The Origin of Hardy's Tragic Vision

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Where there is no freedom to choose—not free will—there is no moral responsibility, where no moral responsibility, there is no properly tragic suffering and therefore no tragedy.

—Dorothea Krook

Aeschylus never begs the question, but he moves beyond it toward mysticism and revelation; and Euripides' tendency is toward nihilism and denial. Sophocles neither preaches nor rails. In the destructive element he could say ... "How to be?" Man is free but fated, fated but free.

—Richard B Sewall

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PREFACE

With the hope of addressing not only those of English language and literature departments, but also those aligned to the idea of clarifying views of man's existence on the earth planet, I can say that Hardy sees life as a tragedy. According to his vision, the origin of tragedy for Hardy lies everywhere; in the character, in the physical world and in society.

Hardy experiments with Aristotelian and Shakespearean tragic models in the novel form so as to convey the tragic possibilities of the actual life of his age, helping him to develop the modern tragic novel and to universalize the tragic suffering of the common man.

The three tragic novels examined in this book (of Hardy's fourteen novels in total), *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, have many elements in common which display how Hardy's tragic vision helped him to contribute to the development of the modern tragic novel as well as portray, in a powerful and convincing manner, man's tragic suffering in an indifferent universe.

With regard to the nature of the incidents and circumstances represented in the three tragic novels, it is clear that the manner in which the protagonists Henchard, Tess and Jude, and partly Sue, battle against external forces determines the type of their tragedies. The roles of the tragic protagonists in the development of their own stories have a direct link with the way they use their free will. For instance, Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* has enough freedom and power to use his free will against outward forces, but his own personal weaknesses blind him and prompt him to mistreat people as well as his physical and social environment, generating the overall unity of his own tragedy. That is why we define *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as a tragedy of character. As for Tess's situation, she is given enough freedom to use her own free will. However, chance and outward social and physical forces lead her to inevitable circumstances in which she struggles to create happiness and defend herself against them. The inevitability of the chain of events which hurt her throughout the novel defines her tragedy as one of circumstance.

In *Jude the Obscure*, as in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the protagonists are given limited freedom to use their free will. Whenever Jude and Sue struggle to realize what is right for them, they find that it is wrong for society, and thus they find themselves at war

with their surroundings. The battle between the characters and the established social laws generates the basic tragic force which destroys them, so we can regard *Jude the Obscure* as a tragedy brought on by the moral outlook of Victorian society.

Hardy experiments with the traditional tragic model in many of his early novels. However, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is regarded as Hardy's most ambitious and successful effort in traditional tragedy, and his later novels *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* branch out in regards to both theme and technique. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy sees the seed of tragedy in character itself, having inherent volcanic and aggressive qualities which blind him and consequently make his fall inevitable. The decline of the tragic protagonist and his rise in personal stature and insight remind us of Oedipus's fall and rise. With all his personal qualities, Henchard represents the characteristics of his agricultural society. As in most of his tragic novels, and so in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy makes use of traditional technical concepts such as tragic error ("hamartia"), reversals ("peripetiea"), recognition ("anagnorisis") and the three unities.

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, tragedy pivots on the clash between a female protagonist and her external physical and social circumstances. Here, Hardy sees outward circumstances as the real basis of tragedy. In Tess's tragedy, the labouring classes and their social institutions are also introduced as tragic forces.

In his last tragic novel, *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy focuses on the conflict between the individual and society. Here, there is very little of the interest Hardy commonly shows for agricultural life. Instead, he concentrates on an ambitious young working man and an intellectual, cold and neurotic young girl. They struggle to realize their ambitions and to lead a life of their own, but find themselves at odds with the social system, and they fail at every stage of this struggle, resulting in Sue's capitulation and Jude's death from despair. Hardy deals with more variety of technical and thematical qualities here than he does in the rest of his tragic novels. While in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy applies the traditional concepts of tragedy and constructs the development of the protagonist's tragic stature, in *Jude the Obscure* Jude remains as the simple man he is at the beginning of the novel—he acquires no tragic stature. The absence of a tragic stature for Jude is partly the consequence of his meaningless death. He dies for nothing. After losing all his hopes and those who are dear to him, his life becomes meaningless to him. This difference in ending and the presence of farcical elements in the novel represent its modernity. Here tragedy and comedy are close neighbours

rather than opposites. Hardy's inclusion of farcical elements in *Jude the Obscure* does not mean that his tragic vision has disappeared. On the contrary, it is an example of Hardy's effort to bring something new to the form. Indeed, Hardy's treatment of the social absurd in his last novel makes him "closer to the postmodern spirit … than to the Victorian age" (Adelman 1992, 114).

