DETERMINISM IN THE NOVELS OF HARDY
MIDDLE PERIOD

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PREFACE
Preface

Hardy's vision of life is generally considered to be tragic, even pessimistic. There is no denying the fact that life as depicted by him shows the "sorriness" underlying human existence and tragedy underlying comedy. The novels of the middle phase present the profounder aspects of his gloomy view of life. They incorporate not only his varied experiences of life but also reverberate with intellectual and spiritual upheavals of the time.

Hardy's critics have tried to study the various aspects of his art and have discussed the comparative merits of his poetry and fiction. Critics like Abercrombie, Duffin and Douglas Brown have evaluated his art with reference to his poetry, thought and philosophy. If Abercrombie and Duffin analyse his novels in relation to tragic and dramatic effects, Douglas Brown interprets them in the light of agricultural upheavals taking place in the second half of the last century. Some of the modern critics like Millgate, Norman Page and Irving Howe have paid more attention to the individual novels. Certainly there are hints in their studies about "determining forces" but they have not paid full attention to this aspect of Hardy's art.

A closer analysis of determinism that gives birth to pessimism, remains an unexplored aspect of his art. From certain statements made by him in his diaries and in his essays
it appears that the Greek plays and Shakespeare's tragedies impressed upon his mind the suffering of man caused by uncontrollable forces. Apart from external agents, heredity, psychology and the circumstances seem to mould and shape human destiny in a particular way. I propose to study Hardy's novels of the middle period in the light of personal and impersonal forces operating against human protagonists and displaying the working of determinism.

Hardy's novels appear to me a sort of compromise between Greek and Elizabethan concepts of tragedy. Hardy not only inherited the views of tragedians but also incorporated certain aspects of deterministic philosophy in his creative work. Accordingly man is the victim of different simultaneous conditions which leave little room for freedom. The causes are to be found in his past. Nothing happens at random. Hardy, being a fatalist sees man's action determined and further rendered helpless by "irrational forces". The characters in the ensuing novels are deep rooted in a particular society, surrounding and definite point in time. They act and react according to social conventions, hereditary values and psychological development. Therefore their actions are predictable barring the activities of chance.

The novels proposed for study present a picture of individuals trapped and victimised. Their desire and
aspirations appear to be dreams of men "bound hand and foot." This vision of Hardy owes a great deal to his society where persons believed "it was to be." Every novel portrays unique problems of determinism. Therefore individual novels deserve our special attention. No doubt deterministic forces are present in totality but the presence of certain other facts enable the novel to retain its individuality. For instance, mother and son relationship in The Return of the Native, friendship converted into enmity in The Mayor of Casterbridge and boundless love in The Woodlanders become focal points in the novels respectively.

In order to analyse and show different determinants in the novels, I have discussed the philosophical as well literary background of determinism and in the subsequent chapters traced the extent of presence of such elements. This study comprises the following chapters:

1) Introduction
2) The Return of the Native
3) The Mayor of Casterbridge
4) The Woodlanders
5) Conclusion

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
It has been a fashion for quite sometime to consider the Victorian era as somewhat barren in creation and complacent in attitude towards life. The fact is that the age of Queen Victoria was not only rich in scientific inventions but also over-flooded with novel ideas and prolific literary output. No doubt the Victorian mind was divided in approach, shocked by simultaneous contrary currents of thought which shook the very basis of the society as a whole but such upheavals and ideological and psychological turmoil also provided raw material for art and literature. New thoughts and ideas were so frequently debated and constantly propagated that even a layman did not remain unaware of them. Toss loses faith in ecclesiasts, Jude craves for education and Dr. Fitzpiers argues in favour of ideal life which indicate some of the current problems of the age as well as eternal.

Like most of the Victorians, Hardy benefitted from the prevailing views and enriched his art with vigour of life and popular notions expressed in various disciplines. This is not all. Classical and Shakespearean drama fascinated him to a great extent. The Greek tragedies Aeschylus and Sophocles presented human life trapped by fate and chance. "Moira" as fate as the ancients believed, rendered human beings helpless any and their actions determined. There was hardly/freedom for choice. Therefore tragedy was inevitable. Hardy used fate
to show man, evil or virtuous, falling prey alike. In other words the blind power does not bother about good and bad or just or unjust. Similarly, being "a born bookworm", Hardy studied Shakespeare with great interest. The dilemma of man that Shakespeare presents with intense tragic effect, influenced Hardy's art. For instance his keen observation of human relationship which is all the time painful, tense and tragic, perhaps owes a great deal to Shakespeare's tragedies.

On the other hand, the Victorian society full of tragic events helped form Hardy's vision. As a matter of fact, the society tainted with class-snobberies and prejudice gave little hope for success or improvement. Tess's hanging for no fault of her own and Jude's plight bear evidence to the statement. In the same manner, Christian dogmas were losing credentials because of over-emphasis on false morality. Religion laid down traps from which the common man could not escape though the upper-class went on exploiting the poor. This double faced attitude of religion motivated many of them to give up faith in scriptures. Besides, Hardy also witnessed the plight of agricultural labourers. Its effect was not only monetary loss but also gave birth to nostalgia in the community. Therefore his novels portray a protagonist in search of lost glorious days, culture and the cherished values of life. The migration is followed by separation from near and dear
ones, native land and even unadjusted at a new place of work. These facts helped him adopt tragic attitude towards life.

Besides the above mentioned facts, contemporary thinkers offered him, the beacon light for up-to-date arguments. In the age of doubts and uncertainty, Hardy assimilated homogenous streams of thought to the point of novelty. The impact of nineteenth-century thinkers on Hardy's later novels is of paramount importance in the sense that it enabled him to form and deliver his tragic vision of life and elevated him from a mere "good hand at a serial" to one of the best novelists of the second half of the last century. Schopenhauer, the greatest philosopher of his time, came out with his theory that the world can be apprehended in two ways viz. the world as representation or idea and the world as will which is blind and uncontrollable. Therefore the individual's "Will-to-live" is insignificant as compared to the will governing the world. History and time are controlled by forces beyond our approach. Probably the concept of Schopenhauer that the Will controlling the world is malign and unaware of human affairs and that man is bound to suffer and die, appealed to Hardy most.

Schopenhauer's book, The World as Will and Representation offers only one way of escape from the Will, i.e. Nirvana or calmness of spirit. In other words, it can be considered, surrender of an individual's will before the
Immanent will for human will is neither free nor powerful enough to make him happy. Therefore it is suggested that life of a saint is enviable and ideal for imitation. This concept borrowed from Schopenhauer is obvious in the following lines of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*:

But the ingenious machinery contrived by the Gods for reducing human possibilities of amelioration to a minimum - which arranges that wisdom to do shall come pari passu with the departure of zest for doing - stood in the way of all that. He had no wish to make an arena of a second time of a world that had become a mere painted scene to him.

(Chap. XLVI)

According to Schopenhauer, the will that governs the world is "free-in-itself", though operates through physical phenomenon. It is uncaused. The will of man is nothing but man is simply a medium for various activities of the greater will. In this way, the world is determined and there is no scope for freedom. The variety of experiences teach man the futility of his struggle, though in the beginning he thinks otherwise. Man is manifestation of will, exposed alike to external circumstances, surroundings and above all, a slave of his own motives. These are some of the limitations one comes across at every step and one's character is not more than a creation of above-mentioned factors. It is applicable to all sorts of creatures. Therefore the whole world is determined and made to suffer. Only by denying one's
will, one may achieve peace and calmness of spirit.

Herbert Spencer's First Principle impressed Hardy to a great extent. According to him, Time, Space and Matter are realities beyond the comprehension of man. His phrase "survival of the fittest" and the concept that the power governing the world "is utterly inscrutable" struck Hardy to prove the indifferent and sinister attitude of Providence. The transcending quality of the malign power as inapprrehensible operates in Hardy as fate, destiny and agency is chance.

John Stuart Mill's book On Liberty gave birth to Hardy's Jude the Obscure. The concluding point that might have helped Hardy to shed his belief in freedom, is Mill's total denial of existence of any chance for escape from suffering. The whole universe is determined by the Prime Cause, as Mill calls it, which is unconscious of human will. In this way Hardy's concept of Immanent "Mill owes a great deal to Schopenhauer and Mill's philosophy.

Mill remarks "In this stage (metaphysical) it is no longer a god that causes and directs each of the various agencies of nature; it is a power, or a force, or an occult quality, considered as real existence, inherent in but distinct from the concrete bodies in which they reside, and which they in a manner animate." 1 In the above passage Mill pin-points August

Comte's concept of the uncontrollable power, resembling that of Mill's conviction, Comte believed in "inherent plan of the universe" which spells out deterministic ways of the world. Comte was also of the view that study of past may provide clues to future and all phenomenon are guided by "invariable natural laws" and are not "being governed by some kind of 'will". These are some of the major points discussed in his Positive Philosophy. He may differ from Schopenhauer, since Comte believed in the gradual progress of the world but determinism is common to both, which helped Hardy adopt the same approach, namely the lack of freedom in the universe, life and action. The rays of hope as seen by Comte guided Hardy to formulate his own philosophy of "amelioration" though all hopes stumbled down during the world war.

According to Mill, George Eliot is a determinist for will as well as choices of her characters are caused by many factors. Her main emphasis on determinism lies in the scientific discovery, namely the role of heredity in the life of man. Fate of a character depends, as she perceives, upon the inherited values which give birth to choice. Therefore the creatures are controlled by social barriers and hampered by financial limitations. Their private plans, ambitions and desires come to a standstill for public cause. For instance, in The Middlemarch, Lydgate's intention to appoint a chaplin for the new hospital, gets him so involved in public controversy
that he gives up his choice. He is compelled to set aside his own preference for public interest. Ian Adam points out the deterministic element which permeates her last novels most:

In the last novels we get a tremendous sense of pressure, of frustration, of the limitation of human potential. Here determinism of a sort enters in, but it is not a determinism within character, not that in which a character cannot help what he does. It is rather something without, that of the social circumstances in which the character is placed .... The social circumstances are often given added emphasis by a domestic dimension acted out in microcosm. 2

The Middle March explores life that is "imperfectly fulfilled". If social barriers and "moral stupidity" are removed, there is hope for fulfilment of one's intentions. Since heredity involves background of man and circumstances around him which shape his psychic development, determinism is inside as well as outside man. Like Mill, she believed that man also helps frame his own destiny along with external factors, working contrary to man's ego. Man is equally responsible for his action with limitations which offer him frustration in place of happiness. There are some solutions of the problems too. If the social barriers are removed by man for man is capable of doing so and adopts the principle of "confined virtue" as she believes, he can be free and happy too.

2. Adam, Ian, "Character and Destiny in George Eliot's Fiction" Nineteenth Century Fiction, Vol. 20 (September 1965)
It means there is scope and need for social and personal reform.

Though circumscribed by social choice or common interest, in George Eliot's scheme of thought, an individual is free to choose between right and wrong. The result is, she is successful in peeping into human consciousness and her characters undergo remarkable changes due to personal and social forces or pressure. For the sake of human freedom, she comes to the conclusion that both man and society are to be scrutinised for betterment of human lot. This is a remarkable difference between George Eliot and Thomas Hardy's approaches towards determinism.

There is no denying the fact that heridity, circumstances, social barriers and chance are common to both the novelists, but Hardy's total denial of freedom and hopelessness about the state of human affairs make him more tragic to the point of pessimism. There is little or no hope for improvement in human destiny. Moreover his faith in fate, taken from classical literature and personally intensified, leave no room for happiness if there is any. Therefore responsibility lies on the shoulders of such agencies as fate and chance than on man himself. The characters become slaves of their aspirations too, but according to Hardy man is "bound hand and foot" by external forces rather than internal
factors. They do what they are made for without any privilege of choice. Anyhow, the major difference between the two is Hardy’s belief in Immanent ‘will, the unforeseen, and unpredictable power, governing the human as well as world affairs. It is the same power responsible for Gabriel Oak’s downfall from a sheep-farmer to the hired-labourer and Giles Winterborne’s loss of the house which leads to the cancellation of his engagement with Grace. This is the inherent defect in the world and seems to be beyond control or reform by man. Such elements are present even in his earliest work like *Desperate Remedies*.

Determinism and free will, the philosophical terms opposed to each other, have been a subject of controversy for a long time. The main issue frequently being debated is whether our choices are free or not. This gives birth to the main problem. Are our actions free or restricted, caused or uncaused, compelled or unforced? The determinists agree on the point that all events, for that matter actions too, have pre-existing causes. The supporters of free-will or indeterminism, on the other hand, assert that determinism is incompatible with moral responsibility. If our actions, they argue, are not free in the fullest sense of the word, then the question of praise or blame does not arise at all.

The determinists explain the point in a rather
different way. An agent performs the act out of will or intention. At any stage in his life, he might have thought over the consequences, good or bad, therefore he is responsible for the voluntary act. But at the same time, he cannot be held fully responsible for every kind of action performed in a different sort of situation. For instance working or acting under compulsion, mental or external, or against one's own nature, justifies the point that he is not fully responsible for the act. The prevailing mental or physical condition and overwhelming external forces are more responsible for the act. A.J. Ayer highlights the point in the following manner:

A kleptomaniac is not a free agent in respect of his stealing, because he does not go through any process of deciding whether or not to steal or rather if he does go through such a process it is irrelevant to his behaviour. That over he resolved to do, he would steal all the same. And it is this that distinguishes him from the ordinary thief.... It may be true that unlike the kleptomaniac he could refrain from stealing if he chose; but if there is a cause or set of causes, which necessitate his choosing as he does, how can he be said to have the power of choice? 3

In this way, the determinists believe in partial responsibility or no responsibility at all, and free-will thinkers are not in a position to neglect the situation or the past-history

of man which motivates the agent or makes him behave without deliberation.

The determinists also believe that an event contains pre-existing causes in its womb. Secondly, a voluntary action, as it is clear from Ayer's argument, is preceded by motive, cause and will. Therefore the champions of free-will consider a caused action free. But the determinists feel strongly and conclude that no action was possible except the one the agent performed. They claim, in the light of their conviction, "the same cause, the same effect", that prediction is also possible provided all the necessary informations are available. Contrary to it, they argue how an indeterminist is going to act or react in a particular situation arising in future unless he keeps in mind that the same kind of causes will create the same effect. The determinists maintain that the agent could not have acted otherwise. There was no choice left before him. His physical and mental states were "inclined towards one and one only". If someone chooses one out of two, that is simply a matter of chance. Chance selection comes in the wake of unintentional acts.

Science presents a rational picture of the universe, Darwin propounded the theory "that physical changes are subject to natural law." This theory in itself contains deterministic outlook. Human beings governed by "natural law" cannot claim
for free-will. Whenever free-will puts its head out, the agent finds himself at war with nature. Above all the Christian belief in Providence, the creator of the universe who knows beginning and end, controls good and bad, is incompatible with the free-will theory. While governed by external forces, one cannot be fully responsible too. It means human beings perform what they are assigned. The Christian faith in free-will is as controversial as the power of God.

The Greek tragedians presented the same kind of dilemma of human existence. The free-will of the character clashes with super-ego and the result is that he is defeated at every step. This gives birth to remorse, sense of loss and pessimism.

The determinists maintain that our actions are influenced by many internal and external forces. The internal forces include mental and physical development in a certain way. In the formation of an act, motive, cause, deliberation, desire, instinct and will play an important role. External forces consist of environment, heredity, race, society and so on. Even our "spontaneous actions" spring up out of unconscious which stores life-long images. There is hardly any need to emphasize the point that physical actions are "causally determined by mental states".
The controversy of free-will and determinism is as old as the history of human civilization. Socrates and Plato propounded the theory that everybody chooses that is best according to him and that evil is the product of ignorance. It means good is the determinant of one's action. If someone chooses the path of tyranny, it implies that he is ignorant or unaware of virtue. Socrates' belief, "virtue is knowledge and vice ignorance" supports determinism, for it is better to be restricted by good than be free and evil too. Aristotle contradicted them on the ground that sometimes man voluntarily chooses evil even though he is aware of the consequences. He came to the conclusion that man's reason is at war with "appetite" or will, but his action is determined because his choice is confined to only good or evil. Later on philosophers like Spinoza, Hobbes and James defined good in terms of man's will and ethical determinism was set aside. Their contention depended upon the fact that will is the last process before action and "the object of man's will is, always as apparent good", though may be evil from others point of view.

