

Reinvestigating Thomas Hardy's Motives in The Characterisation of Alec D'urbervilles and Angel Clare in *Tess of the D'urbervilles*

Mr. Alphonsus Aneke

Department of English, Coal City University, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Dr. MaryIsabella Ada Chidi-Igbokwe

Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.37745/gjahss.2013/vol12n85163>

Published September 29, 2024

Citation: Aneke A. and Chidi-Igbokwe M.A. (2024) Reinvestigating Thomas Hardy's Motives in The Characterisation of Alec D'urbervilles and Angel Clare in *Tess of the D'urbervilles*, *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.12, No.8, pp.51-63

Abstract: *One stable error of judgement by critics of Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles is regarding Alec D'Urbervilles as a villainous tool of fate instrumental to Tess Durbeyfield's tragedy. This idea goes with the associated assumption that Tess has all the moral and ethical reasons to reject him and embrace Angel. This paper seeks to redeem the name of Alec in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles by positing that all the odium placed on him result from gross misrepresentation and that he is a hero of love, whose tragedy results from bestowing his love on Tess unrequitedly. It will be proven by comparison that Angel Clare is ironically the evil in the set-up, and the embodiment of all the tragic contents of Victorian moral laws and patriarchal customs. This study is a product of a qualitative research approach, involving interpretive and content analysis aimed at deepening the argument that while Alec's conduct is almost completely unimpeachable, Angel is the agent of distraction and destruction that single-handedly brings about the tragedy of both Tess and Alec. The key finding is that Tess's tragedy happens as a result of her rejecting Alec's love and bestowing her love on the wrong person.*

Key Words: Angel Clare, Alec d'Urbervilles, Tess Durbeyfield, Victorian Period, Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

INTRODUCTION

One stable error of judgement by critics of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is regarding Alec as a villainous tool of fate instrumental to Tess's tragedy. This vision goes with the concomitant assumption that Tess has all the moral and ethical reasons to reject him and embrace Angel. Thus, readers hardly attach to Angel the same odium associated with Alec. Despite that Angel is not considered perfect, and has his own portion of the blame for precipitating the ultimate

tragedy of the novel, he is without doubt considered better by far than Alec. It is believed that Alec is intrinsically inflamed by an unfettered sexual drive which impels him to hurt people for his sensual gratification. This is why it is believed that Alec's name is synonymous with villainy. Angel is in contrast viewed as a suave Victorian gentle man with no more evil than that his mind has been blighted by the lopsided societal moral laws of his days. This explains why Haiyan Gao is of the view that "Angel's love and Alec's persecution" (2013, 515) combined to drive Tess to her tragedy. The key words in that phrase are *love* and *persecution*, antithetical words disclosing how readers view the attitude of each man towards Tess. This paper affirms the rather ironic fact that Angel never loves Tess while Alec loves her inestimably. Tess's failure to understand this cardinal fact about those two men draws her inexorably to her tragedy. And the failure by critics to grasp it is the reason for the wrong interpretation of the intricate web of relationships in which the three characters are tragically enmeshed.

This scenario needs to be reviewed for the readers of the novel to understand Hardy's message and its relevance to particularly the modern person. Love is crucial to life, and marriage is the basic unit of social existence. It is also the articulation of male and female units for the furtherance of the existence of the human race. It is the basic unit from which the different aspects of society take their origin. It is pertinent therefore to note that society is jeopardised if marital institutions go wrong on account of unrequited love. Expending unrequited love is like pointing a loaded pistol at one's forehead, with potent suicidal impulsion. Failure to understand this is the root of Tess and Alec's tragedy. Some questions need to be answered as this paper progresses with regard to the foregoing speculations.

Despite this fact, critics believe that Alec persecuted Tess unto her destruction: Guo Miao Miao for instance says of Alec that "under the gilded outside there were cruelty, arrogance and hypocrisy" (2018, 355). Peng Yuan Yuan lauds Tess's killing of Alec by stating that "Tess's violent anti-evil ending was the sublimation of her character" (2018, 40). It goes without saying that she considers it proper that Alec should die in the hands of Tess for purportedly persecuting her.

