

**Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*: A Pure Woman (Not So) Faithfully Presented  
in Modern Adaptations by Roman Polanski and David Blair**

Sophie Buckingham  
3922464  
Lariestraat 23  
5482 LH Schijndel  
BA Thesis for UU English Language and Culture  
Adapting to the Novel  
Supervisor: Dr. Roselinde Supheert  
Second Reader: Dr. Paul Franssen  
30 January 2015  
10,696 words

## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1: A Pure Woman	7
Chapter 2: Tess's Independence	19
Chapter 3: Christianity and Paganism	26
Conclusion	33
Works Cited	36

## Introduction

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented* by Thomas Hardy was first published in book form in December 1891, after different serialised versions first appeared in several magazines (Dolin xlv-li). Some differences can be explained by the objections of some editors to “frequent and detailed reference[s] to immoral situations” (xlviii); other differences occurred from around 1890 until around 1920, when the “novel was in a more or less constant state of evolution” (liii). After the publication of the 1891 edition, Hardy frequently revised the novel, but the basic storyline remained the same.

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* tells the story of Tess Durbeyfield, a working-class girl who is forced to claim kinship with the rich Stoke-D'Urbervilles at Trantridge. She succumbs to the Stoke-D'Urberville heir, and her supposed cousin, Alec. He rapes or seduces her, leaving her with child. After she leaves Trantridge, the child is born but soon dies and she starts working at Talbothays dairy farm where she meets Angel Clare. She fails to tell him of her past before they are married and when he finds out, he leaves her. After enduring many hardships, Tess meets Alec again, who eventually wins her back. When Angel comes back for her, she impulsively murders Alec. Tess and Angel spend some brief time together before Tess is arrested and sentenced to be hanged.

The novel was not received well on its first publication. One of the reasons that the novel met considerable objections is part of its subtitle: “A Pure Woman.” Losing her virginity before marriage, Tess hardly seems pure.<sup>1</sup> The next version was published in 1892 in which “Hardy responded to the reviewers’ clamouring objections to the subtitle” (Dolin lvi). However, during the 20th century, Tess’s innocence has been revalued. According to William Davis, “we are inclined to scoff at this ‘old-fashioned’ reaction and attribute it to the

---

<sup>1</sup> One critic who objected to the subtitle and the novel itself was Mowbray Morris. He had also rejected Hardy’s manuscript for serial publication in Macmillan’s Magazine and later heavily criticized *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in the *Quarterly Review* (Higonnet xx). R. H. Hutton wrote in the Spectator that *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was probably the best of Hardy’s works, but he thought that Tess Durbeyfield was a weak character (xxi).

ubiquitous Grundyism of that era,” so that the current prevailing opinion suggests that Tess is pure after all when looking at her motives (397).

In this thesis, the novel’s first book edition of 1891 is used as a starting point because it is the most controversial one: it has not yet undergone any changes that Hardy made “to answer criticism of his subtitle” (Dolin lvii). It can also be argued that the 1891 edition is most widely referred to in modern times because the current opinion is that Tess is a pure woman (Davis 397), and Tim Dolin suggests that Tess’s purity is more vigorously declared in the 1891 edition than in the 1892 edition (lvii). However, the 1892 edition is also important because Hardy altered this version most significantly compared to its direct predecessor (li), and some differences in pivotal scenes need to be analysed with regard to the film adaptations.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the 1892 edition is more similar to later editions than the 1891 book edition, so that at least the most important changes Hardy made himself can be discussed, rather than smaller trivial alterations between the 1892 edition and later ones. The differences between the 1891 and 1982 editions will mainly be discussed in chapter 1 to analyse the ways Polanski and Blair have adapted the rape or seduction scene, as this is the most ambiguous event of the novel and the other subjects described in this thesis are of a more general nature.

The novel has been adapted for the screen numerous times. Tess’s cinematic adaptation history dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. In 1913, J. Searle Dawley’s silent version was released and in 1924 another silent film, directed by Marshal Neilan, was made (Niemeyer). However, both these films are considered lost. Since the 1950s other adaptations have been made. These include television series as well as Indian films. In this paper, two adaptations will be analysed: the film *Tess*, directed by Roman Polanski in 1979, starring Natassia Kinski as Tess, Leigh Lawson as Alec and Peter Firth as Angel; and the mini-series *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, directed by David Blair and written by David Nicholls

---

<sup>2</sup> Neither Blair’s nor Polanski’s version seems to be consistently based on one definite edition. However, the Polanski’s seduction scene appears to be based on the 1892 edition and Blair’s rape scene seems to be based on the 1891 edition.

in 2008, starring Gemma Arterton as Tess, Hans Matheson as Alec and Eddie Redmayne as Angel. They have been chosen because of their very different portrayals of Tess and the differing interpretations of the novel's ambiguities.

This thesis mainly deals with Tess's character and the way in which her actions or experiences may be interpreted. It focuses especially on her purity, independence and morality (according to the different value systems she belongs to: Christianity and paganism). With his novel Hardy criticised Victorian society. The most apparent issue at hand in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is the Victorian double sexual standard. However, although Hardy labelled Tess "pure" in the novel's subtitle, it is not evident whether this label is to be taken literally. As her maidenhood is not intact, physically speaking Tess cannot be considered "pure" by late-Victorian standards, which means that Hardy either intended the subtitle as sarcastic or that he meant for Tess to be seen as morally pure and acting with good intentions. Other issues in Hardy's novel relate to class relationships and male domination in Victorian society. Tess is of noble blood but now poor, whereas Alec is definitely not of noble stock, being merely a Stoke, but his father was able to buy a title due to a large fortune. In this way, appearances are not what they seem. Tess is dominated by many others in her life, usually males. It is difficult for her to assert her independence against these forces, not only because these people, including her mother, are very persistent, but also because, as a working-class woman, Tess does not have a high position in the Victorian social hierarchy. Married to Alec in one sense and to Angel in another, Tess is subject to both their wills. She is a vital character because she is a victim of all these issues. Moreover, she has both Christian and pagan characteristics so that she is constantly in conflict with herself. She seems to have Christian values and pagan instincts, but neither can help her escape her fate. Polanski and Blair's adaptations offer different views on Tess Durbeyfield in relation to the novel; they reveal remarkable differences in interpreting her sexual purity and relationship with Alec, Tess's

independent nature and the morality behind some of the choices she makes. Although Blair's adaptation is not a film but a mini-series and has more time to elaborate on Tess's character development, the differences with Polanski's film are still profound: like Blair, Polanski has managed to present Tess in a distinct manner with many qualities so that the difference in length does not necessarily affect the outcome when analysing these two adaptations.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first deals with Tess's innocence in relation to her sexuality and life experience. The second addresses Tess's independence and in what way she asserts her freedom in relation to other characters in a male-dominated society. The third analyses Tess's religion and the value systems that occur in the novel. This paper mainly deals with the different interpretations of the story and therefore focuses on (adjustments to) the storyline and dialogue. Camera angles and character positions on the set are also examined if they are significant to Tess's portrayal: they may add symbolism to the story or carry an implied message. The aim is to analyse the way Tess is presented in the two different adaptations in relation to the novel and whether Hardy's criticism on Victorian society is strengthened or diminished by the way Tess is portrayed.

---

<sup>3</sup> References for Polanski's film will be given in the basic format of *hour:minute:second* and references for Blair's miniseries will be given in *episode.minute:second*. The lengths of the adaptations are circa 170 and 200 minutes, respectively.

## Chapter 1: A Pure Woman

When Hardy's novel was first published, its subtitle was heavily criticised. Not only does Tess lose her maidenhood before marriage, she is also an adulteress and a killer. Indeed, Tess commits adultery on two levels because she might still be considered Alec's wife when she marries Angel, but she also might equally be regarded as Angel's wife when she goes to Sandbourne with Alec. While Alec's death may seem justified to some after he raped Tess, it does not take away the fact that Tess murdered someone. However, although Tess can be considered an adulteress and a murderess, she appears to be more morally pure than any other character in the novel (Gordon 60). Nonetheless, due to factors such as Victorian rules and even fate, she is sentenced to be hanged.

