

THE ROLES OF NATURE FOR WOMAN'S SELF-AWARENESS IN THOMAS HARDY'S *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*: AN ECOFEMINISM APPROACH

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Abstract

Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* illuminates profound connections between individuals, society, and the natural world. This study examines Hardy's narrative through an ecofeminism lens, investigating the role of nature in shaping women's self-awareness, particularly exemplified by the protagonist Tess. Utilizing qualitative descriptive methodology, the research delves into Tess's experiences, elucidating the intricate interplay between her consciousness, societal constraints, and environmental dynamics. The research reveals nature as a multifaceted backdrop for Tess's journey of self-discovery. Initially, her poignant encounter with the death of her horse, Prince, triggers a profound introspection, catalyzing her awareness of life's fragility and her own agency within the natural order. However, subsequent traumas, such as her violation in the forest, tarnish her perception of nature as a sanctuary, rendering it a poignant symbol of her suffering. Nevertheless, nature also offers Tess moments of solace and renewal. Her immersion in farm life provides a conduit for reconnecting with the rhythms of the earth, fostering resilience and empowerment amidst adversity. Moreover, nature becomes a refuge from societal judgment, albeit simultaneously serving as a poignant reminder of her past. Through Tess's odyssey, Hardy underscores the intimate bond between women and nature, shedding light on their vulnerability within patriarchal structures. This research contributes to the discourse on ecofeminism in literature by elucidating how nature shapes women's self-awareness and agency, advocating for a nuanced understanding of their complex relationship. Ultimately, it underscores the need for more equitable and empowering connections between women and the natural world.

Keywords: ecofeminism, nature, self-awareness, woman

Introduction

Thomas Hardy (2 June 1840 - 11 January 1928) stands as an eminent figure in English literature, renowned as both a poet and novelist. Amidst the backdrop of the Victorian era, Hardy's literary voice echoed the critical tones of his time, delving into societal and ecological concerns with a keen eye. His engagement with Ecocriticism, evident in select works, reflected his profound contemplation on the dwindling state of Victorian society (Dennis, 1986). Through his novels, Hardy weaved narratives of tragic protagonists entangled in the web of their own desires and the rigid constraints of their social milieu (Tomalin, 2006). While often associated with Romanticism, Hardy's repertoire also encompasses works rooted in Realism, notably exemplified by *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

Published initially in the British illustrated newspaper, *The Graphic*, in 1891, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* swiftly garnered acclaim and was later released in book form across three volumes.

Revered as a "Pure Woman" novel, it emerged as a seminal literary work, capturing the imagination of readers throughout the 19th century (Ainy, 2020). Its reception, however, was not without controversy, as it challenged the prevailing sexual mores of late Victorian society, provoking varied responses (Hazel, 1965).

Ecocriticism is a study that explores how we describe the relation between humans and nature in all its aspects, which traces the development of ecocriticism concepts which are divided into several parts (Garrard, 2006). On the other hand, there are several studies that focus on discussing ecocriticism with women's equality (Adamson & Slovic, 2009) which is known as ecofeminism where we are going to focus in this study.

Literature Review

Ecofemism

Ecofeminism is a multifaceted theoretical framework that explores the intersections of gender, ecology, and social justice. Rooted in the recognition of parallel oppressions faced by women and the environment, ecofeminism posits that systems of domination and exploitation are intertwined, perpetuating both gender inequality and environmental degradation (Shiva, 1988).

Central to ecofeminism thought is the assertion that patriarchal structures inherently devalue both women and nature, viewing them as resources to be exploited for the benefit of a privileged few. Ecofeminists argue that the subjugation of women and the exploitation of the environment are symptomatic of the same hierarchical power dynamics, manifesting in issues such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change (Mies, 2014).

Ecofeminism emphasizes the importance of understanding and challenging these interconnected systems of oppression through intersectional analysis. It recognizes the diverse experiences of women within different cultural, social, and ecological contexts, highlighting the ways in which gender, race, class, and other identities intersect with environmental issues (Merchant, 1990). Scholars such as Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, and Carolyn Merchant have made significant contributions to the development of ecofeminism theory, illuminating the complex relationships between gender, nature, and social justice. Their works explore themes of environmental activism, sustainable development, and ecofeminism spirituality, providing valuable insights into the complexities of gendered environmental experiences (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990).

