



Title	The Rhetoric of Defense : The Function of the Narrator Who Veils Tess's "Bygones"
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Citation	Osaka Literary Review. 2008, 47, p. 47-68
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/25308
rights	
Note	

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The Rhetoric of Defense: The Function of the Narrator Who Veils Tess's "Bygones"

Noriko Asahata

1.

In the critical history of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), although the question of whether Tess was raped or seduced by Alec has been frequently debated by critics, it still has not been resolved among them. Over the past few decades a considerable number of studies have been made on the topic: for example, Ian Gregor's "'Poor Wounded Name': *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*" (1974), Kristin Brady's "Tess and Alec: Rape or Seduction?" (1986), Ellen Looney's "'A little more than persuading': Tess and the Subject of Sexual Violence" (1991), John Sutherland's "Is Alec a Rapist?" (1996), William A. Davis's "The Rape of Tess: Hardy, English Law, and the Case for the Sexual Assault" (1997), and so on. All their titles even show how critics have been grappling with the indeterminacy of the scene in The Chase where Tess loses her virginity. Moreover, we may find the ambivalent attitudes of some critics toward the topic, particularly when Gregor concluded that "In Alec, she [Tess] senses both her creator and her destroyer. It is the attempt to do justice to the extent and range of these feelings that makes Hardy so calculatedly ambiguous about the nature of their encounter in the Chase; it is both a seduction and a rape" (Gregor 182). Against it, Rooney criticized his conclusion as "Gregor's unselfconscious application of the double standard" (Rooney 91).

The controversial debate that divides critics, first of all, is rooted in the lack of evidences to ascertain precisely what

happened to Tess in *The Chase*. There is a crucial gap in the information which the text offers. Let me begin with an examination of the problematic scene of Chapter XI. The point to observe is where the narrator switches his way of description from showing to telling just after Alec discovers Tess in a sound sleep:

'Tess!' said d'Urberville [Alec].

There was no answer. 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 contrast with hers. She was sleeping soundly, and upon her eyelashes there lingered tears.

Darkness and silence ruled everywhere around. Above them rose the primaeval yews and oaks of *The Chase*, in which were poised gentle roosting birds in their last nap; and about them stole the hopping rabbits and hares. But, might some say, where was Tess's guardian angel? where was the providence of her simple faith? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked.

Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order. [...]

As Tess's own people down in those retreats are never tired of saying among each other in their fatalistic way: 'It was to be.' There lay the pity of it. (XI, 118-19, Hereafter all underlines mine)

Clearly enough, the narrator puts aside his task as informing readers of the incident except lamenting over Tess's misfortune after Alec reached to Tess. His description of this scene does not provide any conclusive answers to the question. Or rather, it is the narrator who completes the scene of rape or seduction, or "violation" as some critics refer to it: while the narrator declared his deep sympathy for her, almost "at a leap Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman" (XV, 150). By blurring the distinction between rape and seduction in his description, the narrator succeeds in making Tess's injury an experience already complete in itself from the beginning. It becomes her bygone experience in her story: "Was once lost always lost really true of chastity? she would ask herself. She might prove it false *if she could veil bygones* [my italics]" (XV, 150).

The more complicated aspect of the question, however, lies not only just in the lack of evidences but also in the narrative "veil" which suspends our judgment on Tess's uncertain feeling for Alec. The ambiguity is deepened within the texture of the narrative. In Chapter XII, Tess confesses her whole story about the relationship with Alec to her mother. Her confession, even though it does not give a full account of the incident since it is briefly summarized that "Tess went up to her mother, put her face upon Joan's neck, and told" (XII, 130), reveals us the fact that Tess still lived with Alec at least for "some few weeks" after the night ride in The Chase probably as a kept woman. For this reason, her mother complains about Tess's decision not to choose the future marriage with Alec for the profit of her family. At this point, we may scent somehow Tess's ambiguous attitude

toward Alec especially in the following passages:

Get Alec d'Urbervilles in the mind to marry her! He marry her! On matrimony he had never once said a word. And what if he had? How a convulsive snatching at social salvation might have impelled her to answer him she could not say. But her poor foolish mother little knew her present feeling towards this man. Perhaps it was unusual in the circumstances, unlucky, unaccountable; but there it was; and this, as she had said, was what made her detest herself. She had never wholly cared for him, she did not at all care for him now. She had dreaded him, winced before him, succumbed to adroit advantages he took of her helplessness; then, temporarily blinded by his ardent manners, had been stirred to confused surrender awhile: had suddenly despised and disliked him, and had run away. That was all. Hate him she did not quite; but he was dust and ashes to her, and even for her name's sake she scarcely wished to marry him.
(XII, 130)

At a glance, these passages seem to show Tess's "present feeling" towards Alec clearly. They might refute any doubt that Tess was indulged in being Alec's mistress. However, the co-existence of two discourses, Tess's internal reflection and the narrator's intrusive affirmation, tends to blur the distinction between Tess's personal feeling and the narrator's subjective assumption. While Tess seems to regret the incident which "made her detest herself", why she has to detest not only Alec but also herself so deeply is still uncertain because the subordinated clause, "as she had said", where the narrator intrudes obscures the specific reason for her self-reproach.

For this reason, we shall examine Tess's suffering from remorse furthermore through the connection between Tess's internal

monologue and the narrator's intrusive comment. What the narrator refers to in the phrase "as she had said" is Tess's refusal to stay any longer with Alec when she was leaving from Trantridge. In Chapter XII, Alec tries to keep her back from leaving. When he asks her "if you didn't wish to come to Trantridge why did you come? . . . You didn't come for love of me, that I'll swear", Tess replies to him, "'Tis quite true. If I had gone for love o' you, if I had ever sincerely loved you, if I loved you still, I should not so loathe and hate myself for my weakness as I do now! . . . My eyes were dazed by you for a little, and that was all" (XII, 125). The last sentences in her reply, "My eyes were dazed by you for a little, and that was all", afterward exactly correspond to the passages in the scene of her confession which we have already seen, "temporarily blinded by his ardent manners, had been stirred to confused surrender awhile . . . That was all." Through the comparison between the original reply by Tess herself and the restated affirmation by the narrator later, it is noticeable that they differ in the purposes of discourses. While Tess has no intention to excuse her ambivalent feeling toward Alec, the narrator intends to persuade the readers to accept her *bygones* by explaining how she is suffering now. In Bakhtin's sense, it would be said that Tess's reply is single-voiced discourse whereas the narrator's assumption is double-voiced discourse, or more precisely, the latter represents his defensive attitude toward the readers' accusation. It is part of his rhetoric to veil Tess's complicated feeling about her past.

In this paper, the point that I want to make is not to clarify Tess's uncertain past of whether she was raped or seduced, or her ambiguous feeling of whether she in fact loved Alec or not, but to focus on the rhetoric of the narrator who succeeds in leaving the indeterminacy of the text. As I illustrated at the beginning, both the lack of crucial evidences in the narrator's

presentation and his intrusive comment on Tess's personal feeling work strategically for hiding her past incidents and for stirring our sympathies on her present suffering. Besides, I also emphasize that the existence of his intrusive voice as Tess's advocate is essential for the text because it takes the pivotal part in its plot. Hardy's tendency to intrude into the story as an authorial commentator has sometimes been disregarded by critics as one of his regrettable faults. Bernard J. Paris summarizes such critical climate with quoting Dorothy Van Ghent's words in *The English Novel: Form and Fiction* (1953), "Some critics dislike the philosophizing because it is the "intrusion of a commentary which belongs to another order of discourse": it introduces a "competition in 'truth' that belongs to an intellectual battlefield alien from the novel's imaginative concretions" (Paris 57). David Lodge, however, acutely points out that such criticism depends on "a prejudice against omniscient narration and in favour of Jamesian 'presentation'; against 'telling' and in favour of 'showing'" (Lodge 169). Using Lodge's words, even in case it disturbs the narrative flow as "such intrusions qua intrusions", we could not criticize it simply without an attempt to describe how the authorial commentary works in the story. In this paper, therefore, I at first examine in detail how the narrator works for concealing Tess's "immoral" past and for revealing her hidden desire, and next I estimate the coherency of defensive rhetoric as narrative strategy. The main purpose of this paper is to prove that the authorial commentary is not merely intrusion as intrusion but intrusion as essence for the text, which generates its indeterminacy that allows Hardy to juxtapose limited views with arbitrary assumptions about sexual morality.

