

Courtship in persuasion and tests of the d'urbervilles



Courtship is the behaviour in which, normally, the male attempts to persuade the female into a romantic relationship or marriage. In 'Persuasion' by Jane Austen, as well as 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' by Thomas Hardy, courtship is displayed in a kaleidoscopic view which thus portrays a plethora of meanings and interoperations. These two books however give an extremely contrasting view of courtship despite the fact they were written in the same century.

This is evident as in 'Persuasion' Austen presents courtship to be derived by emotions as well as very gender-stereotypical ; yet in 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' it seems to be simply lustful and the consequences of falling for false courtship.

In 'Persuasion' the character Frederick Wentworth leaves Anne a heartfelt letter in which we are able to see how courting a beautiful experience as it is says: "A word, a look, will be enough to decide whether I enter your father's house this evening or never." The use of asyndetic listing catalogues that for Anne to give a single sign of attraction and that would be enough for Wentworth. Furthermore the use of stating the consequences, make Wentworth's motivation for writing this letter clear, and by using the adverb 'never' we are able to tell how he is illustrating strong and passionate emotions towards Anne. The 19th century reader may see this as a final attempt of wooing Anne and putting the faith of their relationship in her hands, however a modern day reader may see this as Wentworth simply wanting to know if she feels the way he does as he can wait no longer. Socially, this would have been seen to a very romantic gesture as this is considered courtship by Wentworth admitting his feelings towards Anne. Despite this, we are able to see how in 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' Hardy

presents a courtship which is purely based on lust from Alec d'Urberville as he says: " Well, my big Beauty, what can I do for you?" The adjective ' big' gives the whole phrase a sexual connotation as this could be interpreted as her physical appearance as Tess may be a well-developed female. In addition to this the capitalisation of the word ' Beauty' could state how Alec finds this the most attractive feature of Tess. A 19th century reader may find this somewhat repulsive as this is a very vulgar way in which to talk to a lady of whom you had just become acquainted too, and a modern day reader may agree to this yet to a lesser extent due to the fact that sexuality and sexual comments have become more accepted, yet this may offend some readers. In social context, we are able to see why Tess carried on with this interaction as she needed help from someone of higher status. Hence we are able to see a clear difference in the way Austen and Hardy present the theme of courtship, as Austen presents it to be a very romantic and sincere expression of one's emotions and this is juxtaposed to how Hardy presents it as to be based on sexual desire and ardour.

In ' Persuasion we are able to see how in the 19th century courtship was a very male dominated action as it says: " if Mr Elliot should some time hence pay his addresses to you ... accept him" The verb ' pay' foreshadows that Mr Elliot will soon make his interests in Anne and Lady Russell advises Anne to ' accept'. This therefore demonstrates not only how courting is a male dominated, but it also gives us an insight that when one does court a lady it is for the intentions of a relationship or possibly marriage. A 19th century reader would have seen this to be very common and therefore seen as a social norm, however for a modern day reader may not understand this

concept and find that this as an extremely romantic gesture, of which it is. Yet this is contrasted as unlike in 'Persuasion' we are able to tell that in 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' courtship could be used as a façade to enable the male to get what they want. This is seen as Tess questions: "Why didn't you tell me there was danger? Why didn't you warn me?" The use of the rhetorical questions demonstrates Tess's resentment towards Alec, as the noun 'danger' highlights the fact that Tess was raped by someone who had misused her trust and this has left her with many questions as well as doubts. This therefore highlights how courting Tess was used to make her trust Alec, and once she had trusted him, he abused the trust that they had. A 19th century reader would therefore feel that Alec is the antagonist in this story as by misusing the trust he was able to create a negative perception to himself, however a modern day reader may find that this is more common as it seems as if males in the modern day society misuse their trust more often. Therefore we are able to see how the key fundamental idea to do with courting differs within the time frame of 100 years, which therefore may make the reader question what changed during this society in order to change the actions or morals behind courting.

In conclusion, the chosen writers Jane Austen and Thomas Hardy present the theme of courtship in two completely different lights in this novel. Austen presents it in a soft and affectionate manner, which is reflective of her book 'Persuasion' as it is purely a amorous book. However the way in which Hardy presents his book may grab the modern day reader's attention as it portrays a deep dark meaning and teaches the reader about trust which is desecrated and the consequences of trusting to easily. Therefore the way that the

writers present the theme of courtship highlights their writing style and the message of their books.