This segment of the research paper will be partly devoted also to exploring the view by some critics that Alec is so inconsiderate that he gets Tess pregnant and leaves her to bear alone the burden of her disgrace. It shall also examine the notion that Alec uses his wealth and status irresponsibly to exploit Tess sexually without any intention of marrying her. These views echo Diganta Borgohian's notion that Alec employs his privileged status in oppressing Tess. Tess, he says, "falls prey to a trick played upon her by Alec D'Urberville who, in actual, is a member of the newly emerging class". (2013,3) It is interesting that he considers class conflict as responsible for the crisis between Alec and Tess and that, in holding that view, he considers Alec as unfairly using the economic advantages of his moneyed class to subjugate and exploit her. Part of the concern of this paper is to re-examine and gainsay the validity of such postulations.

Obviously lending support to the view, Haiyan Gao affirms in his essay titled “The Inevitability of Tess’s Tragedy” that “Alec is selfish throughout the whole story and seldom thinks for the others” (2013, 515).

Casting Alec as sinister, critics clearly view Angel with approbative indulgence. This bias is fostered by the fact that Angel is, in Hardy’s descriptive hands, a painted sepulchre masquerading with external nobility. He falls within the category of Hardy’s characters whom Safnida Saihaam says the reader cannot help loving despite their faults. In the same vein, Yongliang Huang (2008, 3) implies that Angel is not intrinsically villainous but is only the product of his experiences. He however discloses one aspect of Angel’s character that sinisterly runs throughout the story and helps more than anything else in pushing Tess onto the path of her doom. He argues that Angel “is a man with no definite aim or concern about his material future” (2008, 149). But this blame is not all-embracing since it does not touch the aspect of Angel’s love life. Angel lacks focus in anything he does and this is behind his tragic inability to focus his mind on Tess. This study examines interpretively the characterisation of Alec D’Urbervilles and Angel Clare in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*.

Synopsis of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*

Tess of the D’Urbervilles is Thomas Hardy’s 12th novel which was first published in 1891 as a serial in the newspaper *The Graphic*; this publication was thereafter followed by a three-volume edition in 1891 and a single volume in 1892. *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* parades as a criticism of the oppressive and unjust social system of Victorian England and seems to dramatise how social class, gender and morality were used to control and punish women. The novel is regarded by critics as an exploration of social stigma, gender, class injustice, and the inevitability of fate. Set in the imaginary, southwestern English region of Wessex, the story centres on Tess Durbeyfield, a sixteen year old, poor and innocent young woman who becomes the victim of moral and social prejudices and rigid social hierarchy of the Victorian England. Hardy portrays Tess as a tragic figure who is torn between what she perceives as the expectations of society and her own desires. Tess’ father is a carefree heavy drunk and her mother is ignorant and old fashioned. Tess’s poor and dissolute father, John Durbeyfield, learns from a local parson that he is the direct descendant of a wealthy and noble family named D’Urbervilles and Tess Durbeyfield is sent by her father and mother to make an appeal to nearby supposed wealthy family relatives. Tess was reluctant to embrace the suggested venture, being a reticent and withdrawn girl, in personality subdued by the heavy and enchaining moral paradigms of her society.

When Tess mistakenly causes the death of Prince, the family's horse, she is impelled by an acute sense of guilt and alarm over the death of the horse to take up an appointment the supposed relative’s manor as a farm hand. The rich son of the Manor, Alec d’Urbervilles, who has inherited his father’s immense wealth, falls instantly in love with her, although she will have none of it. All

the same, he ensures through mentoring that Tess suffers no shock as a novice the first time she begins to work for them, and that she grasps how to handle his blind and erratic mother. Despite her cold reception to his love advances, he still succeeds in having intimacy with her in an episode Tess considers as rape, for which she will never forgive him, because she is inspired by her vision of Victorian moral paradigm. Tess secretly bears a child, Sorrow, who dies in infancy. Tess leaves home soon after in search of another job to fend for her family, in the process of which she secures employment as a milk maid in a farm house at Talbothays inn, alongside three other peasant girls, Izz, Retty, and Miriam. Tess meets and marries Angel Clare, a refined young intellectual man of the middle class who abandons her on their wedding night after learning of her sexual past and flees to Brazil, trying in vain to make Izz Huett elope with him, and unable to be affected by Izz's frank confession that no woman will ever love him as much as Tess.

