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Sundke Aatif A. Assistant Professor Law Department Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth

ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this paper is to illuminate the tragic and harrowing influence of fate on Tess, the protagonist of "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" (1891) by Thomas Hardy. Tess, the female lead in the novel, endures immense suffering not as a result of her wrongdoing, but due to the relentless grip of fate over her life. The narrative portrays her as a compassionate individual navigating a world rife with cruelty and injustice, yet ultimately succumbing to the whims of destiny. Throughout the story, Tess remains blameless, yet she is confronted with an unrelenting string of tragedies both within and outside her familial sphere. She emerges as a tragic figure, subject to the predetermined course of her life dictated by fate. Despite her inherent purity, Tess is deprived of even fleeting moments of happiness, her existence overshadowed by the inexorable hand of fate.

Keywords: influence, destiny, fate, life of Tess, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, protagonist, tragedy, crime, sin, fateful life

INTRODUCTION

In the annals of English literature, countless characters are etched into memory for their harrowing and tragic experiences, rendering them unforgettable figures. They are not remembered for supernatural or extraordinary traits, but rather for their genuine, human-like qualities, intertwined with circumstances directly or indirectly relevant to real-world human existence. Among these tragic personas stands Tess in Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" (1891), a literary work renowned for its exploration of adverse and transformative events that shape the protagonist's journey.

Hardy's oeuvre is distinguished by its treatment of various social issues, making it challenging, if not impossible, to confine his novels to singular themes. "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" exemplifies this breadth of exploration. At its core lies the profound portrayal of Tess's evolution, without whom the novel would lack purpose or direction.

Central to Tess's unforgettable presence is the pervasive role of fate, which casts her as a victim ensnared in its relentless grip. Throughout the narrative, Tess's life appears orchestrated by forces beyond her control, with every endeavour to improve her plight thwarted by preordained circumstances. Fate's malevolent influence pervades Tess's existence from its inception to its tragic conclusion, leaving no respite or reprieve.

Tess's life unfolds in distinct phases marked by traumatic events, yet it is most aptly delineated into three pivotal stages: her upbringing in the parental home, her estrangement from family and lover, and her ultimate demise. Born into impoverished circumstances, Tess assumes familial responsibilities from a young age, caring for her siblings amidst her father's neglect and alcoholism. Her decision to shoulder the burden of family sustenance underscores her sense of duty and responsibility.

However, fate intervenes abruptly when a fatal accident befalls her family's horse, Prince, signalling a turning point in Tess's fortunes. This tragic incident precipitates further economic hardship, encapsulated in Tess's poignant lamentation:

"Tis all my doing – all mine! No excuse for me – none. What will mother and father live on now?

Aby, Aby! We can't go on with our load – Prince is killed!" (Hardy 72).

This marks the inaugural chapter of her journey, culminating in the demise of Prince. The conclusion of this chapter ushers Tess into a second phase fraught with adversity and grief, which ultimately concludes with Tess's demise. Following the loss of the horse, Tess finds herself compelled to seek employment in the household of Mrs. d'Urbervilles to provide financial support for her family. Tess confronts this reality with acceptance, acknowledging:

"Well, as I killed the horse, mother; I suppose I ought to do something. I don't mind going and seeing her, but you must leave it to me about asking for help. And don't go thinking about her making a match for me – it is silly" (Hardy 75).

At first, she experiences apprehension about visiting the residence of Mrs. d'Urbervilles, yet she finds herself compelled to do so to support her family's survival. Upon arriving at her destination, she encounters Alec, a man bearing a resemblance to a beast in human form. Unconcerned by the

significant age gap between himself and Tess, Alec is immediately drawn to her striking and alluring physical presence. Oblivious to Alec's seductive intentions, Tess fails to recognize the danger of becoming entangled in his manipulative scheme. Alec himself acknowledges the truth about his character, stating:

"I can say no more. I suppose I am bad fellow – a damn bad fellow. I was born bad, and I have lived bad, and I shall die bad in all probability" (Hardy 125).

She doesn't have the maturity to understand Alec's cunning scheme. Alec tries to molest and seduce her to sate his physical cravings while she is working on projects around the house, but she resists and foils his attempts. The fundamental query, nevertheless, is how long she can withstand his alluring approach given that she works in his house and is constantly in his presence. In the solitary spot where no one can stop him from fully satisfying his sexual urges, he is constantly searching for her. Alec tries several times to find her by herself but is unable for unintended reasons. He tries to express his love for her occasionally, but Tess is aware that he is only drawn to her physical attractiveness and not her. In addition, Alec promises to marry her if she consents to have a sexual connection with him. All of his efforts to win her over have failed.

