

A Comparative Study of Female Figures in Tess of the d'Urbervilles and Yue Opera A Test of Love (Qing Tan)

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Abstract: *A Test of Love (Qing Tan)*,¹ 1957) and Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1892) both depict betrayal in love, marital dissolution and female vengeance. The two heroines are both kind and compassionate. They fall in love and marry their beloved ones in circumstances where their husband did not, or cannot, care much about the status of the two females. Yet soon they are betrayed and deserted by their partners, and later, the two heroines both avenged themselves. However, the similar narrative progressions in both works have different underlying contexts and character developments. Even as a ghost, Guiying still wants to believe that Wang Kui may still have a trace of humanity so that she could forgive him; while Tess, on the other hand, decides that her loss of virginity is the reason for her marital dissolution, so she decides to kill the man who has raped her. By studying the similarities and differences between the two stories, this thesis aims to find out how the social norms in the Song dynasty of China and Hardy's Victorian England are reflected by the portrayal of female figures in *A Test of Love* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. I will analyze the tragedy of both stories in terms of their depiction of marriage, betrayal, and vengeance, unveiling how the social norms of their time are demonstrated accordingly.

1. Introduction

Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1892) is a celebrated Victorian novel written by Thomas Hardy. During its time, the Victoria era (1837-1911) witnessed both colonization and industrialization. While bringing prosperity, wealth and glory to the United Kingdom, the Industrial Revolution increased the gap between different social classes drastically. Great shifts had taken place in the social structure. Owners of industries and entrepreneurs became more powerful. Many female workers migrated to urban areas to seek a better future for themselves upon the rising demand for female and child labor. Most of them also had to support their family. At the same time, the rise of the citizens and the value of the bourgeoisie also altered moral values of people of that time. In the middle class, men were considered as the ones who "entered the public world of business and politics, where their rationality, aggressiveness and intellectual power allowed them to succeed, [1]"

¹ In this thesis, I will mainly be discussing the Yue Opera version of *A Test of Love (Qing Tan)* - written by Tian Han and An E, starring Fu Quanxiang and Lu Jinhua; though other versions will also be mentioned.

nonetheless the women should be the ones who “remained at home in order to cultivate their moral and nurturing characters, which they used to guide their children and husbands. ^[1]”

Tess of the d'Urbervilles was published in such historical and social contexts. Coming from a poor peasant family, Tess works for the d'Urbervilles as a way to help her family get rid of the financial woes, yet she is raped there by the young master Alec. Later, when she has to confess such a sin to Angel, her husband-to-be, she is abandoned by him. When she is persecuted by public opinion and traditional morality, she regards herself as guilty ^[2]. Tess's tragedy is catalyzed by the outdated moral standards of Victorian society, which is also the underlying reason for Angel's virginity complex.

A Test of Love is a story about Wang Kui's betrayal of Jiao Guiying. After Wang's betrayal, Guiying accomplishes her vengeance as she haunts him in the form of a ghost. The story can be traced back to the Southern Opera of the Song dynasty (960-1279). Back then, taking the Imperial Examination was common among aspiring young men from lower social classes. If they were to be successful, they could secure themselves a bureaucratic job posting, which would improve both their financial conditions and social status. During the exam preparation and after their unsuccessful attempts, these scholars may fall into hard times due to financial impoverishment. Under such premises, Tian Han and An E wrote *A Test of Love* in the 1950s, in which Guiying, the heroine of this story, takes pity on Wang's condition and saves Wang from destitution. Guiying marries him out of love, providing him with financial and emotional support so that he could succeed, and he does. Yet, like many of the scholars who leave their wives or remarry someone more elite for the sake of exaltation after garnering their newfound success ^[3], Wang Kui divorces Guiying regardless of her total devotion to his success. Similar to Tess, who has to work again for the d'Urbervilles, Guiying commits suicide in the prospect of having to return to the brothel to earn a living. She had devoted everything in order to support her beloved, yet she gets nothing in return but betrayal.

“In that day and age, the exposure of the tragic fate of women and their struggle for freedom was a major issue of the time.^[4]” Jiao Guiying belongs to the oppressed class, and Wang Kui, instead of being her anchor of salvation, becomes the one who oppresses her. On the stage, the “underprivileged, tender heroine” can take her revenge through the help of supernatural forces, exhibiting the liberation of women that cannot be achieved in real-life. This is not only a victory of “theirs”, but a victory that belongs to “her”— the triumph of women ^[5]. Yet such success only serves people's desire to punish the evil as well as to show their compassion for the women of the working class. In *A Test of Love*, Guiying has the opportunity to test if Wang Kui still loves her in the form of a ghost thanks to the power of the God of the Sea, implying that such vengeance was impossible to be accomplished by herself in the real world. There is no law or justice that would take the disadvantaged women's side in reality. The accomplishment of vengeance is only a way to reach a make-believe happy ending.

