "Why am I on the wrong side of this door?"

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Perhaps Hardy had just reason to believe in the irony of fate. Certainly his last minute addition of a sub-title to Tess was an excellent example. Carl J. Weber wrote that at the very last minute, after reading the final proofs, Hardy added the words: "A Pure Woman, Faithfully Presented by Thomas Hardy." "That was, he afterward explained, 'the estimate left in a candid mind of the heroine's character--an estimate that nobody would be likely to dispute.' To his later amazement

it was disputed more than anything else in the book."

Between 1891 and 1893 the addition of the sub-title to *Tess* made, indeed, a difference in the reception of the book by the critics. Consequently (and again ironically), the very shocked attitude of the critics made *Tess* Hardy's best seller. Of the reviews which appeared the year following publication only three magazines, in which the character of Tess was discussed, did not challenge the purity of the heroine. The anonymous writer of *The Speaker*, *The Athenaeum*, and *The Westminster Review* and Janet Newton-Robinson also of the *Westminster Review* did not question the purity of Tess, but considered her one of the most beautiful creations to come from Hardy's pen. Of these few, however, *The Athenaeum* reviewer felt that the sub-title was an inartistic addition because it caused diversion from the main interest of the story which was *Tess the woman*.

*The Critic* reviewer also considered the sub-title inartistic and he believed, perhaps correctly, that there would have been no disposition to quarrel with Hardy if the sub-title had been omitted.

The critics of *Blackwood's Magazine*, *The Quarterly Review*, *The Nation*, *The Spectator*, and *The Literary World* stated in no uncertain terms that Tess was not a pure woman. True, some

were more vehement than others, but they agreed that, chiefly because of Tess's return to her seducer, she could not possibly be considered pure.

It is interesting to note what Hardy had to say about Tess's return to Alec, when interviewed by Raymond Blathwayt of Black and White. Blathwayt stated:

"But how on earth you can describe her as a pure woman after her absolutely unnecessary return to Alec D'Urberville, I cannot conceive; for you cannot plead with F. W. Robertson, of Brighton, that in her case 'a woman's worst fault arises from a perverted idea of self-sacrifice.' And to add to her sin a cruel murder is, at first sight, absolutely unjustifiable."

"Very well," replied Mr. Hardy, "but I still maintain that her innate purity remained intact to the very last, though I frankly own that a certain outward purity left her on her last-fall. I regarded her then as being in the hands of circumstances, not morally responsible, a mere corpse drifting with the current to her end."40

After the first flood of reviews of Tess immediately following the publication there was a slight lull of nine or ten years. During this period one notes that there still persisted the consideration of Tess's purity as embodied in the Reverend S. Law Wilson's study of Hardy. He, like the former reviewers could not consider Tess a pure woman. Nor did Lionel Johnson fail to mention the sub-title. He felt that Hardy should have explained just what his connotation of the words pure and faithful was.

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Raymond Blathwayt, "A Chat with the Author of 'Tess,'" Black and White (London), IV (August 27, 1892), 240.
With Johnson, however, a new note in consideration of Tess appeared. He was the first to recognize the significance of Tess's hereditary background and he believed that her background was the key-note to her character and actions. Although Tess's ancestral background was mentioned by later critics, Johnson placed more emphasis upon it than any critic who followed.

Before Annie MacDonnell's study of Hardy, no one had found an excuse for Tess's return to Alec which was compatible with her author's epithet "a pure woman." MacDonnell, however, explained, that whether one was a saint or sinner, there was certain limitations to the endurance of the human body and Tess gave in from sheer weariness. This explanation is not unlike Hardy's own reasons which were quoted above.

The brief passage about Tess, which appeared in an anonymous article in The Edinburgh Review pointed out that every element in the novel was used in order to create a complete picture of Tess. This passage might also be considered as a forerunner of Lascelle Abercrombie's presentation of Tess as epic in structure, which will be considered in a later chapter.

Abercrombie was the first to recognize the fact that Hardy had a personal regard for Tess and that his treatment of her arose from perfect sympathy and understanding of love, which was not usual in a work of art. Abercrombie's study is also significant in that he was the first to note the undercurrent of the ruthlessness of universal fate in the life of Tess.
In the years following this study of Abercrombie until the death of Hardy, consideration of the question of Tess's purity was still apparent. H. C. Duffin went further in his consideration of Tess's moral character than had any of his predecessors. He traced all the evidence for and against which appeared, he tried to weigh the evidence he found, and he came to the conclusion that since Tess "sinned" against her pure woman's instinct of honor her end was justified. Lina Wright Berle, too, continued consideration of the moral element of Tess. She pointed out that Hardy didn't even recognize that there was such a thing as "sin," but he treated Tess's career with the inevitableness of a fatalist.

Beach considered Tess a beautifully created character with just the right artistic touches to make her seem real. Beach agreed with Abercrombie that Hardy's own feelings were involved in this creation and that Hardy passionately defended her character. Grimsditch had nothing of particular significance to add to the discussion of Tess as a character, but he believed that Tess stood apart from Hardy's other characters and that her tragedy was caused by the conflict between social and natural law.

After Hardy's death the controversy over Tess's purity which played such a large part in the early criticisms of the novel, completely disappeared and not once did a critic consider the moral aspect of the novel, unless in mentioning by way of
review the early history of the novel. This is perhaps quite natural for since 1891 the attitude toward the treatment of sex has changed greatly. The frankness of today was not possible in 1891 and today it is hard to realize how unusual Hardy's treatment of sex in Tess was to the Victorians. It was only natural that the critics of the last generation should have been shocked and interested in the moral aspect of the novel.

Since Hardy's death discussion of Tess has been confined to consideration of the artistic creation of this character. Pierre D'Exideuil thought Tess was the most complete expression of woman that Hardy conceived. McDowall and Weber considered Tess an inspiring figure. The general attitude toward Tess as a character today is that she stands first among Hardy's gallery of woman characters and that Hardy poured forth his personal sympathy and understanding for Tess. Hardy one feels was right when he said, "Anyhow, I have put in it the best of me."

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CHAPTER III
THE SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Included in many of the criticisms of Tess was a discussion of Hardy's treatment of the other characters besides Tess herself. Some critics managed to touch upon all the supporting characters, whereas others included only one or two.

1891-1893

The critic of The Speaker wrote that in Tess the Wessex peasantry were once more brought upon the stage, and the dignity, the tragedy, the comedy of their lives was again presented. "It is the lives of the toilers that Mr. Hardy paints, with the minuteness, the loving care, the sympathy, the instinctive rightness which characterise genius." Later he added "Never have his peasants been more real, never have we had a keener

1 The Speaker (London), IV (December 26, 1891), 770.
insight into their joys and their sorrows than here."

The reviewer for *The Athenaeum* stated that Angel Clare was a thought too perfect. "His errors are readily condoned by himself, and the author, in accordance with plan, does not stop to insist upon them over much, so that sometimes one is driven to ask whether the touch of satire suggested by the name has not prompted Mr. Hardy's representation of the characters." Alec D'Urberville was considered the most boldly designed of villains, "the very embodiment of a reckless, passionate 'child of the devil.' And those who have complained of his swift conversion from virtue to vice convict themselves of ignorance in the psychology of the sensual man."

Concerning the other characters in *Tess*, the critic wrote, "'Sir John' D'Urbeyfield stands beside Joseph Poorgrass; his wife and the milkmaids, the dairyman and Angel Clare's pious Calvinistic father, are drawn with exceeding skill."

In *The Saturday Review* the rasping statement was made that "there is not one single touch of nature either in John Durbeyfield or in any other character in the book. All are stagey, and some farcical." Concerning Mrs. Durbeyfield, the critic asserted that she was described as a good-natured

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2 *The Speaker* (London), IV (December 26, 1891), 770.
3 *The Athenaeum* (London: January 9, 1892), 49.
4 *Ibid.*, 49
6 *The Saturday Review* (London), LXXIII (January 16, 1892), 73.
shiftless woman, not refined in her perceptions, but she had led a respectable life. "Yet she does not hesitate to send her daughter deliberately into temptation, with as much sang-froid as if she had been the vilest of her sex. 'If he don't marry her afore, he will after,' she observed to her husband, and he does not contradict her." 7

The critic of The Review of Reviews believed that Hardy had done nothing more charming and winning that the picture of the three dairy maids who were "by no means immaculate or ideal conception of English girlhood, but entirely sweet and loveable in their wholesome reality and credibility--whose calamity it was to give away their too combustive hearts where no return was possible." 8 The reviewer though that Angel Clare had not been created as singularly attractive as Tess and he doubted if Angel Clare's power to draw upon himself the devotion of all the women within the sphere of personal influence was quite intelligible on any less general ground than that of "the incalculable impressionableness of the feminine heart." 9 The critic added, "In his curious inconsistency which underlies these superficial contradictions, he is, however, a subtle and powerful study." 10

7 The Saturday Review (London), LXXIII (January 16, 1892), 74.
8 The Review of Reviews (London), XXVI (February, 1892), 200.
9 Ibid., 200.
10 Ibid., 200.
The story of Tess occasioned the flowing of the muses of Joseph Truman and Earl W. Hodgson. Joseph Truman wrote a poem "Tess and Angel Clare" that was published in The Bookman, which I quote, since nothing else of this kind appeared:

Deep brood the spell of the great writer's tale--
That vision of despair,
The last of the pure maid of Marlott vale,
The sin of Angel Clare.

In the strained misery of her love she sighed
The shuddering question pale,
Which through the yearning centuries has cried
Its doubt of boon or bale.

And love that was not generous, just, or strong,
Pressed on those guileless lips,
That hungered sweetly and that waited long,
A message of eclipse.

E'en so the dreary unfaith of the time
Freezes the legend fair
Gives (clean negation for a trust sublime)
The kiss of Angel Clare.11

W. Earl Hodgson wrote no poet, but he did write a light and amusing satire on Tess of the D'Urbervilles, which he called "A Prig in the Elysian Fields" (The National Review, April, 1892). In it Hodgson presented Tess, Clare and Alec after death amongst the Shades. During their conversation, they commented upon their creator (Hardy); the three agreed that they should never have acted as they did, "if he hadn't made us act so--for his own ends." The greater part of the tale was taken up

11 Joseph Truman, "Tess and Angel Clare," The Bookman (London), II (April, 1892), 11.
by Clare talking and explaining his being a prig; he seemed to enjoy his very priggishness. He recalled some of his encounters with other characters of fiction and their attitude toward him. Tess and Alec tried to persuade Clare to try to improve and to cease being a prig. Clare, however, saw no reason why he should. When questioned why he left Tess on the day of their marriage he replied: "To say that I left her because I was a prig touches only the fringes of the problem. I left her because, not being an ordinary man like you, D'Urberville, I should have found the domestic joy of staying less a pleasure than the high moral and intellectual satisfaction of going away." Alec and Tess began to appear bored with Clare's incessant explaining of the universe and priggism to them. Their indifference did not deter him. After a brief lapse, when Clare started again "once more brisk," Alec exclaimed "What! At it again? Talk--talk--talk--" The tale ended with Clare's remark: "Yes, I'll talk till the stars fall."