After a series of unsettling events, and Alec's cares, concerns and much needed help for Tess' sinking family by not only renting another apartment for them but also by providing all their material needs, Tess pitches tent with Alec and they take up residence in an exclusively rich area of the city known as Sandbourn, and rent an apartment in the upper floor of an expensive boarding house called The Herons. Angel later returns to Tess, importuning her fervently to have him back and to forgive him for abandoning her. But she tells him that she is already living with another man and that his return was too late for them to restart their marriage. Angel darts out of the place in apparent consternation. Overwhelmed by feelings of injustice, she murders Alec and rushes out of the house in pursuit of Angel. Tess is soon apprehended by the agents of the law of the land in the hands of Angel in a love hideout. She is eventually hanged for her crime, and Angel walks off with Liza Lu, her sister, in what seems like a rollicking vista of another love relationship.

Reinvestigating Thomas Hardy's Motives in the Characterisation of Alec and Angel in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

Alec is not as depraved as critics castigate him and the tragedy of the novel stems primarily from Tess's choice of Angel over him. It should therefore be born in mind that Alec and Angel are supposed to be foils of each other to the effect that the analysis of Angel's character will shed some light through contrast on the character of Alec.

It is cogent to think that Hardy had in mind this contrast while creating the two characters, because the grasping of his message depends on the understanding of this fact. He was, however constrained in making his intention obvious to the Victorian audience. He would certainly have been at odds with his society had he blatantly tried proving to them with his narrative that a man of Alec's apparent sexual libertinism should be favoured over the sexually restrained and platonic Angel. Since a statement like this would have put him at odds with societal paradigm, Hardy resorted to portraying them with gilded disclosures, so as not only to elicit the patronage and approval of his immediate Victorian audience but also to make some vital revelations and recommendations for the future generations of his readers.

To ascertain whether or not Hardy thought in this direction while writing his novel, it is pertinent to look at the choices he made of the spectacles to present in his narrative and the structural decisions he took as to which event should come before the other.

Angel Clare

It is with discretion that Hardy contrives to make Tess and Angel to glimpse each other on the May Day dance bash, even before Tess is circumstanced to meet Alec for the first time. The tendency for generations of readers to take this structural arrangement for granted is a great error of judgment compelling re-examination. It is true that the May Day event is crucial to the ironic development of the plot, but Tess and Angel seeing each other at that material time is not so crucial as such. It is not causally related to the other episodes involving both of them, in such a way that their meeting later at Talbothay's dairy would have been impossible, or necessarily taken a different turn, had they not had a glimpse of each other on the May day occasion. It is not consequential to the love that later blossoms between Angel and Tess at Talbothay's dairy. Nor has it any structural relationship with Tess's later meeting with Alec. Hardy's story would have remained almost perfectly the same if that portion has been elided from the entire story. He therefore must have included it for a reason other than to establish causality among the novelistic episodes.

One significant thing about that fleeting episode is that it offers Angel and Tess the timely opportunity to see each other before the commencement of the events involving Tess and Alec. That would have been a prime moment for Angel to enlist Tess's love before ever she meets Alec. But Angel squanders the opportunity that evening by hastily choosing another dancing partner. A more choosey man would have taken pains to conquer his confusion in so scanning the faces of the girls as to make a suitable choice. Had Angel done that, he would certainly have chosen Tess and that encounter would have started a relationship capable of putting Tess completely out of Alec's way. Angel's crass remiss in those crucial moments is particularly remarkable, especially at the backdrop of the fact that the girls, on seeing that he wishes to dance with any one of them, tells him to make a choice of who to dance with. Angel's failure to back up his choice with appropriate discretion reveals an aspect of his character that renders him a wrong choice of lover and spouse.

