

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

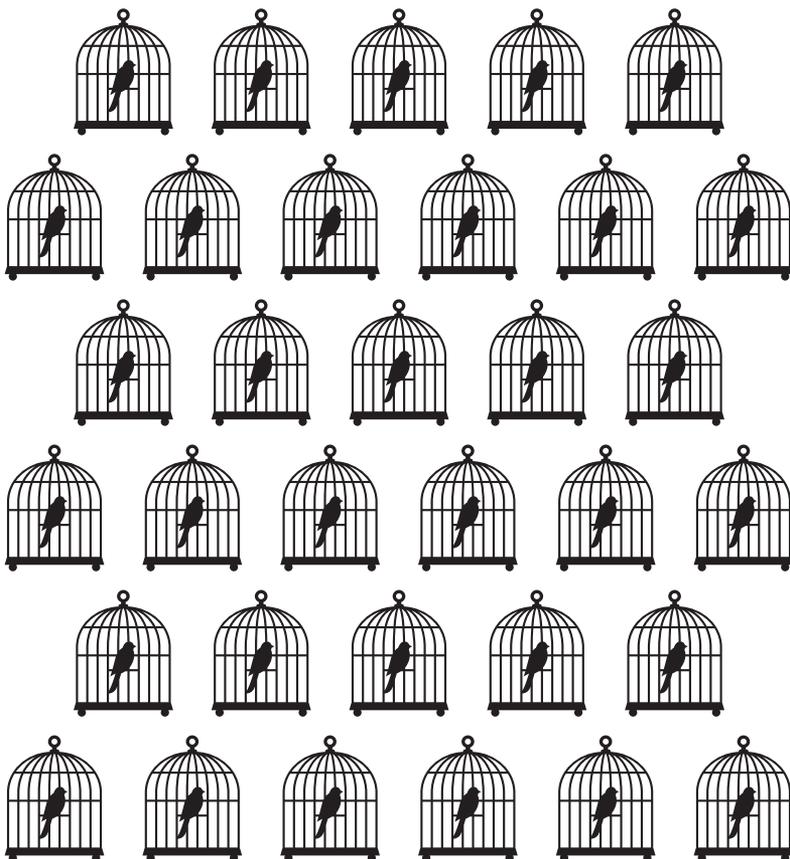
by Thomas Hardy



A Guide to Reading & Reflecting

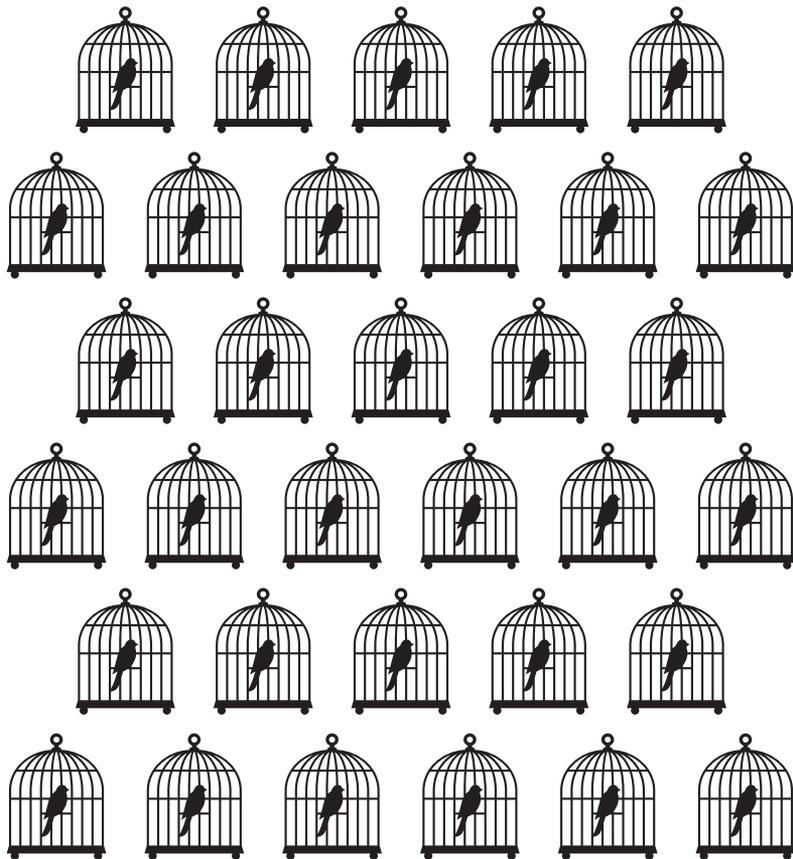
Karen Swallow Prior

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. . . Poor wounded name! My bosom as a bed
Shall lodge thee.—W. Shakespeare.

NOTE TO THE READER



The introduction below is written to enlighten and assist both those who have read previously *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and those who have not. In consideration of the latter, spoilers have been avoided in the introduction so that new readers may experience the delight of surprise and discovery that all good books hold. The introduction is intended to be a true *introduction* to the work, one that will equip new readers and returning ones with background and knowledge that will increase understanding and appreciation of the work without giving the story away. The discussion questions address events that occur in the story and are designed for use after the section has been read.

Footnotes are provided to define or explain most archaic words and usages. Some of the terms explained are repeated throughout the text, but they are defined only once, the first time they appear.

INTRODUCTION



Introduction to the Author

The lush settings of a Thomas Hardy novel are so laden with meaning that each place becomes nearly like a character, an agent in the story's outcome. A reader entering Hardy's fictional world for the first time will likely feel overwhelmed by the density of descriptions. But the fictional Wessex of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (and several other of Hardy's novels) reflects more than just an author's active imagination. The many places named in this novel are based on the rural county of Dorset in southwest England where Hardy was born and lived much of his life. The roads Tess travels on and the places she stays are based on ones Hardy himself traveled and knew intimately. To understand the novel, readers must attend to its settings. And to understand

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the man behind the story, readers must see him in his own setting as well.

Born in 1840 to a working-class family, Hardy was seemingly destined to follow the path of his father, a stonemason and builder. But Hardy lived in an age of newly emerging social mobility. It was a time when it was increasingly possible for a person to rise above the station into which he was born, a feat unimaginable to most people throughout human history. Hardy had the additional benefit of being well educated in his youth, particularly in Latin and math, which gave him a considerable start, but because his family could not afford for him to continue his education at university, he was apprenticed to a local architect for several years.