In the context of literature, ecofeminism offers a powerful analytical framework for examining the representations of women and nature in literary works. By foregrounding the connections between gender and the environment, ecofeminism literary criticism sheds light on the ways in which literary texts reflect and reinforce societal attitudes towards both women and the natural world.

Ecocriticism extends its purview to encompass discussions on gender equality through the lens of ecofeminism. This paradigm acknowledges the intrinsic link between the status of women in society and their relationship with nature. Within ecofeminism, women's roles and experiences are scrutinized, revealing a complex interplay between societal power structures and environmental exploitation. Scholars (Husein, Herdiansyah, & Putri, 2021) emphasize the pivotal role of ecofeminism in broadening the discourse on environmentalism, highlighting the nuanced connections between human existence and the natural world, particularly concerning women's lived realities (Liu, Anser, & Zaman, 2021).

Concurrently, the notion of self-awareness emerges as a central theme in both psychological discourse and literary analysis. Scholars (Cherry & Gecas, 2018) underscore the significance of self-awareness in shaping individual behaviors and identities. Moreover, self-awareness transcends mere introspection, encompassing a multifaceted understanding of one's social, spiritual, and environmental contexts (Courtney & Ackerman, 2018). This holistic perspective acknowledges the profound impact of biological and environmental factors on shaping individual consciousness, highlighting the need for a nuanced examination of human-environment interactions.

In Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the protagonist Tess navigates a tumultuous journey of self-discovery amidst the backdrop of nature's unforgiving landscapes. Her experiences serve as poignant illustrations of the intricate interplay between self-awareness and environmental

dynamics. From the tragic loss of her beloved horse to the harrowing trauma of assault in the forest, Tess grapples with the profound implications of her interactions with the natural world (Paris, 2014). Furthermore, her decision to seek employment on a farm and subsequent retreat from society underscore the profound influence of environmental stimuli on her sense of self-worth and agency (Destinugrainy, 2015). These incidents illuminate the intimate relationship between Tess's self-awareness as a woman and her interactions with the natural environment, highlighting the enduring relevance of ecofeminism discourse in literary analysis.

Overall, ecofeminism provides a vital lens through which to understand and address the intertwined oppressions faced by women and the environment, advocating for holistic approaches to social and environmental justice.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness, within the context of ecofeminism and literary analysis, emerges as a crucial theme in understanding the roles of nature for women's development and empowerment. Explored through the lens of ecofeminism, self-awareness reflects women's recognition of their interconnectedness with the environment and their agency in challenging oppressive systems.

The concept of self-awareness is deeply intertwined with ecofeminism principles, which emphasize the interconnectedness of gender, nature, and social justice. As women become more self-aware of their place within ecological systems, they are better equipped to challenge patriarchal structures that exploit both women and the environment (Shiva, 1988).

In literature, particularly in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the protagonist Tess exemplifies the journey of self-awareness amidst her interactions with nature. From her experiences of trauma, such as the death of her horse and the violation she endures in the forest, to her moments of solace and renewal while working on the farm, Tess's self-awareness evolves as she navigates the complexities of her relationship with the natural world (Mies, 2014).

Through the exploration of self-awareness in literature, ecofeminism literary criticism sheds light on the ways in which women characters negotiate their identities and agency within environments shaped by patriarchal and ecological forces. By foregrounding the connections between self-awareness, gender, and nature, ecofeminism literary analysis offers valuable insights into the nuanced representations of women's experiences and empowerment in literary works (Merchant, 1990).

Overall, the examination of self-awareness within the framework of ecofeminism enriches our understanding of the intricate relationships between women, nature, and societal structures. By acknowledging the significance of self-awareness in women's empowerment and environmental activism, ecofeminism advocates for holistic approaches to social and ecological justice.

Previous Researches on Women's Self-Awareness

In previous research, exploration of various aspects of women's self-awareness and its relationship with nature has been conducted by scholars, particularly within the context of literature and ecofeminism. These studies have delved into themes such as gender equality, environmental justice, and the intersectionality of women's experiences with ecological concerns.