An examination of Hardy's tragic vision together with the technical and thematic elements in the three tragic novels have led us to the conclusion that Hardy did indeed manage to contribute to the development of the modern tragic novel. Moreover, Hardy's tragic vision gave him a special understanding of the individual's psychology and assisted him in the treatment of modern issues such as the liberation of the individual, particularly of womankind. It is in this that Hardy's modernity and greatness lay.

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INTRODUCTION

> [Tragedy is]:
> ... concerned with a great personality engaged in a struggle that ends disastrously.
>
> —H.H. Thorndike

In his tragic novels, or as he defines them, novels of "character and environment" (Orel 1967, 44) Hardy concentrates on the tragic aspects of life in order to generate a modern version of the Aristotelian and Shakespearean tragic model in the novel form. Hardy's last three major tragic novels *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) are clearly experiments with both the idea and the form of tragedy. Before taking up Hardy's tragic vision and the way he represents, it is better to first give an account of the characteristics of the Greek and Shakespearean tragic models and different tragic visions so as to illuminate Hardy's contribution to and achievement in his experiments with the tragic model. Moreover, this will help us towards a compact vision of what tragedy is and what it is not, and what its elements are.

It is commonly agreed that there are no such things as universal principles or criteria of tragedy with which to classify its various types. There are only particular, individual plays or novels or poems which seem to be called tragedies and accepted as such. Discussions of tragedy are vast and varied; but definitions of the term are few in number. Tragedies seem to demonstrate themselves in ways so different that it is difficult to see common elements of tragedy common in all of them. A more reasonable method is to attempt to reveal where the essence of the tragic conflict lies in any given example. This will be the method followed in the examination of Hardy's tragic novels. Nevertheless, it will be useful to consider some of the trends in the criticism of tragedy, as well as certain types.

A contemporary critic and philosopher Oscar Mandel proposes two general approaches towards a definition of tragedy. He calls them "derivative" and "substantive" definitions. The derivative definition "tends to ask what expresses itself through tragedy." On the other hand, "instead of asking what tragedy expresses," the "substantive definitions … begin

with the work of art itself" and go on to deal with "the constituent elements of art, rather than its ontological sources" (1968, 10). Mandel then divides substantive definitions into four main types. The first is "definition by formal elements," which is based on the treatment of rules such as "legislation on the three unities, diction, or the hero's social level." The second is "definition by situation" which directs attention to "what happens" in tragedy and "its recurrent subject matter." The third is "definition by ethical direction" which attempts to illuminate "the thematic implication of the work." The fourth and last one is "definition by emotional effect," which can be associated with "Aristotle's requirement of pity and fear and the elimination of both from our nervous system" (1968, 11).

Mandel regards the Aristotelian definition of tragedy as a "substantive one" (1968, 11). Though no one regards Aristotle's definition as perfect, it seems impossible to enter into a serious discussion of tragedy without referring back to that first and most helpful approach. In *Poetics*, Aristotle gives a detailed examination of each element of tragedy which in this or that way throws light on the nature of the tragic works of innumerable playwrights, ranging from the ancient Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, Elizabethan dramatists Shakespeare, Kyd and Marlow, modern playwrights such as Arthur Miller, and finally to writers of modern tragic novels like Hardy, Lawrence and Conrad. In *Poetics*, Aristotle's substantive definition of tragedy is briefly expressed as follows:

> Tragedy then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of a narrative; through pity and fear affecting the proper purgation of this emotion.
>
> (Bate 1970, 22)

Aristotle describes tragedy as a play of some length that tells a noble story in its entirety, in metrical language, that relies on deep suffering causing terror that involves the spectator to acquire an emotional reality. Mandel's definition is a fairly similar one. It runs as follows:

> A work of art is tragic if it substantiates the following situation: A protagonist who commands our earnest good will is impelled in a given world by a purpose, or undertakes an action, of certain seriousness and magnitude; and by that very purpose on action, subject to that some given world, necessarily and inevitably meets with grave or physical suffering.
>
> (88)

It is interesting to note that the words "magnitude," "serious" and "action" are used in both definitions, and in fact Mandel's largely repeats Aristotle's concept. The main difference is Aristotle's emphasis on the emotional effect, which is not a structural element but a quality of tragedy.

