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## Warm-Hearted Love in a Cold World: Sexuality, Nature, and Modernity in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

Ashley Beatriz Medina

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WARM-HEARTED LOVE IN A COLD WORLD: SEXUALITY, NATURE, AND  
MODERNITY IN THOMAS HARDY'S *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES* AND  
D. H. LAWRENCE'S *LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER*

A Thesis

by

ASHLEY BEATRIZ MEDINA

Submitted to Texas A&M International University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2018

Major Subject: English

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## ABSTRACT

Warm-Hearted Love in a Cold World: Sexuality, Nature, and Modernity in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (December 2018)

Ashley Beatriz Medina, B. A., Texas A&M International University;

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While examining Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the importance of the themes of sexuality and nature is apparent. In this thesis, the exploration of sexuality and nature being at odds with different incarnations of modernity is argued. Sexuality, in this thesis, is referring to sexual behaviors and activity. Nature is referring to both the untamed and calm wilderness. Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* displays sexuality and nature being at odds with modernity as science. In Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, sexuality and nature are at odds with industrial modernity.

In regards to Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, this thesis primarily focuses on sexuality, nature, and modernity as presented in its central characters, Tess Durbeyfield, Angel Clare, and Alec d'Urberville. Tess is presented as a sexual being who has connection to nature but is misread and objectified by Angel and Alec. Tess's treatment can be further understood by focusing on gender relations in the Victorian Era.

In viewing Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, this thesis focuses on sexuality and nature as two parts of a whole that are at odds with modernity. The characteristics of sex and

nature are seen in Constance Chatterley and Oliver Mellors, while Clifford Chatterley embodies industrial modernity.

By examining these two novels, I establish the relationship between *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and how Thomas Hardy influenced D. H. Lawrence when writing about sexuality, nature, and modernity.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the literary world, there have been many novels that have incorporated the themes of sexuality (referring to sexual activity) and nature (referring to the wilderness) both tamed and untamed. Various authors have also covered these themes and have even used both as propelling forces for their literature. Two such authors who used sexuality and nature as main themes are Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence. In this thesis, I argue that nature and sexuality must find an equilibrium and maintain such balance in order to survive in a cold world, a result of heartless modernity.

In Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), the reader is presented with a tragic tale that unfolds in the manner it does due to Victorian England's ideals. Tess Durbeyfield is a woman with a name of noble origins, d'Urberville, but she and her family are of the working class in the English countryside. Tess blames herself for the death of the family horse. When the family locates a wealthy d'Urberville they believe is a relative, Tess sees it as her duty to go to him in order to try to get money since the horse assisted in their means of financial gain. In this way, she exemplifies the "Angel in the House" personality. It is this decision that sets things in motion. When arriving to the house of the older woman with the surname d'Urberville, she meets Alec d'Urberville, her so-called cousin. Over time, Alec tries to seduce Tess just as a male animal looking for a potential mate tries to woo a female. On a wild carriage ride one day, Tess does what she has to in order to survive by grabbing on to Alec to stop from falling. In this way, she has become Alec's prey because he knows how to get her to comply with his advances. Before long, Tess is raped by Alec. Even though the sexual act was not consensual, she is

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This thesis follows the model of *Modern Fiction Studies*.

considered a fallen woman by Victorian standards. She leaves the d'Urberville residence and returns to her home and is with child. After her baby dies, she seeks out a new life and goes to a dairy farm where she meets Angel Clare. Angel, unlike Alec, sees Tess as an embodiment and goddess of nature; it is for this reason he falls in love with her. Tess feels guilt knowing her own past and feeling like a fallen woman. She feels she does not deserve the affection of Angel, so she keeps pushing him away. Eventually, she gives in because she loves him too. Before she marries him, she feels she must confess her past to Angel. As fate would have it, Tess is unable to tell him despite her efforts including a letter she slid under his door. After the two are married, Angel confesses a past indiscretion, a time in which he engaged in sexual intercourse. Tess forgives him and feels that she too can confess her past. Instead of being understanding, Angel tells Tess that she is not the same woman he married. The two separate shortly after; Angel travels to Brazil while Tess goes back to work and becomes a farm laborer. Later, Tess once again runs into Alec who has supposedly found God. Tess still does not trust him and rightfully so. Alec begins to pursue her once more. After misfortune strikes her family and her father dies, Tess is left with an ultimatum of she and her family having nowhere to live or marrying Alec who has plenty of money to support the Durbeyfield family. Meanwhile, Angel is gravely ill. In being ill, he realizes that he has wronged Tess. After Angel comes to this realization, he decides to go back and find his wife. In his search for Tess, he finds out her family's misfortune and finally finds her under the name "Mrs. d'Urberville." When Angel sees Tess, she tells him to leave, and he finds out Tess has married Alec. When Angel leaves, something in Tess snaps. She gets mad at Alec, and she finally stands up to him after everything he did to her and kills him. Tess goes after Angel. They spend the last few days of Tess's life on the run and are able to

finally act as husband and wife. Tess gives up, feeling that the love between her and Angel will not last, and she is executed for murdering Alec.

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), D. H. Lawrence presents a novel focusing on finding peace and balance in the modern world. Constance Chatterley is married to Lord Clifford Chatterley, an aristocrat who fought in the First World War. Clifford was injured in the war and is paralyzed. He is content in his lack of sexual activity. Constance, however, becomes frustrated with the emptiness of her relationship with Clifford. While in the woods on her estate, Wragby Wood, she meets the gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors. Constance becomes less content in her marriage. She does not feel like a woman. Within her crisis, Clifford decides he wants an heir and considers letting Constance have an affair with someone he sees worthy. Without his knowledge, Constance has an affair with a fellow aristocrat, a man of merely the mind. She is dissatisfied in her affair. Even though she does not find peace in her sexual experience, she still finds some peace in the woods. One day, in Wragby Wood, she is dissatisfied because she still does not feel like a complete woman. The gamekeeper sees her. Constance and Mellors make love for the first time. When they do, feelings are awakened in them. Constance has more of a connection with nature and is now, once again, sexually active. However, she is more sexually fulfilled than she has ever been. Mellors also has something awakened in him. Mellors finds himself more sexually satisfied than he has every been before. The satisfaction of both is more than merely a physical satisfaction. There is more to the euphoric feeling Mellors and Constance feel than the body. The feelings they have run all the way to their souls. The two go on with their affair, and others, including Mrs. Bolton, who is Clifford's caretaker, are becoming aware of it. Constance becomes impregnated with Mellors's baby. Constance is scheduled to go on holiday with her sister and uses this as a way to cover up her affair with Mellors since she intends to

pretend a close friend of hers, who would be acceptable to Clifford, is the father of her child. While away from Mellors, Constance finds she is completely in love with him. However, during Constance's time of realization, Mellors is dealing with both the separation from Constance and an abundance of problems caused by his estranged wife. Due to the firing of Mellors, which Constance learns of upon her return, she reveals her affair and pregnancy to Clifford. In the end, Constance and Mellors are unable to be together, but they still keep in contact and are in love while awaiting the day they can once again be together.

Some research conducted on Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* has revealed connections with nature and sexuality or merely the opinions of various scholars on these themes. When discussing the nature aspect of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Paul J. Niemeyer, Hardy scholar and author of *Seeing Hardy: Film and Television Adaptations of the Fiction of Thomas Hardy* (2003), discusses the meaning of "A Pure Woman" that is often included on Hardy's title page. Niemeyer presents various points of view on the sub-title, and he argues the idea of purity connects with nature (99). Similarly, in John B. Humma's article "Language and Disguise: The Imagery of Nature and Sex in *Tess*" (1989), Humma presents the connection of nature and sex that is evident in the words Hardy uses. The main argument in the article is "to develop the way that Hardy takes his nature imagery at least one vitally important step further, to render the naturalness of Tess's sexual being through nature details" (Humma 64). He establishes Tess's connection with nature and how it connects with sexuality. In Humma's argument, the connection with sexuality and nature comes when describing sexual situations or when referring to Tess, specifically when men are admiring her. Thus, as the title implies, it is through the imagery in the novel that shows the connection between nature and sexuality.

The examination of the novel through various lenses in order to understand Tess and her “purity” is presented in Bernard J. Paris’s article “A Confusion of Many Standards’: Conflicting Value Systems in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*” (1969). One such issue of morality that Paris brings to light is the topic of Tess’s purity, and he mentions the “[p]art of the novel’s inner purpose or *telos* is the affirmation of Tess’s purity[.]” (58). The notion of Tess’s purity caused great debate in its time.<sup>2</sup> According to Paris, Tess’s sexual experience is not wrong because sex is part of nature in the grand scheme of things; for Tess, sexuality causes suffering that is unavoidable due to her beauty (65-66). Sexuality is an instinct. Tess seems to have little responsibility in what has happened to her and how she is seen. By keeping all the standards in mind, sexuality, societal, and instinctual, Paris makes the claim, “The defense of Tess from her lack of responsibility leaves us without a standard of value in terms of which the word ‘purity’ has a meaning” (72). In other words, it is difficult to define purity by any standards presented, especially when characteristics such as her family name are taken into consideration. H. M. Daleski writes in the chapter entitled “*Tess of the d’Urbervilles: Green Malt in Floor*” in his book *Thomas Hardy and the Paradoxes of Love* (1997), “Her life is subject to many intolerable pressures, and these are rendered in disturbing particularity: the pressures exerted on her by Alec and Angel; the pressures of her ancestry and of a doom that seems to dog her [.]” (155). Because Durbeyfield is an old family name originating from d’Urberville, Tess is heavily connected to aristocracy and the past. Additionally, her family’s former status is seen as a commodity of sorts, a commodity that causes her more trouble than it does good and causes her to be seen as a sexual commodity as well. Tess’s relationship with nature, purity, and name are

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<sup>1</sup> Paul J. Niemeyer mentions this in his chapter on *Tess*.

linked with her sexuality, all of which are crucial to my argument and will be explained further in my second chapter.

In the field of research on Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, scholars have pointed out both the nature aspect and the sexual aspect of the text. In the research so far, the sexual aspect primarily focuses on the sexual relations Constance Chatterley has with Oliver Mellors and lack thereof with Clifford Chatterley. The natural aspect primarily focuses on the serenity and solitude of nature presented in Wragby Wood. Michael Squires, author of *The Pastoral Novel: Studies in George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and D. H. Lawrence* (1974), argues, "[...] Lawrence creates his finest pastoral novel [in *Lady Chatterley*], representing the ideal pastoral world of Wragby Wood as a temporary haven whose powerful significance cannot however, because of its purity, be transplanted into the real contemporary world of despair and doom" (196). In other words, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* can be considered a pastoral novel much like Hardy's novels; the subject of a natural place is brought in and used as a contrast to society at the time. Much like Wragby Wood in Lawrence's novel, being in a separate world from the so-called "modern world" while being in conflict with the industrial lifestyle is the essence of a pastoral novel. An industrialized world is uncaring while the realm of nature is a place of peace and tranquility, at least in the case of Lawrence's novel. The idea of sexuality and nature being in a semi-symbiotic relationship emerges in much of the research. In "Patrick White and D. H. Lawrence: Sexuality and the Wilderness in a *Fringe of Leaves* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1988)," Debra Journet presents the relationship between Lawrence's texts and a text in Australian literature. In presenting her research, she writes about the importance of nature in Lawrence. Journet argues that Lawrence's view of nature. In Lawrence's view of nature, he does connect sexuality with nature, but he also shows the modern world corrupting both nature and sexuality. Oliver Mellors

and Constance Chatterley are both often associated with sexuality, but Mellors is the character most associated with both sex and nature. He is the one who shows Constance how to accept both sides of herself. According to Journet, Clifford Chatterley, however, has a “relation to a civilized world that will stand in sharp contrast to the redemptive vision of nature [that the novel] will celebrate” (65). Clifford is presented as a character that is separate from Connie despite their being of the same class. Thus, Clifford is a means of contrasting the natural world and sexuality with his aura of modernity.

