

## FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD (1874), Thomas Hardy

### Chapter 3 “A Girl on Horseback- Conversation”

<b>Repérage lexical</b>	<i>seeing/ being seen</i>	<p>there appeared in view</p> <p>he peeped through the loophole ⇒ Gabriel is <b>a voyeur</b>, a peeping-tom</p> <p>she looked around, the girl looked around as if to assure herself that all humanity was out of view, satisfying herself that nobody was in sight</p> <p>Gabriel's eyes had scarcely been able to follow ⇒ impossibility to catch her (proleptic of their difficulty to connect later on in the novel?)</p> <p>the obvious sounds of a person milking a cow from within the shed ⇒ she is not seen but heard</p> <p>a beholder, Oak's eyes</p> <p>she was Gabriel's face rising like the moon behind the edge ⇒ funny, out of proportion</p> <p>nobody had ever seen her neck and shoulders</p> <p>her instinct to draw the line dividing the seen from the unseen higher than they do in towns now</p> <p>criticism looked at her proportions</p> <p>rays of male vision</p>
	<i>conventional/ unconventional portrait</i>	<p>an unexpected performance, the performer ⇒ theatrical, <b>like a show</b></p> <p>her head, her feet, her eyes cf <b>blason-like</b></p> <p>this abnormal attitude, another even more obviously convenient, she had no side-saddle, she seated herself in the manner demanded by society, though hardly expected of the woman ⇒ the woman breaks <b>free of convention when unseen</b> (1<sup>st</sup> step of emancipation?)</p> <p>the pony seemed used to such doings</p> <p>the girl returned, properly seated now</p> <p>the left arm – enough of it shown bare – wish the whole would be revealed cf blason-like, <b>eroticism</b></p> <p>desirability – her charms</p> <p>her height, her features, her proportions with pleasure, her figure, a beautiful neck and shoulders</p> <p>not a shy girl by any means</p> <p>Yet it was the man who blushed, the maid not at all : reversal of expectations, the woman is strong-willed, <b>emancipated even when seen</b></p>
	<i>movement</i>	<p>was about to advance / suspend the action</p> <p>the rapidity of her glide, springing to her accustomed perpendicular ⇒ <b>virtuoso</b></p>
	<i>the beginning of something</i>	<p>day began to break – a new interest – at the foot of - ascending</p>

<b>Repérage syntaxique</b>	<i>length &amp; rhythm of sentences etc.</i>	<p>there appeared in view an auburn pony with a girl ≠ a girl appeared  ⇒ the mysterious girl is referred to at the end of the sentence (<b>staging of the scene</b>, suspense)</p> <p>An hour passed, the girl returned ⇒ parataxis, ellipsis, abrupt rhythm and change of focus (<b>time and space are played with</b>)</p> <p>vanity if a little more, dignity if a little less ⇒ <b>parallelism between vice and virtue</b></p> <p>At long last the “conversation” announced in the title of the chapter: very short sentences, <b>anti-climax</b>?</p> <p><b>What matters is not what they say but what they see / saw.</b></p>
<b>Repérage narratif</b>	<i>omniscient voice</i>	description of the scene, the motions, the characters
	<i>narrator's specific voice</i>	<p>a pause to describe Bethsheba in details and with <b>amusement</b> (makes fun of Gabriel's trouble / emphatically refers to beauty canons of the time, mockingly evokes mythological nymphs)</p> <p>her instinct to draw the line dividing the seen from the unseen higher than they do in towns now ⇒ <b>actually this is the narrator drawing literal lines as he writes, playing with Gabriel's and the reader's desires</b></p> <p>higher than in towns / virgin faces in rural district ⇒ <b>a narrator interested in rurality</b></p>
<b>Repérage rhétorique</b>	<i>similes, anaphoras, alliterations etc.</i>	<p><b>d</b>exterously <b>d</b>ropped backwards, rapidity of her glide ⇒ movement echoed by alliterations (<b>virtuosity</b> of the character and of the narrator)</p> <p>anaphora “her head...her feet ...her eyes...” = movement of the character and of the beholder watching her</p> <p>her glide was that of a kingfisher, its noiselessness that of a hawk ⇒ <b>animal similes</b></p> <p>springing to her accustomed perpendicular like a bowed sapling ⇒ <b>natural simile</b> ⇒ Bethsheba makes one with nature (birds, plants)</p> <p><b>h</b>anging up the <b>h</b>at in <b>h</b>is <b>h</b>ut ⇒ an amused pause in the scene</p>

The female character is chronologically referred to as:

a girl – the rider – the girl- - the performer – the girl – the young woman – a person milking a cow- the girl – the maid (never her name in the whole passage)

## TOPICS

-a striking **portrait in movement**

-an **unconventional** woman

-**male gaze / female confidence**

-a **well-staged scene** (the literary topos of the romantic encounter) : the scene is staged like

1/in a circus or a theater

2/in the English countryside

3/in the Universe (he masters the sunrise, the moonrise)

⇒ **the characters are the narrators' puppets**

*“All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts”  
As You Like It (1599), William Shakespeare*

## **SKETCH FOR AN ANALYSIS**

The first (potentially) romantic encounter of a novel is a literary topos, as well as more often than not a source of enjoyment and anticipation for the reader. If the extract from Chapter 3 does fulfill this role in the form of a game of hide-and-seek, it also proves to be quite a trompe-l'oeil: the way the reader gets to know the female character is far from conventional (I), hinting at the freedom and power of both the heroine (II) and the narrator (III).

### **I/ AN UNCONVENTIONAL PORTRAIT**

- A) Illusion of a portrait (blasons, similes)
- B) Irony of the portrait and situation (reversal of roles, rural life vs urban society)
- C) A portrait in motion (the heroine is a living force)

Transition: the strength of the woman is not only physical but also social

### **II/ A GAME OF HIDE-AND-SEEK**

- A) The woman in control of seeing / (not) being seen
- B) The woman's gradual emancipation
- C) The man's voyeurism but powerlessness

Transition : the man is the narrator's toy even more so than the woman's

### **III/ THE STAGING OF THE SCENE**

- A) The narrator as a puppeteer
- B) The narrator as an observer of society
- C) The narrator as the ultimate entertainer (mastering time and space)

All through the passage, the heroine remains anonymous, which turns her into a mystery for the hero, as well as an allegory of female independence for the reader. Nothing can bring her down, not even a name. Obviously, her freedom acts as a foil for the narrator's amused inventiveness: Bethsheba and Hardy have thus found their own respective means to criticise Victorian society.