It is with deliberate narrative emphasis that Hardy indicates Tess's mild misgiving over his having not chosen her. This episode is a window through which Hardy offers the reader a glimpse of the fickleness and confusion ruling Angel's inner world, which constitutes him into a lethal bomb of disappointment and sorrow for any girl that dares to fall in love with him. It also foreshadows the tragic web of agony in which Tess is bound to get herself entrapped.

The unfolding events of that day reveal yet another aspect of Angel's character. He is on a journey with his brothers, but on passing by the May day dance arena, Angel is so distracted as to stop and dance purposelessly with the girls, while his brothers are so focused as to continue with their

pursuit (2000, 12). Readers and critics of Tess of the D'Urbervilles fail to wonder why Hardy chose to make Angel's brothers continue with their journey rather than hang around like Angel to at least witness part of the occasion, even if they refrain from dancing with the girls. It is also a surprise that no reader wonders why Hardy creates Angel to be travelling in the company of his brothers when he is the only character meant to play any significant role in that episode. Hardy simply employs that scenario to depict through presentational contrast a sense of purpose and focus in Angel's brothers totally lacking in Angel himself. This further clarifies the postulation that Angel is possessed of a hazy, purposeless mind, such as is not fruitfully applicable in the apt choice of a marriageable partner. And this stance further corroborates Yongliang Huang's notion that Angel "has a nebulous, preoccupied quality, for he is a man with no definite aim or concern about his material future" (2008, 149). He certainly has no definite concern about his present material circumstances. This flaw overshadows all his pretences of nobility and gentility.

The Talbothay dairy episodes involving Tess and Angel bring more of Angel's disconcerting traits further to the fore. On sighting Tess for the first time, he is instantly gripped with admiration and he impulsively calls her the "fresh virginal daughter of nature". But his matter-of-the-moment impression of her does not last owing to the fact that he is substantially a creature of the intellect. Much of the classical literature he has read instantly surge up and drown his initial purity of feeling for which he at last begins to conceive of her as one would conceive of an art object, forever reflecting the image of sexual virginity. His unnatural vision soon dwindles into his regarding her as a classical deity, the incarnation of Demeter and Artemis (2000, 187). This mental attitude to the experience constrains his free-flow natural spontaneity to the promptings of love. It diverts him and Tess from the path inaugurated by the May Day dance and plunges them into the wilderness of eternal vacillation. When their marriage comes at last, it merely plunges them into the sphere of anguished frustration engendered by Angel's ingrained rigidity and narrow Victorian morality: He will not forgive Tess of a supposed evil a similar one of which he is more heinously guilty of (2000,198).

His infamous decision to abandon Tess at this time precipitates the major crisis in the novel by making Tess go through such unbearable deprivations and sufferings that push her helplessly onto the path of her tragedy. His lack of single-mindedness becomes manifest in the moments of the crisis produced by Tess's confession. No sooner has he patted with Tess than he is eagerly proposing to Izz Huet to elope with him on his impending journey to Brazil. (2000, 235-236). The move to quickly replace Tess with another is a precise proof of the vanity of his earlier profession of love for Tess. It should be remarked that the situation was saved only by Izz Huet's present-minded rejection of the proposal and frank confession of the inordinacy of Tess's love for Angel. Otherwise, Angel would have totally relegated Tess to the back of his mind in the process of starting a fresh relationship with Izz. Utterly regrettable is the fact that even Izz's confession of Tess's love for him does not reverse his infamous decision to abandon Tess for a vengeful migration to Brazil. It only portrays the degree of wickedness, masquerading as high moral

rectitude, indwelling his inner world. Meanwhile Tess undergoes from that moment ceaseless pangs of agonising frustration for having lost him. In her desperate love for him, she would never have had a moment's thought of replacing him with another lover, despite that Alec is eagerly pining and waiting for her love.

Many readers think Angel's sojourn in Brazil changes him at last and makes him run back to Tess as a repentant man, begging to be forgiven. It is also believed that the transitory snatch of love he shares with Tess just before her execution is the sublime fruition of his repentance. This line of reasoning amounts to gross misinterpretation of the entire scenario:

After periods of hardship in Brazil, a chance encounter with a stranger, who talks sense into him, prevails on him to return to Tess. His material suffering has also sobered him up by introducing some mellow humanity into his personality. It is therefore not his love for Tess, nor his intrinsic reflection and decision, that impels him to return to Tess. He decides to return simply on account of an adventitious feeling of remorse originating from sources alien to his interior vision. This only shows that he is not the stuff of which a great lover is made; and this is why any contact he makes with Tess brings about only but mutual frustration.