In the *Poetics*, in connection with Aristotle's definition we are given the constituent parts of tragedy in order of importance; "plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and song" (Bate 1970, 23). The plot as the imitation of an important action is an urgent element of the overall design or structural unity of tragedy. No element can be removed without causing destruction to the organic unity of the work. Moreover, the plot should focus on one problem related to the character of the tragic hero along with the other characters of the work. To create "pity" and "fear," the characters must fall from happiness to misery because "pity" is generated by an undeserved misfortune and "fear" by the suffering of the character we identify with. The tragic hero for Aristotle is a representative of ideal humanity, but not highly virtuous and just, whose misfortune is brought about not necessarily by their vice or depravity but by some error of judgment. Other elements such as "diction," "spectacle," "thought" and "song" are expected to contribute to the overall tragic unity of the work (Bate 1970, 23–7).

Along with the method of constructing a whole body of a tragedy, technical concepts such as "probability or necessity," "coincidence," "reversal of intention and recognition," "tragic incident" and finally "unity of action, time and place" are examined in accordance with their importance in the *Poetics*.

"Probability or necessity" means the naturalness and inevitability of casual interrelation of happenings, out of which the whole plot occurs. "Probability or necessity" is the substituent of human life, destiny or chance. In comparison with chance happenings, coincidences are more striking, for they are designed as the result of an accident. An instance of this is "the statue of Mitys at Argos, which fell upon his murderer while he was a spectator at a festival, and killed him" (Bate 1970, 24–6). "Reversal of intention" is the change of direction of the action to its opposite dependent on the law of "probability or necessity." The concept of "recognition" shows alteration from indifference to awareness creating love or hate between fated persons. And the "tragic incident" is the action which causes physical destruction or pain. Lastly, the use of the three unities is explained with more emphasis on the "unity of action" than the unities of "time and place" (26).

Aristotle's definition of tragedy and analysis of its constituents leads him to a classification of four types of tragedy. The first is "the complex"

tragedy; this depends wholly on "reversal of intention and recognition." The second is "the pathetic" tragedy; the main concern of this type is human passion. The third type is "the ethical" tragedy, which deals with ethical matters. Finally, the "simple" tragedy is left without comment (Bate 1970, 30).

It was solely upon the works of the Greek tragedians that Aristotle formed his conclusions in the *Poetics.* Thus, what has been analyzed above gives not only the base of tragedy but also the way the Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles recorded their vision of life. To be added to this is the question of justice. This element reveals the basic concerns of the dramatist's own vision of life more than the way he constitutes his tragedy. The question of justice in Greek tragedy shows a variety of tones from poet to poet, but a general characteristic is its sharp and striking appearance.

Aeschylus was the first to introduce the idea of justice to tragedy. It became a recurrent element in all Greek tragedy, from *Prometheus* and the *Oresteia* to *Medea* and *The Bacchae*. The idea of justice helped the poets to deal with "the nature and destiny of man" (Sewall 1967, 29). Sewall asserts that in Euripides's tragedy, gods cruelly and wilfully make people suffer. The gods may ruin man for the sake of sport or jealousy, or remain indifferent if a person destroys their own self. Sewall sums up the Greek poets' visions of the idea of justice as follows:

> Aeschylus never begs the question, but he moves beyond it toward mysticism and revelation; and Euripides' tendency is toward nihilism and denial. Sophocles neither preaches nor rails. In the destructive element he could say … "How to be?" Man is free but fated, fated but free.
>
> (1967, 30)

This shows the way the three poets develop their characters' tragic states. Determination of the tragic result is dependent on the war between the powers of gods and the desires of man. We may call any external forces that generate suffering upon the character as the general will, and the character's own desire as the human will. The struggle is not always necessarily between external forces and the character but possibly between the character and their own will. For Aeschylus, the tragic outcome seems to come as a result of the workings of both wills against the character. Yet, Euripides's characters seem to be under a total hegemony of the general will, so both wills may automatically operate extreme blindness against the characters and may possibly cause a very sharp pain that leads the characters to a shocking and tragic end. The purest attitude among the three tragedians seems to belong to Sophocles. For him, human will itself

determines the destruction of the character rather than the gods' will. A peculiar example of this is the state of Oedipus the King. How he finally acts and becomes is the product of his own human doing. There is in him a strange mixture of guilt and innocence, beauty and ugliness, good and bad, which generate a genuine tragic conflict in him.

In sum, Greek tragedy presents a view of the universe, of man's destiny and his relation with his fellows and himself, in which evil is real and threatening. The Greek poets' general criteria of the nature of what is tragic and none-tragic are argued as follows:

> … the Greek poets were amply aware of the fact that disasters that could easily have been avoided are widely felt to be pre-eminently tragic. This is true also for Shakespeare.
>
> (Kaufmann 1969, 366)

This criterion can be easily traced in the character's tragic flaw or tragic error which blinds him ruthlessly. For example, the spectators and some characters other than the tragic character themselves are most frequently aware of the tragic incident. Therefore, they know that the tragic character can save his life or whatever they are losing, perhaps depending on a small chance happening. However, nothing happens to save them, so, their suffering state becomes striking enough to arouse the desired dramatic effect on the spectator.