Tess certainly seems innocent when she first arrives at Trantridge. An innocent person can be described as "having little experience of the world, especially of sexual matters, or of evil or unpleasant things" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*<sup>4</sup> 801) and being free "from sin, guilt, or moral wrong in general" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). She is innocent because she does not "understand [Alec's] meaning till it [is] too late" (Hardy 77). Physically speaking, Tess is not as innocent as she was before she entered the Chase. In a moral sense, however, it is more complicated. The rape of Tess is one of the most ambiguous scenes of Hardy's novel. Hardy remains vague about what happens exactly during the rape scene and does not describe Tess's reaction to her violation. Although the narrator condemns Alec's act by asking: "where was Tess's guardian angel?" (74), and commenting on "why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus" (74), Tess's actions and emotions themselves are not mentioned. This narrative gap is ambiguous because of the events surrounding the rape. It is

---

<sup>4</sup> This dictionary has been used alongside the *OED* because it mentions sexuality more explicitly in its definition(s); and sexuality is extremely important to this chapter. Later the *OED* is used to refer to changes in how people looked at purity/innocence over time.

from these events that the reader must derive whether Tess's motives,<sup>5</sup> at least, are pure. Hardy's subtitle to the novel, "A Pure Woman," is interesting because Tess is clearly not a virgin anymore when she leaves Trantridge, and cannot be pure in the physical sense as her maidenhood is no longer intact. However, she might still be considered pure if her motives are morally good. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, purity in this sense suggests that someone is "without evil thoughts or actions, especially sexual ones" (1225). This definition is in accordance with Victorian values because women were not supposed to "pursue sexual [. . .] satisfaction" (Hughes par. 5). If Alec indeed raped her, Tess remains morally pure because he would have had sex with her against her will. However, it is not clear what Tess thinks of the matter, or what happens exactly after the supposed rape. Moreover, Olwen Hufton claims that the common Victorian belief was that pregnancy resulting from intercourse "was held to demonstrate [the woman's] active consent" (57-58), in which case the possibility that Alec raped Tess, rather than seduced her, is impossible because she gave birth to a son.

William Davis raises some interesting questions about the ambiguous scene. He asks whether Tess was raped or seduced, whether she lived with Alec as his wife in the period after the rape, whether Tess actually loved Alec for a time, whether Sorrow was conceived in The Chase or later and why Tess even chose to remain at Trantridge (398). Different answers can be found by looking at some details in the different editions of the novel. In the 1891 edition nothing indicates that Tess remained at Trantridge after the night in the Chase, though the possibility is not excluded. In the 1892 edition, however, it is clearly mentioned that Tess was enamoured by Alec for a while and that she stayed with him after the seduction. Like the different editions, Polanski's and Blair's adaptations also offer different answers to Davis'

---

<sup>5</sup> Tess cannot be regarded physically pure after she has had sex with Alec because her maidenhood is no longer intact. Her motives, however, remain pure and honest in case she does not consent to have sex with Alec. If she does consent, it is in conflict with Victorian values (see Hughes par. 5), diminishing her moral purity.



questions and so produce differing portrayals of Tess and the extent of her innocence, whether it relates to her purity or her life experience.

The novel's ambiguities make it difficult to determine whether Tess is at least spiritually "pure" despite the loss of her virginity and whether she has morally good intentions, i.e. she does not want to become Alec's mistress. The fact that Hardy rewrote some parts of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* several times also complicates matters. Especially concerning the rape-seduction scene, the 1891 book edition stands out against later revised editions: the 1891 version establishes Tess's position as a pure woman, but

the revisions after 1891 seem almost immediately to qualify or complicate Tess's purity. [. . .] It can be argued that Hardy responded to the reviewers' clamouring objections to the subtitle, not, as might be expected, by even more vigorously defending his assertion of her blamelessness, but by further obscuring or mystifying her character. (Dolin lvi)

Dolin suggests that Tess's purity is more apparent in the 1891 edition than in the 1892 edition, which even seems to reject it (lvii). It is difficult to determine which edition of the novel the adaptors based their work on, because elements from both editions can be found in them.<sup>6</sup>

However, when analysing the relationship between Tess and Alec, it seems that Polanski has adhered to the 1892 edition and Blair to the 1891 edition. The 1891 Tess "had never cared for [Alec], she did not care for him now. She had dreaded him, winced before him, succumbed to him, and that was all" (Hardy 82). The 1892 Tess, however,

had never wholly cared for him, she did not at all care for him now. She had dreaded him, winced before him, succumbed to a cruel advantage he took of her helplessness;

---

<sup>6</sup> For instance, the 1891 edition is not entirely clear whether Tess becomes Alec's mistress, whereas in the 1892 edition this is more explicit. This suggests that Polanski, at least, based the affair on the 1892 edition. However, when it comes to Angel, Polanski seems to have based his film on the 1891 edition and Blair on the 1892 edition. The 1891 Angel is somewhat crueller: he laughs demonically after Tess's confession and in Polanski's film, Angel laughs at Tess when she asks him to forgive her (1:38:19-34). Polanski has perhaps chosen to adapt the crueller variant of Angel's character because he switches the role of hero (normally Angel) and villain (usually Alec) – see chapter 1.

then, temporarily blinded by his ardent manners, had been stirred to confused surrender awhile: had suddenly despised and disliked him, and had run away. (qtd. in Dolin lvii)

It is clear that in the latter edition, Tess stays with Alec for some time after the night in the Chase, which also happens in Polanski's film, but definitely not in Blair's adaption.

Moreover, Polanski's Tess is also "temporarily blinded by [Alec's] ardent manners." Blair conveys sympathy for Tess and defends her purity, as the events at Trantridge in his mini-series are probably based on the 1891 edition. This portrayal of Tess as a completely pure woman is in accordance with the current opinion as described by Davis: modern readers reject the old-fashioned objections the novel met when it was first published (397). Indeed, she is not a virgin anymore, but she remains morally pure because she did not consent to have intercourse with Alec.

When Alec demands a kiss from Tess on their drive to Trantridge, Hardy's Tess refuses; but while Polanski's Tess remains rather calm and is at most simply annoyed, Blair's Tess is visibly upset by the idea of having to touch Alec, possibly making her seem frigid to modern standards. When Tess leaves Marlott to work at Trantridge for Mrs Stoke-D'Urberville, Alec picks her up. However, he is a very reckless driver: "Sometimes a wheel was off the ground, it seemed, for many yards; sometimes a stone was sent spinning over the hedge, and flinty sparks from the horse's hoofs outshone daylight" (Hardy 54). This distresses Tess: "Ever since the accident with her father's horse Tess [. . .] had been exceedingly timid on wheels; [. . .]. She began to get uneasy at a certain recklessness in her conductor's driving" (53). Without meaning to, "she clutched D'Urberville's rein-arm" (54) but Alec tells her to hold on to his waist instead, which she does. In this case, Polanski's Tess behaves exactly as she does in the novel. However, in Blair's adaptation, Alec has to tell Tess to hold on to him and she reluctantly takes his arm (1.20:19). When Alec tells her to hold on to his waist

instead, Tess exclaims that she “will do no such thing” (1.20:23-25) and Alec starts driving even faster. Hardy’s Alec offers Tess a deal: “Let me put one little kiss on those holmberry lips, Tess; or even on that warmed cheek, and I’ll stop – on my honour, I will!” (55). While Blair’s Tess vehemently protests, Polanski’s Tess is less fierce in objecting. The former is kissed on the mouth and scrunches up her face in disgust (1.20:49) before wiping her lips with a handkerchief, like Hardy’s Tess (56). The latter is kissed on the cheek and almost imperceptibly wipes it with her shoulder. Although Polanski’s Tess is indeed not kissed on the lips but on her cheek, it is still striking that she does not seem as fussed as Blair’s Tess. Both adaptations include some elements of the novel in this scene, but Blair differs mostly from it in making Tess more frigid than she is in the novel. It does add to her purity, however, and makes Alec’s rape seem even crueller, especially compared to Polanski’s version.

