

Thomas Hardy and Urbanization: The Role of Determinism in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

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ABSTRACT--- *Thomas Hardy is considered to be a determinist mostly because his protagonists are either controlled by the nature of things or by superior powers. In other words, independence of the human Will in Hardy's fiction is hard to be approved because man's struggle against the 'Will' just leads to his future failures. In the present study, the researchers depict how the Victorian author applies his deterministic views/techniques in the Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and how his portrait of the characters as the victims of heredity and environment exempts them from controlling their destiny. This study also investigates how nature and characters in Tess challenge with one another to manipulate the pre-destined conditions.*

Keywords--- Determinism, Tess, Thomas Hardy, Industrialism, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

"It wears me out to think of it,
To think of it;
I cannot bear my fate as writ,
I'd have my life unbest;
Would turn my memory to a blot,
Make every relic of me rot,
My doings be as they were not,
And what they've brought to me!"

Thomas Hardy: Tess's Lament

1. INTRODUCTION

As Catarina Belo states, "determinism can be broadly defined as the theory that every event or substance in the world has a definite and necessary cause such that it could not have been otherwise" (Belo, 2). It implies that every single movement in the world is controlled under determinate conditions and this necessity approaches human beings in a variety of forms. This concept, because of its relation to the notions of necessity and causality, is usually considered as an ontological structure rather than epistemological dominance. Also, this philosophical concept should not be taken mistakenly as a 'chance', for chance happens spontaneously and there is no definite cause in its happening. Although 'determinism' appropriated many attributes in recent scholarships, we mainly focus on two forms of it in this study: Metaphysical determinism and physical determinism.

Aristotle [384-322 B.C.E.] believed that 'metaphysics', as the branch of philosophy, "studies being *qua* being in its most general sense and God as [its] the Supreme Being" (Belo, 3, bracket's mine). In this belief, metaphysical determinism, everything in the cosmos is controlled by a single force, which may be termed 'God's will' or 'Fate' (Taylor, 359). However, physical determinism refers to natural laws which can define the cause of each individual event. This deterministic outlook seeks to explain events in its natural process. In such perspectives, human actions influence the destiny contrary to the fact that he is himself pre-destined. If human beings are different, their life will be different as well. We should also bear in mind that all these issues are hypothetically discussed rather than being a pure reality, and independence in such deterministic outlook has been just a shadow of predetermined future. *Causal determinism* claims

that past events happened, according to the laws of nature. In other words, it imposes the relation of causation between past and future occurrences. For example, in Newtonian physics all events happen deterministically based on their past experiences in the laws of nature.

2. DISCUSSION

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) is mostly known as a transitional poet and novelist and literally attaches the late Victorian fiction to the beginning of the twentieth century. Although Hardy experienced almost all genres of literature, he is most famous for his tragic novels, including *Jude the Obscure* (1895), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). In conservative and prudish Victorian era, Hardy got notorious for his unorthodox treatment of sex and marriage and brought up a lot of uproar by his novels in his lifetime. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* at the time of its publication received hostile greetings and frustrated many Victorian moralists, and many critics believe that these kinds of disapprovals obliged Hardy to quit fiction and rely on poetry. By the way, *Tess*, as Morgan asserts, "is perhaps the most notable of his literary creations to haunt his poetic imagination" (1992, 177). In Hardy, fate and individuality are confined to making the life complicated. For him, the conventional ideals of virtue were different to that of his contemporaries who believed in social institutions and social stances. Hardy defines purity as an inner quality.

As Nemesvari states, "Hardy's great strength as a novelist lay in his representation of rural life, based on his own intimate knowledge of the countryside of southwest England" (83). 19th-century in Britain coincided with the industrial movement in which many farmers and worker found themselves in mere devastation. They not only lost their jobs, but also their rural land which gave shape to factories and railways. Hardy's concern with loss of natural beauties and industrial development is perceptible in most of his work. He believed nature was the core of all existence and its damage equated with loss of humanity.