Focusing on the sexuality of the novel, Laura Fasick discusses *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the chapter, “The Servant's Body in *Pamela* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*,” in her book *Vessels of Meaning: Women's Bodies, Gender Norms, and Class Bias from Richardson to Lawrence* (1997). According to Fasick, “Lawrence shows that lacking the right kind of lust makes men and women resemble each other, thereby sinking them all into disarray. His primary interest is therefore in providing precise specifications for healthy sexuality, complete with models for true man- and womanhood” (158). In other words, Lawrence believed that there are standards to be maintained in sexual relations that correspond with being male or female. A separate perspective focusing on Mellors comes through in Earl G. Ingersoll's chapter “Revisiting Mellors's Penis in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*” in his book *D. H. Lawrence, Desire, and Narrative* (2001). Ingersoll presents the lack of scholarship focusing on the fact that Constance is not the only character who appears nude in the novel: Mellors is also naked in various parts of it. Ingersoll states, “The trend toward reading nudity as an expression of vulnerability, or at least passivity, appears the overriding explanation for the reluctance of male artists to expose the male body” (157). In other words, perhaps the nakedness of Mellors is not focused on as much due to the vulnerability associated with nudity because vulnerability is not accepted in masculinity, as previously

established. In the case of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, there is some vulnerability associated with the sex portions of the text since there is love between Mellors and Constance while having sexual intercourse. Interestingly enough, Mellors is not the only one in the text shown with vulnerability; Clifford is, in his own way, vulnerable as well. However, Clifford is physically vulnerable due to his injury. Mellors, on the other hand, is vulnerable due to his ability to have sexual intercourse, as will be explained later, and is even seen as less than Constance at one point in the novel. Ingersoll explains, "The scene in which the male body is objectified by being exposed occurs as a consequence of a disagreement between the lovers. [...] Because Connie is also angry, she is positioned as the conscious observer of the male body's sexual performance. As a gazing subject, the woman is empowered here, and the male body as its object performing desire is oddly feminized through the power of that gaze" (158). Not only does Mellors display vulnerability, but he also is objectified by Constance and, through the perception of Constance, the reader. Thus, Mellors and Constance are equal in their sexual relationship.

Both novels focus on gender relations and their reconciliation with nature and sexuality. In Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1953), de Beauvoir establishes that women are first thought of as "a womb" (ix). The concept of women as wombs can be seen in both *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Both Tess Durbeyfield and Constance Chatterley are seen for their wombs since Alec d'Urberville impregnates Tess, and Clifford Chatterley wants Constance to give him an heir. De Beauvoir continues on the subject of women and how they are seen: "In truth woman has not been socially emancipated through man's need—which makes the male dependent for satisfaction upon the female" (xxvi). This idea can be applied to all the males in the novels. Alec needs Tess in order to satisfy his animalistic urge. Angel needs Tess in order to complete his fantasy of the perfect life. Clifford needs Constance

for companionship but eventually replaces her female companionship with Mrs. Bolton. Lastly, Mellors needs a woman he can connect to in order to find peace within himself, and he finds that in Constance. In *Be A Man!: Males in Modern Society* (1979), Peter N. Stearns gives insight into the role of men over time and the image of masculinity as defined by the changing times in society. One of the first major categories of men Stearns mentions are men who are in the field of agriculture. While women were seen primarily for their means of caring for and birthing children, men had a higher stake in the field of agriculture. Stearns points out, “Maleness and property—some might say, tragically—intertwined in agricultural societies” (22). The masculine identity can be identified with agriculture; it is control and ownership of the land that gives it its masculine essence. If women are equated with nature, which they often are, understanding the masculine identity in agriculture brings an understanding to the views of women since men plant seeds both in women and in the ground. Stearns discusses the relation to industry and men, saying that the world became industrialized, “Sexual conquest took on new importance. The working class began to engage in sex at an increasingly early age—around eighteen or twenty in a society that previously had reserved heterosexual intercourse for between the ages of twenty-five or twenty-six” (44). Due to men feeling less sufficient and less masculine, sex was the only way they could feel masculine because it was something they could control, at least according to the working class men. However, Clifford Chatterley is not one who is sexually active; he, instead, asserts his masculinity in being controlling and degrading. In the chapter “That Damned Morality’: Sex in Victorian Ideology” from the book *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800*, Jeffrey Weeks establishes the Christian morality of being dedicated in marriage and only having sexual relations in marriage. Weeks argues, “[...] the actual implementation of this Christian philosophy often fell far short of these standards, and

throughout the modern era we can trace a second layer, summed up in the phrase ‘the double standard’, which enjoined chastity on the female while allowing a large degree of sexual freedom for the male” (22). Men do not have to comply with the standard of being “pure.” The standard was only applied to women. Thus, women were oppressed. This standard is highlighted when examining Angel Clare and Tess Durbeyfield. Angel and Tess are guilty of the same “immoral” act, but Tess is damned for it because she is a woman and is expected to be “pure” while Angel only sees his indiscretion as such due to his religious upbringing.

Examining nature as a concept, John Burroughs wrote “Is Nature Cruel?” (1918). Burroughs covers the way nature is personified in order to suit humankind’s beliefs. Burroughs writes, “Nature as seen in animal life is *sanguinary*, but only man is *cruel*. Only man deliberately and intentionally inflicts pain, only man tortures his victims, and takes pleasure in their agony. No other creature goes out of its way to inflict suffering; no other creature acts from the motive of cruelty, or the will to give pain” (559). Nature itself does not show cruelty; it is mankind. The association with nature and mankind shows the personification given to nature rather than accepting both humanity and being part of nature. Burroughs does make it clear that there are no moral laws that occur in nature but are laws man makes. The idea of survival being a part of nature’s working shows that survival is still a part of nature, as seen in Alec and Tess.

In relation to *Tess*, Darwinism has often been mentioned.<sup>3</sup> Notably, Gillian Beer discusses Darwinism in Thomas Hardy in the chapter “Descent and Sexual Selection: Women in Narrative” in her book *Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1983). Beer states, “Darwin brought humankind openly into the evolutionary debate and emphasised not only natural – that is, unwilling – selection, but also

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin Padian and Paul J. Niemeyer are amongst some of the other scholars who mentioned Darwinism in Hardy.

*sexual selection*. Both the individual will and the internalised values of a community play their part in the processes of sexual selection” (196). In *Tess*, Tess is seen as a sexual object by a vast majority of the men who encounter her. According to Darwin’s theories, as applied to Tess, Alec is willed to her because of the communal values of beauty. Beer continues her analysis: “Hardy emphasise[s] the discordance between a woman’s individuality and her progenerative role” (199). This presentation of women shows the divide between being an individual sexual being and a vessel for procreation. Thus, Alec’s view of Tess is skewed. Richard Lehan discusses naturalism in Europe in his chapter “The European Background” of the book *The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism: Howells to London*. In the chapter, he discusses Benn Michael’s argument of naturalism. Lehan contends,

Michaels, in effect, argues that sex, art, and economics are all part of the same process, whereas a more conventional reading of naturalism sees them as distinct activities, as three different ways of relating to nature, existing in hierarchy ranging from those activities closest to nature (sex), to those most abstractly removed (economics), to those which can give us an insight into their relationship (art). Michaels creates his own text: literary naturalism is subsumed to the motive of economics; commodity culture produces desires that reduce sex, art, and consumerism to the same order of reality. (68)

There is a connection with nature with sex, art, and economics. While the removed economics may seem to have nothing to do with nature, it still has a relationship with it. Looking at *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* with Michaels’s concept in mind, sex is close to nature, which is seen through Tess, Constance, and Mellors and the connections they all have with the nature around them. Clifford Chatterley has some connection with nature even though he is not kind to nature.<sup>4</sup> Sure enough, nature and its relationship with sex and economics is shown in art; it is shown in these novels and others by Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence.

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<sup>4</sup> This concept is further examined in “Chapter III: D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*: The Battle Between Sex, Nature, and Industry.”

Drawing from the research, this thesis takes feminist theory into consideration, specifically when referring to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. However, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, both parties engaging in sexual intercourse have a connection with nature rather than one, i.e. just women. Additionally, nature is not only taking on a role that shows the will of the universe that causes destruction but also the part of nature that shows rejuvenation.

In chapter two, I focus primarily on Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and its connections with nature and sexuality. Tess Durbeyfield embodies both nature and sexuality. Tess is unable to find a balance between nature and sexuality due to the oppression and judgment she faces from Victorian society but most of all, the two main men in her life. From Alec d'Urberville, Tess faces oppression since he sees her as someone to be conquered. Alec is a representation of sexuality and modernity in a seemingly natural way; the modernity Alec represents is modern science as illustrated through his Darwinistic nature. On the other hand, Tess faces judgment and oppression from Angel Clare. Angel sees Tess as a nature goddess and rejects her when she does not embody all that he thinks she should. Tess turns against herself and only accepts herself in the closing chapters of the novel. However, her acceptance is not beneficial because the world around her is not open to sexuality. Thus, Tess is doomed to die.

In chapter three, I focus on D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and argue that Constance Chatterley and Oliver Mellors embody sexuality and nature. Constance is sexually unfulfilled and does not find peace in the industrial modern world. Mellors, on the other hand, finds solace in nature after feeling incomplete sexually after being betrayed by his estranged wife. In contrast to Mellors and Constance, Clifford Chatterley embodies industrial modernity. Through their affair, Constance and Mellors find their equilibrium in nature and sex while being

at odds with industrial modernity, both by metaphorically with Clifford and literally with the decay of love in society.

By examining *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* with the lens that has been previously established, readers can better understand the novels especially when keeping the times in which they were written in mind. Tess Durbeyfield is a woman oppressed by Victorian society and the men, Alec and Angel, in her life. On the other hand, Constance Chatterley is a woman a tad freer with her sexuality because she is from a different era, the Edwardian Era. While society is still judgmental about sexual relations, she is not alone in her sexuality. She finds a haven in nature with Mellors. Tess was able to have that same haven with Angel shortly before she died. To survive in the modern world presented by Hardy and Lawrence, one must embrace the nature around them and accept their sexuality.

