

Tess on the Road

Ways and Paths as Spatial Elements in the Plot of
Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to study the roads, ways and paths in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as structural and cohesive elements of the novel. It is a masterpiece of naturalistic English literature. *Tess* is a tragedy about a young girl who faces the consequences of being seduced and of becoming a single mother in Victorian countryside England. By describing both the road and the landscape, Hardy emphasizes the symbolic meaning of the story, often anticipating what is going to happen in future episodes, so that the narration of events on roads functions—like the chorus in a Greek tragedy—to clarify the plot, to warn, or to guide the reader. The road reflects the protagonist's development through the different 'phases' (as Hardy called them) of her life, and its description is transformed as the heroine is. It becomes Hardy's nexus among characters, scenes and settings. This project will study how roads operate in both the initial and closing parts of the novel, as well as their role in adding a deep symbolic meaning to the narrative events involving Tess, Alec and Angel. The road is clearly a symbol of one's life. In the novel, roads are used to indicate how Tess's life is developing, mostly as a victim of nature, society and sexuality. She is forced twice to exile from her home in Marlott and it is on the road where she wanders to find her place. As it is a naturalistic novel, Hardy's treatment of roads and smaller tracks represents an important strategy to show the invisible forces of nature acting upon the individual. Tess cannot escape her destiny as a sexual victim in Hardy's Wessex countryside. This project will also pay attention to meaningful elements encountered by Tess on roads, such as minor characters, animals, or objects, like the parson or the shepherd, the pheasants, or the 'Cross-in-Hand' stone. It is divided into four main parts comprising: a general approach to the matter, roads connected with Alec, roads associated with Angel, and an analysis of the labyrinthine web of tracks leading her to Stonehenge. The main aim is to show how roads are central to reinforce the symbolic meaning of Hardy's novel.

Key words: nature, paganism, road, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman* (1891) is usually considered a masterpiece of English naturalistic fiction. Although today it is seen as a realistic writing, when it was first published it was a revolutionary novel as it depicted elements of an emergent literary trend in France. In naturalism, characters are subordinated to underlying invisible powers, such as fate, laws of nature, etc., that force them to struggle for survival in a merciless, ruthless environment. The naturalistic movement was partly influenced by Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859). In the case of *Tess*, this influence is very strong, not only owing to the cruelty of *nature* against the main characters, but also to the impossibility of escaping from the consequences of her social/genetic degradation. Hardy's *Tess* responds to this creative pattern. She was still a simple country-girl when she became a single mother. Then, burdened with a turbulent past, she is abandoned by her beloved husband Angel on the wedding evening, and impelled to become abhorred Alec's lover in exchange of welfare for her family. However, for Thomas Hardy, *Tess* embodies the three types of women characteristic of his fiction: the common natural woman who asks nothing from life, the young woman ready for marriage, and the *femme fatale* who delights in seducing men, in other words, *Tess* must be seen in her triple essence: woman and victim of both, her love and sexuality. This complex construction of the character is consistent from the opening scene on May Day until the end when she must comply with her destiny.

A common aspect among Hardy's 'Wessex novels' is also the influence of Greek tragedies as their narrative structure¹. In his 'Wessex novels,' or novels of 'character and environment' as he called them, Hardy becomes "the tragic humanist-realist of Wessex, finding essential human nature in the lives of the rural protagonist [...] pitted in conflict with 'Fate' or 'Nature'" (Widdowson 5). Throughout his latest novels, Hardy explored and exploited the invisible forces of nature acting upon the character by following the patterns of the Greek tragedy, a structural technique that he started to develop in his novel *The Return of the Native* (1878), as John Paterson comments:

¹Thomas Hardy gave the name 'Wessex' to his novelistic space as a means to represent true Victorian countryside life in his fiction. It corresponds to the southern and southwest of England, a territory where the former Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex was located. The name 'Wessex Novels' is commonly given to the six novels of the "Wessex Edition" in 1912: *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1896).

In the ceremonial chapters of Egdon Heath and Eustacia Vye, in the set speeches and soliloquies of the heroine, in the novel's conscientious observation of the unities of time and space, in its organization (as originally planned) in terms of the five parts or 'acts' of traditional tragedies, *The Return of the Native* was meant to recall the immensities of Sophocles and Shakespeare. (107)

Throughout the five parts, Hardy evokes also the Greek tragedy through imaginary allusion to Prometheus. As Paterson points out "Clym and his Egdon Heath are specially affiliated with the banished Titan, with the fallen benefactor of mankind; but is the novel fire imaginary, by inference Promethean, that mostly fully asserts this primary motif"(110). The moors of Egdon are presented as almost in flames, and the vivid descriptions provided by the narrator almost made Egdon functions as another character of the novel. The same situation is repeated in *Tess*, where the intense and detailed description of landscapes turns nature into an active, vital element rather than a mere setting. Although the structure of the Greek tragedy is clearly presented in *The Return of the Native*, in his following novels Hardy will progressively blur this pattern albeit still noticeable. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the novelist still applies the structure of the classical tragedy, as it is divided in phases that function as 'acts'. Hardy conserves in this novel a theatrical aspect, since the descriptions of this novel seem to perform in front of the audience. Hardy provides a vivid staging of the invisible forces acting on the human being. Likewise, *Tess* includes hints of this classic genre with elements such as the chorus, which is metaphorically introduced by means of several narrative strategies and devices, especially when Tess is on the road moving from one place to another. These include not only actual roads and tracks but more importantly the people, animals, objects, weather conditions, etc. that Tess comes across, because they are meaningful to the symbolic understanding of the novel.

This project concentrates on the parts of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* where characters are moving on roads and smaller tracks in order to study, firstly, how they provide cohesiveness, a nexus to unify the different 'phases' that Tess undergoes, and secondly, how these parts determine the symbolic dimension. Therefore, the first part of this project analyses roads and tracks in order to explore how they operate in the novel: the first subsection provides a general overview of the initial chapters (up to chapter V, inclusive), whereas the second one focuses on a spot called 'Cross-in-Hand,' described at the end of chapter XLVI (389-91), as an example that shows how roads functions in the novel when Hardy combines, in relationship with one single place, the development of the plot, the lives of the characters and

the symbolic meaning. The second part concentrates on the roads related to the character of Alec; this section contains two subsections: the events that modify the plot and those that influence the construction of Tess as a completely new character. Then, a third part is dedicated to the study of the roads related with Angel Clare. The first subsection deals with the plot and characters, and the second one with Wessex. The fourth section deals with the reencountering of Angel and Tess and the labyrinthine escape after the murdering of Alec leading to Stonehenge where she is caught by the police. The last two sections are the conclusions and references.

2. MAIN ROADS: TYPES AND FUNCTIONS.

Thomas Hardy has transformed the natural environment in the central element of his literary writings. Hardy concentrates in the smallest details, imperceptible natural elements to plain sight. His images of nature add precise information, thus providing the spatial and symbolic background for the story.

Throughout *Tess*, the protagonist moves several times from one place to another, and even when she settles in a new household, there are many other smaller tracks where central events take place. Roads and paths are placed in a close setting where the whole story is developed. The dramatic action is restricted to South Wessex and, only on one scene, the protagonists travel to a surrounding town of Mid-Wessex. Moreover, by showing and describing different types of ways, Hardy can express emotions, moods, or predict future events. This first part concentrates on the analysis of roads of the first five chapters of the novel. In the meantime, I would also like to argue that Hardy applies lineal roads when Tess's life adopts a monotonous and even predictable aspect. By the contrary, curved tracks imply certain complexity in her future life, as well as, anticipate her fall. Besides, Hardy also describes crossroads or intersection implying a bifurcation not only of the way but also in the lives of the protagonists.

