

Fate and Pessimism in Thomas Hardy's Novel

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Abstract:

The purpose of this article is to elaborate Thomas Hardy's **Fate** and **pessimism**. The novels Tess of D'Urbervilles and The Mayor of Casterbridge has the reflection of his life. Hardy's novels reflect a pessimistic view where fate, or chance, is responsible for a character's ruin. In these novels, fate and pessimism are still visible. The concept of fate, Pessimism and its types are clearly explained throughout the paper. These two major elements are handled by the novelist in a great way. In spite of this all his novels are not totally dark but some ends with a hopeful note.

Keyword— **Fate, Pessimism, Fatalism, Coincidences.**

Fate and Pessimism in The Mayor of Casterbridge and Tess of D'Urbervilles; Destiny, sometimes referred to as fate, is a predetermined course of events. It may be conceived as a predetermined future, whether in general or of an individual. Fatalism refers to the belief that events fixed by fate are unchangeable by any type of human agency. In other words, humans can not alter their own fates or the fates of others. There are three types of fate.

- Mesocosmic fate
- Microcosmic fate
- Macrocosmic fate

Mesocosmic fate

The fate which is determined by its relation to its mesocosmic fellow beings, which means human beings and animals.

Microcosmic fate

The fate which is not based only on their behaviour towards their fellow human beings and other mesocosmic fellow beings.

Macrocosmic fate

The fate or retribution according to the behaviour or the consideration we manifest towards the beings. Macrocosmic Fate plays a major role in the stories of

Thomas Hardy. Hardy presents chance, accident and coincidence. Illustrate their significance to the novel as a whole. Enthusiasts of Thomas Hardy's novels know him with his distinctive philosophy of life. That is, the indestructible unseen force, Fate, exists to alter the happiness of a human's life. Fate resides in nature and may appear as a natural force. Thus, The Mayor of Casterbridge falls under the category of novels of character and environment. Furthermore, Hardy believes that there are different manifestations of Fate.

Hardy described himself as a determinist because, he believed that the course of human life was shaped by forces, internal or external, beyond human control. Hardy shows that there are forces like fate or chance that affect us at every turn of life. It is not always that the expected happens.

Fatalism is an important part of the story because it is what perpetuates the action. Fate alters the course of people's lives and events can take someone to the top and another to the bottom. The hand of fate pulls Henchard out of the pit he has been lying in since he abandoned his wife and daughter. Hardy shows no suggestions of

Henchard disliking his daughter or his wife, so it is due to fate that the firmity lady offers them firmity that is laced with rum, which leads to Michael becoming drunk. It is also chance that leads to Newson, who is searching for a wife, appearing there at the very moment Henchard was announcing his offer. Newson being a sailor is also coincidence, as this means that he isn't a resident of the town and later on, when Henchard realizes what he's done and tries to look for his wife he will never be able to locate them.

It is the fate which rewards him and makes him the Mayor and a wealthy person. Later it results in the loss of his name and his reputation as a worthy and honorable citizen.

Even the weather seems to be fatefully against Henchard. Henchard's plans for the holiday are ruined by rain. Henchard jealous of Farfrae decides to ruin him financially. Henchard is not thinking clearly based on weather prophet's predictions for rain and encouraged by Jopp, he buys all the grain in Casterbridge. Unfortunately for him, the weather improves and the grain prices fall. As a result, Henchard is ruined by fate and his own foolishness. It is the same fate which made meeting with Farfrae and then his family his wife and grown up daughter face to face is all ordained by fate. So, in this way, Hardy is right that our lives are affected by forces outside our control. On the other hand, in the novel *Tess of D'Urbervilles* the decisions that took by Tess made things happen to her in the beginning of the novel in a domino effect that cannot be reversed.