The series of events trailing his return from Brazil prove that he has not changed and shall never change, for he remains statically the same callous and refractory man that he has ever been. This is why his return from Brazil only but wrenches Tess from the haven of cosiness created for her by Alec, and feeds her into the mouth of devouring agents of which he is a living harbinger. If this sounds as being unfair to Angel, then, there is need to review those unpropitious moments trailing his return from Brazil.

After a long search, he finds Tess already as a live-in-lover to Alec. He makes her feel that he regrets all his mistreatment of her and would have become for her a devoted husband if she had not got tied up to Alec. His avowals, rather than prove that Angel has become a better man, simply highlight the fickleness and indecisiveness underlying all his undertakings. The fact that Tess kills Alec for his sake does not alter his attitude, either, as all would have expected it to do.

As soon as Tess runs up to him and announces her sordid action of murder for his sake, he seems to welcome and console her with all his heart, and his promise to take her away to safety, beyond the reach of the law, seems wholehearted enough. This is what an authentic lover should naturally have done, and this is what he seems to be doing. But all he does now seem to be mere simulation, for rather than pursue relentlessly the task of taking Tess to safety, he begins to dawdle at a certain point in their bid to escape.

Obviously his delay signifies his unwillingness to continue to keep Tess now that she is not only a tainted woman in the eyes of the world but also a murderer after whom is the law.

His sole desire now is to gain his freedom by handing her over to the law. He shows all the while no visible sign of regret over her dire predicament and that is why his reaction to her death wish comes as no surprise to a discerning reader. Her only death wish is that Angel marries Liza Lu, her younger sister, as atonement for her death (2000, 345). Had Angel any sufficient degree of retentive love for Tess, he would have been so distraught over her death that the question of replacing her with her sister as soon as she is hanged would have meanwhile been totally untenable. Instead he links hands with Liza Lu and walks away with her to embrace what promises to be an unperturbed marital union, just the very moment Tess is hanged for his sake (2000,35). It is a very pathetic irony: the one Tess has killed and died for leaves the memory of her behind no sooner than the moment of her death, and walks away to pick up another life with her sister.

The scenario proves that Angel never loves Tess and that Tess has wasted her affection on a man that has not the capacity to love her back. Tess's failure to understand this fact early enough is a cardinal part of the primary cause of her tragedy. The other part of the cause is her failure to perceive how much Alec loves her and how much of a hero and mascot he is for her, designed by nature to protect her from forces of doom and disaster incarnate in the ilk of Angel. Hardy describes that indiscretion in the following horrible words: "The two speechless gazers bent themselves down to the earth, as if in prayer, and remained thus a long time, absolutely motionless: the flag continued to wave silently. As soon as they had strength they arose, joined hands again, and went on." Even Liza Lu cannot vouchsafe a sigh of sorrow, or even some tears of anguish, for her sister. (2000, 350) It will be pertinent to surmise that Angel Clare's stolid demeanour solely imbues her with so much quietude and placidity in what would have been a moment of uncontrollable crisis. What a pity! What a great disappointment that Angel is!

Alec D'Urberville

The next segment of this paper is concerned with an exploration of Alec's character when placed in comparison with Angel, aimed at proving the fact that Alec has been unduly demonized by generations of readers despite his heroism.

