

Is angel really an  
angel?— the paradox  
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Abstract Tess of the D'Urbervilles is the representative of Thomas Hardy.

The heroine, Tess's bravery, purity, and her determination impressed many readers deeply. Till now, there are many works written about this. In those works, the authors usually prize Tess and condemn Alec who raped Tess and made her pregnant. But there is still another character—Angel whom Tess loves most. In this paper, the author tries to prove that Angel is the root cause which leads to Tess's tragedy. And through comparing this character to the image of angel in Christianity, tries to find the similarities between these two.

Why does Angel hurt Tess so badly although he loves her so much? Is there some symbolized meaning of his name? In this paper, the author will explain those questions, and finally explain the question in title: Is Angel really an angel? Key words: angel; paradox; Christianity Introduction " Tess of the D'Urbervilles", the magnum opus of Thomas Hardy, is one of the excellent literary works of the European Critical Realism. It describes the tragically short life of the poor peasant woman Tess. By describing the sufferings of Tess, this novel specifically and vividly describes the disintegration of small individual farmers and suffering of the bankruptcy after the rural capitalistic invasion into Britain in 19th century. The three main characters — Tess Durbeyfield, Alec D'Urbervilles, and Angel Clare make up a tragic and realistic fairy tale.

Hardy gives his all to a better quality of working women: strong, hardworking and imbued with rebellion. She suffers from a series of heavy blows of life and the strong pressure of secular ethics, but she does not bow to the

difficulties and the evil. By the sense of dignity and self-determination, she struggles in the face of tremendous difficulties and hardships strongly and repeatedly rescues herself from a desperate situation. Without doubt, she is a woman with good nature.

So people hate Alec because he takes Tess's virginity and makes her pregnant. If there is no him, maybe Tess will not die. But Angel Clare, the person that Tess loves most, has a handsome appearance, a gentle manner, and a considerate heart. All the women should be attracted by him. Like his name, he gets the women's worship as the angel gets human beings' worship. But if you pause and think about Tess's tragedy deeply, it is obvious that Angel is the person who victimizes Tess even more than Alec.

Whenever I read Tess speak to Angel with a desperate, weak tone " too late, all too late", tears are always surging in my eyes. Why does the destiny always make fun of such a pure living creature? The Gods ended their tricks of Tess's fate. Who actually missed the other? Tess? Or Angel? Angel didn't dance with all other girls except Tess in the first festival in May; he missed Tess, so Tess misses him in the rest of her life so unavoidably. Is it really retributive? The aim of this paper is to analyze the characteristics of Angel to show his paradoxical features which lead him to hurt Tess although he loves her so much. In the fairy tales, angel is the embodiment of goodness, virtue, and moral. It is sent by God to let human beings know what is right and what is wrong.

But angel also do wrong thing. It is not perfect. In this novel, the situation is also like this. Angel Clare's unforgiveness, which compared with Alec's rape, was so insignificant, leads to Tess's death.

Angel's behavior seems not match for its goodness. This paper aims to compare this character with the image of angel in Christianity, and analyze the conflicts of this character to answer this question: Is Angel really an angel? Part One: Angel is not an Angel Living hard, Tess is arranged by her parents to recognize the pro-family D'Urbervilles. Who knows Alec D'Urbervilles is a bogus moral capitalists. He is a playboy who bought the name of D'Urbervilles. He takes the opportunity to insult the Tess.

Being ashamed, Tess decides to leave him. Unfortunately, she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a kid who dies not long after his birth. She renerves and goes to a dairy where she becomes acquainted with the son of a Protestant clergyman, Angel Clare. They fall in love with each other very quickly and they decide to get married.

At the Wedding night, Tess tells him her miserable past and hopes her husband can understand her. But Angel doesn't forgive her. Instead, he dumps Tess, and goes to Brazil alone. During this time, Tess encounters the hypocritical Catholics Alec again.