Committed to pursuing the scholarly life, however, Hardy immersed himself in self-study, rising early each morning to read before work. In addition to studying classical languages and texts, Hardy also read and was deeply influenced by a number of works that offered direct challenges to traditional Christianity. These most notably included *The Communist Manifesto* (1847) by Karl Marx, *The Origin of Species* (1859) by Charles Darwin, and *On Liberty* (1859) and *Utilitarianism* (1863) by John Stuart Mill. These works contributed to a crisis of faith from which Hardy never fully recovered. It was a crisis, unfortunately, like that of many other leading thinkers and writers of the day. New claims of science, philosophy, and economics seemed to undermine traditional biblical accounts that had been believed for thousands of years. Higher criticism, which placed the Bible under scientific-like scrutiny, bred a skepticism

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that was trickling down from the academy to the general population. In short, doubt and disbelief were in the air, and Hardy breathed them in deeply.

Although earlier in life he had set his sights on ordination in the church, the cost of the university education required for taking holy orders, as well as his growing doubts in Christianity, put Hardy on a different course. He moved to London in 1862 to accept a position as a draftsman for a church architect and enrolled in evening classes at King's College to continue his formal studies. Hardy's vocation in repairing crumbling church ruins became for him a powerful symbol of the passing of the age of faith, especially Christianity, as seen throughout his works, particularly in his last novel, *Jude the Obscure*.

In 1867, Hardy decided to return to his rural Dorset home to pursue a vocation as a writer. His deep and enduring love for the land, nature, and his rustic roots is evident throughout his life and work. Even so, this love was in tension with his desire to rise above the station of his birth in every way—socially, intellectually, financially, and philosophically. The conflicts seen in many of his works, including *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, between ancient and modern, noble and common, educated and ignorant, and rich and poor are grounded in these frictions within his own life. The ghosts of his humble origins never left him although he would become one of his country's pre-eminent men of letters.