## CHAPTER II

### THOMAS HARDY'S *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*: THE BATTLE BETWEEN SEX, NATURE, AND SCIENCE

One of the distinguishing features of Thomas Hardy's novels is that they are known as pastorals. Therefore, nature is a crucial theme in these novels. However, Hardy is also known for his depictions of women in his novels including *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). However, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is certainly one of the more controversial and disputed novels due largely in part to the debate of whether Tess is raped or seduced. In fact, Paul J. Niemeyer points out the way Hardy is seen with this particular novel when he argues, "[...T]he Hardy of *Tess* has [...] been labeled a Darwinist, a Zolaist, a naturalist, a modernist, a socialist, a conservative, a satirist, a lover of women, a hater of women, a neo-pagan, an anti-religionist, a sadist, a pervert, and a writer who didn't know how to control his own materials" (96). In other words, the novel is complex to the point that there are more ways of examining it than what was expected of Hardy as an author. Hardy allowed the text to speak more rather than putting himself into it. While the novel has many interpretations, many of the same elements and themes are in various interpretations including nature, sexuality, and modernity. In Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, sexuality and nature are at odds with modernity. Tess Durbeyfield embodies both sexuality and nature. Tess is a sexual being but is forced into facing her sexuality even though she does not completely understand it when Alec d'Urberville rapes her.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, she is treated as an object of desire throughout, before and after Alec. Tess is associated with nature because she has a connection with nature that is evident in her appearance, her various occupations, and the origin

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<sup>5</sup> My analysis of the text is that Tess is raped. Alec has given Tess reason to feel obligated to love him since he has been taking care of her family. Additionally, Tess makes it clear that she does not love Alec (Hardy 71).

of her last name which has a connection with Old England. However, she is not able to come to terms with both her embodiment of nature and being a sexual being until after she has murdered Alec d'Urberville and is reunited with Angel Clare. Alec d'Urberville embodies both modernity and sexuality. Modernity, in this case, is represented by science, specifically Darwinism.

Additionally, Alec only accepts Tess for her sexuality and, through Darwinism, the nature part of her that is merely connected to her reproductive system. Angel sees Tess in a light that primarily focuses on nature and treats her as a commodity of Old England. Because Angel wants to be a farmer, he needs a woman that fits the schema he has in his head of a farmer's wife.

Additionally, Angel, who ordinarily loathes the aristocrats and old nobility, sees value in the fact that Tess is from the old family of the d'Urbervilles. Due to the ways both Alec and Angel see her, Tess is not seen for who she is, which is a female human being with the features of nature and sexuality. It is society's, including Angel and Alec, lack of seeing Tess for who she really is and for punishing Tess for not fitting their schemas that causes her downfall.

In discussing the novel, one of the main issues that comes up is whether Tess Durbeyfield is pure or not. Niemeyer explains, "The first critics of *Tess* were probably most offended by the subtitle, *A Pure Woman, Faithfully Presented*; and the common complaint is that Hardy used the words 'pure' and 'purity' without understanding either their intrinsic meanings, or how those words may in any way be applied to Tess Durbeyfield" (98). The argument as to whether Tess is pure or not is only an argument because she engages in sexual intercourse, in some interpretations, with Alec d'Urberville.<sup>6</sup> It is due in part to the views on sexuality that bring her purity into question, but the argument of whether Tess was raped or if she consented to sex also

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<sup>6</sup> Again, my own interpretation is Tess is raped.

brings up the question of whether or not Tess is “pure.” Essentially, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* is a novel about a woman being put on trial due to her sexuality and being blamed for her own rape.

One point made by Niemeyer is that Hardy is often called a “Darwinist.” Kevin Padian concurs with this fact and displays his agreement when he states, “Darwin had a profound influence on many writers, but none more than Thomas Hardy, and in the extensive literature on Hardy’s connection with Nature there are numerous approaches to the influence of the Darwinian theory on his writing” (217). One can see this Darwinian influence in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* when closely examining Alec d’Urberville, through his sex drive, and Tess Durbeyfield, through her fate of being an endangered species of sorts. Padian continues,

Hardy saw this uncaring, mechanistic Universe not in the vicissitudes of Nature but in the mechanisms of society: in the inhumanity of British laws of marriage and divorce [...], in the reforms of land enclosure that dispossessed rural people from their homelands and, moreover, in the crushing anonymity of the Industrial Age and its heartless machinery. [...] Certainly Hardy responded to the idea that natural processes shape the destinies of organic beings through selection, adaptation and survival – but in ways that differ between humans and other organisms. (224)

Hardy responded to the so-called civilized British world with novels that showed just how Darwinistic living in that world could be. Nature is sometimes uncaring, but the civilized world can be as well. In this way, civilization is much crueler because it is made up of people with reason who make up civilization. Padian discusses one aspect of Darwinism in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*:

The sense of sex, of ripeness, of the urge to procreate is nearly overwhelming at every turn in the early part of the novel. [...] The novel is full of descriptions of the fertility of Nature, with ploughings, matings, plants in flower all over. Tess herself becomes an unknowing symbol of fertility when she becomes pregnant. It is an easy transition from fertility to heredity, in the form of plant and animal husbandry – breeding to encourage beneficial desirable characteristics and to weed out others. This, of course, was the basis of the artificial selection of breeders that in turn formed the basis of the grand analogy of Darwin’s theory of natural selection. (227)

Within the nature imagery of the novel, there is inevitably the idea of procreation. All the events that happen in the novel are a result of the theory of natural selection. Natural selection is heavily connected with chance. In the novel, Tess possesses pure roots, referring to her family name, and gets selected as Alec's target. In nature, animals that possess brighter colors tend to get the mate. Keeping this in mind, it would make sense why the phony d'Urberville is the first to die, the real d'Urberville is endangered and goes extinct, and the man who feels he is connected with nature only survives after giving up his societal pride.

### Tess Durbeyfield

When the Durbeyfields are first presented, the reader learns of the origin of their surname. As it turns out, the Durbeyfield family name comes from the old family name d'Urberville. The parson talking to Jack Durbeyfield, Tess's father, explains, "You are extinct—as a county family" (Hardy 3). In the wording of this statement, the d'Urbervilles sound more like an animal species than a family since, like animals, they are essentially endangered. At least in this sense, it is established that there is a connection the Durbeyfields have with nature that has more to do with the fact they can be compared to animals.

Tess is "a fine and handsome girl—not handsomer than some others, possibly—but her mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes added eloquence to colour and shape" (Hardy 9). Tess possesses natural features, natural referring to . Her lips are compared to peony, which is a flower, and her eyes are large and innocent, much like the eyes of a doe. Not only is she associated with nature but also with sexuality. As presented by Logan T. Trujillo, Jessica M. Jankowitsch, and Judith H. Langlois, "big eyes and lips" are attractive in women (1061). Tess has traits that are desirable and attractive. One day, while Tess is at the Mrs. d'Urberville's home, she "went down to the hill to Trantridge Cross [...]" (Hardy 39). There, she is admired by

someone passing by who mentions flowers. Hardy describes the scene: “Then [Tess] became aware of the spectacle she presented to their surprised vision: roses in her hat; roses and strawberries in her basket to the brim. She blushed and said confusedly that the flowers had been given to her” (39). Tess, all covered in flowers, looks like a flower herself to outsiders. In this regard, Tess has a natural look to her.

At the same time, other characters treat Tess like a commodity including her parents. After Mrs. Durbeyfield talks to Alec, she tells Tess, “Mr. d’Urberville says you must be a good girl if you are at all as you appear; he knows you must be worth your weight in gold. He is very much interested in ’ee—truth to tell” (Hardy 41). Alec sees Tess as a commodity. However, for him, she is a sexual commodity. Due to Alec’s social status, Mrs. Durbeyfield accepts the objectification of her daughter which assigns her a monetary value. Additionally, Mrs. Durbeyfield wants Tess to marry Alec for monetary gain for the family. Others see the name as a commodity as well. One such individual is Angel Clare, who tells her, “Tess, you must spell your name correctly—d’Urberville—from this very day. [...] [W]hy dozens of mushroom millionaires would jump at such a possession!” (Hardy 190). Angel sees Tess’s family name as valuable whether it is because it has a noble background or because of the connection it has with nature and the land, Angel still sees the name as something that gives Tess a little more value. Thus, Angel makes her into a commodity as well. Because Tess has great value, she is someone who is seen as valuable in the song and dance that is reproduction.

Tess shows her natural side in a Darwinian sense through her survival instincts as well. When Tess is riding in a horse-drawn carriage with Alec, he is driving recklessly. She grabs on to Alec, and, when she lets go, he is upset. As Hardy describes, “She had not considered what she had been doing; whether he were man or woman, stick or stone, in her involuntary hold on

him. Recovering her reserve, she sat without replying, and thus they reached the summit of another declivity” (50). Tess had the instinct to survive. Rather than letting herself fall out of the carriage, Tess grabs on to whatever she can to avoid from falling. Due to this action, Alec confuses it for the instinct to survive that is linked to reproduction since he sees it as an act of affection.

Tess further shares a connection with the scene painted by Hardy and nature in *The Chase* during Alec’s pursuit and the climax of it. As Hardy describes the pursuit of Tess: “A little rest for the jaded animal being desirable, [Alec] did not hasten his search for landmarks. A clamber over the hill into the adjoining vale brought him to the fence of a highway whose contours he recognized, which settled the question of their whereabouts. D’Urberville thereupon turned back; but by this time the moon had quite gone down, and partly on account of the fog *The Chase* was wrapped in thick darkness, although morning was not far off” (72). Tess is a “jaded animal,” and thus an easy target for Alec. In addition to that, Hardy references the “fog” in *The Chase*. Hardy uses the fog to illustrate the ambiguity of the scene, as many critics argue whether Tess was raped or not. Not to mention *The Chase* is now dark. The darkness is crucial due to the predatory nature of Alec and the act that is being done to Tess. After Tess is raped, Hardy describes the scene: “The obscurity was now so great that he could see absolutely nothing but a pale nebulosity at his feet, which represented the white muslin figure he had left upon the dead leaves. Everything else was blackness alike. D’Urberville stooped and heard a gentle regular breathing. He knelt and bent lower, till her breath warmed his face, and in a moment his cheek was in contact with hers. She was sleeping soundly, and upon her eyelashes there lingered tears” (72). Hardy uses the term “nebulosity” which refers to the stars. Tess is now a blurry object of light. She is the only light within the dark but not as bright. She is lying on the dead

leaves which are connected to the way she feels; Tess feels her innocence has died. Thus, the season of her life has changed just as the leaves signify autumn. Some time after being violated, it is almost as if Tess controls the perception of nature. Hardy describes the natural scene around Tess:

The incline was the same down which d'Urberville had driven with her so wildly on that day in June. Tess went up the remainder of its length without stopping and, on reaching the edge of the escarpment, gazed over the familiar green world beyond, half veiled in mist. It was always beautiful from here; it was terribly beautiful to Tess to-day, for since her eyes fell upon it she had learnt that the serpent hisses where the sweet birds sing, and her views of life had been totally changed for her by the lesson. Verily another girl than the simple one she had been at home was she who, bowed by thought, stood still here and turned to look behind her. She could not bear to look forward into the vale. (74-75)

Tess sees a place that looks like The Chase and comes to accept what happened to her. However, the scene is “half veiled” because she is still subconsciously affected by Alec’s assault. While the word “vale” refers to the landscape, it also seems to be a play on the word “veil.” Tess is aware that sex is natural, since she does not fully understand that Alec’s actions were not appropriate, and has come to terms with the fact that she has sexual experience. However, she cannot look directly into her sexual experience due to her still trying to accept what has taken place which has changed who she is entirely, primarily because she feels it is her fault.

