

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TRAGIC ELEMENTS
IN THOMAS HARDY'S *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*
AND ROMAN POLANSKI'S *TESS***

JOVANKA KALABA

University of Kragujevac

Abstract: Starting from the evident interest that Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* has inspired in the film and TV industry throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this paper centers on the comparison between Hardy's novel and its film adaptation in 1979 by Roman Polanski; more specifically on the aspects of tragedy found in Hardy's nineteenth-century novel and the manner in which they are included in the structure of Polanski's film. The paper tackles the functional features of the elements of tragedy such as the strict logical and structural organization of plot, the heroine's hybris and fatal flaw, as well as Hardy's view of Tess as "a perfect specimen of a womankind", and examines the ways in which the film, which can be seen as generally truthful to the original, conveys a subtly different understanding of Tess's character and fate.

Keywords: film adaptation, hamartia, hybris, tragedy, Victorian novel

1. Introduction

Seen from one of the numerous viewpoints, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, a novel written in 1891, can be said to centre on the tragic fate of the novel's heroine, Tess Durbeyfield. In Scott Elledge's preface to the third *Norton Critical Edition* of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, which partly discusses the reception of the novel directly upon its publication, special attention is paid to the opposing standpoints and the ways the novel was perceived at the time it was written. While, for some critics, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* was the best novel that Hardy had ever produced, an unsigned notice in *The Saturday Review* described it as "an unpleasant story" told "in a very unpleasant way" (Greenslade 2013: 28). In his introduction to *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Thomas Hardy*, Harold Bloom (2010: 12) perceives the novel as having moments of vision that correlate with modern times. The contemporary relevance of the tragedy of one of literature's most famous fallen women, who is deemed by her maker "a perfect specimen of womankind", is also shown in Roman Polanski's interest in turning the novel into a film in 1979. His film adaptation, entitled *Tess*, with Nastassja Kinski in the leading role, was nominated and awarded numerous prizes. At the 38th Golden Globe Awards, Nastassja Kinski won the Golden Globe for New Star of the Year, and the film received the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film. At the 53rd Academy Awards, *Tess* won the Best Art Direction, Cinematography, and Costume Design awards and was also nominated for Best Director, Best Original Score, and Best Picture. At the 5th César Awards, the film won the Best Director, Best Cinematography and Best Film awards. The adaptation, made almost a century after Hardy had written the novel, can be generally seen as truthful, "a sensitive, intelligent screen

treatment” that “has that infrequent quality of combining fidelity and beauty” (“Tess”, *Variety*). Colin MacCabe (2014) calls the adaptation “(t)he Truest Tess”, perceiving it as one of the finest examples of the new form of adaptation. “Fidelity to the source text became, for the first time in the Western tradition, an important aesthetic goal”, says MacCabe (2014), with the director using “the resources of the cinema to intensify the themes and concerns of the source in ways that no literary text could accomplish”. In this use of cinematic resources, MacCabe (2014) sees the film director’s “willingness to alter and invent to deepen” the vision of the novel’s author. Nevertheless, this paper argues that the novel’s structure, based on the tight cause-and-effect concatenation of seemingly banal events, that creates an intense atmosphere of tragedy and imminence of the heroine’s inglorious end, is not translated into the film in all its complexity. Moreover, the paper explores the tragic elements contained in the strictly logical and structural organization of plot, the heroine’s hybris and fatal flaw, as well as Hardy’s view of Tess as “a perfect specimen of a womankind” (Elledge 1991: x), and examines the ways in which the film, which can be seen as generally truthful to the original, conveys a subtly different understanding of the fall of Hardy’s perfect woman.