To prove this justifies the need to first clear the smut of vilification poured on Alec by generations of critics. One of the major accusations on him is by Guo Miao-Miao Wang who affirms that he is characterized by "cruelty, arrogance, and hypocrisy" (2018, 355). This is quite incorrect because no portion of the novel exposes any of those sinister traits in Alec's character in his attitude to Tess, Tess's father's family, or to anyone else. On his seeing Tess for the first time, he calls her *Cuzz*, and "my beauty" (2000, 32) which describe his total acceptance of her as his soul mate and equal. Alec is here depicted to be acting out the noble intention to treat Tess without regard to the vast gap between his social class and hers. It should be noted that this reaction of his to her is the very dream of Tess' family, and panders to their hope of rising from their poverty through claiming kin with the supposed surviving strain of the D'Urberville pedigree. He eagerly takes her round the lawn of his estate, chivalrously plucking fruits to feed her with, even feeding her in her mouth,

and at a point asking her if she does mind his smoking and only continuing with it when she says she does not (2000,34). It should be noted that her encounter with him takes her instantly leagues away from her lowliness, which shows that Alec will combat her poverty and lack by leading her up to splendour and plenty. The only thing that Tess needs to do to become a co-owner of Alec's vast estate and wealth, together with his undying love and care was to cast off her emotional constraints and understand how much he loves her. Hardy signifies this reality by pointing out that Tess begins to go "downhill" (2000, 36) the moment she sets out from Alec's estate towards home. Hardy is not by indicating this just describing the topography of the area, but is also signifying that Tess will descend low to her usual life if she keeps away from Alec. The very moment she takes her seat in the van that will take her home alongside other passengers, the vast alteration her encounter with him has wrought in her life begins to manifest in distinction, as the others admire the roses he has bedecked her with. "Why, you be quite a posy! And such roses in early June." Hardy goes on to describe the spectacle thus: "roses at her breast; roses in her heart; roses and strawberries in her basket to the brim" (2000, 36).

Hardy surely spares no effort in disclosing to the reader the role of Alec as an uplifting agent to Tess, whose sole intention is to make life rosy for her and, by extension, for everybody in her father's family. How does Alec then constitute the problem? Tess is mostly her own personal problem, and, with her narrow vision of reality, will plunge herself and others into crippling despondency. This Hardy technically reveals by narrating that Tess "rode along with an inward and not with an outward eye" (2000, 36) She is therefore incapable of looking beyond her narrow vision of life to envision fortune's veritable embrace waiting for her to just fly into it and be succoured beyond her wildest imagination. She thus leaves everything behind and walks blindly into despondency, and Hardy foreshadows this by depicting that, "she fell to reflecting again, and in looking downwards, a thorn of the rose remaining in her breast accidentally pricked her chin...and she thought this an ill omen" (2000, 36). Unfortunately, Tess does not ascribe this perceived ill omen to her inward speculation and her downward looking, in fact, on herself, and this is because she is wrapped up in herself. Instead, she heaps the blame on Alec and considers him the harbinger of the foreshadowed ill fortune.

To that effect, Alec never at any point in dealing with Tess shows any signs of arrogance born of personal pride, chauvinism, or class consciousness. Angel is rather the one who shows major signs of arrogance by presuming that he can punish Tess for an offence he is also guilty of, and by failing to understand that he mocks her in her poverty by sending her unavailing financial helps abstracted of love and regard, all the while denying her of the benefit of emotional fulfilment she badly needs from him.

Another accusation levelled against Alec is that he abandons Tess when she gets pregnant because he does not have any intention of marrying her. This sounds factual at first cursory consideration, but it is not really so at all. It is pertinent therefore to establish the textual fact that Alec does not

abandon Tess after impregnating her. Tess rather abandons him in her unreasonable bid to keep away from him. The reason impels her to refrain from going to work in his mother's employ, where he has made her stay very cosy and fruitful. She instead travels from Tantridge, through Blackmoore, to Talbothay's dairy where she takes up employment and subsequently meets Angel Clare (2000, 67-69).