2.

Some poignant scenes where readers sense Tess's past incidents are located behind the narrative, which means the narrator does not treat them on the spot. The scene in *The Chase*, which is one of the most crucial scenes of Tess's injury, is described not in *showing* the sequence but in *telling* the consequence. Similarly, all the scenes where Tess confesses her past relationship with Alec are treated in the narrator's summary. In the story, Tess makes her confessions three times: 1) the first confession is to her mother when Tess returns home from Alec's place, 2) the second is in her letter to Angle before matrimony, and 3) the last is again to Angle face to face after their wedding. The same as in *The Chase*, any detailed accounts are not provided in all these three scenes:

- 1) Tess went up to her mother, put her face upon Joan's neck, and told. (XII, 130)
- 2) She sat down and wrote on the four pages of a note-sheet a succinct narrative of those events of three or four years ago, put it into an envelope, and directed it to Clare. (XXXIII, 275)
- 3) Her narrative ended; even its re-assertions and secondary explanations were done. (XXXV, 297)

Here, it is noticeable that all her confessions are always presented as "having done" in the story, and the narrator never tells us her inside directly.

Kristin Brady refers to the fact that the narrator "withdraws completely from her [Tess] consciousness at the most crucial points in her life", such as, "the moment when she was awakened to Alec's return in *The Chase*, the weeks following that scene when she was his mistress, the time of the discovery of her pregnancy and the birth of her child, the points when she

decided to return to Alec and then to murder him and flee with Angle" (Brady 129). As Brady points out, we already have seen how the narrator obscures Tess's uncertain feeling about her past incidents within the texture of narrative. In one sense, it is an inevitable choice for Hardy to erase her direct speech about her own sexual matters because the conditions of magazine publication designed for household reading forced Hardy to censor the obtrusive treatment of female sexuality. Brady also observes that there is a double bind situation in the way of representing Tess's purity: "if Tess's relationship with Alec was based in any sense on her sexual desire, regardless of whether she 'loved' him or not, then she is not 'pure' in the rigid Victorian sense of that word; if, on the other hand, Tess was simply the passive victim of Alec's sexual aggression, then the question of her own sexuality becomes insignificant. Tess would then be simply a victim of circumstances, not a woman with complex feelings and responses" (Brandy 130).

We should be careful, however, not to confuse Tess's sexual intercourse with her murder of Alec in her "immoral" incidents because there is no logical continuation between them. The last example that Brandy picks up, "the points when she decided to return to Alec and then to murder him and flee with Angle", brings about a completely different kind of immorality from the other three examples. While the other three would be her moral faults in the rigid Victorian sense, the murder of Alec should be regarded as a criminal fault. Even if Tess would be forced to accept her faults in her relationship with Alec or her pregnancy, she could have no excuse for justifying the murder in his sexual aggression. There were no external forces to make her murder against her will. I emphasize, therefore, the importance of the distinction because the criminal fault is the only and the most direct expression of her desire to choose not Alec but Angle. At

this point, Tess makes a totally different kind of decision in her whole life to choose not to be a victim of circumstances but to achieve the fulfillment of her own sexual desire. Although much feminist criticism including Brandy insists that Hardy's practical difficulty to treat female sexuality directly is reflected in the narrator's concealment of Tess's sexual subjectivity, I doubt their general assumptions that the narrator violates her desiring subject because Hardy still seems to regard it at least in his plot of the murder of Alec.

