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## Destiny and Chance: Fortune Changing Factors of 'Tess' and 'Henchard'

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### Abstract

The present paper focuses on the two major characters; 'Tess' and 'Michael Henchard'. Tess is from *Tess of D'Urbervilles* and Michael Henchard from *The Mayor of Casterbridge* written by Thomas Hardy. The themes of the novels, the fluctuations in the fortunes of the hero and heroines have been discussed. Eventually this paper explains the roles of chance and destiny in the lives of Tess and Henchard.

**Keywords:** Destiny, chance, role, life, Wessex

### Introduction

Thomas Hardy was born June 3, 1840, near Dorchester, England. For the most part self-educated, he worked in an architect's office as young man and later practiced architecture independently. From the year 1871 until 1897 he published the series of novels for which he is chiefly known; after 1897 he devoted himself almost entirely to the writing of verse. He continued to live in Dorchester, where he died on January, 11, 1928. Through his life span of which was 88 years he wrote many novels, and short stories and poems. Among the prominent novels of Thomas Hardy are *Far from*

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*the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). The protagonist of the novels of Hardy believes in the role of chance and destiny which always plays the villainous role against them.

### Theme of Hardy's Novels

We often find the tragic theme in the novels of Hardy. Probably Thomas Hardy was fascinated by Greek tragedy. Hardy uses tragic circumstances to enhance the Wessex countryside and its inhabitants. By doing so he not only developed his story but also attained certain grandeur for his novels. His first attempts at tragedy were in *The Return of the Native* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, but *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is the peak point of his efforts. Hardy describes himself as a determinist. In other words, Hardy believes that the course of human life is shaped by invisible forces. It might be internal or external; both beyond human control.

### The Fortunes Tess and Henchard

**John Durbeyfield** is a poor man and is the father of Tess. Tess's Father sends her to D'Urbervilles palace to make fortune. But she is shocked to find that she and her family had no any relation with D'Urbervilles. Alec, who is the son of Simon somehow gets her job in the palace. Tess disagrees first and later agrees Tess has resisted seduction from Alec but one night Alec takes advantage of her unconsciousness in the woods. Tess returns home and gives birth to a boy named

Sorrow who dies soon after he is born. Tess later finds a job as a milkmaid.

One day she meets Angel Clare. Angel was the same man whom she had exchanged glances during the May Day Dance. Their love slowly started growing and they both married. Tess wanted to tell about her past but she could not tell about her past but she could not tell. One day, she writes a letter and slides it under his door but it slides under the carpet and Angel could not read it.

After the wedding, they both confess careless acts which they did in the past. Angel tells about his affairs with a woman in London. Tess tells about Alec and her dead child. Tess forgives Angel for his careless mistakes in the past but Angel cannot forgive her and he leaves alone and goes to Brazil. Tess had a difficult time. One day, she hears a preacher and is shocked to find that he was Alec. When Tess meets Alec, he begs her not to tempt him again. But a few days later Alec begs to marry him as he has turned his back on religious ways. Tess learns from her sister, Liza-Lu that her mother is unwell. Tess returns home. Her mother recovers but her father dies. Angel finally returns and starts searching for Tess. Angel was not told that Tess has gone to village called Sandbourne. When Angel reached there, he finds Tess in a boarding house. He tells her that he has forgiven her and begs her to come back. Tess says that it is too late now and she cannot return to him. In that Boarding house, Alec also comes. Tess' heart is broken. She goes upstairs and stabs Alec to death.

Tess is arrested by a search party at Stonehenge and is sent to jail. On a warm day in July a gallows was erected in the prison of the old town of Wintoncester. From a distant hill Angel and Liza-Lu watched a black flag ascend the shaft which means that Tess is executed or hanged. "Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals had ended his sport with Tess.

Thomas Hardy derived the character of Michael Henchard from the autobiography of J.F. Pennie, a bed-ridden writer for the chronicle whose various projects were doomed by his quarrelsome nature. Hardy noted that Pennie was "seemingly, a man who had chiefly himself to blame the vicissitudes of his life." (Turner, 92)

The story of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* begins with Henchard who is travelling with his wife, Susan, looking for employment. When they stop to eat, Henchard gets drunk, and in an auction he sells his wife and their baby daughter, Eliazabeth-Jane, to Newson a sailor for five guineas. In the morning Henchard regrets of his misdeeds and searches for his wife and daughter. Unable to find them, he takes an oath, that he will not drink wine for twenty one years. After Newson's death eighteen years later, Susan and Elizabeth seeking Henchard come in Casterbridge.

Susan comes to know that Henchard is The Mayor of Casterbridge. Meanwhile Henchard has hired Donald Farfrae as his manager. Farfrae and Elizabeth has love affair which dislikes Henchard so he asks Farfrae to leave the job. Sussan

falls ill and dies soon after her remarriage to Henchard. After discovering that Elizabeth Jane is not his own daughter but of Newson's he becomes cold towards Elizabeth and she leaves his house and starts to live with Lucetta. Elizabeth comes to know that Lucetta and Henchard had an affair. One day Lucetta and Farfrae meet each other and both quickly fall in love and marry by which Elizabeth is shocked. Lucetta fears that Henchard might disclose her affair to Farfrae so she asks him to return all her love letters.