Concerning the peasantry of Hardy the critic of The Quarterly Review wrote: "Mr. Hardy's rustics have always, it is true, had a smack of caricature about them; but they have generally been extremely amusing caricatures, and founded, moreover, as Dicken's are founded, on the essential facts of humanity." 

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13 The Quarterly Review (London), CLXXIV (April, 1892), 324.
The critic of *The Nation* declared that D'Urberville was a thorough-going scamp. He considered Angel Clare a good man, just and not unduly severe. He thought it was natural that he should discard his wife and not unnatural, considering her sensual attraction that he should come back to her and not notice the lemon-colored finery. Of Tess's parents this critic wrote, "The Durbeyfield father and mother embody much humor, of which, if Tess had inherited a spark she might have escaped many unpleasant messes, including the gallows."  

The most famous of all attacks was that by Andrew Lang found in Longman's Magazine (November, 1892). This was not his first criticism of the novel, but it was the answer to Hardy's reply in the preface of the fifth edition of *Tess* to Lang's article in The New Review (February, 1892). This article from Longman's has been reprinted in its entirety in Arthur Mordell's *Notorious Literary Attacks*. It was sarcastic and biting and like his previous article offered little of literary value to the evaluation or interpretation of the novel. It represented more of a personal antipathy toward Mr. Hardy. Albert Mordell defended Mr. Lang's attack by stating: "It was natural that the lover of Dumas, Scott and Stevenson, and the champion of romance against realism should write as he did."  

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14 *The Nation* (New York), LIX (April 28, 1892), 325.  
Concerning Alec and Angel, Lang wrote: "the villain Alec and the prig Angel Clare seem to me equally unnatural, incredible, and out of the course of experience. When all these persons, who conduct and conversation are so far from plausible, combine in a tale of which the whole management is, to one's own taste, unnatural and forbidding, how can one pretend to believe or to admire without reserve?"

1893-1912

Lionel Johnson did not comment on the characters of Alec or Angel, but he did point out how the facts of rural life which quickened wonderfully the reader's living interest were interwoven with the fabric of the story and affected the lives of the characters.

Annie MacDonnell considered Alec as "the only sensualist, pure and simple," to be found in Hardy's novels. She wrote that Angel had many contradictory tendencies, but "while interested lookers on at Tess's tragedy have rushed to vehement and opposite conclusions about him, Mr. Hardy has left his own judgment in a half light; has pointed out his limitations, but with a kind of understanding pity for him, and refused to make him

17 Annie Mac Donnell, Thomas Hardy (New York: 1895), 97.
the scape-goat to bear the sins of the prejudices of the world. Angel is a skilful embodiment of a type of the modern man in any age, one whose mind has perceived more truth than his soul will ever grasp, whose intelligence has outstripped the capacities of his nature."

1912-1928

Lascelles Abercrombie thought that Tess's parents were both admirably drawn: "The sottish father, unable without help from alcohol, to bear the weight of his family's antique greatness, and the genial, stupid, feckless mother are as real as maybe, and the story takes some splendid comedy from them, though the humour of it comes in rather sadly." As Abercrombie made much of the epic quality of Tess, he believed all the characters besides Tess were only characterized just as the great theme required. They were strictly a part of its formal apparatus and never intruded too much on the reader's attention. "So also is it with the group of Tess's girl-companions at Talbothays; exquisitely real figures, these, but if one examines one's knowledge of them, it is plain that their natures are only must know enough to be distinct personalities."

18 Annie MacDonnell, Thomas Hardy (New York: 1895), 111.
19 Lascelles Abercrombie, Thomas Hardy; A Critical Study (London: 1912), 147.
20 Ibid., 147.
The only psychological surprise in the book, Abercrombie found, was the conversion of Alec from a lecher to a rander.

It was a fine stroke, though not a subtle one; a piece of broad rather than of searching psychology.

His Alec's is not a nature capable of any profound development and he would be less suited to the story if he were. His first sight of Tess after he has begun his preaching shows that he has but found a razor-edge footing on the heights of religion. After his question: "But since you wear a veil to hide your good looks, why don't you keep it down?" --We know well enough that his feet are slipping already; he will soon fall down, plump into the mire where he belongs. Yet he is as near to agony as such gross stuff can come, and has almost the touch of tragedy in him, when he cries out, "There never were such eyes, surely, before Christianity or since." Withal, he is a common enough sort of creature; but a common thing wrought with masterly art.21

Abercrombie believed that Angel Clare was the one figure in Tess who was at all out of the ordinary run of human nature.

His squeamish, fastidious nature, conscious of his own purity and unconscious of his deep insincerity mixing with farm-hands as an equal and always feeling his own superiority, pretentiously broadminded and essentially mean, is analysed with considerable care. He is not so pushed forward as to be too noticeable, however; though he is undoubtedly real enough to be odious.22

H. C. Duffin, on the other hand, considered Clare a spiritually beautiful character:

22 Ibid., 148.
I believe it will not be disputed that the hold this man has on life, whether it is complete or precarious, is essentially spiritual, ideal, free from grossness. Indeed, the charge most frequently brought against him is that his spirituality eclipses his humanity. His renunciation of Tess is in direct contradiction of the tendencies of his emotional desires, and is sanctioned by a voice that over-rules even the demands of reasonableness—the voice of the high passion which has been vividly evident throughout the whole progress of his love. He is not guided solely by passion. Reason enters when he attempts to argue his position, and, for as much as Passion's methods proceed on a special logic, reason goes hopelessly astray in Clare, and, be he lovable or not, there is surely no contesting the celestial beauty of his figure.  

1928-1942

Samuel Chew wrote of the exquisite art with which the passionate love of the dairy-maids for Angel Clare was kept from slipping over "either into the maudlin on one side or the farcical on the other." Chew found the character-drawing was generally of a high order with the exceptions of the two brothers of Angel Clare and Tess's father and younger sister. He considered that Alec D'Urberville was portrayed in really masterly fashion. "The subtle way in which his conversion is ascribed to a slight shift of point of view under the influence of the same sensual temperament, is perhaps Hardy's finest achievement in psychological analysis." The delineation of Angel Clare was equally subtle and a more difficult task:

23 H. C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy (Manchester: 1916), 129.
25 Ibid., 62.
He belongs with all those men who have partially shaken off the tyranny of convention and yet, while fancying themselves intellectually free, are bound faster than they realize by the conventions which they pride themselves upon having put by. The much-criticized episode of Clare's suggestion to Izz to accompany him to Brazil is in reality thoroughly in character. The suggestion comes in a moment of revolt against those conventions, obedience to which has ruined his life. It is sudden, not reasoned; and it is checked in a moment by the return of thought. His is a limed soul that, struggling to be free, is but the more engaged. He is thus portrayed and the function of admiration or condemnation is left to the critics, who have accordingly divided, Mr. Abercrombie, for example, repudiating him utterly, while Mr. Duffin writes of "the celestial beauty" of his character... it must be remembered that Hardy himself does not pass judgment on him.26

Patrick Braybrooke wrote that he felt Angel Clare was slightly exaggerated. "His priggishness is so detestable that it may be that Hardy dislikes him so much that he has rather overdrawn his unpleasing character." 27

Rutland considered Alec and Angel "incredible and character failures." 28

Weber wrote: "The Alec who 'twirled a gay Walking-cane,' who 'clenched his lips' and exclaimed 'you artful hussy!' is too obviously related to the villain of melodrama." 29

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As the early critics were more concerned with the details

26Samuel C. Chew, Thomas Hardy (New York: 1928), 63-64.
27Patrick Braybrooke, Thomas Hardy and His Philosophy (London: 1928), 54.
of *Tess* rather than the novel as a whole, more time was given by them to examination of the supporting characters of the novel.

Of all the subordinate characters, Angel Clare was the most discussed. Perhaps, this is natural since he was, to use the popular term, "the hero" of the story, but undoubtedly the nature of his character also accounts for a great deal of the discussion concerning him. The controversy over Hardy's conception of Angel, is one topic of *Tess* which has continued to have two opposing flanks of opinion from the time of publication until the present day.

On one side have been those who considered Angel a well-drawn character. The critic of *The Review of Reviews*, although he doubted Angel's power to have all the milk-maids in love with him, did consider Angel a subtle and powerful study. The reviewer of *The Nation*, although he disliked the rest of *Tess*, thought Angel a good man and not unduly severe. H. C. Duffin continued the line of opinion that Angel was a well-drawn character and wrote that he was spiritually beautiful. Since Hardy's death, Chew wrote that Angel was a subtle and difficult task well done. On the other hand, there has been a continuous stream of objections to the character of Angel. The critic of *The Athenaeum* began this side of the controversy gently by writing that Angel was a thought too perfect. Next followed the rollicking satire on Angel called "A Prig in the
Elysian Fields." Andrew Lang considered Angel an incredible prig. Abercrombie, although he praised many aspects of *Tess*, considered that Angel was one character who was out of all run of human nature. Braybrooke thought him slightly exaggerated, and Rutland wrote that Angel was incredible.

But what was Hardy's own opinion of Angel? Raymond Blathwayt when interviewing Hardy termed Angel as odious. Hardy replied:

Angel Clare you describe as odious. Well, I have had many letters from men who say they would have done exactly as he did. Cruel, but not intentionally so. It was the fault of his fastidious temperament. Had he not been a man of great subtlety of mind, he would have followed his brothers into the church. But he had intellectual freedom in the dairy. A subtle, poetic man, he preferred that life to the conventional life.30

Alec was discussed more by the critics before Hardy's death and has only been mentioned incidentally by the later critics. Only two critics have considered him an incredible character--Andrew Lang and Rutland, but neither devoted more than a sentence to their opinion of Alec.

