

Biblical allusions in tess of the d'ubervilles essay sample



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Are Adam and Eve the most famous and exemplary couple that ever lived? Whether or not one believes the religious theories of Adam and Eve, this question remains a mystery. In truth, they may be considerably famous, but they are, above all, significantly controversial. No two religions bear the same interpretation of the story of evolution, but some do believe that Adam and Eve were the creators of all humankind. Although this issue is completely debatable, legend has it that Adam and Eve resided in the Garden of Eden and this allusion is constantly referred to throughout various types of literary works. Thomas Hardy, author of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, is one of the many writers that utilizes numerous scenes, descriptions, and images to illustrate specific characters as Adam and Eve, the place in which they dwell as the Garden of Eden, and the antagonist as the serpent.

Within his novel, Hardy presents many situations that allow the reader to understand this familiar biblical allusion. He successfully paints a clear picture of this religious reference by using aspects such as, setting description, dialogue, and the statements made by the narrator. Throughout *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy uses imagery to exemplify the Talbothays Dairy as the Garden of Eden, Tess and Angel as Adam and Eve, and Alec as the evil serpent.

The explicit description of the setting surrounding Tolbothays Dairy is the first account of Eden imagery. Hardy expounds upon the countryside by emphasizing its beautiful and fertile land. As Tess reaches her destination, to take on her new job as a milkmaid, she feels the land is "more cheering" (119) and "the new air was clear, bracing, ethereal" (119). Tess's mood and attitude change considerably upon her arrival because of the uplifting

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scenery she notices. After a past full of sin, doubt, and isolation, this new environment allows Tess to start her life over. When Eve is in the Garden of Eden, she feels carefree and enjoys every moment of life. Water also plays an important role in the surroundings of the dairy. The streams that divide into rivers in Eden play a very important role there and, similarly, in Talbothays, "The river itself" nourished the grass and cows" (119).

As if the water itself is the only thing allowing there to be life, the river does play an important role in both the novel and in Eden. Tess is utterly amazed by her new environment and takes a keen interest to the fact that it lies near the former estates of the d'Urbervilles. The innumerable number of cows produce great quantities of milk and butter while soft breezes, pleasant winds, and sunshine are usually present. "She heard a pleasant voice in every breeze, and in every bird's note seemed to lurk a joy" (119). Hardy's personification of the wind and bird's noises allows the reader to feel as Tess does. Pure, fresh, and lighthearted are some of Tess's emotions that convey a sense of perfection to the scene. This pastoral, serene, and divine setting is just one example of the imagery linking Talbothays Dairy to the Garden of Eden.

The relationship between Tess and Angel, both in the beginning of the novel and as it develops, clearly relates to that of Adam and Eve. Although Tess and Angel know they have seen each other once before, their encounter is still awkward. Yet, after their initial meeting, they progressively grow closer and closer. At dawn, they were usually the first on the farm to awake and they "seemed to themselves the first persons up of all the world" (146). This suggests that they were similar to Adam and Eve in that God made them the

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first people of all the world. A sudden feeling of power of importance overcome both the couple in the novel, as well as, Adam and Eve. Being alone caused them to possess “ a feeling of isolation, as if they were Adam and Eve” (146).

Just as Adam and Eve live alone tending to their beautiful Garden of Eden, Tess and Angel constantly remain alone tending to the work at the Dairy. There, Hardy uses a direct reference to his biblical allusion and allows the reader to really grasp his idea. As Angel returns to Talbothays from his visit home, Hardy expresses that Tess “ regarded him as Eve at her second waking might have regarded him” (158). The intense feelings she possesses for Angel identify themselves within this quote and, once again, the direct mention of Adam and Eve show Hardy’s strong desire for this accurate religious comparison. The vivid descriptions of their feelings and conversations illustrate another example of the imagery used to portray the couple as Adam and Eve.

The deceptive sinner and antagonist of the novel, Alec, plays the role of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, who persuades Eve to eat fruit from the forbidden tree. Alec instigates serious predicaments within Tess’s life, just as the serpent does within the life of Eve. He constantly brings her down and eventually causes her complete downfall. It is because of his murder, that Tess is apprehended and killed. Tess’s love for Angel is pure and their relationship is without sin. Alec, conversely, seduces Tess unwillingly, takes advantage of her, and repeatedly returns to torment her. At one of their encounters, Alec expresses “ How much this [the encounter] seems like

Paradise (366),” and, “ You are Eve, and I am the old Other One come to tempt you in the disguise of an inferior animal” (366).

Hardy uses a simile to suggest their rendezvous is “ like Paradise”. The irony is interesting because the reader knows that, on the contrary, this visit, as well as all the others, causes Tess extreme grief and causes her to miss Angel even more. Alec does refer to Tess as Eve, though, and admits that he is there only to tempt her and, therefore, take away what she already has. He does not want her to be happy unless it is with him. This is one of the most apparent examples of the connection between the novel with the situation story of Adam and Eve.

In conclusion, Thomas Hardy’s novel, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, is an example of one literary work that employs specific images, characters, and dialogue to portray the theories behind Adam and Eve. The Talbothays Dairy, where Tess and Angel maintain their pure relationship, clearly represents the Garden of Eden. The innocent acts and convictions of both Tess and Angel, illustrate their apparent link to the life of Adam and Eve. Lastly, Alec D’Urberville, the antagonist of the novel, exemplifies the malicious ways of the serpent who causes all wrongdoing in Eden. Although, this concept is repeated throughout numerous works, it has a very deep effect on the story. The numerous biblical allusions within the novel, paired with the clear and observable imagery, proves Thomas Hardy made assiduous attempts to relate his novel, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* to the important history of Adam and Eve.

Works Cited

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