This negative view of Urbanism is vividly justified in his *Tess*. Hardy's viewpoint in *Tess* "embraces the agricultural depression of the 1880s, as well as the social disruption brought about by more general economic and social change" (Harvey 8) Hardy, like Jean Jacques Rousseau, believed that the primeval innocent nature is destroyed by civilized outsiders that not only invade villages but also destruct human's fate. Judith Mitchell claims 'Tess is clearly one of the most erotic novels of the Victorian period; Tess herself, however, by virtue of such obsessive narratorial 'looking', is a sexual object rather than a sexual subject" (178).

Tess of the D'Urbervilles is the history of a girl by the same name who is seduced in her celibacy. Tess as a farmer-girl and daughter of nature is forced to abandon her agrarian lifestyle and is raped by a brutal (pseudo-) aristocrat in the dirty and dark industrial circumstance. She is passionate and extraordinarily beautiful and more committed to nature rather than social standards. It is her beauty that makes her over-attractive to men and respectively makes her life intricate. Hardy defines Tess as an innocent, loyal, selfless human being is trapped in the web of circumstances that made her an outcast in the society. Tess is a single country girl from a struggling family who has more education and intellect than most girls in her society. She is amazingly strong and enduring. She is able to survive through a series of misfortunes that would destroy any other human being.

Tess is marked for ever and the cause of this notoriety for Hardy is Urbanity. Hardy describes that Tess was brought up in an isolated place not contaminated by hazards of the modern world and this is why he defines Tess as a "fine and picturesque country girl" (TD 21) who accepts the responsibility of "six helpless creatures compelled to sail in the Durbeyfield ship." (TD 30). Unfortunately, soon after entering into the new industrial environment she is manipulated and turns into a victim of urbanization which is symbolized through Alec D'Urberville. Harvey mentions that "Tess is the daughter of a small dealer seduced by the son of a retired manufacturer" (176). Tess's character repeatedly changes as the rural landscape changes in the industrial world. In other words, image of Tess as the representative of 'Nature' in under attack by industrial Alec!

But she finally collapses and makes the greatest disappointment and loses the man she loves. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* consists all the literary technique in its structure and proves itself as a great novel of ideas. As a protagonist, Tess portrays an innocent girl who is seduced, betrayed, and then abandoned. In Hardy's novel, Tess is the symbol of the victims of the cruel opportunities. Her tragic fate is a symbol of the inescapable misfortune of the beautiful and pure nature under the invasion of the industrial civilization. Tess's fate and destiny are described by Hardy with much fatalism and pessimism. However, "Hardy regarded himself not as a pessimist but as an 'evolutionary meliorist'" (Wakefield 203). This novel involves both sublime happiness and heartbreaking misery. It is the story of love and lost. It distanced from a love-story and closes itself to the kind of dark romance. The class struggles are depicted as vividly as possible in this novel.

Alec stock-D'Urbervilles are Tess's seducer who in spite of his family name doesn't have any relation to Tess. The family adopted the name after getting rich and the rationale was that the name had the history and they could cover their arriviste

credentials. However, the name hadn't brought nobility for the man and he maintained immoral insight. The character 'Alec' is the symbolization of industrialism which perpetually struggles and destroys Tess, the rural life. On one hand faith, farming, and tradition personify Tess; on the other seduction, industry, and egoism decorate Alec's character! In Tess of the D'Urbervilles the intercourse between man and nature is set forth with amazing power. The different seasons act as the chorus of the human tragedy. (Fox 410) It seems that newly-born Stock D'Urbervilles is detached from a traditional background of agrarian history and are clutching to the modernity and capitalistic lifestyle. Alec is a clear sign of industrialism and anti-humanism. Hardy's first manifestation of industrial invasion can be perceived through the description of the mansion of Alec D'Urberville which is constructed on rural land and looks as a "contrast to the evergreens of the lodge" (TD 43).