Of those who did discuss Alec to any great length, the critic of *The Athenaeum* was the first. He wrote that Alec was the most boldly designed of Hardy's villains and he con-

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30 Raymond Blathwayt, "A Chat with the Author of 'Tess,'" *Black and White* (London), IV (August 27, 1892), 240.
sidered Alec's swift conversion entirely consistent with the psychology of the sensual man. In The Nation the reviewer wrote that Alec was a thorough-going scamp. MacDonnell considered Alec the most complete sensualist in Hardy's novels. Abercrombie thought that Alec represented a good piece of broad, but not searching, psychology. Chew wrote that Alec was portrayed in masterly fashion. Weber pointed out Alec's similarity to the villain of melodrama. The critics, who considered Alec at all, have agreed, with the exception of Lang, Rutland and Weber, that Alec was a consistent study of a sensual man.

The other characters of Tess when discussed by the critics were usually considered collectively, and never to any great extent. The reviewer of The Speaker thought the peasantry were very real and painted with loving care. The critic of The Athenaeum wrote that the subordinate characters which were drawn with the most excellent skill were John and Joan Durbeyfield, the milkmaids, the dairyman and Angel's father. In The Review of Reviews the writer agreed that the three milkmaids were charming. On the other hand the critic of The Saturday Review thought the lesser characters were stagey, farcical and unreal; he also wrote that Tess's mother was vile. The Quarterly Review thought the peasantry had a touch of the caricature about them, although it was based on the essential facts of humanity. The reviewer of The Nation thought Tess's parents embodied much humor.
Of the later critics, Abercrombie and Chew were the only ones to discuss the lesser characters. Abercrombie stated that the parents were admirably drawn and the milkmaids were exquisitely real. Chew thought that Angel's two brothers, Tess's father and younger sister were not very convincing creations, but he considered the dairymaids' love for Angel handled with exquisite art.

Although the critics gave little more than a bare statement of like or dislike for certain of the lesser characters, Hardy himself had much compassion for them, which was revealed in his interview with Blathwayt:

The English peasantry as a rule are full of character and sentiment which are less often found in the strained, calculating, unromantic middle classes. . . . Rustic ideas, the modes, the surroundings, appear retrogressive and unmeaning at first. After a time, if you live amongst them, you will find as Angel Clare found, that variety takes the place of monotony. The people begin to differentiate themselves, as in a chemical process. The labourer is disintegrated into a number of varied fellow creatures, beings of many minds, infinite in difference: some happy, many serene, a few depressed, one here and there, bright even to genius; some stupid, others wanton, others austere; some mute Miltons, some potential Cromwells. The men strong, heroic souls; the girls dainty heroines. Much of which I ascribe to the fact that in many cases our peasantry is the sole remnant of mediaeval England.31

31 Raymond Blathwayt, "A Chat with the Author of 'Tess,'" Black and White (London), IV (August 27, 1892), 239.
CHAPTER IV
SETTING AND BACKGROUND

The works of Hardy were so closely associated with his Wessex country that one would naturally expect to find some consideration of his presentation of this background to be found even in criticisms dealing primarily with Tess. And this subject was broached in many of the criticisms of Tess. In the early reviews of Tess the landscape was praised because of Hardy's excellent description; in the more recent criticisms of the novel the close relation between the people and the Wessex land was noted.

1891-1893

One of Hardy's severest criticisms was found in The Saturday Review. About Hardy's description of nature in Tess, however, he wrote: "Mr. Hardy is always at his best when dealing with scenes taken from nature, in which his imagination
has something to go upon."

Janetta Newton-Robinson found delight in Hardy's descriptions of the Wessex land:

Much of the special charm of the novel lies in the pictures of the life at Talbothay's Dairy, and at the upland farm of Flintcomb-Ash. A delicate discrimination of the sentiment which clings to inanimate things is one of Mr. Hardy's most delightful qualities, and gives poetical value to his treatment of Nature. His glowing words vitalise the mists, meads, and streams of the valley of the Froom with etherealised latter-day Pantheism. Such a chapter as that in which Tess and Angel Clare walk together at dawn, through the morning mists of the meadows near Dairyman Cricks is a splendid achievement of prose; and the book has many other passages little inferior in grace and graphic energy.

Although the critic of The Quarterly Review did not like Tess as a whole and called it "an extremely disagreeable story told in an extremely disagreeable manner," he did have one laudatory remark for the book: "As the scene is laid in the author's favorite Wessex, the reader is pleased with many charming natural description, with many clever sketches of village life and humours."

The editor of Harper's wrote that in none of Hardy's former novels had he given such exquisite landscapes: "They are drawn or painted rather than written--such scenes of dawn, of night, of lush summers, and of barren time of frost, such

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1 The Saturday Review (London), LXXIII (January 6, 1892), 73.
3 The Quarterly Review (London), CLXXIV (April, 1892), 323.
absolutely vivid pictures of farm life."

The critic of The Fortnightly Review believed that the harmony between the people and the places was excellent:

One artistic gift Mr. Hardy has which rarely seems to desert him, and that is what Henri Beyle calls so aptly l'originalité de lieu. His people are at one with his places, a single harmonious growth of spiritual and natural circumstance, and this, the true artistic charity, cover, or helps to cover, a multitude of sins. The best examples of it reach high indeed as high as anything of the kind now done among us. What else but this renders credible or even poignantly real the final wanderings of the two lovers world-weary and doomed. (The murder, of course, is absurd.) The love-nest in the empty furnished home of stranger, an incident superficially so improbable, is only less actual than the weird journey to Stonehenge, and Tess's sacrificial sleep on the altar-stone. 5

The reviewer of The Critic stated that Tess presented a vivid, striking picture of life in England under certain conditions, and within the limits of a certain class. He continued, "Life in its finer, sweeter and more cheerful aspect on the dairy farm at Talbothay, as well as the harder and more grinding aspect of life in the winter on the dreary farm at Flintcomb Ash, is unfolded before our eyes in a manner to make us appreciate these people, and to take that difference into consideration in passing judgment upon them." 6

In The Gentleman's Magazine, one critic wrote that the old charm of Mr. Hardy's descriptions of rural life were pre-

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4 Harper's New Monthly Magazine, "The Editor's Study" (New York), LXXXV (June, 1892), 152.
5 The Fortnightly Review (London), LII (July 1, 1892), 21.
6 The Critic (New York), XVIII (July 9, 1892), 13.
served, and the pictures were as vivid as they could be.

Andrew Lang thoroughly disliked *Tess*, but in a round about way he did give praise to Hardy's rural scenes:

*Tess* failed to captivate me, inspite of the poetry and beauty and economic value of its rural descriptions, in spite of the genius which is obvious and indeniable in many charming scenes. To be more sensitive to certain faults previously discussed than to great merits, to let the faults spoil for you the whole, is a critical misfortune, if not a critical crime. Here, too, all is subjective and personal; all depends on the critic's taste, and how it reacts against a particular kind of error. 8

1893-1912

Johnson showed how Hardy through his sense of the piteous, human interest in life portrayed the contrast between Tess and Marian at Talbothays, the dairy farm in the rich pasture land, "where they lived and moved like pagan nymphs of Arcady of Sicily"; and Tess and Marian at Flintcomb-Ash, that "gaunt, hard place, where they bent over their weary work, 'like some early Italian conception of the two Marys.' The contrast is brought home to us, an actual bitterness and desolation to think upon." 9

Annie MacDonnell wrote more specifically of Hardy's description of Wessex. She considered that Hardy as an interpreter of the world of the out of doors had no equal among

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7 The Gentleman's Magazine (London), CCLXXII (September, 1892), 321.
9 Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (London: 1894), 152.
English prose writers. She continued:

He is a great pleinairist, occasionally content to render only colour and facts, but far more often painting landscapes broadly, with a perfect eye not only for topographical features, but for the character to be read in the lines, and for the mood in the tone of the atmosphere . . . . the descriptions of the kindly languorous Vale of Blackmore, and of the sparkling valley of the Great Dairies, can hardly pass out of the mind of those to whom natural beauty appeals. The most masterly of all pictures is that of the turnip field at Flintcomb Ash.

1912-1928

Ever stressing the epic quality of *Tess*, Lascelles Abercrombie wrote that whereas dramatic stories have in the main a fixed and unaltering background, in *Tess*, as seemed proper to the epic movement, the setting altered with the progressive emotion of the story, turning bleaker and harsher as the tragic stress deepened. The descriptions were done with extraordinarily minute intensity; but their innumerable detail was fused by a continuous and large design, so that a multitude of small strokes built up a spacious background of living earth for the human events. "Except for *The Return of the Native* no other novel of Hardy's has its action placed so grandly, and with such perfect propriety." Abercrombie conceded that it was with a more than logical propriety "that the scenery of Tess's life changes from the prodigal beauty of the Vale of Blackmoor...

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and Froom, to the grim upland winter of Flintcomb Ash, with its hard soil immensely exposed to scathing rain and windy snow; and that her occupation correspondingly changes from idyllic dairying under the humorous Crick . . . to aching toil among the Sweded, at reed-drawing, and on the threshing machine, under the eye of a vindictive curmudgeon.”

Whenever the background of Tess came into the critical study of the novel, the description of the farmland was almost always the topic of the discussion. H. C. Duffin, however, wrote of Hardy's use of the empty house in which Angel and Tess found a brief refuge:

It is perhaps only a personal impression that renders an empty house peculiarly romantic and fully of faery possibilities; certainly the introduction of the deserted mansion into the vicissitudes of Tess and Clare seems to me a very delightful unwordly episode. Into their sphere of concentrating sorrow a tiny Paradise falls from heaven and shuts them in safe for a brief spell of exquisite joy.  

Beach wrote that in Tess the setting sympathized with the action, the place and season changing with the fortunes of the heroine:

It is not without premeditation that the growing passion of Tess and Angel is set in the summer foisoning of the rich dairying country, that the woman is made to "pay" in the wintry bitterness of a hard and cruel district, that it is among the ancient

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11 Lascelles Abercrombie, Thomas Hardy (London: 1912), 151.
12 H. C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy (Manchester: 1916), 54.
and awesome monuments of Stonehenge that the law steps in to put an end to their brief clouded romance. But this is the usual course of a story—a ballad or a tale—flowing like a stream through changing country, with the natural vicissitudes of landscape. And it actually puts less strain upon the reader's attention than a design, like that of The Native, in which all threads of plot are made to cross in one place, beneath one sky and within the limits of one fixed horizon. It gives less the impression of design or contrivance.13

1928-1942

Chew, like Abercrombie and Beach, found a close relation between the background of the story and the action:

In Tess the adjustment of place and season is accomplished with the highest art. It is spring-time at the beginning of the tale. Tess goes to the home of the pseudo-D'Urbervilles in high summer and returns from Alec amid autumnal decal. It is summer again on the dairy-farm and winter on the wedding day and again at Flintcomb-Ash. So also the action moves in appropriate places. The initial tragedy of Tess's life takes place in a gloomy woodland called The Chase; the courship of Angel and Tess goes on amid the unconventional, bright sensuousness of Talbothay's dairy; the wedding night passes in the dark ancestral manor-house of the D'Urbervilles and in the ruined abbey near by; Tess, the deserted wife, supports herself on the harsh and unsympathetic Flintcomb-Ash farm; the murder of Alec occurs in a tawdry seaside boarding-house; and the last night with Clare passes at Stonehenge, Tee the destined victim of social conventions sheltering herself in the ruins of the pagan temple where, thousands of years before, her ancestors had been sacrificed upon the altar of a barbarous religion.14

MacDowall wrote more floridly of the close kinship between the action and the setting:

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Joseph Warren Beach, The Technique of Thomas Hardy (Chicago: 1922), 183-184.