Alec has obviously been searching for her since ever they parted ways. Their accidental meeting proves that he has been searching eagerly for her, which is why he abandons his congregation and runs after her (2000, 266, 269). Only after this meeting does he get to know that she has been pregnant with his child (2000, 272). This is also the time it becomes clear that Alec regrets his having unknowingly put her through so much suffering, and he tells her that he would have married her had she given him the chance (2000,291). From this moment on he never stops importuning her to forget Angel and marry him (2000,275-283), regretting the fact that Tess has no affection for him, who is there always in her moments of dire need to help her overcome her straits, while she waits and pines for a callous man that has abandoned her to her fate (2000,283). This remark by Alec describes the crux of the matter in the novel. It not only defines the genesis of the ultimate crisis, but also signifies the role of each of the characters in the whole affair. It also impels the reader to wonder what true love really is. Is it an abstract phenomenon existing only in the private mind of an individual which the individual can possess without practically experiencing the array of goodness that should go with it? Or is it something whose existence is grounded in the practical goodness that goes with it? Angel is just a pestering phantom in Tess' life. Contrary to Tess' supposition that he is always there for her, in her moments of dire need of love and solvency, he is never there to offer her the much needed prop. Instead he contrives always to be there at the wrong time, when he can only but cause trouble, conflict and sorrow, when he can only but bring about nothing else but disaster.

Alec is also accused of using his wealth and status irresponsibly, which seems to be valid considering the class structure in the Victorian England and the evils of capitalism prevalent then. This accusation however is invalid viewed against the backdrop of the fact that Alec shows constant keen interest in using his vast resources to keep Tess and her father's family solvent in their moments of desperate poverty. He for instance buys Tess's father a new horse to replace the dead prince (2000, 63), and later on comes to their rescue when they lose their residence at Tess's father's death (2000,308). All these negate Haiyan Gao's notion that "Alec is selfish throughout the whole story and seldom thinks for the others" (2013, 519).

Another accusation against Alec is that he rapes Tess. The validity of this assumption cannot be precisely ascertained for the fact that Hardy does not depict the scene in which the supposed rape takes place. One of two reasons may account for his bewildering obscurantism: it is either that he considers the open toleration of sex a taboo to the readers of his time and society, or that he does not wish to tarnish the heroic image of Tess to the hypocritical Victorian society, or both. It is

however doubtful that Alec will rape Tess, considering the helpless degree of his love for her. The only thing to suspect is that he gets her in her moment of weakness, for which she can be regarded to have been complicit to the deed. Hardy himself does not consider what happens between them as rape, for which he has been quoted by Emily Hardy to have called it a minor evil. Furthermore, his strong sexual desire for her is in consonance with the nature of erotic love without which marriage cannot be actualised. And so long as he has the intention of marrying Tess, his desire for intimacy with her ought to be viewed with absolute tolerance.

Angel and Alec are two continents of contrasting attributes. Unlike Angel, Alec is focused and selective. Once he has placed his love on Tess, his affection never veers away from her despite her unremitting hatred and repudiation of him. Even though his vast wealth can secure him the eager affection of any of Tess's contemporaries, he never wavers in his focus on her. This assumption is validated by the events in the evening after the fair, when all the other girls evince their jealousy towards Tess on account of Alec's selective affection for her (2000, 59).

Angel is a slave to the Victorian moral laws and societal paradigm, but Alec is completely unconventional in his approach. This accounts for why Angel is platonic while Alec is erotic in his approach to love matters. This is why Alec should be regarded as a tool for Nature to affirm Tess's fertility in consonance with its adumbration by the May Day dance.

Why then do both the readers and Tess agree that Alec is the incarnate of evil, and Angel, a good man with just a wrong perception of reality? That is essentially because of Hardy's technique of presenting Alec in dark and sordid aspects and Angel in prepossessing aspects. That is why he gives one the name of Angel, which suggests moral purity and unimpeachable rectitude in whatever he does. On the contrary, he contrives for Alec the curious name of Stokes, which suggests the fanning of passion's embers. And when used in collocation with *smart*, as in smart Alec, the name *Alec* connotes a trickster. It is cogent to think that Hardy had in mind this contrast while creating the two characters, because the grasping of his message depends on the understanding of the artistic purpose of the contrast. He was, however, constrained in making his intention obvious to his Victorian audience. He would certainly have been at odds with his society had he blatantly tried with his narrative to prove to them that apparently libertine Alec should be favoured over the sexually disciplined and constrained Angel.

CONCLUSION

Some readers have highlighted Hardy's knack of categorizing the two men into mythical opposites, whereby he associates Angel with Apollo, and Alec with Dionysus. . Apollo and Dionysus are respectively the classical solar god and the god of the underworld.