Greek tragedy and Elizabethan tragedy, particularly Shakespeare's tragedy, are two remarkable modes in its history, both of which seem to have influenced Thomas Hardy considerably. For this reason, after what has so far been said about Greek tragedy, the addition of some interpretation about the nature of Shakespeare's tragedy is expected to contribute to the development of the argument of this work.

Shakespeare, Kyd, Marlow and Chapman were four of the many of Elizabethan dramatists who reformulated and developed for their own purposes the Greek and the Roman form and structure, and marked the second rise and popularity of tragedy after the Greek period. During the same period, tragedy also developed in Spain where the main writers were Lope de Vega, Molina and Calderon, and just as the development of tragedy stopped in England and Spain so the form began to rise again in France where the finest writers were Corneille and Racine.

Modern criticism of Shakespeare's tragedy frequently refers to the elements of Greek tragedy and to the technical terms which are applied to it. As we pass from Greek tragedy through the tragedy of Shakespeare and to modern tragedy in novel form, particularly in Hardy's fiction, we are aware of an increasing complexity, or complication in the plot, and as a

consequence a greater difficulty in identifying the spectacle of tragic suffering. While in Greek tragedy the plot is always simple and single, in Shakespeare's it is less so, yet still clearly traceable. In modern tragedy, it tends to cover a whole situation or condition, rather than concentrating only on a single act or series of events.

Representation of characters in Greek and Shakespeare's tragedy consists of "high personage"; often kings, queens, and princes, and always men and women of noble birth and breeding, such as Oedipus, Lear, Hamlet and others. Delineation of such noble figures in tragedy is thought to account for its total effect:

> For if they, who are set so far above the ordinary level of men by their powers, and opportunities for happiness, can "fall" can suffer and be destroyed, then this must indeed be the necessary condition of men. If it can happen even to them it can happen to me, to you, to everyone.
>
> (Krook 1969, 62)

Both the Greek and Shakespearean tragedy deal with "high personages" but with one important difference; while Shakespeare puts the emphasis on the tragic character, Greek tragedy puts it on the plot, or action. Brereton's *Principles of Tragedy* illustrates that Greek tragedy stresses moral issues which are defined by the action of the characters whereas in Shakespeare's tragedy, characters do not so much define the issue. Moreover, Aristotle's category of "thought" is combined in Shakespeare's characters as action and argument; "thought" should not be separated from either "action" or "character." In Shakespeare's characters, "one must recognize that 'thought' is at once an internal action inseparable from the external action and a factor in the composition of 'character'" (1969, 95). The difference pointed out between the representation of the Greek and of Shakespeare's tragic characters in Brereton's study indicates the quality of free will, and this accounts for the nature of the tragic visions represented in both modes. Thus, the Greek vision seems to be based on a treatment of more fated characters than Shakespeare's. A proper comparison to this point might be driven out of Oedipus's unwitting murder of his father and marriage to his mother, and Lear's division of his property between Goneril and Regan and his cruel deprivation of his third daughter Cordelia, and the throwing of himself upon the mercies of his insensitive daughters. It is clear that King Oedipus is exposed to an outward force which drives him to commit the tragic action, and herefore, we can say that Oedipus is fated by an external force. Yet, Lear had the choice at the beginning. He could have saved himself from all that he suffered from if he had acted more wisely, making him the architect of his own fate. For Brereton, Shakespeare's

differently motivated characters are to be seen as an indication of a new development in drama; this is a change from character as a type to an emphasis on an individual's power far beyond anything recognized by the Greek tragedians (1969, 95).

Aristotelian technical devices such as "reversal of intention and recognition coincidence, probability or necessity" are of major importance in Shakespeare's tragedy and create the "theatrical excitement of external action" (Bratchell 1990, 6) which matches the general tragic theme. An instance of this is "the ruin or restoration of the soul, and of the life of man" (Bratchell, 6) as is clearly delineated in *King Lear*.

We can summarize that the Greeks introduced and developed the tragic mode in general and Shakespeare added life to it with his emphasis on character, which gave way to our astute examination of man's psychology. Tragedy, then, became a mature unit of body and soul.

Like other major art forms, if tragedy is to be taken as an expression and reflection of man's nature and vision of the universe, then the concept of tragedy has changed greatly since the time of Shakespeare. The scale and tone of tragedy has been reformulated. We now have the grief, the misery and the disaster of the ordinary mother, tramp, peasant or salesman, rather than just a king, a queen or a prince.