Hardy's class consciousness was not just an internal struggle. It played at least some part in the eventual estrangement between Hardy and his first wife, Emma

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Gifford. The two married in 1874, when both were in their mid-thirties, and eventually settled near Dorchester in Dorset. There, still striving to advance within the professional class, Hardy accepted an appointment as a magistrate. Drawing on his experience in architecture, he designed a stately brick home for them known as Max Gate (which still stands today) where he wrote *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and several other novels. The couple never had children. Eventually, Emma, the daughter of a lawyer and niece of an archdeacon, came to see herself as having married beneath herself, and resentment over her husband's literary success and his religious doubts festered. Hardy's social and literary circles outgrew Emma's provincialism, and the two increasingly spent time apart. Emma became more reclusive and crueler toward her husband. Despite these difficulties, Hardy's memories and later poetry honored her and he showed remorse for his neglect of her.

Two years after Emma's death in 1912, Hardy married Florence Dugdale, who had befriended the couple some years before and done secretarial work for Hardy. He and Florence, who was thirty-eight years younger than Hardy, seem to have had a happy marriage based on mutual needs, interests, and affections.

Hardy's first literary output was fiction, but soon after his earliest writing efforts, he turned to poetry. And it was poetry to which he returned after abandoning his long but controversy-laden career as a novelist. *Tess* was his next-to-last novel. The final one, *Jude the Obscure* (first published serially from 1894–95, then published as a book in 1896), with its morbid vision of

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marriage, family, and the church, generated even more controversy and censure than *Tess* did (as detailed more fully below). Hardy vowed that novel would be his last—and it was. He wrote several volumes of poetry over the course of his life. In all, Hardy published fifteen novels, dozens of short stories, and more than 900 poems. In 1910, he was appointed by King George V as Member of the Order of Merit, a royal award based on distinguished accomplishment within a variety of fields, including literature and culture.

While a tragic view of humanity underlays so much of Hardy's writing, he had always resisted the accusation of pessimism, claiming instead to be a meliorist (one intent on improving the world's ills). That is until commenting on the aftermath of the great war, when he remarked, "I do not think a world in which such fiendishness is possible to be worth the saving."¹

Hardy died in 1928. His pallbearers—which included Rudyard Kipling, George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy, A. E. Housman, J. M. Barrie, Edmund Gosse, and Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin—are a testimony to the prominent place he had achieved. Hardy had expressed his wish to be buried with his first wife, Emma, in the churchyard of St. Michael's in his home parish. But fame demanded that his body join those of other British luminaries in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. A Solomonic decision was reached by Florence, his second wife, to have Hardy's heart removed and

¹ Michael Millgate, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1984), 420.

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placed with Emma, allowing the rest of his remains to be cremated and buried at Westminster, and so it was done.² Thus, Hardy's divided, conflicted life was reflected by his literal division in death.

Background of the Work

Tess of the d'Urbervilles has a complicated publication history, one surrounded by controversy. As was common in the nineteenth century, the novel was first published serially. But even the serial publication was complicated from the start when the would-be publisher rejected the first installments Hardy submitted because the sexual aspects of the story were considered too scandalous. (At this stage, Hardy had titled the work, *Too Late Beloved*, a key phrase taken from the end of the novel.) Even the version eventually published by a different magazine in 1891 had to be heavily edited by Hardy before it was accepted. Later that year, Hardy released this serialized version in a three-volume work. But it wasn't until the publication of the 1892 version (the one presented in this volume) that the novel appeared in the form Hardy had truly envisioned. The changes he continued to make over the

² A gruesome detail about Hardy's burial seems like it could have been taken from one of his novels. While removing Hardy's heart for its separate burial, the doctor was interrupted. He returned to the room to find his cat eating the heart. In order to have all of Hardy's heart placed at St. Michael's, the cat was killed and buried along with the rest of the heart.

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years comprise a subject that fills volumes of criticism. This long history of revisions further clouds the already-ambiguous nature of the story, as well as the century of criticism that has followed its publication. (Classes and book clubs covering the novel will have interesting discussions if members find themselves using different editions.)