2. Religious and social aspects in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*

The layered structure of Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* features several different aspects of the novel, each consisting of oppositions reflected both in Tess’s character and her social and cultural context. MacCabe (2014) points to Tess’s ruin as “due as much to her class as her gender” and “the double standard of Victorian life that required virginity in a woman as a condition of marriage, but permitted a man his visits to the brothel”. The religious aspect of the novel represents the clash between the natural, almost pagan life of rural England at the end of the nineteenth century on the one hand, and the rigid Anglican Christianity of Victorian England of the same period, on the other hand. Harvey (2003: 85) remarks a more scathing attack on contemporary religion in “Tess of the d’Urbervilles” than in earlier novels, citing the examples of Angel’s clerical father who, although “a good man”, is dogmatic, as well as of the character of vicar, who does not allow Tess’s baby Sorrow to have a Christian burial. Harvey (2003: 12) sees the general crisis of religious faith that went hand in hand with Darwin’s theory of evolutionary struggle for existence as compatible with Hardy’s fatalistic temperament. Kucich also identifies the influence of Darwinian theory in Hardy’s novels in the individual’s ruin brought about by circumstances devoid of any order or meaning, in the presence of myriad “cruelties of chance”, which all “emphasize historical accident – in conformity with Darwinian theory”:

In *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891), to cite perhaps the most poignant instance, Angel Clare tragically misses an opportunity to meet the innocent Tess at a May Day dance long before she is despoiled by Alec d’Urberville; and, later, Tess’s confession is regrettably – perhaps fatally – delayed when she accidentally slips her letter to Angel under the carpet at the threshold of his lodgings. (Kucich 2002: 130)

In the world ruled by the law of the survival of the fittest, Hardy’s characters inhabit “a universe oblivious to humanity” (Harvey 2003: 199), and this is where, in Hardy’s work, the religious concerns of the time blend with the social ones. King (1978: 67) observes that Hardy “shows the misery caused by changing

economic and social pressures, arising out of humanity's indifference to itself", out of "man's tragically persistent inhumanity to man". With no after life, a better, socially more just world was to be established with "an alternative moral and ethical system to that of Christianity" at its core, "combining service to others, compromise, and loving-kindness (Hardy's phrase)", in other words a society in which conventional religion had to be replaced by a "religion of humanity" and the survival of the fittest to be alleviated by a conscious effort at social improvement (Harvey 2003: 14-15).

The social aspect provides insight into a sharp, even grotesque gap between the social classes and backgrounds, reflected in "a picture of the English countryside as the effects of industrialization begin to destroy its centuries-old way of life" (MacCabe 2014). This gap is ironically hinted at in the novel's title; in the entire novel, Tess's surname is Durbeyfield, a peasant surname of a poor family that stems from the once noble surname d'Urbervilles, while only in the novel's title is Tess named "d'Urbervilles". The ancient surname in the title ("*of d'Urbervilles*") is coined in a pleonastic manner, since it comprises two Norman genitives, one deriving from the English language, and the other one from French. The transformation of the noble d'Urbervilles into the common Darbeyfield is ironic and indicative as well: the surname d'Urbervilles contains the French noun "ville" ("city") with an upper-class, urban connotation, whereas in the surname Darbeyfield, the "ville" is changed into the English noun "field", connoting the lower-class rural reality of Tess's family. One of the key ironic oppositions encountered, which are numerous in the text, is the narrator's referring to Tess as Durbeyfield. Durbeyfield is the peasant variation of the surname d'Urbervilles, although she descends from the noble d'Urbervilles. On the other hand, Alec, who belongs to the newly rich, is referred to as d'Urbervilles, although his original surname is Stoke and he adopts d'Urbervilles only after purchasing the title. Tess's character is a sort of synthesis of the social and cultural oppositions (pagan/Christian, Christian/Darwinian, rural/urban, peasant/aristocratic) that clash dramatically in the building of her character, accompanied all along by a premonition of the impossibility of a positive, optimistic resolution.

