

THE FABRICATION OF TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES AS FEMME FATALE

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Abstract

In a consumerist society the human body becomes a fetish, and sexual fetishism is also expressed in the 19th century literature through the prototype of femme fatale. Most authors, who dealt with this issue, highlight the display of power imposed by the fetishized body on the persons who desire it. Due to the bourgeoisie's hypocrite morality, the 19th century society wanted to conceal sexuality, this being reflected in different forms of prostitution. The female body seen as fetish by male consumers establishes the relation between the buyer and purchaser. Many young girls traded/were forced to trade their bodies and this trade affected all levels of society. We have chosen for our analysis Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles, having the intention to extend Tess' presentation from the archetypal victim into defining her as a possible femme fatale. Our survey is based on the identification of a certain type of sexuality through a form of sexual focus on an object or a body part. Tess' body becomes a fetish due to Hardy's persistent presentation of her sexuality, the text continually reminding the readers that her beauty and charms are not only tragic, but also fatal. This fatality is disclosed gradually and this process of unveiling enhances her physicality and seduction, but also the ultimate fear that underneath these 'veils' lies something repugnant or disturbing for Victorian society (as her 'bad blood' or her tendency to violence).

Keywords: *fatal sexuality, degeneracy, erotic fetishes, subversion of male dominance, femme fatale*

Rezumat

Într-o societate consumeristă, corpul uman devine un fetiș, iar fetișul sexual este exprimat, în literatura secolului XIX, și prin prototipul femeii fatale. Mulți autori, care au abordat acest subiect, subliniază puterea pe care o emană un corp fetișizat asupra oamenilor care-l doresc. Dată fiind moralitatea ipocrită burgheză, societatea secolului XIX era dornică să ascundă sexualitatea, manifestată prin diferite tipuri de prostituție. Corpul femeii perceput ca un fetiș de către consumatorii masculini stabilește o anumită relație între cumpărător și vânzător. Multe femei tinere își vând sau sunt forțate să-și vândă corpul, iar acest târg afectează toate clasele sociale. Am ales să analizăm romanul lui Thomas Hardy „Tess of the d'Urbervilles” cu intenția să extindem analiza lui Tess dintr-o victimă arhetipală într-o posibilă femeie fatală. Studiul nostru se bazează pe identificarea unei anumite părți a corpului drept un obiect fetișizat. Corpul lui Tess devine un fetiș datorită insistenței cu care Hardy îi prezintă erotismul. Textul amintește mereu că frumusețea și farmecul lui Tess sunt fatale atât ei, cât și celorlalți. Această latură de fatalitate este dezvăluită gradual accentuând puterea de seducție a corpului ei. Dar întotdeauna există teama că sexualitatea feminină este atât dezgustătoare, cât și periculoasă pentru victorienii (în cazul lui Tess, vorbim de anumite tendințe violente moștenite genetic).

Cuvinte-cheie: *sexualitate, fatalitate, degenerare, fetișuri erotice, subversiunea puterii masculine, femeia fatală*

The Victorian Age is generally perceived as an era full of changes, these mainly due to the industrial revolution, which 'revolutionized' not only the industry, the economic market and the labour force, but also brought about a challenge of the usual gendered discourses. Female writers such as the sisters Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, were challenging the usual conventions by building female characters with feelings, will and intelligence; these passionate female characters, included by both female and male writers in their writings, sometimes offended the 'respectable' public. Though women's rights and opportunities were flourishing in the Victorian Age, the male writers still delivered contradictory representations of women. The female body had been long idealised, but also objectified and fetishized, and the Victorian culture was not an exception. The social conventions which imposed women how they should dress their body, how they should look, which hairdo they should choose - all these guidelines objectified the female body and confined it. At the same time, the female body was subjected to oppression and marketed like other commodities. Usually the Victorian Age is illustrated as a society full of restrictions and strict social and moral codes, yet if we take into consideration the recent surveys on this epoch we notice that the Victorians did not feel inhibited and their sexual tastes and practices were not suppressed as they were generally described. On the one hand, the reader is exposed to women who seem to have no sexual appetite and sexuality was seen as a way of producing the necessary heirs. On the other hand, women who declared openly their sexual desires or erotic pleasure were publicly ostracized although there were a lot of examples of Victorian pornography and sadomasochistic desires.