In the nineteenth century, what seemed to be in fashion was the novel as a vehicle flexible enough to cover representation of the modern vision of tragedy. Examples such as Emilie Bronté's *Wuthering Heights*, George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, Hermen Melville's *Moby Dick*, and Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are comparable with their tragic vision of depth and intensity, comprehensiveness and coherence to that of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, Shakespeare's *King Lear* and others.

After taking up the characteristics of Greek, Shakespearean and modern tragedy, a brief account of what is genuine tragedy (and what is not), together with an account of some philosophers' tragic visions of life are expected to contribute to the formation of an overall idea about tragedy.

Above all, the process which determines the nature of a tragedy as described by Aristotle is simply an action based on conflict and a character exposed to suffering which leads to their destruction. If the direction of the action of the conflict is unexpectedly changed by an accidental event then the outcome is a "prevented tragedy." Mandel categorizes "the tale of Abraham and Isaac" as an example of "prevented tragedy" (1968, 43–4). Moreover, Mandel classifies serious works such as "works of intrigue, works concerning passive victims, works of grave but successful action"

as pseudo-tragedies. He calls them "paratragedy" (26). A serious work of this sort implies the hero's awareness and determination or their total resignation of what they are doing. *Oedipus at Colonus*, which is based on a story of redemption, Sophocles' *Electra*, and Euripides's *Orestes* are regarded by Mandel as examples of paratragedies or successful dramas of revenge, but not genuine tragedies. In brief, "the vision of life peculiar to the mystic, the pious, the propagandist, the confirmed optimist or pessimist—or confirmed anything—is not tragic" (Sewall 1967, 5). "The mystic" and "the pious" are hopeful, and "the propagandist" and "the confirmed" are determined and willing to do something. Therefore, we can summarize that where there is hope and determination, there is no tragedy: "In the point of doctrine, Christianity reverses the tragic view and makes tragedy impossible" (Sewall 1967, 50). Christianity, or any religion, promises hope both in this life and in that beyond.

Yet, since hope inherent in an action prevents the occurrence of tragedy, then the reverse should automatically create a genuine tragic outcome. Instances of these are the atheistic visions of existentialism, Freudianism and Marxism, for each of these doctrines denies the existence of religion in general. A contemporary philosopher Raymond Williams asserts that the three "systems, of thinking":

> … are all, in their most common forms, tragic. Man can achieve his full life only after violent conflict; man is essentially frustrated and divided against himself while he lives in society; man is torn by intolerable contradictions, in a condition of essential absurdity. From these ordinary propositions, and from their combination in so many minds, it is not surprising that so much tragedy has in fact emerged.
>
> (1966, 189)

While the point is now focused on the factual life from which stems definite patterns of tragedy according to existentialism, Freudianism and Marxism, an argument about whether well-known events such as the two world wars, the great famines that plague India, and the assassination of John F. Kennedy are tragic or not will add meaning to our discussion. Philosopher Kaufmann, considering Max Scheler's vision of tragedy, sums up that: "a disaster that could easily have been avoided is preeminently tragic" (1969, 362). We can then conclude that all the actual manmade disasters mentioned above are avoidable, and thus are tragic.

Furthermore, Kaufmann, in agreement with Aristotle, points out that "what seems inevitable is particularly tragic" (362). In accordance with this, Mandel asserts that "death with its inevitable victory over effort is then the first tragic fact" (1968, 163) and concludes that if man's death is

an inevitable happening then "the act of birth is tragic." The act of birth here means that "we have brought another death into the world" to face "the inevitability of suffering among his own species" (163). In this case, both birth and death seem to be inevitable tragic facts of humankind. However, for Buddha what makes death tragic is its universality rather than its inevitability (Kaufmann 1969, 94).

What matters in a tragic work is not only the tragic incident and character but also the writer's own vision of existence, which gives it life and body. Some of the main authorities who have contributed different personal visions of the tragedy of life to the modern vision of tragedy are Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, A. C. Bradley, G. W. F. Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche and many others.