Tragedy in the Victorian novel shifts the focus from man's relationship with the Gods and his fate to the tectonic changes in contemporary society and the individual's place in it, "suffering having now a merely human scale", and embodying "elements of realism, satire and comedy" (Harvey 2003: 146). Tragedy had to "come to terms with the methods of realism" in the Victorian novel, while a realist writer had to "endow mundane material with aesthetic and symbolic values without falsifying its nature" (King 1978: 50), all the while relating it "to whatever is unchanging and ubiquitous" (idem: 64), so as to meet the requirements that tragedy entails. Perhaps the best definition of Hardy's accomplishment in making the social code one of the key elements of Victorian tragedy is Ain-Krupa's (2010: 113) summary of Polanski's film: "Tess is a story about the nuances of fate and the misfortune that often accompanies sudden monetary and social gain". Newton (2008: 66) points out that "a character like Tess in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) can be said to be both a victim of social forces and fated to be destroyed by some intrinsic recalcitrance that exists in the world." In other words, social codes combined with Fate bring about the protagonists' downfall in the Victorian novel.

The novel provides a cyclic structure of the passage of time, from Tess's youth all the way to her death, symbolically conveyed by the change of seasons and the changes in nature that happen in the process:

The natural world of these novels is experienced both as a physical, and as a supernatural, influence. Its changes reflect forces that impinge on the individual's life at all levels. ... The changing seasons in Hardy's novels express the omnipotent rhythm of flux and reflux. ... Hardy uses Nature as part of the symbolic structure in a way that isolates the character in opposition to the natural world. (King 1978: 61)

If we analyze the passage of time and the events placed at particular times of the year, we will see that the events such as the ceremonial celebration honouring the pagan goddess Cerealia, then Tess's leaving for the dairy where she again meets Angel Clare and Tess's execution are all set in the month of May, signifying both the beginnings and the ends of particular phases of Tess's life. The periods in which the events in Tess's life are of the highest emotional intensity, such as Alec's courting and sexual advances, motherhood, love, and psychological breakdowns in her relationship with Angel, all happen during the summer months of different years. The climaxes of those periods, such as the unfortunate loss of virginity as the result of Alec's insistence, the death of Tess's baby, the acceptance to marry Angel without a confession regarding her previous life, occur at the end of summers, during autumns and at the beginning of winters. Although "(t)he imagery of the film depicts the cyclical quality of the ever-changing seasons, the milking of the cows, the harvesting of the wheat" (Ain-Krupa 2010: 113-114), Polanski's film does not use the symbolism of nature and passage of time strictly in this manner. Still, the cinematography of the film, the effects produced by the images of the nature, climate and surroundings of Tess's Wessex that symbolize her psychological states can be characterized as consistent to Hardy's vision of Tess's character, as well as the temporal and spatial context.

3. Cause and effect in Tess's fall: hybris and hamartia

Both Hardy's and Polanski's Tess are a dynamic fusion of various historical, social and cultural influences. Tess is a pagan, aristocrat, and Victorian woman at the same time: pagan in her nature and temperament, aristocrat not so much by ancestry as by natural grace that stands in opposition to her direct environment, and finally, Tess is conditioned to be a Victorian in the society she is part of. The pagan and aristocratic traits come from the times that are not hers and are not in harmony with the Victorian norms and Anglican cannons which function in Tess's immediate surroundings. The clashes of these influences are unavoidable and incessant, destructive at the moments of Tess's Victorian, moralizing hybris, e.g. just before the sexual intercourse with Alec d'Urbervilles. This event is Tess's "infamous tragic error or *hamartia*" (King 1978: 4) that will prove fatal for her future life. King (ibid) talks about the tragic error or *hamartia* when discussing the Aristotelian concept of tragic hero, remarking that "Aristotle seems to have meant by this simply a mistake, making the hero's fate logical and convincing, but not necessarily just." In the scene after the dance, when Tess falls out with one of the peasant girls with whom she is going back home and scornfully rejects the girl's insinuations about her potentially sinful relationship with Alec, Tess exhibits the hybris of a Victorian: "Indeed then – I shall not fight! [...] and if I had known you was of that sort, I wouldn't have so let myself down as to come with such a whorage as this is!" (Hardy 1991: 52) This display is immediately followed by the description of her decision to still leave with Alec:

At almost any other moment of her life she would have refused such proffered aid and company, as she had refused them several times before; and now the loneliness

would not of itself have forced here to do otherwise. But coming as the invitation did at the particular juncture when fear and indignation [...] she abandoned herself to her impulse (idem: 52-53)

A similar conflict of natural and socially conditioned impulses is also found in the feelings that Tess has for her new-born baby, “that intrusive creature, that bastard gift of shameless Nature who respects not the social law” (idem: 75), whom she, on the other hand, kisses and caresses “violently [...] some dozens of times, as if she could never leave off, the child crying at the vehemence of an onset which strangely combined passionateness with contempt” (idem: 70). Tess’s feelings for the child are ambivalent, her motherly love collides with the rejection and self-condemnation conditioned by social and religious norms and rules. The importance of Tess’s internal conflict is reflected in the scene that Polanski quite truthfully takes over from the book, when Tess makes a cross for the dead, unbaptised baby in the middle of the night, sticks it into the grave, and brings flowers in a white marmalade jar.

Polanski, however, chooses to leave out certain events the symbolic value of which is of great importance in Hardy’s novel. Although the death scene of the horse entrusted to Tess by her parents is the first death scene in the novel and one of the key ones in the sequence of scenes that build up an atmosphere indicating a tragic end, that scene is left out from the film. The point in the novel at which Tess sets out on a journey instead of her father, who, due to his drinking, is not able to go, and during which the nature that surrounds her takes her to the dimension of the unreal, is simultaneously the point in which Tess’s destiny meets the history of society, as well as the history of her family and herself:

The mute procession past her shoulders of trees and hedges became attached to fantastic scenes outside reality, and the occasional heave of the wind became the sigh of some immense sad soul, conterminous with the universe in space, and with history in time ... The pointed shaft of the cart had entered the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword, and from the wound his life’s blood was spouting in a stream, and falling with a hiss into the road. (idem: 21-22)

The image of the horse is present in the film and can be linked to a certain extent to the symbolism attached to it in the novel. In the novel, the chain of sacrifices begins with the death of the horse, and it ends with the death of Tess, and as Tess is (unintentionally) responsible for the death of the horse, she is also responsible for murdering Alec. In the film, the “Seduction or Rape” scene between Tess and Alec takes place in a forest, as it is also the case in the novel, however with an additional detail – the moment she loses control of herself due to Alec’s relentless advances, Tess pushes Alec off the horse. Tess’s reaction results in blood gushing from the back of Alec’s head, as a premonition of Alec’s death at Tess’s hand. Although the film does not make a direct allusion to a significant detail in the novel that refers to the curse of d’Urbervilles, the scene in which Tess uncontrollably pushes Alec off the horse, as she will uncontrollably kill him in the end, can be directly linked to the curse of Tess’s family. In the novel, it is Alec who recounts the story of the curse of the D’Urbervilles to Tess. The event that started the curse was the rape of a peasant woman that Tess’s ancestor, a noble d’Urbervilles, committed in a carriage, which ended in murder. This episode brings us back to the naming of characters, where Tess’s surname is Durbeyfield and Alec’s, who is originally a Stoke, is d’Urbervilles. Ironically, in the context of the

past, which is ever-present in Tess's situation, such naming points to the presence and repetitiveness of past events that haunt Tess, but with inversed roles: just like once Tess's ancestor, a true d'Urbervilles, brought a curse upon his family by raping a defenceless girl, Alec, a fake d'Urbervilles, takes Tess's virginity and thus continues with the same pattern of behaviour, founded exclusively on male power, and not on social and class background.