2.1. Opening Road: from Marlott to Tantridge.

As soon as the novel starts, Thomas Hardy makes clear the naturalistic character of the novel, as well as the scenographical and theatrical sense, as Lodge comments (qtd. in Niemeyer 35). In the opening paragraph of this novel, a middle-aged man walking along a road from Shaston to Marlott it is described. Hardy presents this man (Tess's father) as a universal human being at any time and at any place, an anonymous individual in the course of history and time. This strategy—presenting the characters through the road—is not only restricted to *Tess* but it can be seen in previous novels as *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886). In this novel, Hardy is presenting a marriage enclosed into routine that he is representing through a vulgar, monotonous and lineal road located in the most common and graceless place around Wessex:

...the scene for that matter being one of the might have been matched to almost any spot in any country in England at this time of the year; a road neither straight nor crooked, neither level nor hilly, bordered by hedges, trees, and other vegetation, which had entered the blackened-green stage of color that the doomed leaves pass through on their way to dingy and yellow, and red. (70)

This sense of drabness and boredom is constantly repeated in the descriptions of roads that they come across. The same occurs in *Tess*, where ways and paths portray the life of the maid, as well as acts as a nexus of the different villages that appears in this novel. Through the road Hardy offers a guided tour through the relevant places of the heart of Wessex.

The protagonist of the *Tess*'s opening scene is John Durbeyfield. During his way home, he meets a priest who is going to change the fate of his family. According to the parson, John is the direct descendant of an aristocrat who came to England with William the Conqueror. Thus, he and his offspring are not ordinary villagers but they belong to the lineage of the d'Urbervilles, which had lands throughout the region. This is the starting point of the novel, and what triggers the father's greed, as he really believes the story of the priest and will do anything to achieve the real social status belonging to him.

John Durbeyfield follows the road to Marlott, not as a simple haggler but as member of the nobility, even treating a boy who sees on the way as his servant. The reader, as Tess's father does, keeps on the road until the narrator offers a panoramic view of the valley of Blackmoor. Down the hill, it is seen a group of young maiden dancing to the music. Among them is Tess Durbeyfield, a naïve girl wearing a white dress described with a "peony mouth and large innocent eyes" (51). Hence, in the first reference to Tess, Hardy has used the environment and nature to lead the reader to his heroine, and to describe the maid's physical attributes.

The festivity which Tess and the other maiden are celebrating is the May Day dance. This is a pagan ritual that dates back to the times of Celts and celebrates spring, fertility and, as Keating and Hickey pointed out, "the purity of this season." The narrator refers to this celebration as "local Cerialia" (49), making allusion to the ancient Roman goddess Ceres and reinforcing the idea of fertility. However, Hardy is not only including this festivity with the folklore associations given in the Victorian Era, but also he is applying the ancient connotation of this ritual, since for the old Celts and Saxons the May Day was a celebration to the Sun and the first of May was for them "the day of the fire," as Keating and Hickey explain. So, Hardy is playing with the double meaning of this word and presents a pure and

fertile Tess—who even gets pregnant during her first intercourse—but with a pagan touch which even anticipates the fall of the girl. The May Day symbolizes Tess's initiation ritual; she is now accepted as a creature of nature. For Keating and Hickey: "May-Day can also be interoperated as a day of 'awakening'—Tess is called to face the legacy of her aristocratic ancestors." Therefore, this day represents Tess's fusion with the natural world, her 'awakening' not only as fertile country-girl, but as a d'Urberville. In a way or another, this celebration is the starting point of Tess's tragedy and it could be considered the beginning of the end.

The festivity is reinforcing the idea that the story of Tess is bathed both by traditional and pagans dyes but only the last ones condemn Tess to her fall. As Scott Rode affirms "Hardy invokes this ancient ritual along the road to reinforce the notion that the road is rich in sedimented meaning and remains a conflicted space because of the many historical, cultural, social, and mythical meanings embedded within it" (69). During the May Day, the road is a symbolic spatial and temporal nexus. It connects Tess with her ancestors (past), evokes her female maturity (present) and connects her with Angel (future).

However, the importance of the May Day is due to Tess and Angel, who see each other for the first time. Clare and his brothers were among the onlookers attracted by the festival. In this scene, Angel makes clear his dissolute—even childish—character, since unlike his brothers, he decides to take a partner but she is not Tess. This rejection caused some disappointment in the young girl who, like in a fairy tale, had fallen in love with Angel at first sight. Moreover, it can be understood that Angel is not the husband that nature has ready for Tess because he even does not realizes of her presence although she is described as an exuberant beauty through the novel. As George Wotton points out "what Angel's idealizing vision fails to see is immediately apparent to the distracted gaze of Alec d'Urberville" (34).

In the first two chapters, the plot has been developed around a main setting: the road. By means of it, the author introduces both characters and plot and it is on the road where the curse and disgrace of the Durbeyfields are shown. Likewise, it is on the road where it is known that the d'Urbervilles lineage has not been strong enough to survive in society, what Hardy is representing by the degradation of the name from d'Urbervilles to Durbeyfield, and therefore, applying Darwinian theory. Furthermore, Tess's father is presented as a simple

drunker whom nobody believes. Hardy is also portraying in John the social degradation of the d'Urbervilles, as he is a peasant from the lower class who drinks the incomes of the family.

A path leads now our protagonist home, from where she will go to look for her parent in a nearby inn. This is the first time that a road is mentioned after the opening scene—and therefore after the pagan forces had fallen upon Tess—and what is presented is a “dark and crooked lane or street not made for hasty progress” (62). On this occasion, the way shows a gloomy and twisted aspect that anticipates how will be the life of the girl in the future: a tragedy with comings and goings. However, the interesting issue about this description is that Hardy is implying that lanes and streets coexist together in the same space. The novelist is portraying the imminent urban change that is undergoing the rural England. For Hardy, the road was a manner to defend the rural against the modern; for that, his protagonist is seen walking, riding, or on a wagon.

To connect this episode with the next scene, Hardy uses the road again. He places Tess and his brother Abraham in a horse-driven cart crossing an uphill way. After an incident, the girl causes the death of the horse, the only source of family supports. This creates in the maid a sense of guilty that will make her to accept the proposition of working for the d'Urbervilles, which begins the action of the novel (LitCharts). So, once more it is on the road where a trigger point for the novel happens, and the way is the one that is guiding Tess to the hands of Alec d'Urberville. Apart from that, the symbolism of Prince (the horse) on the road is reinforcing the idea posed above; the death of this horse, caused by an incident with a modern carriage, represents the progressive death of the rural way of life (LitCharts).

With a sense of guilt, Tess starts her way to Tantridge in order to meet their alleged relatives. Hardy depicts the road of Tess's journey with a symbolic language suggesting that something important is coming: “Tess Durbeyfield route on this memorable morning lay amid the north-eastern undulations of the Vale” (75). During her way, the narrator reinforces the innocence of the girl by saying she has never visited any place outside the valley. But the road ends, and Tess ascends on foot a slope that she scales without almost realize, as if she was absent. Here, Hardy predicts and anticipates how is going to be the maid sexual relation with Alec, since she does not know what are they doing and the consequences of that until it is too late.