We should bear in mind that Tess cannot be taken just as a mere victim of indecision, for her attitudes towards Alec D'Urberville are an ambivalent one. As Ahmad Abuzeid wrote, "Tess's arrival at the D'Urbervilles' estate represents a crucial new stage in her life, for she is confronted for the first time with both wealth and sexual aggression" (238). After being raped by Alec, she doesn't leave the place and her further acquiescence to him is distracting. Tess over and over asks herself why she should be the victim of cruel fate. Harvey believes, "Hardy makes clear that it is Tess's innate predisposition to passive fatalism that contributes to her destiny and implicates her in her own tragedy." (83)

Mallet writes, "whereas with Alec Tess awakens a conscience he does not want to acknowledge, with Angel she awakens a sensuality which is equally threatening to his comfortable belief in his own gentlemanly self-discipline (Texts and Contexts, 99). In regard to Angle, Tess appears as his ideal Arcadian lover who, after disclosing the hidden secret of oppression would be dismissed from the Garden of Eden. Angel at first glance is taken to be literate, honest, tender and bookish who rebels against his forefathers religions and social conventions; however, Angel Claire did not really get rid of the traditional moral values; he turns out to be morally tied to conservative beliefs, conventional and strict-minded in relation to Tess's confession and her lack of idyllic image he made of her in his mind. At the wedding night, when Tess told him about her tragic experiences, He still thought about the old capitalistic respectability and morals firstly, performing hypocrisy. Angel's destructive influence on Tess is greater than Alec's (Mallet 2003:97). This is Hardy's critique of hypocritical bourgeois morality. In other words, social moral rules distorted the relationship between Claire and Tess. Angel's decency is full of clergymen; at the beginning of the novel, he rejects the idea of a formalized industry and leaves of priesthood to learn about the agriculture. He points out his natural views on life, but carries out the actions of an Urbanite because "he was in the agricultural world, but not of it" (TD 345). Fox scripts, "poor Tess is set between the lusts of one Alec D'Urberville and the love, such as it was, of one Angel Clare. 'Now Alec was a Bounder', to quote Mr. Besant; and Angel was a prig, whereas Tess was a human being, of human passions" (211). Angle's conducts equate the urbanization, for although the industry meant no great harm, it was a "tyrant" that "kept up a despotic demand upon the endurance of their muscles and nerves" (TD 345). *Tess* may not represent the death of the peasantry, as Arnold Kettle proposed, but she does represent and embody the cultural memory of a dispossessed class fraction (114).

Although industrialism didn't mean to do harm to people, its negative effects put people under pressure. This thought in Tess of the D'Urbervilles had been incarnated through Angel's characterization. Neither industrialism nor Angel preconceived their destructive actions. As Beauregard asserts, "Darwin's theory that in terms of sexuality mankind is a species where the male is dominant over the female is central to Thomas Hardy's scene" (3). Hardy portrays Tess as a pure woman and criticizes patriarchal society as the responsibility of her illegitimate child. He describes Tess as a girl "endowed with a luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was" (TD 48). Tess's refusal to play the innocent victim to Alec's seducer begins to suggest the insecurity which lies within male sexual desire. For a time Alec abandons his role as a villain and becomes a preacher; Angel Clare, in the aftermath of his marriage to Tess, is briefly tempted to play the card with Izzy Huett. The momentary reversal of positions is significant. (Mallet 2003: xvii)

Even if we imagine Tess had made a mistake, she is convicted cruelly by the conventions of society and is left helpless. Tess consequently chooses to live stoically and does not even attempt to fight. Waldoff mentions, "Ultimately Tess is a victim of an ambivalent attitude towards women that is traceable both to Hardy and to the culture in which he lived" (142). One aspect of human nature is the sense of possession. He/she should either possess or be possessed. This sense of belonging can construct your emotion strongly or destroy it if not be fulfilled contently. Tess moves from town to town for finding her due place in society. Primarily she settles in Marlott where "her life was a mere vessel of emotion untinged by experience" (TD 21). In her life journey, Tess is not able to find a permanent residence to live in and this causes her to do many unethical things that consequently put her in different dangerous situations.