Ecofeminism theories have been applied by researchers to analyze literary works in order to uncover the intricate connections between gender, nature, and self-awareness (Shiva, 1988) and (Mies, 2014). Discussions have revolved around how protagonists, like Tess, navigate their identities and agency within environments shaped by patriarchal and ecological forces. Additionally, previous studies have examined the representation of women characters and their interactions with the natural world, shedding light on the ways in which literature reflects societal attitudes towards gender and the environment (Merchant, 1990).

The research results of these previous studies have highlighted the importance of recognizing women's empowerment and environmental activism within literary narratives. Scholars have emphasized the significance of self-awareness in women's journeys towards liberation and the role of nature in facilitating this process. Through their analyses, researchers have contributed valuable

insights into the complexities of gendered environmental experiences and the need for holistic approaches to social and ecological justice.

In the context of the research on The Roles of Nature for Woman's Self-Awareness in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: An Ecofeminism Approach*, the aim is to build upon these previous studies by offering a nuanced exploration of Tess's self-awareness within the framework of ecofeminism. Specifically, the focus will be on how Tess's interactions with nature shape her self-awareness and empowerment throughout the novel. By applying ecofeminism theory to Hardy's work, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, a fresh perspective on the relationship between women, nature, and self-awareness in literature is sought, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of these interconnected themes.

Research Method

The method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive method. Endraswara (2006) stated that qualitative research is research carried out by prioritizing the depth of appreciation of the interactions between concepts studied empirically. This research uses qualitative methods, because qualitative research is research that is most appropriate to literary phenomena, because literature is a world of words full of meaning, so this meaning needs to be realized so that it is easy to understand.

The qualitative descriptive method is a research method used to describe or explain a phenomenon or event in detail and in depth. This method aims to understand the meaning and experiences experienced by Tess in the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The way to apply qualitative descriptive methods in this research is to collect data through case studies. The data obtained is then analysed in depth and produces a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under study.

Result and Discussion

Numerous incidents the protagonist Tess experienced as a woman fighting for her very existence can be explored and analyzed in depth.

1. Nature Accompanies the Destruction of a Woman's Feelings

The demise of Tess's cherished horse, Prince, transcends mere sorrow; it becomes a poignant emblem of lifelong regret, haunting Tess with self-blame that reverberates through the corridors of her existence. The loss of Prince marks a pivotal moment in Tess's journey, a poignant awakening to her own self-awareness and the commencement of her intricate entanglement with the natural world. As she grapples with the weight of responsibility for Prince's fate, Tess's connection to nature deepens, intertwining her emotional landscape with the rhythms and cycles of the earth itself. The death of Prince serves as a catalyst for Tess's profound introspection, prompting her to confront her own agency and culpability in the face of life's capriciousness. Through this lens, Prince's passing emerges not merely as a tragic event, but as a symbolic threshold marking Tess's entry into a world where her interactions with nature become imbued with layers of meaning, reflecting the complexity of her innermost emotions and the inexorable march of time.

"'Tis all my doing - all mine!' the girl cried, gazing at the spectacle. 'No excuse for me - none. What will mother and father live on now? Aby, Aby!' She shook the child, who had slept soundly through the whole disaster. 'We can't go on with our load - Prince is killed! (Hardy, 1994: 23).

Witnessing the death of Prince left Tess shattered and engulfed in hysterical tears amidst the forest's embrace, where the raw beauty of nature served as a stark backdrop to her profound anguish. For Tess, Prince wasn't just a beloved companion; he was the cornerstone of her family's survival, a tangible link to their fragile existence in a world where prosperity often seemed reserved for the privileged few. The brutal reality of their dependence on Prince as a means of livelihood amplified the agony of his loss, casting a shadow of despair over Tess's already burdened heart.

As the crimson pool of Prince's lifeblood seeped into the earth, staining the once pristine landscape, Tess found herself grappling with the harsh truths of existence. Yet, amidst the wreckage of her shattered dreams, nature remained a steadfast companion, its silent presence bearing witness to

her grief and offering solace in its quiet embrace. Even as the tendrils of sorrow threatened to engulf her, Tess found a strange comfort in the unyielding beauty of the natural world, a reminder that amidst life's trials and tribulations, there is still solace to be found in the embrace of the earth itself. And so, in the midst of her darkest hour, Tess found herself enveloped by the gentle whisper of the wind, the soothing murmur of the trees, and the silent strength of the earth beneath her feet, offering her a glimmer of hope amidst the wreckage of her shattered dreams.