In the novel and the opera, Tess and Guiying's tragedies are reflexive of the influence of social norms of Victorian England and the Song dynasty. Hardy's narrator wishes to imply that by the standards of “Nature,” by the laws known to the environment, Tess has committed no crime ^[6]; the social norms of virginity complex that lead to Angel's abandonment of Tess. Likewise, the social expectation for a scholar is to seek a marriage that is appropriate to his social status, giving Wang Kui the perfect excuse to divorce Guiying and remarry the daughter of the prime minister after his success in the Imperial Examination.

Hence, the two heroines and their lovers can be seen as the victims of the uncharitable social norms of their times.

2. Literature review

Tess of the d'Urbervilles and *A Test of Love* are both considered pearls of Chinese and British literature. A lot of research has been done about their story and how the female figures are portrayed in them.

Both in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *A Test of Love* the heroines and their lovers are the representatives that are limited by the social norms of chastity and marriage. In the 19th century, “most women were expected to marry because they wanted love and affection; they wanted children; they were sexually and economically vulnerable; they desired respectability and security.^[7]” “The Victorian definition of women as domestic angels is conflicted with the prevalence of women's labor outside the home and the differing sensibilities that this experience created.”^[1] (Ittmann 1995: 224) This explains why Angel thinks that Tess is no longer pure after she has lost her chastity, as the social norms define a respectable woman as an epitome who “believing in chastity before marriage and fidelity afterwards.^[7]” In the Song dynasty of China, the women were expected to be faithful to their husbands. Even a courtesan may hope to stop providing services of prostitution and getting married to a man. Although the life of a famous prostitute was glamorous on the surface, their life with intoxication and laughter is disdainful in the eyes of the upper-class people. Thus “they longed to leave prostitution and return to the chaste decent family life and live like ordinary women.^[8]” but the marital bliss actually depended on whether their men would be faithful to them and treat them with respect. Wang Kui's betrayal actually is because of the social conditioning of the Song dynasty which dictates him to find a wife that is well-matched to him in terms of social status.

The heroines have to “see the martial harmony as the only sign of a happy life.^[9]” which is an indicator that in Victorian times and the Song dynasty, women have to submit to male domination. For instance, women need to depend on men financially due to the lack of job postings for them. “Companionate marriage based on romantic love was considered the best type of union throughout the century.^[10]” yet the women had to “always enter the marriage market as minors.^[10]” In the Victorian times, “husbands controlled their wives' finances for most of the century so that wives could neither own property or money nor make wills.^[10]” Without being married, it might be hard for a woman to find a job. Because “few single women were employed in the public sphere”, and people believed that “marriage was the ‘career’ for women.^[10]” Therefore, when Angel deserts Tess, she is forced into emotional deprivation and financial impoverishment, forcing her to give in and, again, become one of Alec's mistresses. Meanwhile, in the Song dynasty, the Imperial Examination does not define a person by his family background, offering possibilities for scholars from lower classes to attain a higher social position. Nonetheless, women had to be appendages of their husbands in order to exchange for a better life. Otherwise, she would be looked down upon by others and she would not have a way to make a living, just like Guiying's experience as illustrated in *A Test of Love* – having to become a courtesan just to earn some money to bury her father.

Men also had the power to decide whether their romantic relationship or marriage should continue to exist, while women cannot argue for their own rights. Back in the Victorian era, women were considered inferior to men and therefore had to be subservient to men. The laws of society were also based on a man's perspective. Thus, in order to emphasize the absolute authority of men, women's beauty is often associated with provocation and lust. Tess is desired as a beautiful and pure woman, and when her image of perfection is shattered by her loss of virginity, she is relentlessly rejected and blamed by her loved ones^[11]. Angel and Alec share the assumption that they are entitled to the power of judging Tess's actions; neither of them treats her as a loving, equal partner^[12], while in feudal China, Men and women are extremely unequal. “Women are in a humiliatingly dependent position in marriage and are subjected to a heavy burden of chastity.^[13]” So Guiying is overwhelmed by Wang Kui's betrayal.

Tess and Guiying are both depicted as victims that chained by patriarchal ideologies, but the results of their tragedies reflected the distinctions in values and philosophical ideas of Chinese and Western culture. “Classical Chinese tragedy tends to lead people to believe in the ultimate triumph of the forces of truth, goodness and beauty over evil, while Western tragedy conveys the rejection and negation of the forces of evil through negation and destruction.^[14]” So, for Chinese classical tragedy, the happy ending is not only an integral part but also an indispensable part of making it complete even when it is unachievable in real life. Guiying’s revenge is accomplished after her suicide with the assistance of the power of the God of the Sea. This kind of happy ending is not realistic, but just an emotional solace and refuge for people. Such solace arises from conditions in which the protagonist has no way out and no reconciliation is possible for her in reality^[14]. On the other hand, although Tess is “the victim of outside forces-both societal and individual, and completely blameless for her problems and her resulting actions” as Young ^[15] illustrates in her dissertation, Tess still cannot escape the death penalty.