14
Samuel C. Chew, Thomas Hardy (New York: 1928), 97.
In *Tess* the strength of Hardy's feeling for Tess, the vividness of her own emotions, make the landscape at every turn a reflection of the inner story. It has its own delightful substance, in that vale of the great dairies; but its chief beauty is a subtler emanation. It is a luminous spell of atmosphere. Nowhere else in Hardy is there such magic of light, and half-light; the deep blue of one vale and the transparency of the other; the evening twilights where Tess walks alone with her sad thought; the twilights of dawn when she and Angel are the only people moving in the world, and her face, rising above the ground mist of summer, looked "ghostly, as if she were merely a soul at large." It is her moment of ethereal beauty. Then there is the climate of the book, that oncoming of the bitter season at Flintcomb-Ash which is described in the greatest winter-piece of the novels—"There had not been such a winter for years"—with a blinding, snowy lights in it. And yet even this effacing kind of scene is absorbed into the human figures.15

Thomas Hardy's knowledge of the Wessex peasants and their customs and superstitions had been considered one of the unique characteristics of all the Wessex novels. Ruth A. Firor has made the most complete study of the folkways in the works of Hardy. For her doctorate dissertation she picked out all the instances of folkways in Hardy. In *Tess* some of the examples which she pointed out were: the cock crowing three times on the afternoon of Tess's marriage; Tess's being troubled by a thorn that pricked her breast after she had parted from Alec; the D'Urberville's ill luck as an inherited tendency; Tess's gathering and stripping the buds

17 Ibid., 26
18 Ibid., 37.
of the "lords and ladies"; the ghostly D'Urberville carriage; the blaming of a newcomer for the cows' not giving milk; Joan Durbeyfield's superstitious fear of the Compleat Fortune-Teller; the club-walking which was a survival of the May Day festivals.

Rutland descanted on the symbolism in Tess:

No reader with any feeling for the art of letters can miss the subtle, sometimes exquisite, modulations by which the changes in Tess's fortunes are symbolized in her natural surroundings; for example, when she returns to the home of her childhood as a maiden no more: "Sad October and her sadder self seemed the only existences haunting that lane." The whole of the third part, that incomparable idyll of summer in Var Vale where for a little while Tess tasted milk and honey on the lirs is partly symbolic . . . . The inevitable happens, and the days begin to darken about Tess. On the night of her marriage, she is about to tell her secret to the husband who is so unworthy of her as they sit before the fire: "The ashes under the grate were lit by the fire vertically, like a torrid waste." And in the hard, bitter days of her slavery at Flintcomb-Ash, the snow comes. Towards the end of the book, the sure touch with which this symbolism has been sustained, begins to falter. Alec waits for Tess beneath the rick, and the rats within it are soon to be left shelterless, to be hunted to death. The symbol is stressed, and is a trifle commonplace. And the last sleep, on the very stone of sacrifice at Stonehenge, is too obvious.24

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The one subject on which there has been no dissentation since the publication of Tess is that of Hardy's powers of

19 Ruth A. Firor, Folkways in Thomas Hardy (Philadelphia: 1931), 42.
20 Ibid., 77.
21 Ibid., 94.
22 Ibid., 99.
23 Ibid., 114.
presenting the Wessex country vividly. Even Hardy's severest critics, such as, Andrew Lang and the anonymous writers of The Saturday Review and The Quarterly Review had no fault to find with Hardy's descriptions of the landscape. Many of the critics expressed delight in Hardy's presentation of Wessex as a whole and each critic also usually told of one scene which was his particular favorite. For example, Janetta Newton-Robinson liked the scene in which Tess and Angel walked together in the dawn through the meadows at the Talbothay's Dairy. The critics of Harpers, The Critic and The Gentleman's Magazine found that vivid was the best word to describe Hardy's pictures of Wessex.

Annie MacDonnell, a little later, stated without reservation that Hardy as an interpreter of the out of doors world was unsurpassed by English prose writer.

Abercrombie was the first to recognize the close relationship between the physical background and the emotions of the story. Beach, Chew, MacDowall and Rutland later enlarged upon this kinship between the action and the setting. These later critics pointed out that not only were the seasons symbolic of the actions which were taking place but the countryside and the make-up of the peasantry in the different places Tess resided were in close harmony with the actions and moods of Tess. Rutland, however, believed the symbolism was subtle
and well-controlled until the final scenes of the book. The 
incident of Tess's sleep on the stone of sacrifice at Stone-
henge, for instance, he considered too obvious.

Although Hardy's portrayal of the countryside has ever 
been thought masterly, the modern critics have had a deeper 
appreciation of the artistic genius of Hardy because of their 
recognition of his subtle blending of the action of Tess with 
the different climes of the Wessex country.
CHAPTER V

STRUCTURE AND STYLE

Besides consideration of the meaning and purpose of *Tess*, the presentation of *Tess* and the supporting characters, and the discussion of the background, many critics also wrote of what "flaws" they found in the novel. This chapter is more general than the preceding chapters in that it contains the criticisms which did not fall under any of the categories designated by the previous topics. Under the general heading of structure has fallen all criticisms of the artistic value of various incidents in *Tess*, Hardy's use of the language, his style in relation to his subject matter, and in one instance grammatical errors in *Tess*.

1891-1893

The reviewer of *The Athenaeum* in discussing Clare's leaving *Tess* after their wedding wrote that at that point in the story there was a fault of construction in the novel:
Mr. Hardy does not make it sufficiently clear that Angel Clare did not know so much as he and we know; nor has he sufficiently explained to the reader why Tess submitted completely to D'Urberville instead of revolting from him after his act of treachery. So many woman would have chose (or rather flung themselves upon) the one, that it is wonderful that Tess should take the other course. Yet the strength of her affectionate loyalty, joined to a certain stubborn dignity (a relic of her noble descent), retains our respect.¹

In The Saturday Review the critic objected to Hardy's putting "The dots on the i's so very plainly." He declared that the story gained nothing by the reader being let into the secret of the physical attributes which especially fascinated Alec in Tess. "Most people can fill in blanks for themselves."² This criticism is unique in that it is the only one which picked the flaws in Mr. Hardy's grammar. For example, the critic wrote:

In his "explanatory note" he begs his too gentle reader "who cannot endure to have it said what everybody thinks and feels," to remember a sentence in St. Jerome's. To have what said? To what does "it" refer?³

Also this critic quoted the sentences from Tess: "The Durbeyfield waggon met many other waggons with families on the summit of a road. Which was built on a well-nigh unvarying principle, as peculiar, probably, to the rural labourer as the hexagon to a bee. The groundwork of the arrangement was the family

¹The Athenaeum (London: January 9, 1892), 50.
²The Saturday Review (London), LXXIII (January 16, 1892), 73.
³Ibid., 74.
dresser." On the above statement the critic commented: "Now, by all the rules of syntax it is the summit of the road that was built on the unvarying principle and on the family dresser, but the context shows that it is really the inside of the wagon to which he means to refer. These things ought not to be."

The reviewer of The Spectator thought that the only fault of Mr. Hardy's style was an excess of pedantic phraseology in various parts of the book.

The critic of The Review of Reviews wrote, "The conception of a girl who, placed in circumstances of extraordinary difficulty, was led, almost irresistibly, to forsake the path of conventional morality, yet retained her central virginity of soul, was attended with some dangers, both ethical and artistic, and we do not pretend to think that Mr. Hardy has altogether overcome them." This reviewer went on to state that the influence of so-called "realism" as understood in France in the latter part of the nineteenth century, was strong both for good and ill in Mr. Hardy's novel, which in some respects was Zolaesque to a degree which was likely to alienate some well-meaning persons. The reviewer doubted if Hardy had not sacrificed, in more than one instance, the higher truth of imagination for a narrower and lower kind of fidelity to the ig-

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4 The Saturday Review (London), LXXIII (January 16, 1892), 74.
5 The Spectator (London), LXVIII (January 23, 1892), 122.
6 The Review of Reviews (London), XXVI (February, 1892), 200.
noble facts of life. "This, however, is partly a question of view-point and partly of mere detail and, these matters being allowed for, simple critical justice demands the admission that Tess is truly a great work, in virtue both of the profoundly serious purpose which animates it, and of the high level of execution maintained almost from first to last in its pages."  

Janetta Newton-Robinson thought that although there were many passages in Tess which were full of grace and graphic energy, sometimes there slipped in "melodramatic incident or distasteful detail." She considered the sleep-walking scene such an incident.

The critic of The Dial believed that the "manner" of Tess was that of realism, and the method that of photography:  

As a memorable example . . . of what this method can persuade a writer to do, let us quote a single sentence: "She did not observe that a tear came out upon her cheek, descending slowly, so large that it magnified the pores of the skin, over which it rolled, like the object-lens of a microscope." The reason why "she" did not observe all this is very evident: she was only a peasant girl, not a realistic novelist. The latter is the only kind of person who ever does observe such things.