The atmosphere turned pale, the birds shook themselves in the hedges, arose, and twittered; the lane showed all its white features, and Tess showed hers, still whiter. The huge pool of blood in front of her was already assuming the iridescence of coagulation; (Hardy, 1994: 23).

This incident shattered Tess's confidence in navigating both the world and the natural realm, as her inadvertent actions in Prince's demise not only plunged her family into financial jeopardy but also precipitated a profound shift in her own sense of self. Prince's untimely death marks the onset of Tess's transformation from a carefree girl to a woman burdened by the weight of her own awareness and the consequences of her actions. Moreover, this tragic event resonates deeply with the principles of ecofeminism, a theoretical framework that examines the intricate interplay between nature and women's experiences. Tess's intimate connection with Prince and her subsequent devastation at his loss underscore the profound emotional ties that women often forge with the natural world. Through Tess's narrative, we witness the ways in which women's lives are entwined with the rhythms of nature, and how their experiences are shaped by their interactions with the environment.

Thus, Prince's death serves as a poignant reminder of the interconnectedness of all living beings and the profound impact of human actions on the natural world. It prompts Tess to confront not only the fragility of life but also her own role within the intricate web of existence, marking the beginning of a journey towards self-discovery and reconciliation with the forces of nature.

2. Nature as Dumb-Witness and Profaned Sanctuary

Once a haven of tranquility for Tess, the forest now stands as a haunting symbol of violation and trauma in the aftermath of her harrowing encounter with Alec d'Urberville. What was once a sanctuary where she sought solace and found respite from life's tribulations has been irreversibly tainted by the indelible scars of her suffering. The verdant canopy of trees, once a source of comfort and refuge, now serves as silent witnesses to the unspeakable horrors she endured. Every rustling leaf, every whispering breeze, now seems to echo with the echoes of her anguish, a relentless reminder of the agony she endured amidst the silent indifference of the natural world. The once gentle melody of the forest, now seems to reverberate with the haunting echoes of Tess's screams, her pain and anguish suffusing every corner of the once tranquil landscape. Nature, once a source of security and solace, now stands as a silent accomplice to Tess's suffering, its vast expanse bearing witness to the profound violation she endured. The very earth beneath her feet, once a sturdy foundation upon which she trod with confidence, now seems to quiver beneath the weight of her anguish, its silent tremors mirroring the turmoil raging within her own soul.

In the wake of her trauma, Tess finds herself adrift in a world that offers no solace, no refuge from the demons that haunt her every waking moment. The once sacred sanctuary of nature has been profaned by the cruelty of man, its beauty marred by the scars of Tess's suffering. And yet, amidst the wreckage of her shattered dreams, Tess finds a flicker of hope, a glimmer of resilience that refuses to be extinguished. For even in the darkest depths of despair, there is still the promise of redemption, the possibility of finding healing amidst the ruins of her brokenness.

There was no answer. The obscurity was now so great that he could see absolutely nothing but a pale nebulousness 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. (Hardy, 1994: 59).

This transformative shift in Tess's perception serves as a stark reminder of how the vibrant hues of her once colorful life were tragically tainted by the specter of her horrific experiences. The incident underscores a profound paradox inherent in the concept of women's equality, as it starkly illustrates how even the most idyllic of settings can become the stage for acts of violence and subjugation.

Tess's abuse, perpetrated amidst the serene beauty of nature, challenges the notion of the natural world as a sanctuary free from the trappings of human cruelty. The very landscape that many perceive as a symbol of purity and tranquility becomes, in Tess's narrative, a site of unspeakable violation and trauma. This juxtaposition serves to illuminate the pervasive nature of gender-based violence, highlighting how it transcends societal boundaries and infiltrates even the most sacred of spaces. Moreover, Tess's ordeal in nature raises poignant questions about the societal constructs that perpetuate such injustices. The fact that Tess's abuse occurred in a setting traditionally associated with beauty and serenity underscores the need to confront and dismantle the patriarchal structures that enable and condone acts of violence against women. It challenges us to reexamine our perceptions of gender equality and to recognize the inherent vulnerability faced by women in all facets of society, even in the ostensibly safe confines of nature.