In the same ancient world, man's helplessness was proved with the help of logic, viz, every statement is either true or false. The stoics found determinism in omens, signs and portents, the beliefs common in ancient Greece and Rome. According to them, if signs are made available by gods about a
man's future action or what is going to happen in future, predictions can be made easily. Even in modern age, the determinists do not altogether discard the possibility of prediction. Bertrand Russell argues in support of determinism and prediction:

The principle of causality - that every event is determined by previous events, and can be predicted when enough previous events are known. It cannot be said that its application to human action is wholly beyond doubt, but a doubt extending to the principle of causality must be so fundamental as to involve all science, all everyday knowledge, and everything, or almost everything, that we believe about the actual world. 4

From signs, the Stoics drew the corollary that in case the prediction was true, the action was indispensable. Certainly the Stoics were fatalists. The Stoics, however, attributed the events of the world to God and fate. It appeared clear to them that this world is the only possible world, neither substitutable nor alterable. Spinoza held the same view and went a step further to think that it was not possible for God to create another world. Therefore this is the only possible world and good is to be accepted with evil. Leibniz, contradicting Spinoza, went on telling the world that "this is one of many possible worlds." According to him, though man's

action is necessitated but free. In this way, he paved the way for the philosophers of later generations, like Hume who tried to reconcile determinism with free-will.

The theological determinists believed in God’s omniscience with the inevitability of events. According to argument, since God knows the beginning and the end, "all truths are eternal". Contrary to it, St. Augustine argued, God’s knowledge of every event, does not imply His interference in human affairs. Man is free to act or man’s action is avoidable. St. Aquinas, maintaining the same view, tried to reconcile God’s omniscience with free-will. Martin Luther and John Calvin denied the free-will theory on the basis of above argument that man is beastly by nature, therefore he requires God’s help for virtuous acts.

Modern thinkers (18th and 19th Century) with their scientific bent of mind propounded the concept of physical determinism. The common point derived from Aristotle, is that man is governed by the law of nature. They refuted ethical and theological theories according to which man is controlled by laws of morality or virtue. The Epicureans in pre-Christian era, with the same view, dominated the scene for centuries. According to them, everything is composed of matter and atom; even thoughts, desires and soul are not more than composition
of atom and controlled by its behaviour. Therefore man appeared to them a helpless victim, unable to control himself. The inherent uncertainty in nature, causes changes in man which implies the futility of human will. On the other hand, it appeared beyond any dispute to Hobbes that human mind works according to the nature of atom and that behaviour is co-related to it, but man is free. He defines liberty or freedom as: "the absence of all the impediments to action that are not contained in the nature and intrinsic quality of the agent". Descartes, paving the way for the modern psychologists, introduced the demarcation between body and mind. Being a champion of free will, he described mind without limitation in term of choice. In Meditation, he considered man's choice as random and capricious. He was confirmed that mind does not determine the action of man. Unlike him, Locke believed in action determined by the mental state of an agent and caused by choice. Kant, on the other hand, insisted that theory of determinism is not applicable to man, for man's freedom is categorical, not to be affected by the forces beyond his control. For instance, he argues, a good man cannot become a thief because his goodness is unavoidable. Similarly there

are several diseases like neurosis in which a man does not go through the process of deliberation, therefore there can be an act of unconscious without responsibility on the part of the agent. In such cases man does not control his own action.

William James was perhaps the first thinker to point out the difference between "soft" and "hard" determinism. According to James, this world is the only possible world, and there was no possibility of creating another world different from the one we live in; therefore there is no scope for sorrow and no sense in regret. Regret does not enable a man to shed off responsibility. James's connotation of the term "soft" determinism is similar to that of Hobbes and Hume. Our actions are, as they think, caused by desire, will and aversions, but freedom lies in our choice to act if the "last appetite" prefers to do so. In James's view, causation is compatible with responsibility.

In contrast to "soft" determinism, the "hard" determinists ponder over man's helplessness in this world. There is contention that one cannot help doing what one actually does. Therefore moral responsibility is baseless and unreasonable. The French philosophers like Baron d'Holbach, find man a victim of circumstances for, as they perceive, this universe is governed by "irrational forces", beyond man's control or apprehension. In recent years John Hospers and others like-
minded thinkers have found fault with Hume, and Hobbes's theory that will is not the sole agency ruling over man. Man is born unfree, insignificant and helpless. In the words of James:

the determinism (Lord) which allows considerations of good and bad to mingle with those of cause and effect in deciding what sort of universe this may rationally be held to be. The dilemma of this determinism is one of those left horn is pessimism and those right horn is subjectivism. In other words, if determinism is to escape pessimism, it must leave off looking at the goods and ills of life in a simple objective way and regard the materials indifferent in themselves, for the production of consciousness, scientific and ethical in us. 6

But at the same time, he finds the way for escape not so easy, the escape from suffering, poverty, death and the like, the very basis of pessimism.

Keeping in mind the distinction between "soft" and "hard" determinism, there is no room for doubt that Hardy is a thorough-going hard determinist, whose characters, particularly protagonists, the men as well as women act and react from Schopenhauer, Spencer and Mill's point of view. Neither they can change the world affairs nor control the over governing the world. They feel obliterated by internal and external forces, the products of "Asiatic fatalism" as Hansel calls it. In other

words, they not only lack freedom but also face the wrath of fate. All the time they feel compulsion from outside and inside. In most of the events the human motive is kept aside and external forces become the decisive factor. Here responsibility is as meaningless as free-will itself. This shows the helplessness of an agent into the hands of circumstances. As there is only one choice left before a character, he cannot do anything else except what he does. This justifies pessimistic outlook, and provides not only ground but also moral boosting for such negative approach towards life.

According to the hard determinists, the remoulding of a character's behaviour in a specific way is not possible unless that kind of element is already present in him. The behaviour is an outcome of his own conscious part and the choices are fixed by pre-existing conditions. In case, the action is unintentional, the situation prompts him to act. Therefore in the light of above mentioned facts we come to the conclusion that a free-choice is a non-existing entity.

Bertrand Russell argues that it is quite natural to be influenced by the actions of others; otherwise nobody will get elected to the parliament. Moreover, the nineteenth-century philosophers and scientists in general and Darwin and Spencer in particular challenged the very basis of religion. They led us to believe in the causal chain of events and forces. Being
a victim of nature and product of his race and surrounding, as they perceived, man has been striving for existence since time immemorial. Thus an individual is remoulded and shaped by external forces rather than his own will.

Now it does seem strange that Thomas Hardy, though "churchy", might have accepted Darwin's theory of evolution at the intellectual plane. However, his loss of faith in the extraordinary power of Providence at the cost of human freedom is quite natural. As far as his characters are concerned, they do surrender before the forces of nature, environment and social conditions. Moreover, they are slaves of their own passions and cravings. On the other hand destiny makes their efforts futile. Providence in the guise of fate interferes in their affairs as a malign force. For instance, conventional morality makes Tess's life miserable, fate snatches the horse, the main source of family income and destiny makes her a victim of Alec's lust. The same forces operate on Oak's sheep rendering him penniless and bringing down his status from a farmer to that of a hired-labourer.

Apart from constant struggle and all the efforts put into action, one cannot be free from one's hereditary influences. They may operate from inside or outside but their presence is felt through and through. Tess inherited physical beauty and innocence from her mother, and her father
impressed upon her mind the pride of belonging to a mighty but fallen family. Pride and arrogance are the basic racial ingredients in Henchard's blood, secondly environment together with financial background play a crucial role in shaping a character. Egdon Heath took Clym as its own child. Angel Clare, a product of clerical background and for that reason of narrow outlook, could not have acted in a different way. The method of upbringing and education are indispensable forces in shaping a character. Michael Henchard's defeat in trade at the hands of Farfarae heralds confrontation between superstition and sound scientific knowledge. Farfarae, better informed and well-suited for corn trade, finds Michael Henchard intellectually too inferior. Their actions are attributed to their intellectual background, environment and personal nature. They could not have acted otherwise.

Thomas Hardy appears a fatalist for the Immanent Will changes the course of action, worsens the situation and makes the future ambiguous. Hardy's gods are not meant for bettering human lot. More often than not they limit human choice, and finally put an end to all their aspirations. One gets the impression from his later novels that man is doomed to suffer and destiny is indispensable. Neither there is any possibility of reconciliation between man's will and the Immanent Will. Thus the supernatural operates contrary to
human wishes, desire and ego. There is an inevitable confrontation at a certain point between the two. The consequence can only be disastrous. The Immanent Will is simply meant to restrain, check and avert the situation, making the notion of free-will baseless and efforts futile. The same power made Eustacia jump into the pool, failed to rescue Toss from Alec's lust and did not allow Giles Winterborne to improve his social status. Is not the same power that created the situation for the death of her horse, responsible for making the night darker and Toss drowsy?

Hardy seems to have come to the conclusion that there is nothing like free-will as long as this invisible force controls the destinies of man from above. The characters, therefore, share partial responsibility for their downfall. The charge against Hardy that his characters are puppets in the hands of fate is as superfluous as free-will itself. The characters do not surrender at once. There is a strong desire for freedom and fulfilment, they fight to the last drop of blood in their body and engage themselves in close combat with the external forces including the Immanent Will. Their heroism lies in their battle against inexorable forces. Hardy delineates a character not only from without but also peeps into his mind. The actions are not random in any sense but are produced and controlled by the unconscious which becomes man's
fate. It is Eustacia's desire for freedom and luxurious life, that keeps her in motion, forms her mental state. Tess's search for purity is closely interlinked with the loss of innocence.

Bertrand Russell's conviction seems more convincing that it is wiser to be a determinist in comparison to an indeterminist with an ambiguous future. In Hardy's novels prediction about a character is quite possible. But the revelation of chance, a kind of unforeseen negative power makes the situation a bit ambiguous. Its close affinity with fate reverses the situation, darkens the future, and worsens the conditions of already suffering characters. It is chance, that drops the letter, meant to be opened only after Jane's marriage, into the hands of Henchard. To his horror, he discovered Jane as his step-daughter. The same power slipped Tess's letter of confession under the carpet. In Hardy's scheme of thought, chance possibilities are negative, and only negative.

Despite this ambiguity, financial, social, historical, and topographical determinism along with facts mentioned above, help us form an impression about a character's future. For example lack of financial advantages spoil Jude's efforts to be a scholar and Egdon Heath's effect on Clym and Eustacia's action, is of considerable importance. On the other hand, wise-acres, being slave of their own class-consciousness, advised Jude that he better be a mason. Tess's financial
sufferings compelled her to surrender before Alec's lust and be his mistress. The soul surrendered before the starving body as Huxley believed and the same society did not agree to baptise her natural baby. She was forced to leave the village for ever, the same village that had been a source of pride to her.

The historical events and social changes from one way of life to another, are rather beyond man's control. The Mayor of Casterbridge and The Woodlanders depict the shift of social values from old to new in addition to superiority or inferiority of races, topographical limitations and the problem of education. In the opinion of Marx, political, religious and legal explanations of a society can be found in its economic system, which implies that economy determines the course of action. Henchard's defeat also lies in the lack of awareness of modern system of economy or trade introduced by Farfarel. Carlyle was of the view that a hero can change the destiny of a nation. But what about the followers who are dictated rather than lead. Moreover, the hero himself is a product of historical, social and political movement or system of a society. Above all the historical events take place by chance, and since chance is unpredictable, the hero becomes not more than an agent, fulfilling the requirements of the time. Under these circumstances, the question arises whether there is any freedom for choice before man? Hardy in his later novels, seems to question the supporters of free-will.
Hardy's theory of human destiny and his views on determinism have been influenced by:

(a) A deep study of Greek Tragedy — Aeschylus and Sophocles and Shakespearean Tragedy.

(b) Modern philosophers

His observation of life around him convinced him of man's helplessness. Social conventions, religious decrees and commandants, role of culture and education also help in the formulation of his beliefs.
CHAPTER II

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE
The Return of the Native heralds the era of philosophic novels in which Hardy, for the first time, appears at his best. Though some of the early critics found it peerless among Hardy's novels, the moderns consider it a significant achievement and movement towards tragic intensification of his vision. McDowall pertinently observes:

The drama is a typical progressive revelation. Eustacia at the beginning is a typical romantic, aching for passion and colour and above all, to be where she is not; dignity she always has, but before the end, this is heightened to an impressive tragic power. She is a victim of the moorland solitude .... and that antipathy, impelling her and Willelovo, at the last decides their fate. 1

Though Hardy was generally acclaimed after the serialisation of Far From the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, the first tragic novel, shows in particular remarkable maturity in the treatment of philosophic subject in an artistic manner. The novel presents confrontation between old and modern, village and urban, rural and industrial culture and traditional and ideal life. Moreover, the novel depicts human beings as slaves of their own strong dreams, inner tensions due to lack of fulfilment and high drama of personal relationship, followed by clash of personalities, on the one hand, and social, topographical, historical, financial traps and fate on the other.

It means there are personal and impersonal forces, man-made social laws curtailing the freedom of man, generation-gap hampering the genuine relations, dichotomy in attitude tinged with class-consciousness, "ache of modernity" in the guise of luxurious life or advanced sober philosophical views of Clym, all weaving the main tissues of life and society at Egdon Heath. Out of this predicament emerges the story of "loyalty and disloyalty", love and hatred, hope and frustration, the life in want of freedom and choice.

The novel retains its individual vigour in the presentation of human relationship between husband and wife. Mrs. Yeobright shows immense effect on Clym, the son who is never free from her passionate blind or "destructive love". On the other hand, he takes little care of Eustacia's desire for high and luxurious society. Similarly Wildeve and Thomasin are mismatched to the extent that their wedding becomes a funeral. This makes all the difference; and distinction for the ensuing novels perhaps emphasise other equally important aspects of life. As Abercrombie puts it: "the central subject ... is rather the emotional relationship combining a group of persons, and the changes caused in this relationship by a current of events; though there are degrees of personal force in the members of each group".\(^2\) The dominating theme is the role of

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mother in the life of a son and daughter-in-law. If in
*The Mayor* and *The Woodlanders*, Hardy excels in portraying the
father and daughter relationship, *The Return* reverses the role
to show the effect of Mrs Yeobright on Clement Clym, the son.
The passionate and blind love for her son, brings disaster in
many ways. For instance Clym's arrival from Paris, in other
words migration from prosperity, luxury and pomp of life to
traditional, natural and humble one, takes place only due to
Mrs. Yeobright's loneliness at Egdon Heath. The responsibility
of reversal in Clym's condition lies with her.

The impact of Mrs Yeobright on Clym is far reaching
and devastating. Even her death leaves him in a dilemma and
causes final breach between him and his wife Eustacia. He moves
between two reconcilable ends, wife and mother. At last he
extricates himself from the hands of his mother for the sake of
his wife but he is never free from the bond of love for her.
Mrs Yeobright's first interference with Clym's affairs appears
at the time of his marriage. As Eustacia's influence increases
or she successfully traps him for her own ends, Clym shows
momentary inclination towards her. But the images preserved in
his unconscious seek opportunity for reconciliation with the
mother. As soon as Eustacia's past gets revived, Clym repents
for his folly. In short, Clym's life is an errand between
mother and wife, spoiled by both of them.
As far as passionate love of mother is concerned, a parallel can be drawn between *Sons And Lovers* and *The Return* in as much as the sons suffer at the hands of mothers in both the novels. Mrs Yeobright's widowhood motivates her to cling to the only son Clym. Naturally enough, the wives in both the novels require full attention and never agree with partial care. Now the dilemma before Clym is how to adjust with two opposing personalities while both of them claim for their respective rights. Therefore the action of the protagonist is affected by the mother and the wife who take least care of his mental and physical capacity.

Hardy has successfully portrayed different aspects of love and marriage in "Wessex novels" but in the present novel, he insists categorically on love followed by marriage as a means for fulfilment of desires of different kind in nature or desire other than love itself. Unlike Mr Melbury, Clym does not use marriage institution for social uplift but for a noble cause viz. to open a school and preach deeper ideas among the rustics. On the other hand, Eustacia traps him for the fulfilment of her desire to see Paris and enjoy luxurious life which is impossible at Egdon Heath. Keeping in mind the dictum "the same cause, the same effect" this kind of love or marriage is destined to bring suffering rather than happiness. Due to this selfishness on the parts of Clym and Eustacia, the problem
of loyalty and disloyalty, love and infidelity is likely to crop in, signifying the tragedy underlying love and marriage. In this case, Clym is not more than a medium to Bustacia for modern life abroad, the cherished objective of her heart which is self-deceptive and vain struggle against destiny.

