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Tess with Angel and Clare: The New Woman and Masculine Identity in  
*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

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*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) is a major late nineteenth-century English novel, one of Thomas Hardy's most famous work, and is considered his masterpiece. It received as much praise as criticisms in the Victorian era (1873-1901), where it famously espoused oppressive, even stifling moral values, which creates unbearable social and religious conventions and exposed the sexual double standard causing the tragedy to women's lives such as that of Tess. Though Thomas Hardy was regarded as a misogynist for his tragic creation of his female protagonists, and for the theme of the fallen women prevalent in his works, he is in fact an essentialist, "hopeful that women could improve their roles in society" (Sandlin 12). Hardy is fully aware of women's struggles in the highly oppressive society of the Victorian era and "respect strong women and disgust for a world that expected them to be small and silent" (Sandlin 11). Living in the time of flux, Hardy was deeply influenced by many new ideas where he combined with his life experiences to create his stories "forming a vision of how things should and would be, even though they weren't just yet" (Sandlin 12). With this in mind, Hardy endeavor to challenge his readers to envisage the serious repression that the society had on women by creating an adulterous heroine like Tess. For Hardy, Tess is not a fallen woman but the emergence of the new woman:

The evolution and emergence of the New Woman and a sense of female empowerment are common themes in most of Hardy's major novels as he was keenly aware of the radically changing world at the end of the Victorian era as well as the struggles women faced in their evolution from a subservient role to the empowered New Woman figure. (Sandlin 10).

Although Tess seems to be the victim of the story in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, she is also portrayed as the new woman of the 19th century in Hardy's work who undermines the power of Angel's and Alec's masculine identity by virtue of their desire for her. The desire undercuts the presence of their masculinity, their self image and sexuality.

Hardy was not the one who coined the term “New Woman”, it was coined by the women rights advocate, Sarah Grand in 1894. However, decades before Grand coined the phrase, Hardy was already writing about women who are strong and independent in their minds and could live on their own. Thus, “the New Woman was nothing new to Thomas Hardy; she was the reemergence of a natural phenomenon long suppressed and stifled by the social expectations of Victorian society” (Sandlin 8). During the late nineteenth century, social reformation was evident in the Victorian society. With the rapid growth of industrialization, more job opportunities were given, even women from the working class need to come out the house and work to support the families; thus, women were no longer just the domestic female or “angel in the house”. In fact, in 1792, the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* has already challenged the subordinate role of women socially and politically. It condemned the sexual double standard and call for women’s rights in education, employment, and full citizenship (UK ESSAYS). More and more female college were open and women began to receive education. In addition, the women’s suffrage movement and the change of the divorce law have all contributed greatly to the possibilities of the rising of new woman. Tess was the collective female individual of the working class who lived in the transformative time where she experienced the changing role of women, and is considered as a new woman in terms of receiving education, having an occupation and owns certain degree of sexual autonomy (whether she was raped or seduced by Alec is ambiguous), which allowed her to fight for the social expectation and even have influences on men she encounters in her lives.

Though Tess very much seems like the victim of the story, she is more like a new woman figure, “a generalized phrase describing an economically independent woman who stood socially, politically, and educationally equal among men” (Sandlin 10). A historian Ruth Bordin also defined new women as “women of affluence and sensitivity... exhibited an independent spirit and were accustomed to acting on their own. The term New Woman always referred to women who exercised control over their own lives be it personal, social, or economic” (Bordin). Tess has passed the Six Standard of the National Schools, which make her more articulate than her unschooled parents and those milkmaids at the dairy farm in Talbothays. Her language may not be in the level like that of Angel and Alec, but her diction is more polished than a cottage girl, which makes her more equal to men than other women who have not receive education. Back then, the main purpose of life for women is to get

married to a healthy and well provided man; thus, it is more important for woman to make herself attractive. Even if they need to learn particular kinds of accomplishment, they need not learn too much so that they won't become a "bluestocking, a young woman who simply knows too much stuff and reads too widely and cares too much about what she reads" that no reasonable man would want to marry (The British Library). Although Tess only received the basic education, she is perceived as more educated than her townspeople because of her fondness of knowledge, which she believes would enable her to be more exposed to the world outside the village she lives in. Owing to the fact that she has received education and her innate personality differ from regular farm girl, Tess has the mentality unlike traditional women who questions about her life and dare to challenge the unfairness in life by taking action. Moreover, Tess is capable of living on her own by having an occupation as a milkmaid or a factory worker to earn money not only just for herself but also to support her family. Another important element of a new woman is placed on the importance of sexual autonomy. Though she seems to be forced to lose her virginity because of the scoundrel Alec, it is left unknown by Hardy whether Tess is raped or seduced. Tess is able to exercise her sexual autonomy by having sexual intercourse before marriage though she had to pay the price eventually, still she challenged the conventional opinion of the Victorian age. All of these traits of Tess empower her as a new woman and threaten the male dominated society:

"With the increasing power of women during the Victorian Era, Hardy creates men who are in a state of ambivalence about their sexuality; they either reach for the well-worn stereotype of the "manly" man, or they attempt to explore their own complicated emotions, sensitive to the needs of the emerging New Woman" (Fitzgibbon).

Tess may be seen as the victim of the story ostensibly; however, she does exert power on the two male protagonists in the story for their desire of her. Thus the two men Alec and Angel struggles on their masculine identity in terms of the presence of their masculinity, their self image and sexuality. :

"The typical male is often associated with money, power, and prestige, while the realists and chaste men are almost unmasculine in thoughts and action, and frequently fall victim to the New Woman" (Fitzgibbon).

In the 1890s, it was a fraught period for the Victorians, there was controversy over the New Woman, and the British men felt that they were losing their manliness. The society was filled with anxieties about masculine identity (Nemesvari 95). It is said that the late 19th century feared that their masculinity is threatened by desire. For the novel, “both Alec d’Urbervilles and Angel find their self-conception of masculinity endangered by their desire for Tess” (Nemesvari 88). Their masculinity is even more threatened when the two protagonists are “aware of the other’s existence as a ‘rival’”, because they started to realize the “precarious status of [their] masculine identity,” and feel the need to “defeat the rival” who has embodied the alternative vision of self (Nemesvari 88). In Joanna Devereux’s “Patriarchy and Its Discontents,” she explains the precarious status of masculine identity in the Victorian era:

“Yet masculinity as a societal construct was fluid and constantly changing. There was not one masculinity, but many masculinities; the Victorian period alone witnessed such diverse constructions as the ‘man of letters’, the Empire hero and the Muscular Christian, as well as the rake, the misogynist and the Dandy” (Devereux).

The word “precarious” refers to an unstable state or situation, and in terms of masculinity it means that manhood must be achieved instead of being born with and may also be lost (Bosson & Vandello). In the case of Alec and Angel, they both construct the older and newer forms of masculinity socially and culturally (Nemesvari 96), where the former exhibits it through “predatory sexuality,” a physical approach (Nemesvari 90), while the latter through sexual restriction, a more spiritual approach. Yet the configuration of their masculine identities are both insufficient to stability and struggled on constantly trying to regain their manhood because the masculinity were dwindled by their strong desire for Tess. Most people focus on the suffocated restriction placed on women in the victorian era, but they were less aware that “men were also experiencing anxiety in relation to the demands placed upon them by the highly regulated hegemony of masculinity in the second half of the nineteenth century” (Thomas 116). The anxiety that Alec and Angel experienced was to maintain their masculine identity after they encountered Tess in their lives. Just as Joanna Devereux points out “the manliness of Hardy’s male protagonists is frequently tested by the

circumstances in which hero finds himself and particularly by the relationship he either forms or desires to form with women.”

To begin with, let us first take a look at the presence of Alec’s masculinity and then move on to his self image and sexuality and how they are undercut by his desire for Tess. Alec is a son of a bourgeois upstart whose family surname used to be Stoke, but his father annexed the ancient aristocratic name d’Urbervilles to its own with his fortune so that the family could climb up the social ladder to the upper class. The reason why Tess had a chance to encounter the cad, Alec was due to this very name “d’Urbervilles” which she went to claim kin in the first place. The presence of Alec’s masculine identity is first shown by his social and economic power as the county squire and a bourgeois. In Philip Carter’s review of Adam’s book *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*, he interpreted “Victorian masculinity as a social construction” (Carter 1018). It is essential for a man in the Victorian era to gain his masculinity by his social status and not simply by his innate gendered identity. In addition, the presence of masculinity is also depicted through a man’s features. Below is the appearance of Alec described in the novel when Tess first met him:

“He had an almost swarthy complexion, with full lips...above which was a well-groomed black moustache with curled points, though his age could not be more than three-or four-and-twenty. Despite the touches of barbarism in his contours, there was a singular force in the gentleman’s face and his bold rolling eyes” (Hardy 35).