Polanski’s Tess is portrayed as naïve, while in Blair’s version Tess seems rather wary, especially of Alec. In the novel, the narrator tells the reader about the Stoke-D’Urbervilles’ situation. In Polanski’s film, however, it is Car Darch who tells Tess that Alec is actually a Stoke and she also warns her: “You watch out for Dollop the Bailiff, he’s a devil. And that Mr Alec spends half of his time on horseback and the rest of it chasing the likes of us!” (26:48-58). Tess is thus warned that Alec is a deceiver and a womaniser, but she still lets him seduce her. It certainly makes her seem naïve and in this way may contribute to her innocence, since she has little experience of the world and does not take heed of Darch’s warning. As for Blair’s Tess, she is also somewhat naïve, but as Alec is kind and helpful towards her, it is no surprise that she starts trusting him again. Alec approaches Tess when she is trying to whistle. Seeing that she is anxious, he keeps his distance and places the lower side of the door between them so that he stands outside and she stands inside (Blair 1.26:40). It is a more sexually tinted scene than in the novel because Alec tells Tess to “lick your lips first” (1.27:14-15) and to “try once more, it’s like a kiss” (1.27:30-34). At the end of this scene, when Tess has

learned how to whistle, they are laughing together and Tess genuinely smiles at him (1.27:54-18:11), not aware of the sexual innuendo in his remarks. It must be said that Polanski's Tess is also wary of Alec when he teaches her to whistle (1.30:22) and that the mini-series contain more instances in which Tess may show reluctance or hesitance towards him, for instance in the library scene (1.30:01-41), perhaps making her seem less naïve than if only the whistle scene would have been shown. The differences in naivety between the two protagonists are also illustrated by their motives for leaving Alec. Polanski's Tess is more naïve than Blair's Tess and correspondingly claims she was "blinded" (Polanski 44:10) rather than "dazed" (Blair 1.49:09).

In Polanski's film Tess is seduced by Alec, whereas she is raped in Blair's version. When Alec first appears in Hardy's novel, he is described as having "an almost swarthy complexion, with full lips, badly moulded, [. . .]. Despite the touches of barbarism in his contours, there was a singular force in the gentleman's face, and in his bold rolling eye" (40). Dianne Sadoff, however, maintains that "Polanski's Alec [. . .] looks elegant and [. . .] smilingly suave" (158). This change in Alec's character, or at least his appearance, has important consequences for the rape scene. Polanski's Alec does not give liquor to the already sleepy Tess, nor does he violate her when "she [is] sleeping soundly" (Hardy 73). In fact, Tess is not sleepy at all and the rape, or rather seduction, takes place in broad daylight and not in "[d]arkness and silence" (73). Tess's weariness may lessen her guilt and responsibility for what happens (Davis 398) so that Polanski's Tess seems less pure than she does in the novel. In the ambiguous scene, rape is turned into romance (Sadoff 86). When Alec turns around on his horse to face Tess and leans in to kiss her, Tess pushes him off (38:00). This is quite different from what happens in the novel, as she "slid off" and Alec "sprang down on the other side" (71). Polanski's Tess is distressed to find that she has hurt Alec and softly whispers "you're bleeding" (38:19) before they embrace and Alec strokes her tenderly (38:33-

50). She raises her head and this time does not resist as he kisses her, but even responds to him (38:55–39:14). Tess starts objecting not when he touches her breast, but when he tries to open her buttons (39:49–40:25). She thus “resists when seduction threatens to become sex” (Sadoff 158). Blair’s Tess feels betrayed by Alec when he takes her to the Chase: “How could you be so treacherous when I put my trust in you?” (1.41:25–29). She claims that she is tired (1.40:42) which, as suggested before, diminishes her responsibility (Davis 398), but like Polanski’s Tess she is not given any alcohol. Although Blair’s Alec clearly rapes Tess, Blair adds to the ambiguity by introducing the fog that also appears in the novel as soon as Tess falls asleep (1.43:30). It is sometimes difficult to make out what happens exactly upon Alec’s return, but it is evident that Tess is being raped. Tess is crying (1.45:00) and screaming (1.45:13) and the action appears in slow-motion, emphasising Tess’s confusion and possibly the side effects of her sleep. It is due to her weariness that she does not resist Alec at once, but it only takes her a few seconds to realise that she is being violated. Polanski’s Tess, on the other hand, has not been sleeping and is fully conscious during her interaction with Alec.

Polanski’s Tess becomes Alec’s mistress, while Blair’s Tess leaves immediately after the rape. These differences suggest that Polanski has adhered to the 1892 book edition, whereas Blair has adhered to the 1891 book edition, at least in adapting Tess’s affair with Alec. It has also been suggested that Polanski has adapted the novel according to a life experience of his own; namely the Manson murders at Cielo Drive:

Bearing the dedication “To Sharon,” Tess represents as period romance the violence done the woman who loved both Polanski and Hardy’s novel and who would have played the part of Tess; the dairy maids, the Manson family women, dominated by and obsessed with the filmically flaccid hero; Angel as villain, Manson; Alec, Polanski himself, seducer of the actress who did finally play Tess after his wife’s murder. (Sadoff 86)

If Polanski indeed saw himself as Alec, it is no surprise that the novel's ambiguities have been translated into Tess more or less consenting to an affair with Alec and that Angel becomes the villain.<sup>7</sup> It is important to note, however, that Polanski is not the only one who sees Alec in a more heroic light. It reflects a more general shift in attitude regarding Hardy's novel as some critics suggest that Hardy intended Alec, rather than Angel, to be the story's hero. Felicia Bonaparte claims in a 1999 article that "Angel has generally been seen as the hero of the novel, even as Alec is seen as the villain, [. . .] and Hardy would appear, at first, to encourage us in this reading" (425). If Alec is interpreted as the hero, the answers to the questions of whether Tess was raped or seduced and whether she lived with him in the weeks after the night in the Chase are not that ambiguous: in this case she was seduced and did live with Alec as his mistress. Consequently, she does not seem as pure because she consents to have intercourse with Alec before marriage. Blair does not leave his audience to ponder over any ambiguities either, but his interpretation differs from Polanski's. In fact, what happens in the Chase "is very clearly rape" and Tess "flees almost at once" (McNamara). In the scene after the rape, Polanski's Tess gladly accepts a hat as a gift from Alec (40:25-49), presumably "given in exchange [. . .] for her maidenhead" (Sadoff 158). Although Polanski has shown her to be naïve, this does not at all contribute to her moral purity since by accepting his gift, she justifies the rape. Polanski does add romance to his film by including a scene in which Alec rows Tess around in a boat (40:50) and swans swim nearby (41:03-11). However, Tess looks sad (41:20-31), suggesting that she does not really love him. She stays with him, though, but leaves after she discovers that Alec tries to sleep with another maid. He is certainly not talking to Tess when she hears him say: "Don't be so foolish, open the door. You'll force me to make

---

<sup>7</sup> This is further illustrated by the use of apples. Blair includes a blatant image in his series of Tess eating an apple (1.36:42-37:10), a clear reference to Eve and original sin as she eats it on the same night she is raped. Polanski is more subtle with apples. He does not use Biblical references explicitly, but at one point Angel and Tess are picking apples (1:25:23-32). Angel picks them and throws them to Tess, who catches them in a bag. It seems that he throws her guilt towards her; he is the one who condemns her for her past and he is the one who makes her feel guilty. This is significant to Polanski's understanding of Alec's and Angel's roles. Since Polanski identifies with Alec, it is logical that he seeks ways to make Angel the villain of the story.

a noise. My mother has sharp ears, she'll hear" (41:40-54). It is storming when this happens, possibly referring to Tess's inner torment about finding out that he is cheating on her. It is not clear, then, what she means when she claims that she "was blinded for a while, that's all" (44:10-11), because she might be referring to Alec's presents or to Alec's charm. She is not happy with him but does accept his gifts, implying that she is materialistic; but then she leaves Trantridge when she discovers that he is unfaithful to her, suggesting that she does feel affection for him. In another sense, however, she might feel that his infidelity breaks the bond between them that was created when he took her virginity in the Chase. Throughout the novel it is suggested that Alec is Tess's true husband, because he is her first sexual partner. It seems that Polanski's Tess also feels this way; fatalistically believing that she now cannot escape from him as they are married according to the laws of nature.<sup>8</sup> Alec's intercourse with other women might, in Tess's eyes, break the connection between them, releasing her from him. If Polanski indeed based this part of his adaptation on the 1892 edition, he changed some details. For instance, Tess had been "temporarily blinded by his ardent manners" but then "had suddenly despised and disliked him, and had run away" (qtd. in Dolin lvii). Polanski fills in the blanks by having Alec give Tess gifts, adding some romantic scenery and including an adulterous Alec as the reason why Tess "suddenly despised" him. However, Polanski includes the image of a sad-looking Tess, so that she may never have been completely "stirred to confused surrender awhile" (qtd. in Dolin lvii) because she has known from the beginning that she does not love Alec. Both the explanations for Tess being materialistic and fatalistic remain valid interpretations. It is evident in any case that she stayed with Alec for an indefinite period as his mistress. Whatever her reasons for this, she cannot be wholly regarded as innocent or pure, even morally, in Victorian times. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the notion that women had to remain "pure" declined from the 1970s onwards.