The relationship between mother and son and mother and daughter-in-law is further marred by generation-gap or by an oppression of time. In this context the orthodox and conventional morality clash with modernity and "loose-living". Irving Howe highlights the points in discussion:

In my own experience of the novel Mrs Yeobright keeps growing in force, this gritty puritan woman who alternates between passionate outburst of self-assertion and sudden lapses into country stoicism. Surely Mrs Yeobright served D.H. Lawrence as a model for the still more powerful Mrs Morel in Sons and Lovers. In both of these mothers the thrust of will, the resources of age and the tyranny of experience frighten away the eager young girls loved by their sons. The three figures meet in a struggle of wills, each putting his or her stubbornness against the other, ... Not Clym and the diseases of modernity, but the timeless rage of the clash between generations, the old clinging and the young grasping, provides the drama of the book. 3

As far as Mrs Yeobright is concerned, she neither sanctions Clym to marry Bustacia nor agrees with his novel ideas.

Contrary to her, Clym and Eustacia project two prevalent trends of nineteenth century way of life. Eustacia's desire for city-life is a product of industrial culture and Clym shows, not as Irving Howe believes, an intellectual bent of mind influenced by the thinkers like Rousseau, Huxley and Darwin. If Eustacia shows upward trends in new-found region, Clym recedes back to native traditions, morality improved with deeper ideas of life. Clym's struggle to retain both past, present and future proves futile in the sense that he neither keeps his mother happy nor can make Eustacia satisfied. In short, he hangs between the two trends, generations and culture — one was going to die and another powerless to be born.

The financial limitation is one of the facts which affects the action to a great extent. Since Eustacia lacks requisite financial resources, she cannot fly to Paris on her own. Therefore she is bound to trap either Widdovo or Clym. It was only because of economic consideration that Clym had migrated to Paris. Egdon Heath offers very limited source of livelihood to its inhabitants but broadly speaking they are divided into two classes namely the rustics and the educated which introduces cultural demarcation based on financial line. Clym tries to cross the barrier of both the classes to identify himself with the humble folk of Egdon Heath. The result is disastrous. Jean Brooks remarks:
The counterpointing strain of the hero who triumphs over obstacles to shape destiny, questions the validity, to the modern mind aware of 'the obstructive coil of things', of simple heroic resistance ... Clym is compound of the free hero of romance, the hero of classical tragedy, subject to fate and moral judgement, whose hubris leads to his downfall, and the diminished hero of modern realism, subject to biological and economic laws which limit human responsibility. 4

Moreover Rastacia and Thomsasin incline towards whose fortune seems secure and purse a heavy one. The former leaves the humble cottage and deserts the genuine husband and the latter prefers licentious Wildeve to honest Diggory Vann for Wildeve is comparatively richer than all of them. In most of the novels, the heavy purse, dubious sophistiction and deceitful manners of the villains, tempt the heroines to desert their actual counterparts. One of the major events of the novel is caused by money which enlarges the pro-existing gulf between mother and daughter-in-law. A large sum of money to be divided between Clym and Thomsasin, is handed over to Thomsasin only. Therefore possibility of reconciliation, if there is any, becomes simply a matter of dream.

On the basis of their likes and dislikes, and attitude towards fellow-creature the characters are divided into two groups which offer sharp contrast. This is one of the

barriers to prevent them from harmonious communion. As the story moves on, the first group comprising Eustacia and Wildeve enters into the conjugal relationship with the second group consisting of Clym and Thomasin. The apparent or paradoxical charm they find in the opposing group proves self-deceptive. It is followed by a sense of remorse and attempt for adjustment in their own group but it is too late to make them successful. Norman Page aptly comments on passionate love and unsuccessful marriages as the causes of their suffering:

In subsequent novels the complications produced by the working of different varieties of love, ranging from romantic adoration to casual appetite, become more intricate, and the havoc wreaked in human lives by blind passion or unwise marriage becomes more extreme ... The pattern embodies disappointment, frustrated desire, infidelity, ambition, unrequited love, there is no shortage of marriages, but they signally fail to accommodate the existing love-relationships. 5

As a matter of fact, in almost all the later novels, Hardy differentiates the two groups of characters on the ground of their attitude towards the surrounding. Douglas Brown interprets it as a confrontation between semi-urbanite and agricultural communities. But the vast agricultural background of Far From the Madding Crowd has been given up in favour of cosmic vision presented through the heath. If Hardy's division

as novels of environment is to be taken seriously and contains some thematic weight, the action in later novels is confined to limited space and definite point in time. The heath in the present novel, shapes personalities, controls destinies of its inhabitants and gives birth to various coincidents. The characters meet and get separated here. Any attempt on their behalf to escape from its clutches proves suicidal at last. The characters who hate it are destined to be frustrated and the natives have inherited the values of endurance, simplicity and resistance from it. Michael Millgate's observations on the significance of the heath are noteworthy:

Egdon provides, of course, a closed and isolated situation in which the action of the novel can be worked out as if in a laboratory, with little hope of escape for the inhabitants and the minimum of interference from outside. It also approximates to that 'sort of poetic or fairy precinct' which Howthorne found necessary to the writing of a romance. As a place where paganism and witchcraft flourish and churchgoing is a rarity, the heath constitutes a kind of moral wilderness where the standards of value and behaviour adhered to by the major characters have to be imported from elsewhere. In the ensuing confrontation with the realities of the Egdon world it is all too often the alien values which are surrendered.6

Egdon is a symbol as well as sign which enables one to predict about the characters. The images of meeting and

separation, brightness and gloominess provide clue to mysteries of life and tell the story of man since time immemorial. Its face suggests "tragic possibilities" in the sense that the characters going stray from its path, are going to meet the tragic fate. The effect of Egdon Heath on its dwellers is beautifully depicted in the following passage:

The fact of the heath by its mere complexion, (darkest vegetation) added half an hour to evening, it could in like manner retard the dawn, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread.

(Book I, Chap. I)

The action of the drama at Egdon is so interwoven that a character affects the life of another beyond repair. For instance, Clym loses his freedom for choice in favour of the mother. Later, he is further exploited by Lustacia. Her ambition for high society compels her to shift her capricious attention from Wildeve to Clym and the result is victimisation of Thomasin by the former. In this way A hampers the action of B and B does the same with C, followed by causal chain of events. Their interdependence for fulfilment of intentions, leaves neither room for choice nor scope for success in efforts. Millgate aptly sums up Lustacia's predicament:
Eustacia who finally gains the reader's sympathy is not a type of Promethean rebelliousness but a frightened, frustrated, and deeply disappointed woman, the sources of whose fear, frustration and disappointment are presented specifically and in intensely human terms: Clym's angry self-absorption; the denial of her femininity and of her social ambitions; her own appalled sense of being trapped in a hostile environment, with no alternative course of action, no prospect of future amelioration.

Clym's return or his "mis-matching" affects the life of at least five persons. Had Clym been successful in taking Eustacia abroad, he could have averted the tragedy. But "it was not to be" as fate devised.

The helpless creatures of Hardy are masters of abundant passion, the agency of fate, which make them realise at the end, the trivialities of their activities. Their personal relations with fellow creatures and response to nature are based on passion rather than reason. This blind force brings them at a point where clash between will of man and the Immanent Will is inevitable. The feeling of injustice perpetrated on mortal beings by "colossal Prince of the world" emerges out of this universal phenomenon that we want to see the things done according to our own choice. Here we find our will coinciding with the Immanent Will that all the time operates otherwise. Eustacia's soliloquy reveals the fact

in the following lines:

How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! ... I do not deserve my lot! ... 0' the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! 0' how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!

(Book V, Chap. VII)

It is obvious that as her struggle for escape from Egdon Heath, intensifies, the grip of the traps got tightened.

It is one of Hardy's techniques for highlighting the powers of determinism that he hints at the possible tragic events in anticipation. Here imagery plays an important role. For example, Mrs Yeobright's visit went unheeded and resulted into her death. At her arrival she noticed a "cat asleep on the bare gravel of the path". There were "fallen apples" under the tree and Clym's furze-hook near the door. The place where she sat and thought was "Devil's Bellow". Bustacia's death is suggested through such images:

The fire soon flared up the chimney giving the room an appearance of comfort that was doubled by contrast, which snapped at the window-panes and breathed into the chimney strange low utterance that seemed to be the prologue to some tragedy.

(Book V, Chap. VIII)
Hardy's full use of Wessex rituals, myths, dumb show and festivals determine the action and the presentation of signs, omens and images foretell the future of the characters. Bystacia's acceptance of the role of a Turkish Knight in the dumb-show staged at Clym's house, resembles with her actual defeat in life. She is predestined to be a victim of passion or fate or the Immanent Will. Similarly in the beginning of the novel, Tess misses the partnership of Angel Clare in a festival dance which forms the summary of her life. Moreover Hardy makes maximum use of omens, delayed news, misunderstanding and confused paths. The marriage of Clym is subject to the tyranny of ill-omen. Had he consulted any rustic wise-acre, he could have been told that his marriage was going to be unsuccessful because he was going to marry in a moonless night. Christian Cantlo did not marry at all for he was born in a moonless night. The rustics always thought of her as a witch whose presence was disastrous. The superstitious Mrs Yeobright predicts at Wildeve's failure to get matrimonial certificate issued: "Such things don't happen for nothing".

Hardy's characters are clearly contrasted or differentiated from each other on the basis of their psychology, economy or class and culture or profession. Mrs. Yeobright is a reticent widow and respectable daughter of a curate who had once aspired for doing better things. Her husband did in
practice good things for the rustics and personally she identified herself with the values, customs, traditions of the inhabitants of Egdon Heath. Her family links and the services that other family-members have rendered in common interest, give birth to a self-respect bordering on pride in her.

Thomasin argues with Mildove:

no I can live without you. It is aunt I think of. She is so proud, and thinks of her family respectability, that she will be cut down with mortification if this story should get abroad before - it is done.

(Book I, Chap. V)

Her uncompromising nature and hatred against Eustacia, prevent Mrs Yeobright from participating in her son's marriage. It is not all. To hold this view is, perhaps, to over-simplify a complex problem. Her passionate love for the only son, springs out of that unconscious that stores our dreams. Her husband died preceded by unsuccessful marriage, when she was young enough to marry again. But there was promising Clym to fill the vacuum created by his father's death. But most of the time, things move against her expectations. As she puts it:

And this maternity - to give one's best years and best love to ensure the fate of being despised.

(Book III, Chap. VI)

Mrs Yeobright, bitten by snake, died as a miserable, heart-
broken and depressed lady. The fatal news left Clym a melancholic man. As a sinner-born Christian, he craved for baptism.

Thomas Hardy probes Clym's mind in detail rather than his family background. However two facts are crucial to the problem that his father was a rough farmer and his mother a sophisticated daughter of a curate who married out of love without consent of her father. Hero two ways of life intermingle in Clym's person namely the physical smartness and love for Nature from father's side and meditative mood from mother's. Hardy emphasises Clym's brooding nature in the following passage:

The face was well shaped, even excellently. But the mind within was beginning to use it as a mere waste tablet whereon to trace its idiosyncracies as they developed themselves ... Had heaven preserved Ysobright from a wearing habit of meditation, people would have said 'A handsome man'. Had this brain unfolded under sharper contours they would have said, 'A thoughtful man.'

(Book II, Chap. VI)

Now there is no escape from inherited flaws.

Once recognised "as an artist and scholar", Clym was forced to work under a diamond businessman in Paris. Egdon Heath fostered him up as its own child but the necessities took
him to an entirely different world. The death of his father in childhood and aftermath misery compelled him to give up the scholarly career. Hardy elaborates the effect of circumstances or economic condition on man in the following lines:

That waggery of fate which started Clive as a writing clerk, Gay as a linen-draper, Keats as a surgeon, and a thousand others in a thousand odd ways, banished the wild and ascetic heath lad to a trade whose sole concern was with the especial symbols of indulgence and vainglory.

(Book III, Chap. I)

Here Hardy's mind is preoccupied with the role of economy in the life of middle or lower class people, which can be considered one of the agencies of fate, for, money shapes or spoils the aim or purpose and set-ideals get lost in the oblivion of poverty. To overcome paupery, is not an impossible act, but the process determines the action in contrast to man's will.

Wordsworth's Michael waits for the lad till the last tragic moment of his life while Hardy's native returns to take up the task and lead an equally pathetic life. Being armed with novel thoughts and ideas, he feels, his life in Paris "was the idiest, vainest, most effeminate", as Egdon Heath appears to Eustacia. Its practical outcome is to open a school
where persons will learn wisdom rather than be prosperous.

The rustics throw light on such a risk:

In a few weeks he will learn to see things otherwise 'This good hearted of the young man' said another 'But, for my part, I think he had better mind his business'.

(Book III, Chap. I)

Actually it is not the "well-proportioned" mind of Clym that sacrifices realism for idealism, prefers fancy to fact and learning to acquire wisdom. While it is practicable to follow fancies at the cost of burning problems it is equally impossible for fragile Clym to overcome the recurrent urgings of his soul. His passionate love for Heath, mother and learning seems to be equalled with his hatred for wealth and luxury. Desmond Hawkins aptly remarks:

When Jane Austen was concerned with alliances within a social pattern, Hardy's lovers are the castaways of a great social shipwrecks. The men — Angel, Jude, Clym — are the sensitive misfits with no settled occupation, intellectual vagrants separated from any abiding context. And they turn, high-souled, and idealistic, to women in search of a key to the meaning and values of life. They are all "Achonding Joes of the love-world, burdened with a sort of nameless guilt, desperately in search of the True and the good outside the social pattern. 8

On the other hand, Clym's marital happiness does not last

too long. Instead of being helpful, Paris-addicted Eustacia is a great impediment in the way of his noble pursuits. His studious habit weakens the eye-sight. Secondly unsound financial condition relegates him to the position of merely a furze cutter. In this way physical, financial and domestic problems not only lay down traps before him but also give birth to the feeling of isolation in him. No doubt it is impossible for an individual to fight against the mighty forces working against him. But this sense of defeatism leaves the question in one's mind whether there is any value of our aspirations before the Immanent Will.

Clym, a man torn between two values, generations and loves, gets more depressed and dejected after his mother's death. Any Hamlet-like effort to undo the wrong-doings belatedly proves not only disastrous but also affects the lives of at least five persons. Clym's genuine effort to propagate novel ideas is marred by the older ones. At the social front he may be partially successful but at the domestic front, he crumbles down. His struggle for integration with heath and identification with its values get strengthened in him. In the process of two contrasting values and opposing classes, he finds fault with Eustacia who is also responsible for his plight and death of his mother. On the other hand Eustacia feels deserted for ever. To be born ahead of time is tragic in itself but the nostalgic longings further ruin Clym.
Almost all major characters of Hardy are pitted against their social and professional status. The clash between them and forming catastrophe is the by-product of their class-consciousness and psychic development. Eustacia and Wildeve prefer superiority of class to personal genuine relations. They remain detracted from the class to which Clym, Thomasin, Diggory and the rustics belong. Whenever there is interpenetration, it results in death-wish, sense of unfulfilment and misery. Life means to the former "music, poetry, passion, war and all the beating and pulsing that is going on in the great arteries of the world". To the latter, life is found in genuine love, beauty of Nature, hard labour and values prevalent at Egdon Heath. As a result, they survive and the latter get uprooted.

Being the daughter of a band-master who loved her mother passionately, Eustacia, the queen of the night was brought up at a "fashionable seaside resort" at Budmouth. From paternal side, she belongs to a respectable family though her maternal relations are dubious. She was given the best education available in the town. After the death of her parents, her grandfather Captain Vye took care of her and settled down at the heath which presents contrast in every respect to life at Budmouth. The fashionable Eustacia inherited passionate love from the parents and "juxtaposed the strangest assortment of ideas" from modern education. To be capricious is in her very
blood for she "was the raw material of divinity". Fidelity in love is as meaningless to her as Paris appears to Clym.

Eustacia is forced to stay at Egdon Heath to which she never emotionally belongs, the place where kisses are available at "famine price". There is obvious contrast between her past and present, internal and external self and the facts determining her life and her own action. There is none at Egdon Heath to match her superiority of race and financially sound enough to fulfil her desire. The main drawback comes from the topographical limitation itself. Trevor Johnson highlights the point: "To him figures are always seen against a landscape, and the nature of that landscape will always have some effect often a crucial effect, on the human actors."  

Eustacia's family background leaves neither room for loyalty to the lovers nor mental inclination towards the norms of Egdon Heath. Her instinct to be free, is ready to challenge any conventional authority. She is, on the other hand, a slave of inherited passion, ambition and memory of childhood.

Eustacia changes her mood as frequently as weathers change at Egdon. Wildeve observes:

One moment you are too tall, another moment you are do-nothing, another too melancholy, another too dark, another
I donot know that.

(Book I, Chap. IX)

To penetrate deeper into the recesses of her mind, Hardy uses dream-device in the novel. At night she dreams as heightened to the position of a queen dancing with a partner in silver armour. This heavenly dream does not last too long as they try to escape from others and in the process get drowned into the pools of the heath. Unfortunately this dream turns out to be the bitter and bare facts of her life. Since it is Paris that matters not the stranger Clym, she is ready to rebel against any hostile situation. The desire to see Clym at least once before the marriage, preoccupied her mind for a long time. The arrangement of mumming at Clym's house, gives her an ample chance to visit him. Anyhow she gets the role of a Turkish Knight who is to be defeated in the end.