Lessing's main contribution to modern tragedy lies in his "rejection of neo-classicism, a defense of Shakespeare … and writing of bourgeois tragedy" (Williams 1966, 28) which is based on the illustration of "general nature" later "called 'classical realism' which is still generalized, and in which a grasp of dramatic structure is still strong" (Bate 1970, 244). The main concern of Lessing's vision of tragedy lies in his "moving portrayal of human nature and of human passions" (244) comparable with that of Aristotle's catharsis and Shakespeare's purpose of dramatic effect. On the other hand, Hegel's vision of tragedy is based on "a conflict of ethical substance" which directly "provides over and above mere fear and tragic sympathy" out of the destruction of the tragic individual's own will (Williams 1966, 33–4). However, Bradley focuses on "self-division and self-restitution, and seems in the end to produce a psychological rather than an ethical theory of tragedy" (35). According to Bradley's theory, tragedy seems to emerge out of the conflict between humans and their own fate. Some original contributions to the theory of tragedy have also been made by Schopenhauer. The critic and philosopher Williams argues that Schopenhauer is the first philosopher who has introduced the existentialist vision of modern tragedy to the world of literature. For Schopenhauer, a tragedy represents blind cosmic will. Williams adds that "secularization of fate" is one of the most important elements of the modern theory, and Schopenhauer is thought to be the forerunner of this idea. Here, the emphasis of tragedy is seen to rest, not on the hero's own sin but on the "original sin, i.e. the crime of existence itself." The tragic action represents "the power of evil and of blind fate" which generates suffering to a degree that makes "the will to live" dead (Williams 1966, 37). Schopenhauer's representation of the struggle between man and fate and his emphasis on man's resignation demonstrates his deterministic vision of tragedy, which seems to be altogether pessimistic. While Schopenhauer reflects the tragic

nature of life and man's resignation to it, Nietzsche, on the contrary, in his first book *The Birth of Tragedy*, as quoted by Kaufmann points out that "tragedies … deal with the incurable, inevitable, inescapable in the human lot and character," so as to show man "how to turn these nauseous thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live" (1969, 349). Thus, both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche's characters are fated, but act in a reverse direction; Nietzsche wants his character to observe the nature of their fate, but not to resign to it. This aspect of Nietzsche's vision of tragedy is what Kaufmann finds enjoyable leading him to conclude that Sartre has been "probably inspired by Nietzsche" in the idea of man's nausea, "one of the most epoch-making novels of the twentieth century" (349).

The novels of the twentieth century seem to have started with Hardy's last tragic work *Jude the Obscure*, making Hardy the last tragic novel writer of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth. With Jude he introduced both farcical and tragic elements as close neighbours, a combination developed successfully not only in the modern novel but also in drama.

Among Hardy's fourteen novels, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are generally considered to be his purist works in the tragic form. Hardy's tragedy emerges either from an external or an internal conflict, or from both simultaneously, from which the protagonist is led to an inevitable catastrophe. In *The Life of Thomas Hardy* (1962), Hardy gives some account of his definition of his tragedy. In a note written in April 1878, Hardy argues that tragedy "should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions" (120) or as he later writes on November 21, 1885, tragedy generates out of "a state of things in the life of an individual which unavoidably causes some natural aim or desire of his to end in a catastrophe when carried out" (176), or as he finally wrote in 1895, it is "created by an opposing environment either of things inherent in the universe or of human institutions" (274) which represent a universal tragic situation of man.

Any tragic situation in a work of art naturally reflects the vision of its creator. On a minimal level, the construction of a tragic situation requires a character and an action, or a plot. The treatment of character, action or plot and other elements such as setting, diction to create a tragic situation or an overall tragedy differs from writer to writer in accordance with the way they perceive life.

If we consider the view of life expressed in Hardy's novels of tragedy, it must be obvious that the view is a very gloomy one. The statement from

the last paragraph of Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess" (1966, 446) implies Hardy's disbelief in life beyond the grave. Consideration of the "Aeschylean phrase" together with Hardy's use of a statement from the German writer Novalis—"character is fate" (Hardy 1968, 117)—in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* shows that Hardy's "recognition of the phenomenal was bold, lucid and rational," and this is also the case for the existentialist (Dave 1985, 10). Moreover, Hardy's affinity with Darwin's theory of evolution, and his own words written in January 29, 1890: "I have been looking for God for fifty years, and I think that if he had existed I should have discovered him" (1962), show that he believed in a malevolent deity. Hardy, indeed, defines such a deity not only as "the President of the Immortals" but sometimes as "Immanent Will" and considers "some unthinking force is sure to inflict pain on a man until he is lucky enough to die" (Miller 1970, 13). This "unthinking force" is apparently life itself; that is nature and its blind forces together with fate.

Hardy's affinity with the theory of evolution and his apparent acceptance of the non-existence of God have prevented earlier critics from examining the themes related to the psychological world of the individual. The reason behind this fact seems to be that the social values of the Victorian time were too conservative to permit critics to deal with Hardy's emphasis on the state of fallen women, degenerate men-women relationships, and other probable troubles of the unfortunate individual, while Hardy's attack on religion and other social codes was so apparent. This and similar attempts by critics led some of them to interpret Hardy as an atheist and as a result of they set out to illuminate the elements of atheism, pessimism and fatalism in his works. Some other critics found his works "shocking" and "disgusting," and some found him evocative of "nostalgia for a lost, rural past." Despite this, "recent criticism has been concerned to define his philosophical position more precisely and to show its relevance to the modern world" (Sumner 1986, 188).