It should be kept in mind that if Tess keeps her seduction as a secret from Angel, it is not just losing angle, but for the dominated idea of being a pure woman in the Victorian age. Tess even for proving her love to Angel murders Alec which is considered as an unforgivable crime. However, we should ask ourselves whether this commitment changes Tess's social stance or her stance had been already ruined before this murder?! As Morgan points out, "it is the combination of

sexual vigor and moral rigor that makes Tess not just one of the greatest but also one of the strongest women in the annals of English literature" (Women and Sexuality 60). British religious hypocrisy is once more demonstrated in a scene when Tess meets Alec after some years and he has become a priest! Undoubtedly Hardy tried to depict the dark side of the merciless hypocritical institutions of capitalist societies. Gilmartin and Mengham believe, "what Hardy is scrupulous about is recording the effects of the dominant ideologies upon the lives of his characters" (17).

Tess as "the child of the soil" (TD 391) is in line with nature and more particularly its seasonal characteristics. For example, in the month of "May" she falls in love when fertility and growth are at their apex. In "September" when nature is slowing dying and decaying, her rape and the death of her baby happen. Her marriage to Angel occurs in the dead of winter, paralleling the harshness of winter to the collapse of their matrimony. Hillis Miller writes of the moment as just one example among many in "Hardy's writing of 'the movement of detachment', which he describes as a separation from life in which the character becomes completely changed into an uninvolved witness of all that had once lured him to longing and suffering" (Gilmartin and Mengham 38). These assimilations certainly define Tess as the offspring of nature. In the country setting of Talbothays Dairy, a positive sort of love erupts between Tess and Angel. Hardy shows that the country's beautiful scenery and landscape provide a perfect place for nature's emotions to show themselves. On the other hand, Hardy illustrates his dislike for the urban movement by placing actions in specific sites. Tess passes from the intimately physical, elemental wilderness to draw closer and closer to transcendental ecstasy (Morgan, Women and Sexuality, 62)

The difference between city and country are mostly demonstrated in explanation of cities. At Flintcomb - Ash, Tess is obliged to work very hard with big machinery. The "stony lachets" and "stubborn soil" make the working condition very challenging. She is put in danger of being hurt by the owner of the machineries, which foretells Tess's bitter death due to the forces of the industrial world. Morrell argues from an existential humanist position that Tess's fate is the consequence of her failure to act (8). The machinery clearly represents the industrialism that was eating away at the farms in England. In comparison to the ease and tranquility of the work Tess did at Talbothays Dairy, Flintcomb - Ash was a grueling place. Again Hardy makes a specific point to announce his distaste for the urban movement by contrasting the lifestyles of the city and the country. Cooper exemplifies "the 'dialect' Tess speaks is set against 'ordinary English' as though they were two mutually exclusive languages. This is a standard critical reading that uses implicitly the non-literary rules of definition of the time" (35). The city has a harsh laborious lifestyle while the country remains pleasant and peaceful. Hardy illustrates his hatred of the change occurring in England at that time. She murders Alec in the city of Sandbourne that was like a "fairy place suddenly created by the stroke of a wand." (TD 398) In other words, Hardy images the country as the place of love flourishing and the city as its place of death and this fortifies his pessimistic view of industrialism. When she had gone to the city, "Tess is plunged at once into the abyss of evil" (Fox 221).

Hardy endeavors to clarify how urbanization and its deputies forced farmers to evacuate and leave their houses and make way for industrial movements. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, John D'Urberville "was the last of the three lives for whose duration the house and premises were held under a lease" (TD 371) and after his death, his family has been evicted from their home. Tess, similarly focused on a country girl seduced by a sophisticated city man, her "ruin" leads, ironically, to his ruin and a lifetime of misery for all concerned (Bloom 23) Hardy believed "rhythm of change... so do flux and reflux, alternate and persist in everything under the sky." (TD 371) Cash matters more than lineage in the Victorian context and this deciphers how Alec's father, Simon Stokes, is easily able to use his large fortune to adopt a famous family name and transform his clan into the Stoke-D'Urbervilles.