Ultimately, Tess's experience serves as a sobering reminder of the work that remains to be done in the pursuit of true equality and justice for women. It calls upon us to confront the uncomfortable truths that lie at the heart of gender-based violence and to strive towards a world where all individuals are afforded the dignity, respect, and safety they deserve, regardless of gender.

Darkness and silence ruled everywhere around. Above them rose the primeval 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. (Hardy, 1994: 59).

This underscores the prevailing perception of women's vulnerability and fragility within society's collective consciousness. It highlights the harsh reality that women are often viewed as easy targets for violence, susceptible to harm regardless of time or place. Such a stark realization underscores the urgent need for society to prioritize the safety and well-being of women in order to uphold the principles of equality and justice. The recognition of women's inherent vulnerability serves as a poignant reminder of the pervasive nature of gender-based violence and the systemic injustices that women face on a daily basis. It underscores the imperative for society to enact meaningful measures aimed at safeguarding women from harm and ensuring their full participation in all aspects of life.

By prioritizing women's safety, society not only acknowledges the fundamental rights and dignity of women but also takes a crucial step towards dismantling the structures of oppression and inequality that perpetuate violence and discrimination. It is only through collective action and unwavering commitment to women's rights that we can hope to create a world where all individuals, regardless of gender, are able to live free from fear and violence.

3. Nature Provides Life Changes for a Woman

Nature assumes a transformative role in Tess's perception of the world around her, offering a glimpse into a larger pattern that transcends the confines of her immediate surroundings. As Tess surveys the expansive landscape before her, she is struck by the vastness and richness of the natural world, which serves as a stark contrast to the limited scope of her own existence. The description of the enclosures numbering fifty acres instead of ten and the more extended farmsteads signifies a shift in Tess's understanding of scale and proportion, as she grapples with the magnitude of the natural world unfolding before her. The groups of cattle forming tribes evoke a sense of community and interconnectedness, underscoring the intricate web of life that binds all living beings together. Moreover, the vivid imagery of the myriads of cows stretching as far as the eye can see, with their

ripe hues absorbing the evening sunlight, paints a picture of abundance and vitality. The green lea, speckled with cattle, becomes a canvas of natural beauty, reminiscent of the works of renowned painters such as Van Alsloot or Sallaert.

Through the evocative portrayal of nature's splendor, Tess's encounter with the vastness and richness of the natural world suggests that nature has the potential to catalyze profound changes within her as a woman. It hints at the transformative power of nature to expand Tess's horizons, broaden her perspective, and imbue her with a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of all living things.

The world was drawn to a larger pattern here. The enclosures numbered fifty acres instead of ten, the farmsteads were more extended, the groups of cattle formed tribes hereabout; there only families. These myriads of cows stretching under her eyes from the far east to the far west outnumbered any she had ever seen at one glance before. The green lea was speckled as thickly with them as a canvas by Van Alsloot or Sallaert with burghers. The ripe hues of the red and dun kine absorbed the evening sunlight, which the white-coated animals returned to the eye in rays almost dazzling, even at the distant elevation on which she stood. (Hardy, 1994: 84).

Tess's choice to become a milkmaid at Talbothays Dairy serves as a testament to her resilience and determination in the face of adversity. It reflects her newfound sense of self-awareness and her commitment to forging her own path despite the challenges she has endured. Despite the trauma she has experienced, Tess refuses to be defined by her past, instead choosing to pursue independence and purpose in her life. Her decision to embark on this new chapter signifies her resilience and her willingness to embrace new opportunities, demonstrating her unwavering resolve to carve out a better future for herself. Through her work at Talbothays Dairy, Tess not only finds a sense of belonging and fulfillment but also asserts her agency and autonomy, reclaiming control over her own destiny.