Living vagrantly and poorly, and having a big family to feed, she has to live with him again. But Angel finally makes himself realize that Tess didn't do anything wrong and he comes back to her. The coming of Angel makes Tess crazy and desperate. After quarrelling with Alec, Tess kills this person who destroyed her life. During the following days, Tess spends the most happy  
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and peaceful days with Angel in the wilderness. One morning in July, a black flag (symbolizing death) moves slowly up the high pole of the city prison.

Tess is hung and Claire therefore regret for it all his life. Hardy uses two men to victimize Tess— Alec and Angel. They both love Tess but also hurt her badly and lead to her tragic life. These two men have many things in common.

They both come from the upper class, having money, even though neither of them earns it. Although they associate with a poor, working class girl, neither of them earns a living from the land. Kathy Newkirk said: “ even though they seem very dissimilar, in many ways they share commonalities: ‘ The swart, swashbuckling, brutish, nouveau-riche phoney aristocrat and the delicate, rebellious, skeptical, even squeamish dissention minister’s son turned radical farmer are two halves of Victorian culture that dooms Tess’(Newkirk ). They just hurt Tess in different ways. Alec hurts Tess physically. Because of Tess’s beauty and poverty, he takes the chance to seduce and rape her, which makes her pregnant.

Under a great pressure, Tess still gives birth to this baby. But the fate hasn’t tortured her enough; the baby is so unhealthy that it dies several months later. Because of his shame over Tess’s illegitimate baby, Tess’s father refuses the parson’s admission into the house to baptize the baby during his imminent death. Hardy writes, “ So passed away Sorrow the Undesired—that intrusive creature, that bastard gift of shameless Nature, who respects not the social law; a waif to whom eternal Time had been a matter of days

merely, who know not that such things as years and centuries ever were.....

" (Hardy p161).

Hardy pities this child and also pities Tess. Undoubtedly, Alec is the beginning of Tess's tragedy. He takes her virginity which at that time was unacceptable. To everyone's surprise, Tess is so brave that she baptizes the baby herself. This big disaster doesn't make her lose heart. Yet even now Tess felt the pulse of hopeful life still warm within her; she might be happy in some nook which had no memories.

" Write Hardy. (Hardy p166) you can see Alec doesn't destroy Tess although he destroys her virginity. Tess asked herself: " Was once lost always lost really true of chastity? " (Hardy p167) Tess doubts this and she wants to begin a new life in somewhere else that is far from her hometown. But Angel, such a " perfect" guy in all women's eyes, destroys Tess's new life, which really ruins Tess mentally. Or, we can say at the beginning of this novel, Hardy implied that Angel was the root cause of Tess's tragedy. In the May Festival, Angel was late.

He invited all the other women to dance except Tess. Hardy writes: " Trifling as the matter was, he yet instinctively felt that she was hurt by his oversight. " And " bending himself to a rapid walk, he dismissed the subject from his mind. "(Hardy p22) To Angel, it is a trifling oversight; while to Tess, it is so deep-impressed that she recognizes him when she sees him again in the dairy.

Angel's evident higher education and class impress Tess; therefore, it

disturbs her when Angel doesn't dance with her that day. They fall in love  
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quickly and life is so beautiful. But more beautiful the life is, the more Tess worries about Angel's knowing of her past. Angel loves Tess. He appreciates Tess's beauty, but he loves her hardworking more.

He expresses the hope that he wants Tess to do a good housekeeper. Their combination, in his view, is more a matter of construction in egoism. So when she tells him the sad past, although he also has the same experience, so cruelly, he doesn't forgive her. His lack of understanding and of sympathy for Tess, at least, showed an extreme selfishness, hypocrisy and cruelty. His behaviors show that he is still a loyal son of the upper class, a slave of the bourgeois moral prejudice.