---

<sup>8</sup> This also supports the notion that Polanski's Tess is more pagan than Christian, as explained in chapter 3.

Polanski might have included the affair to assert his own criticism of Victorian society while simultaneously making Tess a product of modern times. Like Polanski, Blair also fills in the blanks surrounding the rape. While singing to the birds for Mrs D'Urberville the day after the rape, Tess bursts into tears; she runs outside crying (1.47:51) and collapses (1.48:00). In the next scene she leaves Trantridge (1.48:13). Tess does not stay at Trantridge, neither to work nor as Alec's mistress. This suggests that Sorrow was conceived during the rape and not at a later time. Alec offers Tess money and clothes, but Tess refuses: "I should not take anything from you... I should be your creature to do that and I won't!" (1.49:33-46). When Tess first goes to Trantridge, she is dressed completely in white (1.19:18) but after this, Tess is not seen wearing only white any more other than as undergarments. Even when she marries Angel, her wedding dress is green (3.1:24) rather than virginal white. This suggests that although she is not to blame, she did lose her innocence because of Alec and blames herself for it.

In killing Alec, Polanski's Tess seemingly commits premeditated murder, whereas Blair's Tess is guilty of manslaughter. In the novel, Tess is very upset after Angel has visited her at Sandbourne. In fact, she comes across as hysterical:

And you had used your cruel persuasion upon me... you did not stop using it – no – you did not stop! [. . .] and you said my husband would never come back – never, and you taunted me, and said what a simpleton I was to expect him... And at last I believed you and gave way! ... And then he came back! Now he is gone. [. . .] O yes, I have lost him now – again because of – you! (381)

She speaks loudly with sudden exclamations but also with pauses, suggesting that she is not quite herself. There is also "a sudden rustle" (381). This description is quite different from what happens in Polanski's version. It looks as if Polanski's Tess locks the door (2:31:44) and though we do not see her killing Alec, she is strangely calm before it happens. Although she only decides to kill him just after she has seen Angel, locking the door and her calm



appearance lean toward premeditated murder. It is also striking that she leaves Sandbourne in a red dress (2:32:42). When she tells Angel what she has done, she seems calm and even sleepy (2:34:34-44). This is noteworthy because several critics have suggested that every time something significant happens to Tess, she appears to be drowsy (Sadao 47). Polanski's Tess might also be in some kind of trance, though, and not fully realise that she has just killed a man, rather than merely feeling tired. If this is the case, it is a way of demonstrating that Tess is not quite herself in a different manner than Hardy has shown in his novel. Blair's Tess, on the contrary, is not so calm after having seen Angel. She starts screaming at Alec: "You lied to me!" (4.34:56-57). After winning back Tess, Alec has become openly cantankerous. He snaps at Tess, gets easily annoyed with her and tells her to "[c]alm down, woman" (4.35:08-09). As in the novel, they struggle (4.35:43-58). In Blair's version the murder itself is also not shown, but Tess's hysteria and the struggle point towards manslaughter, rather than premeditated murder. Moreover, unlike Polanski's Tess, she seems delirious when telling Angel about the murder. The differences between supposed premeditated murder and manslaughter are significant, especially when it comes to Tess's innocence. Both Polanski's and Blair's Tess have lost their innocence because of Alec, but Polanski's Tess seems somewhat less innocent because of the lack of hysteria and the tendency towards premeditated murder.

In short, Polanski has adapted Hardy's Tess in such a way that she can be seen as naïve and a bit child-like, but not as morally pure as Blair's Tess when it comes to her sexuality and the murder. This is mainly due to the fact that she consents to be Alec's mistress, whereas Blair's Tess leaves immediately. Since Polanski has portrayed Alec in a more heroic light, Tess is more liable to maintain a relationship with Alec. Blair and Nicholls have interpreted Tess as pure as she could have been considering the circumstances; sometimes even leaning toward frigidity. They are clearly interpretations on completely

opposite sides of the spectrum of the ambiguity that occurs in the novel and the dubiousness of its subtitle.

## Chapter 2: Tess's Independence

Tess is a somewhat rebellious girl who often asserts her independence. She highly values her freedom, which is evident in the way in which she defies her mother and the men in her life. Not only does she have a tendency toward independence, she also takes the responsibility of her family's welfare upon her and thinks of what the future may bring. Despite these tendencies, she is not always able to escape the male domination that she especially encounters in Alec D'Urberville. Polanski's and Blair's adaptations offer different views and contexts in which Tess maintains her independence.

It seems that Blair's Tess takes over her mother's role in taking care of the children, demonstrating a responsible and self-sufficient nature as the eldest child, while Polanski's Tess feels less obliged to do so. When Tess comes home from the May-Day Dance in Polanski's version, she wants to go upstairs but is stopped by her mother, who wants to tell her about the discovery of their D'Urberville ancestors. It is interesting that Tess is placed on the stairs and so in a higher position than her mother (11:57-12:47). This difference in perspective indeed illustrates the notion that "her mother did not see life as Tess saw it" (Hardy 192), but it also suggests that Tess is the more responsible one. Moreover, Joan Durbeyfield is technically speaking not a D'Urberville descendant; so Tess is of nobler blood than her mother. Joan decides to go to Rolliver's to fetch Sir John and tells Tess to "be a good girl, [and] take the little ones to bed for me" (12:45-7). In Blair's version, it is Tess who decides what to do with the children. She tells her sister Liza-Lu to "dress the children for bed, now" (1.7:27-9). It seems that Mrs Durbeyfield forces the role of motherhood onto her daughter in Polanski's film, but that Tess takes it upon herself in Blair's adaptation. It soon becomes clear that Tess's parents will not come home soon and Hardy's Tess first sends her little brother to Rolliver's before going herself (24), but Polanski's Tess immediately goes to fetch her parents herself while Blair's Tess remains at home altogether. In this way,

Polanski's version might reveal a certain responsibility and independence on Tess's part. He employs reverse parenting to make sure that the Durbeyfield parents do not stay out too long drinking. On the other hand, it might illustrate that Tess is dependent and not autonomous at all, because she does not send out her brother first while staying with the children herself and apparently needs her parents at home as quickly as possible.

In the novel, Tess has taken the burden upon her shoulders of maintaining the family income. Unlike Joan, who believes that Alec will "marry [Tess], most likely, and make a lady of her" (Hardy 47), Tess sees the job at Trantridge as a mere "opportunity for earning money" and tells her mother to forget about any marriage prospects: "You had better say nothing of that silly sort to the neighbours" (48). Besides this responsibility, she is mindful of the future: Tess "had hoped to be a teacher at the school, but the fates seemed to decide otherwise" (48-9). Being a school teacher means that she will have her own income, which certainly points to aspirations for independence. Her ambition is omitted in Polanski's version, but it is emphasised in Blair's adaptation. She shyly tells Alec that she wants to be a school teacher (1.16:19-20) and she is seen rehearsing "Ozymandias"<sup>9</sup> in front of her own teacher at Marlott (1.17:05-30). What is more, this educational aspect highlights the differences between Tess and her mother. Although at this point Tess is still naïve, not realising what Alec's motives are, she is still in a better position than her mother because at least she is eager to learn. Hardy writes that

Between the mother, with her fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folklore, dialect, and orally transmitted ballads, and the daughter, with her trained National teachings and Standard knowledge under an infinitely Revised Code, there was a gap of two

---

<sup>9</sup> Percy Shelley's poem "Ozymandias" is very appropriate in the context of the adaptation. Like Ozymandias, Tess is no match for fate (see chapter 3). Ozymandias exclaims: "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" However, "Nothing beside remains" (Shelley, 11-12). The poem describes "the indomitable power of transiency and the consequent folly of human pride" (Freedman 70). It is linked to Tess's story, because she cannot escape her fate, however hard she tries.

hundred years as ordinarily understood. When they were together the Jacobean and the Victorian ages were juxtaposed. (23)

When Blair's Tess supposedly receives a letter from Mrs D'Urberville, actually written by Alec, it is Tess who reads it and not her mother (1.17:39-18:03). As for Polanski's version, Joan does read the letter but haltingly. In both adaptations, Joan appears as an uneducated woman who seems to be lacking a sense of responsibility whereas Tess is the opposite; at least in theory, because Tess also still has much to learn. Blair has also included irony in his version. Alec allows Tess to roam the library freely (1.30:40-1), thus offering her an expansion of her education. When she is back at Marlott, she blames her mother for what happened with Alec in the Chase, as "[l]adies know what to guard against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance of discovering in that way, and you did not help me!" (Hardy 82). It is interesting that Blair's Alec offers Tess these novels, a passive means of protection as it were, but she does not get the chance to read them and thus cannot guard herself against him.