Tess also consciously accepts her natural side. In chapter 13, Tess has a personal dilemma with herself due to her sexual experience and the result of it, her pregnancy. However, she does find some peace. Hardy describes a time in Tess’s pregnancy,

The only exercise that Tess took at this time was after dark; and it was then, when out in the woods, that she seemed less solitary. She knew how to hit a hair’s-breadth that moment of evening when the light and the darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraint of the day and the suspense of night neutralize each other, leaving absolute mental liberty. It is then that the plight of being alive becomes attenuated to its least-possible dimensions. She had no fear of the shadows; her sole idea seemed to be to shun mankind—or rather that cold

accretion called the world, which, so terrible in the mass, is so unformidable, even pitiable, in its units. (84-85)

Tess is criticized and judged by others. The only peace she finds is within nature. Tess finds solace in the nature aspect of her persona, the part of her that has a connection with the nature around her. Her acceptance and solace bring her to a state of equilibrium that she does not feel with other people. According to Gatrell, “Tess is an example of the destructive effect for society’s pressures and conventions upon a nature naturally pure and unstained; Tess is an issue” (105). Society rejects Tess because she is seen as impure. She has become an issue, and, within her, there is another issue, i.e., the baby.

After Tess’s baby is born, she makes peace with the fact that she is now a mother. However, the peace she has found in her life does not last long. Her child falls ill. Hardy states, “So passed away Sorrow the Undesired—that intrusive creature, that bastard gift of shameless Nature, who respects not the social law; a waif to whom eternal Time had been a matter of days merely, who knew not that such things as years and centuries ever were: to whom the cottage interior was the universe, the week’s weather climate, new-born babyhood human existence, and the instinct to suck human knowledge” (96). Tess’s baby succumbs to the illness he contracts. He was judged by society and, at a time, by his mother to be a product of something natural but wrong. However, Tess does feel it is a misfortune that he is gone. It is fair to argue that Sorrow is a product of sexuality, of the Darwinian science, and of nature. However, Sorrow is also part of his mother. Thus, due to his experiences of solitude in the woods with his mother while in the womb and her persona of being both nature and sexuality, he is primarily a persona made up of sexuality and nature. The world did not accept him just as it does not accept Tess. Therefore, all that was left for him was to die.

When Tess meets Angel at Talbothays, she does not want to be with him because she feels she is impure. However, over a span of time as he shows his affection for her, Tess begins to feel something for him. Hardy describes how Tess feels her love for Angel when “[s]he was embarrassed to discover that excitement at the proximity of Mr. Clare’s breath and eyes, which she had contemned in her companions, was intensified in herself; and as if fearful of betraying her secret, she paltered with him at the last moment” (Hardy 144-45). Tess feels guilt for her feelings towards Angel. While one reason may be the fact that the other milkmaids are attracted to Angel, she also feels guilt for the secret she harbors, her past. H. M. Daleski makes the case, “Though [Tess] is always instinctively responsive to Angel’s physical advances, his inhibition is matched by her attempt to repress her sexual being. It is as if after her experience with Alec she would like to dispossess herself of her body” (168). Tess feels she cannot respond to Angel because she is repulsed by her past experience. Thus, she decides to repress her sexual self and repeatedly rejects Angel due to her shame.

In the end, the events happen as they should and are meant to be. Tess finds Angel after killing Alec. She confesses to Angel her new sin. Tess tells Angel, “Still, I owed it to you and to myself, Angel. I feared long ago, when I struck him on the mouth with my glove, that I might do it some day for the trap he set for me in my simple youth and his wrong to you through me. He has come between us and ruined us, and now he can never do it again” (Hardy 392). Tess kills Alec in order to take control of her life. She has finally seen and accepted the events and the parts of herself. Thus, she is able to break free. Tess goes on the run with Angel and seeks refuge in Bramhurst Court. After some nights there, the housekeeper finds Tess and Angel. As Hardy describes the scene:

A stream of morning light through the shutter-chink fell upon the faces of the pair, wrapt in profound slumber, Tess’s lips being parted like a half-opened

flower near his cheek. The caretaker was so struck with their innocent appearance, and with the elegance of Tess's gown hanging across a chair, her silk stockings beside it, the pretty parasol, and the other habits in which she had arrived because she had none else, that her first indignation at the effrontery of tramps and vagabonds gave way to a momentary sentimentality over this genteel elopement, as it seemed. She closed the door and withdrew as softly as she had come, to go and consult with her neighbours on the odd discovery. (398)

Tess is described in a way that makes her sound pure. Considering the fact Tess's and Angel's clothes are around the room, it can be understood that they have consummated their marriage. As I have argued, Angel is a character who rejects his sexual self, but Tess has finally made love to the man she loves. Therefore, in this scene, both Angel and Tess have come to peace with their sexual and natural personas.

When Tess and Angel have been captured, Tess tells Angel, "It is as it should be, [...]" Angel, I am almost glad—yes, glad! This happiness could not have lasted. It was too much. I have had enough, and now I shall not live for you to despise me!" (Hardy 403). Tess received the happiness she would not have gotten until she embraced her two halves, nature and sexuality. She has embraced her two personas and has had a fine existence in her acceptance. However, at this point in history, woman as sexual being was not accepted. Stave writes, "Tess is doomed by a culture that cannot accept the sexual. Tess, as an incarnation of nature, must be sexual" (103).<sup>7</sup> Because Tess is of nature, having a connection with the natural world around, she must be sexual which contradicts the social standards. Additionally, Daleski presents that Tess's problem is in fact "her blooming sexuality" (156). Thus, Tess was doomed to die sooner or later.

### Alec d'Urberville

When the reader is first introduced to Alec d'Urberville, he is described in a way that paints him as the stereotypical villain: "He had an almost swarthy complexion, with full lips,

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<sup>7</sup> While I do not agree with Stave's argument of Tess being responsible for her sexual interaction with Alec, I do see how Tess is a sexual being and the connection between her sexuality and (Darwinian) nature.

badly moulded, though red and smooth, above which was a well-groomed black moustache with curled points, though his age could not be more than three- or four-and-twenty. Despite the touches of barbarism in his contours, there was a singular force in the gentleman's face and in his bold rolling eye" (Hardy 35). Looking closely at the description Hardy gives of Alec, one notices certain words and phrases that might stick out: "swarthy complexion" and "barbarism." Alec has a dark complexion and is described as looking slightly like a barbarian. During the Victorian Era, people with a darker complexion were usually looked down upon. Additionally, his traits give a hint of him being uncivilized. Thus, Alec is indirectly painted as someone who is less than human, connecting him further with the animalistic nature of humans painted by Charles Darwin.

When Alec first meets Tess, he is drawn to her. Hardy describes, "She had an attribute which amounted to a disadvantage just now, and it was this that caused Alec d'Urberville's eyes to rivet themselves upon her. It was a luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was" (37). Tess looks like a desirable female to Alec. Perhaps she looks the ideal candidate to carry his offspring due to her fully developed and fertile appearance. The way Alec perceives Tess proves to be unfortunate for her. Hardy explains the importance of Alec meeting and seeing Tess: "Had [Tess] perceived this meeting's import, she might have asked why she was doomed to be seen and coveted that day by the wrong man and not by some other man, the right and desired one in all respects—as nearly as humanity can supply the right and desired; yet to him who amongst her acquaintance might have approximated to this kind, she was but a transient impression, half forgotten" (38). Hardy is foreshadowing the misfortune that Tess faces due to this single interaction leading to a domino effect that ends in both Alec's death and Tess's downfall which ultimately leads to her own death. Tess appears as

an object of desire when Alec first sees her, and his desire is further described. He wants her entirely, but he does not want her for who she really is. Alec sees her for how he wants to see her and not as her true self.

The irony about Alec is that, while he seems to be a proponent of natural selection, it is the longing for sex and/or reproduction that leads to his downfall. In fact, as previously established, Hardy first foreshadows the fates of both Tess and Alec when describing Alec's attraction towards Tess. Aside from that incident, Hardy foreshadows Alec's fate after his and Tess's bumpy ride in chapter 8. When Tess wants to get away from Alec, he states, "Come, let there be peace. I'll never [touch you] any more against your will. My life upon it now!" (52). When Alec inadvertently swears his life upon it that he will not touch Tess without her consent again, he does not realize breaking the promise will, ultimately, truly cost him his life.

In chapter 11, he still continues to touch her against her will. In one instance, he asks Tess why she does not like him kissing her. She tells Alec it is because she does not love him; rather, she is angry at him for his love-making. Hardy describes Alec's reaction, "Nevertheless, Alec did not object to that confession. He knew that anything was better than frigidity" (68). Alec seems unable to take no for an answer. Instead, he treats Tess like something to be conquered and considers any reaction to be better than no reaction.

In the closing of the first phase, Alec is once again riding with her on a horse-drawn carriage. Hardy describes Alec's persistence in spending time with Tess: "In the meantime, Alec d'Urberville had pushed on up the slope to clear his genuine doubt as to the quarter of The Chase they were in. He had, in fact, ridden quite at random for over an hour, taking any turning that came to hand in order to prolong companionship with her and giving far more attention to Tess's moonlit person than to any wayside object" (Hardy 72). While it is not inappropriate to try to

prolong his time with Tess, she has already established that she is not interested. Additionally, he is primarily focusing on her. Considering the setting is at night, it sounds reminiscent of a nocturnal predator eyeballing its prey. Additionally, the name of the location stands out since Alec is continuously chasing or pursuing Tess. Again, the pursuit of Tess is quite animalistic in nature; this scene ends in the male conquering the female in a way that is inhumane. In fact, Margaret R. Higonnet gives the feminist perspective of the rape scene: “In a controversial instance, the narrator comments on the unspeakable violence done to Tess by Alec in the well-named woods of The Chase. In this symbolically darkened and dimmed setting, the narrator ironically suggests that historical justice somehow visits the sins of the fathers upon the daughters, whereas a closer examination even of that maxim suggests instead a historical repetition of the sins of powerful men against simple peasant girls” (19). Using this lens, Alec is still dominant. Because he is a d’Urberville, or so Tess thinks, he has power over her. Therefore, not only does he have a Darwinian upperhand in the sense of being, he also has a social upper hand.