Interestingly enough, the same narrative strategy as in the case of *The Chase*, that is, the rhetoric to veil her consciousness about by-gones, is taken in Chapter LVI, when Tess murders Alec with a knife. In this scene, Tess impulsively kills Alec just after she reluctantly sent Angel away with a brief remark. Mrs Brooks, the landlady who peeps through the keyhole, witnesses Tess's anguish at the moment Angel left:

'O — O — O!'

Then a silence, then a heavy sigh, and again —

'O — O — O!'

The landlady looked through the keyhole. [...] It was from her [Tess] lips that came the murmur of unspeakable despair.

Then a man's [Alec] voice from the adjoining bedroom —

'What's the matter?'

She did not answer, but went on, in a tone which was a soliloquy rather than an exclamation, and a dirge rather than a soliloquy. Mrs Brooks could only catch a portion: (LVI, 469)

And then, we might be astonished at a great amount of her own utterance that shows her consciousness by the very moment when Tess took a knife on impulse. The sudden change from her

"dirge" to her explosion in the narrator's description is clearly seen in the following passages:

'And then my dear, dear husband came home to me . . . and I did not know it! . . . And you had used your cruel persuasion upon me . . . you did not stop using it — no — you did not stop! My little sisters and brothers and my mother's needs — they were the things you moved me by . . . and you said my husband would never come back — never; and you taunted me, and said what a simpleton I was to expect him! . . . And at last I believed you and gave way! . . . And then he came back! Now he is gone. Gone a second time, and I have lost him now for ever . . . and he will not love me the littlest bit ever any more — only hate me! . . . O yes, I have lost him now — again because of — you!' [. . .] She continued: 'And he is dying — he looks as if he is dying! . . . And my sin will kill him and not kill me! . . . O, you have torn my life all to pieces . . . made me be what I prayed you in pity not to make me be again! . . . My own true husband will never, never — O God — I can't bear this! — I cannot!'

There were more and shaper words from the man; then a sudden rustle; she had sprung to her feet. Mrs Brooks, thinking that the speaker was coming to rush out of the door, hastily retreated down the stairs. (LVI, 469-70)

Undoubtedly, it is where Tess would snatch the knife on "the breakfast table, which was already spread for the meal." Following the sequence of narrative, we could hardly imagine that the "more and shaper words" from Alec's mouth only drive Tess to kill him. Rather, we could guess that the murder would be mainly motivated by her pent-up feeling about the long-term separation from her "own true husband", Angel, which had been fully expressed in her direct speech. Strategically, now I would

say, the narrator skips over the accounts of her suffering from the murder itself and jumps into the aftermath of her impulse:

Overhead, as she [Mrs Brooks] sat, she could now hear the floorboards slightly creak, as if some one were walking about, and presently the movement was explained by the rustle of garments against the banisters, the opening and the closing of the front door, and the form of Tess passing to the gate on her way into the street. She was fully dressed now in the walking costume of a well-to-do young lady in which she had arrived, with the sole addition that over her hat and black feathers a veil was drawn. (LVI, 470)

As we see, the scene of murder also turns out to be an experience already complete in itself. In addition to this, we should not overlook the fact that Tess even cares about how she looks just after killing Alec. Apparently, her costume explains her expectation for the after meeting with Angel. We would miss the point if we regard Tess merely as a victim who has no responsibility in terms of the murder. It is a mistake to think that the narrator who withdraws from her consciousness at the most crucial points in her life disregards her sexual subjectivity and overemphasizes her sacrifice as a victim. Here, on the one hand, the narrator regards how violently her sexual impulse stirs, and shows it both in her utterance and in her appearance. On the other hand, however, he needs the strategic handling of it as retreating from her consciousness at the very moment of killing Alec in order to appeal to the readers to stir their sympathies for Tess's decision.