In the novel, Tess goes to Trantridge because she feels guilty over the death of the Durbeyfield horse: "'Well, as I killed the horse, mother,' she said mournfully, 'I suppose I ought to do something'" (Hardy 36). This is similar to what happens in Blair's adaptation. In Polanski's film, however, Tess seems to go because her mother tells her to. They do not have a horse, but it is never stated that this is Tess's fault and eventually the reason for her going to Trantridge is revealed as getting the Durbeyfields a new horse (15:38) rather than going because she killed the old one. Although Tess would "rather try to get work" (14:54-5), she is on her way to Trantridge in the next scene (15:42-16:17). The differences between the two adaptations are significant because Blair's Tess goes out of personal reasons and maintains a certain level of independence, whereas Polanski's Tess is coaxed into going by her mother which denotes an obedient character rather than an independent one.

Hardy's Alec is a very dominating presence who severely restrains Tess's freedom. The way in which he is portrayed serves to illustrate the male domination to which Tess is subjected. The different relationships Tess has with Alec and Angel are illustrated by the casting choices of Polanski's *Tess*. Leigh Lawson was cast as Alec because he is much taller than Natassia Kinski, whereas Peter Firth as Angel has more or less the same height as her (Bullen 56). This choice enforces Alec's "cavalier and unequal treatment of Tess as *femme objet*" and the "equal sexual relationship that she manages to achieve with Angel [. . .] after the murder of Alec" (56). At times, Polanski's Alec also talks to her patronisingly: "no buts, there's a good girl" (36:02-04). Alec has a prevailing influence on Tess from which she cannot escape until she murders him. Although Hans Matheson, who plays Alec in Blair's version, is more or less of the same height as Gemma Arterton, Blair has found other ways to portray Alec's authority over Tess. One instance in which Alec's control of her is demonstrated is when he saves her from the Darch sisters and the other companions. While Polanski's Tess jumps up on the horse behind Alec, as in the book (Hardy 68), Blair's Tess ends up in front of him, encircled by his arms (1.40:10). In this way, it is more difficult for her to escape from him. However, she does manage to jump off the horse when she feels that he has betrayed her (1.41:30). It denotes a certain independence because she escapes from his dominating arms. When she wants to find the way back by herself, Alec tells her that "that's very independent of you, but I'm afraid we're miles from Trantridge" (1.41:32-6). As for Polanski's Tess, by pushing Alec off the horse (38:00), she asserts her autonomy. At this point she refuses to kiss him even though he has given her family a new horse (37:13): she does not feel obliged to satisfy his needs and is still independent from him. This changes when she realises that she has physically wounded him (38:14). She gets down to examine the damage and almost immediately succumbs to Alec's seduction. In this way, her guilt trumps her need for independence, which parallels the situation with the death of Prince in the novel

and in Blair's version. It also appears that Tess's body is a great burden to her because it attracts so much attention from men. Through Alec, Tess is not only "subjected to a colonizing male gaze" but is also "constructed according to the image of Alec's rather than Angel's desire" (Silverman 7). Already on the day Tess and Alec first meet, his stare seems violently possessive: "She had an attribute which amounted to a disadvantage just now; and it was this that caused Alec D'Urberville's eyes to rivet themselves upon her" (Hardy 42). It is suggested that Tess has well-formed cleavage and as it is this that attracts Alec to her, he seems to love Tess for her body and not her mind. Alec's control of her begins through his gaze and she is "doomed" because she was "seen and marked and coveted that day by the wrong man" (43); his domination seems completed when he rapes her. Kaja Silverman argues that Tess "place[s] herself beyond the mastery of the male gaze" by making herself less attractive (25). While looking for work after Angel has left her, "several young men were troublesomely complimentary to her good looks" (Hardy 280). Tess does not want to "run [. . .] further risks from her appearance," and clothes herself in one of her "old field-gowns" and takes

a handkerchief from her bundle and tie[s] it round her face under her bonnet, covering her chin and half her cheeks and temples, as if she were suffering from toothache. Then with her little scissors, by the aid of a pocket looking-glass, she mercilessly nipped her eyebrows off, and thus insured against aggressive admiration she went on her uneven way. (280)

In this manner, she gains some of her freedom and independence. However, it is ironic that when she meets Alec again after his religious conversion, he relentlessly pursues her despite her self-molestation. She tells him to "go away – for the sake of me – my husband – go, in the name of your own Christianity" (318), but Alec has different intentions. Even after she hits him, a sign of rebellion against his control over her, he reclaims this domination:

“Remember, I was your master once! I will be your master again. If you are any man’s wife you are mine!” (333). In both adaptations Alec says this to her, but only Blair’s Tess has tried to ward off male attention, or in this case male aggression, by smearing mud on her cheeks as if she wants to hide (3.37:17-30). Tess continues defying Alec even after she has left Trantridge. She has not told Alec anything of Sorrow even though he informed her that “if certain circumstances should arise [. . .] in which you are in the least need, the least difficulty, send me one line, and you shall have by return whatever you require” (Hardy 77). Taking anything more from him would make her Alec’s “creature” (77), which is not in accordance with her cherished independence. As with Alec, Tess refuses to obey Angel in asking for help should the need arise. Although Alec tells Tess that a woman’s “mind is enslaved to [her husband’s]” (Hardy 321), Tess still defies Angel through her pride. Before Angel leaves for Brazil, he gives Tess some money and tells her that “whenever she required further resources she was to apply to his father” (274). During her search for work after Angel has left her, Tess sleeps out in the open because she stubbornly refuses to ask Angel’s parents for money and is estranged from her own:

But the more Tess thought of the step the more reluctant was she to take it. The same delicacy, pride, false shame, whatever it may be called, on Clare’s account, which had led her to hide from her own parents the prolongation of the estrangement, hindered her in owing to his that she was in want after the fair allowance he had left her. (274)

In Polanski’s version, Tess is seen making her own bed or camp under the trees because she does not have any money to get herself some decent lodgings. She goes about it very carefully and overall Tess is portrayed with a fair extent of self-sufficiency. Blair’s Tess is never presented with such self-sufficiency; Blair does not show her making her own bed outside, but Tess is seen trudging through the rain looking for shelter (3.35:38-50). When, in the novel, Tess lays her pride aside and finally does go to Angel’s parents, her shame prevents her from



going through with her plan to ask them for help. This is more apparent in Blair's adaption, in which Tess hears Angel's brothers talk degradingly about their so-called marriage (3:45:58-46:18), whereas Polanski's Tess simply seems to change her mind (2:04:14-22). Thus, in both versions, Tess's guilt is stronger than her independent nature, while pride in Polanski's film and shame in Blair's adaption seem to force her to become or remain independent.

In short, Polanski's Tess seems more obedient in nature and willing to comply to others' wishes than Blair's Tess, who seems rather stubborn. Both adaptations show a considerable level of responsibility on Tess's part, though Blair's Tess seems to take her family's welfare into consideration while Polanski's Tess is especially concerned with herself. However, both adaptations demonstrate that Tess's sense of guilt is stronger than her need for independence. Blair's version shows this through the death of Prince, while Polanski's film makes this clear in the seduction scene. Despite the differences in detail, both versions maintain the idea that Tess is an independent girl who tries to defy any unjust force that seeks control over her, even though in the end she appears to be no match for fate.

### Chapter 3: Christianity and Paganism

Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is pervaded with cosmic irony: Tess, "having lost her virtue because of her innocence, then loses her happiness because of her honesty, finds it again only by murder, and having been briefly happy, is hanged" (Abrams and Harpham 186). Tess tries to act according to her conscience and to do what is right, but she is often punished for things that are not her fault. Despite this, she is tormented by seemingly unnecessary guilt and shame. In the novel, a distinction is made between Christianity and paganism, and correspondingly two different value systems can be discerned. One of them judges a person's morality according to the rules of society and conventional values, whereas the other takes nature as the moral norm (Paris 61; 64). Both of these systems are present in the character of Tess, but because they are in conflict with each other it is always difficult for Tess to make the right decision. It seems that the adaptors choose to make Tess comply with only one of these systems, so that ultimately Polanski's Tess comes across more as pagan whereas Blair's Tess appears to be more Christian. Despite the different approaches of the adaptations, Tess's fate is sealed because whichever system she most adheres to, she inevitably ends up at the gallows.