Hardy created a wide range of interesting and irresistible female characters that are guided by instincts and can be defined as 'seductive Eves' due to their relative morality and individual temperament; they were either "Undines of earth" or "untamed children of Nature" (Havelock, 1979, p. 106) maintaining the general attitude towards women. Tess of the D'Urbervilles is one of Hardy's heroines who is condemned as an adulteress and murderess because of the circumstances and of her natural drives. She is torn between two opposite forces: the social norms and her instincts. Her portrait highlights her sensuality and her mind is seized by both moral and immoral impulses. With her desire of living a life full of sensations, Tess resembles other Hardy's strong heroines. Tess claims several times her right to be considered as an individual, though the trend in Victorianism was to reduce women to simple commodities. The clash between her natural drives and the social norms and most of all her lack of experience make out of Tess an ambivalent character on the question of morality; hence her being

categorized as a *femme fatale* because even the writer himself does not want to restore her totally, in fact her sensuality, her voluptuousness has devastating consequences.

1. Is Tess of the d'Urbervilles a *femme fatale*?

Her fatality lies first in her beauty. Although she struggled to elude the 'fixed' images created by men regarding purity and womanhood, although she struggled to escape the pressures and social conventions, Tess is finally 'owned', 'possessed', defeated in her struggles by the men in the novel (Alec, Dairyman Crick, Angel, Farmer Groby). They are all generally smitten with her beauty, thus Tess is never perceived as a domestic woman, she is far from the Victorian "angel in the house" (a concept introduced by Coventry Patmore in 1854 in his poem "Angel in the House" that emphasised the woman's virtues: she should be dutiful, virtuous, meek); it is her beauty that makes Hardy portray her as both a victim of male exploitation and as *femme fatale* exuding an active and desiring sexuality. Hardy's equivocal portrayal makes readers wonder: was she seduced or raped, did her passivity encourage men to possess her? One thing is for sure: her sexuality, beauty proves to be fatal to herself and to those around her.

When trying to construct Tess' identity Ellen Moers (Moers, 1969, pp. 98-101) notices that she takes up a wide range of roles: milk-maid, emancipated woman, good-girl type of heroine, doomed descendant of an ancient family, unwed mother, earth goddess, doomed bride, prostitute, murderess. Most importantly, Tess displays both poles of the virgin-whore split: she is both passive (virgin, hunted animal, victim) and active (prostitute, murderess). Tess' sexual polarity held within one body (both virgin and whore simultaneously) is highlighted in almost every erotic passage of the novel. Tess' ambivalence is shown particularly when she has Alec around her and this is speculated by him as her weakness. Seeing the weakness on her part, Alec is continuously trying to seduce Tess: during their first encounter by holding the stem of the strawberry to her mouth he insists on having her take the fruit with her mouth; when they ride to Trantridge he forces her into holding his waist while the cart is descending rapidly the steep hills; her silence also encourages Alec to put his hand around her waist when they ride in the Chase; after having lost her virginity, she herself confesses her weakness to Alec on the way back to her village:

"If I had gone for love o' you, if I had ever sincerely loved you, if I loved you still, I should not so loathe and hate myself for my weakness as I do now! ... My eyes were dazed by you for a little, and that was all" (p. 91).

Even after her seduction, a true Victorian would consider her a 'fallen' woman, but Tess does not consider herself unpardonable and hopes for a new life, for a new start after the child's birth:

“Was once lost always lost really true of chastity? She would ask herself. She might prove it false if she could veil by-gones” (p. 117).

In the scene where she meets Angel in the garden, Tess reminds us of Eve, being placed on the boundaries of the Edenic gardens, she represents the ultimate ‘fallen’ woman. At the same time we might perceive her as the predatory *femme fatale* lurking the object of desire (Angel) heading like a feline towards him softly without being heard. She represents the wild, untamed, anarchic sexuality, since she comes from the wild, uncultivated part of the garden and ogles the civilized, educated, superior creature – the man. Women’s dark nature¹ is reflected in Tess as well, when she seduces men in the twilight, at dusk or during night when things are unclear and dim. Even the garden scene is set at dusk. Yet her dual personality also includes her description as a “fascinated bird”, due to her weakness, her own desires – she is not able to leave the garden, she wants to stalk Angel, thus in this case she is not seduced by a man, she falls on her own trap of desires.