2.2. CROSSROADS: ANGEL AND ALEC.

Thomas Hardy includes two scenes in which the road forks. The division of the road implies a separation, as well as indicates different possibilities or aspects for the person who is on the crossroad. This final assumption is applied to the bifurcation that Alec and Tess find in their way. Both characters reach a point where the road parts in four different tracks. Since this episode takes place almost at the end of the novel, it can be assumed that they symbolize the four different selves of Tess represented in the novel: innocent girl, single mother, wife and lover—Tess's final option is to take this road and becoming Alec's mistress in order to survive. Moreover, there is another episode where Tess and Clare reach a crossroad. In their case, there are two possible ways: one to Marlott and the other one to Emminster.

When Alec d'Urberville reappears in the heroine's life, Tess has come from Emminster after a failed visit to Angel's family. Hardy depicts the maid's way back as tedious—"Along the tedious length of Benville lane..." (378)—in order to represent a hopeless Tess who is wandering those roads. As she is tired of walking, she stops in a village where a preacher is delivering a service. This man is no other than Alec, who seems to be totally changed because of faith. Tess recognizes him and runs away. She has reached a desert white road, to where Alec has followed her. Both lovers are once again on the road, the natural space where they became one. As it occurs in the first 'phase' of the novel, the road has acted as a nexus among Tess and Alec, leading the woman precisely to the village where Alec is. While they are walking, he tells her the impure thoughts she still evokes in him. During their way, the atmosphere becomes creepy and darker, particularly when they reach a wall with red and blue paintings—a combination of colours that generates purple, a symbol of a suffering love—whit a fragment of the Sixth Commandments. These paintings can be understood as a metaphorical representation of the Greek chorus which is on the road warning Tess, in this case of the malign intentions of Alec. Similar paintings appeared after Tess was seduced by Alec and she decided to abandon Tantridge. However, they can be also a symbolic representation of Tess's subconscious as she feels guilty by her former attraction to Alec.

Both characters keep on the road until they reach a crossroad and a stone called 'Cross-in-Hand,' depicted as a monolith with "a negative beauty of tragic tone" (389). The villain cheats Tess telling her this spot was once a Holy Cross. Alec is taking advantage of the stone's advanced state of deterioration, which can be analyzed as metaphor of the d'Urbervilles degradation—the Durbeyfields are the traces of the stone still erected. Putting

her hand over the stone, Alec makes her to swear she will never tempt him. After that cynical scene, Alec goes for one of the four paths with an unknown direction, whereas Tess takes the one to Flintcomb-Ash. Within the distance of a mile, she met a shepherd whom she asks about the monolith. This anonymous individual tells to the protagonist that this is not a Christian cross, rather is an ill-omen stone where the remains of a tortured malefactor were buried. As the paintings on the wall mentioned above, this man is the representation of the Greek chorus since he is participating in the dramatic action—advising Tess that Alec is still being the liar she knew in *The Chase*—but has not relevance by himself. Furthermore, in spite of showing Alec’s religious conversion, this episode portrays a more frivolous—but possibly more accurate—description of d’Urberville, who even uses faith to approach Tess. Hence, it is also on the road where the characters’ behaviour is constructed.

Nonetheless, Tess and Alec are not the only ones whose ways lead them to the ‘Cross-in-hand.’ After returning from Brazil, Angel also passes along “the unholy stone whereon Tess had been compelled by Alec” (458). This spot becomes a linking point for the three protagonists, as well as implies that all of them are trapped under a pagan invisible force which is predestinated to cause suffering in all of them.

Tess and Angel’s bifurcation of their ways takes places the day after their non-consummated marriage. Clare has elevated and idealized Tess as a model of perfection; however he cannot afford that she is a woman with a past. Angel, who is concerned about social laws, decides to abandon the house where they were supposed to be living their honeymoon. He rents a carriage and “at the midway point, when Nuttlebury had been passed, and where there cross-roads, Clare stopped the conveyance and said to Tess that if she meant to return to her mother’s house it was there that he would leave her”(324). The way of the couple is going to fork because Angel is unable to forgive his wife, for the same action he committed in the past. Hence, as Hardy entitles this ‘phase’, “The Woman Pays” for the consequences of the double standard of the Victorian Era, where a man can have sexual freedom whereas the woman must remain pure.

After his departure, Angel watches Tess's coach slowly moving up the hill, and hopes that she will look back at him. But following Angel’s order, she does not turn to say goodbye. Tess shows an absolutely submissive behaviour, unlike the powerful woman who rejected Alec d’Urberville. Tess and Angel follow their respective roads, which are once more functioning as a structural element that provides cohesion to the different scenes developed

until that moment. Besides, the road was where they met and it is on it where they separate, implying the idea that what Hardy started on the road he finishes on the road.

3. WAYS CONNECTED TO ALEC d'URBERVILLE.

3.1. Paths Related to the Plot.

The episodes or scenes concerning Alec are mainly connected to sexuality and temptation. The most important scene relate to d'Urberville is the one in which Tess sexuality is firstly insinuated in the strawberry fields.

After meeting Alec d'Urberville in Tantridge, he invites the young woman to see the orchards and, through a small track, he leads her to a strawberry field. In this scene, Hardy boasts of his Romantic influence, using a poetic language in which every detail and description is important to comprehend the whole meaning of the situation. Clearly, the author does not leave anything to imagination since all what he wanted to express, directly or indirectly, is portrayed through nature imaginary. Even emotions are evoked using this device, as in this moment when Alec is trying to seduce his alleged cousin with strawberries. Alec is offering this fruit to Tess and putting it directly in her mouth. The eroticism of this scene is not only given by this action, but also by the description of the environment:

He conducted her about the lawns, and flowers- beds, and conservatories; and thence to the fruit-garden and greenhouse, where he asked her if she liked strawberries...D'Urberville began gathering specimens of the fruit for her, handing back to her as he stooped; and, presently, selecting a specially fine product of the 'British Queen' variety, he stood up and held it by the stem to her mouth. (80-1)

The sexuality of this excerpt, it is given by the use of 'flower-beds' since Hardy's could use other word to depict the landscape that surround them, but with this specific term he is given a complete sexual connotation to the scene and seems to be telling the reader what is going to happen. Moreover, Hardy is describing here a primitive, natural man who is moved by his instincts and his sexual attraction for Tess, while his antagonist, Angel, is presented as a civilized man with moral values rooted in the Christian tradition. Apart from that, this fragment also shows Hardy's taste for country's activities such as cultivation of fruit, reinforcing his preference for the rural versus the modern. He will let see this penchant for the rural labors in different parts of the story, not only in the figure of Tess, who is always

working on fields or in Talbothays Dairy, but also in Angel who decides to leave the Christian life and become a clerk as his father and brother, to dedicate his life to the rural activities.

In addition to that, while Tess and Alec are on the field, he covers her hat and dress with roses. This image of the girl covered with flowers is used by the author to offer a new symbiosis of Tess and Nature, as Hardy description of the girl seems to be emulating a goddess of nature. However, during Tess's way home she pricked her chin, what for the girl was a sign of 'ill omen'. These superstitions are part of the beliefs of the country people, often evincing the ancient pagan tradition. Hence the incident of the rose, apart from revealing Tess unlucky end, is part of the pagan environment in which Tess is involved since the May Day, and is the road again the one that is warning Tess of her destiny.