In the novel, Christianity and paganism are in conflict with each other and nowhere is this conflict more profound than in the character of Tess. It is no coincidence that the Durbeyfield lineage can be traced back to Sir Pagan D'Urberville (Hardy 8) as it suggests that Tess is pagan despite her Christian upbringing. Because of her inherent paganism she may even be denied access to Christianity. This is perhaps illustrated best in the events surrounding the death of Sorrow. Her father, with the same pagan lineage, refuses to let Tess call the vicar to baptise her child. When the vicar tells Tess that he cannot give her child a Christian burial, she recognises the injustice of it and rejects the church. It is interesting that Polanski's Tess rejects the church while standing outside the parson's house (52:24-28),

similar to what happens in the novel (Hardy 96), as if she has already accepted that she is not a real Christian. Blair's Tess, on the contrary, is inside a church during this scene, demonstrating Christian solidarity (2.04:40-49). Comparing the two, Blair's Tess seems to conform to Christianity more than Polanski's Tess does. For instance, Blair's Tess also reprimands Alec for quitting his preaching" (4.2:57-3:01). An interesting parallel may be found in Blair's emphasis on Tess's Christianity and his emphasis on Tess's education. Felicia Bonaparte claims that "the instincts of [Tess's] pagan nature have been undermined and obscured by a veneer of modern thought" which she has developed "at a National School" (425). Like Hardy's Tess, Blair's Tess wants to acquire a solid education, but this suppresses her inherent paganism and makes her lean more toward Christianity. This leaning makes Tess unhappy because it is suggested that convention blocks out her justified natural feelings: "Most of the misery had been generated by her conventional aspect, and not by her innate sensations" (Hardy 91). A potent image related to this statement is conveyed in Blair's version when Tess kisses her wedding ring in the rain (2.42:23). She holds on to a Christian symbol, but the rain reveals her inner torment. However, although Charlotte Bonica suggests that in the novel Hardy writes about the absence of justice or any kind of morality in nature (854),<sup>10</sup> Blair might have interpreted it differently so that the rain, rather than Tess's emotions, may also reflect nature's sympathy for her.<sup>11</sup> Blair also often includes Biblical references; for example, when Angel and Tess walk outside alone at Talbothays, Angel remarks: "It's like we're the only people on earth, Tess. Adam and Eve" (2.19:04-08). Although in Blair's adaptation Christianity is heavily emphasised, it does not necessarily mean that Polanski's film is the more pagan of the two. While Polanski's Tess does appear to

---

<sup>10</sup> The absence of justice or morality in nature suggests that nature is hostile or at the most indifferent to the plight of man. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, it seems that nature is rather hostile because Tess is punished again and again for events or actions that she does not intend to do or which are not her fault. There is no cosmic justice because the good may be punished just as the bad may be rewarded.

<sup>11</sup> According to Janet Burroway, "setting can help to portray a swirl of emotion" (172), but it can also be used to condemn a character's actions or convey sympathy for them (175).

have a close bond with nature, Polanski himself has omitted mythical and Biblical elements wherever possible, denying the existence of any deity that justly, or unjustly, punishes or rewards people on earth. Angel, for example, does not play a mythical lyre, but a flute (1:02:45), and while apples do sometimes occur, they are not always overt Biblical references.

Tess's life is governed by two opposing value systems, one based on societal rules and the other focusing on nature. This makes it difficult for Tess to act, because these systems oppose each other: the societal system suggests that Tess's intention to reveal her past to Angel is a good thing, whereas the other suggests that her silence is "inevitable and entirely proper" according to nature's norms, and that "her instinctive drives for pleasure and self-preservation" are responsible for her "reticence" (Paris 64). In any case, Tess is held responsible for not telling Angel about her immoral past; even "though fate, in the letter she wrote him remaining unseen, and social pressure from her mother, are also partly responsible" (Mackean). In the novel, the scene in which Tess discovers that she has accidentally slid her letter to Angel under his carpet<sup>12</sup> is not especially remarkable, but in his adaptation, Blair has interestingly portrayed the idea that Tess is condemned for her silence in this scene. She has tried to reveal her past to Angel but is prevented from doing so and although she is not to blame for this, she is depicted as being guilty nonetheless: the fire in the hearth suddenly burns fiercely and her tormented facial expression is illuminated by the burning light, as if she is already burning in hell (2.56:40). In Polanski's version, dramatic music begins when Tess finds her letter and reaches its zenith when the camera moves so that Tess's image is consumed by sunlight (1:27:26). This relates to the idea that light violates Tess and is even fatal: "It is fitting that Tess [. . .] lay herself on an altar devoted to sun-worship [. . .] [because] it is fatal for her to be seen"<sup>13</sup> (Freeman 322). In Polanski's version, the light touches Tess at a

---

<sup>12</sup> So that he has not seen the letter and does not yet know of Tess's past.

<sup>13</sup> Freeman further explains this by suggesting that Tess's fate is decided "on whether and how she is seen" (315). According to Kaja Silverman this is certainly true, because Tess is seen first by Alec and so "constructed according to the image of Alec's rather than Angel's desire" (7). Angel also sees her differently from what she

moment when she is very vulnerable, and she cannot hide from her fate any more as now it is sealed.

Tess has a tendency to hide and avoid conflict, which possibly stems from the Christian mores with which she was raised: having a child out of wedlock, she feels guilty and embarrassed, but these sentiments are more profound in her imagination since most of society does not really condemn her. People who are close to Tess do criticise her status, at least when they find out about what happened at Trantridge, but “to [the rest of] humankind [. . .] Tess was only a passing thought” (91). Ever since the Durbeyfield horse died, a sense of moral responsibility has followed Tess, “which from time to time returns to torture her after her seduction” (Bullen 18). This guilt results from the Christian morals under which she grew up, but she feels convicted even when other members in society do not condemn her. It is her own imagination in which she cannot but convict herself (Bonaparte 425), so it seems that Tess has internalised the strict Christian value system at the cost of her inherent pagan and natural sentiments: “She’s fond of [her baby], though she mid pretend not to be” (Hardy 90). Tess is not supposed to approve of Sorrow because he is a bastard; however, her pagan and motherly instincts make her love him nonetheless. Tess feels embarrassed about her situation after she has left Trantridge, but she has accepted it as “with a curiously stealthy yet courageous movement, and with a still rising colour, unfastened her frock and began suckling the child” (90). The other field workers do not exclude her even though she is a so-called fallen woman. Tess tries to exclude herself from their company because she feels ashamed. One of the men offers her a drink during their break, but Tess declines, and Tess is the only woman there who does not take part in the conversation. The other women talk about her, but not unkindly, though Tess perceives it so: “She might have seen that what had bowed her head so profoundly – the thought of the world’s concern at her situation – was founded on an

---

really is, but when he finds out what happened in the Chase, the illusion is broken. The truth might even be more painful because of the fact that Angel was in love with her. If he was not; granted, they would not even have married each other, but Tess would also not have been fatally misjudged.

illusion” (91). Although Tess believes that society at large rejects her, the members of it rather feel that “she makes herself unhappy” (91). Besides her virtual self-banishment from Marlott, Tess also separates herself from her community in other ways in the adaptations. In the novel, when Tess sits down after working in the fields at Marlott, “her face [is] turned somewhat away from her companions” (89). She shields herself from the others, but she does not sit away from them to feed Sorrow. This also occurs in Polanski’s version. Blair’s Tess, on the other hand, removes herself from the group entirely so that Tess can suckle the baby in solitude, without anyone speaking to her (1.57:35). She seems to go unnoticed. Moreover, she is portrayed as an outcast when she is placed on the other side of a wall behind which the May Dance takes place (1.56:00) and her former friends cast condescending glances at her (1.56:11). In Blair’s version, unlike Polanski’s, “the world’s concern at Tess’s situation” is real and not merely a result of her imagination. This ultimately suggests that Blair’s Tess does not get the choice herself to turn away from society because she is already excluded from it.