Her fate is already chosen and all she can do is live through the events that happen to her. The first view of fatalism is when Joan believes that she has read Tess's fate in an astrological book. According to the book, Tess is going to marry a gentleman. It

sounds like a happy fate, and it turns out to be true, but Tess marries a gentleman that makes her life miserable, and she doesn't marry him until every chance for happiness seems to have passed her by. Tess presents for the first time her view that the world she lives in is spoiled and rotten. This is a continuing view for Tess, especially in light of the events that unfold in her life. Tess's tragedy is primarily caused by events over which Tess has no control, it is impossible to argue that her suffering was the result of an adverse, abstract "Fate." Despite the many characters that blame their misfortunes on the will of a perverse "Fate," Tess insists on blaming her own suffering entirely on human causes.

The novel famously ends with the scene at Stonehenge where Tess lays down at the altar and yields to her fate by falling asleep. In her surrendering to her fate, **"We have witnessed the freeing of one will, one consciousness, and, as a result, we have witnessed redemption"**. He defines fatalism as the "doomed the experience of life, which all things are beyond the control of human power." Tess herself, views her life in this way. She believes that destiny and fate are unchangeable and uncontrollable. Hardy makes it painfully clear that for Tess death is deliverance, while the act of yielding to her gruesome fate is one of the few instances of free will in the novel.

Pessimism is a mental attitude. Pessimists anticipate undesirable outcomes from a given situation which is generally referred to as situational pessimism or believes that undesirable things are going to happen to them in life more than desirable ones. Pessimists also tend to focus on the negatives of life in general or a given situation. Jeffery Rossman states that there are two kinds of Pessimism.

They are;

- **Dispositional Pessimism** [It means the tendency to believe the worst on a consistent basis]
- **Defensive Pessimism** [It is being prepared for bad things]

Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Tess of D'Urbervilles* is a kind of pessimistic story. In these novels both the protagonists are characterised as a **dispositional pessimist** by the novelist. Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is basically made on the concept of unjust pessimism, and is absolutely framed on the past events of Michel Henchard. The note of pessimism is strongly prevailed throughout the novel and that in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* Hardy's own perspective on the events seem remote and detached. He is the main character who has become a puppet of his own luck though he is laborious man. He tries to do good and becomes a better human being but everywhere he gets frustrated, disillusionment, alienation and disorder in his life. But after all his life resulted in the very pessimistic mood. If there is anything that is very responsible to give the pessimistic tone of the novel, it is only coincidences.

Coincidences have played the very crucial role to take the pessimistic vision in the entire life journey of Michael Henchard through the whole novel. So, the sense of pessimism in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* has been presented in a bit different way. No doubt the protagonist of the novel is a pessimistic character, but the whole credit of his pessimism has not been given to his own flaw only. But the pessimism has been broadly caused by the luck, fate, conscience of human beings. Life has been presented there as pessimistic in the hand of luck or chances. Our pessimistic life is a kind of truth, but the very cause behind it is beyond our control. This sort of

pessimism is there in Henchard's life too. Hardy was the painter of darker side of life as it was no wonder if people charged him of "pessimist". The opinion is both right and wrong in this context. Infact, there are some factors that compels us to believe him a pessimist. He was hypersensitive; his own life was tragic and gloomy.

Hardy himself says:

"My pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption that the world is going to the dogs. On the contrary my practical philosophy is distinctly Melioristic."

Tess is worst fated to the sufferings of life. She tries her best to come out of her fated circle of misfortunes but remains fail. Throughout the novel she keeps on revolving around the predetermined circles of her cruel fate. Being the eldest child she has to go to D'Urbervilles for earning. Her seduction plays a vital role in her destruction. She is rejected by society on becoming pregnant. She goes to earn for her family to Talbothays. Her love affair, her marriage and then sudden rejection by Angel Clare, all this make her a victim of conventional social attitude. It is crystal clear that Hardy is a meliorist rather than a pessimist. R.A.Scott James observes that, "**Hardy did not set out to give us a pessimistic philosophy. Hardy is pessimistic about the governance of the Universe, but not about human beings.**" I strongly believe that who charge Hardy with being a pessimist do so on account of his twilight or gloomy view of life.

Conclusion

In Hardy's point of view, all live's are suffering. Each and every person in this universe have their own problems and suffering. Suffering is the universal law and but happiness is an occasional episode and also he delivers that forces like fate plays a vital role in human life, there are things that

are still within human control and humans can shape their own fate by their intelligence and foresight.

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