During Tess's stay in Tantridge, a young man sees her with Alec d'Urberville. Apparently, this individual has no relevance for the dramatic action, but however, he will reappear during Tess and Angel's excursion to the city before their marriage. This—until now—unknown person recognizes Tess and almost unmask her past. It could seem an isolated moment, consequence of fate or result of pure chance, but she is going to meet him again while she is on the road to Flintcomb-Ash. As she is afraid of be recognized by this man, the protagonist decides to avoid roads using hidden paths, as she and Angel will do after Alec's death. This individual is another characterization of the Greek chorus, as he is persecuting Tess on the road as her past does. He represents her failure in Tantridge, and is presented in different parts of the story to remind both Tess and the reader she is a woman with a past; that she has a husband by nature, Alec d'Urberville, and she cannot escape of that reality.

3.2. Alec as Forerunner of Tess's Evolution.

Alec is the one who determined the starting point in the psychological and physical transformation of the heroine. The road is the central witness of Tess flowering. Her passage from childhood to young womanhood is portrayed in a completely naturalistic environment: "a maid that went to a green wood and came back in a changed state" (57).

In a September night, Tess Durbeyfield is being escorted home by Alec after a fair-dance in a near village. To take the longest way is Alec perfect excuse to be alone with Tess, who seems to be sensing the dark intentions of his escort. The villain pretends to be lost and

leaves Tess lying on the roadside while he is going to discover their localization. When Alec goes back with Tess, the narrator describes her as a pure and immaculate creature, wearing a white dress and in sound sleep. The environment becomes erotic, sensual as well as mysterious, since both are wrapped by a fog that is surrounding this intimate moment.

The great enigma of this passage is if Tess was raped or just seduced by Alec, a controversy issue that opened a debate that is still a hot topic. As the narrator describes, d'Urberville, attracted by Tess's beauty, "knelt, and bent lower, till her breath warmed his face, and in a moment his cheek was in contact with hers" (119). He seems to be taking advantage of her while she is defenseless. However, the narrator describes "gentle roosting birds" and "hopping rabbits and hares" which seem not shocked or disturbed by seeing an act of violence. Thus, the environment approves of and encourages this natural instinct. Kristin Brady goes further and affirms that "the sexual relationship had continued beyond the single encounter in *The Chase*. Whether it began as a rape or seduction, Tess had subsequently 'been stirred to confused surrender awhile'" (163). So, Tess's sexuality was awakened that night by Alec. For Brady, what makes her different from other literary maidens and heroines is precisely her sexuality (160). Hence, Tess and her seducer are not antagonists rather than two young creatures moved by their animal instincts. The road is the natural element where their instincts are satisfied; the way evokes a sexual primitivism that the narrator reinforces calling *The Chase* "the oldest wood of England" (116).

The scene concludes with the end of the first 'phase' and Tess is "Maiden No More". She is seen walking on a road carrying a heavy basket, a symbolic representation of the consequences of that sexual relation: her pregnancy. In this case, the road is not only a structural element but also serves as a nexus between a young innocent Tess and the adult woman who carries a burden, out of sin and passion.

During her way home to Marlott, a man offers to carry her basket but Tess refuses his help. This man is in the process of painting on a wall "thou, shalt, not, commit adultery"—one of the Ten Commandments that God gave Moses as rules to live by—but when she looks to the writing he has not yet written the last word. The way Tess feels guilty by it suggests that she was not raped by Alec, but she is coping with part of the responsibility in that act. By seeing the man painting those words, Tess starts to be conscious of the offense committed against her family. As explained previously, the sign-writer has no relevance for the plot itself but his intervention is what makes Tess (and the reader) conscious of her actions. Therefore,

he resembles the chorus that Hardy includes echoing Greek tragedies. This individual marks an evolution in Tess's life, as the maid is now aware that she is a sinner whose social life is in decadence. There is no place for a fallen woman, like Tess, in society. Patricia Ingham compares Hardy's heroine with a "Magdalene figure," a prostitute in the eyes of society (82). For Ingham, the narrator defends the maid's innocence as she was just responding to her impulses: "since she is no sexless he construes her as all sex" (83). Thus, Tess's sexuality, awakened in the pagan ritual of May Day, is part of her maturity not only as a woman but as a natural creature who is led by her primitive instincts.

After the episode of the painting, Hardy employs the road in order to connect Tess's next episode. In a lane "just at the hour when the shadows of the eastern hedge-top struck the west hedge midway" (136), it is seen Tess Durbeyfield. The narrator depicts a calm, sweet yet dry environment, and Hardy's heroine seems to be the personification of Mother Nature by doing the most beautiful and delicate act: breastfeeding a baby. The bastard child is the materialization of Tess's sexual intercourse with Alec; the baby is the Durbeyfield's shame, the fruit of her offense to her family and a creature born out of misery. That is why she decides to call him Sorrow when she baptizes him at home because of the imminent death of the baby. As a traditional maid, our protagonist's desire is to bury her son in a graveyard, so she takes the track to the church. Just by pure coincidence or by fate, she meets the priest on the road. The vicar, motivated by the compassion that Tess produces in him, accepts. The gloomy road is the only partner which accompanies our heroine to bury her death son. The young girl presented by Hardy in earlier pages has nothing to do with the courageous mother who baptized her son at home, went out at night alone with her death child and pleaded her son's redemption.

When Alec and Tess meet again, she is now an abandoned woman trying to survive without the protection of her husband. Now she is aware that Alec is a sexual threat, a predator, as Laura Claridge defines him (74). Supposedly, he is repentant of the damage and suffering he causes in Tess, and to make amend of her mistake, Alec decides to propose her marriage again and again. Alec follows Tess for the roads of Wessex, until the death of her father when he offers to help financially Tess's family since he is his husband by nature. He is humiliated by a new refusal of the woman, but his obsession with the protagonist will make him to persecute Tess in her move to Kingsbere, after she is forced to leave Marlott. Once in her new village, Tess decides to take the lane to the d'Urbervilles Aisle, and visit one of the buildings belonging to her family. The place is depicted as gloomy, dark and picturesque but

ruinous. As the 'Cross-in-Hand' monolith, this aisle symbolizes the social degradation of the aristocratic family and how they were unable to survive. Going back to the scene, when Tess enters to the building, she is delighted by a grave with a curious sculpture above. She thinks she is seeing an object moving. Tess is frightened of the sight, but soon realizes that it is somebody staring at her: Alec d'Urberville.

The importance of the scene lies on the symbolic significance. This episode is the last one until Tess accepts to be Alec's mistress. The narrator does not describe how, when and where the woman decided to go with him but rather places them in such a symbolic spot as an old d'Urbervilles' buildings. Moreover, in this scene Tess finally reencounters her ancestors in an old, run-down building where she was led by a road. Different generations of d'Urbervilles coexist in a same space just a couple of minutes. The sinister description of the scene—which resembles elements of the gothic novel—represents the decay of Tess's ancestors, as well as is an anticipation of Alec's death since he is lying on a grave.

4. ANGEL CLARE ON THE ROAD.

As it can be seen in the previous section, roads related to Alec d'Urberville have a closer connection with nature and with primitivism. When Tess is under the influence of the villain, Hardy shows a creature of nature that follows her desires. Nevertheless, the maid that is depicted while she is under the spell of Angel Clare is trying to be a civilized woman, a lady. Tess Durbeyfield has evolved because of the events occurred in her life, that forced her to grow up too early. Due to these events, the Tess who Angel meets is far from being an innocent girl but a woman with experience.

4.1. Constructing a Way.

4.1.1. *A Love on the Road.*

From the opening of the novel, the road is the connecting element between Tess and Angel. As presented in the first part of this research, the couple met while Angel Clare was on the road with his brothers. They do not see each other again, until the moment in which Tess is conducted along a curved track to Talbothays, the place where their love will flourish.