All the statements taken from Hardy's own writings urge us to pose the question: is Hardy a materialist? It is extremely difficult to give a proper answer to such a question. Hardy seems to have no kind of spiritual compensation, yet he frequently shows that there is an unpredictable force governing the universe. The unpredictability of the force behind the universe, shows Hardy's atheistic vision of life which falls in line with Darwin's theory of evolution. For Hardy, as for the scientist, things are as they are not because God has planned them thus, nor because man, by violation has spoilt the plan, but because that is how the blind forces of

nature have happened to work. Nature is at present a Darwinian evolution machine, an immanent force both creative and destructive, yet entirely ignorant of either consequence. Thus, what matters in man's life seems to be his fate. This leads to the problem of free will as well as to Hardy's excessive use of chance and coincidence and many physical and social factors which contribute to the development of his vision of tragedy in his novels.

In a work of art, the treatment of free will might be considered a measure which determines the nature of a genuine or a pseudo-tragedy. In this, we refer to free will in the tragic purpose, not in any other action which may occur in the work. The protagonists of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are able to use their own will only in as much as their fate, chance and coincidental happenings permit. Here we can express all outward forces as substitutes of the "Immanent Will" and the protagonist's will as human will. It is generally accepted that "Hardy embraced and modified Schopenhauer's concept of the will and progressed from there to adopt Von Hartman's theory of the unconscious nature of that immanent force" (Collins 1990, 61). The protagonist's passion and desire frequently blind the human will which causes their tragic flaw and turns against them; in this case, not only the human will but also the Immanent Will work together to lead the protagonist to their final doom.

Determinism seems to be a dominant element in the construction of Hardy's major tragic characters; particularly Henchard, Tess and Jude. But it must be kept in mind that Hardy's determinism is based on a Darwinist mould. This means that the characters are not only given a set of circumstances in which to live but also a set of personal characteristics. Character and environment interact with each other. The characters are given freedom to choose but their own passions spoil their success. This reminds us of Shakespeare's representation of Lear as a man destroyed by his own tragic flaw. This is what makes Lear's story a good tragedy. In Henchard's story in particular, and also partly in Jude's and to a lesser extent in Tess's, the tragic flaws are what account for their tragedies and what make their stories good tragedies. Therefore, we can say that the destruction of the character through their own tragic flaw makes for a good tragedy. Krook puts the idea of a good tragedy into a formula as follows:

> Where there is no freedom to choose—not free will—there is no moral responsibility, where no moral responsibility, there is no properly tragic suffering and therefore no tragedy.
>
> (68)

In Hardy's tragedy there is determinism, but this determinism is not absolute; it is open to some small amount of freedom. Otherwise, the presence of an absolute determinism would have made puppets, rather than tragic characters.

Unexpected turns of events, such as chance occurrence and coincidence, are of major importance in the development of Hardy's tragic figures. This device is sometimes associated with the operation of fate, or destiny, and sometimes with the operation of the forces of nature. Briefly, the use of chance occurrence and coincidence are tools with which Hardy determines where, why, when and how things are to happen so as to arrange the events in accordance with his subject-matter. However, Hardy is condemned by some of his critics for his exaggerated use of this technical device. J. I. M. Stewart criticized Hardy's use of coincidence or chance asserting that "to a quite unnatural and unverisimilar degree, it deals out far more 'pain' than 'bliss.' The objective picture may be dark, but Hardy insists on darkening it further" (Stewart 1971, 37). David Cecil regards Hardy's use of chance encounter and coincidence from a wider angle:

> We are witnessing a battle between man and Destiny. Destiny is an inscrutable force; we do not understand its nature or its intentions. And we cannot therefore predict what it will do. In consequence, its acts always show themselves in the guise of inexplicable unexpected blows of chance.
>
> (1963, 28)

If Hardy's philosophy of life is not taken into consideration, Hardy's use of the unexpected turn of events may seem overdone and may possibly cause critics and readers alike to misjudge him and his works. In connection with this, Bert G. Hornback argues that:

> Coincidence is the central problem for almost every critic who has had reservations about Hardy's art—and this is so because coincidence is at the centre of his vision and his technique. From his philosophical acceptance of the interdependence and interaction of all vital phenomena, Hardy develops the idea of necessary co-incidents. Because he is committed to a dramatic view of life—and this comes from his respect for living—he sees these moments of crisis as the essence of human experience.
>
> (1971, 86)

In real life, chance encounter and coincidence sometimes play a very important role, and we naturally never question its frequent occurrence, commonly accepting it as a part of our lives, interpreting it as our fate or destiny. An author like Hardy, who aims at depicting the actual face of life, would naturally deal with the unexpected turn of events. For this reason, we have traced a large number of chance or coincidental happenings that play a role in the formation of the tragic figure in Hardy's novels.