For what are called the "contemplative parts" of the novel, where the narrator comments and gives his personal judgment of the characters' behaviour and the progression of the plot, Hardy claimed that "he had not wished to persuade his readers to a point of view, but only to present from his point of view an accurate account of what he had observed" (Elledge 1991: xii). However, it must be observed that Hardy's "accurate account", ironically enough, verges on biased, even sentimental compassion with the misfortunes of his heroine. King (1978: 5) remarks that, although tragedy should excite pity and fear, the nineteenth-century novel "excited too much pity, destroying the tension necessary to tragedy". The sub-title of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is *A Pure Woman*, and Hardy's view of what a "pure woman" is provoked a great deal of polemic at the time when the novel came out, to which Hardy responded:

Respecting the subtitle ... I may add that it was appended at the last moment, after reading the final proofs, as being the estimate left in the candid mind of the heroine's character – an estimate that nobody would be likely to dispute. It was disputed more than anything else in the book. *Melius fuerat non scribere*. But there it stands. (Hardy 2005: 1006)

Hardy's argument was that, in the interpretation of the novel's sub-title, to derive "chaste", with the connotation of virginity and moral virtue, from "pure" was forced and artificial. For Hardy, the quality that the word "pure" holds in the context of the novel's heroine applies to Tess as "an almost standard woman" (Hardy 1991: 71) and someone who "would have been called a fine creature" (idem: 77); the author considers Tess as a pure woman in the sense of "a perfect specimen of womankind" (Elledge 1991: x). King (1978: 33) points out that "[b]ecause the odds against her are so great, Tess remains innocent, 'a pure woman', although the mother of an illegitimate child, and a murderess". Having in mind such an attitude presented by the author, certain differences can be identified between Hardy's Tess as "a perfect specimen of womankind" and Polanski's Tess. The novel, in accordance with Victorian conventions of novel writing, does not go into specifics regarding the sexual intercourse that takes place between Tess and Alec. Polanski's film, on the other hand, according to MacCabe, takes the novel's story further, by developing it in the treatment of sex. The scene implies that Alec takes advantage of Tess's moment of weakness when she allows him to approach her, but when she tries to retreat at the last moment, it is already too late – Alec takes her moment of weakness as consent. However, the following scenes in the film convey a different, or, at least, more complex insight into Tess's mood after the fatal act, in comparison to the one we find in the novel. After the ambiguous seduction/rape takes place, the scene that follows shows Tess with an innocent smile on her face as an expression of momentary joy over a hat that she receives from Alec as a present. The next scene shows the two in a boat where we notice Tess in a completely different, melancholic, and sombre mood, as an expression of the subsequent understanding of her situation. The sexual intercourse with Alec happens to Hardy's "pure" Tess out of innocent ignorance, but in the case of

Polanski's "pure" Tess, it is a moment of weakness of an "everywoman", an error that anyone who is, in the final instance, simply human is susceptible to; this is why Tess does not immediately perceive the intimacy with Alec as a fatal flaw. Such treatment of Tess's downfall, which implies Tess's *hamartia* of bringing herself into the situation where she can be ill-used and giving in to Alec, at least for a moment, adds up to the tragedy of her final downfall in the film.

While Hardy's Tess is lifted to a very high pedestal of martyrdom, the film shows a much higher degree of irritation in both male characters caused by Tess's submissiveness and passive sufferance. The examples for that are Angel's reaction to Tess's confession about her past, as well as Alec's reaction when they meet again and when he becomes aware of Tess's motherhood and her decision not to tell him. In her powerless misery, only for short moments does a survival instinct, awkward and unconstructive, rise to the surface, and her final reactions can be summarized in a sentence directed to Alec in the film: "Go on, hit me. Once a victim, always a victim". The powerless misery of Hardy's characters has been subject to criticism; R.H. Hutton, (qtd in King 1978) sees Hardy's tragedy as "carefully limited to gloom" and fatalism of Tess's rural England community, giving us "the measure of human miserableness, rather than of human grief" that is essential for inspiring pity and fear in the reader as well as giving poetical enjoyment. "Tragedy is almost impossible to people who feel and act as if they were puppets of a sort of fate" says Hutton (qtd. in King 1978: 7), which is exactly what Tess's character, "in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done" (idem: 9), is like. A Victorian tragedy heroine, "(d)enied the traditional rhetoric of the tragic hero", is "burdened with a terrible isolation" (idem: 54) due to her inability to communicate. This flaw, according to King, does not signify the absence of feeling, but is rooted in the poverty and general deprivation caused by social class injustice, which Tess feels as a sort of fate, definite and irreversible.