A Hardyian feature throughout the novel is the use of scenery “to create an echoing dimension for the narrow, folk-ballad tragedy in which Tess is trapped” (Álvarez 19). This characteristic can be seen when the heroine arrives at Talbothays. The significance of the environment is shown in a vivid imaginary, creating a tridimensional space and transporting the reader to From Valley. The protagonist, who rather recedes into the background when the narrator is providing a panoramic view of the landscape, merges with the environment as if she were a creature of nature:

Not quite sure of her direction, Tess stood still upon the hemmed expanse of verdant flatness, like a fly on a billiard-table of indefinite length, and of no more consequence to the surroundings than that fly. The sole effect of her presence upon the placid valley so far had been to excite the mind of a solitary man... (159)

Talbothays is described as lush, green, and fertile, representing Tess's happiness (as well as her biological impulses) in these lands. The maid's natural beauty draws the attention of every man, including Angel Clare. Shortly after their meeting, the natural space will

become the scene of the idyllic romance between Tess and Angel. The visionary power by which Hardy's depicts the two lovers falling in love implies a delicate language that remains poetry. For Álvarez "at critical moments of the book, narrative and description and feeling fuse together in a peculiar complex way to produce effects which are, literally, beyond those customarily found in prose fiction..." (16). Therefore, the relationship of Tess and Angel is comprised in a natural environment that resembles the romantic poetry.

Nature is also used to reproduce the biological forces that move Tess's sexual desire. According to Patricia Ingham Tess's sexuality is not only evoked through others, she is aware of her own 'impassionate nature' (82). Angel is the object of the protagonist's desire, and she is also the personification of the man's urgency for a physical encounter since both are part "of an organism called sex" (204). An example of an erotic and sensual moment is seen when Angel is playing the harp and Tess is delighted by his music, as Orpheus enchanted Hades and Persephone with his. The exaltation of the moment is reinforced by the natural elements that create an intimate and romantic atmosphere:

Dim, flattened, constrained by their confinement, they had never appealed to her as now, when they wandered in the still air with a stark quality of nudity...The outskirts of the garden in which Tess found herself had been left uncultivated for some years, and was now damp and rank with juicy grass which sent up mist of pollen at a touch... She went stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails that were underfoot, staining her hands with thistly-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her naked arms... (178)

Here Hardy is using the environment as a metaphor of the ardent love Tess feels for Angel. The natural space is depicted as "juicy" and "damp," so the vegetation itself is portraying the physical passion the protagonist is experiencing. Besides, the outskirts of the garden is a clear symbol of the maiden's sexuality, since through this resource the author is telling that the young woman has her sexual desire asleep (after the consequence of her intercourse with Alec), but it is flourishing because of Angel. Likewise, Hardy is advocating this eroticism with words such as "nudity" and "naked," and reinforcing this entire atmosphere by describing Tess as a cat, a feline associated to sexuality and femininity, and therefore associating the girl with animal and primitive instincts.

The effervescent sexual tension between them is hidden behind Angel's courtship. He is a man indoctrinated in the Catholic religion, so it is not coincidence that their next meeting is on the way to Mellstock church. The road is the perfect natural stage to reunite both lovers while she is walking with three other maidens of the Dairy. Clare, who has carried the three girls through a flood solely, is tempted to kiss Tess when he is holding her in his arms. But it is his sense of morality what makes Angel to control his impulses (Hugman 32). Hence, instead of Alec's impulsive behaviour Angel reflects the rigid principles he absorbed during his childhood.

The road is the place that gives Angel freedom to explore his incipient attraction for Tess. Angel's roads are usually open, full of light and brightness, while the ways related with Alec are dark—most of these roads take place at night—narrow and hidden. This is because Hardy wanted to transmit Angel's enthusiasm to take on the world instead of Alec's conformism. The road is the author's method to explore Angel's own desires, to brake with his familiar past and mark new boundaries in his life. That is why, after returning from visiting his family in Emminster, he declares his intentions of marrying her before his departure to Brazil to learn about farming. The path that Hardy depicts is green with "the languid perfume of the summer fruits, the mist, the hay, flowers, formed therein a vast pool of odour..." (230). The narrator's description is portraying Clare's euphoric mood, since he is totally convinced of becoming the husband of that "fresh and virginal daughter of Nature" (121). However, the mist resembles the moment at The Chase when an intense fog was surrounding Alec and Tess. It is a clue for the reader to realize that Angel is also a man whose sexual instincts are vivid as Alec's.

The road is not only the setting for the proposal, but also for Tess's refusal. But moved by his unconditional love and biological forces, he insists several times until the maid accepts. Angel idolizes Tess as she represents a spiritualized version of her sex, "a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condense in a typical form" (158). The problem is that, due to her past and her poor family background, Tess considers herself an inferior creature. She even induces her future husband to marry with any other women of the Dairy, because of both her vision of Angel as a superior intelligence and her sense of guilt for her past.

It is during a journey to the railway station when the maid can finally forgive herself. The narrator's description of that moment is completely an evocation and exaltation of nature,

which becomes the main element of the scene. The landscape is not portraying both lovers' feelings but nature is the feeling itself:

In the diminishing daylight they went along the level roadway through the meads, which stretched away into gray miles, and were backed in the extreme edge of distance by the swarthy and abrupt slopes of Egdon Heath. The lane they followed was so solitary that the hazel nuts had remained on the boughs till they slipped from their shells and the blackberries hung in heavy clusters. Every now and then Angel would fling the lash of his whip round one of these, pluck it off, and give it to his companion. (249)

Nature is not showing the intense love that they feel for each other, but rather is portraying a 'gray' atmosphere, humid by the rain. The narrator describes the shape of the slope as 'abrupt' implying the problems the couple will have to deal with. However, the solitude of the road propitiates the couple to be closer and can declare their love. Penny Boumelha goes further and compares this episode with the one in *The Slopes*, when Alec feeds Tess with strawberries, since Angel is feeding Tess with the berries he has pulled from the trees (58). In this respect, Boumelha supports the idea that Alec and Angel are not antagonists but two primitive human beings whose main difference is that Angel has grown up under the influence of Religion.

During the rainy way to the railway station, the couple passes near a big Caroline Mansion, which according to Angel belonged to d'Urbervilles. He cannot hide his happiness for the complete extinction of that aristocratic family, due to his rejection of the old privileges. Moreover, this is the first time that the name of d'Urbervilles is pronounced by Angel. The reader is then aware that the pagan invisible forces, which fell upon Tess in the May Day, are also surrounding Angel, and when he will become her husband, the disgrace of Tess d'Urberville will hurt the farmer as well. Furthermore, after arriving at the railway station and ensuring the task entrusted to them, Angel and Tess start their way back home. It is when Tess confesses her real name and who her ancestors are. To her surprise, Clare claims his rejection of blood privileges but also confesses his curiosity for those ancient castes. Tess, delighted by Angel's speech, accepts to be his wife, but only after he promises to forgive all her past mistakes, a proposition Angel agrees immediately because (in his thoughts) a candid maid as Tess could not have done anything wrong.