However, Tess might also be defined as a *femme fatale* because of her violent tendencies, “violent delights” (p. 87); but the narrative voice insists upon her heredity, upon her being a “victim of biological determinism” (Stott, 1992, p. 173); Rebecca Stott defends Tess arguing that Tess is not responsible for her violent tendencies since they represent just an unfortunate hereditary feature. Some other critics (Rebecca Stott, John Lucas, Shazia Gulam&Abdus Salam) have agreed that Hardy seems to have taken seriously the ‘blood taint’ of the d’Urbervilles hoping that he would exonerate Tess – she has in her veins a drop of the degenerate d’Urbervilles blood which leads her to murder. The novel was written two decades after Max Nordau’s *Degeneration* and it reiterates the criminological discourse found in the book of the German philosopher: Tess is perceived as a fatal woman, she is just a degenerate with debased and alcoholic parents, a degenerate capable of murder. Max Nordau strongly criticizes Baudelaire and the influence of the French society and lifestyle on the rest of Europe. Hardy seems to try to keep the British morally ‘clean’², thus Tess carries French blood: Parson Tringham tells John Durbeyfield that his ancestor is one of the twelve French knights who came with William the Conqueror from Normandy to Glamorganshire – Sir Pagan d’Urbervilles. Even from the ancestor’s name (‘Pagan’) the readers are subversively indicated the family’s immorality and the tendencies of its members to ignore Christian norms or to create their own belief in God. Tess had an illegitimate child, whom she later baptized and buried on her own – all these indicate in front of other peasants or workers that she unconsciously subverts the strict Victorian morality.

Tess’ heredity, which explains her degeneracy, is strongly emphasised by the writer after his novel was rejected by British censure in November 1889;

hence Hardy's determination to defend Tess from being considered a morally impure woman. Even from the novel's subtitle ("A Pure Woman") Hardy tries to establish that Tess is innocent since she is not responsible for her degenerate bloodline. In this subtitle the writer reckons her as 'pure woman'. We might say that he compares his female character to a blank page whenever he insists upon white as the colour he uses when depicting Tess; the colour imagery emphasizes Tess' portrayal in a victimized light: "the white muslin figure" (p. 6), "this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow yet" (p. 114). But the blank page (in our case Tess' body) is to undergo a process of writing, this blank page is filled by all the events that follow and by all men who encounter Tess and judge her. Consequently, Tess is forced to leave her innocent past behind (as a 'maiden') and the "immeasurable social chasm" ensures that 'the coarse pattern' will never be removed. A blank page does not write itself, but it is written upon. In the same way, Tess does not choose her experiences, but is constructed by certain events and by other people.

Critics are still at odds when classifying Tess into the category of *femme fatales*. Her violent reactions in certain situations and her passivity in circumstances when she should have a different reaction - all these make Tess a victim of her heredity, of Alec, of socio-economic pressures.

2. Erotic fetishes become stigmata of degeneracy

The body is an important aspect in constructing women's identity; it is one of the primary ways through which women tell others who they are and an aspect by which they are evaluated by others. Discourses on female bodies have always been present in culture, but at the end of the 19th century, these representations are frequent and symbolic. The fascination with the female body shows how women have always been on constant display. However these descriptions do not imply just the aesthetic characterization, they also indicate the women's position in society and their morality. The strict moral and social codes of Victorian England dictated rules on what women should wear and how they should reveal some parts of their body.

Beauty transformed women into commodities and always an object of desire. Thomas Hardy was even accused of parading Tess' sensuality "over and over again with a persistence like that of a horse-dealer egging on some wavering customer to a deal, or a slave-dealer appraising his wares to some full-blooded pasha"³ (Stott, 1992, p. 184). In the beginning of the novel Hardy seems to be "the voyeuristic authorial presence" (*ibidem*) when he points out his heroine's charms:

"This morning the eye returns involuntarily to the girl in the pink cotton jacket, she being the most flexuous and finely-drawn figure of them all. But her bonnet is pulled so far over her brow that none of her face is disclosed while she binds,

though her complexion may be guessed from a stray twine or two of dark brown hair which extends below the curtain of her bonnet. Perhaps one reason why she seduces casual attention is that she never courts it, though other women often gaze around them... She brings the ends of the sheaf together, and kneels on the sheaf whilst she ties it, beating back her skirts now and then when lifted by the breeze. A bit of naked arm is visible..." [p. 138].