Alec encounters Tess again, now as a preacher, some time after Angel abandons her. In his encounter with Tess, Alec tells Tess of his conversion from the man he was before to a man who has found God. However, he has not truly changed his character. While he talks to Tess, Alec tells her, “I will think. But before we part, come here. [...] This was once a Holy Cross. Relics are not in my creed, but I fear you at moments—far more than you need fear me at present; and to lessen my fear, put your hand upon that stone hand and swear that you will never tempt me—by your charms or ways” (Hardy 315). Alec, once again, treats Tess as an object of desire. However, he is not only treating her as an object of desire but also puts the blame on her. Thus, he is not showing that he himself is a dominant male but rather weak. Shirley A. Stave

describes Alec: “The seemingly diabolical Alec echoes mainstream Christian rhetoric in his accusations against Tess, displacing his desire onto her” (111). With that in mind, it would make sense as to why Alec gravitates to Christianity, so that he may place the blame onto Tess for his barbaric actions. Alec continues his decline into his animalistic tendencies: “‘But remember one thing!’ His voice hardened as his temper got the better of him with the recollection of his sincerity of asking her and her present ingratitude, and he stepped across to her side and held her by the shoulders, so that she shook under his grasp. ‘Remember, my lady, I was your master once! I will be your master again. If you are any man’s wife, you are mine!’” (Hardy 336). Alec displays an act of trying to assert dominance. However, he is not playing by the rules. The female he is trying to mark as his territory is taken by a male who is not around. Thus, he is not truly asserting dominance but is once again showing the lack of survival instincts he has. Additionally, D. H. Lawrence claims, “Alec d’Urberville sees her as the embodied fulfillment of his own desire: something, that is, belonging to him. She cannot, in his conception, exist apart from him nor have any being apart from his being. For she is the embodiment of desire. This is very natural and common in men, this attitude to the world. But in Alec d’Urberville it applies only to the woman of his desire. He cares only for her. Such a man adheres to the female like a parasite” (*Study of Thomas Hardy* 483). Alec only claims Tess because of the desire, the animalistic urge, she represents. Taking Lawrence’s point further, perhaps the reason why Alec feels he can stake a claim on Tess, aside from her being the embodiment of his desire, is the need to reproduce and knowing he had met this need with Tess. After Tess kills Alec, he is found stabbed with “the point of the blade [touching his] heart” (Hardy 390). He is killed in a violent fashion which displays Tess’s rage against him. Perhaps she shows her survival instinct with her murder of Alec. Additionally, Alec is not a true d’Urberville, thus he is not “pure bred.” Simon

Gatrell says of Alec, “Alec Stoke-d’Urberville, whose moneylender father has attached the decayed name to his own, inherits with his father’s wealth the power and sensual brutality that go with the medieval robber baron’s name. He employs his violent power on Tess and Hardy notes that the ironic ‘justice’ thus involved may be good enough for Jehovah in his eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth frame of mind [...]” (99). Alec is a fraud because he is not a purebred d’Urberville, yet he still manages to take on the brutality associated with the aristocracy. In this way, he combines the worst of the animal world and of the civilized human world. In the end, Alec’s being violent to the purebred d’Urberville, Tess, is the reason he must die by the same method he hurt her, penetration.

### Angel Clare

When the reader is reintroduced to Angel Clare, Hardy describes him as having “something nebulous, preoccupied, vague, in his bearing and regard, [which] marked him as one who probably had no very definite aim or concern for his material future” (114). Angel is not materialistic and does not care for the money. Hardy continues to describe Angel as “the youngest son of his father, a poor parson at the other end of the county, and had arrived at Talbothays Dairy as a six months’ pupil after going the round of some other farms, his object being to acquire a practical skill in the various processes of farming, with a view either to the Colonies or the tenure of a home-farm, as circumstances might decide” (114). Angel comes from a humble background. He shows his connection with nature, or at least the longing to be connected with it, through the profession he has decided to pursue; Angel wants to work the land and be a farmer. However, it is the connection with nature that causes him to see Tess for something she is not. Angel one day says to himself, “What a fresh and virginal daughter of

Nature that milkmaid is!” (121). Hardly knowing Tess, Angel believes her to be a goddess of nature and creates a persona for her.

While that was his first impression of Tess, Angel continues to see Tess as a Goddess of Nature. Hardy describes how Angel sees Tess after some time, “Tess was the merest stray phenomenon to Angel Clare as yet—a rosy, warming apparition which had only acquired the attribute of persistence in his consciousness. So he allowed his mind to be occupied with her, deeming his preoccupation to be no more than a philosopher’s regard of an exceedingly novel, fresh, and interesting specimen of womankind” (130). Rather than referring to Tess as a woman, he refers to her as both an “apparition” and a “specimen of womankind.” Again, Angel does not see Tess as a human who can err. In fact, while the two are in their own “personal Eden” (Hardy 130-31), Angel goes deeper into his illusion. This scene provides insight into Angel’s thinking of Tess: “She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names half teasingly, which she did not like because she did not understand them” (131). Instead of seeing Tess more for who she is while spending time with her, he now compares her to goddesses that embody nature.

Aside from seeing Tess as a goddess-like figure, Tess learns of Angel’s dislike for old families. Tess is informed, “Mr. Clare [...] is one of the most rebellious rozums you ever knowed—not a bit like the rest of his family; and if there’s one thing he do hate more than another, ‘tis the notion of what’s called a’ old family. He says that it stands to reason that old families have done their spurt of work in past days and can’t have anything left in ‘em now” (Hardy 128). Angel does not believe the old families are willing to work the land as they used to. Despite putting Tess on a pedestal, he is unaware, at this point, of the fact that she comes from an

old family. However, when Tess informs him of her family name, Angel tells Tess, “I do hate the aristocratic principle of blood before everything, and do think that as reasoners the only pedigrees we ought to respect are those spiritual ones of the wise and virtuous, without regard to corporeal paternity” (Hardy 189). Angel does not like old families that merely used their blood to rank above others. He admires Tess for working the land and being of a noble family. Her lineage contributes to the perception of her as a romanticized being. Additionally, in a sense, Angel sees himself as owning the name once he marries Tess. Angel says to Tess, “Since you will probably have to leave at Christmas, it is in every way desirable and convenient that I should carry you off then as my property. Besides, if you were not the most uncalculating girl in the world, you would know that we could not go on like this forever” (203). Angel treats Tess as if she were a fool and as if she could only function as being owned and taken care of by him. Angel treating Tess as if it were necessary they marry because “[...] Tess’s lineage had more value for himself than anyone in the world besides” (212). Angel loves Tess for the idea of her name and what value it has.

The night after their wedding, Angel decides to disclose to Tess that he had engaged in sexual intercourse with a woman. Despite his sin that was similar to Tess’s supposed sin, “the essence of things had changed” (Hardy 228) for Angel. Tess knows, even though she has faith Angel loves her, her “sin” is not forgiven. In fact, Angel tells Tess, “[F]orgiveness does not apply to the case! You were one person; now you are another. My God—how can forgiveness meet such a grotesque—prestidigitation as that!” (Hardy 229). Angel condemns Tess for her confession. However, Bernard J. Paris makes the case, “Tess’s effort to confess her past is a good thing; in the argument from nature as norm Tess’s reticence is the product of her instinctive drives for pleasure and self-preservation, and as such it is inevitable and entirely proper” (64).

Angel condemns Tess, but he does not see the natural aspect of her confession. While it does not coincide with his ideal of nature, she is still acting in a natural way. She is trying to preserve herself.

While it has not become completely clear to Tess that Angel does not see her for herself, she sees what happened between her and Alec as her fault. However, it becomes clear to the reader that Angel does not love Tess for who she is but, rather, for the nature goddess he sees when he looks at her. In fact, it is his illusion, the pure embodiment of nature, “who had excited his desire” (Hardy 246). It was the illusion of Tess that Angel loved and felt sexually attracted to. However, when the illusion is destroyed, he turns frigid. Stave draws a comparison between Tess’s treatment by Angel and her earlier treatment by Alec. Stave argues, “Angel thinks along similar lines. He is all too ready to overlook his own sexual activities while he damns Tess for hers” (111). Perhaps it is Angel’s roots in religion that cause him to blame Tess. However, it also shows that he is a product of his time.

After Angel leaves and forsakes Tess, nature gets revenge on him. After describing Tess, Hardy describes Angel’s state:

Meanwhile her husband’s days had been by no means free from trial. At this point, he was lying ill of fever in the clay lands near Curitiba in Brazil, having been drenched by thunderstorms and been persecuted by other hardships, in common with all the English farmers and farm-labourers who, just at this time, were deluded into going thither by the promises of the Brazilian Government, and by the baseless assumption that those frames which, plowing and sowing on English uplands, had resisted all the weathers to whose moods they had been born could resist equally well all the weathers by which they were surprised on Brazilian plains. (277)

Angel betrayed Tess by leaving her and by not forgiving her for something willed by Darwinistic nature, testing his strength of whether he is truly fit for the world. Angel, a man who idolizes the connection to nature and had idolized Tess for her connection with nature, is betrayed by nature

in a manner similar to the way he has betrayed Tess. While he left Tess for having a sick soul, he becomes severely ill. Additionally, it is through this sickness that he finds clarity.

Keeping in mind that Angel seems to initially reject sexuality and Tess, it appears to be a prelude to the later enemy of sexuality and nature, industrial modernity. Hardy writes about the internal workings of Angel Clare:

Within the remote depths of his constitution, so gentle and affectionate as he was in general, there lay hidden a hard, logical deposit, like a vein of metal in a soft loam, which turned the edge of everything that attempted to traverse it. It had blocked his acceptance of the Church; it blocked his acceptance of Tess. Moreover, his affection itself was less fire than radiance, and with regard to the other sex, when he ceased to believe he ceased to follow—contrasting in this with many impressionable natures, who remain sensuously infatuated with what they intellectually despise. (Hardy 242)

Angel has a more mechanical way of thinking and also he does not love deeply, so he does not love Tess deeply. Instead, it is shallow, something D. H. Lawrence would refer to as “modern love.”<sup>8</sup> The selection questions whether Angel ever really loved Tess deeply. While he is able to go back to Tess, Angel still fits the hero standard that Lawrence presents when discussing the Wessex novels:

One thing about them is that none of the heroes or heroines care very much for money, or immediate self-preservation, and all of them are struggling hard to come into being. What exactly the struggle into being consists in, is the question. But most obviously, from the Wessex novels, the first and chiefest factor is the struggle into love and the struggle with love, and love alone. Having achieved and accomplished love, then the man passes into the unknown. He has become himself, his tale is told. Of anything that is complete there is no more tale to tell. The tale is about becoming complete, or about the failure to become complete. (“Study of Thomas Hardy” 410)

According to Lawrence, Angel Clare is never “complete.” His tale ends where it does because he has found a completeness, perhaps by Hardy’s definition. However, he has a hollow core and

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<sup>8</sup> “Modern love” is discussed in more detail and defined in the chapter covering D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.

loses the closest thing he had to love, Tess. However, there is an alternative argument. Gatrell discusses Angel's affection: "Put simply, Angel has to be capable of inspiring the deepest love in Tess, and at the same time capable of ruthlessly rejecting her when he learns that she has had a child by another man; and finally he has to be capable of growth to a stage where he can reject his rejection, unlearn his unlove" (106). While Gatrell refers to the central quality of Angel while discussing Hardy's revisions, he is still making the point that Angel does feel deep love and returns to it. While Angel might not be redeemed in the eyes of the reader, he is trying to make it up to Tess and acts against his own calculated reason. Thus, his love changes from "modern love" to the ideal love right before Tess dies.