Hence, Tess and Angel's love story is defined, basically, by the road. It is the witness of how the *pure* love of the couple has taken form, and it is also the protagonist in the wedding day. Angel's courtly character can be seen even on this day, as he buys for the bride a white dress—implying the pure image of Tess he has in his mind. He also rents an ostentatious carriage to transport the couple and Mr. and Mrs. Clirk to the church, due to the long and curved road that separates it from the Dairy. The bride is enthralled by the beauty of the vehicle, and her fiancé tells her that maybe it is familiar for her because of the d'Urbervilles' legend: one of Tess's ancestors killed four people in a coach and only those who belonged to the family can see the carriage. Tess, shocked by story, asks if the carriage could be only seen for those d'Urbervilles who have committed a sin, but her future husband does not answer. Undoubtedly, the heroine is trapped in a pagan curse that is pursuing her in each 'phase' of her life. The narrator's description of the road as "long and cold" (278) is just a way to portray the nature of the curse. For Hugman, if bodily creatures are transitory, the curse is timeless and transferred generation after generation. Furthermore, he claims that the pagan elements constitute Hardy's subtle way to provide a sense of the continuity of events, how humans are mortals but superstitions and maledictions are immortal (8).

The sweet Tess crosses the way to church so stunned by nerves and the new revelations that even she is hardly aware of the road. With little description of the event, Tess is now Mrs. Clare. After the wedding, the road leads the couple towards their last visit to Dairy. Until this point, the road is carrying the burden of the narrative structure, acting as narrator and a silent witness of the story. The road, as a metaphor of life, seems to be the curse itself. Every time that a pagan misfortune is mentioned, Tess is on the road. Therefore, it is not surprising that when the new marriage returns to the Dairy a new pagan superstition makes its appearance. The bad omen is a cock crowing. It heralds the imminent end of the couple. Aside from the pagan, it can be also related to Jesus Christ's life, since a cock crowed three times before Peter denied him. Furthermore, the crow of the cock is warning Tess of troubles to come, thus it can be considered part of the chorus which is anticipating Tess's end.

Scared by the ill omens surrounding her marriage, Tess encourages her husband to get on the coach and to follow the road to their new residence: a mansion of d'Urbervilles now transformed into a farming house. The mansion represents, on the one hand, the majestic glory that the ancient family lost until its degradation into simple peasants, and, on the other, that d'Urbervilles and their mishap are going to haunt Tess until her death. It is in this house

where Tess's worse nightmare becomes true: she is abandoned by Angel after disclosing the secret of her past.

The road has led Hardy's protagonist to a marital drama. She was conscious of her marriage disgrace right after the wedding, as she realizes that "these violent delights have violent ends" (281)². On the wedding night, Angel admits his sexual past with an old woman. His wife forgives him right away, and she is almost pleased he has committed the same sin as hers. However, Angel's reaction to Tess's past mistake portrays the double standard of the age, since men's sexual misbehaviour was licit but he punishes his wife for the same behavior (Brooklyn College). The d'Urbervilles have won the battle. Angel's rejection of Tess will determine her destiny from now on. She is condemned to wander as a homeless on the roads of Wessex after being abandoned by her husband under the civil law.

3.1.2 *Clare's Influence on Tess.*

Leaving his wife to her fate provokes the emergence of a new Tess. According to Scott Rode "Hardy's characters—his Victorians—are characterized by their nomadic movements and condition of homelessness and uprootedness" (67). Tess is not an exception. Being an abandoned wife, Tess sets on the road to find a solution for her economical problems.

Ways, paths, roads and lanes become a representation of the maid herself; the road reflects her displacement of society and her fusion with the landscape, since nature seems to be the only one that accepts Tess. In her next journey, the heroine is seen alone and wandering on a road to Flintcomb-Ash. The narrator depicts the lane as "irregular" (355), which predicts the murky situation of the woman in the industrial farm. As Tess is walking, the road is changing. In this scene, it is described as "dry, cold and white" (356) since it is covered by snow. Besides, in this episode the woman's fusion with the landscape is complete: "thus Tess walks on; a figure which is part of the landscape; a fieldwoman pure and simple, in winter guise..." (355).

On her way, she meets the personification of the chorus, a man she knew at Tantridge as explained in the second part of this research. A scared Tess hides behind some bushes, and sleeps there, on the hedge of the road. Woman and environment become just one entity. When she wakes up, she sees several pheasants wounded by hunters. Moved by compassion, Tess

² Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Scene 6. Hardy uses Friar Lawrence's speech to anticipate the tragic end of the lovers. It is also a gesture to emphasize the importance of the Shakespearean tragedies in his novels.

decides to end with the life of the birds in order not to see them suffering. This killing can suggest that the maid is ending with one of her selves; she is accepting that she has been left by her husband because of her own fault. However, it can also be a comparison between the woman and the pheasants themselves. She is a wounded animal, hurt by an unscrupulous hunter: social law. Tess's sacrifice of the birds is a premonition of her sacrifice in Stonehenge. Therefore, the pheasants can be considered part of the chorus that is adding a deeper significance to the story.

After this incident, the reader can see a new Tess, more active and determined. For instance, while she is still on the road to the farm she is praised by a group of men because of her beauty. Tess decides to cut her eyebrows with a scissors in order to be the ugliest woman alive. Abandoned or not, she is a married woman. She represents the perfect model of a Victorian peasant who is submitted to her husband: her devotion for Angel turns her into a submissive woman. Angel embodies intelligence, culture, values, morality and civilization for her. Hence, Tess as a wife is under the influence of an educated man who "has been taught that fornication is evil, and like all stern moralist, he is incapable of allowing for the exception which might modify or abolish the rule" (Hugman 29). However, Tess as an innocent girl was under the spell of an immoral man, moved by carnal desires and passion. Therefore, if both men are different, their relationships with her also differ. As Wotton remarks, while "Alec appeared quite definitely as a man to Tess, Angel appears as intelligence. The material, physical relationship is replaced by a spiritual, idealized relationship" (36).

Throughout her stay in the industrial farm, Tess decides to take the road to Emmister and visit Angel's family for the first time. Rode describes Tess's journey to Angel's village "more like a pilgrimage than a social visit" (86). Hardy depicts the lane as a hard road, anticipating the reader the arduous purpose of the visit. Guided by this natural element, Tess arrives at Emmister wearing her worse shoes. She changes them for others more *civilized* and appropriate for a middle class family, and hides her torn-out boots under a bush. Finally, Tess could not meet Angel's parents. When she goes back to the edge of the path where she camouflaged her boots, she sees her husband's brothers complaining about her with Mercy Chant. They were criticizing the owner of those boots, although they did not know to whom they belonged:

...And she went her way without knowing that the greatest misfortune of her life was this feminine loss of courage at the last and critical moment through her estimating her father-

in-law by his sons. Thereupon she began to plod back along the road by which she had come not altogether full of hope, but full of a conviction that a crisis in her life was approaching. (378)

The latest developments have vanished Tess's courage. Now, she feels lower than ever before; her idealized husband deserves someone better than a peasant, as his own brothers teased. She is almost convinced that Angel would never come back from Brazil to look for her. Angel's environment transforms the protagonist into a hopeless, weak, tired and vulnerable woman. Tess's weakness and vulnerability are going to be used by Alec after their meeting in her way from Emminster.

Ever since Tess first saw Angel in the May Day dance, she has undergone so many 'phases' as the moon has. She has evolved from a pure and candid maid, to a woman with a past. During her stay at Talbothays, she was a woman trapped in the past who then became Mrs. Angel Clare. Only the road knows the story of Tess, even it evolves and changes as the heroine does. The descriptions of the natural environment change from the open green and fertile paths of Talbothays—where Tess spent her culminating moments—to the dry and solitary roads of Flintcomb-Ash—when she is the most disgraceful woman in the Earth.