Hardy's earlier novels—he had published more than a dozen by this time—had been well-received by the middle-class readers who comprised much of the novel-reading audience. These works display Hardy's characteristically tragic outlook, but did not directly challenge central beliefs of Victorian readers the way *Tess* and *Jude* did. Yet, it was also these two novels that secured Hardy's critical reputation within the canon of literature. Even so, the controversies around these two novels surprised and hurt Hardy, and he never recovered from it. He abandoned writing novels to return to poetry.

Despite some of the criticism, *Tess* is widely considered to be Hardy's finest novel. From its first publication, the criticism fell into two main areas: substance and style. One main point of the earliest criticism derived from what many saw as the story's immoral content. Victorian standards, of course, were rather prudish compared to earlier ages that saw the flourishing of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Sterne. For example, one scene in this edition that involves a man assisting women by carrying them in his arms—a portrayal that was shocking to Victorian readers—was altered at one editor's request to have the women ferried in a

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wheelbarrow instead. Within this context, it is easy to see how objectionable a story that hinges on sex outside of marriage would be. One famous early review described the novel as “gratuitously . . . coarse and disagreeable.”³ Another review complained, similarly, that Hardy “tells an unpleasant story in a very unpleasant way.”⁴ On a different note, some readers considered the story too melodramatic, a criticism Hardy took to heart as his later revisions addressed some of these elements. (It should be noted, however, that some of the most shocking incidents in the story are based on actual events that Hardy witnessed or read about.) Other criticisms centered on the heaviness of a story in which human will cannot overcome fate.

In terms of Hardy's style, one common point of complaint is the erudition that bleeds onto every page, broaching (or perhaps even crossing) the border of affectation at times. For, despite his rejection of Christianity, Hardy had a great store of knowledge about the Bible, and his works are rich with biblical allusions. He was learned in the classical traditions, too, as well as various contemporary schools of philosophical thought, and the novel is saturated with this knowledge. Related to this is that in moving from traditional Christianity, to atheism, and finally to agnosticism, Hardy never developed a coherent worldview or belief system. These evolutions of his belief are reflected in a pastiche of various,

³ *The Quarterly Review*, v. 172, 1892, 325.

⁴ *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, v. 73 (Jan. 16, 1892): 74.

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even conflicting philosophies and ideologies expressed in his works. This feature might be understood less as incoherence than as the testing of ideas and claims in an ongoing quest to find an ultimate answer, although that seems never to have come to Hardy. Nevertheless, the lack of a coherent vision in the novel leads some to another point of criticism, that is, an inconsistent narrative voice.

A final point of complaint is one that today's readers are most likely to be sensitive to: Hardy's turgid style. Certainly, Hardy has a propensity toward overblown language, using Latinate constructions, archaic and esoteric words, and obscure allusions. This quality makes the reading difficult, sometimes, perhaps, unnecessarily so, and reeks at times of the pompous pedant, eager to show off all he learned in those early hours of self-tutelage. But once a reader accepts this quality and digs into the text, she will see that the style is the substance. The masterfully dense prose provides a richness of meaning and evocation that could not be achieved any other way. Hardy paints a deeply layered world, and he does so with deeply layered language.

Form of the Work

It is helpful to understand the place of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* within the context of the history of the novel and its development. The novel was the foremost literary genre during the Victorian age, arguably, reaching the peak of its early glory in the mid-century with

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writers such as Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and many others. The novel is the literary form that most expresses the characteristics of the modern era: written in the everyday prose of the common people, usually centered on an individual from ordinary life, and often centered on the theme of human will and self-determination. In these ways, earlier novels tended toward optimism, or even comedy (as in Jane Austen). But by the waning years of the Victorian age, when Thomas Hardy was writing, this optimistic spirit was declining. In fact, Hardy was a leading voice of growing pessimism and despair in the face of the downturn of religious belief and the diminished hope in the progress first promised by the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles is not merely dark and pessimistic but is tragic—tragic in the true literary sense. In fact, it is a model of classical Aristotelian tragedy, although set in the modern age and using the modern form of the novel. (Note: It is impossible to provide the background of the novel without the “spoiler” that it is, in fact, a tragedy, but the specifics that constitute the tragedy will be addressed in the discussion and reflection questions.) Several key features of tragedy identified by Aristotle in his classical analysis of tragedy in *Poetics* are found in *Tess*. The tragic ending of the story is the result of both fate (in Hardy's terms, determinism or fatalism) and the character's tragic flaw. Yet, as with classical tragedy, this downfall and the loss it engenders are accompanied by illumination. Finally, the inevitable outcome of events is achieved by a tightly integrated,