The thesis is going to introduce how the two masterpieces construct two female figures affected by social norms and marriage, embodying the social problems of Song China and Victorian England. By doing so, the thesis will analyze the reason for the function and fracture of their romantic relationships and then seek the cause and aftermath of their vengeance. Finally, the meaning and conclusion of this study will be presented.

3. Social norms in the Song dynasty of China and Hardy’s Victorian England

People, even as individuals, have their social attributes; they can hardly avoid being influenced by social ideas and norms as Tess and Guiying. In this section, I will be demonstrating how both works indicate the influence of social norms and the prevailing ideas of feudal Song China and Victorian England.

3.1 Loss of chastity

In the Victorian times, “Englishmen required only one virtue of a wife^{[7]212}” which is the female’s chastity. Feminist critic Ann Douglas propounds that in the Victorian era, women gained status by becoming the moral keepers of their generation^[15]. The social norm of chastity is demonstrated in Tess’s belief that she should be the wife of Alec’s.

She was Mrs. Angel Clare, indeed, but had she any moral right to the name? Was she not more truly Mrs. Alexander d’Urberville? Could intensity of love justify what might be considered in upright souls as culpable reticence? She knew not what was expected of women in such cases; and she had no counsellor^{[16]255}.

The reason that Tess thinks that she should be Mrs. Alexander d’Urberville instead of Mrs. Angel Clare is that she has been seduced by the former and even lost her chastity to him, which she thinks is a fault that she once has committed by herself. Although others from the lower class do not have such high expectation of her virginity, Tess would not agree to think so, and she thought that she is inferior to her friends who worked as dairymaids that love Angel as well. At times, she “dares to rebel against traditional morality and the hypocrisy of the religion^[17]” by giving the baptism to her dying illegitimate child; but she “is unable to free herself from the constraints of traditional morality^[17]” when it comes to the loss of her own virginity. “Angel serves as her father, confessor and even her judge; on their wedding night, Tess tells Angel of her past, letting him decide what is right without a word in her own defense.^[15]” Such depiction shows that only men have the right to define if a woman is pure. It is demonstrated in the novel as well that Tess was asleep when Alec seduced and raped her, that she is unconscious and does not have the right to deny and refuse Alec’s actions. Especially when the prevailing wisdom of the Victorian era tells her otherwise: “even in

situations of violence and danger, women should remain passive and sweet rather than engage in self-defense.^[10]” The restriction of virginity only belongs to women. As Pateman notes^[18], the naturally superior, active, and sexually aggressive males do not have to follow such rules. Instead, as the dominant party of the patriarchy, they are within their power to have sexual relationships with women. The example of Angel’s “eight-and-forty hours’ dissipation with a stranger.^{[16]267”} is the proof of that concept.

Guiying, on the other hand, faces a situation that is even more difficult. When asking for help from the God of the Sea, she explains that she was “forced into prostitution so that she can bury her father,^[19]” thus her loss of chastity is unavoidable. As a character of the Song dynasty, Guiying cannot secure any steady financial income as Tess does, apart from getting married or becoming a courtesan. Guiying later chooses to stop selling her body after getting married to Wang Kui, which caused her to be scolded and taunted by her female procurer. However, once she becomes the wife of Wang Kui, she has no choice but to devote herself to him. In feudal China, the ethical codes of the society required absolute obedience of the wife to her husband. Whereas the men can own several concubines, the females must be faithful and devoted to their partners. The love that women developed for their husbands is not only seen as a duty and by-product of the marriage, but also an unavoidable and imperative protuberance of it. Because it is the only way that a woman can be attached to her husband as well as get the security of her own live hood^[13]. For a courtesan, when she decides to get married in order to get out of prostitution, she also had to adhere to such social norms just like other females. Moreover, because of her loss of chastity, she will be more likely to get divorced and abandoned by her partner.

