

To what extent is
'tony kytes the arch
deceiver' by thomas
hardy a reflection
of ...



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Thomas Hardy was born in the late 19th century in a village near Dorchester, the country town of Dorset. He lived in a tiny village with a population of no more than 50 people. It was quite acceptable in this era for children to be uneducated but Hardy was lucky and grew up with quite a good education by reading lots of 'good' books and he even taught himself Greek and Latin. Most of Thomas's novels and short stories were set around Dorset life. Through his stories he tries to bring alive the true Wessex life style by using dialect which only people in Wessex at the time would understand, 'He loved 'em in shoals'.

By using this language he truly brings the story to life. During the Victorian period, there was a very rigid class system, and women were pictured as dainty and naive creatures. The main theme of this anecdote is the importance and role of women in this era. The story is told by a narrator, who manages to entice the reader by using phrases like 'the very hill we will soon be going over.' The main character in the story is Tony Kytes a young attractive man with a 'little, round, firm, tight face, with a seam here and there left by small pox, but not enough to hurt his looks in a woman's eye.

He is engaged to 'a nice, light, small, tender little thing' called Milly Richards. He sets off in his coach one day alone and by the time he arrives home he has Milly, and his ex-girlfriends Unity Sallet and Hannah Joliver all hiding in his cart completely unaware of each other's presence. The first woman we come across is Unity Sallet. She is a very manipulative and cunning character. She is constantly trying to manipulate Tony into changing his mind about marrying Milly, 'I should of made 'ee a finer wife.' She does not come across as the stereotypical women of the time.

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She doesn't appear to have the same innocent nature associated with Victorian women. She is however happy to oblige when Tony flatters her into hiding under the piece of tarpaulin. The next female we come across Milly, is a completely different character. She is very innocent and naive when compared to women of today who are much more independent, and is still happy to marry Tony despite being deceived. She is very dainty and 'conducts her self in a very well manner'.

However Tony has a control over Milly and she is easily led by him (' I don't mind, to oblige you.) So she is easily persuaded in to hiding when Tony comes across the third and final woman in the story the very ' handsome' Hannah Joliver. Hannah knows exactly how Tony feels about her and plays ' hard to get', ' she tossed her head a little disdainfully and smiled off hand' she also knows exactly how to use her flirtatious way to get what she wants and almost succeeds. When Hannah declares ' throw over milly, all to marry me! How delightful ' shows us the importance of marriage to the women in the 19th century. It was quite rare for women of the era to have careers so marriage and starting a family was the biggest role in their life.

Many women today still feel this way but society now finds it expectable for a woman never to get married or to have children out off wedlock whereas back in the Victorian era it would off been seen as an outrage. We also see how women of the time were seen as a lot weaker both physically and mentally than men. When Tony goes over to see his father leaving Hannah in control of the cart, she is too weak and delicate to manage such a task and she loses control of the cart knocking her, milly and unity on to the floor.

This concept shows the idea that women were very dependant on men. In this era there was an expected 'code of conduct' in both rural and urban Victorian society. There were strict rules which courting couples of the time were expected to follow. It would have been seen as unacceptable for Tony to 'go driving about in the country with Jolliver daughter' and would have been seen as a 'scandal.' It was important that once the custom of 'giving out the banns' (where the couple would announce their marriage in public) that the couple conducted themselves in a respectable manner.

For example they would not be allowed to kiss in public because that would have been seen as unacceptable. The most important of all customs of this time was that of a woman's virginity. In today's generation it is quite common and acceptable for a woman to have sex before marriage, but during the Victorian era the preservation of a woman's virginity until marriage was crucial, shown in Tony's defensive remark to Mr Jolliver 'she's as sound as a bell for me, that I swear. This reflects the importance placed on a woman's honour. To conclude, 'Tony Kytes the Arch Deceiver' reflects the traditional role of women in the Victorian society. This humorous anecdote provides us with a reflection of the importance of marriage to women, female innocence and gullibility and yet also gives us a view of females as manipulative stereotypes.