

# Unveiling the Complexities of Fate and Resilience: An Analysis of *Tess in Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

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## Abstract

This article offers an analysis of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, focusing on Tess's fate, character, self-struggles, portrayals of key characters in the novel, and the vivid descriptions of the scenery. It aims to explore the author's remarkable depiction of characters and landscapes within the book. Additionally, the article draws inspiration from Tess's experiences to shed light on themes of self-worth, courage, and the pursuit of happiness. It highlights the inner strength exhibited when facing adversity and pressure. Through Tess's story, readers, particularly female readers, are encouraged to reflect on their attitudes and choices in the face of difficulties, finding inspiration and empowerment. It prompts deeper contemplation and introspection of personal values while challenging societal issues, fostering questioning and opportunities for improvement.

## Keywords

Female consciousness, Self-struggle, Scenic descriptions.

## 1. The Introduction of The Author of The Background

Thomas Hardy was a writer spanning two centuries. His early and middle works are dominated by fiction and carry forward the literary tradition of the Victorian era. In his later years, he mainly composed poems and opened up the literature of the 20th century. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, published in 1891, is one of the last two major novels by Thomas Hardy, the famous English novelist and poet. The other was *Jude the Obscure*, which Hardy published four years later. The Victorian Dynasty, a period of apparent prosperity for British capitalism, were another "golden age" in British history that the rulers were proud of, with its worship of elaborate etiquette and hypocrisy. In the face of the social atmosphere and the sanctimonious pretensions of the upper classes, Hardy wrote a novel with a lost woman as the protagonist, and called the heroine "a pure woman" in the subtitle of the novel, which was an open challenge to the hypocritical social morality of the Victorian era. At the time of its publication, the book caused a stir in Victorian England and received mixed reviews. But most readers and critics agree that the most outstanding achievement of the novel is the successful portrayal of the heroine, they considered that the novel has rustic beauty and natural charm.

## 2. The Introduction of *Tess of the D'urbervilles*

*Tess of the D'urbervilles* is the most famous novel of Thomas Hardy. Heroine Tess comes from a farmer's family, she has lived a poor but peaceful life. One day her parents learn that they lived a poor but peaceful life. One day her parents learn that they are descended from the D'urbervilles, an ancient family once renowned in England. They urge Tess to claim kinship with the D'urbervilles, so that Tess could marry a gentleman. Unwillingly, the girl comes to their house to seek help. There she meets Alec D'urbervilles who manages to seduce the girl and make her pregnant. Being humiliated, Tess choose to leave home and goes to work at a farm,

where she meets Angel Clare. They fall in love and become engaged. Then comes the wedding night, too honest to keep any secret, Tess tells her husband the truth. She begs for forgiveness, but Angel chooses to leave for Brazil. Several years later, Tess and her family remains poor and she even has no place to stay, so she listens to Alec's words and accepted his "kindness". Tess has to live with her foe.

However, Angel Clare regrets and comes back. Tess thinks Alec is the person who makes her lose Angel Clare again so she kills Alec wrathfully. In the end, Tess is arrested and hanged.

### 3. The Book Report

#### 3.1. Trapped in Society's Cage: The Tragic Journey of Tess in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

After reading the book *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, I was filled with emotion. I'd like to start by talking about my thoughts on the heroine Tess. When the heroine Tess came into view, the author gave us a vivid portrayal of a pure and beautiful girl image. She was more independent and thoughtful than the women around, and her delicate appearance made it difficult not to be attractive. In the social background at that time, I think Tess has been a woman with strong self-recognition. She has always been honest and loves herself and her family. When she was a child, she often helped her parents in the farm and hoped to improve the family situation through her own efforts so that her family could live a better life. Even after Angel's leaving, Tess was still unwilling to accept Alec's scheming gifts and goodwill. She preferred to work in the farm to make a living, and she was not willing to ask Angel's parents for help. Therefore, Tess has always had quite high self-awareness and self-pursuit in my mind. But Tess's self-awareness was incomplete. We can see that when Tess is facing Angel, she still has not escaped from the cage set up by the society for her. After confessing to Angel, she completely obeys Angel's orders and is willing to be the slave of love. So Tess thinks she's guilty when it comes to her beloved husband. She seems to have no right to speak. At this time, Tess had already regarded her husband as her whole universe. So in front of Angel, Tess has no independent consciousness. In my opinion, the sense of identity with no self-worth and the act of completing surrender to a male are also important reasons for Tess's tragic life.

#### 3.2. The Dilemma of Angel Clare: Caught Between Tradition and Freedom in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

As for the hero Angel Clare, the original meaning of the word "Angel" is the messenger of God and the evangelist of the Gospel. Clare's father named his son in the hope that he would one day follow in his footsteps and become a minister. However, when he grew up, Angel was not a faithful believer in Christianity, and his thinking and behavior were exudes a pagan atmosphere. In fact, Angel was different from his brothers in his pursuit of equality and freedom. We can see this from the description of the three brothers at the beginning of the story. They're first described in the book at the Parade ball of Marlott village as "Their general likeness to each other, and their consecutive ages, would almost have suggested that they might be, what in fact they were, brothers. The eldest wore the white tie, high waistcoat, and thin-brimmed hat of the regulation curate; the second was the normal undergraduate; the appearance of the third and youngest would hardly have been sufficient to characterize him; there was an uncubbed, uncabined aspect in his eyes and attire, implying that he had hardly as yet found the entrance to his professional groove. That he was a desultory tentative student of something and everything might only have been predicted of him." However, for the influence of traditional Christian faith is very broad and powerful, so in reality, Angel is also faced with a dilemma. Angel met Tess again in the Talbothays dairy, though he did not recognize Her, she was like 'a rosy warming apparition' to him. He soon fell in love with Tess. He thought Tess is different