Yet the Yue Opera *A Test of Love* does not state such social concepts so directly. Instead, it puts more emphasis on Guiying’s love and tenderness for Wang Kui. As Fu^[20], the actress of Guiying, says about the character-building of Guiying: “Yue opera is soft, beautiful and lyrical which is beneficial for me to expressing emotions when I played the role of Guiying on stage.” (p.28)

3.2 Marital decisions and betrayal

The marital decisions in *A Test of Love* and *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* are the perfect epitome of Victorian reality and the social norms in feudal Song China. Angel’s parents hope that he could marry Mercy Chant, an accomplished lady of a good family, which is an understandable choice for the middle-class male. Moreover, as a Christian, Angel is taught by his family that he should get married to a chaste, pure woman; Tess is a fallen woman by definition, and she can never fit his requirements^[21]. But in Victorian England, a man could be “legally at liberty^{[16]197”} as he chooses his spouse, thus in the novel, Angel is able to marry Tess as he wishes. Although his parents were a little dissatisfied with what he had done, they still sent their benedictions and blessings to the newly-married couple.

On the other hand, a fallen woman was considered immoral, and if a man decided to desert such a partner, the social norms would support him for doing so, and would not consider it a betrayal. When Tess is confessing her past to her husband, she “even suggests first that she must leave^[15]” so that Angel can be free from such scandal. Angel’s decision to simply ignore her and depart for Brazil deeply troubled Tess, because in the Victorian era, “a woman’s ‘feminine hope’ was to secure her husband and domestic status.^[22]”

In Song China, it was common for men to marry a woman upon his parents’ approval. Without the acceptance of the parents and the arrangement of the matchmakers, the romantic relationship would be forbidden as the lovers would be looked down upon by others in society^[13]. Thus, Guiying and Wang Kui’s marriage in *A Test of Love* is not recognized by the social expectations and when the scholars rise in their social status as Wang does, it is commonplace for them to “divorce their

lawful wife from lower class and remarry another lady that from the upper-class family^{[13]136}” so that they can lead a smooth career just like Wang’s second marriage with the daughter of the prime minister. However, even if in the social concepts of that time, it was impossible for the scholar to marry a female that had a gap in social status with him, it was still unforgivable in people’s minds that the scholar betrayed his devoted wife. “Instead of being grateful to Guiying’s love and financial support, Wang Kui sent her a letter of divorce, which makes people grow more sympathetic towards Guiying.^{[13]11}” Since it was impossible for a person like Wang to pay the price in reality, the God of the Sea helped Guiying accomplish her vengeance

Thus, the marital decisions of Victorian England and the Song dynasty were influenced by the social norms of those times. As illustrated in the examples of Tess and Guiying’s marriage, women were viewed as the ones who had to be restricted by concepts such as virginity and loyalty as dictated by the patriarchy; they do not have the right to defend themselves against the betrayal of their lovers.

4. A comparison of romantic relationships

In *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *A Test of Love*, it is clearly unveiled how their romantic relationships develop and shatter. In this section, I will illustrate the characteristics of both female protagonists as well as the beginning and the end of their relationships.

4.1 Function of romantic relationships

In *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, Tess is passive when Angel pursues her, partly because she has lost her virginity, but also due to fatalism and pessimism. She hardly believes that she deserves the happy marriage with Angel. She “is particularly distressed during her brief moments of happiness^[15]” in the fear that she might lose it in sudden misfortune. She feels inferior to her dairymaid friends for her impurity as they, too, love Angel. She, although painful in the heart of hearts, denies herself from getting married to Angel.

“I don’t want to marry! I have not thought of doing it. I cannot! I only want to love you.”

“But why?”

Driven to subterfuge, she stammered—

“Your father is a parson, and your mother wouldn’t like you to marry such as me. She will want you to marry a lady.”

“Nonsense—I have spoken to them both. That was partly why I went home.”

“I feel I cannot—never, never!” she echoed^{[16]204}.

Tess is in pain, but incapable of telling the truth of her loss of virginity to Angel in person. Throughout her relationship with Angel, she cowers and hesitates in the face of his advances and proposals; she later tries to postpone their wedding date, and tries to confess in letter, yet all this is in vain. Although she feels that she might not be able to keep such happiness for long, as she is somehow affected by the fatalism belief. For her, it is impossible and unfair for her to refuse Angel’s love, since she worships him as if he is a god: he is educated, gentle and with good manners. “The psychological root of her self-sacrifice for and worship of Angel is twofold: she greatly overestimates Angel Clare’s worth, while, at the same time, significantly underestimating her own value.^[15]” While Angel, on the other hand, actually loves her as a symbol of a pure maiden:

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.

“Call me Tess,” she would say askance^{[16]154}.

This passage above clearly reveals that not only does he think she is the embodiment of the

perfect woman in the world, but he loves her more as a perfect image of “goddess” in his imagination rather than as a person, such an image of perfection will inevitably break down in the long years of marriage.

Unlike Tess, Guiying is more motivated in developing a romantic relationship with Wang Kui. Her righteous act of rescuing the downtrodden Wang Kui, as well as the financial support and comfort she offers to him is certainly the reason that the two fall in love soon after they become familiar with each other.