The moustache, the barbarism and the force in his eyes portray his physical masculinity. Apart from his physical appearance, “his dandy dress and his cigar smoking and his patronizing manner of speaking to Tess demonstrate the strong sense of manhood he enjoys” (Tanoori 126). I would like to draw your attention on the two incidents in the novel where Alec first met Tess in Trantridge and how he drove Tess from her hometown Marlott to Trantridge on the dogcart. After Alec asked Tess the purpose of her visit to Trantridge the first time, he then offered her some strawberries by forcefully putting it to her mouth instead of letting her eat it on her own, presenting himself as a seducer. Hardy emphasized this scene by saying “she parted her lips and took it in” (Hardy 37), which strongly underlines Alec’s presence of masculinity in a sexual way, and it also foreshadows his attempt to steal her virginity presented later in

the story. Another demonstration of Alec's presence of masculinity is shown through his aggressiveness of controlling the horse of the dogcart. When Tess begged him to slow down and show more sense he replied "I always go down at full gallop. There's nothing like it for rising your spirits" (Hardy 49). By putting Tess at risk, he can enjoy exerting full power over her, where she had to cling close to him to avoid falling and he could steal a kiss or two from her. He further added that "If any living man can manage this horse I can" (Hardy 49). Alec is proud of his superiority of being able to handle the wild horse and establish his supremacy on Tess. These two actions of Alec are both used by force and further demonstrate his presence of masculinity.

Alec's self image is developed through his practice of masculinity and it could be analyzed in the public and private domain. In the public domain, Alec is from an upper class and need not to work to prove his masculinity. This is known as the aristocratic masculinity where the man associates his masculinity with his own property and lead an idle life (Tanoori 126). As for the private domain, his masculine identity is shown through his "emotional attachment" which is "his pursuit of the opposite sex" (Tanoori 126). Alec represents "an older, phallic, version of masculinity" (Nemesvari 96) where the construction of his masculinity is based on "an excessive sensuality which finds its expression in a predatory sexuality and the connected willingness to overpower the desired woman if attempts at seduction fail" (Nemesvari 90). Throughout the story, Alec had constantly tried to seduce Tess from the moment he laid eyes on her and have not ceased to stop until he finally succeeded to exert his sexual dominance over her. The construction of his masculinity is through "sensuality and promiscuity" (Tanoori 126), as if the "repeated sexual conquest" and "wide sexual experience" (Nemesvari 90) make him a real man. He believes that his masculinity is strengthened by his "sexual assertiveness" (Tanoori 126) and is proud to admit his bad nature in blood: "I suppose I am a bad fellow--a damn bad fellow. I was born bad, and I have lived bad, and I shall die bad in all probability" (Hardy 76). In short, he has viewed Tess as a sexual object and he is the master and the seducer who took control of her.

Moreover, Alex's sexuality reveals the fact that "Male chastity and fidelity may be middle-class virtues, but promiscuity and adultery make up middle-class reality" (Federico 33). In the Victorian era, there were lots of prostitutes available in England,

which clearly indicates the unfairness of sexual double standard among men and women. However in Richard Nemesvari's "The Thing Must be Male, We Suppose: Erotic Triangles and Masculine Identity in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*..." , he went beyond this obvious indication and further points out that Hardy's presentation of Alec as the "sensational form" of masculine identity "is actually extremely vulnerable and unstable...and exposes its inadequacy as a role for men along with its destructive effect on women" (91). Nemesvari clarifies that this by no means refer to the vulnerability of Alec, Tess was clearly the vulnerable one. Nonetheless it was Tess's character's that "provide a real challenge to his masculine sense of self, and therefore has the potential to undermine it" (Nemesvari 91). This can be shown specifically in the novel where Alec used his "kiss of mastery" to Tess on the gig and the parting of Tess from Trantridge after he raped (or seduced) her in the Chase. Tess is obviously not an ordinally cottage girl, she is very rare to Alec, for he never have encountered lower class girl who behaved like her. Alec's former lover among the female workers, Car and Nancy Darch were nothing like Tess, though as obscure as them, she displays a strong sense of dignity. When Alec was speeding on the gig he tried all possible ways to take advantage of Tess by letting her hold his waist and trying to kiss Tess on her lips but she dodged away. Alec cursed her for doing so and still managed to kiss her on her cheek, but she "took out her handkerchief and wiped the spot on her cheek that had been touched by his lips" and "undone the kiss" (Hardy 51). Alec said to Tess "You are mighty sensitive for a cottage girl" and not before long he was played by a trick of Tess of letting her hat blow off and refuse to get on the gig. In reply, Alec cursed and swore and called her all kinds of names but Tess seemed not to be affected by it. Instead she replied determinately "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for using such wicked words... I don't like'ee at all! I hate and detest you heartily" (Hardy 52). It was this unique manner of Tess that attracted Alec even more: "Well, I like you all the better" (Hardy 52).