Apollo is supposed to stand for sexual virtue, and Dionysus, for sexual licentiousness. It is obvious that Hardy had in mind the association of those men with the gods and their attributes and this

association is reflected in their approaches to life. That is why the Victorian society is bound to judge them with laid down principles that designate Apollonian values as superior in morality to Dionysian values. This, among other vital factors, accounts for Alec's notoriety with Hardy's readers. Hardy was apparently aware that his readers would be so swayed by his narrative dynamism, when they remember the mythical account in which Dionysus abducts Persephone to the underworld and subjugates her to forced espousal. Alec whisks Tess away from among "the children of the open air" just as, in Helen Burns' Greek myth, Dionysus abducts Persephone from among "the daughters of the ocean." (GreekMyth 1996, 7). The unmistakable analogy is quite striking. Not only is there a group of females in each set, but a swift, determined and amorous male appears and whisks away the one among them that piques his fancy. And so long as Persephone's encounter with Dionysus gave rise to the Greek myth of marriage and fertility, it should be inferred that Hardy means no condemnation for Alec's conduct and the sexual escapade resultant on it. Even the baby born out of the encounter, which gives Tess much sorrow, would have been the crown and sublimation of her womanhood if she had not been wrapped up in herself, for which she fails to give some thought to the obvious possibilities of the presence of the hands of fortune in all her affairs.

It is not outlandish to infer that Hardy likely had this mythical encounter in mind when creating the scene of violation between Alec and Tess. In Persephone's case everything turns out propitiatory for all concerned, but Tess's own case results in a tragedy. This is because Persephone understands at last that her lot is the will of Zeus and comes to reconcile herself with the forces of destiny. Her decision is heroic so long as it is tied up to the concept of fertility and the natural rebirth, and the provision of grains for the survival of humankind.

Tess on the other hand renders her mind impervious to the material, natural and, even spiritual, indicators designating her encounter with Alec as an inescapable aspect of her destiny, and disclosing Angel as nothing but a distraction in the set-up. She also forgets the predicament of those around her in the blind pursuit of her own arbitrary and untenable notion of love. Hardy's message to his readers is therefore that every young girl choosing a spouse should consider the spouse's personal attributes of character rather than societally imposed moral and ethical values, or her own arbitrary notion of reality concerning such matters. The girl should therefore avoid any man imbued with a refractory mind that renders him incapable of focusing his attention solely on a loved one. It should also be the policy of any girl who seeks for happiness in marriage to make sure that her man has full-fledged erotic desire for her, and she should of necessity consider this as a virtue rather than a vice. Tess's tragedy is rooted in her failure to grasp these vital facts because her ignorance of them seals her doom by propelling her to kill her mascot.

REFERENCES

- Birdi, A. (2023, December 29). Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tess-of-the-DUrbervilles>
- Burn, L. (1996) *The Legendary Past: Greek Myth*. Texas, University of Texas Press.
- Borgohain, Diganta. "A Study of the Persistence of Individuality in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*" in *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IOSR-JHSS)* Vol 12, Issue 4 (July-Aug) pp 1-5. www.iosrjournal.org
- Cosby, M. (2013, November 3) "*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Plot Summary". <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tess-of-the-d-urbervilles/summary>.
- Gao, H. (2013) "The Inevitability of Tess's Tragedy" in *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. Vol 3 No 3, pp 515-520. Finland, Academy Publishers.
- Hardy, F. E. (1962), *The Life of Thomas Hardy*. London, Macmillan.
- Hardy, T. (2000), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Edition Limited.
- Huang, Y. (2008, April) "The Character Development of Angel Clare in Tess of the d'Urbervilles" in *CCSE: Asian Social Science*, vol 4 No 4.
- Jungersen, S. (2016) *Desire in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Aalborg University. Master's Thesis.
- Miao, M. G. (2018) "An Analysis of the Architectures in Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles" in *The Journal of Literature and Art Studies* Vol. 8 No 3. Pp 351-358. Beijing, David Publishing.
- Yuan, P. Y. (2018) "The Analysis of the Character of Tess of the D'Urbervilles" in *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* Vol 5, No 6.