However, the romantic relationship between them is utterly unequal in a lot of ways. In order to afford the fees of Wang Kui’s study and the cost of living, Guiying has to go to the pawnshop to sell her jewelry in order to make the ends meet. Besides, she is so devoted to him that she almost forgets to celebrate the friendship anniversary with her sworn sisters. In order to cure Wang’s disease, she asks for a prescription from the doctor herself. But Wang Kui does not show his affection for Guiying in any direct way. Ambitious as he is, he spends most of the time studying. Because in Song China, “however distressed the scholar was, once they passed the Imperial Examination, they would become rich and famous.”^{[13][138]} Thus Wang Kui tells Guiying what he aspires to:

(says) ...If I get good scores in the Imperial Examination, I will take you to the capital city Bianjing to enjoy all the material comforts together with me.

Guiying (says) My dearest, are you just grinding your days for the betterment for your own physical comfort?

Wang (says) Just as the saying goes: “The person who spends dozens of years in preparation is only nobody; yet once he passes the Imperial Examination, he is well-known nationwide.” Just imagine, if I earned an official career by passing this exam, I would have everything I want. What else should I be looking forward to?

Guiying (says) My dearest!

(sings) You shall never forget the hardship that you have been through; for there are others beyond the upper-class who are down and out.

If you, my love, would become the upper-class to deliver the poor and all those who are oppressed, then it is not in vain that I am giving you my support at this moment^[19].

From these lines, the author indicates the differences between Guiying and Wang Kui. Guiying is tender, compassionate, and hopes to save those that are impoverished, while Wang Kui seems more selfish as he is only eager to have a higher social status and becomes rich. In feudal China, it is considered a virtue that a wife urges her husband to be diligent in his administration for the people and to be a good official who cares about the affairs of the state and people's livelihood ^[23]. Thus, Guiying is acting as a good wife of Wang Kui. According to Zhao ^[23], it is also common for wives to give support and encouragement while their husbands were in the preparation for the Imperial Examination, some of them even sold their trousseau when their husbands are suffering from economic difficulties. A good wife is required to be resigned and loving to the husband. There is no such requirement for men since they are expected to succeed in their official careers. Therefore, Guiying’s devotion to Wang Kui is an outcome of her deep love and kindness, as well as a result of what the society requires.

Due to his chances of earning an official career, Wang Kui feels secretly superior to Guiying, although all he has is provided by Guiying, even the opportunity to sit for the Imperial Examination is under her financial support. Since if a courtesan wants to leave the brothel and gain a higher social position as a lawful wife, the only way they can do so is by marrying someone, especially one of the scholars who have the chance to be an officer in the government^[24].

As Guiying always has an inferiority complex for her status as an ex-courtesan, Guiying never asks Wang Kui to repay her kindness, instead, she devoted herself single-heartedly Wang Kui, even giving him the jade fan pendant, her family heirloom, as the token of their love. Therefore, she is

choosing to marry Wang Kui rather than Wang Kui deciding to marry her.

The relationships that Tess and Guiying experienced are not equal because of both the inequality between the genders and their dispositions that are very typical of their time, as illustrated by the authors. Whether they feel enthusiastic or irresolute about the development of their romantic relationships, essentially, the love and marriage are viewed as their careers which are of overwhelming importance in their life. By presenting such scenes to the readers and the audiences, the authors have in fact “challenged the concepts of love, the institution of marriage^[25]” by constructing them as the perfect examples of devoted, faithful wives of their times.

4.2 Reasons for marital dissolution

Both Tess and Guiying are viewed as commodities that the men could purchase with money or get rid of with palimony, when Alec wants Tess to be his mistress, he moves and persuades her by telling her the favors he could offer to her family, while Wang Kui coerces Guiying to leave by promising to give her more money. In such situations, the two heroines seem docile and passive to their partners, and it actually exposes the objectification of women in their times. The men had the power to determine the value of their partners in the patriarchal society like Song China and Victorian England, the loss or comprise in relationships could be offset by the money the females got from their partners. In these times, women did not have the right to decide whether their marriages should continue since only the husbands had the right to divorce a wife. They can divorce their wives for many reasons, including the loss of virginity or the unequivocal of social status, essentially regarding a woman as their own property rather than as an individual.

“I thought, Angel, that you loved me—me, my very self! If it is I you do love, O how can it be that you look and speak so? It frightens me! Having begun to love ‘ee, I love ‘ee for ever—in all changes, in all disgraces, because you are yourself. I ask no more. Then how can you, O my own husband, stop loving me?”

“I repeat, the woman I have been loving is not you.”

“But who?”