Depending on her fancy, living in Utopia, above reality and means, are not only tragic elements but also create a situation from where escape becomes impossible. Her apathetic attitude towards the heath and disinterestedness in the lives of its dwellers, parentlessness, the unimpressive or superfluous Captain Vye, her own search for an imaginary world, render her rootless at the heath, the world of hardship, custom, rituals, omens and primitivism. The contrast is obvious:

Never was such harmony more perfect than that between the chaos of her mind and the chaos of the world without.

(Book V, Chap. VII)
At a dark, horrible and stormy night, Eustacia Clym makes a vain effort to elope away with Wildeve. It is a step not only against the customs of Egdon Heath but also cuts her off from the mainstream of life. Wildeve is too late and effeminate to share her grief. His delay provides an ample chance, for the first time, for self-analysis. She finds herself grief-stricken, isolated and fully exposed to dreadful Nature. Now it is no more a secret that Wildeve is neither a Saul nor a Bonaparte to cope with all her physical and psychological problems. The creatures meant for higher things are dragged in trivialities. Her blind passion for luxurious life drives her to be Wildeve's mistress and reject Clym, the furze-cutter.

For the first time, Eustacia is fully exposed to the calamities of Nature and made to realise the place of man in the cosmos. Freedom of will is as insignificant as her own existence. At last she surrenders before the powers of destiny. David Cecil pinpoints the predicament of Hardy's characters

And indeed it is significant that Hardy — as a rule — emphasises the fact that even those characters the world would call wicked are so much the creatures of circumstances that they are far more to be pitied than to be blamed. 10

Wildeve, a licentious sort of man was brought up for engineering but at present runs the quiet-Woman inn. Since his

profession and education keep him above the standard of rustics, he has adopted apathetic attitude towards them. Though his family relations are unknown there, the rustics are well-aware of his unscrupulous ways of life. Mr Wildeve owns many acres of land on heath. The men who redeemed the land and did hard labour, died in the process. At last it fell into the hands of Wildeve's family who profit from the labour of others. Thus he is one of those who never hesitate to exploit innocent men or women. Hardy reveals his personality, that he is a man "of two properties, form and motion". Altogether he was one of those in whom no man would have seen anything to admire, and in whom no woman would have seen anything to dislike.

Probably Wildeve belongs to the class who are never late in spoiling an innocent lady's life. His explanation for the postponement of marriage with Thomasin that the licence was made for another church resembles the crucial episode in *Far From the Madding Crowd* where Sergeant Troy loves two ladies simultaneously and loses her life because of confusion between two churches. Wildeve goes on promising Thomasin but plans to migrate abroad with Eustacia. It is their common hatred against Egdon Heath that keeps them stick together. Like Dr Fitzpiers, Wildeve born for doing better things, sacrifices his life for trivialities. His uncontrollable passion and illicit relation with Eustacia, challenge not only the normal pattern of life
at Egdon Heath but also break the norms and help spoil almost all the major characters in the novel.

Thomasin and Diggory Venn are the representative characters of Egdon Heath who face the ups and downs of life without any confrontation with the Immanent Will. Therefore they survive to enjoy. It appears rather strange that a lady like Thomasin, having affinity with her surrounding, is bent upon marrying Wildeve who hates not only the surrounding but also the inhabitants. She learns to adjust with her class through personal experiences of life. The marriage meant for physical and spiritual union, is exploited in favour of lust. Secondly her own aunt compels, her to accept Wildeve for the sake of family honour.

Diggory Venn symbolises the nostalgia of Hardy and observes the events without personal involvement. As Douglas Brown puts him: "He exerts an odd fascination, for he is a particularly apt projection of Hardy's feeling for the country at this time: a man ... dyed into a way of life, and that way fast disappearing". 11

He forms contrast with the fashionable world of Wildeve and Eustacia and like Gabriel Oak is true to his profession, culture and inherited values. Diggory Venn's proposal for marriage with Thomasin was turned down on the

ground that nobody would like to walk beside him as a wife. In other words he lacks that element which enables Mildeve to deceive Thomasin, arms Troy to spoil Fanny and assists Alec to seduce Tess. As far as simplicity of heart, traditional values and sincerity of love are concerned, he is above all of them. No than doubt his profession is humbler and culture inferior to all of them but he is "a specimen of rustic manhood". Therefore his large-heartedness, sense of sacrifice and the capacity for bearing hardships, remain unquestioned. Though the same kind of virtues hamper his success, he achieves in the end what he deserves in the beginning.

Irving Howe holds that Hardy believed in chance and coincidence, "both as manifestations of fate and as signs revealing the dynamics of character". As a matter of fact, the dumb show, falling a bucket into the well and opening a barrow, all caused by chance and coincidences, help Clym and Eustacia come closer and form a tragic pair. It becomes impossible for Clym to maintain emotional relation with the high-tempered mother as well as heath, at the same time fulfil the life-long yearnings of Eustacia and be a teacher too. Moreover, chance helps further deteriorate the situation. The money meant for Thomasin and Clym, is lost in gambling by Christian Cantle. This causes final breach between mother and

12. Howe, Irving, Thomas Hardy, p. 66.
son, Wildeve and Thomasin and Eustacia and Mrs Yeobright. In the same manner, Clym's letter meant for reconciliation is delivered only when Eustacia had left her house. This kind of delay is always crucial to the action. Thus Clym is bound to be unreconciled and Eustacia destined to meet the tragic end.

The Return of the Native is a remarkable novel as it shows Hardy's emergence from the idyllic world of Wessex to the profounder and more mysterious world of human motives, relationships, dreams and agonies. The setting of the novel remains the same but it has acquired a more deterministic dimension in the subsequent novels.
CHAPTER III

THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE
Most of Hardy's critics have interpreted his novels either with reference to their social background or viewed them from the philosophical point of view. Hardy is neither a social chronicler nor a thorough-going philosopher but an artist with deeper vision of life. Therefore it is proper to study the *The Mayor of Casterbridge* both from the social as well as philosophical point of view. Determinism in the novel lies in concrete social realities like undercurrent religious beliefs, cultural heritage and economic system which affect the life and mould the action to a large extent. Similarly the philosophical approach highlights the significance of theological, ethical, and psychological determinism, consciously or otherwise projected in the novel. Arthur McDowall throws light on the problem:

So there are two aspects, we might say, which he shows at different moments, or to different minds. He is intent on seeing things as they are; and most of all he realizes the fact of limit or necessity, on which he founds a vision that is both tragic and true. And there are times when the vision darkens with its own seemings, and man appears a lost atom in a terrifying world. This is the pessimism that grows imminent or actual when the universe is regarded as indifferent to values. 1

*The Mayor of Casterbridge* comes under the group of novels named by Hardy as novels of environment and character.

which implies that characters though important than story or plot are nevertheless portrayed in relation to the environment. There is no denying the fact that characters belong to their age and their actions are conditioned by prevalent values of the time, relevant to all time and age. Hardy was influenced not only with the various movements of his age but was also concerned with the predicament of human beings in general viz. the sheer need of freedom in life which has been denied to them from the first day of creation. If life appears meaningless without liberty for choice and action, there is little or no chance for lasting happiness. Therefore life becomes an enigma and place of man on this earth is simply vague. After his traumatic experiences Henchard comes to the conclusion:

I have tried to peruse and learn all my life; but the more I try to know the more ignorant I seem.

(Chap. XLI)

Michael Henchard, probably the first leading male character of Hardy, for most of the major novels have female protagonists, is seen wandering in search of job. His tiresome journey reminds us of the situation in which man finds himself in the society to which he belongs. It suggests predicament of man in the cosmos, a dilemma of existence. It should, however, be noted that Hardy's tragic vision is not only an outcome of
his study of nineteenth century thinkers but more or less based on personal observation of Victorian life in general and Wessex in particular to which he emotionally belonged.

Let us try to view Hardy's theory of determinism in the light of the two well-known theories of tragedy namely Shakespearean and ancient Greek. According to the former, the protagonist suffers for flaw in his own character and the latter depicts the protagonist in relation to the situation, circumstances, destiny and fate, all conspiring against his will. These elements or forces may be held largely responsible for his plight. If someone suffers due to his own weakness there is no cause to grudge against the power governing the world. Thomas Hardy who thought of the malignant power as "neither moral nor immoral but unemoral" suggests not only its indifferent attitude but also life without purpose and the individual born to suffer. Hardy comments on Henchard:

Misery taught him nothing more than defiant endurance of it. His wife was dead, and the first impulse for revenge died with the thought that she was beyond him. He looked out at the night as a fiend. Henchard, like all his kind was superstitious, and he could not help thinking that the concatenation of events this evening had produced was the scheme of some sinister intelligence bent on punishing him.

(Chap. XIX)

In such circumstances the place of man is an enigma not to be
formulated in terms of "flaw". King Lear shaped his own
destiny by dividing the kingdom between his two wicked
daughters and deprived genuine Cordelia of her due share. But
the problem with Henchard is different. He misses Jane not
for his own fault. The letter written and sealed by Susan
revealed the fatal news that she was the daughter of Newson.
This information puts an end to all his fatherly affections.
Is this tragic event not carved by fate? For Henchard there
is no reconciliation with Jane even at the time of death though
Lear receives Cordelia's assistance.

Hardy lost faith in Christianity and had certain
reservations against Darwin's theory of evolution. He saw
little or no hope for man's happiness. In the age of
"uncertainty", questioning and social reshuffle, Hardy expressed
doubts about both the scientific claims and religious dogmas:

    We enter church, and we have to say,
    'We have erred and strayed from the
    ways like lost sheep', when what we
    want to say is, 'why are we made to
    err and stray like lost sheep?' Then
    we have to sing. 'My Soul doth magnify
    the Lord', when what we want to sing
    in, 'O that my soul could find some
    Lord that it would magnify! Till it
can let us magnify good works, and
develop all means of easing mortals'
progress though a world not worthy of
them. 2

I think the key-words "made to err" and "a world

2. Hardy, F.E., The Life of Thomas Hardy, p. 332.
not worthy of them" denote the compulsion of external forces dictating the beginning and end of human life. Fate helps worsen the situation, the causes unknown till it is too late. Above all there is no justification of the suffering, no distinction between good and bad in the world where virtue suffers and evil goes unpunished.

As a matter of fact, the protagonist finds himself at loggerhead with the unforeseen power on the one hand and social barriers on the other. Chance raises its ugly head constantly without any warning and upsets the set ideals of an individual which make his vision more gloomy and life more miserable. Social barriers do make him realise at every step the lack of freedom for choice and hazards of trespassing the accepted social norms, customs and morality. Honchard's strong will challenges everything coming in his way but at last he is compelled to follow rather than lead. Jean R. Brooks aptly observes:

Hardy's tragic figures rooted in an unconscious life-process more deterministic than their own, try to mould their lives according to human personal will, feeling and aspiration. Though their self-assertion is overcome by the impersonality of the cosmos, including those instinctive drives they share the natural world, their endeavour to stamp a humane personal design on cosmic indifference makes them nobler than that destroys them. 3

The protagonist is helpless to the extent that the cherished values of life viz. love, truth and chivalry fail to avert the situation in his favour. Even craving for repentance goes unwarranted. Tess’s spiritual purity is not acceptable to the same society which spoiled her innocence. Tess and Henchard’s dauntless courage to brave the odds, puts them above average lot, no doubt, but their wandering in search of livelihood in the beginning and withdrawal from the arena of life in the end, give the sense of nothingness.

According to Margeson, ancient as well as Elizabethan tragedians emphasize the isolation of the tragic protagonists who are admired for bravey and honesty after catastrophe but condemned for certain rebellious qualities during hey-day. Chapter I and XLI highlight the loneliness, defeat, uprooting and disaster of Henchard as well as predicament of man in general. Hardy comments on his position:

His mood was no longer that of the rebellious, ironical, reckless misadventurer; but the leaden gloom of one who has lost all that can make life interesting or even tolerable.

(Chap. XLI)

Tess failed to compromise with Alec and Henchard warned Jopp that Farfarae was to be outwitted in corn-trade but "by fair competition". Now this creates room for doubt whether society
is wrong or the protagonist. Similarly the question arises whether the ways of apathetic gods are justified in sporting with innocent and honest characters like Toss and Henchard respectively. It appears neither society nor the malign powers sanction any freedom to prosper and be happy.

During the period 1870-90, free corn-trade spoiled the agriculture of England. The effect was far reaching and devastating. The farm-labourers shifted from villages to towns, away from their near and dear ones. The compact life of agricultural community was shattered. This changed into melancholy and nostalgia. The impact of this upheaval on Hardy's characters, Brown observes, "was intellectual misery perhaps also poverty and the loneliness of exile from one's native community. So his level analysis of migration of labour has its sharp edge." It should be rewarding to ascertain to what extent this social upheaval affects the action of Casterbridge folk.

The first chapter of the novel serving as prologue to the main drama to begin only after twenty years, reflects the real predicament of man in the society as well as in the cosmos. Henchard, stout and skilled forced to say good-bye to his native place like Christ, trods on his weary way towards Weydon Prior. When he asks for shelter, the turnip-hoar sums

Putting down is more the nature of Heydon. There were five houses cleared away last year, and three this; and the folk nowhere to go - no, not so much as a thatched hurdle; that's the way of Heydon Prior.

Later on the microcosm develops into cosmic vision. The destructive ways of the society affect his action in this manner:

Being out of work, he was, as a consequence, out of temper with the world and society and his nearest kin.

At this stage we realize that the crucial problem of livelihood shapes personality of a man who loses faith not only in the society but also in human relationship. The same "temper" is further invoked and exploited by the strong liquor and auction of the horses. In this way, one of the major events of the novel, the sale of the wife, is an outcome of this temper preceded by definite pre-existing causes.

It is not my purpose to consider The Mayor of Casterbridge as a social record. Yet it is important to note that economy plays a crucial role in the life of characters. The deterioration in economy for that matter change in culture is
apparent from the fumity – woman and the Heydon-fair. She appears before us three times which show different phases in her career. First we have a glimpse of her tent big enough to accommodate many persons simultaneously, then reduced to a stove and stool after twenty years and finally brought in the court as a vagrant. She is deserted by her own class. If she is to be tried and convicted by the court, society alone can be held responsible for her behaviour and sin. There are internal as well as external evidences which prove the causes for social sin. H.L. Beales observes:

Victorian social setting was one of vaster and more rapid urbanisation than had ever taken place before. The rise of industrialism, and its expansion, were even cradled in destruction as well as invention — the destruction of crafts, known patterns of social simplicity and of personal deferences of behaviour, conceptions of value and happiness and of public and private function that seemed to have had their day. 5

The Casterbridge society is divided into two classes namely the labourer and the prosperous corn-traders. The emergence of the business class suggests a kind of social change. The lack of social integration and growing stigma are obvious then Susan and Jane enter the town in search of Henchard who is seen presiding over a banquet by the dignitaries of the town. The rustics or labourers are only allowed to have eye-

5. Beales, H.L., "Victorian Ideas of Sex" in Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, p. 252.
feast. Secondly Jane serves at the "Three Mariners" with great care that the news may not reach Henchard otherwise his sense of pride will be wounded. The same hay-trusser Henchard is seen later on criticising Jane for use of dialects and offering bread and ale to a poor lady. Ironically their views and social-demarcations are based on economy. Douglas Brown, in an individual booklet on the novel, hints at the major determinant:

Susan Henchard's sale was the first, the plight of the Furmity-Woman is the second image of the predicament. Hardy seeks to bring to legendary force and clarity in Henchard himself, representatives of an older style of living and working, dependent upon an earlier economy; involved in new processes whose authority they cannot comprehend nor hold back ... 6

This brings us closer to another problem in the novel; the introduction of strangers by Hardy. Alec, Fitzpiers and Fairfarae clash with their native counterparts who challenge not only the life-style of the latter but also enhance the sense of struggle for existence. It is only through the inherited supremacy of wealth or culture or knowledge that the intruders dominate. On the other hand, they also bring along with them the money-based artificial culture and unscrupulous mentality. Strange enough the pitched battle of existence

commences when they, the exponent of modernity strive to
establish themselves at the cost of the interest of the natives.
Desmond Hawkins highlights the point:

Hardy was confronted with the appalling thought that the evolutionary development might be no orderly progressive sequences at all but an unsuspected and freakish motion carrying him over farther away from his proper context — a sort of psychic elephantiasis dislocating and distorting the pattern of normal health. 7

The struggle for existence leads us on to an eternal dilemma of man namely the confrontation between orthodox or conservative and scientific or modern ways of life. Irwin Howe points out the two different values of life:

And the more Henchard emerges as a personal force, the less he survives as a social power.
Their conflict reflects, but is not reducible to, a shake-up within the dominant social class of Casterbridge, the merchants and traders. Men accustomed to a free-and-easy personal economy, in which arrangements are sealed by a word, will now be replaced by agents of an economy more precise and rational, in which social relationships must be mediated through paper. 8

Henchard's defeat is not personal in nature but shows the decay of the society which he represents. If he fails to survive, he is not to be personally blamed for the causes are

7. Hawkins, Desmond, Hardy the Novelist, (Devon, 1965), p.22
greater than his will. Therefore the extinction of such species seemed inevitable to Hardy.