Concerning Mr. Hardy's manner the critic of The Quarterly Review wrote:

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7 The Review of Reviews (London), XXVI (February, 1892), 200.
9 The Dial (Chicago: April, 1892), 424.
Coarse it is not, in the sense of employing coarse words; indeed he is too apt to affect a certain perciosity of phrase which has a somewhat incongruous effect in a tale of rustic life; he is too fond,—and the practice has been growing on him through all his later books . . . of making experiments in a form of language which he does not seem clearly to understand, and in a style for which he is assuredly not born . . . Mr. Hardy never leaves you in doubt as to his meaning. Poor Tess's sensual qualifications for the part of the heroine are paraded over and over again with the persistence like that of a horse-dealer egging on some wavering customer to a deal, or a slave-dealer appraising his wares to some full-flooded pasha.10

In Harper's the editor of the magazine wrote that there had crept into Hardy's language in Tess a certain scientific jargon, "which effectively meets the requirements of a scientific age, no doubt, but has an odd effect--a slight effect of strain, if not artificiality." This reviewer also criticized Hardy for not permitting Tess to act according to the character which he had delineated her as having:

A character in fiction, as soon as it is conceived and accurately limned for the reader, has rights. Whatever we think of the first misstep of Tess in the immaturity of her girlhood, her character was afterwards so formed by experience and suffering, so enlightened was she by intelligence and by the pure love for her husband, that the acts which she committed seem impossible. Certainly her return to the betrayer she loathed was not her act, but the wilful compulsion of her creator. And in the last moral insensibility to crime, which her husband shares with her, the happy pair seem walking in a dream, surely not in the reality of any sane world we recognize.12

10 The Quarterly Review (London), CLXXIV (April, 1892), 325.
11 Harper's New Monthly Magazine, "Editor's Study" (New York), LXXXV (June, 1892), 152.
12 Ibid., 152-153.
The reviewer of *The Critic* thought that the interest *Tess* inspired was absorbing and unflagging from the first page to the last, although the book itself was somewhat illogical and inartistic.

The critic of *The Gentleman's Magazine* wrote of the similarity between French realism and the form of *Tess*:

Some influence upon a vigorous English mind of the latest forms of French realism . . . appears, and *Tess*'s murder of her villainous lover may be compared with the slaughter of her husband by Pauline Blanchard, as exhibited recently by Mme. Sarah Bernhardt. I would rather Mr. Hardy would stick to his old English style, and keep his heroine from the gallows; and his final picture of the hero hand-in-hand with his future wife, the sister of the woman who has died for him, fails either to win sympathy or carry conviction.

Andrew Lang believed that the sleep-walking scene was a physical impossibility, and he disliked Hardy's pendentic phraseology:

When Angel Clare, walking in his sleep, carries the portly *Tess*, with all her opulent charms and "ethereal beauty" to a very considerable distance, he does what Porthose, or Guy Livingston, could hardly have done when wide awake. It is a romantic incident, but if an otherwise romantic writer had introduced it, the critics, one fears would have laughed. At all events, when any reader finds that a book is beyond his belief in character, in language, and in event, the book must, for him, lose much of its interest. Again, if he be struck by such a defect of style as the use of semi-scientific phraseology out of place, he must say so . . . . An example of a fault so manifest, and of such easy remedy (for nobody need write jargon), I select and reproduce. A rustic wife is

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13 *The Critic* (New York), XVIII (July 9, 1892), 13.
14 *The Gentleman's Magazine* (London), CCLXXII (September, 1892), 321.
sitting in a tavern, taking her ease at her inn. "A sort of halo, an occidental glow, came over life then. Troubles and other realities took on themselves a metaphysical impalpability, sinking to mere cerebral phenomena for serene contemplation, and no longer stood as pressing concretions which chafed body and soul." . . . First, one does not know whether this description of Mr. Durbeyfield's tavern content is to be understood as her way of envisaging it, or as Mr. Hardy's. It can hardly be Mr. Durbeyfield's because the words "cerebral" and "metaphysical" were probably not in her West Saxon vocabulary. So the statement must be Mr. Hardy's manner of making clear and lucid to us the mood of Mrs. Durbeyfield. . . . when a novelist, or a poet, deals with a very unscientific character, like Mrs. Durbeyfield . . . then the use of psychological terminology seems to my sense out of place.15

1893-1912

Lionel Johnson noted that in his finest books, Hardy contrived some special touch of rare romance or strangeness. In Tess there was "the murder of Alec D'Urberville, the enchaunted sic walk, the solemn morning hour at Stonehenge, the sad end of all at Winton-chester." But while these touches of rare romance or strangeness, each in its degree, was very strongly felt, they were not felt with a sudden thrill, they were of one kind with all the touches of quieter experience throughout Tess.

Annie MacDonnell stated that Hardy's chief narrative talent did not lie in the integral structure of his stories, but in

16 Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (London: 1894),114.
his rich invention for incident; for example, Tess baptising her child Sorrow, with the audience of sleepy, awe-struck children about her, or the homeless Durbeyfield family setting up their menage over the vault of their noble ancestors in Kinsbere.

This, his strongest faculty as a story-teller, points to the fact further exemplified by his style, that he is a writer not of even perfection but of great passages and great moment. But his moments have occasional power to give the tone to the whole book. One can pick out cases where the incidents are sensational, or too elaborately furnished with picturesque detail, where they overstep the limits of artistic propriety in their determination to besiege the senses of sensibilities. The policemen closing in round Tess at Stonehenge is the type of this offending. But such offences are the defects of a great quality.17

William Lyon Phelps found that Hardy's artistic sense was blinded to a certain extent by his interest in the argument which he issued in the sub-title, "otherwise he would never have committed the error of hanging his heroine. The mere hanging of a heroine may not be in itself an artistic blunder, for Shakespeare hanged Cordelia. But Mr. Hardy executed Tess because he was bound to see his thesis through."18

Lascelles Abercrombie believed that Tess was constructed

17 Annie MacDonnell, Thomas Hardy (New York: 1895), 74.
in an epic form in that the novel developed a single theme, the life-history of one person, and it sent this theme uninterruptedly forward. He pointed out the dualism in Tess: "the dualism of a merciless unhesitating tragic imagination, and an impotent fervour of charity for its central figure; charity that seems always desiring to protect this figure from the steady injurious process of the imagination which conceived her, yet can do nothing but painfully watch her destruction." Abercrombie added: "This conflict throughout the story, and through all its intellectual and emotional accompaniments, is grasped by a great epic unity of form. It is worked out in the simplest and barest manner, but in a spacious design, and with terrible earnestness."

Beach in comparing the plot of Tess with that of other Hardy novels wrote that the story of Tess was one of extreme simplicity—a simplicity unique in the novels of Hardy. Beach believed that the greater extension of time allowed in Tess gave the story less the impression of design or contrivance:

The events leading to her seduction are made to cover one summer; and it is not until two years later, after a time of retirement with her disgrace, that Tess goes forth again to battle with life and to hope. All summer is given to the growth of her love for Angel, and it is not till New Year's that they are married. There follows the bitter winter of

19 Lascelles Abercrombie, Thomas Hardy (London: 1912), 145.
their separation, and then their brief reunion in the spring; so that the arrest and execution of Tess takes place fully three years after she first started out from Marlott to seek her fortune in the world. This is not an arrangement suitable to a drama, in which the lines of lives, long converging, are to be shown at the point where at last they cross and tangle. But it does seem more like life: life that holds its issues in abeyance; life so full of seeming conclusions and new starts: life that, when it once conceives a grudge against one of its creatures, loves so to play at cat and mouse with him—to let him go and then catch him again, leaving time for recovery between one seizure and the next. 21

George Moore, whom, Weber declared, never wrote about Thomas Hardy except in an envious snarl, disliked Tess Passionately. He wrote that the best word to define such a novel was the French word coco, which he translated Mother Goose. He seemed to take a particular delight in picking out flaws and discrepancies in the novel. In a talk with Mr. Freeman in Conversations in Ebury Street he said:

I have read Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and my doubts began, when Alec came riding by and called her to jump up behind him. We are told that he rode into a wood. Now a wood may be large or small; it may wander hither and thither, or grow in patches. A wood may be dense, dark, solemn, forbidding, or it may be blithe, enticing, with delightful interspaces; it may be overgrown with scrub, littered with uncouth rocks, or it may be smooth, or it may be fragrant as a garden. . . . But the woods and fields that Mr. Hardy speaks of are never before our eyes. 22

Moore also disliked Hardy's not using the sleep-walking scene to better advantage:

21 Joseph Warren Beach, The Technique of Thomas Hardy (Chicago: 1922), 184.
22 George Moore, Conversations in Ebury Street (London: 1924; 1930), 79-80.
As I read how they approached the house, I said to myself: We are coming to something more original than a wedding-night parting due to a confession. He Angel will put Tess into his own bed, and on awakening he will take her into his arms—a daring piece of craftsmanship! and my mind softened toward Mr. Hardy. But only for a moment, alas, for Tess persuades Angel Clare to lie down on his bed and retires to her own room. The episode, therefore, means nothing, for next morning they drive a little way together and part, and henceforth we see her getting her living as but she can from the fields.23

1928-1942

Samuel C. Chew defended Hardy's having Tess executed. He remarked that other critics had denounced the execution of Tess as an impossible extravagance. "This, however, is to forget the severity of the penal code as it existed of recent years in England." Chew continued: "Other episodes can be picked out in which the writer seems to lose his self-control, the capital instance being the sketch of the vical who refuses burial for Tess's baby in consecrated ground. In general an effect of incoherence is produced by the indiscriminate blows rained now upon ephemeral remediable wrongs, now upon the very nature of things." Chew believed, however, that if at times the presentation of some episodes was not convincing, the presentation of other episodes was profoundly so.

23 George Moore, Conversations in Ebury Street (London: 1924; 1930), 81-82.
24 Samuel C. Chew, Thomas Hardy (New York: 1928), 61.
Bernard Groom in *A Literary History of England* thought that the story of Tess's life and death was powerfully tragic, though the handling was here and there sensational. "But no lover of what was characteristic in Hardy can deny that the book contains some of his finest things—the life of Tess at Talbothays, for instance, the dairy-farm with its maids and men, and above all, the desperate flight of Tess was Angel Clare to Stonehenge."  

Rutland believed that the last part of *Tess* was inferior to the rest and that it bore unfortunate traces of Hardy's early training in the melodramatic mystery novel, especially the meeting between Angel and Tess in the lodging house and the murder with the carving knife.  

Weber wrote that "of course there are flaws in *Tess*." He stated that Alec was too obviously related to the villain of melodrama. "The carpet that 'reached close to the sill' and so inopportune concealed the letter that Tess had slipped under Clare's door discloses the author too openly in the act of setting the stage." Weber also considered Hardy's presentation of Brazil had disregarded facts. But he added, "Let all this be freely granted. There still remains in *Tess* an abundance of Hardy at his best. Every aspect of his art and

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thought is here represented. Wessex superstitions and peasant folklore, delicate descriptions of nature and magnificent accounts of passage of the seasons, humor and pathos, irony and tragedy, all are here found between the covers of the book.