“Another woman in your shape.”^{[16]273}

When Tess confesses her past, the perfect image of a pure goodness-like maiden has faded in Angel’s mind. Upon the huge shock that Angel receives, the first thought that comes to his mind is to accuse Tess of her impurity and deny his love for Tess while Tess has already forgiven him about his affair. Even if Tess is being raped instead of having an affair with others just like what he once has done, he still thinks that it is her fault rather than Alec’s. Under the influence of patriarchal values, women are thought to be inferior to men and have to become the possession of their husbands once married. Although Angel is the one who rebels against his family tradition of being a parson like his older brothers, and decides to do the farming, which is not a respectable profession in the mind of the middle-class people, he is still affected by the social norms he learns as a member of the middle class. In fact, he is still chaining Tess and himself with such prevailing social concepts.

Wang Kui, on the other hand, sends Guiying a letter of divorce due to the mismatch between his newfound social status and Guiying’s:

(sings) I am going to send the letter of divorce to Ms. Jiao who lives in the brothel.

It is not because I have lost my conscience; it is due to the differentiated social class of you and me.

How could I, the one who garners the top position in the Imperial Examination, settle down with a courtesan such as you?^[19]

As Wang Kui is dissatisfied with Guiying's profession as an ex-courtesan and the social

differentiations between him and Guiying, he chooses to marry the daughter of the prime minister's family, whom will be of help to his future in the government. To emphasize the enthusiasm of being engaged to such a lady from the powerful family, Wang even gives out the jade pendant, Guiying's family heirloom as well as the token of love between them, as a token of his engagement to his second marriage. His care for Guiying is clearly secondary compares to the importance that he attaches to his career. In contrast, the sense that shows the faithful love that Guiying holds out for her beloved Wang Kui was performed just after Wang sends out the letter:

Guiying is already in the temple where she will commit suicide when she receives Wang Kui's letter of divorce. She has just finished lighting three sticks of incense and singing three prayers for his success and happiness, which heightens the dramatic impact of his heartlessness and ingratitude^[26].

In both the feudal society of China and Victorian England, the dissolution of marriages was viewed as a disaster for a divorced wife, for the social restrictions deprived them of independence and push them towards their husbands. While men like Angel and Wang Kui are so content with their social privilege: the former sanctions whether a woman is chaste; the latter betrays his wife to earn a higher social status. Moreover, the women do not have the chance to make advancement in their social status except that get married to a man who is born a member of the upper-class or has earned the qualification for it. As Huang notes^[13], it is only through marriage that women can get out of their plight and enter the social class that they are desiring.

5. Vengeance in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *A Test of Love*

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *A Test of Love*, the two heroines both avenge themselves in the face of abuse and betrayal, also suffering the immense consequence that comes with it. Guiying sacrifices her life so that she could hold Wang Kui accountable for his heartless betrayal. Meanwhile, out of resentment and the need to atone her sin for Angel, Tess kills Alec herself, knowing full-well that she is going to the guillotine for her actions. This chapter will examine the cause and consequence of their action respectively.

5.1 Causes and ways of vengeance

Tess, who has been abandoned by Angel for her impurity and forced to become Alec's mistress, clearly harbors a deep resentment towards Alec. In the novel, Tess's reason for revenge is to bring back her beloved ex-husband.

Angel, will you forgive me my sin against you, now I have killed him? I thought as I ran along that you would be sure to forgive me now, I have done that. It came to me as a shining light that I should get you back that way^{[16]458}.

Tess tries to make up for the loss of her virginity with murder so that she can prove her love for Angel in an extremely tragic way: paying for her actions with her life afterwards. She believes that she is morally chained to Alec, for she "feels obligated to free herself of Alec. She could not legally separate herself from him because they were not legally married; thus she must kill him.^[15]" Yet, her killing is seen as somehow a sacrifice rather than a vengeance, "when she may bring the chance of happiness to herself and to Angel.^[15]" she chooses to kill Alec in order to make Angel come back to her. Only by doing so, she shows Angel her love and nearly regains her chastity.

Tess also hates Alec for he had deceived her that Angel would never come back to her again in order to keep her as the mistress of his own, and he talks about Angel disrespectfully. Hence, her vengeance is for Angel in more sense than one rather than for herself. This substitution of the individual for the divine, using the power of the human to bless or kill, including in Tess's baptism of her illegitimate child, is in fact a reflection of the Western literary conception of vengeance. The

idea of “vengeance” itself carries the power for the individual to take revenge for the evil inflicted on them by the others. An act of determined revenge is even praised and affirmed. Thus, Tess’s motive for accomplishing her vengeance is her love for Angel and take revenge for what Alec had done to her.

