

'the the arch-
deceiver' by thomas
hardy



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In this essay I am going to give a brief summary of three stories from a collection we have read and then look in detail at and comment on how they portray the position of women in the nineteenth century. All the stories we read were taken from the book, 'Nineteenth Century Short Stories'.

The three I have chosen to look at in more detail and use in this essay are, 'The Unexpected' by Kate Chopin, 'A Woman's Rose' by Olive Schreiner and 'Tony Kytes, The Arch-Deceiver' by Thomas Hardy. The first story is 'The Unexpected' by Kate Chopin. This story is about a betrothed couple who appear to be deeply in love. The two main characters in the story are the couple, Randall and Dorothea. When Randall had to leave for a while, they sent "daily impassioned" letters to each other and seem to miss each other a great deal.

They were a very passionate couple and there was obviously a great physical desire; when Randall left there were "lingering kisses and sighs" their behavior would also have been seen as inappropriate and been frowned upon during the nineteenth century. Randall's return was "delayed by illness" and Dorothea would have travelled to visit her love if not governed by nineteenth century society and her parents, it was seen as improper for a woman to be so besotted. When it was realised that Randall was not getting any better, the doctors decided to send him south so he may have a better chance of recovering. He was allowed to visit Dorothea for a day.

When the lovers met Randall was in a terrible state and all his good looks had gone. All the desire and anticipation of the meeting had disappeared, she says how her love is "shriveling" inside her just from the "sight and

touch" of him. She realizes that she never really loved him, that it was just all lust over his good looks. He was no longer the " perfect specimen of manly beauty" from the portrait she had gazed on for so many hours.

Randall asks Dorothea to marry him, because she no longer loves him she asks to wait till his return knowing full well he isn't going to come back.

But Randall also knows this and he even tries bribery to get her to marry him, he says how he wants her to " have all his fortune." Still she says there will be enough time to get married when he returns. After Randall had left to head south again, Dorothea ran. Out of the house, out of the street and she carried on running until she reached the countryside didn't know where she was. Suddenly she stopped and repeated the words, " Never, not for all his thousands! Never, never! Not for millions!" The author uses a lot of language to describe the passion between these two people. The greatest descriptions in the story are those of the sensuous, romantic gestures.

Whether in the form of letters or embraces the way the author depicts these is with such passion and love you can almost visualize the couple yourself. At the time, it was considered improper for a story to talk of things like love and the passion shared between the couple. Descriptions like this would have been considered shocking and would have been frowned upon. Society sees marriage as a woman's duty and that they should marry for practical reasons but Kate Chopin believed and wrote that love and passion were very important in any marriage. And nineteenth century society, especially men would have frowned upon these views coming from a female writer.

Women were expected to love their husband's no-matter what, so the way this story talks about Dorothea falling out of love because there is no physical attraction would also have been un-acceptable. The second story is 'The Woman's Rose' by Olive Schreiner. In this story, none of the characters were given names but the two main characters were two young women. The first is the narrator; she opens the story by looking back at a box of "trifles", memories, things that reminded her of her life so far. She talks of many little items in the box but one in particular, a dead white rose.

She also mentions other flowers that were in the box but threw away except the remaining withered white rose. When she was 15, the narrator went to stay at a small "up country" town for a while. The town was made up mostly of men and what few women there was, were married. There was one young 17 year old woman, all the men in the town "worshipped" her, she was very beautiful and all the men talked about her.

Men would "bring flowers to her door" and offer her 20 horses as they "begged" her to marry them. Their attention was suddenly drawn to the narrator, when she arrived; the gifts were given to her and the offers of marriage. Although the narrator liked this attention, she felt sorry for the other girl who all the men seemed to forsake for this younger and in their eyes, better looking woman. They never spoke but the narrator thought this woman "hated her."

"On the day the narrator was due to leave a party was organized for everyone in the village, the one rose for two hundred miles around had been promised to the other woman. At the party, the narrator met the older

woman and said " good evening" but quickly turned away. The narrator felt a hand touch her hair and heard a voice say " stand still," in the mirror the narrator could see the other girl attaching the white rose into the narrator's hair. In this story, we learn mostly about the feelings of the narrator, the story is not biased but we do only see things from the narrator's point of view.

She talks of how she likes the attention from the men " I like them to ask me to marry them", but at the same time she " despises them" for it, when one of the men ridicules the older woman's walk, the narrator " turned on him so fiercely that he never dared come before her again." She also liked the power she held over the men who would do anything she commanded them to " I was like a child with a new whip." Olive Schreiner was obviously a great believer in the strength of women and had a lot of hope that in the future women would have more rights in society. From this story it appears that women were treated as items, as objects, as a craze that would pass from one woman to the next; when one woman gets a little bit older and the men get a little bit bored of her, all the attention would pass to the younger, better looking model.