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unified plot, one in which the removal of any element would result in a different end. The term *architectonic*—referring to a carefully constructed structure—aptly describes the intricacy of the plot of *Tess*.

Another feature of classical tragedy is the chorus which, among other functions, serves to explain and interpret the events playing out. In *Tess*, the landscape fills a parallel role. It's tempting to some readers to gloss over Hardy's dense, florid descriptions of the natural settings. But these passages are more than mere description. Nature functions in the novel to reflect or comment on the internal life of the characters, the external forces of the universe, and various points of view offered by the narrator. The landscape whispers to the reader hints, omens, and interpretations to guide the understanding of what is unfolding. Attending to these descriptions greatly enriches the reading experience.

What makes this story—or any true tragedy—so satisfying is an ingredient which Aristotle identified as at work in any well-constructed tragedy: catharsis. Aristotle's notion of catharsis describes a purgation or cleansing of emotions experienced when a tragic plot produces a balance of competing emotions like fear (which draws us away) and pity (which draws us in), along with the balance of sin or crime with a countervailing justice. (Grace, a uniquely Christian doctrine, finds no place in either the classical tragedy or *Tess*'s world.) In a work such as the ancient tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, for example, we feel pity for Oedipus because he unknowingly killed his father and married his mother, yet we also fear the consequences of such sins if they are

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not met with justice. The culmination—or “fulfillment” as it is termed in the final phase of *Tess*—feels satisfying (although tragic) because of the catharsis achieved by the carefully constructed plot. In simpler terms, the experience of crying at a sad movie is something like what Aristotle means by catharsis, as well as what happens in reading *Tess*. Catharsis offers a cleansing and training of the emotions through vicarious experience.

This tragic form is part of what elevates the story of *Tess* to a mythical level. Although the novel is very much about particular people with particular characters in particular circumstances, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* transcends these particularities, and this is part of the novel's enduring power. While *Tess* is an interesting and unique character, she is also representative of many women of Hardy's time (and all times). Likewise, Alec and Angel, as individual as they are, also are types who stand in for many such people—wretches and idealists—who can be found everywhere. While *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is by no means an allegory, there is a kind of symbolic power at work in the story's portrayal of universal human tendencies, social conditions, and philosophical and theological questions. *Tess* is, at once, *Tess* herself, but she is also, in Hardy's rendering, potentially Every Woman.

There is more to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* than its novelistic, tragic, and mythic qualities, however. Another aspect that contributes to its widespread praise as a literary masterpiece is its poetic style. Hardy's dense, allusive descriptions demand slower, immersive reading. A word choice, a turn of phrase, a comparison, a

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classical or biblical reference—all these tell the story of *Tess* as much as the narration of events. In fact, the poetic portrayal of the characters confers on them a kind of realism that exceeds the realism of the bare plot.

Thus, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is to be read as a poem. As a tragedy. As a myth. And, of course, as a novel. To read it in all these ways is to understand why it has been so universally praised and loved—and why it is a book that begs to be read again and again.

Themes of the Work

Tess of the d'Urbervilles pushes against an idea emphasized in most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels: that the individual human will can prevail over the obstacles granted by one's given circumstances or condition. Two centuries of novelistic discourse had steadily advanced this idea. But Hardy's view of the individual offers regress rather than progress. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy paints a picture of the individual will as being unable to overcome what family lineage, society, or nature have predetermined.

