

Tess of the d'Urbervilles

-literary analysis-

"Tess of the d'Urbervilles" is Hardy's tragic masterpiece. It is the story of innocence and evil, of man and nature, of history and its relations to the present, concentrated on the fate of a simple country girl.

Reading Hardy's novels one can easily recognise the Greek writers view on man: a being born to endure that which was to befall him. The English writer conceived almost all his heroes as variants of certain types, without endowing them with too much inner depth. They only have to face the essential hypostases of Fate which is the principle around which all the Hardian stories spin. It is a notion designating the power that predetermines events.

Tess, the main character of the novel, is a simple innocent country girl, who tries to escape her social background under the pressure of exterior circumstances; she is forced to fight the principles of evil, embodied by Alec, but she cannot resist; she sins, therefore she is punished.

Alec is the symbol of evil, the embodiment of the wickedness and unscrupulousness of the implacable world in which man is obliged to live.

Angel Clare is neither good nor bad; he is not daring and he is conservative, abandoning Tess in the most difficult moments. Hardy did not succeed in portraying him very well so he remains a rather vague character.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles is a novel written by a story-teller and not by a powerful analyst.

The "Stonehenge" fragment begins with Hardy-the-architect's description of the monoliths. The author's eye for the significant details is to be mentioned. The atmosphere is set at this stage; darkness, coldness, wildness, and greatness are supported by the symbolical paraphrases used by Tess and Angel to denominate Stonehenge : Forest, pavilion of the night, heathen temple.

The description of the Great Plane and its symbolic stones (the Stone of Sacrifice and the Sun Stone) follows. From dusk to dawn, whole nature accompanies Tess. Hardy describes the elements (still or moving, dark or light, colourful or colourless) in such a way to suggest Tess's thoughts and emotional states. The communion between character and nature may be followed throughout the text: when Tess is falling asleep everything is dark; reserve, taciturnity and hesitation are the qualities of the landscape at that moment even the night wind has died out. Then gradually, the reader is prepared for the moment of Tess's awakening: the light is growing, the stones are no more dark, but they are glistening green grey. The reader is announced that something is going to happen through some significant phrases as for example, the light is strong or the sunbeam which shines full on Tess's face. The reader can probably feel as Tess feels, that everything has become clear, that the heroine does whatever she has to do so the memorable phrases "It is as it should be" and "I am ready" climax the whole passage. The Stonehenge scene shows the

idea that Hardy's novel's nature does not help the characters, but only projects the human tragedy on the primordial axes.