And thus her spirits, and her thankfulness, and her hopes, rose higher and higher. She tried several ballads, but found them inadequate; till, recollecting the psalter that her eyes had so often wandered over of a Sunday morning before she had eaten of the tree of knowledge, she chanted: 'O ye Sun and Moon...O ye Stars ...ye Green Things upon the Earth...ye Fowls of the Air... Beasts and Cattle...Children of Men...bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever!' She suddenly stopped and murmured: 'But perhaps I don't quite know the Lord as yet. (Hardy, 1994:85).

The farm environment provided Tess with a sanctuary to reclaim agency over her life, offering a semblance of control amidst lingering emotional wounds. While she has not fully healed, the daily tasks associated with farm life instilled a sense of routine and order, revitalizing her spirit and fostering emotional resilience. Through tending to livestock such as cows, Tess found herself deeply intertwined with nature, forging a profound connection to the earth and its rhythms. Her work on the farm served as a form of atonement for the violations she had endured and witnessed, reflecting her commitment to restoring harmony between humanity and the natural world. This resonates deeply with the principles of ecofeminism, which advocates for the recognition of the interconnectedness between women and nature. Tess's journey towards healing finds a powerful ally in nature, as she learns to collaborate with the natural world to navigate her trauma. Through this partnership, she discovers a renewed sense of purpose and empowerment, finding solace and strength in the embrace of the earth itself.

4. Nature as a Refuge and a Reminder

Tess's recurring escapism from society, spanning multiple pivotal moments in her life, offers profound insight into the intricate tapestry of her relationship with nature. Each instance, whether prompted by the trauma of falling victim to Alec's advances, the weight of confessing her past to Angel, or the crushing sense of failure within her familial dynamics, serves as a testament to the deep connection she shares with the natural world.

Following her harrowing encounter with Alec, Tess sought refuge in the embrace of nature's solace, retreating to secluded landscapes where the verdant beauty provided a temporary sanctuary from the scars left by her ordeal. Amidst the tranquil expanse of fields and forests, she found solace in the rhythmic cadence of the natural world, a balm to soothe her wounded spirit and mend the fractures within her soul. Similarly, after baring her soul to Angel and confronting the shadows of her past, Tess once again turned to nature as a source of comfort and renewal. In the vast expanse of the countryside, she found solace in the simple yet profound rhythms of life, seeking solace in the gentle whispers of the wind and the soft caress of sunlight filtering through the leaves. Yet, Tess's retreat into nature was not merely an act of escapism; it was a profound expression of her intrinsic bond with the land. In moments of despair and disillusionment, she sought solace in the embrace of the natural world, finding solace in its immutable beauty and unwavering presence. Through her connection with nature, Tess discovered a source of strength and resilience, a testament to the enduring power of the human spirit to find solace amidst the storms of life.

He had quite forgotten his struggle to kiss her when, in the early summer, they had driven in the opposite direction along the same road. But she had not, and she sat now, like a puppet, replying to his remarks in monosyllables. After some miles they came in view of the clump of trees beyond which the village of Marlott stood. It was only then that her still face showed the least emotion, a tear or two beginning to trickle down. (Hardy, 1994:62).

Tess's escapism after her confession to Angel about her past manifested in various forms. She sought solace in the idyllic countryside, immersing herself in the tranquil beauty of nature, hoping to temporarily evade the weight of her guilt and the repercussions of her revelation. Engulfed by the lush landscapes and serene surroundings, she found fleeting moments of respite from the turmoil within her heart. Amidst the verdant fields and whispering winds, Tess sought refuge, attempting to reconcile her fractured sense of self and navigate the tumultuous emotions that threatened to consume her. Yet, even amidst her attempts to escape, the echoes of her confession lingered, a constant reminder of the complexities of her reality and the uncertain path that lay ahead.

'I have thought over what you say,' she remarked to him, moving her forefinger over the tablecloth, her other hand, which bore the ring that mocked them both, supporting her forehead. 'It is quite true all of it; it must be. You must go away from me.'

'But what can you do?'

'I can go home.'

Clare had not thought of that.

'Are you sure?' he inquired.

'Quite sure. We ought to part, and we may as well get it past and done. You once said that I was apt to win men against their better judgment; and if I am constantly before your eyes I may cause you to change your plans in opposition to your reason and wish; and afterwards your repentance and my sorrow will be terrible. (Hardy, 1994: 203).

