

English (General)  
(CC-T-4) Tess of the D'Urbervilles (4th sem)  
Plot construction

Thomas Hardy is one of the greatest novelists of the modern world and indeed a master of plot construction. Unlike Dickens, Thackeray and many others he shows a great mastery in plot construction. He builds the structure of his plot brick by brick and stone by stone like an expert mason. Like Fielding his first love in his novels is the story and he thinks that the novelist should not waste his reader's time if he has no exceptional story to tell him. In this respect Fielding follows Shakespeare whose first love in the drama is nothing else but the story.

Being an architect by profession Hardy gives to his novels an architectural design, for he employs each circumstance in the narrative to one accumulative effect. Therefore the whole design appears perfectly clear in its outline and at the same time he attaches a great importance to situation and circumstance. Most of the plots of Hardy are agricultural and have an idyllic charm about them. Neil has observed - "His plots are for the most part simple. The passions he depicted are the elemental - of love, greed, jealousy, ambition, the thirst for power and knowledge, and the

springs of action that move his characters are psychological - - - - -". Like Shakespeare the opening of a novel written by Hardy gives the keynote of the whole novel and there is a current of inevitability running through all the events in the novel. Though the part of an external fate is great in them, yet the life or motive at the centre of each plot is essentially psychological. The favourite theme of Hardy is love around which his plots are built and they rise from the fact that two or more men love one woman, or two or more women love one man. The eternal triangle is always present in his novels and this triangle is very simple in "Tess of the D'Urbervilles".

We have got the emotional actions of the heroine - Tess, of this novel and also the ~~devilish~~ devilish pursuit and the ~~equal~~ cruel persuasion of Alec D'Urberville to destroy her innocence and beauty. There are the emotional disturbances of Angel Clare together with his conventional morality lying deep into his subconscious mind. At last Angel Clare marries Tess and goes away to Brazil. Tess has to work very hard at Fintcomb Ash and Alec reappears in her life. He renews his approach to Tess and ~~tempt~~ tempts her. Tess struggles against this temptation but in vain.

Like Satan in the Bible, Alec continues his cruel persuasion of Tess and she is forced to yield before the villain. When Angel Clare returns to rejoin her, she stabs Alec to death and passes an interlude of happiness with Angel. In the end, Tess is arrested and hanged. So, the character of Tess ~~is~~ is her destiny to some extent, and heredity and environment play their part in bringing about her tragic end.

In spite of some weaknesses Hardy remains a superb master of plots. There is something psychologically improbable about the sleepwalking scene, Tess's surrendering her soulless body to Alec, again stabbing Alec and Angel Clare's ~~acceptance of~~ accepting Tess, when she commits ~~a~~ a murder. In spite of all these things 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' remains a masterpiece of Thomas Hardy, for he has left behind no better novel than this.

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— R. D. —

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