John Goode (Google, 1988, p. 117) points out that this passage is a definite invitation to possess this body through the voyeuristic gaze which Tess is trying to avoid. Goode further associates Tess's holding of the corn in an embrace "like that of a lover" with men's holding and fixing her body into their arms. Under these voyeuristic glances Tess becomes an object of consumption - the readers take delight in gazing her just as the male characters take delight in exploiting her sexually or economically. The objectification and fetishization of Tess's body lead to her pursuit, violation and persecution. Her face, considered a "trump card" [p. 93] by her mother, is Tess's only market value that will single her out from all other women who work at the Slopes, rather than her noble ancestry. After being rejected by Angel, Tess struggles to censor the signs of her desirability that enabled men to fetishize her. Tess finds out that being a fetish will only attract "aggressive admiration", thus she brutally conceals her face or her figure, by wearing shabby clothes, hiding her face under a handkerchief, cutting her eyebrows off. Unknowingly, her abrupt attempts of evasion increase the desire in the voyeuristic gaze.

But Hardy depicts his heroine as unconsciously taking delight in her beauty and physical voluptuousness. Her over-brimming sensuality is emphasized by the writer's numerous references to the red colour symbolizing blood, life, but also danger. The whole novel abounds in images with the red colour: from Tess being the only girl (at the beginning of the novel) wearing a red ribbon at the May feast to her murdering Alec in the final scenes: "blood-red ray in the spectrum of her young life", "the red coal of a cigar", "a tin pot of red paint", "red hot pokers", "the red interior of her mouth", "a piece of blood-stained paper", "every wave of her blood", "tall blooming weeds" giving off "offensive smells" and "some of the weeds are a bright red", "crimson drops", then Tess is "virtually trapped and tortured on a piece of red machinery", and a "red house" contains her future rapist, and finally it is another red which contains her final executioner, for the prison where she is hanged is "a large red-brick building". This persistent red colour once again tries to persuade the critics and the readers that Tess is a *femme fatale* since Tony Tanner considers that "the purest woman contains tides of blood (Tess is always blushing), and if the rising of blood is sexual passion and the spilling of blood is death, then we can see that the purest woman is sexual and mortal" (Tanner, 1975, pp. 182-194). Her overwhelming sexuality proves to be fatal, not only a sign of life and visible animation/energy.

Men's eyes sweep over her lush young body, thus many parts of her body become symbol of her sexuality and are fetishized by men. Her body receives excessive and obsessive male attention and arouse men's sexual desires. Her lush sensuality tempts men into comparing or associating her with ripe fruits or flowers. For instance, "Alec forces roses and strawberries on her, pushing a strawberry into her mouth, pressing the roses into her bosom" [p. 38]; her "too tempting mouth" being repeatedly depicted symbolizes the sexuality her body exudes and the desire she excites in men ("To a young man with the least fire in him that little upward lift in the middle of her red top lip was distracting, infatuating, maddening" - p. 178); she also arouses their interest or desire with her enticing large eyes which reflect all colours.

But red is not the only colour considered attractive, Tess' beauty is noticed when she wears white dresses ("the white muslin figure"), her sensuality is often associated with chillness, dampness: her damp, cold skin resembles the new, fresh mushrooms from the fields; her arms are irresistible when they are wet by the rain ("your arms are like wet marble, Tess. Wipe them in the cloth. Now, if you stay quiet, you will not get another drop" - p. 145); her whole body is soft and chill, a sensation felt by both Alec and Angel when they kiss her. The touch of a man gets an immediate sensual response from her body, because she is assured of her charm, consequently Tess oscillates between her instinctual and moral choices.

Later Angel reconsiders his idealized image of Tess as a pure woman after her confession. He does not accept Tess' polarities, her contradictory sexuality; in his understanding women are either pure/virginal or corrupt/debased. All parts of the body which earlier were fetishized by an enchanted lover, turn into stigmata of passion, of degeneracy after the wedding-night confession. Angel begins to compare his 'pure' beloved wife to paintings (that) represent women of middle age, of a date some hundred years ago, whose lineaments once seen can never be forgotten. The long pointed features, narrow eye and smirk of the one, so suggestive of merciless treachery; the bill-hook nose, large teeth, and bold eye of the other, suggesting arrogance to the point of ferocity, haunt the beholder afterwards in his dreams [pp. 283-284].

This is a representation of the female side of the d'Urbervilles ancestry, a female bloodline to which Tess belongs and whose features can be traced in Tess' face:

"The unpleasantness of the matter was that, in addition to their effect upon Tess, her fine features were unquestionable traceable in those exaggerated forms" [p. 284].