In essence, Thomas Hardy is known for his pastoral novels, some of which depict women who possess obvious sexuality. One such novel that possesses all these traits and more, which is arguably Hardy's most complex novel, is *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. In Hardy's novel, the themes of sexuality, nature, and modernity are crucial. Sexuality and nature are at odds. This is seen through Tess Durbeyfield; she does not accept the two personas until close to the end of her life and the novel. She represents nature to Angel Clare and is seen as a sexual object by Alec d'Urberville. However, nature is depicted in two different forms. One form is free from other associations and is the lens taken by Angel. However, Alec comes with a combination of nature that intertwines with sexuality and modernity. The term modernity refers to a science that was fairly new in Hardy's time, Darwinism, which mixes with both sexuality and nature. Angel, on the other hand, is a man who worships nature and even loves Tess due to the connection she has with Old England, through the noble origin of her family name. Because of the disagreements with society, Alec, Angel, and, most of all, herself, Tess is doomed to die. Tola Odubajo and Dayo Odubajo establish, "Alec D'Urberville is the exploitative aristocrat who forcefully claims

Tess' innocence leaving her vulnerable to economic exploitation and sexual oppression. Angel Clare falls in love with a mirage; an ideal and spiritualised Tess. He abandons her at the time she needed him most. He represents the hypocritical Victorian gentleman, one who is swayed by the principles of intellectualism" (9231). Thus, Tess's downfall and death are primarily due to the two men she encounters because of what society has taught them. On a final note, Stave sums up Tess's character: "We are presented, on the one hand, with a very tangible English cottage girl and, on the other, with a goddess figure of immense stature. She exists in time while she remains timeless" (101). Tess is not only a memorable character in the literary canon because of her death but also because she is a character that appears simple but is rather complex. She is both a cautionary tale for society and its treatment of women and a proud woman who embodies strength in her sexuality. Tess is a character that will be remembered through the rest of time because of her complexity and persona, making her one of the better characters, in my opinion, in the literary canon and one of the first female characters who shows women should not be judged for their sexuality. Thus, she set up a standard for women literary characters to follow.

### CHAPTER III

#### D. H. LAWRENCE'S *LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER*: THE BATTLE BETWEEN SEX, NATURE, AND INDUSTRY

D. H. Lawrence is most famous for his novels that are often considered pornographic and controversial, but he was not the only author to write such novels. Thomas Hardy, an author he looked up to, had set the stage for making female sexuality a subject in literary exploration. Taking a cue from Hardy, Lawrence was able to create works centering on female and male sexuality. However, Lawrence's novels are not merely about the animalistic nature of copulation and desire. Just as Hardy touches on both sexuality and nature as central themes in some of his novels, Lawrence likewise elaborates on these themes in several of works such as "The Sun" (1928), *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) while also, according to Del Ivan Janik, "celebrat[ing] the whole of life, and recogniz[ing] human potential for creative rather than destructive participation in [a new environmental consciousness]" (359) during the time of industry and modernity that is destroying nature. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is one of Lawrence's best-known novels, and it emphasizes a deep connection between sexuality—referring to sexual relations and sexual intercourse—and nature, presented in the lustful wilderness and the serene love and chastity. Nature and sexuality battle against a force, industrial modernity, that skews the connection between them. Oliver Mellors is a representation of both and comes to terms with his sexual self while already fully embracing his natural self, the part of him that has a connection to the nature around him. Constance Chatterley, on the other hand, is not in tune with either her natural self or her sexual self due to the industrial/modern persona she has embraced during her marriage to Clifford Chatterley. Constance Chatterley's affair with Oliver Mellors allows her to come to peace with her natural

and sexual sides of being. By contrast, Clifford Chatterley embodies the industrial and modern personas and shows the embodiment through his condescending attitudes towards people of a lower class including those closest to nature such as Mellors.

*Lady Chatterley's Lover* is primarily linked, according to critics and readers alike, only to its sexual content. According to J. M. Murry, "Mr. Lawrence, as all the world knows, happens to believe in Sex. [...] There are, *apparently*, for him, about two ultimate realities in human life: one, the absolute and utter isolation of the individual, the other, the sole real emergence from that isolation in the perfect sexual fulfillment" (281). Sex plays a crucial role in the literature of Lawrence. In a life that is spent in solitude, sex is perhaps the only way a person is able to be fulfilled. There is a natural side to the novel, and it has also been linked to the pastoral literary genre. Michael Squires was one of the first scholars to make this connection and does so when he argues that in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, "Lawrence creates his finest pastoral novel, representing the ideal pastoral world of Wragby Wood as a temporary haven whose powerful significance cannot however, because of its purity, be transplanted into the real contemporary world of despair and doom" (196). In other words, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* can be considered a pastoral novel, much like the novels of Thomas Hardy. According to Squires, the novel can be examined "as a continuation of the old pastoral tradition, a tradition that embraces the novel's social or moral or sexual content as part of a more comprehensive and durable vision. [It] sustains the pastoral tradition by blending the patterns of Renaissance pastoral romance with three variants of traditional pastoral" (198). In this regard, there is a means of comparing both Hardy's literature with Lawrence's novel. Thus, Lawrence and Hardy share the combination of nature and sexuality being used to illustrate a bigger picture. Essentially, the argument is that Lawrence is

not merely presenting the reader with a book that focuses on sexual content, romance<sup>9</sup>, and modernity. It is a pastoral novel; thus, nature plays a crucial role in the novel as it is one of the central themes. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, nature is a safe haven from the heartless modernity created through capitalistic industry and animalistic, meaningless sex.

Nature and sexuality combined can be seen in various parts of the novel. While some are connected to the characters, nature can be seen connected with the sexual acts themselves. After Mellors and Constance have sex, Lawrence paints the picture of “[the] window [being] open, the air of morning drifted in, and the sound of birds. Birds flew continuously past” (*Lady Chatterley* 274). While the romantic and passionate scene has taken place, there is a calm scene after. This is much like the resolution phase from the stages of arousal. Justin J. Lehmiller says resolution “[...] occurs once all stimulation stops. Resolution involves the return of the genitals to their nonaroused state” (Lehmiller 108). In other words, everything goes to a calmer state, much like the nature that is described. When referring to the sexual behavior, the stages of arousal and sexual relations, sexuality is connected with nature.

However, sexuality and nature are at odds with industry and modernity. Rita Felski defines modern as having different parts to it. Felski describes the first part of the term modern, “*Modernization* is usually taken to denote the complex constellation of socioeconomic phenomena which originated in the context of Western development but which have since manifested themselves around the globe in various forms; scientific and technological innovation, the industrialization of production, rapid urbanization, an ever expanding capitalist market, the development of the nationstate, and so on” (12-13). In short, modernization is what one might call industrialization in which industry becomes priority. In this concept of the

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<sup>9</sup> Romance, in this case, is referring to the intimacy of love in relationships that is not sex.

modern, the cruelty towards both by others longing to excel economically, capitalists for example, and by the aristocrats looking down on the working class is illustrated. The second part of the modern that Felski presents is a modernism which,

[...] by contrast, defines a specific form of artistic production, serving as an umbrella term for a *mélange* of artistic schools and styles which arose in late-nineteenth-century Europe and America. Characterized by such features as aesthetic self-consciousness, stylistic fragmentation, and a questioning of representation, modernist texts bore a highly ambivalent and often critical relationship to processes of modernization. The French term *modernite*, while also concerned with distinctively modern sense of dislocation and ambiguity, locates it in the more general experience of the aestheticization of everyday life, as exemplified in the ephemeral and transitory qualities of an urban culture shaped by the imperatives of fashion, consumerism, and constant innovation. (13)

Modernism is essentially a movement shown within the arts. Life was different and the times were changing. This caused the literature to reflect it, which resulted in uncertainty for the future being presented. Modernity itself is defined as “an overarching periodizing [sic] term to denote a historical era which may encompass any or all of the above features” (Felski 13).<sup>10</sup> In other words, all these features make up modernity, which is a theme that is presented in Lawrence’s novel through the character Clifford Chatterley.

### Clifford Chatterley

Clifford Chatterley counters the sexuality and nature embodied by Constance and Mellors since Clifford embodies modernity. However, he also embodies industry, referring to the cold-hearted, mechanic part of modernity. Clifford comes from an aristocratic family. While an aristocratic lineage may often be connected or associated with the old ways such as in Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, this may have ended with Clifford. Lawrence writes, “Sir Geoffrey, Clifford’s father, was intensely ridiculous, chopping down his trees, and weeding men out of his

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<sup>10</sup> Felski is being cited due to her thorough definition of modernism as a literary movement and modernity as a concept.

colliery to shove them into the war [...]” (*Lady Chatterley* 7). While Sir Geoffrey may have been destroying nature, he wanted his old country to be protected. In fact, he was “[...] spending more money on his country than he’d got” (7). While it may seem to be a good motive and selfless economically, they were ultimately contributing to the Great War. Additionally, cutting down trees for the sake of the war and supporting the war are means of destroying the serenity in nature and everything in civilized society as a whole without remorse. In fact, David Seelow states, “[W]ar necessitates the destruction of nature and tradition. [...] Yet Clifford’s father, in fact, broke the land’s continuity with the past” (104). While Clifford’s father was content supporting his country while also destroying it, Clifford expresses discontent in the decision his father made both before the war and while viewing the property with Constance. Lawrence explains, “Clifford loved the wood; he loved the old oak trees. He felt they were his own through generations. He wanted to protect them. He wanted this place inviolate, shut off from the world” (43). Clifford, essentially, wants the woods on his property to be preserved. However, he sees it as just that, his property. He does not want anyone else to have access to it. In this sense, Clifford shows that he at least can appreciate nature. Perhaps that is the reason he loves Constance. However, he must have control over nature and control over Constance. While looking at the property, he thinks about the future of the land. Clifford tells Constance, “I feel every man of my family has done his bit here, since we’ve had the place. One may go against tradition, but one must keep up tradition” (44-45). While he is incapable of having sex with Constance, he still wants a child and essentially gives her permission to engage in an extramarital affair. In this case, Clifford is trying to take control of the nature he feels he owns which includes Constance since she has some connection with nature through her sexuality.