He awakes Tess's longing for a new life, and then abandons her mercilessly. This mental torment and persecution was much crueler than Alec's physically rape, and to Tess, it was more deadly. She did not succumb to oppression of money forces and violence, but was finally crushed by this mental torment. It is because of this oppression of spirit that she lost confidence in life. Her despair and the pressure of her family made her return to the embrace of Alec, and made her become the doll of bourgeois society and the victims of crime finally. From those facts, we can say clearly that Angel destroys Tess.

He is not perfect in nature. He can not abandon his discrimination and prejudice that come from his family, the so-called upper class. From this point of view, Angel is not an angel. Part Two: Angel in the Bible Nowadays, "angel" means goodness; it is the embodiment of justice. Its color — white

represents innocent and pure. It seems that all the words used on angel are good words.

Hardy gives the name “ Angel” to this character. What is his purpose? If his doing proves that he does match this name, why does Hardy name him as Angel? There must be some reason for this. Maybe angel is not as perfect as we have expected. I want to ask: Is angel completely good? The answer is NO. “ Angel”, this word comes from the Christianity. In the Bible, there are many descriptions of it.

It is very interesting that in the Bible, angel is not perfect, it also has the shortcoming that human beings have. “ Fallen Angel” appeared on the “ Revelation” Chapter 12: Dusk of Gods. Lucifer and Satan have been called Fallen Angels. Lucifer means Phosphor, in the “ Bible” refers to the former archangel.

He is the “ Brilliant Morning Star, Son of glory “. “ Revelation” recorded Lucifer’s apostatizing in Chapter 12. for he refuses to submit to the Son Jesus Christ, he leads on one third of the angels to renegade in the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, only three days later, they are exterminated by the Space Forces led by archangel Mical.

Crashed in the chaos of defeat, Lucifer fell from the empyrean and finally arrives in the hell, becoming the king of the devil (Revelation). Actually, Satan is Lucifer, the highest angel in heaven. In John Milton’s epic, Paradise Lost, Satan’s story is clearly described. The story is based on Genesis. Milton uses “ the fall of angel” to imply “ the fall of man”. It describes how Lucifer becomes Satan, how Satan seduces Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit  
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from the Tree of Knowledge and how they are consequently punished by God and driven out of the Garden of Eden (the paradise).

(English literature p203) From those, we can see even angel also do wrong things, not mention human beings. In Bible, God is the only almighty one having no shortcoming; other creatures, even the herald—angel have their own shortcomings. From this point, everyone does wrong things no matter human beings or deities. I believe Hardy adds many features of Bible to this novel. For example, one day, Tess and other three women go to Mellstock.

All the preceding afternoon and night heavy rainstorms had hissed down upon the path they have to pass. Obviously, they can not go across the loblolly. At that time, Angel advanced along the lane towards them through the water and he liked to help them— one of them in particular. He carried them through the pool one by one.

Finally, it was Tess's turn. Resting against his shoulder, Tess was shy and happy. So was Angel. He said: " Three Leahs to get one Rachel.

"(Hardy p243) it is a utilizing of the story in Genesis chapter 29 — the story of Jacob, Leah and Rachel. There are also other examples can prove that Hardy uses many thoughts of Bible in his novel. So we have reason to believe that there must be some relationship between Angel and angel. I believe that Hardy uses the image of angel in Bible to characterize Angel. Because in Bible, angel itself is not perfect; it has many shortcomings.

It can save human beings, and also can destroy them. The paradox of angel in Bible leads to the paradox of Angel in this novel. Part Three: The Paradox

of Angel Now we can answer the question: Why does Angel hurt Tess although he loves her so much? In the stories of Christianity, angel is a non-male and also non-female creature. Its body is a paradox. It conflicts itself.

And we can also see that angel is a combination of good and evil. It can be so kind to make everyone happy, but it also can be so wicked to hurt everyone cruelly. So its acts are paradoxical. Just like the angel of Christianity, Angel has his own merit and deficiency. And this deficiency leads to a paradoxical character which makes him do many things conflicting himself.