Finally, Alec achieves success in his endeavour when he encounters Tess and her friends as they return from a party outside the d'Urbervilles' estate. Tess, along with her companions, is inebriated and revelling in each other's company. Encountering Alec on the road, and guiding him home, he perceives this as the opportune moment to ensnare her in his scheme. Initially, Tess rebuffs his offer to accompany her to her destination, but eventually, he persuades her to accompany him. Unbeknownst to her, fate has already decreed a calamitous turn of events for her on this journey. She is not even in a condition to outright resist his seductive advances. Succumbing to Alec's charms, she is seduced by him. Throughout the ordeal, Tess remains unaware of the gravity of the situation unfolding around her. Later, when she attempts to explain her dire circumstances to her mother, she utters:

"How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house for months ago. Why didn't you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hand against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance of learning in that way, and you did not help me" (Hardy 131).

There is no one to offer assistance to her in her time of need. She decides to resign from her position at the d'Urbervilles, hoping to escape her troubles. However, her relentless sorrows persist unabated. Matters worsen when she finds herself unable to conceal her pregnancy, leading to pressure to terminate the pregnancy. Despite the urging to undergo an abortion, her maternal instincts compel her to refuse, as she cannot bear to part with the child whom she loves dearly. She confronts the harsh reality that both she and her child will face rejection from family and society. For an unmarried woman, bearing a child is deemed a sin and a crime by societal standards. Tess finds herself guilty of both offences, yet she manages to conceal the truth from the world. Through sheer determination, she successfully gives birth to her child, albeit with health complications. Tragically, her newborn suffers from health issues and eventually succumbs to illness. The depths of her grief deepen when the local priest refuses to perform the last rites for her deceased child. Left to her own devices, Tess faces a societal taboo as she endeavours to arrange the funeral rites herself. Society dictates that providing support and conducting funeral rites for a child whose father is unknown is considered sinful and socially unacceptable. Despite the lack of assistance, Tess refuses to let her child depart from this world without proper rituals, believing that without them, the child may be denied a place in heaven. With unwavering determination, she undertakes the solemn task of performing all the rituals for her deceased child on her own.

When she decides to leave home in search of employment to sustain and support her family financially, Tess encounters something even worse. Despite the challenges, moments of happiness briefly enter her life when she meets Angel Clare, a handsome and charismatic man working at the dairy farm. While Clare is admired by many women, he is captivated by Tess's beauty and falls in love with her almost instantly upon seeing her. This fleeting period of joy provides Tess with a reprieve from her prolonged sadness, although it is short-lived due to the spectre of her past life looming over her. Despite her desire to be honest with Clare, Tess struggles to reveal her past experiences out of fear that he will reject her upon learning the truth. She grapples with the belief that she has done nothing wrong and that her pregnancy was a result of Alec's actions. However, Tess ultimately decides to disclose

her past to Clare before their marriage, leaving a letter detailing her experiences in his room to ensure transparency. Their initial happiness as newlyweds is shattered when they both reveal their secrets to each other. While Clare accepts Tess's admission of his prior romantic involvement, he is unable to cope with the revelation that she was impregnated by Alec in the past. Despite Tess's explanations and attempts to justify her actions, Clare cannot reconcile himself with her past, leading to a breakdown in their relationship and utters:

"O Tess forgiveness does not apply to the case. You were one person; now you are another. My God – How can forgiveness meet such a grotesque - prestidigitation as that?" (Hardy 298)

He deliberates over departing from Tess at this moment. Despite her fervent pleas for him to stay, she endeavours to articulate her viewpoint by stating:

"What I have done – what have I done! I have not told of anything that interferes with or belies my love for you. You don't think I planned it, do you? It is in your mind what you are angry at, Angle: it is not in me. O, it is not in me, and I am not that deceitful woman you think me!" (Hardy 302)

However, he disregards her and leaves her to her own devices. Furthermore, her unwavering love and devotion towards him are evident when she allows him to determine what her punishment should be, stating:

"I agree to the condition, Angel; because you know best what my punishment ought to be; only – only – don't make it more than I can bear!" (Hardy 324).

Even as he departs from her, he fails to contemplate the repercussions on her well-being. With his departure commencing the conclusion of her second life phase and the cessation of her moments of joy, marking the onset of her final phase characterized by suffering and eventual demise.