This similarity of traits is deduced as Angel juxtaposes the two images in his mind (the 'pure' Tess and the debased one) after the confession. Unconsciously, men are the ones who force Tess' physical transformation

from a pure milk-maid into a corrupted, immoral woman. Both Angel and Alec dress and adorn her with jewels, consequently they reconstruct her as a different woman. She is no longer the pure “new-sprung child of nature”, she has turned into “the belated seedling of an effete aristocracy”. When he is about to enter her room after the confession, once again the physiognomy influences the man into constructing the woman’s identity. Angel takes a look at the portrait on the wall, which reminds him of her bad bloodline, and distorts his feelings for her. Tess “looked absolutely pure Nature, in her fantastic trickery, had set such a seal of maidenhood upon Tess’s countenance” [p. 307].

Towards the end of the novel Tess’ body seems to suffer further changes; this time she undergoes the process of disembodiment when she accepts Alec’s offer of becoming his mistress. She barter her body, allowing its fetishization, but her will, her feelings are not purchasable; Angel remarks how “his original Tess had spiritually ceased to recognise the body before him as hers – allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction dissociated from its living will” [p. 467]. Her soul moved into a different direction, cut off from her body: “Our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive”. Not being able to protect her body from being objectified, abused, and constantly put into the males’ aggressive attention, Tess decides to relinquish her body entirely. She accepts to be totally compromised, to destroy her body for economic reasons. Once again the desired body bears the marks of decline, the erotic fetishes become stigmata of degeneracy.

3. Subversion of Male Dominance

Tess becomes active when she stalks Angel in the garden, turning from a hunted woman into a huntress stalking her prey. Since Angel does not notice her in this scene, her gaze dominates him. In this respect, Tess slides into a different position: no longer being an object of desire under the male voyeuristic glances, Tess transforms herself into a voyeur. She is no longer a victim, she herself becomes an aggressor. Tess’ passive-active representation is associated with the animal imagery. In the beginning, as she is trapped, hunted and caged, she is associated with the bird imagery: she works as a maid taking care of Mrs. D’Urbervilles’ poultry, then she is hunted by Alec and falls into his trap just as birds do; when she fantasizes about Angel in the garden she is depicted as a “fascinated bird”. Still all these analogies are subverted by her cat-like qualities; her stalking of Angel reveals her predatory attitude resembling a hunter. Then when she stares at a passing train she also reveals the “suspended attitude of a friendly leopard at pause” [p. 251]. Her subversive nature might also be disclosed when Angel finds a sleepy Tess stretching herself:

“She was yawning, and he saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake’s” [p. 231].

In the wedding-night the confession has as effects Angel's "concentrated purpose of revenge on the other sex" [p. 312]. Tess' confession functions as the lifting of veils from men's eyes. Elaine Showalter stresses upon this process of unveiling rather than transformation, an unveiling which enables the man to confront the full horror of the *femme fatale*, a horror which has previously been concealed from him by the "fantastic trickery" of Nature. But even now, just as Salome who drove men crazy when she displayed her sexuality by unveiling her body while performing a dance, Tess makes Angel go mad after he finds out about her 'fallen' past:

"[...] he was becoming ill with thinking; eaten out with thinking; withered by thinking; scourged out of his former pulsating flexuous domesticity" [p. 313].

Like any other *femme fatale*, Tess succeeds in transforming Angel from a joyful, self-righteous young man into a "ghost", a "yellow skeleton" cured of moral Puritanism. Tess proves to be fatal to Angel's moral principles and brings about a radical reconsideration of his philosophical ideas.

Tess' passive gaze (resembling the gaze specific to *femmes fatales* with their half-closed eyes) can strongly affect and can even silence men: Alec d'Urbervilles' "pious rhetoric", presenting himself as newly evangelised while preaching in a barn, is abruptly interrupted by Tess' appearance:

"The effect upon her old lover was electric, far stronger than the effect of his presence upon her. His fire, the tumultuous ring of his eloquence, seemed to go out of him. His lip struggled and trembled under the words that lay upon it; but deliver them it could not as long as she faced him... This paralysis lasted, however, but a short time; for Tess's energy returned with the atrophy of his, and she walked away as fast as she was able past the barn and onward" [p. 384].

We witness how a woman who was constantly silenced and dominated by men, succeeds in silencing and paralyzing men either through her words (the way she paralyzes Angel with her confession) or through a direct gaze (when her eyes meet Alec's). It is important to notice that Tess does not challenge the men's force rationally, but through the ways they remark her: her face, her body. If at the beginning Tess is forced to veil her face against the "aggressive admiration", later the veil serves as a means of protection for men against her 'Medusa-like' gaze:

'Don't look at me like that!' he said abruptly. Tess, who had been quite unconscious of her action and mien, instantly withdrew the large dark gaze of her eyes,...