Again, I insist that it is important to make the distinction between her surrender to Alec for a while and her murder of him at last because the latter choice is based on her sexual impulse to get over her true lover. It seems to me that Tony Tanner was wrong when he said that "Together they [Angle and Alec] add

up to a continuous process in which Tess is simply caught up. For it is both men who drive Tess to her death: Angle by his spiritualised rejection, Alec by his sexual attacks" (Tanner 196). Tanner was convinced that Tess is "indeed a victim" throughout the story in saying that "[t]he colour of blood, which is associated with Tess from the first to last. It dogs her, disturbs her, destroys her. She is full of it, she spills it, she loses it. Watching Tess's life we begin to see that her destiny is nothing more or less than the colour red" (Tanner 184). As Tanner points out, the colour of blood indeed works symbolically to describe Tess's tragedy. However, it is possible to say different things about the colour of blood from Tanner's interpretation. On one level, her bleeding means the loss of virginity in *The Chase*, which means in turn her injury as a passive victim of male aggression and idealization. But far more her bleeding means the compulsion of sexuality inside her pulse, which brings about the awakening of her sexuality and finally makes Alec a victim: "The wound was small, but the point of the blade had touched the heart of *the victim*, who lay on his back, pale, fixed, dead [my italics]" (LVI, 471). These two aspects of her bleeding are intermingled in her tragedy and finally lead her to the altar; yet, we would miss her desiring subject if we do not distinguish between the cause and the effect, that is, her loss of virginity and her murder of Alec.

As for the murder, then, the blood stirs Tess up aggressively. When she catches up with Angle, Tess is almost triumphant in her mood to tell him about the murder of Alec. She does not seem to regret her guilt because she lies upon Angel's shoulder "weeping with happiness". For Angle, who is incapable of understanding what female sexuality really is, her satisfaction in killing Alec is beyond his understanding: "his horror at her impulse was mixed with amazement at the strength of her affection for himself, and at the strangeness of its quality, which had

apparently extinguished her moral sense altogether" (LVII, 475). If Tess is a victim not only of Alec's aggression but also of Angel's idealization as Tanner says, Angel's final acceptance of her passionate feeling, which he could not rationalize at last, would make conflict with the identification of Tess as an idealized woman.

In her explanation, Tess justifies herself to ask for Angel's understanding: "I have done it — I don't know how, [...] Still, I owned it to you, and to myself, Angel. I feared long ago, when I struck him [Alec] 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. [...] I never loved him at all, Angle, as I loved you" (LVII, 474). Here, although we would be impressed by her single-mindedness, we should get back to the point that Tess mentions, "I feared long ago, when I struck him [Alec] on the mouth with my glove, that I might do it some day", at which she generates her intent to kill Alec for justifying her decision. It originates from the particular scene in Chapter XLVII, which was the hardest time for Tess when she had lost Angle, and what is worse, Alec came back again to seduce her. And then, Alec persuades Tess not to expect Angle would return to her:

Her [Tess] face had been rising to a dull crimson fire while he [Alec] spoke; but she did not answer.

'You have been the cause of my backsliding,' he continued, stretching his arm towards her waist; 'you should be willing to share it, and leave that mule you call husband for ever.' One of her leather gloves, which she had taken off to eat her skimmer-cake, lay in her lap, and without the slightest warning she passionately swung the glove by the gauntlet directly in his face. It was heavy and thick as a warrior's, and it struck him flat on the mouth. [...] A scarlet oozing

appeared where her blow had alighted, and in a moment the blood began dropping from his mouth upon the straw. But he soon controlled himself, calmly drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and mopped his bleeding lips.

'Now, punish me! [...] Whip me, crush me; you need not mind those people under the rick! I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim — that's the law!' (XLVII, 411)

Ironically enough, in spite of her self-identification as "once victim, always victim", her "rising" pulse under her "dull crimson" face drives her to strike Alec, and in that moment Alec spills *his* own blood from his mouth, not hers. In the same manner, Tess runs *her* blood violently when she kills Alec. Even if the narrator retreats from her consciousness at the moment of the murder, his handling of its description, his skipping over the scene of murder, contributes not to disregarding her sexual subjectivity but to leading the readers to realize the motivation of her action precisely. In this sense, it is the narrator's rhetoric which leaves her secret desire for Angel *behind* the narrative.