In contrast to Tess’s determination to kill Alec herself, Guiying draws upon the power of the God of the Sea. In traditional Chinese literature, the victims are usually kind-hearted but underprivileged people who are oppressed or ground down by the ones who are powerful, rich and cruel. Since there is no way for them to revolt against such maltreatment, thus the writers would create a supernatural power like the God of the Sea to help the disadvantaged ones to punish the villains especially after the death of the victims. Thus, Guiying first cries out to the God of the Sea to ask for Wang Kui’s capture. She then hangs herself to express her determination to avenge herself for Wang’s betrayal. Her death successfully summons the God of the Sea; thus, she is able to go to Bianjing to confront Wang Kui as a ghost. As Han notes^[27], in the Chinese dramas, the ghost figure is a unique form of the life of the protagonist as it continues the life of the protagonist in the play, reproducing the spirit and emotional appeal of the protagonist’s life, and plays an important role in the plot structure of the play.

In the scene named “On the Journey” (Xing Lu), the playwright uses traditional Chinese literary technique of using characters from Chinese folklore and ancient literature to express Guiying’s anger and lament. Such as the two Liangshan heroes Song Jiang and Wu Song, who are regarded as the saviors of the oppressed people; Zhao Wuniang, a fictional woman that is deserted by her husband after his success in the Imperial Examination which is just so similar to Guiying’s own experience. By using such examples, the audience grows more empathized with Guiying.

However, Guiying is still rendered as a typical sentimental woman of Chinese feudal society by the playwright. Once she sees her once-beloved Wang Kui again, the past disperses in front of her eyes and her emotions surge like a tide, she almost instantly forgives him^[28]. Seeing Wang Kui in his officer uniform and pacing in the study, she forgets her initial vengeful purpose. Instead, she kneels, cupping the hem of his clothing and touches it in a tender, loving way. Compared to Tess, the image of Guiying seems so submissive and sentimental because the playwright wants to focus on the excessive emotional momentum between Wang Kui and Guiying and weaken the believability of Guiying’s character. As Zhang states^[29], it was a way for the playwrights to show the concerns of people’s everyday life, by doing so, they not only echoed the elite thoughts since the May Fourth Movement that appealed for democracy, but to some extent, they also avoided and diluted the strong pressure brought by the realpolitik discourse of the 1950s by showing a thwarted love story instead. On the other hand, it can be seen as a way to give a moral lesson to people, which is also praiseworthy in the political expectations of that time.

Out of her tenderness, Guiying then decides that she will test if Wang would repent; if he does, she would let him go. This is also why this Yue opera is named *A Test of Love*. She asks him if he would allow her to be a concubine or a maid to him, so that she does not have to go back to prostitution. Begging for Wang’s permission to stay, Guiying tells him how miserable her life has been and could be:

(sings) If you still remember the love and kindness that I once offered to you.

Will you let me stay and live my humble life by your side as a concubine or a maid?

Although the life as a subordinate may still be miserable, it is far better than the life of prostitution, in which I would get beaten by the pimp^[19].

From this section, it is demonstrated by the playwright that Guiying must be living a hard life since Wang send her the letter of divorce, for she has been abandoned by the one she once devoted all her savings to. Yet for Wang Kui, it is impossible to provide a shelter for Guiying as he had settled down comfortably in the family of the prime minister. With the power of the minister on his

side, the new wife of Wang Kui would not be so easy to get rid of. If the lady knows that he has married Guiying, she, as well as all his colleagues, and perhaps even the emperor himself, will no longer trust him, let alone offer him professional advancements. Thus, although he feels sorry for what he had done to Guiying, he still forces her to leave. When Wang no longer pretends to be gentle by expiating his sins but threatens Guiying with his sword, Guiying is no longer fixated on the love for her ex-husband: she realizes Wang Kui's selfishness and immorality. Wang Kui is willing to be supported by her when he is desperate, but he is fully capable of annihilating the only person who had helped him just so that he can secure his position and live his life in peace. "Wang Kui's thanklessness is both a sentimental and a moral negativity."^{[13][30]} Thus Guiying's revenge is both emotional and moral. As Zhang claims^[30], Wang Kui's betrayal of Guiying is somehow against his free will. It is still somehow a kind of male domination to females, and the oppression from the mainstream to the disadvantaged ones of the society; at the same time, his thanklessness to Guiying's kindness and his betrayal under his own promise is unforgiveable in the moral code of the people.

5.2 Effect and aftermath of vengeance

Tess and Guiying's vengeance caused the ultimate death of the wrongdoer or the humiliator. Their vengeance shows that back in the Song dynasty and Victorian times, if a woman wanted to get the villain punished in such a society, the price she had to pay is so expansive that the only way she could afford it is to sacrifice herself. Even so, it is impossible for her to be free from the patriarchy. If their revenge indicates the hope of a kinder, more just social structure, then her death indicates that the world is unprepared for such a transformation^[22].