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The first criticisms of Tess in which the style and structure of the novel were discussed pointed out isolated incidents in which it was thought flaws were evident. The critics of The Saturday Review and The Quarterly Review complained that Tess's physical attributes were described too plainly. The Saturday Review criticism was unique in that it was the only one which showed actual grammatical errors in Tess. Andrew Lang and the anonymous reviewers in The Spectator and Harper's criticized Hardy's excessive use of pedantic phraseology, which they considered inappropriate when writing of simple peasants. In The Review of Reviews, The Dial, and The Gentleman's Magazine Hardy was accused of being too much influenced by French realism.

Angel Clare's sleeping-walking episode was one of the most discussed incidents in Tess. Janetta Newton-Robinson thought that it was too melodramatic, Andrew Lang considered

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it a physical impossibility and George Moore, later, wrote that he was disappointed that the scene was not used to greater advantage.

The murder of Alec was another much discussed incident. In The Gentleman's Magazine it was thought too much like French realism and inappropriate for English style. Rutland considered it melodramatic. But Lionel Johnson, on the other hand, thought that it added a touch of rare romance and strangeness to the story.

Lascelles Abercrombie has been the only critic who has written to any great extent about the structure of Tess as a whole. He believed that the story had many epic qualities and that throughout a great epic unity was maintained.

As Carl J. Weber has pointed out, Tess is not flawless, but despite its sometimes sensational or melodramatic incidents, Tess as a whole represents Hardy at his best.
CHAPTER VI
EVALUATIONS

When a novel is first published, it is difficult for the critics who are living in the same age to view it objectively. Too often the reader becomes side-tracked with a smaller issue and is unable to see from a perspective the novel as a whole and to judge it accordingly. The critics of Tess of the D'Urbervilles had just such a problem to combat. Many were side-tracked by the sub-title "a pure woman," as has been shown, or they were too much under the power of the conventions of literature of their day. Consequently, the opinions of the value of this novel varied from its being thought a complete failure to its being thought comparable with Shakespeare's tragedies.

1891-1893

In The Speaker the reviewer was vehement in his praise of Tess: "Mr. Hardy's latest story will certainly take rank
with the best productions of his pen . . . . It is the work of genius, such a work could hardly have come from the pen of any other living writer. . . . we hardly remember any one of Mr. Hardy's many novels which so bites into the heart and the mind of the reader as this does, making an impression upon both that can never be effaced."

In The Athenaeum at the conclusion of the review was expressed the following opinion of Tess as a whole:

Mr. Hardy's style is here, as always, suave and supple, although his use of scientific and ecclesiastical terminology grows excessive. Nor is it quite befitting that a novelist should sneer at a character with the word "antinomianism," and employ "determinism" for his own purpose a page or two later. And a writer who aims so evidently at impartiality had been well advised in retaining a slight animosity (subtly expressed though it be) against convictions which some people even yet respect. However, all things taken into account, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" is well in front of Mr. Hardy's previous work, and is destined, there can be no doubt, to rank high amongst achievements of Victorian novelists.  

George Meredith in a letter to Frederick Greenwood (January 11, 1892) wrote his opinion and reaction to Tess:

The work is open to criticism, but excellent and very interesting. All of the Dairy Farm held me fast. But from the moment of the meeting again of Tess and Alec, I grew cold, and should say that there is a depression of power, up to the end, save for the short scene on the plain of Stonehenge. If the author's minute method had been sustained, we should have had a finer book. It is marred by the sudden hurry to round the story.

1 The Speaker (London), IV (December 26, 1891), 770.

2 The Athenaeum (London: January 9, 1892), 50.
And Tess, out of the arms of Alec, into (I suppose) those of the lily-necked Clare, and on to the Black Flag waving over her poor body, is a smudge in vapour--she at one time so real to me.³

The critic of The Saturday Review had little but condemnation for Mr. Hardy's novel. Most of his review dealt with retelling the story to illustrate his opinion that it was suggestive and disagreeable. A few statements will be sufficient to give the general tenure of this reviewer's attitude toward Tess:

... there is not a single touch of nature either in John Durbeyfield or in any other character in the book. All are stagey, and some are farcical. Tess herself comes the nearest to possibility, and is an attractive figure; but even she is suggestive of the carefully studied simplicity of the theater, and not at all of the carelessness of the fields. ... Mr. Hardy is always at his best when dealing with the scenes taken from nature, in which his imagination has something to go upon. ... Few people will deny the terrible dreariness of this tale, which except during the few hours spent with cows, has not a gleam of sunshine anywhere.⁴

In The Spectator the reviewer mingled his interpretation of Tess with his opinion of its rank as literature:

While we cannot at all admire Mr. Hardy's motive in writing this very powerful novel, we must cordially admit that he has seldom or never written anything so truly tragic and so dramatic. The beauty and realism of the delineations of the life on the large dairy-farm; the sweetness and, on the whole, generosity of the various dairymaids' feelings for each other; the vivacity of the description of the cows themselves; the

³ Letters of George Meredith, II, 448.
⁴ The Saturday Review (London), CXXIII (January 16, 1892), 73.
perfect insight into the conditions of rustic lives; the true pathos of Tess's suffering; the perfect naturalness, and even inevitability of all her impulses; the strange and horrible mixture of feelings with which she regards her destroyer, when, believing that all her chance of happiness is over, she sells herself ultimately for the benefit of her mother and brother and sisters; the masterful conception of the seducer as a convert of antinomianism, and the ease with which his new faith gives way to a few recitals by Tess of her husband's ground for scepticism (with which, however, we are not favored); the brilliant description of the flight of Clare and Tess, and of the curious equanimity with which Tess meets the consciousness of having committed murder, seeing that it has restored her for five days to her husband's heart,—are all pictures of almost unrivalled power, though they evidently proceed from the pantheistic conception that impulse is the law of the universe, and that will, properly so called, is a non-existent fiction.5

The reviewer of The Bookman praised Tess as a literary achievement and explained in detail his reasons for believing this:

No one who gives Mr. Hardy a fair hearing will deny that his book is a great and triumphant achievement—one which places him with the foremost masters of English fictions. It has all the charm of his former works, with something that places it apart. The style is sweet, various, and noble, with coming and going lights of tenderness and power. But it has a rush and movement new to Mr. Hardy, though it contains, perhaps, no such passage of concentrated effort as the description of Egdon Heath in "The Return of the Native." The resistless sweep of "Tess" is, indeed one of its chief merits. Some may complain of the admixture of technical terms. These are but the ruins of systems—great and little—washed into the river of feeling and borne along with it. In this case a bold epitome would be more than commonly brutal . . . . there is no small doubt that it ranks first among Mr. Hardy's achievements and second to no work of its time.6

5 The Spectator (London), LXVIII (January 23, 1892), 122.
6 The Bookman (London), I (February, 1892), 179-180.
Although the critic of The Review of Reviews found Tess not without faults, he believed Thomas Hardy had made an earnest study and brought forth a "great" book.

"Tess of the D'Urbervilles" . . . can hardly fail to take rank as it's sic author's greatest work up to the present time . . . it is a story which is, in virtue of its passionate and lofty aim as well as of the pulse of dramatic vitality which throbs through it from the first half farcical to the last overpoweringly tragic scene, is, to our mind, quite the most serious contribution to latter-day English fiction. With some defects or excesses—among which an occasional tendency to over scientific phraseology must be mentioned—it is yet a great book, and none the less so by reason of the indefinable impressions it gives us of a creative personality, in some ways greater than the thing created. 7

Sir William Watson of The Academy was more unreservedly laudatory in his opinion of Tess than any other critic of this early period. At the same time Sir William seemed to have attained a perspective unusual for a reviewer of his time. His criticism was worth quoting at length:

In this, his greatest work, Mr. Hardy has produced a tragic masterpiece which is not flawless, any more than Lear or Macbeth is; and the easiest way of writing about it would be to concentrate one's attention upon certain blemishes of style, read the author a lecture upon their enormity, affect to be very much shocked and upset by some of his conclusions in morals, and conveniently shirk such minor critical duties as the attempt to annul one's prejudices inherited or acquired; to estimate in what degree the author's undoubtedly impassioned ethical vision is steady and clear; and, while eschewing equally a dogmatic judicialism and a weak surrender of the right of private censorship, to survey the thing created, in some measure,

7 The Review of Reviews (London), XXVI (February, 1892), 200.
by the light of its creator's eyes. What is called critical coolness seems, no doubt, on a cursory view, an excellent qualification in a judge of literature; but true criticism, when it approaches the work of the master, can never be quite cool. To be cool before the Lear or the Macbeth were simply not to feel what is there; and it is the critic's business to feel, just as much as to see. In so tremendous a presence, the criticism which can be cool is no criticism at all. The critical, hardly less than the creative mind, must possess the faculty of being rapt and transported, or its function declines into mere connoisseurship, and pedant's office of mechanical appraisement.

Fortunately . . . Tess is a work so great that it could almost afford to have even proportionately great faults; and the faults upon which I have dealt in the omitted paragraph was a discussion of over-academic phraseology as a flaw in style, —perchance unduly— are casual and small. Powerful and strange in design, splendid and terrible in execution, this story brands itself upon the mind as with the touch of incandescent iron. 8

The reviewer of The Independent, although he did not like the general theme of the novel, gave justice where he thought was due and wrote: "As a piece of artisanship this novel is well-nigh perfect; the workman has shown himself a consummate master of his craft; a sense of this superb workmanship is the only pure pleasure the book affords; every other effect is as black as night, as cheerless as a tomb, as hopeless as the scaffold." 9

In The Book Buyer the critic, although he seemed to prefer George Meredith's works to those of Hardy, did not hesitate to credit the worth of Tess:

8 Sir William Watson, The Academy (London) XLI (February 6, 1892), 125-126.
9 The Independent (New York), XLIV (February 25, 1892), 276.
Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles has been pronounced the best novel published in England during the past year. The admirers of George Meredith, who remember his "One of Our Conquerors," may question the soundness and justice of this opinion, but they will not be apt to deny that Mr. Hardy's Tess, with its charming portraits of his beloved Wessex folk and its fragrant odor of rural England, is a clever story, and one of his best. The author has bestowed upon his heroine a lovable, unsophisticated country girl, all the care and attention of which his art makes his the master. . . . The pictures of country life are delightfully fresh and the secondary characters, the girl's father and mother especially, are drawn with deft and skilful touches.  