The setting, too, is of major importance in the development of the tragic figure in Hardy's tragic novels. This directly leads to the interpretation of Hardy's depiction of nature. The word nature is used in two different meanings in Hardy's narratives. The first one is the use of physical nature as it is apparent in actual life. To begin with, physical nature has two faces; one is negative, the other positive. Man is wholly defenceless against nature in certain cases as it commands the universe. Hardy uses physical nature as a tool which causes suffering for man and sometimes happiness. The second meaning of nature is handled in connection with the state of human nature. Usually, the character's pride, passions, passivity or ambitions lead the irrecoverably towards their doom. Here, chance encounter and coincidence in the form of fate combine with the character's human weakness to create disaster for him.

Hardy's concept of tragedy shows some affinities with that of Greek and Shakespearean tragedy. His affinity with the former tragic modes is a pointer to the sort of seriousness he is attempting to achieve, as Hardy wants to give an account of the human condition that will work on the cosmic level as well as on the local, detailed level. It produces an account of the human condition like that of Sophocles or Shakespeare, but is also something new, entirely of the nineteenth century.

Hardy's idea of tragedy seems to have been based on the Greek model which generally reveals a treatment of not necessarily a bad character, but a character demonstrating a human weakness, unconsciously working against itself in the search for happiness and contentment in spirit, and developed upon a psychological study of the character in a similar manner to that of Shakespeare's Lear. Hardy seems to have developed his notion of fate from Aeschylus as well as Shakespeare's use of irony and dramatic contrast of humour to heighten tragedy.

Hardy also tends to give way to the treatment of Aristotle's three unities; unity of action or plot, time and place in his novel *The Return of the Native* and partly in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. For example, in both novels there is a conscious attempt to limit action, time and place; in *The Return of the Native* the action is limited to a year and a day, from

November 5 one year to November 6 the next. We do not move away from the place which is the setting for it at all. Thomasin and later Eustecia go to get married somewhere out of the setting, but both scenes are constructed in such a way that not one of them spoils the unity. In *Far from the Madding Crowd* the main movement occupies a whole year, from Oak's first sight of Bathsheba to Troy's disappearance. The two brief movements that follow each occupy another year. In connection with this, Hardy's provision to his readers of a map of Wessex from where most of his novels are imitated shows Hardy's conscious attempt at dealing with the unity of place. Despite this, treatment of many characters and naturally the necessity of creating subplots together in one novel are likely to be the reason why Hardy left his practice of the three unities in his other novels.

In addition to Hardy's trial of the three unities in some of his early tragic novels, the traditional "tragic reported action" technique seems to be treated successfully in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*: "The convention in Greek tragedy is that death and violence should not be seen on stage; instead, messengers and others recount such actions at some length" (Butler 1979, 72). "The tragic reported action" is particularly the climax of a plot. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Henchard, towards the end of the story, dies as an outcast in despair. The news is brought to Elizabeth-Jane by Abel Whittle who reads her Henchard's will. Together with the news, Abel Whittle's reading Henchard's will manipulates the climax of his story. Abel Whittle fulfils the business of a messenger in a similar way with that of Lear's Fool.

Hardy's three major tragic novels *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, which are the main concern of this work, are examined in separate chapters so as to illuminate Hardy's contribution to the development of the modern tragic novel both in technique and theme.

Hardy's innovation lies not only in his contribution to the development of the tragic novel form but also in his subject matter. Hardy's "subject is not men but man. His theme is mankind's predicament in the universe," (Cecil 1963, 19) because he sees life as a tragedy. The seed of tragedy lies in man, in society, in physical environment, everywhere in life. Hardy's tragedy is firmly set within the society and in agricultural life of his time. The major theme of Hardy's tragic novels is love, and law, class trade, education, conventions and social institutions are all treated in close accord with the love theme. Love generates a tragic force:

> which in the men is the cause of rebellion, against life, and in the women implies an illimitable capacity of suffering, and it is this which dominates the characters that lie hide. This is the tragic power; and if we are to place

> Hardy among his fellows, we must call him the greatest tragic writer among English novelists.
>
> (Woolf 1991, 77)

While Hardy focuses on love as a tragic force, he creates a tragic conflict not only between the individuals but also between the individual and their own desires and their society. Hardy presents the common person and their subject matter with a view that provides his characters with both tragic greatness and universality.