4.2. Delimitating the Setting.

As John Barrell states "localities and spaces in Hardy's novels are constructed, are mapped, by the characters in the novel..." (157). In the case of *Tess*, it is through the character of Angel Clare that the reader knows the limits of Hardy's Wessex. Because of its dreamy nature and his penchant for the rural world, Angel Clare travels around the geography of this imaginary setting and not only that: Hardy's Wessex was too small for him and decides to travel to Brazil.

Inside Wessex, Angel Clare marks the limits of the region. His wife, Tess, is forced by circumstances to move to several farms looking for work, but she does not break the regional limits of the valley, not as much as her husband does, who due to his familiar circumstances, Angel has an intense baggage of travel upon his shoulders.

Barred says that "in *Tess* the local, circular and self-centered sense of space is destroyed" (164). It is again Clare who disassembles the limits, not only because of his travel

to South America, but it is also him the one who firstly describes the sea borders of Hardy's Wessex. When he reaches Sandbourne after his travel to Brazil, it is quite interesting his description of the landscape:

It was a city of detached mansions; a Mediterranean lounging-place on the English Channel; and as seen now by the night it seemed even more imposing than it was. The sea was near at hand, but not intrusive; it murmured, and he thought it was the pines; the pines murmured in precisely the same tones, and he thought they were the sea. (463)

Angel confuses the pines with the sea, as if he had not seen it before. Moreover, the sea implies the end of Wessex; there is no more Hardy's world outside that land. By putting limits to the region the author is creating a sense of social isolation. After Alec's death, the idea of isolation takes form, as Angel and his wife live alone in an empty house, separate from the rest of society, ruled by their own laws and living the married life they never could enjoy until then. Nevertheless, in this excerpt Hardy is not only mapping the end of Wessex, but also the end of the rural. This city is described as a "Mediterranean lounging-place" because of its sophisticated and modern Victorian buildings. Thus, Clare represents the border between the new and the old as well.

Furthermore, an allusion to water implies life, that there are human beings in the other side of the world, other people living without the Victorian laws. Going to South America breaks the monotony of a novel apparently to be just setting in the rural England. Likewise, this country is Hardy's winks to Robinson Crusoe, as this was the place where he made his fortune and it seems to be the way to a better life. Thus, as if inspired by this, he places Angel in Brazil, the perfect exotic setting for a Victorian young man who wants to start a new life and forget the past. This setting is not simple a place where Clare goes to learn about farming, but is fantastic land where the world seems to be ideal. Hardy is portraying in this country the man's illusion to fulfill his dreams, but in spite of that what he eventually finds in Brazil is suffering and disillusionment, two conditions that trigger Angel's sudden maturity, his facing reality, and his forgiveness and acceptance of his life. For Bruce Hugman, Clare's physical decay after his return from Brazil reminds the reader that men in all their variety walk their own individual way "... the road to dusty death" (9). He is aware of the frugality of life after he met an open-minded man, who helps Angel to realize the relativity of things and to understand he has judged his wife's condition influenced by the principles of society not by

his ones. The stranger is another allusion to Greek drama, as he is a minor character, or agent, whose intervention changes the course of the tragedy.

The figure of Angel Clare, therefore, represents that there is life beyond the limits of Victorian England. He is the connection between the rural and the modern, the tradition and the exotic. This character is the hatching of morality, religion, tradition and dissoluteness.

5. THE ROAD CLOSING THE CIRCLE.

After her father's death, Tess goes back to Marlott. Those "families who had formed the backbone of the village life in the past, who were the depositaries of the village traditions" (436) are being pressed by landowners to leave their houses now needed to be occupied by new agricultural families. External forces, or simply the destiny, drive Tess to adopt a new role: head of the family. The Durbeyfields become part of the general removal that takes place on the Lady Day. This time Tess is not wandering alone but with her whole family. They are literally homeless with no place to rest. She has nothing and the only way to survive is to become Alec d'Urberville's mistress. For her family's sake Tess accepts going with Alec, who has promised to support them in exchange.

After his return from Brazil, a renewed Angel looks for his wife walking every road she has previously walked. When he leaves Emminster and ascends the hill, the road described is as purple because of the plants that were there. The connotation of this colour implies suffering for an ardent love, such as the tragic end of his love story with Tess. Therefore, the initial path of Angel in his searching for Tess is predicting and warning the reader about their unhappy ending. Angel walks to Flintcomb-Ash, Marlott and finally Sandbourne where, according to Joan Durbeyfield, Tess is living. When the windy road leads Angel to that modern city, he wonders why his rural wife is there. The road is substituted by the street, as explained in previous sections. Up and down the streets, Clare tries to find Tess, until he meets a postman who indicates him the address of Mrs. D'Urberville.

Tess's residence is a stylish lodging-house—that shows the continental architecture and the modernity of the region—where she is pretending to be Alec's wife. When she sees Angel, the narrator portrays a confused and dazed Tess, as Alec has told her that her civil husband will never return. But for her "it is too late" (466), and she goes upstairs with the man who treats her as mere flesh (Daleski 177). Moved by the rage and anger that Alec's lies provoked in her, Tess finally murders him. Although, it is not mentioned in the scene, Tess's subconscious is acting under the influence of Angel's words, who once told her "If he were dead it might be different" (313) (Daleski 177). The protagonist is moved by a desperate impulse, the same primitive impulses that led her in *The Chase*. Therefore, the murder remarks the natural character of the woman. For James Heffernan, "Tess kills Alec to free herself from a man whose diabolic manipulation of her motives and impulses has twice threatened to make her his "creature," to take possession of her soul." By killing Alec, Tess

finds the way of make justice; it was an expected act by a betrayed woman who is trying to regain her self-respect (Tarleck 256).

Because of the death of the one whom doomed her marriage, Tess can be finally happy with Angel. That is why she runs after him to the railway station, where they move to a solitary path to be isolated from the crowd. Tess is again in her natural environment, merged once more with the landscape. After confessing the killing, this time Angel does not “subdue but accepts the passionately—fond woman as his deserted wife” (Daleski 178). As both know the consequences of Tess’s act, they decide to flee northwards, avoiding the main roads and travelling along hidden paths. The road represents on this occasion the social law; for Tess and Angel the road is the place where both are vulnerable to apprehension, as they can be assorted by the authorities (Rodes 85). It is in that moment when the couple enters into a labyrinth of paths trying to isolate from society. Tess is again wandering lanes of Wessex without any goal but to be with Angel. Following the path, the marriage arrives at a small town where they see an empty house for rent. The fugitives decide to rest there, and as Daleski remarks “Only now, when is tragically too late, are Tess and Angel ready for a full sexual relationship. Within the house [...] there may be “affection, union, error forgiven,” but outside is the inexorable” (179). The couple has finally become one; Tess’s happiness is indescribable but both are aware that they have to abandon the house to take the road.

After five days, they enter again into a maze of paths which lead the couple until the city of Melchester, bordering Mid-Wessex. As explained in the first part of this project, Hardy places the plot of the novel in a limited and closed space. Although Tess and Angel are going to cross the border of South Wessex, they will not move further away from the initial setting. Likewise, this is the first time Tess is going to overstep the limits of South Wessex and it is with Angel, the character that marks the boundaries of the novel. At night, they crossed the city “keeping off the pavement that it might not echo their footsteps [...] once out of town they followed the turnpike-road, which after a few miles plunged across an open plain” (483). Without noticing it, the couple is in Stonehenge, which, as on the May Day, has a pagan connotation, having been a place for heathen rituals. Therefore, the reader realizes that the end of Tess is imminent; although she has tried to escape, the pagan curse that was haunting her since the May Day has finally found her. Oblivious to this, Tess and Angel enter the circle of stone pillars. As Rode remarks “the monument is a smaller scale version of the larger scale circle mapped by Tess” (86). Moreover, since it is still dark, rather than on the visual Hardy relies on sounds, providing an auditory imaginary narrating the natural noises of the

landscape: “The wind, playing upon the edifice, produced a booming tune, like the note of some gigantic one-stringed harp” (483).