Moreover, the clash between Henchard and Farfarae is not simply a matter of two different personalities. They represent two opposing generations, classes and culture. If the former is uprooted in the end, the causes are found in such ever-operating forces. Those elements constrain his action to the extent of helplessness. At the same time he cannot act other than what he actually does. For instance his firm belief in "weather prophets" is an inherited value, good or bad but unavoidable. Henchard's defeat confirms the fact that his society or culture was unfit for survival in the epoch of modern science where reason dominated over passion, common sense over obstinacy and literacy over superstition. Jean R. Brooks pinpoints the causes: "In the conflict between old and progressive ideas in the foresight and judgement needed to safeguard Casterbridge entertainment from uncertain weather, Farfarae gains ground and Henchard's wrong-headed impulsiveness leads to bankruptcy". The effect, of time on an individual and society is crucial to Hardy's thought. To be replaced by new forces is endurable but certainly not resistible. Thus Henchard with all his cherished values is doomed to be wiped out.

Above all Henchard confronts his own past which

determines his future, an oppression of time. The return of the furmity-woman on a specific day when Henchard presides over the judgment-seat, makes the sale of his wife a public scandal. It may be a conspiracy of fate or chance but anyhow he is exposed as a "blue-bearded" man, the traitor who has no right to pronounce judgment on others. His natural sense of morality is side-tracked by the enigmatic social didacticism.

At the climax of his social position, Henchard is subjected to downfall. Secondly Newson's arrival denies him the last human relationship. Therefore the downfall comes in terms of loss in social position, hope and honour over which Henchard has no control. Norman Page sums up the significance of time in Hardy's fiction in the following passage:

In his defence, it can be argued that coincidence of the typo which involves the intrusion of one set of circumstances upon another over a long period of time dramatizes Hardy's preoccupation with the inescapable nature of the past. A man like Henchard is never entitled to believe that he has left a phase of life behind him for good and all, since the quirks of chance may bring it before him again when he least expects it. 10

Richard Carpenter also opines that time operates through chance, misunderstanding and confusion which help prepare circumstances for tragic events. Fansy's confusion between two churches, Angel Clare's late arrival from Brazil misapprehending that all was right with Tess and Henchard

considering Farfarae's commercial instinct as animosity, spelled their ruin.

Timo is undoubtedly a great determining force in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. The mighty challenge which comes to the older values of life is a designing of time that rolls aside the smaller pebbles in the guise of individuals from the way of its natural flow. The history of an individual or civilization is no more significant than a moment in the whole gamut of endless time-sequence. If Henchard's past in the guise of Susan and Newson makes him miserable, the present coincides with future time represented by Farfarae and Jane. He is rendered insignificant in his life-time. There is neither freedom for choice nor anymore success in the offing. His experiences, skills and beliefs are dead somewhere in point of time. He fails to effect the new waves and the Casterbridge society opts for Farfarae's way of life. His repeated attempts for survival bring but disaster followed by death.

There are numerous other circumstances leading to tragic effect over which Henchard has no control at all. Therefore he shares neither praise nor blame with us but gains sympathy for endurance. Man has always been at war with nature, an agent of cosmic power which takes delight in punishing him. Henchard's unbound ambition and struggle for survival come to an end at the hands of this unforeseen power. In other words,
he is ruined for lack of advanced scientific knowledge on the one hand and robbed at the climax of his success by bad weather on the other. For the entertainment of Casterbridge people, he organises sport show which is spoiled by stormy wind, and rain, while the ball-dance arranged by Farfarae goes successfully. Secondly in the cut-throat competition with Farfarae, the bad weather again puts Henchard in heavy financial loss. Due to his hasty temper he sells the procured corn at a throw-away price though the weather changes within few days. But in the meantime Henchard goes bankrupt. In this way, fate in the guise of weather causes loss in the form of social reputation and economic disaster. Ironically, Farfarae benefits from his misery. F.E. Hardy records:

"Nature's indifference to the advance of her species along what we are accustomed to call civilized lines."

Like Tess "a blighted star" rules over Henchard. In the novel, the sport of weather takes place in the following manner:

When his granaries were full to choking, all the weather-cocks of Casterbridge creaked and set their faces in another direction, as if tired of the south-west. The weather changed; the sunlight, which had been like tin for cocks, assumed the hue of topaz. The temperament of the Welkin passed from the phlegmatic to the sanguine; an excellent harvest was almost a certainty; and as a consequence prices rushed down.

(Chap. XXVI)

First of all, bad weather spoils his sport show, then bad weather changes into good which causes him financial disaster. Therefore unpredictable mood of weather or nature is more responsible for his plight.

According to H.C. Duffin, passion, reason, emotion or instinct pervade all Hardy's creatures. The striking point is the absence of these elements in proportion which help spoil the normal pattern of life or behaviour. As a matter of fact romantic love or marriage-problems are not taken up in detail in *The Mayor of Casterbrige* but passionate friendly relations between Henchard and Farfarae converted into staunch animosity determine the action. Since Henchard's response to life is a passionate one, therefore fate operates from within and without. His friendship with Farfarae is such that he discloses even his secrets and fatherly affection for Jane are some of the moments in Henchard's life controlled by passion. On the other hand, to outwit Farfarae in trade, he appoints inexperienced Jopp. It is only peculiar to Henchard and an element of greatness too, that he cannot separate friendship from profession or private life from public one. Therefore aspiration, desire and passion lay down traps in which he gets entangled.

If fate meddles in Henchard's affairs, Hardy's art was circumscribed by serialisation. "I fear it will not be so good as I meant, but after all it is not improbabilities of incident
but improbabilities of character that matter." It appears from this remark that Hardy took great care of his characters. Michael Henchard shows rare strength and capacity for endurance than an ordinary man. He displays not only extraordinary honesty and courage but also faces, unlike Gilos Wintborne and Clym Yeobright, more ups and downs in his life, a true representative of male kind, who tries unsuccessfully to avert the odd circumstances and hostile cosmic power in his favour. Henchard and Tess's sufferings remind us the dilemma of their respective sex. Both of them convincingly surpass the average physique and mediocre sense of morality in resistance from temptations and unscrupulous ways of the society. The rare success from rags to riches is only possible for Henchard though he falls down flat on the same ground from where he jumped. The acceptance of defeat with grandeur and dignity make him more vulnerable.

As Hardy states, Henchard is pitted against unbelievable circumstances which consistently make him realise that man is insignificant, misery inevitable and future unpredictable otherwise he is inferior to none. The first obstacle that he comes across is poverty and burden of a family. As soon as these odds are removed, he appears before us as a mayor of Casterbridge, a nerve-centre of agricultural trade. On the other hand this success is dearly purchased at the cost

12. Hardy, F.E., *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, p.153
of wife and child and morality. It means monetary gain fails to fetch real happiness.

The reconciliation with wife and child after twenty years proves no boon to him in any way. In their return, he misses Lucotta's love while Susan's death results in loss of Jane. Susan's letter gives him fatal news worse than death. The story of temporary gain and permanent loss is suggested with the operation of web-like causes. In short Henchard's success in social status is an irreparable damage to family life. At last, he is deserted by wife, child, friend and the society as a whole.

The impact of Novalis on Hardy that "Character is fate" is obvious enough but not in Christian or Biblical sense where good is rewarded and evil is punished accordingly. More than any one in the novel, Henchard faces rivals in every walk of life namely family, trade and profession. It is his inherited greatness as well as weakness that Farfarae is to be roughed up but with one hand tied, he is physically weaker. This rugged sense of justice puts an end to his own physical advantage. Therefore body is controlled by mind which is shaped by racial, topographical and cultural background. There is no denying the fact that character helps determine the future course of action but certain facts create a particular character. For instance hasty decisions, over-confidence in assistants and
passionate response even to strangers, are some of the weaknesses in Henchard contributed by above-mentioned factors.

There are certain actions of Henchard which are not deliberately chalked out or well-planned but situation invokes his temper. Therefore it would be wrong to give him any label good or bad or type. In different situations, he acts or reacts in different manner. For instance Abel Whittle is punished for being late but his mother was kept in supply with coal in winter. The same figure so high and mighty, feels ultimately betrayed by ag, society, friend, wife and child. Even his body betrays the mind to the point of implausibility. Hardy narrates:

His measured, springless walk was the walk of the skilled country man as distinct from the desultory shamble of the general labourer; while in the turn and plant of each foot there was, further, a dogged and cynical indifference personal to himself, showing its presence even in the regularly interchanging fustian folds, now in the left leg, now in the right, as he paced along.

(Chap. I)

If Henchard possesses such quality as "large-heartedness", a "dark-rain" also emerges out of the same virtue. For justice and honesty he is found ready to sacrifice valuables, unmindful of the course-sequences. The poor creditor is given
the gold-watch, the last valuable in his possession and the
furnity-woman is not denied justice though her arrival brings
down-fall to Henchard. Hillgate compares Henchard with
Farfarel and their respective qualities personal or racial:

Yet Hardy nonetheless compels us to
recognize in Henchard a man of almost
superhuman grandeur of great if
uncontrollable passions, a tragic hero
whom it is not ludicrous to compare
with Captain Ahab, or even with King
Lear. The presentation is powerful in
itself, but demands as its corollary an
unflattering treatment of the deliberately
contrasted figure of Farfarel. Like
Henchard himself, the reader is initially
attracted to Farfarel by his practical
competence, his friendliness, his
possession of those ordinary pleasant
qualities of politeness and charm in which
Henchard is so signally lacking. It is
only gradually that the essential shallowness
of Farfarel's character becomes fully
apparent; in his sentimentality about a
homeland he has left deliberately enough;
in his skill in disguising impurities in
wheat rather than making them good ... 13

Henchard and Farfarel, strangers to each other, are brought
together by chance and enter into friendship, then rivalry in
profession, trade and love. All these events weave the main
tissue of the drama. Two different opposing personalities are
yoked together. The result is disaster of the former, the
employer converted into an employee. Farfarel deliberates
according to the situation while Henchard vails in vain to mould
the circumstances in his favour. While the one adjusts with his

13. Hillgate, Michael, Thomas Hardy : His Career as a Novelist,
environment, the other lacks this virtue. The stranger benefits from the favourable situation, the native is ruined by the adverse circumstances.

Like ancient Stoics, Henchard has firm faith in vows, superstition, omens and endurance. These are part and parcel of his character shaped by the society and developed by the prevailing beliefs of the time. The sense of aggression tinged with ego compel him to fight back with every kind of impediment coming in the way of his action. But this psychology causes him defeat. It is his failure in planning and manoeuvre. Though he holds fate fully responsible for his plight, his own temperament contributes a lot to his disaster. Nevertheless his lack of modern knowledge is more than personal in nature. If there are flaws in his character, they are the outcome of cultural, racial and hereditary weaknesses. Abercrombie observes "It is not one man's old sin finding him out, but a type of the general sin of personal existence, and personal desire, in a universe of indifferent fate. And the tragedy is not so much punishment exacted for this, as the stubborn endurance of the punishment."

On the other hand, Farfaree adjusts with the labourers in a rather cunning manner, pays less but behaves well and Henchard pays well but loses temper at slightest provocation. Farfaree may be inferior in terms of

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language, race, courage, culture and attitude towards life
but his commercial instinct and rational approach towards
affairs give him an advantage over others. For instance, he
introduces new agricultural tools and modern economic system
to the Casterbridge folk.

According to Thomas Hardy cultural values are more
accountable than financial success. Apart from his abilities
as a trader, Farfarel fails to provide requisite leadership to
the men of his generation. By throwing Henchard into the
region of "ancient Casterbridge", Farfarel creates vacuum rather
than fill up the gulf created by Henchard's exit.

As a matter of fact, Hardy emphasizes the genesis of
his protagonists viz. Clym the furze-cutter, Giles Winterborne,
the tree-planter, Henchard, the hay-trusser and Farfarel the
trader which provide clues not only to family background,
professional psychology and hereditary values but also hint at
their future course of action. If Henchard's genesis makes him
slave of higher values of life, Farfarel's aim is prosperity
and establishment, a victim of topographical limitations and
product of "bourgeois economy". His greed for social success
comes to fore when Lucetta suggests for change of air abroad
but he opts for the post of mayor:

See now how it's ourselves that are ruled by
the Powers above us! We plan this, but we do
that. If they want to make me Mayor I will stay, and Henchard must rave as he will.

(Chap. XXXIV)

This approach of Farfarae towards life, results in Lucetta's death.

In the novel, more often than not, the action of a man is conditioned by fellow creatures and events other than impersonal powers. It is Henchard who insists on Farfarae to give up the idea of migration. Then he compells him to accept the job and be an enemy too. On the other hand Farfarae's efficiency brings down Henchard from the position of a mayor to that of a pauper and his negligence and skimpiness-ride cause death to Lucetta. Susan and Jane suffer only due to Henchard's bad temper and Jane enjoys, though too late, the position of being wife of the mayor only because of Farfarae's success. Therefore one's success or failure, suffering or enjoyment and hope or despair are partially the effects of the action of another. Above all, fate confirms their helplessness as Henchard admits in the following words:

who is such a reprobate as I? And yet it seems that even I be in Somebody's hand!

(Chap. XLI)

Susan as well as Lucetta is "more shadow of her
men-folk". Hardy's mind was so much preoccupied with male characters to the extent that female characters were relegated to secondary position in the novel. The simple-hearted Susan falls prey to Henchard's bad temper and moral consideration puts barrier in adjustment with Newson on the other. Lucetta comments on Susan's death:

> Poor woman, she seems to have been a sufferer, though uncomplaining, and though weak in intellect not an imbecile.

*(Chap. XXII)*

Lucetta, an emotional and romantic lady from Jersey comes to Casterbridge with an idea to marry Henchard. But fate carves her future just opposite way. Henchard pays her visit with the best intention in the world. She wishes to see him the next day which according to Henchard is an insult to his passion. While she waits for him, Farfarae arrives with the aim to see Jane who is out for evening walk. They fall in love which leads to marriage and as a consequence Henchard and Jane both are side-tracked. Moreover, her happiness by marrying well does not last long. Her letters written to Henchard become a public scandal resulting in her death. Therefore "happiness is but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain" is applicable to Henchard, Lucetta and Susan alike.
The events, episodes and coincidences which operate as agencies for fate and chance help Hardy carry out in-depth study of life though the reviewers attacked him for the same. It is Jane who survives to make final comment on life. Her silent observations and varied experiences bring her closer to Marty South. Elizabeth Jane's role is sketchy but Trevor Johnson feels "Elizabeth Jane is perhaps as near as any one to Hardy's ideal woman. By contrasting her with the wayward, imprudent Lucetta ..., he stresses Elizabeth's quiet charm." 15

Her suffering and endurance deserved to be rewarded in the end. Like Henchard, she experiences life, from lower to upper and rags to riches and vice-versa. Her hopes, suffering and misery are pinned with Henchard's response. Jane is a "point of rest" between Henchard and Farfarae but the former does not sanction her freedom to marry the latter otherwise it could have averted the situation in their favour.

It has been her desire from childhood to "see, hear and understand". She is even ready to sell all the fineries to purchase books. Her thirst for knowledge resembles Grace Melbury's education abroad, though the former gains wisdom and the latter achieves sophistication for social-uplift. Elizabeth Jane inherits qualities from her parents with improved wisdom which make her adaptable to the surrounding, emerging social values and new forces of life.

