

The main characters of the novel are, of course, Tess, Alec and Angel. Their relationship is what is called a triangular one. Surprisingly enough, however, Alec and Angel do not meet each other through the novel. When Alec appears before Tess, Angel disappears, and vice versa. In Phase I, the first one Tess meets is Angel when he is casually passing by Marlott. Though she is no more than a transient impression to him, he has made a deep impression on her. We feel that he should have stayed here longer and loved her before she meets the 'wrong man'. Hardy later makes her say to Angel, "I should have had four years more of your heart than I can ever now. Then I should not have wasted my time as I have done--I should have had so much longer happiness." (TD, p. 250) But it is too late when she meets him next in Phase III through Phase V, because her affair with the 'wrong man' has made both of them extremely miserable though they have been extremely happy until her confession. As Angel says later, this woe and misunderstanding might have been prevented if Tess had told the whole story of his night-walking across the Froom stream next day. But "who knows what tomorrow has in store?" (TD, p. 497)

It is in Phase VI that Tess needs Angel most. Misfortune and hardship come upon her and her family. The money he has given her has been spent. Again Tess has to do hard labour on a farm to support her family. To make the matter worse, her family have to move from Marlott to Kingsbere. But the rooms they have wanted are already let, for their letter has arrived there too late. With no money, they are at a loss what to do. At this crucial moment, accident has thrown Tess once more in the path of Alec. Ironically the 'desired man', a missing counterpart of the perfect whole, may be wandering somewhere in Brazil. There he has financially gained nothing, but learned the great lesson that "the beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay not among things done, but among things willed." (TD, p. 432) What Tess has been is of no importance beside what she will be. It implies that he answers in the negative Tess's question of "Was once lost always lost really true of chastity?" (TD, p. 126) Thus, repentant of his harshness, he has made up his mind to come home

to forgive her. But "it was too late" (TD, p. 483), for she has already gone to Alec as his wife once more. Hardy suggests that it would be impossible to correct these anachronisms by a finer intuition even at the acme and summit of human progress.

IV

Finally, Hardy emphasizes the important role of Chance more than any other motif we have discussed so far. He is most concerned with its influence upon the lives of most characters of Tess of the d'Urbervilles.

At the opening of the novel Parson Tringham tells Tess's father that he is a direct descendant of the great Sir Pagan d'Urberville, the renowned knight who came from Normandy with William the Conqueror. He is impressed by the information so deeply that he says that "It's true that my family has seen better days--. 'Twas said that my gr't-grandfer had secrets, and didn't care to talk of where he came from. . . ." (TD, p. 5) Now, what antiquarian could resist a hint like that? Particularly the antiquarian who, having made a study of the family, knows its past grandeur and its present poor survivors? And at the time when the bogus d'Urbervilles have moved into the neighborhood? Robbed of reality at the outset, Tess's father gets drunk in his elevation at the news, singing, "I be as good as some folks here and there! I've got a great family vault at Kingsbere-sub-Greenhill, and fine skillentons than any man in Wessex!" (TD, p. 27) Thus he loses the horse, his only bread winner, which is the prelude to Tess's tragedy. If he had not learned that he is a descendant of the great d'Urbervilles, Tess would not have been sent to the sham d'Urbervilles to claim kin and to ask for some help. Accordingly her course of life would have been much different.

It is Chance that plays an important role in bringing about Tess's seduction. It is just after she has become inexpressibly tired and restless that Alec chances to make an attempt to attack her. She got up at five o'clock in the morning of that day. She has been on foot all day long, has walked three miles to Chaseborough on this evening and has waited three hours for her neighbors without eating and drinking. She has then walked a mile of the way home, and has had the excitement of the fight

with some other workers. And it is nearly one o'clock. As Hardy comments, "At almost any other moment of her life, she would have refused such proffered aid and company as she had refused them several times before." (TD, p. 83-4)

Later on in the novel, it is Chance that prevents Angel from reading Tess's letter of confession which she has slipped under his door in the hope that he would renounce her before the wedding takes place. It is not until the wedding and his own confession of his dissipation with a stranger in London that she is allowed to confess her own affair with Alec. She has expected that he would forgive her as she has done him. But "Forgiveness does not apply to the case," says he. However, if he had read her letter, he might have forgiven her. This probability is revealed in his mournful statement: "O Tess, if you had only told me sooner, I would have forgiven you." (TD, p. 341) Certainly there would not have been the terrible alternation of extreme joy and extreme pain that have actually occurred.

Finally in the novel, when Tess is working on Flintcomb-Ash Farm or a starve-acre place, she goes to Angel's home to ask for some help. Before he leaves for Brazil, Angel has told her to apply to his father whenever she requires resources. When she arrives there, she finds his parents out. Then she sees and hears his narrow-minded brothers, instead of his father. In spite of his narrowness, his father is far less 'starched and ironed' than his brothers and has the gift of charity. If she had met his father then and appealed for assistance, he would have been willing to give her money. Accordingly, she would not have needed a helping hand extended by Alec on Flintcomb-Ash, where she has to work long after the other workers have finished their tiresome day.