3.

Needless to say, the narrator stands for Tess. It is the novel's main purpose to affirm Tess's purity. The notorious subtitle bravely declares that Tess is "A Pure Woman", who "nobody would be likely to dispute" (1912 Preface). The epigraph also shows how deeply the author feels pity for Tess's story: "Poor wounded name! My bosom as a bed / Shall lodge thee." Moreover, Hardy's declaration for Tess is clear in the Explanatory Note of the first edition (1891) that "If an offence come out of the truth, better is it that the offence come than that the truth be concealed." This statement would not be taken in the literal sense that Hardy now could tell us the whole true story of Tess, part of which had been bowdlerized in the periodical

form. As I have already mentioned in the former section, Tess's story was still under the pressure of Grundyism in the book form. It would rather be taken as Hardy's faithful oath to defend Tess's fault to kill Alec no matter how people would regard her decision as guilty because he believes "the purity" of her personal feeling which endures the ideological oppression of sexual morality. Even Angle himself could not understand what her purity is, but the narrator only sees "the purity" of her love for Angle: "Clare knew that she [Tess] loved him — every curve of her form showed that — but he did not know at that time the full depth of her devotion, its single-mindedness, its meekness; what long-suffering it guaranteed, what honesty, what endurance, what good faith" (XXXIII, 279).

Obviously, the sympathetic tone of the book is reflected in the narrator's voice. Barnard J. Paris estimates the function of the authorial comments on Tess that "Tess has dignity because she is loved by the author, because he enters wholeheartedly into her experience of the world, because her feelings have for him, and are made to have for the reader, an intense reality" (Paris 76). On the one hand, Paris praises the power of his intrusive commentary that "In the narrator, we have a consciousness more sophisticated than that of Tess, but given over wholly to her service, to her praise, to her justification. The narrator rationalizes for Tess more effectively than she can for herself, and he gives her a pity the more perfect for not being self-pity" (Paris 77). On the other hand, Paris at the same time regrets to say that "it also results in a number of weakness" because "[t]he structure of rationalizations he erects for Tess's defense is as full of inner contradictions as such structures usually are" (Paris 78). According to Paris, Hardy's attempt to defend Tess's purity causes thematic inconsistencies in his own logic.

Paris's argument drives us to the question whether or not the

narrative strategy is self-destructive because when ideas are intruded it is the moment when the narrator makes his presence felt clearly. As I have already examined, the narrator persuades the readers to accept Tess's "bygones" without any explanations of what really happened to her. His attempt is not to establish an ethical value which could exonerate her faults, for especially the justification of murder would be beyond his rationalization, but just to shift his focal point from Tess's past incident to her present suffering. In so doing, the narrator would succeed both in blurring her "immoral" incidents and in asking the readers to stand for her side. If his strategy fails to achieve the logical coherence, the defensive rhetoric would reveal the unreliability of the narrator's voice.

For Paris, the thematic integrity is mainly damaged by the confusion of many standards in the narrator's philosophizing. While the authorial commentary introduces other various kinds of discourses into the story, Paris says, it lacks for the coherence in its own logic and necessity. Paris points out that it becomes the weakness because "[w]hen he shifts his emphasis from the arraignment of the cosmic order to the arraignment of society, Hardy seems to be driven back to nature for a norm by which to judge the human order, not realizing that an amoral nature can provide him with no moral norm" (Paris 72). According to Paris, the following passages are so typical that it exposes such a logical conflict. At this time, the narrator marks the beginning of Tess's tragedy in his commentary. While lamenting over her misfortune that Angel could not realize Tess until after she has been appropriated by Alec, the narrator at the same time implies the result of her encounter with Alec:

Thus the thing began. Had she 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.