Despite the objections of the reviewer of Blackwood's Magazine to a novel which, he believed, dealt only with "the relation between the sexes," he did find enjoyment in Tess:  

... what a living, breathing scene, what a scent and fragrance of the actual, what solid bodies, what real existence, in contrast with the pale fiction of the didactic romance! We feel inclined to embrace Mr. Hardy, though we are not fond of him, in pure satisfaction with good brown soil and substantial flesh and blood, the cows, and the mangel-wurzel, and the hard labour of the fields--which he makes us smell and see.  

The reviewer of The Nation found nothing of literary merit in Tess. Nothing worthy of praise unless it was Angel Clare, whom he considered "a good man, just and not unduly severe." The epitome of this critic's attitude was expressed in the final sentence of his article: "'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' is as profoundly immoral a book as the 'young person' can easily lay her hand on."

10 The Book Buyer (New York), IX (February 27, 1892), 68-69.
11 Blackwood's Magazine (Edinburgh), CLI (March, 1892), 465.
12 The Nation (New York) LIV (April 28, 1892), 326.
In The Atlantic Monthly the reviewer considered every element in Tess used in perfect proportion. The scenery, the characters, the drama and the narrative were each given just the right consideration "and everything lends itself to exhibit in the fullest light the central figure of the story. . . . Tess as a whole definitely surpasses the rest of Mr. Hardy's books. . . if only for its wider intellectual horizon, and its larger, sadder, less bitter irony." The critic concluded his estimate of Tess by stating, "Tess alone would almost make a novel great."

In The Fortnightly Review the critic made a severe pronouncement in his appraisal of Tess. There was no half-way opinion here. The criticism was unique in that it alone of the early criticisms gave an unfavorable estimate of Tess which was not based upon moral condemnation of the story:

The central conception of the book, the main feature seems right enough, but it has not been seized strongly, and the story, like all Mr. Hardy's stories, alternately harries and flags. Parts are good enough as renderings of human and natural life to make one more than astonished at the not infrequent lapses into the cheapest conventional style of the average popular novelist. What can one make of a piece of writing like this, where the most flagrant puppets for the time being usurp the parts of what he has taught us to feel as something like human characters?

one cannot for a moment hesitate in one's recognition of the fact that Mr. Hardy's novel is not a success—is a failure. It is far too faulty to pass. The gaps that repre-

13 The Atlantic Monthly (Boston and New York), LXIX (May, 1892), 702.
sent bad work are too large and too frequent. One has no desire to come back to it. A second reading leaves a lower estimate of it than the first, and a third is not possible. There is the immense pity of it.\footnote{14}

Quite the opposite view of Tess was expressed by William Sharp who considered Tess the most mature and, on the whole, the most powerful expression of Hardy's genius. The story, he thought, contained the very spirit of romance and represented English prose of the noblest kind:

I have read several parts of the book again and again, and have read the story as a whole twice, and in so doing I have felt as though all of Mr. Hardy's works that preceded it were in some sort a clearing of the ground--more or less brilliant heralds, let me rather say, of this superb achievement. The romance has the power, the intensity, the inevitableness, and above all the warm humanity of the great drama, ancient and modern. It is so homely a subject and deals so simply with simple things of common life in a remote English county that its effect upon the mind is all the more reason for our wonder and admiration. I can well believe what I heard a distinguished author declare, that no man, and certainly no woman, could read this book with sympathy, and not thenceforth be of broader mind and more charitable and catholic spirit.\footnote{15}

1893-1912

D. F. Hannigan in an article in The Westminster Review for December, 1892, has defended Tess vehemently from the attack made by Andrew Lang. In that article, besides denouncing Lang, he had considered Tess a book written for the mature

\footnote{14} The Fortnightly Review (London), LVIII (July 1, 1892), 19-22.  
\footnote{15} William Sharp, "Thomas Hardy and His Novels," The Forum (New York), XIII (July, 1892), 591-592.
reader. In *The Westminster Review* for March, 1893, in an article "Prospective Transformation of the Novel," he presented his opinion of *Tess* as a literary creation, pointing out its faults and merits:

Mr. Hardy is a novelist of extraordinary power, and every new work of his is eagerly read by thousands. He endeavors to depict life as he knows it; but in nearly every one of his books he falls into some of the worst errors of romanticism . . . In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, his last and greatest novel, the tragedy is artificially brought about; it is unnecessary, it is simply tragedy for tragedy's sake. At the same time, some portions of the book are exceedingly lifelike. In spite of the melodramatic tendencies, Mr. Hardy is one of the foremost living novelists. Many of his local sketches are intensely accurate. His knowledge of the female heart is wonderful; but his men are, for the most part, poor specimens of their sex.16

Mrs. Harriet W. Preston in an article on Hardy's novels in *The Century* (July, 1893), included her reaction to *Tess*, which was reprinted in *The Critic*, July 8, 1893, as "A Woman's Opinion of *Tess*." In this novel she found that Hardy's manner, as in his previous novels, rose with the seriousness of his subject and was never greater than in this novel. Mrs. Preston wrote, "The tale of *Tess* is told with a simple distinction of style not to be matched by any living writer of English."17 However, she was "outraged" by the return of Tess to her seducer and she found the murder and the scaffold were "mere vulgar horrors." They exceeded what she conceded the proper

limit tragedy for they excited neither pity nor terror, but simply repugnance. She concluded by saying "regretfully and even resentfully": "No writer of our own gloomy time has grasped for one moment, only to wantonly fling away, a more sublime opportunity to enlarge the perception of the moral possibilities of primitive womanhood" than Mr. Hardy in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles.*

Lionel Johnson in his *The Art of Thomas Hardy* did not rank *Tess* as high as some of Hardy's earlier novels because it contained so much insinuated argument which he found a "detriment to its art." Johnson found Hardy completely sincere, but he disliked Hardy's "refusal to let the facts of the story convey their own moral, without the help of epigrammatic hints." Later in his book Johnson wrote:

> It is hard, to feel bitterly against even so bitter a book: it is harder, to say anything, that can for an instant move other minds, to share my view of it; against the grandeur of such a book, criticism unadorned has the poorest of chances. Indeed, the book and the age are in many ways good friends: for both are full of humanitarian sentiment, often most true and fine; and both incline towards the same philosophy.

Annie MacDonnell in her study of Thomas Hardy believed that *Tess* was the greatest of Hardy's books. It had deserved being "pushed to the front" because of the strength of appeal.
to human sympathies made by the problems it dealt with. However, the very earnestness had prevented "an idyll of singular beauty" from being a complete artistic success. Miss MacDonnell believed that the greatness of the book was proved by the fact that the reader could forget the defects—incidents, which she called "improbabilities"—when remembering the story as a whole. "It is a book that holds both cheeks ready for the smiting of the little critic, as do not a few of the great books of the world, until tradition has raised a fence of reverence about them, and they become fetishes. But, in no carking modd, one must own that, apart from the central figure, it is poorer than any of the other great novels in strong presentation of character, as it is richer, or, at least subtler, in its interpretations of nature."

Wilbur L. Cross in The Development of the English Novel wrote that Hardy's treatment of the tragedy of Tess had no precedent in English literature:

Tess of the D'Urbervilles, his mightiest production, is a tragedy that at no period in our history other than these fin de seicle days could have been written; or, if written, could have been understood. And what is its novelty? Surely it is not the subject-matter, for recall Clarissa Harlowe and Adam Bede. It has been a tacit assumption in English tragedy that the dramatic hero must commit some deed from which he suffers. The deed may be a crime as in Macbeth; it may

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21 Annie MacDonnell, Thomas Hardy (New York: 1895), 57-58.
issue from a fault in judgment, as in the case of Brutus, or from a stubborn vanity, as in the case of Lear. That there are likely to be innocent victims of the deed may be admitted, and therein lies the deeper pathos of Shakespearean tragedy. . . . The tragedy of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* begins in a crime and ends in a crime; Alec pays the penalty of his misdeeds. But Alec is only a subordinate character. Tess is the main and central character, who, from first to last, Hardy insists is free from any wrong-doing. In this reversal of the traditions of tragedy, both in our drama and in our novel, Hardy is an innovator.  

1912-1928

Abercrombie, as has been shown, made much of the epic quality of *Tess*. In epitomizing his evaluation of *Tess* he wrote, "From the first to the last, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is one relentless onward movement. The human narrative, the surrounding nature, the accompaniment of intellectual and emotional significance, all weave inextricably together, and go forward dominated by a unity of purpose; they unite in a singel epic statement, formidable in its bare simplicity, of the conflict between personal and impersonal--the conflict which is the inmost vitality of all Hardy's noblest work."  

Harold Child recalled that Hardy had more than once pleaded in self-defence that the business of an artist was to create a world that should express the world as he saw it. Child added

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to this that in the long run great art helped to make the actual world. He though that the setting, characters, and movement were august and simple beauties in *Tess*. He found that no novel by Hardy and perhaps no novel ever written was so full of pity as *Tess*. It was "at once so perfect in artistic unity, and so hot an expression of personal feeling."

H. C. Duffin found that the novel *Tess* had a unique place in English literature since it was the only "Soul's Tragedy" since Shakespeare. The relation he found between *Tess* and Shakespearean drama has been adequately treated in the chapter on interpretations of *Tess*. He thought, however, that the peculiar grace and supreme achievement in Hardy was his having "gone down among the unnoticed forgotten myriads of dull, prosaic, average humanity, and discovered here and there among them lives as mysteriously interesting and as spiritually adventurous as were ever those of queens and emperors."