With Darwin, the concept of tragedy shifts from Greek Fate—or its moralized Renaissance equivalent, Calvinist predestination—to a determinism of an equally drastic kind: man is in a world which is not related to him, otherwise than by the Natural Selection which has produced the various species to which he belongs. (Beaugard 4) Yu Fangfang states, "Heredity is the most obvious of these. Tess's ability to see or hear the D'Urberville Coach from the legend and her resemblance the D'Urberville woman of the portraits in the farmhouse at Wellbridge ('her fine features were unquestionably traceable in this exaggerated forms') suggests that she has the fateful blood of the ancient D'Urbervilles in her veins" (TD 236)

Supernatural determinism can be perceived through some omens in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. For example, through the cock that crows the afternoon of the wedding, or the satanic allusions to the characterization of Alec. Within the pages of the novel Tess is tragic only to herself. To others, she is a puzzling daughter, a temptingly lovely girl and woman, an image of purity, a fallen woman' (Kramer 117). In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy writes "Once victim, always victim—that's the law!" (TD 352) "Unconscious force" or "inherent determination", which dominates the nature, decides the fate, and rules the fate of people through the form of coincidence and fortuitous events. Hardy accuses God and his will for Tess's downfall, her life's ups and down, her painful love and her tragic life. Hardy writes at the end of the novel, "The gods' amusement has come to an end for Tess."

Another example of an ambiguity that challenges the idea of inevitability may be observed in Tess's behavior after Angel's proposal. When she writes her mother shortly after accepting Angel's proposal, she is more pleased than distressed by the predictable advice John Durbeyfield gives her. The theme of purity in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* has always been controversial. "Hardy is deliberately revising the Victorian urban legend that the fallen woman is permanently stained. (Morgan, Student Companion, 102) At this point we are told, 'The responsibility was shifted, and her heart was lighter than it had been for weeks'. (TD 211) Clearly Hardy regards Tess's tragic flaw as her sexual nature. It is this that invites the unwanted attentions of the predatory Alec D'Urberville, that seduces the ascetic Angel Clare, and that attracts the narrator, who frequently calls attention to Tess's peony mouth, her eyes, neck, hair, and her curvaceous figure (Harvey 82-83). Tess's tragedy ends at Stonehenge where she is hanged.

3. CONCLUSION

White argues Hardy "remained preoccupied with both fate and providence even as his belief in a personal God was fading, and although written a hundred years ago his work remains an interesting window onto our situation" (357). Hardy regrets how an inherently good person may be defeated largely through a combination of ill-luck and the selfishness of others. Is it her pride, her passionate nature, her passivity, or some combination of these that makes her fate inevitable?

The law Tess refers to is only the expression of social determinism, a form of human error which recalls the religious Calvinist theory of predestination, while what Darwinism is about is another type of law, the struggle between a changing individual and its equally changing environment (Beauregard 6). However, many readers believe that Tess's involvement with Alec and more significantly Angel is based on her own will and consent. *Tess of the Durbervilles* is a Hardy's representation of critical issues at Victorian age. It is also a diminutive generalization of England in the city of Wessex. Tess comes to us as a real victim of fate and the conception of her tragedy rests on an assumption of inevitability. Tess functions not as a peasant rooted in the local soil but as a proletarian who must travel to sell her labor. (Mallet 2004:122) Tess's tragedy in Hardy's philosophy is firstly the tragedy of fate, and it lies in the powerlessness of the individual and social forces of resistance. Tess, for example, remains pure in Hardy's eyes because her free will constantly struggles against her sexual instinct and the hereditary disposition of her barbarous ancestors (Asquith 46) Barbara Hardy concludes, "for the world's opinion", Tess's seduction, pregnancy, and the death of her child, Hardy says at the beginning of the second Phase, 'Maiden no More' 'would have been simply a liberal education' (15)" (46).

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