In the ill-judged execution of the well-judged plain of things the call seldom produces the comer, the man to love rarely coincides with the hour for loving. Nature does not often say 'See!' to her poor creature at a time when seeing can lead to happy doing; or reply 'Here!' to a body's cry of 'Where?' till the hide-and-seek has become an irksome, out-worn game. We may wonder whether at the acme and summit of the human progress these anachronisms will be corrected by a finer intuition, a closer interaction of the social machinery than that which now jolts us round and along; but such completeness is not to be prophesied, or even conceived as possible. Enough that in the present case, as in millions, it was not the two halves of a perfect whole that confronted each other at the perfect moment; a missing counterpart wandered independently about the earth waiting in crass obtuseness till the last time came. Out of which maladroit delay sprang anxieties, disappointments, shocks, catastrophes, and passing-strange destinies. (V, 82-83)

Here, first of all, the narrator disregards the shortsightedness of the modern society which could not explain why the misfortune happens to Tess by "a finer intuition, a closer interaction of the social machinery" even at "the acme and summit of the human progress." He would rather esteem the potentiality of primitive nature that knowingly sees the "passing-strange destinies" and indifferently keeps silence. In Paris's interpretation, he says that "Hardy's notion of soul-mates is Platonic and Shelleyan, and what it is doing in his philosophy is difficult to explain. It may

be associated with his belief in nature as norm — nature "intends" people for each other — but in the passage in question Hardy is clearly criticizing nature" when Hardy says "the ill-judged execution". Paris continues, "Hardy's phrase . . . is puzzling, since it seems to speak of neither an indifferent nor a providentially ordered cosmos" (Paris 67, n. 11). According to Paris, the narrator would not succeed in using the idea of nature for a norm because he contradicts himself in its logic: the commentary exposes a logical confusion in his attitude toward nature.

To some extent, it seems reasonable to support this argument. Some critics have pointed out Hardy's ambivalent play on nature which runs throughout the story as his weakness. On the one hand, Hardy undertakes to defend Tess's purity by emphasizing her familiarity with nature. On the other hand, Hardy describes Tess's fate ironically in the eye of impersonal nature. And some critics including Paris have criticized that the seeming conflict with each other results from the confusion of many standards in Hardy's doctrine of the moment, which becomes the fault of the narrator's commentary.

One point I attempt to make, however, is that these passages would not be so much self-contradicting as Paris says if once we realize what Hardy recurrently emphasizes in his philosophizing. It is the coherent motif in the relationship between Tess and Angle as "hide-and-peek". We may see that its original title, "Too Late, Beloved!", also implies this recurrent theme. The motif gives the thematic unity, that is, they are doomed to miss the opportunity to achieve their perfect union throughout the story. The first time they met on the green in Marlott, Angle dismissed his impression of Tess who had not met Alec yet. The next time they became close to their perfect union, Tess confessed her past that Angle couldn't accept at the night of their wedding. And finally, they were regretful to be separated from

each other forever because of Tess's criminal fault. Throughout the commentary, we could easily follow that the narrator persists in figuring the "hide-and seek" motif.

In the second paragraph I have quoted above, for example, the narrator personalizes the irony of fate, which is saying "See!" or "Here!" as if it mocks their "hide-and-seek" way of missing each other. It sometimes gives them directions, and suddenly it turns to be indifferent to their perplexities. The flux and reflux of their expectation in searching for the missing partner correlate with the two different aspects of the surrounding natural world, the providential moment and the indifferent moment. In this sense, we may say that the narrator uses nature not merely as a norm to defend Tess's misfortune, or rather he uses the amorality of nature as a motif or an allegory to represent her fate. If we keep in mind the insistent motif, it would not be impossible to say that the ambivalent aspects of nature fit the narrator's necessity of plotting.

It is useful to recall the narrator's lament over Tess's misfortune in the scene of The Chase, which I have examined at the beginning of this paper. Similarly there, the narrator repeats the thematic motif in his commentary that "Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, [. . .] there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order" (XI, 119). Interesting enough, the narrator ironically admits the fruitlessness of explaining Tess's tragedy in the way of "analytical philosophy" because it fails to appeal "to our sense of order." Even though some critics including Paris point out the logical incoherence in philosophizing, it is not necessary to see the fault of the narrator's commentary because he uses ambivalent ideas of

nature not in the field of philosophy but in the field of rhetoric.