The Mayor of Casterbridge is, thus, an important milestone in Hardy's career as a novelist and philosophic writer. Michael Henchard assumes classical stature as a tragic figure and through him Hardy holds the mirror to his age, highlighting its ambitions and despair, dreams and disillusionments.
The Woodlanders is a rare study in love, the uncontrollable passion which motivates the major characters for different activities and finally makes the readers realise the place of man in the cosmos as well as in the society. David Cecil observes: "He sees human beings less as individuals than as representatives of a species, and in relation to the ultimate conditioning forces of their existence. His subject is not men but man. His theme is mankind's predicament in the universe".¹ As far as this predicament is concerned, Hardy clarifies his intention in the preface to 1885 edition: "In the present novel, as in one or two others of this series which involve the question of matrimonial divorce, the immortal puzzle — given the man and woman, how to find a basis for their sexual relation — .... "²

According to Hardy, a perfect union is impossible in this world. In most of the cases there is a wrong woman married to an innocent man or an innocent woman is wedded to a wrong man, a universal phenomenon of "mismatching". He endeavours to interpret life through love followed by marriage. Norman Page aptly observes "It is in The Woodlanders that Hardy's treatment of the marriage question becomes more explicit and his rejection of the happy ending is asserted".³ Love, more than anything else

³ Page, Norman, Thomas Hardy, (London, 1977), p.40
motivates their actions and the marriage brings only misery therefore love can be considered a major determining factor of their actions. The scape-goat like lovers remain frustrated and restless. It is apparent from Grace's pathetic condition:

She wondered if there were in the Universe where the fruit had no worm, and marriage no sorrow.

( Chap. XXVIII )

A careful study of The Woodlanders in particular and Hardy's later novels in general reveals the fact that love is adorable; it keeps the soul animated and makes life more active but ultimately drives the characters to a destination from where there is no escape except suffering and death. Consequently Giles Winterborne and Tess meet the same fate. Secondly Hardy believed firmly that love prospers from distance but fades away whenever physical or matrimonial union takes place. A permanent relation like marriage if based on temporary feeling, is bound to create tragic results. Therefore marriages are followed by quick separations. For instance Tess is abandoned because of her bold confession and Grace strives for a divorce from Dr. Fitzpiers. The unhappy marriages emerge out of conventional notion attached to it. The male counterparts, generally fail to grant legitimate rights or freedom to their wives. If Clare is more dogmatic in his approach towards the
marriage institution, Dr Fitzpiers uses it for lust. Thus, instead of making the ladies happy the conventional marriages check their physical and mental growth.

Love may be a rewarding thing in itself, but in Hardy's major novels, it operates as "destructive passion", shapes the action and reflects true meaning of life. The lovers prefer to withdraw only when the pitched battle of passion is fought closely. Resignation is the only choice left before Giles Winterborne who leaves the village out of despair. Their actions, trivial or mighty, have definite causes to the extent of predictability.

Thomas Hardy's characters, as this imperfect world designs, are supposed to serve two masters viz. the dictates of their own aspiration and the Immanent Will. Their strong desires are as blind as the power governing the world and they learn wisdom only when it is too late to make amends. Thus a certain point the clash between the two is inevitable. The confrontation emerges out of this fact that human beings do not accept their defeat acquisely. The outcome is disaster and despair. Richard Carpenter rightly observes: "His pessimistic or better his tragic vision needs the support of a mythic view of the world in which man suffers and is defeated by forces beyond his control or comprehension; in this
way Hardy's philosophy is an integral factor in his work).

It is apparent right from the beginning that Hardy looks at the woodlanders, through the microscope of love. The web-like causes of a man's success or failure, happiness or unhappiness and loss or achievement, are analysed through love. But love, physical or spiritual cannot be free from the material world. For example socio-economic factors affect the main action to a great extent. There is hardly any society in the world without some conventions or traditions. A well-established society demands from a man that its rules should be followed strictly. A typical society like that of the woodlanders, hampers their action. Norman Page provides important clues to the major determinants present in the novel:

Moreover, Hardy's lovers are not, even in Under the Greenwood Tree, the timeless youths and maidens of pastoral tradition, but creatures firmly set in a carefully delineated landscape, in a more or less specific period of time, and in a society which is involved in a process of change that is not always dramatic, but remains inexorable. These three determinants of individual destiny, the topographical, the historical and the sociological, need to be exemplified at some length. 5

Little Hintock is a secluded sort of village, cut off from the mainstream of life. Hardy does not describe any

other place in such detail except a few passing references to Shortan Abbass, London and the Continent. The action remains confined to the village and the adjacent wood. Even on the opening page we have a glimpse of situation, life and culture of the village over there. The toilsome journey of a rambler in search of the village and the deserted road suggest the aloofness of Little Hintock. The village and the wood provide unity of place and time through description of weathers. Its topography and social life are described by Hardy in a rather dramatic manner.

It was one of the sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listlessness than meditation where reasoning proceeds on narrow premises, and results in inferences wildly imaginative; yet there, from time to time, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives therein.

(Chap. I)

The Little Hintock dwellers belong to the same race and there is scarcely any family which is not matrimonially inter-connected. As far as their economy is concerned, most of them earn only from hand to mouth. Of course some of the woodlanders thrived in timber business which makes all the difference. A kind of social change can be felt in the education of Kolbury’s daughter Grace. Like other Victorian
intellectuals, Hardy took the social change dubiously. The old culture slowly replaced by the new one, was not a proper substitute. Was this new culture meant for betterment of the common folk? Hardy's answer in *The Woodlanders* is not in affirmative. He observed conflict between two ways of life which widened the gap, filled life with tension and doubt.

There are two sets of characters in the novel, the outsiders alien to the local taste and the woodlanders, who are remnants of a dying culture. The former class symbolizes in Dr. Fitzpiers and Mrs. Charmond invade into the sequestered lives of the latter, the class cherished by Hardy. They may be superior in race, economy, education and experience but certainly inferior in morality and loyalty. In this way eternal clash takes place between experienced and innocent, educated and uneducated, modern and orthodox, the latter being exploited and uprooted. Thus Grafe Melbury betrothed to Giles Winterborne, inclines towards Dr. Fitzpiers and enters into conjugal relationship. Giles Winterborne's tragedy is significant in many ways. Douglas Brown throws light on the collapse of agricultural community:

This story deals more subtly than its predecessors with personal and social relations, at some sacrifice of the sharp, hard edges of the character-drawing in the other books. Social status is integral to the pattern of the story; its protagonists
each love 'above' himself or herself. That, too, indicates one facet of the impending collapse of the closed, compact agricultural communities. 6

As I have already pointed out, almost every major character of the novel is passionately involved in love affair. Notwithstanding his or her own social position, he or she goes on pursuing the higher. Marty South craves for Giles who loves Grace. Being well-educated and rich, she prefers Dr. Fitzpiers, descended from a vanished aristocratic family. He develops clandestine relationship with Mrs Charmond who is supposed to be more refined, beautiful and owner of a large estate. The irony of fate is too severe here. They never look back at their real counterpart to avoid the tragedy. There is not even a minor attempt on their part to adjust with their own class. On the other hand Mrs. Charmond and Dr Fitzpiers find Grace comparatively inferior in class and family link. Similarly Grace neglects true love of Giles for he is poor and uneducated. And the worst of all, Giles never cast a "long-lingering look" at Marty who could have made him happy. Thus they tried to cross the barriers of class, culture and social heredity to be defeated at the threshold of fate. Grace does make attempt to come back to Giles Winterborne but it is only after her marriage with Dr Fitzpiers. David Cecil aptly comments on the dilemma: "Man is working to one end, Destiny to another". 7

7. Cecil, David, Hardy the Novelist, p. 29.
In Hardy's scheme of thought, the desire of man and the law of nature seldom go together. For example Giles Winterborne's effort to make himself financially sound enough to match Grace's status, is ruined in the death of John South. He loses his house for lease cannot be renewed and all of a sudden, he is rendered penniless. Instead of improvement in status, he is considered degraded in the eyes of Melbury household. This loss of humble cottage, determines the loss of love and social prestige. Giles's complete fall chalked out by destiny, takes him from prosperity to poverty, uproots from social stability to wandering and finally leads him from hope to the grave. Once again David Cecil argues beautifully:

A struggle between man on the one hand and, on the other, an omnipotent and indifferent Fate—that is Hardy's interpretation of the human situation. Inevitably it imposes a pattern on his picture of the human scene. It determines the character of his drama. Like other dramas, this turns on a conflict, but the conflict is not, as in most novels between one man and another, or between man and institution. Man in Hardy's books is ranged against impersonal forces, the forces conditioning his fate.

One may question whether fate is fully responsible for man's plight or some other forces too. Certainly, factors like family background, man-made laws and the environment, curtail the freedom of man, limit his action and cause loss beyond repair. It is not possible for Hardy's fragile man to

cross the barriers of class and culture. The inhabitants of Little Hintock village find distance among themselves, the distance in emotional approach, causing end to social-integrity. Melbury's strong desire to get Grace married to a person superior in class, education and culture, shows Hardy's doubts about survival of old culture. The kind of struggle that Melbury makes proves not only futility of his labour but also reveals hollowness of modern culture. Anyhow in the age of "survival of the fittest" persons like Melbury were causing more harm to their own class than "alien elements" like Dr Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond. Jude's aspiration for higher education rendered him unfit for his own class. Thus a person uprooted from his class remains unadjusted in another one. Hinting at the fatal consequences of strong desire Abercrombie comments:

Human desire must therefore be at best an irony; then completely wrought into artistic form, it must appear as tragedy ... We never feel the characters to be isolated in a purely human world, the conditions of their being and their being itself, are always engaged with immense background of measureless fatal process, a moving, supporting darkness, more or less apparent, it may be only hinted at, but it is always to be felt. 9

Now it is apparent that Hardy did not take the theory of evolution without questioning. The Victorian era which brought in many changes and introduced novel ideas kept the society

divided and left the common man full of doubts. Therefore the innocent woodlanders cannot keep away from the temptation offered by advantageous upper class. In the process, they are not only challenged by modernity but also lose sympathy of their own class. The dilemma of life becomes a riddle.

The introduction of modern education in one of the Little Hintock families is a sign that the Victorian shift from older values of life to modernity was hazardous in many ways. Grace was sent to a boarding school abroad. At her return, Hardy describes sarcastically that houses looked smaller and the trees offered no charm as they used to offer previously. On the other hand, Helbury intensifies his search for a better suitor than Giles. Dr. Fitzpiers is there with all pomp. After marriage, his infidelity is an open secret. As a victim of her father's ambition and unscrupulous acts of her aristocratic husband she attempts for come-back to Giles at last. If the new culture was equipped with modern education and novel ideas, it lacked in morality and genuine love. Hardy introduces at least two prototypes of modern culture in the person of Mrs. Charmond and Dr. Fitzpiers.

The Woodlanders and The Mayor of Casterbridge are also portraits of clash between superstition or orthodoxy and the modern or scientific knowledge. The former was rapidly vanishing. The Little Hintock people are innocent and orthodox,
the true product of their environment. Similarly Henchard and Giles's rivals Farfarae and Dr. Fitzpiers are more informed, better educated and advanced in time. The former faces defeat at the hands of scientific one. Though Hardy was never happy with this new culture but had also doubts about relevance and adjustability of old dying culture. At the same time, it was also painful to keen observers that past ages provided the man less education and material comfort but those were peaceful days. Henchard's wanderings in search of livelihood and Giles's misery are outcome of prevailing instability of Victorian culture. Instead of making the persons happy, the new culture uprooted them. More or less, the causes of their suffering are also to be found in the tradition and ways of life. They are, to some extent, betrayed by their own class and aspirations. Above all, the Little Hintock dwellers are dead in time, too primitive to face the new forces of life. But it would be wrong to say that Hardy favoured new culture for it caused more havoc than happiness. Summing up Hardy's true feelings, it can be argued safely that modern culture created chaos in the life of common folk. That is why Giles and Henchard suffer and the wrong-doers prosper. They die with all their cultural weaknesses and cherished values of life. Once again the question arises: is their action not determined by time, tradition, culture and surrounding?
Hardy's love for older values of life was strong enough to create any room for doubt. But he was critical of certain institutions which had lost relevance by denying freedom to man. The problem of education is well-portrayed in the last two novels of Hardy. For example, Jude's desire to be a scholar at Oxford was genuine one. He could have been given admission by the dogmatic administrators of the prestigious seat of learning. But he was flatly denied the noble pursuit on the ground that he was the son of a stone-mason. He was deemed unfit for such an opportunity. Those prejudiced upper-class people similar to the ancient Brahmins, confined knowledge to highborn advantageous class. This social discrimination spoiled the career of many innocent men and women. Similarly the law of marriage and divorce was too rigid to survive in an era of double standard and cultural chaos. David Cecil appropriately observes "Dependent and ignorant, exposed alike to the oppressions of the social system and the caprice of the weather, at every moment of their existence the people among whom Hardy was brought up were made conscious of man's helplessness in the face of circumstances."\(^\text{10}\)

Both social laws and religious dogmas limited the choice and curtailed freedom of man. While passion dominated in marriages rather than rational thinking, in some cases divorce could make the couple happy. But the church safeguarding

piety of marriage, neglected life itself. This is the main problem with Grace in the last chapters of the novel. Apart from Melbury's painful journey and constant effort, divorce is not granted to Grace. According to the law of the time, a lady had to prove infidelity and maltreatment of her husband before seeking divorce. It was a long and arduous process. According to the guardians of law, Grace's condition is not so bad and relation not so tense to deserve divorce. Her case reflects the rigidity of Victorian laws. The short-sighted law makers seem to neglect the gravity of Grace's situation. Giles Winterborne's cause of death is fully attributed to the denial of divorce to Grace. On the other hand, unwanted elements like Dr Fitzpiers and Sergeant Troy, benefit from the ambiguous social and religious laws of marriage and divorce. They hardly serve the cause of man. Norman Page sums up Grace and Giles's dilemma in these words: "Simple natures and decent moral impulses are shown caught in the trap of archaic and irrelevant legal, social and religious sanctions."

Since Hardy's scope of writing is confined to "Wessex", he has ample chance of observing minutely the life and Nature of that region. His characters are portrayed in relation to Nature. Hardy's approach is really unique beginning from microcosm to macrocosm. It would be wrong to assume that Hardy's depiction of Nature is always beautiful

11. Page, Norman, Thomas Hardy, p. 41
georgeous and romantic. More often than not it is sinister, giving the sense of decay. The wood, a sort of stage for important actions, gives us an impression of tolerance and bearableness as it has been suffering from severe weather and encroachment by man since time immemorial. Its historical face expresses the awful tale of harshness and exploitation. Arthur McDowall points out the significance of the wood:

So permeating is the atmosphere of the trees that you can define characters in terms of it...
The woods are potent and their world is amazingly secluded, but we should miss the point of the book if we took it merely as a tale of simple and lonely lives, even though the virtue in it comes from them. Hardy uses that world for a conflict between simplicity and sophistication. 12

Broadly speaking the characters of the novel are divided into two groups, one intimately linked with the wood and second who hate it. The first type consist of Hintock dwellers and second the intruders. It is remarkable that economy of the Hintock dwellers depends upon the fertility of the wood. In winter the wood expresses horror, makes the wind more chilly but supplies fuel too. In summer it gives them shade full of exhilaration. They cut it out of selfishness but plant the trees with care and love. Above all, it is the wood where persons meet, make love and get separated because

of confusion created by its density and darkness. This is the place where Grace met Dr Fitzpiers, Suko Damson was seduced and Grace instead of falling into the arms of Giles, got trapped by Dr Fitzpiers. This impersonal wood keeps all the secrets silently. The determining role of the wood is beautifully highlighted by Jean N. Brooks:

In no other novel perhaps, does the natural environment permeate human life so thoroughly. Egdon Heath dominates by its physical mass; the atmosphere of the Hintocks, composed of myriads of frail individual lives of many species struggling for survival, creeps into the very bones and minds of the woodlanders. Egdon concentrates; the woodland despises the characters in a confusion of purposes that recalls Shakespeare's Dark wood near Athens, and Matthew Arnold's darting plain. Its character-limitations, scene, climate, crafts, traditions and folklore determine the kind of action that takes place there. 13

There is no denying the fact that the role of wood in matters of love, economy and culture is of immense importance. In this way the wood also shapes their destiny. Grace and Mrs Charmond had bitterly quarrelled, vowed never to see each other but met under a thatched in the wood. They clung to each other for the whole night. Grace confided Mrs Charmond "But see how powerless is the human will against predestination. We were prevented meeting; we have met". (Chap. XXVI). It shows not only the effect of nature on man's action but also

proves helplessness of man in the hands of the environment which frames his body and mind. If they had not met there in a rather compromising manner, lives of many innocent people would have been spared.