Tess has an empathetic nature as she is “a soul who could feel as much for kindred sufferers as much as for herself” (Hardy 279). These “kindred sufferers” not only include other people, but also animals; Tess’s sympathy towards animals is especially presented well in Polanski’s film adaptation. In the novel, Angel embraces Tess at Talbothays when she is milking a cow, but the cow “lifted her hind leg crossly” and Tess exclaims that “[s]he is angry – she doesn’t know what we mean – she’ll kick over the milk!” (152). Tess seems to feel guilty here for upsetting the cow, even though it is technically Angel’s fault. Blair’s version omits this occurrence, but it is featured in Polanski’s adaption. In another scene, Tess finds “many slightly wounded birds [that] had escaped and hidden themselves away” after a shooting-party hunted them (278). She pities them and feels guilty because she had considered herself the unluckiest being in the world: “Poor darlings – to suppose myself the most miserable being on earth in the presence of such misery as this!” (279). Neither of the

adaptions has included this scene. Instead, Polanski has added a deer that visits Tess when she is camping outside during the period in which Angel has gone to Brazil and she is looking for work (1:54:13). Whereas in Blair's version Tess's Christianity is emphasised, perhaps at the cost of Tess's strong connection with nature as in the novel, in Polanski's film it is the pagan aspect of Tess's character that is stressed since she comes across as having a bond with nature.

Hardy's cosmic irony is maintained in the adaptations through foreshadowing. In Polanski's film, when Tess first comes to Trantridge to claim kinship, she is still as innocent as she can be: her maidenhood is still intact and she has not yet murdered anyone. Interestingly though, Alec is seen cutting a piece of meat (19:58-20:10); suggesting that, although Tess is innocent, she cannot escape her bloody fate. In Blair's adaptation, Tess is working hard to become a school teacher which seems a decent ambition. However, she is also seen rehearsing "Ozymandias" (1.17:05-30), perhaps referring to her inevitable sad fate. In both versions, Tess is portrayed as a good, innocent girl; but hints are already given for her eventual demise, no matter what moral system she adheres to. This is ironic, because she does not deserve what fate has in store for her. Both Hardy and the adaptors seem to suggest that there is no such thing as a higher cosmic power that punishes bad people and rewards good people, because Tess is evidently a good person who is punished for nothing.

In short, in the novel both paganism and Christianity are inherent to Tess's character and as they oppose each other it is difficult for Tess to make any right decisions according to her moral beliefs. Even if she were to focus more on either one of them, as in Blair's adaptation she appears to be more Christian and in Polanski's version she seems to be more pagan, it is still difficult for her to act justly since if it is not these opposing forces that thwart her, it is going to be fate that works against her. This ultimately demonstrates that Tess, whether she is a pagan or a Christian, is no match for fate and that there is no just or

structured cosmic power that condemns the wrong and rewards the right. It seems that Hardy did indeed intend his novel to be read in the light of cosmic irony, since Tess will always be wronged, no matter what belief system she adheres to.



## Conclusion

Polanski and Blair have both created their own Tess Durbeyfield in distinctly different ways. The most important difference between them is that Polanski's Tess agrees to be Alec's mistress, whereas Blair's Tess does not. This may make Polanski's Tess seem less pure than Blair's Tess, not only because she has had intercourse before marriage, which also seemingly lessens Blair's Tess's purity, but also because of Victorian values, according to which a woman was not allowed to pursue sexual pleasure in any way. Polanski's Tess might stay with Alec out of fatalism, but she does respond to his kiss in the Chase. Moreover, Polanski's Tess could have walked away, as Blair's Tess did, so that in a moral sense she also appears less pure. The injustice of Victorian society is portrayed better in Blair's version because Blair's Tess is raped, rather than seduced, and she does not want to have intercourse with Alec at all. Polanski's Tess, on the other hand, is reluctant but she is seduced by Alec, which implies a certain consent, passive though this may be. Since Blair's Tess has intercourse against her will, but is still punished by conventional opinions, Hardy's criticism of Victorian society is conveyed better in Blair's than in Polanski's version. However, both adaptors deny the Victorian belief that pregnancy could only result from intercourse with the woman's consent, as suggested by Hufton. This belief is also prevalent in some modern anti-abortion movements,<sup>14</sup> and there is a slight chance that Polanski and Blair have reacted to these views. Moreover, in the time periods that the adaptations were made, women were not expected to remain virgins anymore before marriage (*OED*), so that Victorian society might seem harsh to modern audiences, especially because Tess is executed in the end.

Both adaptations demonstrate that Tess's guilt trumps her need for independence, though the latter is very important to her. Tess's independent nature is portrayed somewhat

---

<sup>14</sup> Controversial statements about rape and pregnancy have occurred recently, too. Todd Akin, while running for Senate in 2012, claimed that "the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down" to prevent pregnancy when she is being raped (qtd. in Belluck). His views are probably based on a 1972 article by Fred Mecklenburg (Townsend and Bernhard).

differently by Polanski and Blair, both stressing different details. The former demonstrates that Tess is self-sufficient but not necessarily rebellious in nature, while the latter rather emphasises Tess's stubborn character and the tendency to take on financial responsibilities. In both versions, however, it appears that Tess defies any unjust force that aims to control her, whether this force consists of the men in her life or conventional rules, but while she is able to escape from the dominance of others she cannot escape her deadly fate. As for Hardy's critique, both adaptations adequately reveal that Tess is trapped by societal rules. However, Polanski's Tess seems less able to fight convention because she seems more naïve and willing to comply with others' wishes, thereby stressing that it is difficult for Tess to escape from the corrupt society at all. Still, Polanski's Tess retains her independence and freedom to leave society of her own accord, whereas Blair's Tess is not given this choice. The former feels the need to banish herself although the other Marlott residents do not necessarily shut her out. As in the novel, she condemns herself through her own imagination. The latter, although she does reject Christianity of her own will, is excluded from society by others. Her segregation is exemplified when she is seen standing on the other side of the wall at the May Dance and her former friends look at her disapprovingly.

There are two value systems in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* that are extremely significant. The first judges a person's actions according to conventional values; the second judges them according to nature. These systems correspond roughly to Christianity and paganism, respectively. Both are present in the character of Tess Durbeyfield and since they oppose each other, it is difficult for Tess to adhere to either one. Polanski and Blair, however, each seem to have chosen to emphasise only one of the value systems. Polanski's Tess seems rather pagan, whereas Blair's Tess leans more towards Christianity. Tess's paganism is important in establishing criticism of Victorian morals, because Tess is able to escape society through her close bond with nature. While Polanski's Tess does portray several Christian

features, e.g. she prays for her baby, Blair has failed to demonstrate Tess's close tie with nature, since Blair's Tess mostly seems to despair when she is alone in a natural setting and she is not shown to be sympathetic towards animals. In the novel, it appears that Tess's inherent paganism is suppressed by the Christian and Victorian morals she was raised with. For instance, she cannot reach her ancestors' burial vault through the bars, which may symbolise societal conventions. If Blair's Tess does not have any, or significantly less, pagan tendencies, they can also not be suppressed by society and in this way, some of Hardy's criticism is lost. Both adaptations show, however, that Tess cannot defy fate, whether she is a pagan or a Christian, and that there is apparently no higher power that rewards or punishes people justly. They both include ironic foreshadowing for this: Polanski shows Alec slicing a piece of meat, and Blair appropriately includes a recitation of the poem "Ozymandias" by Percy Shelley. Tess's life thus remains cosmically ironic from 1891 until 2008; and no matter what belief system she adheres to, she is unjustly doomed.