The wilderness of nature offers temporary refuge, a space to hide from society's harsh judgement. However, nature also always reminds her of the past, with the horrific and unexpected dangers in nature reflecting how complicated the life Tess lived was until she reached the highest point of self-awareness. She realized that nature gave her so many things as not only trauma, but also nature was the only space that gave her changes of life and a kind of freedom the curse of society.

Tess's escapism following her sense of failure within her familial role was a journey marked by profound introspection and a quest for redemption amidst the vast tapestry of nature. Overwhelmed by the weight of familial expectations and haunted by the specter of disappointment, Tess sought refuge in the untamed wilderness, where the rugged beauty of the landscape mirrored the complexities of her own inner turmoil. Retreating from the confines of societal norms and familial obligations, she embarked on a pilgrimage into the heart of the countryside, seeking solace in the embrace of the earth itself. Amidst the towering trees and meandering streams, Tess found sanctuary, shedding the burdens

of her past and embracing the promise of renewal. In the quietude of nature's sanctuary, Tess grappled with the myriad emotions that had long lain dormant within her heart. Amidst the symphony of rustling leaves and chirping birds, she confronted the echoes of her perceived failures, finding solace in the gentle rhythm of the natural world. Yet, amidst her journey of self-discovery, Tess also unearthed a profound sense of belonging and purpose. As she traversed the rugged terrain and forged a deeper connection with the land, she began to unravel the complexities of her own identity, finding strength in the knowledge that her worth transcended the narrow confines of familial expectations. In nature's embrace, Tess discovered a sanctuary where she could redefine her sense of self and chart a new course forward. Through her journey of escapism, she emerged not as a failure, but as a resilient spirit, forever intertwined with the timeless beauty of the natural world.

Poor Tess, who had heard as far as this, could not bear to hear more. The perception that her word could be doubted even here, in her own parental house, set her mind against the spot as nothing else could have done. How unexpected were the attacks of destiny! And if her father doubted her a little, would not neighbours and acquaintance doubt her much? O, she could not live long at home! (Hardy, 1994: 214).

The lines above underscore the enduring relevance of women's equality in Tess's narrative. Her instinct to seek refuge in nature exposes the constrictions imposed upon Victorian women by society's rigid norms and expectations. Despite her attempts to escape the constraints of her past, Tess finds herself ensnared by the repercussions of her circumstances, which threaten to derail her pursuit of a peaceful existence. Her struggles serve as a poignant reminder of the limitations imposed upon women by patriarchal structures, wherein even the most resilient individuals are shackled by societal expectations and the weight of their own history. Nature, in this context, becomes a powerful metaphor for the plight of women rendered helpless in a world that privileges male dominance and control.

Tess's journey highlights the ongoing battle for women's autonomy and agency in a society that seeks to confine and suppress their voices. Her past, beyond her control, becomes a constant reminder of the barriers she must overcome in order to secure her survival and forge a path towards a more equitable future. Through her experiences, Tess confronts the pervasive influence of patriarchy and the enduring struggle for women's empowerment, underscoring the need for continued efforts to dismantle systemic inequality and oppression.

Conclusion

This study explores the roles of nature for women's self-awareness in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles through an ecofeminist lens. The analysis of Tess's experiences throughout the novel reveals a complex relationship between women, nature, and self-awareness.

Nature serves as a backdrop for Tess's awakening self-awareness. The incident with her horse, Prince, marks a turning point where she grapples with the harsh realities of life and death. The violation she experiences in the forest shatters her perception of nature as a safe haven, transforming into a symbol of trauma. However, nature also offers Tess opportunities for healing and growth. Working on the farm reconnects her with nature. While in the other hand nature could also ultimately become a refuge from social judgement, also serves as a constant reminder of her past.

Through Tess's journey, Hardy emphasizes the interconnectedness between women and nature. He highlights the vulnerability of women. Tess's experiences demonstrate the need for a deeper understanding of the relationship between women and nature, advocating for more balanced and empowering connection. This study contributes to the understanding of ecofeminism in literature by demonstrating how nature shapes women's self-awareness and experiences. It emphasizes the importance of appreciating the complexities of this relationship and the societal factors that influence it.

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