This outlook is expressed powerfully and succinctly in Hardy's poem "Hap," published in 1898, but written much earlier, when Hardy was in his twenties:

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"

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Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

The word *hap* comes from the word *happenstance*, which means “chance.” In the poem, Hardy refers to this determinism as “crass casualty,” a kind of blind causation. The poem expresses disbelief in (and futile desire for) a God who gives purpose to human pain, even if that purpose is merely God’s own cruel joy in our suffering. Similarly, by presenting Tess as a victim of natural and social determinism, Hardy demonstrates his debt to Darwinian ideas, showing one source of the complaints of pessimism made against Hardy.

But Hardy would likely counter that those who believe the phrase “you can do anything you set your mind to” are overly optimistic. One need not buy into Hardy’s bleak, deterministic outlook to recognize that the world sometimes does present people with obstacles and circumstances that simply cannot be overcome. This tension between hope and futility exists throughout the novel and is one of its greatest artistic achievements. Just as every step leads inevitably to the

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outcome, every step could have led to a different next step that would have led to an entirely different ending for everyone—beginning with the opening interaction between Tess’s father and the parson.

Determinism is, of course, at odds with belief in human choice and agency. But what comes with the concept of human responsibility is guilt. Guilt, too, is a prevalent theme in the novel, one in tension with the idea of an overly determined universe. Various characters in the story are guilty of various things. How they acknowledge or fail to acknowledge that guilt, and how they carry the burden of that guilt constitute central aspects of the story. The theme of punishment is closely related to this theme of guilt. In addressing these ideas, Hardy critiques his society’s views of both guilt and punishment. It is essential to recognize that Hardy’s descriptions of the world he creates are not necessarily prescriptions. Hardy is criticizing the values of Tess’s world—which is also his own world. At the same time, the plot of his own construction carries out his own vision for how guilt and punishment work in the world. The novel encourages the reader to ask whose vision is more correct: the one Hardy critiques or the one he offers? Or a different one altogether?

Despite the novel’s adherence to the ancient form of tragedy, it is also very much centered on what the text itself in chapter 19 calls “the ache of modernism.” While modernism as a formal movement in art and literature began early in the next century, Hardy was prescient in recognizing the forces at work in bringing it about and, in so doing, he reflected much about the late Victorian

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mood. Toward the end of the century, the excesses and abuses brought about by industrialism and imperialism rendered numerous challenges against traditional institutions, authorities, and artistic forms. But because it offered nothing in place of these, the prevailing mood was one of loss, melancholy, and "ache." While later artists would throw off all shackles of the past in favor of innovation and experimentation, Hardy looked to the past, pitting ancient times against present times, old superstitions against institutionalized religion, humble peasants against upstart entrepreneurs.

In light of the overwhelming determinism and fatalism of the novel, it is perhaps paradoxical that the most central theme in the work is one that seeks to challenge and change a prevailing social custom. That custom is the sexual double standard—the belief that moral (sexual) purity is more necessary for a woman than a man. Indeed, that it is *essential* for a woman. This is the major theme of the novel. In describing Tess, who begins Phase the Second as "maiden no more," and no longer "a pure woman" as in his subtitle to the book, Hardy takes on an unquestioned but central assumption of the Victorian age. In Victorian society, a woman was deemed to be impure (the usual word used was "ruined") if she was unmarried and not a virgin, regardless of the circumstances surrounding her loss of virginity. The sexual double standard so prevalent in Hardy's lifetime (as well as before and after this time) placed expectations on women not demanded of men. Hardy directly confronted that hypocrisy, insisting that

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will and agency are aspects of purity: ignorance entails innocence, and violation does not confer guilt.

But he was also questioning corollary tendencies of the culture to emphasize appearance over substance, and the physical over the metaphysical. Hardy not only shocked his Victorian readers, but he defied a dearly held value of his society that he rightly saw not only as hypocritical but—as the story shows—inherently tragic. Of course, he was also rejecting the traditions of Christianity and the church in his time (and Christianity itself), but that was in part because, living in an age and a place that claimed to be Christian, he could not see the difference between cultural Christianity and biblical truth. (Nor, so it seems, could many of his contemporaries who claimed Christianity.) That inability was not unique to that time, of course. It is always difficult for those of us living in a nominally Christian culture to make such distinctions. One of the great gifts of this novel is that it helps us to see the necessity of doing so.