Still, it appears that in Polanski's modern adaptation, both Alec and Angel demand that Tess should accept her weaknesses with more self-respect, and less Victorian self-pity and self-punishment. In the film, this "deficiency" of Tess's emotional and mental frame provokes a heightened tone and angry reactions in Angel ("How can you be so simple? [...] You are not my servant, you are my wife!"), while those parts of the novel are written in a calmer, more sentimental tone.

In the film, Alec verbally mistreats her over her inability to articulate herself. Alec reacts similarly, when he, for example, objects to Tess's behaviour in a way that cannot be found in the novel, but that can be seen as crucial for the understanding of Tess's character in the film:

You wear your ridiculous pride like a hair shirt! And you put me even more in the wrong than I was ... What is this strange temptation that misery holds for you? ... There's a point beyond which obstinacy becomes stupidity.

The sentimental representation of Tess and Angel's love in the novel is accompanied by a significant level of irony that found its way into the film. Aside from numerous scenes in which, for instance, cows are lowing and insects are buzzing and crawling over the film's protagonists in the moments of most passionate outbursts of emotions, perhaps the best example of irony is the scene in which Angel throws himself into Tess's arms while she is milking a cow (Hardy 1991: 118-119). Compared to the novel, the transitions that concern the love story between Tess and Angel seem too abrupt in the film. Tess and Angel's relationship

is the one where the absence of a narrator is felt the most in Polanski's adaptation. In the novel, Tess's doubts are much more present and dramatic, creating the image of an insecure and tortured heroine, whose struggle with herself evokes sentimental pathos, while the situation is in a certain way simplified in the film, maintaining the logic of the more modern adaptation of Tess's character. The scene in the film in which she, realizing that Angel has not read her confession letter, makes the final decision to keep quiet about her previous "sins", is one of the segments in which, cinematographically, the harmonious tonality of the film is interrupted. The moment when Tess climbs to Angel's chambers and takes away the letter from his sight, she, and the entire scene, is blinded by the sunlight, to the point that Tess becomes invisible for a moment. Then, hiding the letter in her bosom, she descends to the ground, where the tonality suddenly changes and becomes drastically darker and drearier. The change of light is used here as a metaphor for Tess's decision to take the risk and to believe, at least for a moment, in the possibility of a happy ending, with an abrupt change of tonality as an omen of the unfavourable closure of the story.

Tess's story, both in the novel and the film, begins and ends with pagan omens: it begins with a pagan ceremony, and Tess's executors capture her at the pagan monument, Stonehenge. The film does not show Tess's execution, but only the scene in which they take her to her death, while not more than an inscription is displayed on the screen: "Tess of the d'Urbervilles was hanged in the city of Wintoncester, aforetime capital of Wessex". The cyclic progression of events is again revealed, since Tess is caught in a pagan temple, executed in the ancient capital from the times of her ancestor Pagan d'Urbervilles, from whom her curse begins, and ends in her death. The last sentence in the film contains the pleonastic name from Hardy's novel, Tess of d'Urbervilles, since, branded with that name and all that it signifies, she is doomed to ill fate. Tess's pursuers reach her at Stonehenge, which is "Older than the ages, older than the d'Urbervilles", where she is, in the final run, only Tess, without the surname, ancestry and social confinements, sacrificed in a pagan temple of the sun.