The outsiders are likely to lose their direction in the wood because of their ignorance of its nook and corner. They hate it for its severity. This is one of the differences between the natives and strangers. Though Gilos was exhausted by the toil that nature demanded, he never hated it. Even from their appearance, the woodlanders can be distinguished from the outsiders. Their simplicity in culture, belief in omens and superstition are attributed to the environment. The impact of the wood or nature, simplicity or pride, old or orthodox, however, is one of the determinants. The eternal defeat in terms of time, culture, race and education is to be found in their very blood. The simplicity in life and thought is contributed by nature in Wordsworthian sense. No doubt, it is a virtue but it is also a cause of defeat. Both, man and nature suffer in winter, enjoy in short spring and finally fall down whenever the days are counted. Their ultimate surrender before the unforeseen malign power shows their lack of liberty and repudiates the theory of evolution. Millgate points out the similarity;
Little Hintock becomes not a haven of 'sylvan peace' but the microcosm of a world in which the struggle for existence is everywhere the chief condition of existence. It is not simply a question of the struggle in nature mirroring the struggle in human society; nature and society are engaged in the same struggle, interconnected by a myriad strands. The woods yield a living to the woodlanders but they yield it only at a price—... 14

As far as external evidence is concerned, the relation between man and nature is well exemplified in the death of John South. It is also a well-argued episode deeply rooted in superstition and orthodoxy. An old oak tree stands in front of John South's house which horrifies and keeps him disturbed. Dr. Fitzpiers is consulted for remedy. First of all its branches are cut off, then the tree itself is felled down. As a result John South is also relieved from the bond of life. Dr Fitzpiers's failure of noticing close relation or interdependence of man and nature, shows modern man's ignorance and apathetic attitude towards nature. Moreover man and nature suffer at the hands of their own species as well as malign forces governing the universe. Secondly old culture is uprooted by the modern one. Though Dr Fitzpiers is well-read in medicine and abstract philosophy but remains unaware of man's limitations. Probably Hardy intends to emphasise the bondage, plausible but unbreakable, existing between man and

surrounding.

In Chapter VII Thomas Hardy expresses his cosmic vision which is a conditioning force dominating over all sorts of lives:

On older trees .... huge lobes of fungi grow like lungs. Here, as everywhere, the Unfulfilled Intension, which makes life what it is, was as obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf was deformed, the curve crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling.

Life with all attempts, struggle and craving bogs for fulfilment but the things move contrary to one's expectations. The result is only despair and death. Even the wood conveys the message of "torture and execution". It is remarkable that man cuts and falls the trees in the same manner as he renders harm to his own fellow creatures. The difference is that nature has got more resistance and man surrenders soon. More often than not, the same nature conspires along with malign forces against man. The appearance of the wood foretells, the destiny of the woodlanders. Despite hard labour and the best intentions the majority of the woodlanders earn from hand to mouth. Therefore they are deprived of happiness.
The power of time is well-exemplified in the plight of English agriculture and shift of social pattern from one way of life to another. Almost all of Hardy's later novels bear the touch of rural collapse which help frame the main tragic events. The severe blow comes to woodlanders from the upper class aristocratic outsiders. The primitivism of the woodlanders, dead in time, is major obstacle in their way of survival. Secondly their dependence on mercy of indifferent upper class, blocks their freedom at every stop. Some of the privileged ones leave their fellow creatures far behind to join hands with new force. Here it is remarkable that Grace's education brings her closer to the upper class but hardly rewarding. She is uprooted from her own class and remains unadjusted in the desired one. There is a grim fight between the two classes. The whole society remains horrified and full of suspicion. Melbury's vow to give Grace's hand to Giles in marriage, is broken for the new cherished society. Past gets defeated at the hands of present and risk is taken for the betterment of future. Hardy uses this role of time as harsh and crude phenomenon which spares none. For example Sergeant Troy reaching late to find Faney dead and Grace's education are carving of time which creates the situation to make one advanced and another lagging far behind in point of time. This time-factor creates such a gap not to be bridged by mortals like Giles Winterborne. His death exhibits not
only loss of an individual's life but also inevitable death of the whole agricultural community. It symbolises life hampered by time, a causal determinant.

Douglas Brown interprets Hardy's novels in relation to the agricultural plight of England in mid-Victorian era. While avoiding other everlasting values and universal themes presented by Hardy, Douglas Brown comments "... the tale tells of the choice between agricultural life and the lure of the town, the lure of 'rising in the world', confronting a country girl; and the outcome of the story embodies imaginatively the implications of the choice made". 15 And on the next page he says "Grace fulfills her father’s ambition and accepts the role she has been trained for". 16 Are both the remarks not contradictory in critical approach? The former generalises, giving the sense of limited freedom and the latter shows Grace a victim of her father’s ambition sparing no choice before her. The crux of the matter, I think, is something else. Brown’s generalisation is not applicable to individual characters of the novel. Can we say that Grace has choice between rural and town life? No, it is not pertinent. She has been given no freedom to choose. It was all already cut and carved by many forces operating simultaneously. Grace is forced to marry Dr. Fitzpiers an exponent of modern culture. In the light of the insistence

16. Ibid., p.72
and influences that her father exercises over her, she could have done nothing else except what she does. Melbury uses Grace as a scapegoat at the altar of his own ambition. She is made to suffer.

A philosophic novelist like Thomas Hardy cannot be fully understood merely in the light of agricultural background of his time. He presents deeper and multidimensional themes which cover the many important aspects of life. It is almost a truism to say that his milieu plays a crucial role but it is equally important to note that Hardy's belief in lack of freedom and predicament of man in the cosmos are some of the overlasting values. The changing society, slow death of outdated culture and uprooting of families as we observe in the case of Giles and Marty's houses are destinies made by man and history. To be driven out of one's ancestral house and village for no fault of one's own, is prevailing injustice in the society. Hardy's characters suffer as much from cruelty of fellow creatures, limitations of culture and place as from disastrous nature of fate. They face the mighty threat of time and unpredictable mood of chance. These facts constrain their action, leave no room for choice and entangle them to the point of helplessness.

The major characters of the novels are composed and contrasted on different broad lines though certain elements
are common to all. For instance, passion, love and hopelessness, achievement followed by frustration more or less rule their destinies. Millgate observes the differences and the situation in which they are put:

Hardy presents, almost in the manner of a 'roman experimental', a small groups of central characters, carefully selected and differentiated as to birth, education, wealth and class, divided quite specifically into the two basic groups of woodlanders and ex-urbanites, and deliberately subjected to a wide range of the misfortunes which nature, society, sexual drive, human folly and simple accident can bring. 17

It means pre-existing gap between them prevents not only fulfilment but also their actions are hampered by three great impediments viz. society, the universal force supposed to be blind and personal weaknesses in the name of passion or poverty. Thus a character is not more than an agent performing the deed that he or she has been assigned.

As a matter of fact nobody seems content with his or her lot. John Melbury, a prosperous timber merchant exercises great influence on his daughter Grace to fulfil his own ambition. In consequence he spoils Giles Winterborne and curtails the freedom of Grace. Melbury neither achieves the objective fancifully set before himself nor Grace tastes happiness.

There are certain pre-existing causes which compel him to undertake risky expedition. Melbury though descended from an educated family as his father was a church clerk, never took interest in study. Therefore he was laughed at by the rustics who found him too ignorant of religion. On the other hand he did take interest in timber business in which he thrived and was financially superior to his neighbours. On this account, Melbury won the heart of Grace's mother who was previously promised to Giles's father. In this way he wronged Giles's father. As he confesses, he decided to marry Grace to Giles for the sake of repentance. But the ensuing events move just opposite to his original planning.

Melbury's affluence induced him to send Grace abroad for higher education. Being illiterate, he tried to wash the shame by educating his daughter. In the same manner, his better economy brought Grace's mother into his arms and Giles's father died a heart-broken man. Are these two actions of Melbury not caused by past follies and sound financial position? Thus past determines future. As time moves on, Grace's education introduces a lot of change in Melbury's attitude towards Giles and life as a whole. His old follies get revived. He develops an unbounded ambition to get Grace married to a person superior in class and better educated than Giles who is now deemed unfit for Grace's hands. Probably
Melbury tries to achieve education and dignity of the upper class through Grace which he is denied in his own life. Both education and search for elegant society move together here. To marry Grace for the sake of conscience is considered an act of sacrifice. In this way, Melbury's ambition, and personal follies cause not only his actions, but also influence the lives of Grace and Giles Winterborne.

In discarding Giles, Melbury breaks the confidence and old promise and betrays his own class with all traditional values. To remain in the same class to which his forefathers belonged, Melbury feels, is waste of all labour and struggle. He explains clearly that he has been spending heavy sum of money on Grace's education not to see her in the arms of a woodlander. Ironically, all his efforts stumble down when he finds Grace miserable and the ways of upper class simply immoral. Instead of happiness of his daughter and pride of having relation with aristocratic family, the same Melbury moves the court for divorce. Thus Hardy's characters achieve vision through repeated bitter experiences of their own. Melbury's assessment of Dr Fitzpiers is based on his aristocratic family background rather than character. Norman Page observes:

Grace's conflict, which leads her to vacillate in her actions and relationships, is between the world of Little Hintock and that wider world of her recent experience, of which Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond have brought disconcerting reminders into the rural community.
The world of Little Hintock has not only tradition, loyalty and decency on its side, but also morality, even judged in the most conventional terms. Hardy loads the scales against the intruders by making them not only merely unproductive and indifferent to the life and welfare of the community, but loose-living. 18

While Graco hangs between two classes of the society, Melbury's struggle can be ascribed to Victorian class-consciousness.

As far as the woodlanders' pursuits are concerned, misunderstanding dominates over the scene. Does Melbury not deliberately use Grace's education as a means for social uplift? Even they measure the worth of fellow creatures with wrong yardstick which widens the already existing gap. Their views are based on external evidences that is why after intimacy it all turns out to be mere illusion. None of them is superior in the sense they think. Sarcastically one lacks the quality for which another has been trying so hard. Therefore fulfilment becomes a matter of dream. For instance Giles and Marty South resemble in socio-economic terms but he is considered superior by her. Grace Melbury appears to him almost "lady-like" who thinks of Fitzpiers better informed and superior in rank. In turn, Mrs Charmond attracts Fitzpiers for her physical charm, aristocratic manners and wealth. They do come back to their actual counterpart but only when the happiness

enters into the region of impossibility.

Grace Melbury is the most balanced character in the novel. She is neither too bold like Eustacia Vye nor reserved like Elizabeth Jane. Grace belongs to the class of Thomasin and Tess. Through her Hardy is presenting a lady fully exposed to the cruelty of man, society, nature and fate. In this respect she is a younger sister of Tess. Both of them fall prey to the lust of false gentlemen like Fitzpiers and Alec respectively. Moreover, their freedom is upheld by their parents. Their parents have definite reasons in doing so. For example both of them are used as means for social uplift of their respective families. But Grace and Tess, stick to the family traditions, morality and become wiser only when the bitterness of life has been tasted. No doubt differences are there but it can be said conveniently that in creating Grace, Hardy was moving towards the greater female creation, Tess. She is neither high born like Mrs Chasmond nor a pauper like Tess nor capricious like Eustacia. She is what higher education, Little Hintock customs and parents designed for. Grace's family stands a little above the neighbours and below Mrs Chasmond's status.

It would be wrong to argue that Grace is free to choose either Giles or Fitzpiers for marriage. Any person put in the same situation will show inclination towards
Fitzpiers. Due to the desperate attempt and constant effort of Holbury that Graco should join upper class, she belongs to neither. It is Holbury who out of passionate love, decides what she should do. In the light of external evidence one may come to the conclusion that she is devoid of freedom and follows the dictates of her father. Holbury warns her in the following lines:

If you refuse, I shall for ever be ashamed and avary of 'so as a daughter and shall look upon you as the hope of my life no more.

(Chap. XIV)

Thus Millgate's statement that Graco can scarcely be reckoned a victim in her relationship with Fitzpiers and that "She chooses him under considerable pressure, no doubt, but still with some degree of freewill, and even had she been able to obtain a divorce, her life with Giles might not have been an easy one"19 is not quite tenable.

Certainly Giles's bad economy could not have provided Graco pomp and luxury but by the end of the novel, she came to stay with him. She was not only happy with him but also mentally fit and physically safe in Giles's humble cottage. Secondly if economy is the main concern Alice could make Tess more happy than Claro for whom she bore physical and mental

torture. One may question, what was the necessity to kill Aloc. Similarly Grace developed staunch love for Giles only after her marriage with Fitzpiers. Therefore a divorce could make them a perfect pair. Is it not an appropriate evidence that she accepts Fitzpiers again half-heartedly only after Giles's death? Thus the question of freedom and choice does not arise at all. It is due to the situation created by many active factors that Grace becomes a victim of Fitzpiers who loves flesh rather than soul, prefers family background to personal virtues and deserts his moral wife for the infidel Mrs Charmond. Again it is Fitzpiers who creates havoc in the calm atmosphere of Little Hintock by snatching Grace from Giles's arms resulting in latter's death. Hardy describes her situation in the following passage:

Grace was borne along upon a stream of reasonings, arguments, and persuasions, supplemented, it must be added, by inclinations of her own at times. No woman is without aspirations, which may be innocent enough within limits; and Grace had been so trained socially, and educated intellectually, as to see clearly enough a pleasure in the position of wife to such a man as Fitzpiers. His material standing of itself, either present or future, had little in it to feed her ambition, but the possibilities of a refined and cultivated inner life, of subtle psychological intercourse, had their charm. It was this rather than any vulgar idea of marrying well which caused to float with the current, and to yield to the immense influence which Fitzpiers exercised over her whenever she shared his society.

(Chap XXIII)
No one can deny in the light of the above passage that in marrying Fitzpiers, Grace's action is caused by experience abroad and acquaintance with Mrs Charmond. Her mental inclination is towards one and one only. Therefore such actions cannot be called free in any sense. Even in the company of Fitzpiers she does not experience liberty. Her psychology is revealed in the following words:

In an excitement which was not love, not ambition, rather a fearful consciousness of hazard in the air, she awaited his return.

(Chap. XXIII)

Here Hardy hints at her future. Now one may conjecture what is going to happen after marriage. It is interesting to note that the determinists never altogether discard the possibility of prediction.

A peculiar aspect of Grace's personality emerges out of this fact that two contradictory ways of life get mixed up in her. As a typical Victorian's dilemma, she can neither get away with the inherited values nor the new one can be accepted in its totality. This is her real predicament in which she bogged down, one string in the hands of Dr Fitzpiers and another being pulled up by Giles without requisite force. By betraying her own class, she is able to enjoy neither.
In portraying the characters of *The Woodlanders*, Hardy's main emphasis is on the emotional aspect of their personality. Dr Fitzpiers, a spiritual brother of Casaubon of *Middlemarch*, takes great interest in philosophy, science and literature. His sense of supremacy emerges out of over-confidence, posing nature and aristocratic family background. The pride of over-exaggerated physical smartness, extinct family and capricious mood, bring him closer to Sergeant Troy. His dubious character is well-marked by the rustics even right from the beginning of his career as a medical practitioner at Little Hintock. Like all other semi-gentlemen in the portrait gallery of Hardy, Fitzpiers is armed with all sorts of temptations which enable him to deceive innocent women. Its repercussions are devastating. He is fully exposed with all weaknesses after marriage with Grace.

Dr Fitzpiers's greatest weakness lies in his lack of any knowledge of practical life and his constant search for ideal one. Hardy observes:

> Strict people of the highly respectable class, knowing a little about him by report, said that he seemed likely to err rather in the possession of too many ideas than too few; to be a dreamy 'ist of some sort, or too deeply stooped in some false kind of 'ism.

(Chap. XIV)
He is a man with unbound desires and fantasy who sacrifices rational thinking for baser instinct.

Chapter XIX reveals Fitzpiers's inner feelings in detail. To analyse his mind, Hardy uses the device of soliloquy. Presently he thinks, there is no possibility of marriage with Grace. Any such step would be suicidal to his career. Moreover, there are social differences too. The marriage with a country girl will not serve his cause. He intends to marry a girl of good family with large fortune. But he feels strongly that intimacy with her will remove monotony from his life at Little Hintock. To our utter amazement, the same man with high aims marries Grace in utter haste. However, the false ideals preoccupy his mind forever. Therefore his quest for the perfect beauty, high society and fame continues with greater zeal and vigour even after marriage. The ensuing actions of Fitzpiers are caused by his mental makeup and events. Giles thinks of him as a "poor unpractical lofty-notioned dreamer".

Dr Fitzpiers's immoral and irrational activities create room for doubts whether he is a man with high aims descended from a noble family. In consequence he spoils not only his career as a medical practitioner but also makes the lives of at least three persons miserable. He shuts the eyes towards the social norms and finds momentary solace in lust. Hutton's review in The Spectator of 26 March 1887 is quite
significant:

On the whole, Mr Hardy has painted nothing more thoroughly than this mendacious, easy-going, conscienceless, passionate young doctor with his fastidious and his scientific acuteness and his aristocratic self-esteem, availing himself of the weakness of every woman for whom he feels the least fancy and almost more attracted at the close by his mistaken belief in his wife's infidelity to him, than he was at first by her purity and innocence. 20

The persons like Wildeve and Fitzpiers born for higher achievements waste their capabilities in pursuits of trivial objects.