The scene continues with a tired Tess falling asleep upon a horizontal stone, as if she were a creature ready for the sacrifice. The protagonist is curiously absent from most of the culminating moments of the novel. Kaja Silverman comment that “from the death of Prince, to her seduction in *The Chase*, she is in a trance. The abstraction [...] disassociates Tess from her body” (139). Therefore, the author is marking a separation between the flesh and the spiritual, and is because of that she was spiritually a pure woman. Furthermore, with Stonehenge imaginary, Hardy reinforces the pagan aspect of the episode and places Tess on a kind of altar as a victim of Victorian society to pay for her sins committed. Instead of living her worse moment, Tess concludes happily as she feels finally at home: “one of my mother’s people was a shepherd hereabouts, now I think on it. And you used to say at Talbothays that I was a heathen. So now I am at home” (484). With these words, Tess recognizes her pagan allegiance rather than Christian. When she falls asleep, Clare looks to the East, where the “eastward pillar and their architraves stood up blackly against the light, and the great flame-shaped Sun-stone beyond them; and the Stone of Sacrifice midway” (486). With this description, Hardy combines light and darkness, as Tess’s life has been. The underlying invisible forces, that were moving Tess’s life since the May Day, have led the protagonist to Stonehenge where she is going to be sacrificed. She has killed her husband by nature and she must be held accountable for that crime. The sacred imaginary is disrupted by a group of policemen who, at the same time that the Sun is rising, appear from the East. Scott Rode finds significant that it is from the East that the first policeman comes up along a road, since Tess’s misfortune with Alec begins after her journey eastwards to Tantridge (89). Finally, the protagonist is caught by the police and she is ready to face her destiny.

Tess of the d’Urbervilles concludes as it started: on the road. Again the author provides a panoramic view of the landscape where the central element is “a long and regular road” (488). With the execution of Tess the circle comes to a close and by repeating the opening at the end the author completes the circular narrative structure. As it happened at the beginning, along the road there is a couple to be seen walking, approaching the reader. Both protagonists, Angel and Liza-Lu—Tess’s sister—climb up the hill, where they watch the execution and the black cloth that covers Tess, which on the distance resembles just a black flag. The flag is what remains of Tess, a symbol of her integrity and extinction.

6. CONCLUSION.

Thomas Hardy employed roads, ways, smaller tracks, as well as the natural environment as a basic framework of his narrative structure, in particular to connect the different scenes and ‘phases’ of Tess’s life. Descriptions of tracks and landscapes emphasize the symbolic dimension of the novel, not only for the language itself but also for the elements that Tess meets there. Minor characters—individuals who can be anyone—animals or objects are warning Tess of the invisible pagan forces or social pressures that are acting upon her. As shown throughout this project, these elements function as Hardy’s adaptation of the Greek chorus. By means of several techniques, such as narrative descriptions, symbolic elements or folklore—superstitions, pagan myth, curses, etc. —the novelist anticipates future events. The aim of this project was to prove and to show that the road is the element that provides cohesiveness to *Tess*. It is a nexus among settings, as well as between Tess’s *phases*, in other words not only the ‘phases’ of the plot but also the ‘phases’ of the character.

Firstly, the novel presents a circular narrative structure that Hardy could not have portrayed without the road since he begins and concludes the novel following the same structure: two individuals walking on the road. Moreover, the novelist places the dramatic action of Tess in a close setting. As explained in the sections 2 and 5, the different characters are moving in a maze of paths inside South Wessex. Tess and Angel cross the limits of this area but they just walk a couple of miles, therefore surrounding the border with South Wessex. After analyzing the different localizations of the novel, I have concluded that joining the points of the villages that Tess’s visits in a Wessex’s map we obtain a circle—exemplified in the annex. Inside this circle, the whole dramatic action of the novel takes place. Therefore, this reinforces the circular structure of the novel, and also provides a sense of isolation: Tess is trapped in that circle and she cannot escape out of it.

Furthermore, I would like remark that the road is a connecting element inside Hardy’s Wessex. Since the beginning of the novel, Tess travels along roads, first to Tantridge and then to Talbothays. She is forced by the events to walk towards Flitcomb-Ash, where she will take a track to Emminster in order to meet Angel’s parents. However, what I conclude is that Tess is forced to the exile of every village she is living in. For instance, she has to abandon Tantridge because of the incident with Alec, she leaves Talbothays due to the end of the farming time and Flitcomb-Ash because of her parents sickness. Marlott is the only place where Tess has a home. However, the invisible forces condemn Tess to exile also from this

place. Therefore, Tess is a wanderer, a nomad inside Wessex. She fuses with the environment—as portrayed in the subsection 4.1.2—because she is part of it. The natural scenery is Tess’s home. She recognizes that she is a creature of nature when she is in Stonehenge by saying she is finally at home.

I would also like to point out the symbolic meaning of the novel given through the use of the road. As explained above, Tess meets every character by means of a road. The minor ones—such as the parson or the shepherd—embody the metaphorical meaning of the whole novel. If we concentrate only on the signals or warnings that those characters are providing, we realize that they are telling the story but in the background. Their function is to guide the reader through the different events of the story, almost acting as a secondary narrator. Moreover, the main symbolism provided by the elements of Hardy’s chorus is connected with the pagan forces surrounding Tess: the death of Prince, the ‘Cross-in-Hand’ stone, etc. Hence, since the road is Tess’s life, we can conclude that a curse—the curse mentioned about her family—has fallen upon her. She is doomed because of her fate not for her wrongdoings.

The symbolism of the road emerges of course from Hardy’s images, but also from the colours he uses. The reader can realize, for instance, how Tess feels by using specific colours. When she is wandering the cold roads of Flitcomb-Ash, the narrator describes dark roads, covered with white snow. Meanwhile, when she was being wooed by Angel, the roads of Talbothays were green, lush and fertile. Therefore in these two examples, by means of colour, Hardy has portrayed Tess’s mood. Significantly, I realize that the predominant colour of this novel is white; wherever she is, the narrator always describes a white element (her dress, snow, etc...). Even in the final labyrinth, there are two predominant colours: white and black. Both are representing a woman, Tess, who is going to be sacrificed for killing Alec. Whereas white is a symbol of purity, black is a symbol of mourning, a sign of respect. Even Tess is wearing a black dress as if she were predicting her own death.

Finally, regarding the metaphorical meaning added by the road, I should remark Hardy’s use of different ways. As portrayed throughout the project, Hardy describes several types of roads depending on Tess’s situation. For example, when Tess travels to Tantridge to live there, Hardy describes a sloped road. The metaphorical meaning of this track helps the reader to understand and realize how is going to be Tess’s life after she enters that house.

In conclusion, the road adds cohesion to almost every aspect of the novel. Without this narrative device an important part of the story would be lost. I would even say that without

the road this story could not be constructed, since it is on ways and paths where the culminating events are developed. Besides, it is used to clarify some situations to the reader by means of metaphorical connotations. Hardy uses temporal characters, descriptions, places or colours to guide the reader through a complex and symbolic novel. The story of a natural creature as Tess is narrated by her environment: nature.

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8. ANNEX.

1. Hardy's Wessex map portraying the idea of a circular and enclosed setting.