4. Conclusion

Polanski's choice not to include in the film some of the arguably most important segments of the novel's plot, such as the death of the Durbeyfields' horse, Tess baptizing her dying child, Tess and Angel's honeymoon in the castle of the ancient d'Urbervilles, as well as Angel's ironic consent to fulfill Tess's last wish and stay with her sister after her death (the sister who is the same as her, just not "wicked") banalize Hardy's story to a considerable extent. These events in the novel contribute greatly to the tight cause-and-effect concatenation in the story, while Angel's decision to stay with Tess's sister, who is not "wicked", illustrates "the absence of any distancing or ennobling formal beauty" that deprives readers of the aesthetic pleasure of wholeness, thus suggesting that it is "life, not death, that is tragic" (King 1978: 10-13). Tess's story in the film lacks the element of fatality, one of the chief components of the novel, emanating from a complex concatenation of various events, motives and influences that are intertwined masterfully in the novel. On the other hand, although Polanski misses the chance to inflict a more critical blow on the false morality of Tess's rural community, the social and cultural context that sees her as a morally inadequate woman, and, finally, the heroine's sentimental martyrdom, his adaptation provides the possibility of a different perception of Tess's character. Both in the novel and in the film, we

encounter Tess's observation "It's all vanity", which comes to her when she is all alone in the woods, abandoned and unhappy, at the moment of illumination. It seems that Polanski's version of Tess's story, apart from Alec's, Angel's, and her parents' vanity, places a focus on the possible existence of her own vanity as well, on her refusal or inability to come to terms with her own and other people's mistakes and human frailties, resulting from the imperfections of human nature. Polanski's film poses the question whether Tess's tragedy is really entirely a matter of an evil force that cannot be circumvented, pushing Tess to her doom; or whether it is more of a cultural and social matter, and also one of the irony of Tess's passive obstinacy and acceptance of her own guilt and "wickedness". It appears that Tess's fatal flaw in Polanski's film lies more in her inability to come to terms with her imperfections than in her moral downfall, linked either to her virginity loss or in the "hereditary quality" that the narrator points out in the novel. In that respect, in the light of the question asked by Alec d'Urbervilles in the film: "What is this strange temptation that misery holds for you?", the questions that are further raised are in what way and to what extent a modern reader of the novel and spectator of the film can empathize with Tess, and how problematic Hardy's vision of a "pure woman", i.e. the vision of Tess as "a perfect specimen of womankind", proves itself to be.

References

- Ain-Krupa, Julia. 2010. *Roman Polanski: A Life in Exile*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC.
- Elledge, Scott. 1991. "Preface to the Third Norton Critical Edition" in Elledge, Scott (ed.). *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. A Norton Critical Edition. New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Bloom, Harold. 2010. "Introduction" in Bloom, Harold. *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Thomas Hardy*. New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, an Imprint of Infobase Publishing, pp. 1-23.
- Greenslade, William. 2013. "Thomas Hardy and Friendship" in Mallet, Phillip (ed.). *Thomas Hardy in Context*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 22-31.
- Hardy, Thomas. 1991. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Elledge, S. (ed.). A Norton Critical Edition. New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Hardy, Thomas. 2005. "Author's Prefaces to the Fifth and Later Editions" in *The Wordsworth's Collection of Classic Romances*. London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, pp. 1003-1006.
- Harvey, Geoffrey. 2003. *The Complete Critical Guide to Thomas Hardy*. London/ New York: Routledge.
- King, Jeannette. 1978. *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel: Theory and Practice in the Novels of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Henry James*. Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Kucich, John. 2002. "Scientific Ascendancy" in Brantlinger, Patrick, William B. Thesing (eds.). *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Malden/ Oxford/ Carlton South/ Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 119-136.
- MacCabe, Colin. 2014, February 27. "The Truest Tess" in *The Criterion Collection* [Online]. Available: <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/3076-the-truest-tess> [Accessed 2019, April 1].
- Newton, Ken M. 2008. *Modern Literature and the Tragic*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Polanski, Roman (director). 1979. *Tess*. Columbia Pictures.
- Variety Staff. *Tess* in *Variety*. [Online]. Available: <https://variety.com/1978/film/reviews/tess-1200424419/> [Accessed 2019, April 1].