'No, no, Don't beg my pardon. But since you wear a veil to hide your good looks, why don't you keep it down?' She pulled down the veil saying hastily, 'It was mostly to keep off the wind.'

'It might seem harsh of me to dictate like this', he went on, 'but it is better that I should not look too often on you. It might be dangerous' [p. 388].

Like other *femmes fatales*, Tess must be veiled in order to conceal her dangerous beauty, a beauty which acts like a curse upon a man since "Beauty is like lightning, it destroys" [p. 237]. The writer underlines the fact that it is the man who needs to protect himself from his desires.

Yet Tess acquires a voice. Alec notices that she has acquired a fluency in her speech while his discourse was affected with atrophy:

"I must go away and get strength ... How is it that you speak so fluently now?" [p. 389].

The over-consuming work on the fields of Flintcomb Ash strips Tess of her vitality and colour, but forces her to use her voice, which later cannot be bought by Alec. When Tess refuses to be an object of desire, she becomes more articulate: she silences Alec, she writes angry letters to Angel, she asserts openly and bitterly her oppression.

Furthermore, we have to observe the fact that Tess succeeds in dominating men only after they get a full glimpse of her personality. When men try to seduce Tess, she is seldom depicted in full light, she is often seen in the twilight of dawn or dusk (Angel gets a utopian image of her at Talbothays while he gazes at her in the twilight; he meets her in "that strange and solemn interval, the twilight of the morning"). Her figure with blurred contours helps Tess in concealing certain aspects from the male gaze, which is constantly on her. The dim light also helps Tess in freeing herself from the constraints of society and intensifies her beauty. Men fall into Tess' charm, because in the dim light the shadows hide the fissure between morality and degeneracy, in this dim light Tess' polarities are neutralised, dissolved. Men are lured by her because they do not see her in full light, Angel notices only the virgin, not the fallen woman who stands by him: in the "mixed, singular, luminous gloom" "he little thought that the Magdalen might be at his side". Just as Alec, Angel can see only her body, only her appearance, he never goes under the superficial surface. After men get to know Tess, a brutal image of her dominates them: in the fields of Flintcomb Ash, in mid-winter, when she performs hard jobs for a woman, when her body is fully covered, no longer exuding sexuality and voluptuousness, Tess succeeds in draining Alec's energy.

Later, at the end of the novel, the roles of the characters are reversed. Tess's earlier rape is punished with Alec's flowing blood which sips through bed linen, carpets and ceiling ("a lot of blood has run down upon the floor"). Finally, the man is "pale, fixed, dead" no longer capable of dominating her. But when Tess frees herself from being hunted, abused, voyeuristically gazed, she also fixes her in the role of a fallen woman; eliminating one of her suppressers, Tess triggers the witch-hunt which requires the sacrifice of her blood as a proof of moral hypocrisy. The ones who tried to censor her, to restrict her sexuality, to refrain her personality, satisfy a public need for

censorship, for hypocrisy, for a sacrificial scapegoat. Thus her execution reveals that she must be removed both as a murderess and as an object of desire. The whole novel reveals Hardy's conviction that "the doll of English fiction must be demolished". Tess reflects the Victorian women's abuse and oppression when she is forced to conceal her sexuality in order not to offend the puritan readers, she is forced to detach her inner self from her body by letting it be exposed to prostitution. Although Tess challenges the boundaries of Victorian moral codes, yet she manages to escape archetypal image designed for women: she is no longer an 'angel in the house', a 'doll' or a 'puppet'. She celebrates Otherness, accepting the association with animals, her mutilation and finally her reconstruction. In this way she escapes the social and literary constraints by refusing to absorb any false codes.

Notes

1. Freud states several times that women's sexuality is a dark continent.
2. Thomas Hardy witnessed the censure imposed on Zola's works when he wrote and published his *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The British censorship considered Zola as another French 'invader' – still hating the French for the Norman invasion. Zola's publisher in Britain was tried and imprisoned for letting degenerate and immoral books be a negative influence on the British readers. French naturalism was in those times depicted as morally corrupting the British authors, thus the censure was meant to keep the fiction 'clean'.
3. Mowbray Morris objected to Tess's sensuality in his review of the novel from 1892, a novel which he had previously refused to publish as editor of *MacMillan's Magazine* (apud Rebecca Stott, p. 184).

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