Even after Alec cruelly took Tess's virginity and she decided to leave Trantridge eventually, she was able to secure her dignity, which strongly undercut Alec's masculinity. In the parting scene, Alec knew that Tess didn't come to Trantridge for love of him, and Tess answered firmly "'Tis quite true. If I had gone for love o' you, if I had ever sincerely loved you, If I love 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" (Hardy 76). Alec, however, was truly in love with Tess and he would have not let her work and clothed her with fine clothes if she had let him, and even when she was leaving he told her that she could write to him if she needed anything and would receive what she requires. When Tess was finally leaving Alec, he summoned her so that he could kiss her goodbye; however, she answered coldly "If you wish... See how you've master me!" Hardy described her reaction as "she thereupon turned round and lifted her face to his and remained like a marble term while he imprinted a kiss upon her cheek," and when he asked to kiss another side "She turned her head in the same passive way..." Tess further added by saying "I have never really and truly love you, and I think I never can... I have enough honor left, little as 'tis, not to tell that lie. If I did love you, I may have the best o' causes for letting you know it. But I don't." Right after her utterance, Alec "emitted a laboured breath, as if the scene were getting rather oppressive to his heart, or to his conscience, or to his gentility" (Hardy 77). From here we can draw a conclusion that Alec has mastered Tess physically but not mentally. At first, he tried to win her heart by providing her family the material things such as the horse and toys for her siblings, but Tess only said she feel grateful to him rather than love him and almost wished he had not sent it so that she does not owe him by having to love him in return. Thus "by refusing to love him, she undermines his image of himself both as man and as a member of gentry" (Tanoori 128). In attempt to regain his manhood, Alec becomes a converted man when Tess rencounter him years after. There are various icons of middle-class masculinity: the dandy, the gentleman, the priest... (Carter 1018). Apparently he has changed from the dandy to the ranting preacher and has mixed up theology and moral; thus, believed he has become a better man. Tess, however, did not believe in this sudden changed and detested those who bring misery to others' lives and yet try to seek salvation to become converted. She said to Alec "Such flashes as you feel, I fear don't last" (Hardy 313). She was right, the moment Alec behold her at the preaching in the barn his feelings for her were reignited: "The effect upon her old lover was electric, far stronger than the effect of his presence upon her" (Hardy 309). Not before long he gave up his short enthusiasm of preaching and determined to become her husband, but soon realized that she was married to another man: "He feels emasculated when she declares herself the wife of another man"

(Tanoori 129). Upon knowing the existence of his rival, he endeavor to win Tess for whatever it takes and he even said to her “I was your master once! I will be your master again. If you are any man’s wife you are mine” (Hardy 336)! The instability of his masculine identity has “reached its full destructive power” (Nemesvari 94), with the advent of Angel Clare.

While Alec d’Urbervilles represents a very specific type of masculinity, Angel Clare contradicts his in every aspects:

“Angel refrains from constructing his masculinity in terms of sexuality, success, ambition and religious practice and instead strives to construct new subjectivities for himself as an intellectual, a philosopher, a rationalist and a self-governed man” (Tanoori 130).

Compared with Alec, Angel associates his masculinity from the opposite approach, which stress more on the inner-self instead of the worldly materials and desires of flesh. In Rosemary Sumner’s novel *Thomas Hardy: Psychological Novelist*, she refers to Angel as a man of “unresolved conflicting views” (130). Thus, in order to learn about his masculinity, we must first know his subjectivity. He is a middle class man, a gentleman, and is the youngest son of an Anglican Parson. Angel, however, lives out of his class who questions doctrine and does not have a university degree like his two elder brother or envision to become a clergyman. He is a free thinking man who does not live by convention. In fact, Angel Clare is a rather complicated character who is torn between opposite extremes: “fluctuating between the extremes of rigid puritanism and relaxed unconventionality” (Sumner 130). As a result, “Hardy seems to examine in him the possibility of the formulation of masculinity outside the domain of prevailing Victorian gender and class structures and discourses” (Tanoori 130). Before discussing the discourse of Angel, let us first take a look at his appearance and personality described in the novel. To begin with, the very name Angel and that fact that he plays a harp already presents him as an abstracted figure which seems to “suggests a ‘heavenly’ connection with spirit and intellect” (Nemesvari 99), and “is not altogether a convincing creation” compared to the “rustic character of Tess and her [parents]” according to an anonymous writer for the review of the Pall Mall Gazette of 31 December 1891. Angel’s appearance described in the novel that he has “abstracted eyes, and a mobility of mouth somewhat too small and delicately lined for a man’s...