Men at this time thought so little of women they thought that they could be bought or bribed into marriage. They thought that whoever could buy her the most flowers or offer her the most extravagant, expensive gifts would be the champion and win the woman's hand in marriage. In this story they underestimated both the women concerned. Of all the things in the narrators in the narrator's box the item with the greatest significance to her is the withered white rose.

The rose to her is symbolic of the special value of female friendship. It reminds her of the strength of women in a society dominated by men's rules and power. The theme of the entire story is to highlight the importance of friendship and loyalty between women. To emphasize this theme even more the author makes reference twice during the story, at the beginning and at the end, that when she is losing her faith in women, the scent of the dead rose reminds her that all will be well again "spring cannot fail us" The final story we looked at was 'Tony Kytes, The Arch-Deceiver' by Thomas Hardy. The basic outline of this story is that the main character, Tony Kytes is engaged to Milly Richards.

When Tony is driving home from the market, he met one of his ex-lovers, Unity Sallet. She asked Tony if he could give her a lift home and he agreed. Whilst driving along, Unity asked why Tony left her for Milly and then goes on to say why did you not ask me to marry you and Tony couldn't think why. All of a sudden, Tony spotted his fiance Milly and asked Unity to hide in the back of the cart under the tarpaulin so Milly would not see them together.

When Tony was passing Milly, she reminded him that he had asked her to meet him and ride with him. He tried to think of excuses why she shouldn't ride with him but they didn't work and Tony is left with no other option but to help her up and to take her home. While they were driving and discussing their future home, Tony saw his first ever girlfriend Hannah Jolliver who he was almost married to. He comes up with an excuse and convinces Milly to hide under the box in the front of the cart. Again whilst passing, Hannah in a rude manner asks Tony for a lift home.

He didn't refuse and then helped her up beside him. The more Tony looked at Hannah the more he wondered why he didn't marry her. When Tony sees his father he tells him of the predicament and asks him for advice on which one he should marry to which the father replied, " Whichever of 'em did not ask to ride with ' ee." And this was Milly. The story ends with the three women finding out about the other women in the cart.

Tony asked each one to marry him starting with Hannah but she refuses him, then he turns to Unity but she says " Not !!" At last he turns to Milly, although she was Tony's last choice she still accepts him. This story portrays two types of women, and although Tony favours the two assertive women, his father advises him to marry " whichever of 'em did not ask to ride with ' ee." He thought that assertive, freethinking women would not make good marriage partners. This point of view is a prime example of how nineteenth century society thought that all women's decisions should be made by men.

The idea that women could be free-thinking and able to make their own decisions would have been completely dismissed by nineteenth century society. In the end Tony has to settle for Milly, when Unity and Hannah show unusual outward display self-respect and pride. In her desire to conform to society's expectations, although humiliated, Milly chose to make excuses " you didn't really mean what you said to them?" although Milly is clearly supposed to be the heroine in the story, the submissive decision today would not gain any respect. It appears that both Milly and Tony wanted to conform to society's dictation and get married even if for the wrong reasons, similar to ' The Unexpected', another story that shows how nineteenth century society did not think that love was important part of marriage. The party

after the wedding was another example of Tony and Milly accepting their duty to follow social conventions. Two of the stories are very similar in showing how women were treated.

These were, 'The Unexpected' by Kate Chopin and 'Tony Kytes, The Arch-Deceiver' by Thomas Hardy. Both stories show how women were expected to marry and that it was seen as their duty to do so, they both show how nineteenth century society didn't think love and passion were important in relationships. Even to talk of the things that these two stories do talk of would have been frowned upon. Finally, every woman bar one in all three of the stories shows women making decisions for themselves, standing up to society's expectations of them. This would have been a preposterous idea in the nineteenth century and these women would most definitely have been judged harshly by society and possibly treated badly, particularly by men.

In conclusion I think that in the nineteenth century. women were seen more as objects rather than human beings, they were treated as children and were given no real rights. All decisions were made for them and for a woman to make decisions for herself and to be independent was completely unheard of. Women had no real control over their own lives and they had very limited choices. Women were expected to conform to the rules of society and many of them had a desire to do so but they were torn between that and their own needs and desires. I personally think, Women were treated unfairly and the way they were treated was quite wrong.

Even in the nineteenth century women should have been treated like they are today; with equal rights, able to make their own decisions, have freedom

of thought and speech and don't feel oppressed when it comes to sharing their opinions. But most of all they have their own independence. Of the three, my favorite story was ' Tony Kytes, The Arch-Deceiver'. This was my favorite, probably because I found it humorous but at the same time quite astonishing in that, now women have the rights they do, there is no way this could happen in modern day society. It was obvious from the beginning that Tony was going to get caught out in the end.

At the time, I think this story might have been a comedy, but at the same time as having a comedy outline, the story also dealt with issues that in the nineteenth century would have been acceptable but today would be seen as chauvinistic and unacceptable.