Beach wrote that the greatest element of appeal in *Tess* was the pathos inherent in its story and in the heat of feeling with which Hardy traced the sufferings of his heroine. "And it is this pathos, and this heat of feeling--voicing itself in accents of great beauty--that made the superiority of *Tess*, I will not say merely to *The Native*, but to any other

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English novel of its period." Beach excused Hardy's "impiety" because despite it he knew how to envelop his story in such "a dense and shining atmosphere of poetry." Beach continued:

We have never had a novelist who made so beautiful a use of that time-vision which is one of the richest resources of the poet. This is not the faculty of reviving in romantic tale the glittering figures and events of a time long past. It is the more elevated and poetic faculty of setting the plainest figures of today in a perspective of ages, in a shadowy synthesis that, while it swarms the present scene, yet lends it a grandeur, too a dignity and a grandeur, too a dignity and a noble pathos borrowed from those of time itself.27

Robert Shafer in his book From Beowulf to Thomas Hardy wrote that Tess of the D'Urbervilles was by general consent one of the few great English novels. "It is so because of its high measure of truth, its tragic insight, and its intense, moving power. And in more than one incidental episode as well as in its central theme it is obviously a plea for charity, for a larger tolerance, for a repudiation of narrow, traditional applications of moral principles which sacrifice truth and reality for appearances."28

George Moore declared to Mr. Freeman in his Conversations in Ebury Street that many people considered Mr. Hardy's works as impossible and would probably say so once Mr. Hardy was dead, but because truth appeared to many as bad taste they

26 Joseph Warren Beach, The Technique of Thomas Hardy (Chicago: 1922), 185.
27 Ibid., 212.
28 Robert Shafer, "Thomas Hardy," From Beowulf to Thomas Hardy (New York: 1924), 761.
refrained from their comments. Moore added:

But I would think only of how he may be saved from invidious familiarity when he advances to meet our God, for never having known him on earth he may, when he steps from Charon's boat, ask the God to point out his (Mr. Hardy's) seat to him; or it may be that he will seek his seat himself, and not finding it next to Shakespeare or AEschylus, he will return and complain to Apollo, who will ask: Who is this one. A messenger will answer: This is Hardy, the author of Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure. And the author of these absurd works, the God will reply, would place himself next to AEschylus and Shakespeare! The messenger will answer: he has listened long to the quackers that beset the shallows of mortality. All the same, let him be hurled into the hollows we have reserved for—and the God will quote three names which I am not called upon to transcribe.29

Herbert B. Grimsditch placed Tess highest among Hardy's novels. In relating his reasons for this opinion he wrote:

A very striking fact concerning Tess of the D'Urbervilles is that the very aspect of Hardy's art and thought is therein exemplified. The main interest in the story, of course, lies in the heroine's encounter with convention; but whether the critic be in search of pathos, humour, irony, tragedy, description of nature, superstitions or folk-lore, some striking example will at once arise in his mind from this book. Except in architectonic quality (wherein it is inferior to The Return of the Native) it is the greatest of all his novels30

1928-1942

Claude Moore Fuess wrote shortly after Hardy's death that Tess was comparable with War and Peace. He mooted this

29 George Moore, Conversations in Ebury Street (London: 1924; 1930), 85.
30 Herbert B. Grimsditch, Character and Environment in the Novels of Thomas Hardy (London: 1925), 100.
question: "Which leaves the more enduring impression, the Russian masterpiece, with its hundreds of warriors, statesmen and potentates in dazzling colors, or the English novel, with its sketches of men and women in 'hodden-gray,' in an obscure and isolated corner of England?" Then he added, "Whether in palaces of huts, the soul may be the battleground of crimes and passions, of unrealized longing and unachieved desires."

Patrick Braybrooke believed that Tess of the D'Urbervilles would be classed among those volumes which are immortal. For "surely there are few, if any, who would deny this beautiful book the right to such a happy fate. We much never allow a book that can move to unselfish love to go the way of all flesh. Though Tess dies on the scaffold, she has produced her own immortality. Hardy may not believe in immortality, but his works are surely, at least in part, deathless."

Rutland wrote: "The value of Tess of the D'Urbervilles in literature lies in its portrayal of the heroine, and of her setting; both are drawn with the hand of a master, and are of surpassing beauty."

Carl J. Weber considered Tess Hardy's greatest novel:

Nearly fifty years have passed since those excited days when Tess first appeared, and it is now possible to look upon Tess of the D'Urbervilles with clearer eyes. Few readers will be disposed to quarrel with the judgment that it is the

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32 Patrick Braybrooke, Thomas Hardy and his Philosophy (London: 1928), 164.
greatest of his novels. Not the most perfect work of art; that distinction belongs to The Return of the Native. Not the most powerful piece of portraiture; that is found in The Mayor of Casterbridge. But just as most critics agree that King Lear is Shakespeare's greatest work without being his best play, so Tess of the D'Urbervilles is Hardy's greatest, without being his most artistic or most nearly perfect novel.

Henry W. Nevinson wrote that Thomas Hardy was one of the most keenly imaginative, creative, humorous, and profoundly sympathetic natures who had added a lasting glory to English literature.

Edmund Blunden thought that in the simplest aspect it was scarcely possible to imagine a time when no one would be wanting to meet Tess, "there where she stands not so much for her personal tragedy as the English country girl, as a figure as beautiful as those in Keats's "Ode to Autumn" and more distinctly related to these our tilled fields, our needs and our processes."

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The first critics of Tess were concerned with Tess alone and not with the other works of Hardy. Because of this the early reviewers wrote more in detail about the smaller points of the novel. They were more inclined to examine the separate

35 Henry W. Nevinson, Thomas Hardy (London: 1941), 64.
36 Edmund Blunden, Thomas Hardy (London: 1941), 211.
parts of Tess, than to regard the novel as a whole. Because of this one notes that in each chapter more space is devoted to the first period than to the later ones.

Since the early critics made so many comments about the smaller details of the novel, one might be mislead by a cursory glance at the early reviews as represented in the previous chapters into thinking that the novel was not ranked very high when first published. Although more space was given to the details of Tess than to the discussion of the novel as a whole, in almost every article, the critic did try to sum us his opinion of the rank of the novel. In this chapter these various summations of the value of Tess have been given. One notes that of these first criticisms only The Saturday Review, The Nation and The Fortnightly Review fail to see any merit in the novel. The Saturday Review considered it a dreary and too theatrical a story; The Nation wrote that it was profoundly immoral, and The Fortnightly Review thought it was a failure because of faulty workmanship. Much later than this period, the prejudiced George Moore wrote passionately that Tess was impossible.

The Speaker and The Athenaeum predicted correctly that the novel would rank among the best of Hardy's works and high among achievements of other Victorian novelists. The Bookman agreed that Tess was a triumphant achievement and The Review of Reviews wrote it was his greatest work so far. The Inde-
The Bookbuyer and Blackwood's Magazine praised the craftsmanship of Hardy. George Meredith and D. F. Hannigan both thought the book open to criticism, but still excellent. William Sharp wrote that Tess was the most mature and powerful expression of Hardy's genius, and Sir William Watson considered it comparable to Macbeth and King Lear. Thus, one sees that although Tess may have shocked the first critics of the novel, it was recognized from the beginning by all but a few as an artistic achievement.

Of the other critics who wrote of Tess before the appearance of his last novel, Mrs. Harriet W. Preston considered that Hardy's style was never better, although she found the last part of the book repugnant. Annie MacDonnell thought Tess Hardy's greatest book, but too earnest to be a complete success. Lionel Johnson, however, did not consider Tess as good as the earlier novels, because it contained too much insinuated argument.

After Hardy had written his last novel Jude, the critics had his entire prose works to consider when evaluating Tess. The preceding critics when evaluating Tess did little more than try to determine what rank this novel would have in relation to Hardy's previous novels and other Victorian novelists. With the turn of the century critics began to delight in revealing the uniqueness of Tess. Wilbur Cross was the first. He showed that in Tess Hardy's reversal of the tradition of
tragedy in drama and novels was unprecedented. Chew believed that no other novel was so full of pity as Tess and despite the personal feeling involved, it had artistic unity. H. C. Duffin wrote that Tess was the only "Soul's Tragedy" since Shakespeare. He pointed out that Hardy differed from Shakespeare in that he found the soul of average humanity equally as interesting as the spiritual adventure of queens and emperors. Claude Moore Fuess, in somewhat the same vain, in comparing Tess with War and Peace pointed out that Hardy dealt with the Soul of the common people.

Abercrombie praised the relentless onward movement of Tess. Beach, Shafer, and Brimsditch believed that because of the pathos and moving power of Tess, it was one of the few great English novels. Braybrooke, Nevinson, and Blunden agreed that Tess was immortal and Rutland thought the portrayal of Tess and her setting was masterly. Weber was right when he wrote that few readers would disagree that Tess was the greatest of Hardy's novels--in fact, it was "an Anglo-Saxon social landmark."

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Through careful examination of the reviews, criticisms, and comments about Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* which have been made since 1891, the author has tried to determine the various opinions of Hardy's ability to portray setting and character and the diverse interpretations and evaluations of *Tess*.

Although there were many variations of interpretations of *Tess*, it was found that there were two general schools of thought. One, that *Tess* was an indictment of the injustice of man's own moral and social laws. This interpretation was influenced by Hardy's sub-title, "A Pure Woman." The other, that *Tess* was a treatise of indignation at the laws of the universe which were inexorable and beyond man's control. Those who maintained that this was the correct interpretation believed so partially because of Hardy's statement in the final paragraph of *Tess*, "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in AEschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess." The majority of critics since 1912 have tended
to combine these two interpretations and have come to the conclusion that *Tess* was an expression of dissatisfaction at the injustice of the laws of both man and the universe.

Hardy's sub-title, "A Pure Woman," did more than influence the interpretation of *Tess*, it started a long debate over the correctness of such an epithet being applied to Tess, and the whole moral aspect of the novel was therefore discussed. The question of Tess's purity or impurity was never agreed upon by the two sides, but after Hardy's death the whole controversy disappeared and has not been considered since.

Instead, the critics came more and more to discuss the heroine as an artistic creation. The present opinion of Tess is that she is Hardy's most complete creation of a woman character.

Of the secondary characters of *Tess*, Angel Clare and Alec D'Urberville were the only ones who received more than a passing comment. The opinion of Angel has been divided since the day of publication of the novel. It has not yet been agreed upon whether Angel was a "rig" and did not act as a man would have acted, or whether he was "a spiritually beautiful character" whose actions were in line with the character Hardy delineated him as having. The majority of critics have agreed that Alec D'Urberville was an excellent psychological study of a sensual man.

The one subject on which there has been no dissension is that Hardy was a master at portraying the Wessex country
vividly. Even in the severest criticisms of Hardy between 1891 and 1893 no critic had any fault to find with Hardy's descriptions of the landscapes. Although Hardy's portrayal of the country-side has ever been thought powerful, the later critics found a close, even symbolic, relationship between the background of the story and the characters who moved against that background. This fact has made the modern critics have a deeper appreciation of the artistic genius of Thomas Hardy.

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was not a perfect novel, but had many sensational or too melodramatic incidents in it. The different episodes which the critics objected to have been pointed out, as have certain scenes which were thought unusually good. The two more discussed incidents were the sleep-walking scene and the murder of Alec. Despite certain "flaws" in *Tess*, the whole of the novel represented Hardy at his best.

Although many smaller details of *Tess* were criticized harshly, when the novel as a whole was considered, it was recognized from the beginning by most of the critics as an unusual novel. During the first few months following its publication, the novel was predicted to take rank among the best of Hardy's work and high among the Victorian novels. Today one sees that the early predictions were correct and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is considered Hardy's best novel and as Carl J. Weber so aptly wrote, "an Anglo-Saxon social landmark."
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