His continuous search for an ideal life and lost ancestral glory make him adopt indifferent attitude towards the woodlanders as a whole. While drifting towards Mrs Charmond from Grace, is a movement from real to the fanciful world. The long tiresome journey at night to be into the arms of Mrs Charmond is an irony of fate in which even the strongest gets strangled. He cannot be fully reconciled to Mrs Charmond because she is a widow, on the other hand Grace fails to satisfy him for she is the daughter of a timber-merchant. His actions motivated by definite reasons and restrained by prevailing situation, cannot be called free in any sense. As he confesses:

Such miserable creatures of circumstance are we all.

(Chap. XVI)

Once Arnold Bennett considered The Woodlanders the best novel ever written in English literature. Rutland holds:

"The Woodlanders has always been a general favourite; and there are many today who would say that it is Hardy's best novel." 21 The statement seems a bit exaggerated in the last decades of the twentieth century but, it can be presumed that it is the characters of Giles Winterborne and Marty South which have fascinated the general readers during the last hundred years or so. For Bennett the charm was, probably, in the rural setting and Sophoclean drama played with grandeur. Giles and Marty provide contrast to the fanciful life of Dr Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond. Giles is realistically portrayed as "autumn's very brother", a perfect tree planter and cider maker whose colour resembles the environment. His consistency in love, suffering without fuss and inimitable sense of morality made him superior to Dr Fitzpiers and his class. It is pathetic to note that he is never free from the clutches of poverty. Hardy's emphasis on the letter of lease and loss of house resulting into complete hopelessness and final disaster, create room for question whether it is possible for an innocent man to survive. Anyhow success or failure, he fights back courageously against fate, chance and the situation. Is it not an irony of fate that he loves Grace while Marty can make him a happy man? His own blind faith in

love spells his inevitable tragic death. This kind of tragedy is deep-rooted in his very blood. As Melbury reveals, Giles's father met the same fate.

Giles Winterborne is subjected to the prejudice of a rich and educated class. Consequently his loyalty and chivalry go unrewarded. In his death, the struggle for existence itself dies and the question of survival of the fittest arises. It is not the problem of an individual but defeat of the whole agricultural community.

One may suggest that Giles might have been happy in the company of Marty but he did not strive to do so. It is an oversimplification of a complicated problem. The crux of the matter is to be found in some other factors. For example, Giles's mental inclination, loyalty in love, rather simple nature and family traditions leave no scope for another option except the course he adopts. We dare not deny the fact that he was encouraged by Melbury and even promised Grace's hand. Therefore, any one put in his situation, will not be able to look at Marty with the same fondness.

Apparently, Giles's success in love depended on Melbury's final decision and not on Grace and the renewal of lease was Mrs Charmond's prerogative. This kind of dependence on others do not provide opportunity for free action. Both
the objectives were so interlinked that in losing the latter, the former ultimately ran out of reach. In these two episodes the cases crucial to his life, his actions were affected by others. Moreover the compelling forces operate from within and without a person's intentions and the Immanent Will or Social Stigma. Life without love is death-like to Giles and love without social status is discarded by the Melburys. In his loss of the house, the Melburys see social degradation and Giles anticipates total fall. Therefore he leaves the neighbourhood out of self-respect or rather uprooted by the fellow creatures. During the last days of his life, out of sheer morality, Giles cannot share the room with Grace who comes to take shelter in the humble hut. His death is the last tribute offered at the altar of love. However they recognize his rare merits only after his death:

His timid morality had, indeed, underrated his chivalry till now, though she knew him so well. The purity of his nature, his freedom from the grosser passions, his scrupulous delicacy, had never been fully understood by Grace till this strange self-sacrifice in lonely juxtaposition to her own person was revealed.

(Chap. XLII)

Marty South, the best possible companion of Giles Winterborne, is all the time found ready to oblige others at the cost of her own interest. Hardy portrays her character in
such a detail that the novel opens with her and the last concluding words are also uttered by her. The silent love, laborious life, self-respect and sacrificing nature are exemplified in her figure. She is the only person who fully understands nature as well as Giles's abilities.

Hardy makes Marty's predicament obvious even in the first chapter. Barber Percomb is seen approaching to purchase her beautiful hair for Mrs Charmond. The financial burden, illness of her father followed by death and negligence of Giles, motivate her to part company with the hair. It is a matter of despair without much expression. Her silent suffering resembles the passivity of Desdemona. Barber Percomb explains convincingly:

You see, Marty, as you are in the same parish and in one of this lady's cottages, and your father is ill, and wouldn't like to turn out, it would be as well to oblige her.

(Chap. I)

The above lines throw light not only on her position in the world, but also show the dependence of the woodlanders on the mercy of Mrs Charmond, the owner of the estate.

The character of Marty provides contrast to Mrs Charmond's romantic way of life. Marty is inferior in status, class and beauty as compared to Grace and Mrs Charmond. Like
Giles, after losing the house, she is relegated to the position of a labourer. Anyhow Marty belongs to that vanishing race which was adorned and idealised by Hardy. Douglas Brown observes: "Marty South embodies, then a wholly fresh expression of Hardy's intelligent appraisal of the human possibilities of this way of life, with all its limitations". To be too coy and reserved are no ways of fulfilment. The deterioration in economy and burden of the family are crucial determinants of Marty's actions.

Marty's role as a silent observer and detached well-wisher of the community, resembling Diggory Venn, is revealed at the time when she writes a letter informing Dr Fitzpiers of Mrs Charmond's artificial hair. This manoeuvre causes quarrel between them. This is an apt example of her self-less nature and wisdom. But her own sense of aloofness and irony of fate controlled her action in such a way that she expresses her deep love for Giles only after his death.

Chapter VIII of *The Woodlanders* reveals the character of Mrs Charmond in general and her dilemma in particular. As her name suggests, she stands for physical beauty and romantic way of life. Her aristocratic family relation and the past
career as a play-actress, tempted her late husband for marriage, but the same background makes her character dubious in the eyes of the woodlanders. She is neither content with her present situation nor satisfied with the moral code of the society. She confides to Grace;

I am the most inactive woman when I am here, she said. 'I think sometimes I was born to live and do nothing, nothing, nothing but float about, as we fancy we do sometimes in dreams. But that cannot be really my destiny, and I must struggle against such fancies.

(Chap. VIII)

In search of free life and fulfilment, she is ready to rebel against the social norms. But her abundant material resources fail to provide her happiness. Instead they introduce her too much of despair and melancholy. In her desperate attempt, she disturbs the calm and quiet life at Little Hintock. She perturbs the conjugal life of Grace and Fitzpiers and secondly fails to renew the lease of Giles and Marty's house. As a matter of fact, she specializes in victimising handsome youngmen for lust. At last she is shot dead by a frustrated lover. Now again the question arises whether material her resources can bring fulfilment. It is/widowhood in youth which makes her life unbearable, and compels her to take extreme steps. The causes are obvious.
As she is never tired of making love, the hunt for fulfilment continues. Society appears to her unjust and cruel. Duffin rightly observes:

> The misery of the two greater novels (The Woodlanders and Tess) arises in both cases from narrow conventional views usurping the place of the one great law by which all others must be tested, the golden rule of love and happiness. The ordinances of society are administered with great neglect of this golden rule, in a rigid and unintelligent fashion. 23

All her attempts to buy liberty and happiness prove futile. Even Dr Fitzpiers fails to satisfy her because he is already married. Thus it is her fate to be melancholic and deserted. Dr. Fitzpiers quotes Spinoza:

> no man's hand could help what they did, any more than the hands of a clock,  

(Chap. VI)

Here it is complete denial of freedom and man is merely an agent without any choice before him. Hardy's characters amply prove the validity of Spinoza's statement.

Thomas Hardy's use of fate chance, superstition, omen and signs, provides definite cause for a particular action.

23. Duffin, H.C., Thomas Hardy, [Manchester, 1967], p.249
Similarly he felt strongly that he was spoiling the real charm of his novels by introducing episodes into almost every chapter. What the art of serialisation demanded in Hardy's age, is now a special kind of charm from our point of view. The episodes provide not only broad base for the action but also back with reason, motive and faith. For instance, the Christmas party hosted by Giles goes wrong. First of all the Melburys arrive earlier and sit on the chairs which were just oiled. Then there was smug in Grace's plate. Thus Giles is fully exposed before them with all his cultural weaknesses or innocence. The Christmas party is one of the factors that motivates Melbury to change his old decision. Secondly Grace's acquaintance with Mrs Charmond added strength to her desire for upper class.

The next episode adds fuel to the burning desire. As Melbury and Grace were passing through the wood, as hunter used bad language for Grace. Melbury quickly concluded that a lady's respect depends upon the person with whom she walks. If there had been a sophisticated man walking with Grace, the hunter could not have used filthy language. This incident of chance, makes Giles's marriage prospect bleak.

The wall-writing episode is so important that as a final blow it comes to Giles by chance. Marty wrote on the wall;
O Giles, you've lost your dwelling-place,
And therefore, Giles, you'll lose your Grace.

(Chap. XV)

Giles took it as a declaration by Grace herself. Therefore he wrote a letter declaring the marriage vow null and void. When Grace came across this mischief, she did replace the word "lose" by "get". But Giles took the change as a mischief by any country-boy. Consequently he retired to the region of forgetfulness and accepted his fate quietly. Marty disclosed the mischief but it was simply too late to stir him.

Fitzpiers saw Grace by chance. She was attending her sick-servant in the outer room. The same sickness took her to Fitzpiers's house for consultation. Thus they came closer motivated by such causes. On the other hand Mrs Charmond came to know Fitzpiers only after his marriage. This delay in history of individual's life brings disaster to both of them and Giles and Grace are also affected badly.

Chapter XX describes "night-hawk" seeking prey at night. This sign is followed by the Midsummer Eve ritual when maids of Little Hintock wander in the wood in search of their future husband. Grace falls into the waiting arms of Fitzpiers and Giles is left far behind. The superstitious belief is taken so seriously that Fitzpiers decided to drop his future
plans in favour of family-life.

In Hardy's world nothing happens all of a sudden without any cause. Mrs Charming received minor injury and Fitzpiers was summoned for. Thus a new chapter opened in their lives. The mare gifted by Giles was frequently used by Fitzpiers. At a particular night, Melbury followed him. The mares got exchanged by chance. While riding on Melbury's mare, Fitzpiers fell down and received injuries. This episode made the relation more strained. Under the influence of strong liquor, Fitzpiers confessed his infidelity. Thus Melbury strived for divorce.

Hardy brings Fitzpiers and Grace at compromising term by introducing an event. As Fitzpiers visited Grace at night without prior permission of Melbury, Tim Tungs took it otherwise. He thought that he had illicit relation with his wife Suke Damson whom he had already spoiled. Therefore he laid a man-trap on the path. By chance it was Grace who got trapped. Out of fear she shouted loudly for help and Fitzpiers clasped her. In this way, the incident brought them together again. Therefore we can conclude safely that events, superstitions and omens provide causes for the action instead of spoiling the real charm of the story.

Undoubtedly Dr Fitzpiers's arrival introduces a
dramatic change in the novel. His own argument, expressing Hardy's cosmic vision is significant:

There is destiny in it, you see. I was doomed to join in your picnic, although I did not intend to do so.

(Chap. XIX)

The Woodlanders like other novels of the period by Hardy shows the author's preoccupation with forces or agencies which control human destinies and even in the idyllic setting of Wessex villages bring disasters in the lives of lovers — natives and aliens alike. Fate, chance, environment, personal weaknesses all contribute to make "the drama of pain" still more painful but Hardy's art never degenerates into bangs or whimper.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION
Hardy's novels are neither social chronicles nor philosophical documentaries. The artistic blending of the two aspects marks his major novels as literary masterpieces. His protagonists are portrayed in relation to the society with definite point in time, culture and outlook which make them "living beings". Wessex is developed into macrocosm to show the dilemma of man in general. Love, suffering and human relations are the focal points in the novels which enable the writer to highlight human predicament. The bulk of criticism on Hardy that has appeared in the last decades, shows his growing popularity in recent years. Perhaps his distinction as a novelist lies in his ability to see human predicament in larger perspective.

In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to analyse Hardy's novels of the middle period with reference to his deterministic stance. Apart from his personal observations of life around him, Hardy enriched his vision by borrowing certain ideas from ancient and contemporary thinkers and writers. As his biographers record, Hardy read Schopenhauer, Spencer, Mill and ancient and modern tragedians with great interest. Therefore I found it relevant to discuss their views briefly and to trace a brief history of determinism in the first chapter. Hardy's later novels bear the impact of contemporary thinkers and popular ideas of the time. For instance Schopenhauer's
concept that there is no escape from the clutches of the will except surrender or withdraw, is found in almost every major novel of Hardy. Henchard withdraws from Casterbridge and its activities and Giles Winterborne leaves Little Hintock in search of peace though Grace leads him to the grave. Similarly Tess's soul enjoys real holiday after the assassination of Alec even though she is to be crucified soon after the incident.

As compared to George Eliot, Hardy appears to be a far more tragic. He is unique among English novelists with his pessimistic outlook about life and the universe. If George Eliot's characters are the victims of social barriers and slaves of heredity, Hardy's protagonists face even worse situation created by fate and chance. The wrath of fate and the vagaries of chance are the forces beyond apprehension and control. Chance gives birth to various events which curtail freedom and the possibility of success. Giles Winterborne's loss of the house, Tess's letter of confession slipping under the carpet and the suicide committed by the son of Jude are some of the carvings of chance that affect the action and change the course of life. No doubt the determinists support the theory of prediction but in Hardy's case fate and chance decisively shape the future of his protagonists.

As a matter of fact hereditary values, profession, likes
and dislikes, education or lack of education determine the action. Moreover topographical limitations, historical perspective or the carving of time and the social customs provide not only the background to Hardy's novels, but also shape destinies of his characters. In this way Hardy makes best possible use of psychological, financial and topographical determinism in *The Return of the Native* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. *The Woodlanders* portrays the power of passion, education, historical grip and cultural clashes in detail. Though these deterministic forces are common to all the major novels, certain elements are over-emphasized in individual novels. These deterministic forces responsible for the plight of individuals, prompted Hardy to believe in "sorriness underlying human life". *The Woodlanders* and *Jude the Obscure* are more popular now for their profound study of different aspects of life. Love, the "destructive passion" in Hardy's view, clash between innocent natives of Wessex and the semi-urbanished corrupt characters and the confrontation between old and new culture, owe a great deal to Hardy's social and ethical philosophy.

Social conventions are inter-linked with determinism, which can be described as an attempt to see life and contemporary society through the microscope of philosophy. Henchard's lack of knowledge of modern system of economics is not personal in nature but is deep-rooted in society and culture that he
represents. For in the world of cut-throat competition, it is the weakest that is crucified. On the other hand the patrons of Christianity deny Grace a divorce that could make Giles happy. Any how the just and unjust, good and bad are treated alike by the society and the Immanent Will. More not often than the unjust are allowed to prosper at the cost of the interest of honourable, genuine and sensible characters of Hardy. This kind of injustice found in the society and the power governing the world, compelled Hardy to adopt pessimistic attitude and his characters inevitably feel bitter against this injustice perpetrated on them.

Hardy portrays his characters in relation to their profession, family background, education and culture. The result is that his protagonists are foredoomed to suffer and be unhappy. Eustacia's desire to taste luxurious life springs out of her past education, inheritance and mental make-up. In the search if an imagery world, Eustacia spoils the life of others as well as her own. Everyone comes to realise his or her lot only after the bitter experiences of life.

As the inhabitants of Wessex believed, Hardy made splendid use of superstition, omens and signs which they followed as laws of the land. Hardy uses them as traps to hoodwink his men and women. The wax-image of Eustacia, a cat in the gravel at the time of Mrs Yeobright's visit and
Lucetta's effigy herald not only their fate but also affect the action. Secondly the environment and the episodes influence the action to a great extent. Above all the Immanent Will puts its final stamp on their course of life. Moreover, the generation-gap, contradictory views and dichotomy in classes put such odds in the way of the protagonists, that they fall apart. Clym fails to understand the craving of Rustacia, Henchard cannot be reconciled to Jane and Clare's puritanical attitude denies him total acceptance of Tess's pure soul with body. Giles is deserted by Grace for he is inferior in rank and culture.

Being a sensitive artist, Hardy used these elements to create his fictional world full of tragic events. The predicament of his protagonists is time-bound as well as everlasting where personal weaknesses seem insignificant as compared to the forces working against them.
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