At the end of the novel, Tess asks Angel to marry his sister, which is a challenge to British law at the time. Hardy provided an open ending in this regard, since Angel only promises to do so at Tess's deathbed, and it is not clear whether this will happen. As it was forbidden by the law of England to get married to the sisters of one's former wife at that time, it can be sensed as another attempt of Hardy to express his spirit of resistance. Meanwhile, it also showed that the author was limited by the concepts of his time: while men are, ironically, benefiting from women's struggles, they are going to fall in love with another female, who is as gentle and as devoted as their former partners. The women are just so willing to sacrifice themselves to see their beloved leading a happy life without them. It is perhaps a male fantasy to set up such a plot.

Meanwhile, it can be argued that Tian Han and his wife An E were on the women's side instead of the men's. Although Guiying is rendered submissive and docile, and her unwillingness for vengeance is reprised in the work, the final act still ends with the violent clash between her and Wang Kui, underscoring their wishes of women to make themselves as equal to men^[31]. As Fu expresses^[32], Tian Han saw Guiying as the ghost image of "beauty, love and resentment". Her resentment with blood and tears was not only against Wang Kui, but also against the patriarchal values in feudal Song China that were crushing women in general. Yet the condemnation was more likely to be focused on Wang Kui's behavior of betraying Guiying rather than the skewed social norms of Song China. Huang (2000) explains that Chinese tragedy has more moral connotation. The scholars, who are praised and judged for their high moral standards, would lead to a stronger condemnation for immoral behaviors, such as breaking his promise and marrying a new wife after success. By paying more attention to the emotional momentum and the moral lesson which are provided by the characters, Tian and An try to dissolve the political expectations of the class struggle and replace it with the emotions of daily life in order to appeal to the feelings of ordinary people.

Tess and Guiying's personal revenge is actually served as a way to express their love towards

their partners. However, with the narration of the authors, they succeed in revealing the injustice of social hierarchy and gender limitations of their times.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, throughout the study of Guiying and Tess's portrayal, it can be concluded that the two heroines are both victims of the patriarchal values of their time and place.

As two female figures of Victorian England and feudal Song China respectively, they both want to keep their romantic relationships and maintain marital stability, along with the happiness of their life that would have come with it, but both of them fail. Tess, who had been the perfect maiden in Angel's eyes, is no longer perfect when she confesses her loss of chastity on her wedding night, and Angel treats her with disdain and goes to Brazil alone. Guiying receives the letter of divorce from Wang Kui for that as a courtesan, it is impossible for her to be the wife of a scholar who has garnered the top position in the Imperial Examination. Under the constraints of chastity/purity for females to maintain one's virginity before marriage as well as the social concepts that marriage should consist of two people of equal social status; it is always women who are disgraced once they are divorced by their husbands. Men could either be born noble like Angel and Alec or make advancement in their social status by taking the Imperial Examination like Wang Kui, while women had no choice but to devote all their affections or even offer marital favor in order to uphold their marriage, since it is the only hope that they could be protected or getting any financial or social advancements. Thus, if they are betrayed by their husbands, they would be so desperate that they have nothing to lose for a chance of vengeance.

Meanwhile, the emphases of the two females' vengeance are different in the two works. In *A Test of Love* as well as in other Chinese literature, the story of punishing the ungrateful man is considered a moral lesson rather than an exposure of the social bias. Since it was one of the moral ethics in Chinese traditions that if the husband marries a wife when his family was poor, he could not repudiate his wife once he becomes rich, because the wife had shared her husband's hardships^[33]. While in western literature such as *Tess*, vengeance is simply regarded as the action of hurting someone in return for an injury or wrong suffered at his hands.

In addition, the object of the female revenge is not necessarily the one who betrays them in a relationship. Jiao Guiying turns herself into a ghost in order to figure out if Wang Kui still is affectionate or has empathy towards her. Tess, however, decides to kill Alec as a punishment for him as he had raped her, forces her to be his mistress, talks to her with disrespectful frivolity and describes her marriage with Angel Clare as a complete travesty. Hence, the female vengeance accomplished by them is just a way to see if they could win their love back again, and their vengeance embodies the struggle and efforts made by women in facing unequal social oppression^[34].

As for the significance of the study, it aims to show that even in different cultures and times, women are subjected to similar tragic fates by the patriarchy. They both experience gender inequality and the imparity in social status; they have to turn to marriage when they wish to get a higher status in society. By the analysis of the two female figures written in this thesis, people shall recognize how the theme of the oppression that the patriarchy was revealed in both works.

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