Leaving aside Tess of the d'Urbervilles for the moment, let us take a glance at Mayor of Casterbridge. A common criticism of the novel has been that character is fate. We can observe that the responsibility of character in bringing about tragedy is more emphasized than in Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Throughout the novel, the impulsiveness of Henchard, the tragic hero of the novel, is stressed. It is immediately revealed to us

in the opening episode and sometimes it seems to be the primary cause for his misery. It is his impulsiveness, exacerbated by drink, that makes him offer his first wife, Susan, for sale, asking himself: "I don't see why men who have got wives, and don't want 'em, shouldn't get rid of 'em as these gipsy fellows do their old horses. Why shouldn't they put 'em up and sell 'em by auction to men who are in want of such articles? Hey? Why, begad, I'd sell mine this minute if anybody would buy her!" (MC, p. 8)⁹ Thus he sells his wife and a child, Elizabeth-Jane, to a sailor, quite a stranger to the village, for five guineas. She takes off her wedding-ring and throws it in the drunken husband's face. Saying that she has lived with him a couple of years and had nothing but temper, she follows the sailor out of the tent. It is his impulsiveness that leads him to fire out both Jopp and Farfrae, his employees. It is his impulsiveness that leads him to sell his corn out at the worst possible time. It is also his impulsiveness that leads him to conceal Elizabeth-Jane's whereabouts from her real father, who has been given up for lost. He himself describes an impulsive part of his nature by saying: "It never rains but pours" (MC, p. 82), and a little later Farfrae wonders "at the suddenness of his employer's moods." (MC, p. 82) He also says to Farfrae: "No man ever loved another as I did thee." (MC, p. 331) Susan explains his character to Elizabeth-Jane: "I am thinking of Mr. Henchard's sudden liking for that young man (Farfrae). He was always so." (MC, p. 301) These specifications have, perhaps, led many critics to declare that the tragedy of The Mayor of Casterbridge has been caused not by the Immanent Will but by the weakness of his character.

However, there is no denying that Henchard also lives in the chance-ridden universe as Tess does. Chance is as cruel as it is in Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Take just one case, the most crucial, among the many, for example. Is it not chance that Henchard should be in the Magistrate's seat at the time when the furmity woman, who has witnessed the sale of his wife, appears before him and reveals what he has concealed successfully

⁹All page references are to the Harper and Brother's Publishers edition of The Mayor of Casterbridge of which MC is symbolic.

thus far? She begins: "Twenty years ago I was a selling of furmity in a tent at Weydon Fair--. A man and a woman with a little child came into my tent. They sat down and had a basin apiece. Ah, Lord's my life I was of a more respectable station in the world then than I am now, being a land smuggler in a large way of business: and I used to reason my furmity with rum for them who asked for it. I did it for the man; and then he had more and more; till at last he quarrelled with his wife, and offered to sell her to the highest bidder. A sailor came in and bid five guineas, and paid the money and led her away. And the man who sold his wife in that fashion is the man sitting there in the great big chair." (MC, p. 242) Then she goes on to say: "It proves that he's no better than I, and has no right to sit there in judgment upon me." (MC, p. 242) Henchard can not help admitting what she has said, saying, "It does prove that I'm no better than she!" (MC, p. 242) The news about the sale of his wife and child spreads throughout the village soon. Thus he falls down from the post of Mayor to that of labourer of Farfrae, his former employee. It seems all the forces of fate are combined to work against him. We feel that Henchard is also "more sinned against than sinning" (TD, p. 297) as Tess is. As Samuel C. Chew comments, whatever punishment he may deserve, his punishment exceeds the measure of his sins. Even his character is, we feel, not his own fault. Some sinister power almost always overtakes him and dictates his impulsiveness.

V

In the light of our discussion, let us conclude Thomas Hardy's tragic vision. Character is not essentially the cause of tragedy. It is External Nature, Internal Nature, Time and Chance, the substitutes for or the expressions of the president of the Immortals, as Hardy calls at the end of Tess of the d'Urbervilles, that have caused the misery, disaster, catastrophe or destruction. He does not care for man's existence and knows nothing of his plans and struggles for existence. He is cruelty itself. Even so fine a young woman as Tess is no more than a fly before Him. He kills Tess for His sport as Glo'ster in King Lear remarks. Compared with His harshness, Hardy comments, Angel's harshnesses toward Tess are ten-

derness itself.”(TD, p. 435)

In this spiteful universe there is no redemption. Hardy makes Angel say in the anguish of his heart when he sees Tess recede: “God’s not in his heaven: all’s wrong with the world!” (TD, p. 324) which stands in a striking contrast to Robert Browning’s optimistic idea in “Pippa Passes”. Even if God does exist, He does not care for the happiness of man. When Tess is seduced, Hardy asks himself: “Where was the Tess’s guardian angel? Where was the providence of her simple faith? perhaps, like other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking or he was pursuing, or he was in journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked.” (TD, p. 90-1)

In spite of all the forces, we have discussed, against man, Hardy’s hero would not be conquered so easily. He shows us the dignity of man for all his helpless littleness in the face of the universe and for all the seeming cruelty and futility of human existence. He struggles on and on and on, bravely resisting an implacable and sinister Power. It is his continuous courageous struggle that gains our respect and admiration. This is what Aristotle calls the purgation or purification of our emotions.

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