from the others girls and admired her very much. As if in the eyes of Angel, there is no more pure woman than Tess in the world. However, on their wedding night, after they confessed to each other, he looked upon Tess as a species of imposter; a guilty woman in the guise of an innocent one. But in fact, Angel himself is not so pure. The sweetness of the past has gone up in smoke. Angel went to Brazil finally and did not let Tess write to her. I think maybe Angel himself do not realize that although he is a young man with advanced ideas, but when the real test comes, he unknowingly become a slave of thought and accomplice. In my opinions, Angel can not completely separate from the traditional etiquette, he is sandwiched in the new ideas and old customs in a dilemma, struggling constantly. He was also one of the tragic victims of that era.

### **3.3. The Changing Hearts and Unwavering Loyalty: Impressions of Secondary Characters in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles***

After reading the novel, several other characters in the novel also left me with deep impressions. For example, the change of attitude of Angel's parents in the novel. As the most devoted member of the Christian religion, Angel's parents wants to raise his son to be a priest, but when Angel leaves home for Brazil for a period of time, there has been a great change in thier mind. His parents was extremely guilty and regretful for thier original thoughts, and when they saw the dusty appearance of Angel as he came home, they felt distressed. In the book, the author describe this part as: "O, my boy, my boy - home again at last!" cried Mrs Clare, who cared no more at that moment for the stains of heterodoxy which had caused all this separation than for the dust upon his clothes. What woman, indeed, among the most faithful adherents of the truth, believes the promises and threats of the Word in the sense in which she believes in her own children, or would not throw her theology to the wind if weighed against their happiness?" In the comparison of reality and spirit, we can see that even those who are deeply religious are eventually conquered by reality. We can also feel the warmth of humanity at that moment. Another example is the partners "Izz Huett" and "Marian" that Tess meets in the Talbothays dairy in the novel. Tess had always been superior to them in appearance and cultivation, and though they had both loved Angel when they had worked at the Talbothays dairy, when they learned that angel had not chosen them, they accepted the fact rather than resenting Tess. The influence which Tess exercised over those of her own sex being of a warmth and strength quite unusual, curiously overpowering the less worthy feminine feelings of spite and rivalry. On the one hand, it highlights that Tess is a very good woman in the eyes of both men and women. I think being recognized by the same sex can better reflect the good side of this person to some extent. In the later part of the novel, when Marian and Izz Huett knew that Angel left Tess and Tess was in a very hard situation, they helped Tess to write an anonymous letter to Angel. This scene is one of the few warm moments in the depressing second half of the novel. Perhaps it was Tess's fortitude that deeply touched Izz and Marian, who were also very attracted and admired Tess's humanity, so they wanted to do their best to help her. In the description of the two of them, we can feel that their love for Angel is true, but their love and admiration for Tess also real. At the last moment, they still stand on the side of Tess, which also reflects their great love.

### **3.4. Nature's Brushstrokes: The Significance of Scenery in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles***

The scenery in the novel is also noteworthy. Perhaps because Hardy lived in the natural environment of Dorset county, with its flocks of cattle, birds and flowers, this natural environment became the main background for his later works. The book *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is filled with a great deal of landscape description. The author reflects the changes of people's mood through the description of scenery, and highlights these natural things through the changes of characters' mood. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the description of scenery

is closely linked with Tess's inner development. The description of natural scenery in each period reflects the development of Tess's heart. The deep and secluded Vale of Blakemore surrounded by mountains at the beginning of the novel echoes Tess's peaceful life; and the dark woods of Trantridge presaged Tess's misery; The fresh air and lush pastures of the Talbothays dairy were a reminder of the love that lay between Angel and Tess; The bleak, damp village of Flintcomb-Ash in winter reflected Tess's sadness and despair at being abandoned by her husband. In the description of these scenes, we have seen the vitality and the pleasing love, but also see the bleak winter. In Hardy's description, the characters and scenery seem to merge into one. We are happy with the scenery, but also feel sad with the scenery, as if all the scenery came to life. Hardy's description of the scenery makes the whole novel full of poetic painting.

In a word, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is a very poignant novel. The plot of the novel is full of ups and downs in the author's calm and beautiful words. The newly industrialized urban civilization described by Hardy in the book brings impact to the ancient Wessex region, and exposes the hypocrisy of morality that emphasizes female chastity and suppresses women's social status. Tess's tragedy also reflects the background of that time. Tess's tragedy is the product of the society at that time, so Tess's tragedy is also the tragedy of the society. The book is satirical, but Hardy's depictions of color and light make it so appealing and it's really worth recalling.

#### 4. Conclusion

This article is based on the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy and delves into the analysis of Tess's fate, character, self-struggle, portrayals of key characters in the novel, and scenic descriptions to explore the significant themes present in Hardy's work. Hardy skillfully depicts the complexity and resilience of Tess as a character, showcasing her inner strength when faced with adversity and pressure. Additionally, the article draws inspiration from Tess's experiences to enlighten readers on themes of self-worth, courage, and the pursuit of happiness, particularly for female readers, aiming to inspire them to reflect on their attitudes and choices in difficult times.

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