Hardy uses “ Angel” as this character’s name in order to imply that he is a paradoxical person. Because of this, he leads to Tess’s tragedy life even through he loves her. From some examples, we can also see his paradox. Angel wants to be advance-minded.

He likes to achieve his own career without help of his family. He wants to be a dairy owner rather than the fourth priest following his father and two elder brothers. He has more advanced belief than his family of the upper classes at that time. But there is still a bourgeois moral prejudice deep-rooted in his mind.

His selfishness, hypocrisy and cruelty do not change with his advanced belief. When Angel returns home to talk to his parents about marrying Tess, his mother, Mrs. Clare, asks Angel “ Is she of a family such as you would care to marry into a lady, in shout? ” Angel replies, “ She is not what in common parlance is called a lady, for she is a cottager’s daughter, as I am proud to say. But she is a lady, nevertheless in felling and nature” (Hardy p277).  
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From this, we can see his advanced belief. But when Tess tells him her unbearable and miserable past after his telling her his ashamed past, he can not forgive her. For the so-called moral and virtue is deep rooted in his mind. He finally is still a slave and also a victim of the bourgeois prejudice. His behaviors also conflict his thought of being good. He doesn't know what he is really thinking about.

After knowing Tess's past, Angel gets into a crazy situation. Everyday, he broodles; sometimes, he utters some words, but all are elaborate sarcasms. He is smothering his affection for Tess (Hardy p390). However, under the influence of any strongly disturbing force Angel would occasionally walk in his sleep, and even perform strange feats.

Hardy writes: " Clare came close, and bent over her. Dead, dead, dead! ' he murmured", and " ' My poor, poor Tess—my dearest, darling Tess! So sweet, so good, so true! ' the words of endearment, withheld so severely in his waking hours, were inexpressibly sweet to her forlorn and hungry hear" (Hardy p419). He knows Tess didn't do anything wrong; he also knows he should forgive her. But his doings is hurting Tess continuously. Only in his dream, he can really show his thoughts.

His unconscious act encloses that the real thought in his mind is totally different from what he has done days. Angel is a paradox. There are many conflicts existing in him. Just like the angels of Christianity, his insignificant unforgivingness makes Tess desperate and finally makes her go to death.

Hardy gives him this name with a symbolized meaning. Angel, the herald of God, has great power. Because it is deity and it has great power, maybe just <https://assignbuster.com/is-angel-really-an-angel-the-paradox-of-angel-of-tess-of-the-durbervilles-essay/>

because of a small shortcoming, it can lead to a big disaster. And Angel always hurts Tess with some small things. In the May Festival, he neglects her; at the wedding night, he doesn't forgive her; and when Tess lives with Alec, he returns to her and breaks her life again.

Conclusion Now, I can certainly say that Angel is an angel. It is very clear that Angel's wrong doing does not conflict with his name, but is properly equivalent to his name, his nature. His wrong doing to Tess just show the deficiency existing in his nature. This is a real adult fairy tale containing the realistic significance to all the adults, although no traditional meanings of fairy tale exist in it.

Unlike the traditional fairy tale's happy ending, the fate of the three main characters is really miserable. Angel is perhaps the luckiest one because at least he is still alive. But he lost his love forever. As readers, how can we understand his residual pain and loneliness? However, he deserves this because he causes this. Yes, he regrets finally, but Tess who has suffered from so many difficulties can not relive again. Angel is a paradox of good and evil.

Just because he is an angel, he does so unforgivable thing—leading Tess to death. Just because of this characteristic—both good and evil existing in his heart, he has done what he doesn't want to do. But this is unavoidable. Even the deities can do wrong things. The story of fallen angel tells us the deficiency of deities, and Hardy's story tells us the deficiency of human beings, a sad fairy tale of fallen human.

Angel is good-natured and attractive, but he is also deficient. His deficiency becomes visible when Tess confesses her past to him. And Tess dies because she falls in love with a paradoxical guy named Angel Clare. Bibliography

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