Despite Clifford having an affinity for nature, he does not have the same respect for people because of both class and his modern industrial mindset. Clifford goes as far as telling Constance that “industry comes before the individual” (198). Perhaps Clifford feels more of a connection with industry due to the fact that it does not take any means of vulnerability to be able to prosper; it does, however, require a certain amount of strength. Clifford’s feelings about people are not limited to this one event. Clifford sees the working class in a degrading way. Clifford insists to Connie that the workers “are *not* me. They are animals you don’t understand, and never could. Don’t thrust your illusions on other people. The masses were always the same, and will always be the same” (200). Clifford displays the modern mindset of people being dispensable and merely means of fueling the economic machine. Similarly, in order to get around, Clifford uses a powered wheelchair. Additionally, Lawrence explains, “[Clifford] is a pure product of our civilization, but he is the death of the great humanity of the world. He is kind by rule but he does not know what warm sympathy means. He is what he is. And he loses the woman of his choice” (“A Propos” 366). Clifford is incapable of caring because he is a modern man. In these instances, he almost seems to personify modernity in a novel that is very much like a pastoral novel. Katie Gramich states, “Clifford generally exhibits tight self-control, adhering to the codes of his class and the dictates of civilization. Connie’s adultery, when he discovers it, is seen by him as more a lapse in her civilization than a personal betrayal” (153). Keeping in mind both the control he wants to have over Constance having an affair and his patronizing attitudes towards people of a lower class, Clifford displays his need to feel superior. He does not actually love Constance enough to feel hurt. Instead, he dislikes that she has an affair with someone of a lower class, someone he sees as an animal. The need for control and looking down on anyone of a lower class is the product of callous modernity.

While Clifford thinks of the masses as animals, he does not like to think the same of himself. Assuming sexuality is a sign of being animalistic, Clifford is also detached from that side of himself. Lawrence describes Clifford and his friend as “passionless, even dead” when Constance is thinking of them sexually (*Lady Chatterley* 53). Clifford as well as Constance’s first lover, Michaelis, are both men of the mind. They spend most of their time having “intellectual” conversation. Clifford is described by one character as “[the] sort of youngish gentleman a bit like a lady, and no balls” because “he’s got none of that spunky wild bit of a man in him [...]” (215-16). This is referring to the fact Clifford simply does not possess the stereotypical features of a man such as strength, sexual virility, and the willingness to get his hands dirty, so to speak. Additionally, Clifford finds that he is not interested in sexual relations. While he is paralyzed, “the sex part did not mean much to him” even before he married Constance either (9). The paralysis, however, makes it simpler for Clifford to not have sexual intercourse with his wife. When thinking about her husband, Constance comes to the realization that she loves him but not deeply. Constance realizes, “And all the time she felt the reflection of his hopelessness in her. She couldn’t quite, quite love in hopelessness. And he, being hopeless, couldn’t quite love at all” (29). Examining Constance’s feelings, it appears that she is taking a cue from Clifford and feels that he does not truly love her because he does not have deep emotions. In fact, Lawrence states, “Clifford was symbolic of the paralysis, the deeper emotional or passionate paralysis, of most men of his sort and class today” (“A Propos” 366). In other words, the upper class does not have a more human side. In Clifford’s case, it is apparent he is incapable of feeling deeply. Debra Journet explains, “[Clifford is] wealthy, upper-class, highly educated, and sexually inadequate, even impotent. [...] This emotional and sexual paralysis is manifested [...] primarily through [his] inability to sustain any kind of physical intimacy, sexual

or otherwise” (64). Once again, Clifford’s inability to connect with people is brought into light. He is unable to connect in a sexual or emotional manner. This is shown in a physical way, as Lawrence explains, by his actual paralysis.

### Constance Chatterley and Oliver Mellors

In the opening of the novel, Lawrence introduces Lady Constance Chatterley with the phrase, “We’ve got to live no matter how many skies have fallen. This was more or less Constance Chatterley’s position” (1). Constance is a woman who has been worn down by experiences that were a direct result of the Great War. Before she married, Constance was already a sexually active young woman. While her affairs were of a modern nature, they still had connections to nature. Constance would “[tramp] off into the forests” with her suitors and would be “out in the forests of the morning, with lusty and splendid-throated young fellows, free to do as they liked, — above all— to say what they liked” (3). While talking is a very human characteristic, Constance and her suitors expressed sexual freedom in a natural setting, the forest. After marrying Clifford Chatterley, he and Constance move to Wragby. While Wragby Hall is secluded from the rest of civilization, it is not free from the reminders of modernity. Lawrence describes the sounds made by the house as industrial sounding to Constance (10-11). Before she meets Mellors, Lawrence describes Constance’s interaction with nature as a means of getting away: “She would rush off across the park, and abandon Clifford, and lie prone in the bracken. To get away from the house...she must get away from the house and everybody. The wood was her one refuge, her sanctuary. But it was not really a refuge, a sanctuary, because she had no connection with it. It was only a place where she could get away from the rest. She never really touched the spirit of the wood itself...if it had any such nonsensical thing” (18). Constance is miserable in her marriage with Clifford and wants to find a place to get away from him and everyone else. However, she is

not in touch with nature enough to really feel at peace when surrounded by it. Instead, it is yet another place where she feels she does not belong though it is still a means of getting away from all the people she wants to avoid. While Clifford and Constance are near Mellors' hut, Clifford is enjoying the nature around them. Clifford turns nature into a thing that can be summed up with words rather than seeing it for its sublimity. In explaining Constance's mindset, Lawrence writes, "She was angry with him, turning everything into words. Violets were Juno's eyes, and windflowers were unravished brides. How she hated words, always coming between her and life: they did the ravishing, if anything did: ready-made words and phrases, sucking all the life sap out of living things" (99). Constance does not appreciate the fact that words are reducing the essence of nature. To her, nature is indescribable and beautiful. Lawrence describes Constance and her relationship with England: "This is history. One England blots out another. The mines had made the walls wealthy. Now they were blotting them out, as they had already blotted out cottages. The industrial England blots out the agricultural England. One meaning blots out another. The new England blots out the old England. And the continuity is not organic, but mechanical. Connie, belonging to the leisured classes, had clung to the remnants of old England" (171). Just like Tess from Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Constance is from a family line that was considered noble. This causes both to be considered a part of the so-called "old England." David Trotter discusses the idea of Old England presented in the novel: "The hut and the cottage where Constance Chatterley undergoes her rite of passage, redeemed by male sexual tenderness, constitute a liminal space deep in the heart of old England: a sacred realm distinct from the equal and opposite profanities of decaying manor and brash suburb" (158). While he does not go into detail, the Old England in this case is a place that has not been tainted by the modern, industrial world. Aside from the hut and cottage, Mellors and Constance make love in another place that

could be considered Old England, Wragby Wood. In the woods, Mellors “put his coat and waistcoat” down, and Constance “lie[s] down there under the boughs [...]” (Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* 145). Therefore, both Constance and the setting of her sexual encounters with Mellors make up Old England. Additionally, there is a divide between Constance and the new era due to the sexual experience with Mellors that changes her and opens her eyes to the nature in her. The “new England” is destroying nature in favor of industry. Thus, she is now separated from the modern world in the consummated relationship she has with sexuality and nature.

Constance is often compared to nature or a flower by Mellors or by the omniscient narrator. Constance and Clifford may not engage in sexual activities with one another, but they still have an intimacy in conversation. However, Clifford’s hiring of Mrs. Bolton puts a damper on the last bit of intimacy in their relationship. Constance sees their intimacy “rather like an orchid, a bulb stuck parasitic on her tree of life, and producing, to her eyes, a rather shabby flower” (88). After Mrs. Bolton’s arrival the relationship between Constance and Clifford is compared to parts of nature. However, it is not the kind of nature that is harmonious but rather a parasitic relationship because, as Constance’s husband, he sticks to her and eventually gets in the way of the affair between her and Mellors. Constance does not have the ideal relationship with Clifford, neither intimately nor sexually. Nevertheless, the relationship is compared to nature thus showing the connection between human intimacy and nature.

The way Mellors sees Constance has more of a connection between both her sexuality and the connection to nature. After Constance and Mellors have sexual intercourse, he thinks about her, “Poor thing, she too had some of the vulnerability of the wild hyacinths, she wasn’t all tough rubber-goods and platinum, like the modern girl. And they would do her in, as they do in all naturally tender life. Tender! Somewhere she was tender, tender with a tenderness of the

growing hyacinths, something that has gone out of the celluloid women of today” (129-30). In Mellors’ perception of Constance, she is similar to a flower. She is delicate and is unlike the “modern” women. Mellors, by this point in the novel, sees both the natural and sexual sides of her because he has known her. When Constance feels desire for Mellors, Lawrence illustrates, “She was like a forest, like the dark interlacing of the oakwood, humming inaudibly with myriad unfolding buds. Meanwhile, the birds of desire were asleep in the vast interlaced intricacy of her body” (150). While Constance is actually with Clifford and is thinking of her unborn child, she still describes her whole being and desire using nature as a comparison. Katie Gramich argues in a feminist perspective that Constance is being compared to nature in order to “[pander] to patriarchal stereotypes of the essential sameness of the female body and the body of Mother Nature” (153). However, Gramich believes it is a good thing. The contrast between the inhumane and ruthless industrial world makes the association Constance has with nature a positive association rather than an oppressive quality. Perhaps Constance serves as a point of reference for nature, sexuality, and modernity in order to complement the two extremes presented by Mellors and Clifford.

In engaging in sexual intercourse, both Mellors and Constance have a meaningful and natural reaction, natural in the “nature” sense of the word, but it can also be considered biological as in instinctual. Mellors “[...] had come into her at once, to enter the peace on earth of her soft, quiescent body. It was the moment of pure peace for him, the entry into the body of the woman” (126). Mellors feels a kind of peace, the peace one finds in nature. It comes from the unity of two bodies into one. While Mellors feels at peace, Constance feels she has been brought new life through her sexual encounter with Mellors (128). In fact, before she and Mellors know each other in an intimate way, Constance feels she is “[...] so forlorn and unused, not a female at

all, just a mere thing of terrors” (122). At this point in time, she is close to nature as she is tending to some hens near Mellors’ hut. While she does feel peace with that, she is not completely homeostatic. Thus, the sexual encounter with him brings the balance needed between sexuality and nature. Perhaps the reason Mellors compares Constance to flowers is because she is a flower with new ground in a new season and has sprouted once again.