Through his rhetoric, we could also trace the thematic motif on the level of the characters. At the beginning of the story, Angle meets Tess for the first time when he visits Marlott with his brothers. At this time, although he joins in the May-Day dance, he does not ask her to dance with him and soon after that he leaves from the green: "He [Angle] wished that he had asked her [Tess]; he wished that he had inquired her name. [...] However, it could not be helped, and tuning, and bending himself to a rapid walk, he dismissed the subject from his mind" (II, 55). The narrator, as we have already seen, reminds the readers of this first meeting when they missed each other in his commentary that "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 [...]; yet to him who amongst her acquaintance might have approximated to this kind, she was but a transient impression, half forgotten."

Later, the narrator's subjunctive sentence, "she might have asked . . .", is realized in Tess's direct speech. In chapter XXXI, Tess in fact complains about Angle's belated proposal: "Why didn't you stay and love me when I — was sixteen; living with my little sisters and brothers, and you danced on the green?" (XXXI, 261). And then, Angle regrets to say that "Ah — why didn't I stay! [...] That is just what I feel. If I had only known! But you must not be so bitter in your regret — why should you be?" At the moment Tess has to explain to him the practical reason for her regret, she is torn between her desire to be honest with Angle and her longing for happiness at all cost. And unfaithfully, I would say, she chooses at this time not to tell Angle of her past with Alec: "With the woman's instinct to hide she diverged hastily — 'I should have had four years more of your

heart than I can ever have now. Then I should not have wasted my time as I have done — I should have had so much longer happiness!" (XXXI, 261). What has to be noticed here is that the narrator as her advocate does not miss Tess's cunning excuse in his description. Indeed cunning, nevertheless, the narrator no more accuses her of dishonesty to hide her secret because he is sympathetic toward her hesitation. In the same manner as his defense of her murder, while the narrator notes the uncertainty in her personal feeling, he veils what Tess is really thinking in his narration because he sees that the purity of her single-mindedness is inseparable from her hidden desire for Angle. His public way of treating her desiring subject is to conceal it within the texture of narrative. Yet, at the same time, he forms the rhetorical figure to lead the readers to the true source of her purity in his commentary.

Strategically but faithfully, the narrator hides the sexual subjectivity of Tess in his authorial commentary. The rhetoric works for suspending our judgments on her uncertain consciousness which endures the oppression of rigid sexual morality. In spite of the ambiguity, we would agree with the narrator's declaration for her purity because it is associated with her seductive power. We could see how they are firmly connected with each other in her physical reaction when Angle kissed the inside vein of her soft arm:

[S]he was such a sheaf of susceptibilities that her pulse was accelerated by the touch, her blood driven to her finger-ends, and the cool arms flushed hot. Then, as though her heart had said, 'Is coyness longer necessary? Truth is truth between man and woman, as between man and man,' she lifted her eyes, and they beamed devotedly into his, as her lip rose in a tender half-smile. (XXVIII, 239)

It would probably be too obtrusive if she claims the truth, "Is

coyness longer necessary? Truth is truth between man and woman, as between man and man," in her direct speech. The narrator, therefore, indirectly reveals her secret desire in her appealing behavior, such as her wondering eyes or her half-smiling lip. In so doing, the narrator would succeed both in concealing "immoral" aspects and in exposing "seductive" aspects in Tess's behavior. It is the narrator who only knows the truth of her purity as "full depth of her devotion, its single-mindedness, its meekness; what long-suffering it guaranteed, what honesty, what endurance, what good faith" (XXXIII, 279). Without the existence of his intrusive voice, the story of Tess of the d'Urbervilles could not maintain such strength of indeterminable purity which eludes the ideological oppression of sexual morality.

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