The relationship of humanity to nature is another theme of the novel. Tess is depicted throughout as a child of nature, and this puts her at odds with social convention. The story's tragic outcome is presented as the result of social customs overriding the dictates of the natural world and human nature itself. Animals—from Prince the horse, to the fowl Tess is hired to care for, to the cows she milks, and the pheasants she finds injured in the woods—are presented compassionately in the narrative, although they, too, suffer greatly. In fact, Hardy cared for animals and their suffering throughout

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his life, beginning when he was a small boy.⁵ Thus, the novel expresses sorrow for all kinds of suffering, human and otherwise. Nature is also emphasized in the various settings of the story, which range from Tess's poverty-stricken homeland to the lush, pastoral setting where she finds the most happiness she has ever had, to the harsh farmland overtaken by the machinery of the Industrial Revolution. The nature of work itself changes, the novel shows, depending on how in tune a person's work is with the natural world. Indeed, the economic plight of agricultural workers is so prominent in the novel that this topic alone constitutes a significant theme in the work.

Yet, Hardy's view of nature is not the idealization of the Romantics of a century before. Even nature, Hardy recognizes, is fallen. An earlier Victorian poet, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who, like Hardy, was influenced by Charles Darwin, memorably expressed this view in his poem *In Memoriam* in his famous description of nature as "red in tooth and claw." That red—the color of blood, violence, and sacrifice—is woven throughout *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and its meaning is not to be overlooked.

Reading *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as a Christian Today

Christian readers today can see in Thomas Hardy and his works patterns repeated often by those who grow up

⁵ Paul Turner, *The Life of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 7, 133.

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in the church, love the church, but abandon belief out of disappointment or disillusionment. In Hardy's case, the seeds of doubt were sown by newly emerging ideas and philosophies as well as by the hypocrisy and harm he found in the Christian culture of his time. There is much we can learn in observing the things Hardy could see that the Christians around him could or would not see. And more for us to learn from noticing the truths Hardy himself could or would not see.

As a small boy, Hardy had wrapped himself in a cloth and pretended to be a parson. As a young man, he wrote a sermon characterized by one literary critic as Evangelical.⁶ And despite his agnostic beliefs and rejection of the Christian faith, he never stopped attending church. One of his biographers writes that Hardy's "childhood was dominated by two things: the local church, and the natural world around him."⁷ Fleeing the former, he escaped to the latter. Yet, his works are filled by the church, too, even if in the form of questions and criticisms.

Despite his sustained efforts to leave the Christianity of his early life behind, Hardy never could erase its imprint entirely. His doubts about, his debates with, and his wrestlings against Christianity permeate his works. The more we see Hardy rail against the traditions of the Christian faith, its hypocrisy and failures, and even God Himself, the more evident it is that he still

⁶ Pamela Dalziel, "Strange Sermon: The Gospel According to Thomas Hardy," *Times Literary Supplement* (March 17, 2006): 12-23.

⁷ Turner, *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, 6.

Jane Eyre. Frankenstein. Tess of the d'Urbervilles. You're familiar with these pillars of classic literature. You have seen plenty of Frankenstein costumes, watched the film adaptations, and may even be able to rattle off a few quotes, but do you really know how to read these books? Do you know anything about the authors who wrote them, and what the authors were trying to teach readers through their stories? Do you know how to read them as a Christian? Taking into account your old worldview, as well as that of the author?

In this beautiful cloth-over-board edition bestselling author, literature professor, and avid reader Karen Swallow Prior will guide you through *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. She will not only navigate you through the pitfalls that trap readers today, but show you how to read it in light of the gospel, and to the glory of God.



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PhD, is Research Professor of English and Christianity and Culture at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. She is the author of several books, including *On Reading Well: Finding the Good Life through Great Books* and *Fierce Convictions: The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More—Poet, Reformer, Abolitionist*. Her writing has appeared in various publications, including *Christianity Today*, *The Atlantic*, and *The Washington Post*. She and her husband live in Virginia on a 100-year old homestead with sundry horses, dogs, and chickens. And lots of books.

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