something nebulous, preoccupied, vague, in his bearings and regard” (Hardy 114), points out the possible womanly nature and ethereal characteristics in him, which made him very different from other men in the story and would be further discussed in the later passage. Despite the fact that he is a parson’s son and has the “warmest affection” (Hardy 115) toward the church, he have difficulty accepting ordination and thinks that the church needs “reconstruction”. Angel believes that his education should be used for “the honor and glory of man” (Hardy 116) instead of God. Therefore, “he spent years and years in desultory studies” and gradually grew “considerabl[y] indifferen[t] to social forms and observances” and despised “material distinction of rank and wealth as well as undergoing “austerities” (Hardy 117), which altogether could possibly form the discourse of “Stoicism” (Tanoori 130). Stoicism basically relates to self discipline and it is what Angel associates with his masculinity.

Moving on to the presence of Angel’s masculinity or in other words his self image can be first analyzed and depicted in the public domain. Angel did not want to become a clergyman but strives to become an agriculturist, for farming “was a vocation which would probably afford an independence without the sacrifice of what he valued even more than a competence--intellectual liberty” (Hardy 117), and would provide him the economic power to acquire financial independence. Moreover, he formulates himself as a philosopher. Before he went to Talbothays dairy, his knowledge of human nature was learned from his reading rather than actual encounter with men. When he first arrived at the farm, he spent most of his time reading and playing his harp at his attic but “soon preferred to read human nature by taking his meals downstairs” so that he can observe the practical human knowledge. However, due to the sense of his class-consciousness, he did not sit with the dairymen and milkmaids at the same table but sits on the chimney-corner, which shows that he is still governed by middle-class discourses (Tanoori 132) though he said he despise the distinction of rank, he was still deeply influenced by it. After spending more time with the country folks he begins to have less objection toward them and to his surprise he feels “delighted in their companionship” (Hardy 118). Angel gradually “detach himself from middle-class mentality” (Tanoori 132) and “grew away from old associations and saw something new in life and humanity” (Hardy 119).

When Tess enters Angel's life, "his "liberal-mindedness... and his Stoic self-government" (Tanoori 132) were challenged. He was surprised of her peculiar thoughts and shares with him the pessimistic views of life and her "touch of rarity" (Hardy 124 ) deeply attracts Angel. In the scene where Angel and Tess took a morning ramble at the farm, he described her in these words:

"She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman-- a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names half-teasingly, which she did not like because she did not understand them" (Hardy 131).

From his description and his name-calling of Tess, it is made manifest that Angel idealizes Tess and thinks very highly of her. In the beginning his attraction to Tess is more spiritual than physical. He does not constitute himself through "emotional attachment, which demands that a man asserts himself by pursuing and winning of the opposite sex" and associates his masculinity with "self-government" but not "sexual assertiveness" (Tanoori 133). Angel's presence of masculinity is depicted through his strong sense of self-government. This masculine identity of Angel according to James Eli Adams is a "relatively recent construction of manhood" and "was created specifically in response to accusations of over-effeminacy, so that middle class Victorian men could 'lay claim to the capacity for self-discipline as a distinctly masculine attribute and in their different ways embody masculinity as a virtuous asceticism" (Nemesvari 96). I have mentioned the womanly nature of Angel in the previous paragraph and by describing he as "effeminate" lies in "his ability to control [his sexual attraction] and when necessary deny that arousal" (Nemesvari 96). Angel repressed his sexual desire, which was the "ideolog[y] used to police female sexuality" (Nemesvari 96). However, this strong sense of self-discipline is quickly undermined by his increase desire for Tess. After spending some time with Tess in the dairy farm, Angel find himself unable to control his affection toward Tess and could no longer view her as an abstracted figure and she becomes more and more "corporeal". One day Angel was observing Tess milking the cow and the narration depicts his erotic feelings for her:

"How very lovable her face was to him. Yet there was nothing ethereal about it; all was real vitality, real warmth, real incarnation... the middle of her red top lip

was distracting, infatuating, maddening... Resolutions, reticences, prudence, fears, fell back like a defeated battalion. He jumped up from his seats... went quickly towards the desire of his eyes, and kneeling down beside her, clasped her in his arms” (Hardy 151).