Oliver Mellors is also connected with nature, which is shown when Constance first encounters him. Lawrence describes Mellors’ state of being when encountering her: “He resented the intrusion, he cherished his solitude as his only and last freedom in life” (93). Mellors feels serenity on his own and feels it while out in the woods where he resides. Sexually, Mellors is connected to nature. When thinking about Constance, “[the] desire rose again, his penis began to stir like a live bird” (130). Lawrence most likely uses a bird as a comparison because the penis rises when aroused just as a bird rises when it flies. This comparison is made after his consummation with her. By this point, he has embraced his sexuality without shame once more. Thus, his natural side, which was already apparent, is now intertwined with his sexual side. Gramich states, “[...] it is not only Connie’s body which is associated with Nature: Mellors, too, effects a return to the soil, while the colliers of Tevershall are also seen as associated with the earth and with the primeval [...]” (153). The people of lower classes are described as people being much closer with nature. Perhaps this is Lawrence’s way of showing the deterioration of society caused by greed of industry. Mellors becomes an equal, despite being of a lower class, to Constance because both are able to connect naturally and sexually. In fact, Mellors is put on the same level as Constance in a gender perspective. Earl G. Ingersoll explains, “The scene in which the male body is objectified by being exposed occurs as a consequence of a disagreement between the lovers. [...] Because Connie is also angry, she is positioned as the conscious

observer of the male body's sexual performance. As a gazing subject, the woman is empowered here, and the male body as its object performing desire is oddly feminized through the power of that gaze" (158). Not only does Mellors display vulnerability, but he also is objectified by Constance and, through the perception of Constance, the reader. Thus, while Kate Millett makes the argument that sex is for the man (240), Constance is the one being made love to and is not the object of desire.<sup>11</sup> Mellors is both the vulnerable individual and the object of desire while Constance is receiving pleasure.

Mellors has a distaste for modernity. In fact, when he thinks Constance is a "modern woman," so to speak, "[he] dreaded her will, her female will, and her modern female insistency. And above all he dreaded her upper-class impudence of having her own way. For after all he was only a hired man. He hated her presence there" (*Lady Chatterley* 95). While there are feelings of resentment due to Constance's class status, his resentment has more to do with what she could do with her status. Nevertheless, she is also the wife of Sir Clifford Chatterley, a man who embodies modernity. Thus, Mellors assumes Constance has a similar nature. Little does Mellors know at the time, she will prove to be less like her husband and more like him. In fact, Gramich states, "Essentially [Constance] escapes into a world of pastoral innocence, a world characterized by seclusion, simplicity, natural beauty, and a rejection of money and power" (200-01). In a sense, Constance escapes "modernity" by retreating into the woods and goes into the old England because she rejects the life of luxury that is a product of the money made from the modern economy and goes back to the simple pleasures of life.

After Mellors and Constance have had sex, Mellors embraces his sexual and natural sides. However, he is now painfully aware of the industrial world outside the woods. In thinking

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<sup>11</sup> While this is not the sum of her argument, Millett does mention Constance as being "passive" in sex (240).

about the modern, industrial world, he comes to the realization that soon the mechanical greed “would destroy the wood, and the blue bells would spring no more. All vulnerable things must perish under the rolling and running of iron” (Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley* 129). While Mellors had been at some peace over the sexual encounter with Constance, he is no longer able to shut out the industrial world that will destroy all that is beautiful. Perhaps this is a reference to Clifford eventually destroying the love affair between them, especially since, according to John B. Humma, “[h]e represents a direct challenge to Clifford’s way of life and Connie’s sterile existence” (“Interpenetrating Metaphor” 82). While Humma uses this phrase when discussing Mellors and the gun he has on his person, Mellors does challenge Clifford’s way of life by being a man that is not of the modern industrial world and by being a man of the land and body.

Within the combination of sex and nature, the sexual bonding is not merely from the “modern love.” Lawrence defines modern love when he states, “We have all been taught to mistrust everybody emotionally, from parents downwards, or upwards. Don’t trust *anybody* with your real emotions: if you’ve got any: that is the slogan to today. Trust them with your money, even, but *never* with your feelings” (“A Propos” 343). Essentially, modern love undermines love itself. It does not require emotion. If there are feelings involved, they are not genuine. Lawrence makes sure to emphasize the fact that economy has more trust than love does. Thus, modern love is not true or pure. However, genuine love containing genuine emotions can be pure, like the untamed nature or wilderness. Journet claims that “[Clifford] contrast[s] with Mellors, who will offer Connie both sexual passion and ‘tenderness,’ a more fully human love” (66). In their relationship, Constance and Mellors have intense and real emotions that make their love more legitimate. In fact, Mellors describes the kind of love affair he believes in to Constance, “Yes, I do believe in something. I believe in being warm-hearted. I believe especially in being warm-

hearted in love, in fucking with a warm heart. I believe if men could fuck with warm hearts, and women take it warm-heartedly, everything would come all right. It's all this cold-hearted fucking that is death and idiocy" (227). While the terms "fuck" and "fucking" do not make the statement sound as warm-hearted as Mellors means it to be, the sentiment Lawrence means to portray is there. Additionally, it gives a purer meaning to the terms because of the sentiment. The so-called "cold-hearted fucking" is referring to the "modern love." Lawrence feels sex has lost its meaning when it comes to matters of the heart and that young couples "fall in counterfeit love" which leads to a "modern marriage, and a still more modern separation" ("A Propos" 342). Because couples do not have the sexual connection, they do not have a real love. Instead, they conform to the modern means of love, a love with no real feelings behind it. With lust being an intense emotion, much of the imagery when discussing sexual intercourse tends to be wilder and more untamed. However, because Constance and Mellors also have love, his chastity is described with calmer words and calmer natural imagery. Mellors compares his chastity to the "winter," "like a river of cool water in [his] soul," and describes it as "[...] the pause of peace of [their] fucking, between [them] now like a snowdrop of forked white fire" (332). Keeping in mind the imagery presented in the relationship, Constance is often compared to a flower. Flowers do not often bloom in winter. Thus, the winter metaphor is fitting. Charles M. Burack argues, "Lawrence always emphasized that being connected to the living universe means experiencing the rhythms of decay and growth in the natural environment and being synchronized with those same rhythms in the body" (109). The body is in tune with the universe. Thus, there is some decay in winter since Mellors and Constance are unable to make love at the moment. Even still, their love will not die. It will be revitalized just like the cycles in nature. Mellors continues to describe their relationship by describing the spring they will once again possess together: "And when the real

spring comes, when the drawing together comes, then we can fuck the little flame brilliant and yellow, brilliant” (Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley* 332). Again, Mellors uses intense imagery for the consummation of their love. According to Journet, “Lawrence’s vision of the natural world, especially in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, is almost Romantic: nature offers a moral purity that cleanses from Connie and Mellors the corruption of civilization” (63). Even though nature is connected to sexuality in a way that is unlike some theoretical lenses that establish that sex and nature are and can only be synonymous but especially in women, Lawrence is not taking on those lenses. Instead, he presents Constance as not being connected to the womb due to the mere fact that she is a woman but because she is a sexual being. Mellors, too, is connected to nature for the very same reason. In their consummation, there is a purity that is connected to nature that removes them from the moral impurity that arises within modern society.

In essence, D. H. Lawrence is an author most famous for the sexual nature of his novels. However, his works are not limited to sexual content; they also include nature and show that the two have a symbiotic relationship. The relationship between sexuality and nature in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is presented by Constance Chatterley and Oliver Mellors, while Clifford represents modernity. Scholars have seen elements of nature as being crucial. Some scholars have compared *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* to pastoral novels and consider it to be one. Clifford is symbolic of modernity, civilization, and industry. Even through his supposed appreciation of nature, he does not appreciate the people who are closest to it; i.e., the working class. He does not display a capacity of feeling real love which links to his distaste for sex. In dissecting Constance Chatterley’s character, her connection with nature and sexuality is apparent. Nature, Wragby Wood, is the place she goes to in order to get away from her husband and everyone else. Additionally, she is often compared to a flower by Mellors. Both Constance and Mellors have an

active role after being rejuvenated in their state of sexuality connected to the nature around them. Through their sexual relations, Constance and Mellors display their capacity for a love that is deeper than “modern love.” Their love is genuine and perseveres, much like the seasons in nature. In the end, there was a specific purpose Lawrence had for writing the novel. Lawrence explains, “And this is the real point of this book, I want men and women to be able to think sex, fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly” (“A Propos” 337). The point of the novel is to present sexual matters in a more positive light contrary to the stigma about sexual relations at the time. In doing so, Lawrence presents a sublime beauty that can only be seen in nature and sex.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

By examining both Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the themes of sexuality, nature, and modernity are shown to play crucial roles. Thomas Hardy lived in an era in which women were severely oppressed socially and sexually. Tess Durbeyfield exemplifies the fact that women were unable to truly display their own identity separate from what society expected of them. In fact, Niemeyer describes the readers' reaction to Tess: "We want Tess to be Artemis and Demeter, just as we want her past to melt away and for her romance with Angel to develop. That Hardy seems to pull the rug out from under Tess's feet is one of the factors that has left him open to charges of cruelty; but, frankly, Hardy does more to dash the *reader's* hopes for how the story will turn out: Tess herself has always been searching for an alternative reading to the situation she's in" (119). Tess knows her story is going to end tragically because she interprets her situation the same way Victorian society views it. The reader is the one who is hopeful for a better ending that is not possible in the world Tess lives in. More than likely, Hardy meant to invoke anger, disgust, and/or disbelief with Tess's fate in order to cause society to rethink itself. The reader becomes emotionally invested in infatuated Angel Clare and "tainted" Tess and even forgives Angel for his rejection of Tess after she bares her heart to him. Ultimately, Tess is a victim of a society unwilling to believe she is not at fault for her own rape and a society unwilling to acknowledge that women can be raped. She is a victim of a society in which women are expected to live up to a high standard of purity that they define, a standard that puts women on a pedestal causing women to be compared to goddesses. Even if Tess has a connection with nature, it is not in the way Angel Clare and Alec d'Urberville, a product of nature through a Darwinist lens, believe it to be.

D. H. Lawrence read Thomas Hardy and was able to interpret Hardy's literature while psychoanalyzing the characters. In "Study of Thomas Hardy," Lawrence establishes that it is the community that causes destruction since Hardy's heroes and heroines break away from the standard of Wessex and Hardy's time (411). Modernity fits into the standard, though it is not mentioned by Lawrence, because the modern advancements were becoming a way of life. Breaking away from the standard is a common action for Lawrence's protagonists as well, as seen with Oliver Mellors and Constance Chatterley. Clifford Chatterley is modern industrial society further tightening the leash on love and making it nonexistent or, at the very least, cold as the metallic machines associated with industry. Unlike Tess, Constance is able to own her sexuality even when society judges both her and Mellors. The harmony Constance and Mellors find is partly due to the connection they both share with nature, a haven from modernity, just as Tess briefly experiences with Angel.

While *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* come from different times in history and from different authors, the similarities incorporating women's sexuality, nature as a major element that connects to men and women in the novels, and modernity—embodied by industry or science—being an opposing force that causes destruction lead me to believe these novels are meant to cause society to rethink their ways. In the end, both novels display nature, if properly appreciated, as a means of escaping the destructive modern world. Additionally, both novels have their own method of trying to convince people to accept their presentations of sexuality. Lawrence says it best when he quotes an Italian painter, "But we do it every day" ("A Propos" 368). Sexual intercourse is part of the circle of life; it is part of the natural world. In a cold-hearted modern world, embracing nature and accepting sexuality can create a haven, or so I have concluded from reading Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence.

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