This marks the final phase of her life, where her suffering and pain reach their apex, leaving no possibility of reversal. Upon Angel Clare's departure, Tess clings to the hope that he will return one day, and they will be reunited indefinitely. Although they do reunite temporarily, Tess's circumstances remain fraught with trauma and disaster, prompting her to write numerous letters to Clare, detailing her prolonged ordeal while he is away in Brazil. During this time, Alec reemerges in Tess's life intending to marry her, driven by possessiveness and an inability to tolerate anyone else in her life. Upon learning of the hardships she faces, Alec persistently pursues her for marriage, despite her refusals. His interference does not cease there; he goes as far as concealing Tess's letters to Clare, ensuring that Clare remains unaware of the extent of Tess's suffering. To some extent, Alec succeeds in his scheme to conceal the letters, further complicating Tess's already tumultuous circumstances.

The current situation has reached a point where she can no longer wait for Alec, yet he fails to appear. The irony lies in her unawareness that her letters never reach their intended destination. Ultimately, she resolves to marry Alec and accepts his proposal, fully cognizant of the fact that she does not harbour any love for him. However, she feels compelled to marry Alec to sustain her livelihood, lacking any alternative options. Had Angel Clare not chosen to depart on his own, such circumstances would never have arisen. It is important to note that Tess bears no responsibility for the unfolding events. Her frustration and anguish towards Angel become evident as she reads the lines she penned in her letter to him, expressing her sentiments:

"O why have you treated me so monstrously, Angel! I do not deserve it. I have thought it all over carefully, and I can never, never forgive you! You know that I did not intend to wrong you – why have you so wronged me? You are cruel, cruel indeed! I will try to forget you. It is all injustice I have received at your hands!!" (Hardy 440)

If Tess can unequivocally accept Clare's relationship with another woman, then why does Clare not accept the reality of her pregnancy?

In the end, Tess marries Alec and embarks on a tumultuous married life fraught with challenges. However, her life takes an unexpected and unsettling turn with the arrival of Angel Clare. Both Tess and Angel are surprised to encounter each other, as they had not anticipated crossing paths again. Learning that Tess is married to Alec, Angel silently acknowledges the truth and decides to leave her to her marital commitments. After their encounter, Tess retreats to her bedroom and discovers a letter she had written to Angel, realizing that he had never received her correspondence. It becomes clear to her that Alec had intercepted and concealed her letters, manipulating their fate. Blaming Alec for her suffering, Tess is consumed by rage and seeks revenge, ultimately killing him. Following Alec's death, Tess reunites with Angel Clare and shares poignant moments with him, aware that their time together

THE INFLUENCE OF DESTINY ON TESS'S LIFE IN "TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES" BY THOMAS HARDY is limited due to the consequences of her actions. She cherishes their final moments together, knowing that her impending punishment for Alec's murder will prevent her from continuing her life with Angel. Ultimately, Tess is executed for her crime.

After witnessing the tragic and sorrowful experiences of Tess, it becomes apparent that her life is tightly controlled and directed by fate. Every aspect of her existence seems predetermined by destiny. From the outset, Tess is devoid of any semblance of happiness. It is undeniable that Tess stands out as one of the most memorable tragic and unfortunate characters in the annals of English literature. Reading about Tess's plight, one cannot help but feel deeply connected to her as more than just a fictional character in a novel. Her relentless suffering and enduring pain render her a uniquely compelling character. What is particularly distressing in the narrative is that Tess bears no responsibility for her plight, yet she is subjected to excessive and unjustifiable hardships. In essence, fate plays a significant role in dictating the life of this virtuous woman. Despite her best efforts to alter her destiny, Tess remains unaware that she is merely a pawn in the hands of fate. It could be argued that her inherent goodness is the root cause of her suffering, as she fails to comprehend the complexities of human nature. Regardless of the reasons behind her anguish, it is evident that the trials and tribulations she endures are deeply traumatic and catastrophic experiences in life.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the life of Tess in "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" by Thomas Hardy is profoundly influenced by the role of fate. Throughout the narrative, Tess is portrayed as a victim of circumstances beyond her control, experiencing tragedy and hardship despite her innocence. From her humble beginnings to her tragic end, every phase of Tess's life is marked by the relentless grip of fate, dictating her experiences and ultimately leading to her downfall. Despite her efforts to improve her circumstances, Tess is unable to escape the predetermined path set by fate, facing insurmountable challenges and relentless suffering. Her character serves as a poignant reminder of the unpredictable and often cruel nature of destiny, leaving a lasting impact on readers as one of the most memorable tragic figures in English literature. Through Tess's story, Hardy explores the complexities of fate and its profound impact on human lives, underscoring the enduring power of destiny in shaping our experiences and destinies.

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