Angel began to show his sexuality which truly distress him because “his infatuation with her renders [him] a sensual man after all” (Tanoori 134), despite his effort of carefully securing and repressing his desire. Angel’s “new subjectivity as a passionate lover has destabilized his conception of himself as a self-governed man” and as a result he needs to regain his manhood or his sense of masculinity undercut by Tess.

Angel attempts to regain his manhood by trying to “hold aloof”(Hardy 155) to avoid seeing Tess, but soon discovered that it was nearly impossible for him to stay away from her with his strong craving for her. He then thought of the idea of marriage so that he could “[possess] Tess without undermining his subject status as a rationalist, he strives to find a logical reason for marrying her” (Tanoori 134). Angel thus told himself “Would not a farmer want a wife, and should a farmer’s wife be a drawing-room wax figure or a woman who understand farming” (Hardy 155?) By saying so, he is not only trying to be rational and logical but he is also emphasizing the fact that marrying Tess, a milkmaid, does not contradict his class of subjectivity because he aspires to become an agriculturalist though he was born of a higher class; however, in truth, he still cares about the class difference among him and Tess. With this in mind, Angel went home to Emminster visiting his parents to “a set of reasons which attribute to Tess the values of his social class” (Tanoori 134). When he returned to Talbothays he quickly proposed to Tess, but she refused him for fear of her past, which she thinks would draw him away from her. Upon this point, Angel began to associate himself with strong emotional attachment to Tess, and craves to own his object of desire. He pressured her to give him an answer by saying “you have made me restless, I can’t read or play... I want to know... that you will some day be mine” (Hardy 175), and Tess finally gave in and agreed to marry him. Throughout all her virtues, Angel longs for Tess’s purity the most and “marrying Tess can empower him by allowing him to feel himself a man who possesses a previously-unpossessed object of desire” (Tanoori 135); moreover, regaining his own lost subject of chaste man, for he was “entrapped by a woman much older than himself” (Hardy 117) when he lived in London and “plunged

into eight-and forty hours' dissipation with a stranger" (Hardy 227). As a result, when Tess told Angel of her past experience it "devastates him by undermining his whole perception of self" (Tanoori 137). For Angel, "as a gentleman, sexual self-discipline, honour, and masculinity are all tied together" (Nemesvari 98). He defined his masculinity with honour and in terms of "possessing a pure object of desire" (Tanoori 137); thus, when one lapses all collapsed. Tess is now a "tainted object" and Angel even said to her "the woman I have been loving is not you" (Hardy 229) but "another woman in your shape" (Hardy 230). Thus, in order to regain his sense of masculinity, Angel decided to turn to renunciation. He left Tess and did not "consummate their marriage" (Nemesvari 104) for fear that his "gentlemanly self-control cannot rival Alec's aggressive sensuality" (Tanoori ) and "to reconfirm the validity of his conception of masculinity, avoid any sexual comparison to Alec that might threaten his" (Nemesvari 104). Through the suppression of his desire he could somehow prove that he is still a self-governed man. Ironically, Angel doubted his self control masculine identity as unmanly and "[tried] on the part of middle-class seducer...when he asks Izzy Huett [another milkmaid in Talbothays] to accompany him to Brazi" (Nemesvari 104). Tess has indeed undercut Angel's masculine identity in various ways, which destabilized his masculinity tremendously.

In conclusion, in the end of the story when Tess kills Alec and reunites with Angel that is when his desire for Tess no longer threaten him and everything comes to an end. Although Tess was hanged for murdering Alec at the end and seemed to be the victim of the story, she still greatly influenced the two men who desire her and undercut their presence of masculinity, self-image and sexuality, for "lust itself is a machine for depriving males of self-identity" (Sedgwick 36). Not only did desires of Alec and Angel contributed to their loss of masculinity, Tess's personality as a new woman also deeply affected how they interacted and responded to her modernistic characteristics, which threatened their manliness. Though Hardy was not the one to coin the term "New Woman" he "offered his women a voice reflecting the anxiety and ambiguity of their changing role in society" (Sandlin 9). The emerging of New Woman, thus has a great impact on the masculine identity, and "perhaps no new concept was more challenging or threatening as the new woman" (Sandlin 10) in the nineteenth century where male experience the destructive destructive insecurities of masculine identity.

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