### Works Cited

- Abrams, M. H. and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, eds. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, 2012. Print.
- Belluck, Pam. "Health Experts Dismiss Assertions on Rape." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 20 Aug. 2012. Web. 27 Jan. 2015.
- Bonaparte, Felicia. "The Deadly Misreading of Mythic Texts: Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*." *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 4.3 (1999): 415-31. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Nov. 2014.
- Bonica, Charlotte. "Nature and Paganism in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*." *ELH* 49.4 (1982): 849-62. *JSTOR*. Web. 16 Nov. 2014.
- Bullen, J. B. "Is Hardy a Cinematic Novelist?: The Problem of Adaptation." *The Yearbook of English Studies* 20 (1990): 48-59. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Nov. 2014.
- Burroway, Janet, Elizabeth Stuckey-French, and Ned Stuckey-French. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*. 8th ed. New York: Pearson, 2011. Print.
- Davis, W. Eugene. "*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: Some Ambiguities About a Pure Woman." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 22.4 (1968): 397-401. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Nov. 2014.
- Dolin, Tim. *A History of the Text. Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. By Thomas Hardy. London: Penguin, 2003. xliv-lxviii. Print.
- Freeman, Janet. "Ways of Looking at Tess." *Studies in Philology* 79.3 (1982): 311-323. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Nov. 2014.
- Freedman, William. "Postponement and Perspectives in Shelley's 'Ozymandias.'" *Studies in Romanticism* 25.1 (1986): 63-73. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 Dec. 2015.
- Gordon, Dane R. *Philosophy and Vision*. Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V, 1998. Print.
- Hardy, Thomas. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. 1891. London: Penguin, 2003. Print.

Higonnet, Margaret R. Introduction. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. By Thomas Hardy. London: Penguin, 2003. xix-xli. Print.

Hufton, Olwen. *The Prospect Before Her*. New York: Knopf, 1995.

Hughes, Kathryn. "Gender Roles in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century." *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians*. British Library, n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2014.

<<http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century>>

Mackean, Ian. "Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: Human Morality and the Laws of Nature." *The London School of Journalism* (2001). Web. 24 Nov. 2014.

<<http://www.lsj.org/web/literature/hardy.php>>

McNamara, Mary. "Television Reviews: Tess of the D'Urbervilles." *Los Angeles Times*. *Los Angeles Times*, 3 Jan. 2009. Web. 5 Dec. 2014.

Niemeyer, Paul J. "The Lost Hardy Adaptations, 1913-1953." *Thomas Hardy: The Films Page*. N.p. n.d. Web. 22 Dec. 2014.

<[http://www.thomashardyfilms.com/lost\\_hardy\\_adaptations.htm](http://www.thomashardyfilms.com/lost_hardy_adaptations.htm)>

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. Eds. Sally Wehmeier, Colin McIntosh, Joanna Turnbull and Michael Ashby. 7th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Print.

*Oxford English Dictionary, Online*. Oxford University Press, Dec. 2014. Web. 21 Jan. 2015.

Paris, Bernard J. "A Confusion of Many Standards: Conflicting Value Systems in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 24.1 (1969): 57-79. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Nov. 2014.

Sadoff, Dianne F. *Victorian Vogue: British Novels on Screen*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Print.

---. *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy*. Ed. Margaret R. Higonnet. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993. 149-170. Print.

Sadao, Suzuki. "On Aspects of Sleep in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*." N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Dec. 2014.

[http://www.ic.nanzan-u.ac.jp/tandai/kiyou/No.35/Suzuki\\_Sadao.indd.pdf](http://www.ic.nanzan-u.ac.jp/tandai/kiyou/No.35/Suzuki_Sadao.indd.pdf)

Silverman, Kaja. "History, Figuration and Female Subjectivity in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 18.1 (1984): 5-28. *JSTOR*. Web. 16 Nov. 2014.

*Tess*. Dir. Roman Polanski. Columbia Pictures, 1979. Film.

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. By David Nicholls. Dir. David Blair. BBC. London, 14 Sept. 2008. Television.

Townsend, Tim, and Blythe Bernhard. "Where Akin Got the Idea that Rape Victims Rarely Get Pregnant." *The Seattle Times*. The Seattle Times, 20 Aug. 2012. Web. 27 Jan. 2015.



Faculteit Geesteswetenschappen  
Versie september 2014

## VERKLARING KENNISNEMING REGELS M.B.T. PLAGIAAT

### Fraude en plagiaat

Wetenschappelijke integriteit vormt de basis van het academisch bedrijf. De Universiteit Utrecht vat iedere vorm van wetenschappelijke misleiding daarom op als een zeer ernstig vergrijp. De Universiteit Utrecht verwacht dat elke student de normen en waarden inzake wetenschappelijke integriteit kent en in acht neemt.

De belangrijkste vormen van misleiding die deze integriteit aantasten zijn fraude en plagiaat. Plagiaat is het overnemen van andermans werk zonder behoorlijke verwijzing en is een vorm van fraude. Hieronder volgt nadere uitleg wat er onder fraude en plagiaat wordt verstaan en een aantal concrete voorbeelden daarvan. Let wel: dit is geen uitputtende lijst!

Bij constatering van fraude of plagiaat kan de examencommissie van de opleiding sancties opleggen. De sterkste sanctie die de examencommissie kan opleggen is het indienen van een verzoek aan het College van Bestuur om een student van de opleiding te laten verwijderen.

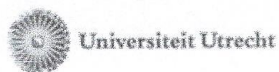
### Plagiaat

Plagiaat is het overnemen van stukken, gedachten, redeneringen van anderen en deze laten doorgaan voor eigen werk. Je moet altijd nauwkeurig aangeven aan wie ideeën en inzichten zijn ontleend, en voortdurend bedacht zijn op het verschil tussen citeren, parafraseren en plagieren. Niet alleen bij het gebruik van gedrukte bronnen, maar zeker ook bij het gebruik van informatie die van het internet wordt gehaald, dien je zorgvuldig te werk te gaan bij het vermelden van de informatiebronnen.

De volgende zaken worden in elk geval als plagiaat aangemerkt:

- het knippen en plakken van tekst van digitale bronnen zoals encyclopedieën of digitale tijdschriften zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het knippen en plakken van teksten van het internet zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het overnemen van gedrukt materiaal zoals boeken, tijdschriften of encyclopedieën zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het opnemen van een vertaling van bovengenoemde teksten zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het parafraseren van bovengenoemde teksten zonder (deugdelijke) verwijzing: parafrasen moeten als zodanig gemarkeerd zijn (door de tekst uitdrukkelijk te verbinden met de oorspronkelijke auteur in tekst of noot), zodat niet de indruk wordt gewekt dat het gaat om eigen gedachtengoed van de student;
- het overnemen van beeld-, geluids- of testmateriaal van anderen zonder verwijzing en zodoende laten doorgaan voor eigen werk;
- het zonder bronvermelding opnieuw inleveren van eerder door de student gemaakt eigen werk en dit laten doorgaan voor in het kader van de cursus vervaardigd oorspronkelijk werk, tenzij dit in de cursus of door de docent uitdrukkelijk is toegestaan;
- het overnemen van werk van andere studenten en dit laten doorgaan voor eigen werk. Indien dit gebeurt met toestemming van de andere student is de laatste medeplichtig aan plagiaat;
- ook wanneer in een gezamenlijk werkstuk door een van de auteurs plagiaat wordt gepleegd, zijn de andere auteurs medeplichtig aan plagiaat, indien zij hadden kunnen of moeten weten dat de ander plagiaat pleegde;
- het indienen van werkstukken die verworven zijn van een commerciële instelling (zoals een internetsite met uittreksels of papers) of die al dan niet tegen betaling door iemand anders zijn geschreven.

De plagiaatregels gelden ook voor concepten van papers of (hoofdstukken van) scripties die voor feedback aan een docent worden toegezonden, voorzover de mogelijkheid voor het insturen van concepten en het krijgen van feedback in de cursushandleiding of scriptieregeling is vermeld.



In de Onderwijs- en Examenregeling (artikel 5.15) is vastgelegd wat de formele gang van zaken is als er een vermoeden van fraude/plagiaat is, en welke sancties er opgelegd kunnen worden.

Onwetendheid is geen excuus. Je bent verantwoordelijk voor je eigen gedrag. De Universiteit Utrecht gaat ervan uit dat je weet wat fraude en plagiaat zijn. Van haar kant zorgt de Universiteit Utrecht ervoor dat je zo vroeg mogelijk in je opleiding de principes van wetenschapsbeoefening bijgebracht krijgt en op de hoogte wordt gebracht van wat de instelling als fraude en plagiaat beschouwt, zodat je weet aan welke normen je je moeten houden.

Hierbij verklaar ik bovenstaande tekst gelezen en begrepen te hebben.

Naam: *Sophie Buckingham*

Studentnummer: *3922464*

Datum en handtekening: *4-2-2015*



Dit formulier lever je bij je begeleider in als je start met je bacheloreindwerkstuk of je master scriptie.

Het niet indienen of ondertekenen van het formulier betekent overigens niet dat er geen sancties kunnen worden genomen als blijkt dat er sprake is van plagiaat in het werkstuk.