

Thomas Hardy's use of imagery in Tess of the d'Urbervilles essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Hardy uses imagery to foreshadow upcoming events which in turn creates a sense of dramatic irony to add a sense of foreboding and ominousness. In phase I, during Prince's death, Hardy uses violent, sexual imagery in the line "The pointed shaft of the cart had entered the breast of the unhappy Prince" which can be analysed to foreshadow Tess's rape. This is due to what could be described as sexual language; "Pointed Shaft" and "breast" but also the choice of wording in "Unhappy Prince" is important because it is an odd choice as the horse is dying.

This is just like Tess' rape as she is unhappy but doesn't necessarily try to stop it occurring. Hardy foreshadows Angel Clare abandoning Tess for the second time following the Pagan Dance; "He had not observed her, and with that in mind, he left the pasture". The fact that Hardy tells the reader that Angel realises he had missed her, but still "he left the pasture" leaving her alone gazing after him. This is also similar to when he abandons her once she admits she is not 'pure' and he leaves.

Hardy also subtly foreshadows Tess' hanging later on in the novel, at the Dairy pasture by describing the cutlery as "Like the beginning of a gallows" which calls upon a dark and ominous feeling than apparently easy, normal breakfast scene. This in turn is just like Tess she goes from a normal life to one that is dark and eventually is a running murderess; giving the reader the knowledge from early on that Tess has a bad fate in store.

Hardy uses imagery to accentuate Tess's purity to contradict the social convention of the times and defend her inner purity. Once again, in Phase I, following Prince's death, Hardy uses the line "Tess's white dress, covered in

crimson blood, she looked whiter than the road". This is Hardy saying that although on the outside, Tess is tainted and ruined: " Covered in crimson blood" underneath that she is still wearing a " White dress" and is " Whiter than the road.

Hardy is already defending Tess's purity even though we haven't even got to her rape scene yet, which is already creating a feeling of sympathy for Tess from the reader. To follow on from this point, just before her rape with Alec, she is described as a " White muslin figure he had left upon the dead leaves. " This shows the reader that Tess is still pure and Alec knows this yet still does what he is about to do. Therefore allowing the reader to empathise with the character of Tess and question her own moral standing on the issue of virginity.

Hardy represents characters hidden personalities through imagery to allow the reader to gain a deep understanding with the characters. When we meet Alec, Hardy describes him as a " Swarthy Alexander" an indication to Alexander the Great, who raped in pillage peasant girls and families. Not only does this allow the reader to foreshadow Tess' death it also shows us his character. Swarthy brings connotations to the reader of a dark, leather skinned, weather beaten complexion and therefore dangerous man who has seen already the evils of the world.

This allows the reader to gain a greater judgment on Alec as soon as we meet him. Hardy also uses this technique on Angel " Beneath was something educated, reserved, subtle, sad, different" this is an example of

verisimilitude as Angel is trying to be a farmer in the scene the quote is from, however Hardy tells the reader he is not, adding a sense of Dramatic Irony because with a well-educated person, you also bring along educated principals such as purity and religion, very opposed to Tess.

This adds a twist to the plot as the reader has their differences highlighted and therefore can tell it will not end well. In the case of Mercy Chant, she is described when we first meet her, as wearing a " Starched, cambric morning gown" cambric is a white linen showing she is pure to the highest level as it is also expensive. The fact it is starched symbolises that she is up tight, reserved and very moral, allowing the reader to see she juxtaposes Tess as Mercy is clearly of a higher class too by the fact she has a " Morning gown".

The reader can therefore make a judgement on Mercy, but also on Angel's parents for suggesting her as a suitable suitor when Angel really loves a normal peasant girl in the form of Tess. To conclude, Hardy uses imagery throughout the novel to suggest underlying meanings to the reader to enable a second depth and therefore a more interesting read. He uses it to help analyse characters and to foreshadow upcoming events which drive the suspense and pessimism of the novel.