One day the peasants arrange the skimmity ride on the love affairs of Henchard and Lucetta which is seen by Lucetta who is shocked and dies. After her death Farfrae once again comes back to Elizabeth. Henchard also like her as his own daughter. One day Newson comes back and enquires about Elizabeth. Henchard tells him that Elizabeth is dead. Suddenly one day Newson meets Elizabeth and tells her about Henchard's falsehood of her death. Since then Elizabeth dislikes him. One day Henchard comes to know about the marriage of Elizabeth and Farfrae. He goes there but Elizabeth rebukes and insults him. He leaves again decides to never return.

Elizabeth soon regrets her coldness and she and Farfrae go looking for Henchard. Unfortunately, they find him too late, discovering that he has died alone in the countryside. Both Elizabeth and Farfrae regret for their rudeness towards Henchard. Probably Henchard is the first of Hardy's major characters to dominate the novel throughout. In this respect The Mayor of Casterbridge paves the way for Tess of the D'Urbervilles in which Hardy focuses on what Hawkins

terms, "the display of a single soul in its totality." (Hawkins, 94)

### The Role of Chance and Destiny:

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* the chance or destiny plays a vital role. It brings so many ups and downs and ultimately she meets her death. Probably it was her bad destiny that she meets Alec and not Angel; lest her fortune would have been different. Tess' mother warns her not to disclose her past to Angel. Her first attempt of writing a letter fails for the letter never gets him. It remains hidden in the carpet. She is so humble that he forgives Angel for his past affairs, thinking that Angel must have read her letter and would forgive her mistakes too. We can say it is her bad destiny that Angel leaves her and she has to face so many difficulties.

Eventually she becomes so desperate and helpless that she stabs Alec and eventually she is hanged to death. Thus we see how the destiny plays the role exactly against the action of Tess. The essential theme of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is that of the destruction of a good and natural character by the forces of circumstances and of society itself; it is reenactment of the scapegoat myth. Tess battles poverty and social prejudice; her belated true love blighted her seduction and abandonment. Tess is the most admirable character in the novel, and finer than the two men; Alec and Angel who came in her life who have also false ideas of their worth stemming from their respective background. The idea of chance operates in this novel, as in some of Hardy's other works. Such

coincidences as Angel's letter sliding under the carpet, where it is invisible, and the mail cart's shaft piercing Prince heart are examples of what critic has called Hardy's use of chance as his weapon "to strike through surface reality to areas where the poetry of man resistance to the drab starkness of a malevolent universe." (Carpenter, 138)

Thomas Hardy has shown in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, how important role the forces like Chance and Destiny play in Henchard's life. The hand of fate pulls Henchard out of the pit he has been lying in since he abandoned his wife and daughter. It rewards him and makes him the Mayor but a chain of punishing again begins thereafter when his wife returns. Whereas Susan is so meek and submissive things go against him. Many things might have been different had Henchard been in control of his temper.

However, they happened because they were bound to happen. There is a central role of the person in his own life but there are other forces too which affect people and circumstances. If Henchard was not as poor, he might not have been as frustrated that night and not committed the vice of selling of his wife. His poverty was his fate and he did not have any control over it. It is the irony of fate that Henchard has let everything he has acquired go, just to escape the punishment for his one abominable sin.

Thomas 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 Henchard never expected to be a Mayor.

His meeting with Donald Farflur and then his family is all ordained by fate. so, in this way, Hardy is right that our lives are affected by forces outside our control. It is equally true that we can affect things around us by our will, intention and hard work. If Henchard becomes successful then it is for he is hardworking and intelligent. it always happens that new things disrupts the old norms. Henchard's loss also seems to arise from his inflexibility. So while forces like fate and chance play a role in human life.

### Conclusion

We often find the tragic theme in the novels of Hardy. Probably Thomas Hardy fascinated by Greek tragedy, Hardy uses tragic circumstances to enhance the Wessex countryside and its inhabitants. By doing so he not only developed his story but also attained certain grandeur for his novels. Hardy describes himself as a determinist. in other words, Hardy believes that the course of human life is shaped by invisible forces. It might be internal or external; both beyond human control. The essential theme of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is that of the destruction of a good and natural character by the forces of circumstances and of society itself; it is reenactment of the scapegoat myth. Tess battles poverty and social prejudice; her belated true love blighted her seduction and abandonment. Hardy has shown in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, how important role the forces like Chance and Destiny play in Henchard's life. The hand of fate pulls Henchard out of the pit he has been lying in since he abandoned his wife and daughter. It rewards him and makes

him the Mayor but a chain of punishing again begins thereafter when his wife returns. Hardy is right that our lives are affected by forces outside our control. It is equally true that we can affect things around us by our will, intention and hard work.

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