



# Thomas Hardy's Conception of a Tragic Hero as Compared to William Shakespeare's (A Comparative Study)

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper a thorough study and analysis are to expose the differences between William Shakespeare's concept of the tragic hero and that of Thomas Hardy's with short hints to the background of tragedy and tragic hero among other old nations such as the Roman and the Greek. The paper will divert to show the concept of tragic hero to Shakespeare whom he believed that he should be 'better than we are.' Shakespeare exhibited his tragic hero who is high in rank as suffering a change in fortune that is from happiness to misery because of a mistaken act, to which he is led to his hamartia or the error of judgment. Then the paper exhibits Hardy's concept of the tragic hero who is low in rank, quite, innocent and simple, from the folk of the country-side of the Wessex. The paper then offers a comparative study between both concepts of the tragic hero. Finally the researcher depicts the conflict that has been demonstrated between these tragic heroes and fate which, at the end, fate proves victorious.

## 1. Introduction

This introduction shows the effect of the super powers upon the end of man and how these powers form the direct cause of man's tragic end encompassed by fate and destiny before wading into the realm of William Shakespeare and Thomas Hardy, starting by the Greek tragedy as the earliest attempt to show the might clash between man's dreams and their realization. Every great tragedy in Greek shows the powerful influence of gods exerted on the destiny of man by supernatural forces. However, Sophocles' (496-406 B.C) ironic and tragic vision of life was not the result of any personal misfortune as in the case of the tragic flaws in Shakespeare's heroes who are direct responsible for their deeds, or in the Hardy's theory of the unknown power which rules over man. On the contrary, to Sophocles, the gods showed their abundant gifts: riches, beauty, health and fame. They also granted him long life, for at the age of ninety he wrote his beautiful mystical play Oedipus at Colonus which deals with the fate of Oedipus. Moreover, Sophocles, Aeschylus and Hardy were interested primarily in

man as a complex human being; heroically and painfully striving to attain happiness in a world governed by stubborn laws.

This Greek conception of tragedy shows that both, our joys and sorrows are determined by relentless gods above. We may also divert to mention the Roman conception of tragedy. This time we shall follow the influence of Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 B.C-A.D 65) a Roman tragedian, who was tutor to the young Nero the Roman emperor. Seneca's plays, which are based on Greek mythology, exercised great influence on the medieval playwrights who used them as models for literary imitation particularly the tragic imitation which also stretched to include the Elizabethan drama. Seneca believed in the fortune wheel that puts man under its control. The supernatural elements are there to give this undefeatable power more effective role in the destruction of man, where we find all the heroes of these Roman plays are killed at the end, the thing that makes us trace the Roman effect in Shakespeare through his famous tragedies. For example, in *King Lear*, we come across these lines on the tongue of Gloucester concerning the power of these gods:

“As flies to wanton boys, are we to gods,  
They kill us for their sport.” (Shakespeare, 1981)

Here we see that Casio prays for the super power Jove (Jupiter) the most powerful of all ancient Greek gods; ruler of heaven and earth, of all gods and all men, to assist him to reach Desdemona's arms:

.....Great Jove, Othello guard,  
And swell his sail with thine own powerful breath  
That he may bless this Bay with his tall shippe  
And swiftly come to Desdemona's armes. (Shakespeare, 1976, p. 67)

Having done briefly with the Greek, Romans and Shakespeare's handling of these gods and their effects upon man's tragic life, we may now analyze the causes of tragedy in Hardy and particularly in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. We find that besides other minor causes, the most powerful cause is indefinable and inexplicable, the cause which is connected with the dominating power of God, the Omnipotence; the Omniscience. Unlike the Greek gods, who are away from the human scene, Hardy's God is sometimes in the scene, whose power is interpreted to fate that takes the lead in the tragedies of Hardy, which is above the human pain. However, in Hardy, the force which works out tragedy in the life of his characters does not appear in human shape, as in Shakespeare's tragedy of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, nor does it experience any malice or ill feeling in the happiness of mankind. It is sometimes indefinable, unimaginable and incommunicable. We may call it destiny or we may call it fate. It may also be thought as “unimpassioned” as Hardy called it in his great epic-drama *Dynasts* (1908). This is also clear in the rest of Hardy's tragic novels. God However could be interpreted in Hardy's belief as fate, or destiny in his theory of man's ephemerality.

H. Newman, in his book, *Thomas Hardy*, (1977) states that man's issues are controlled by the dominating gods in heaven; in valleys; on top of mountains and perhaps across the fields. Newman proves the iron fists of these gods saying that they "cleave the soil; sow the seed and reap the harvest with enduring toil; they store yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil till they perish, some down in hell suffer infinite anguish, while gods dwell merely in Elysian valleys." (Newman, 1977, p. 79) These valleys are called in J. E. Zimmerman's Dictionary (1971) "isles of the blest," or "Blessed Isles" and "the home of the blessed in the afterlife" (Zimmerman, 1971)

It could be helpful now to insert briefly the Islamic conception of the idea of time, which could be interpreted into fate to who the final word is. Fate, thus, in an Islamic view and tradition comes in the shape of the Angel of death, holding his list of human names, comes to man in a continuous visit; it is always on a continuous wait, never tired of waiting, never sympathize man's appeal when the moment comes, and never leaves away. This eastern Islamic philosophy of man's fate, of death and life is deep rooted among the Muslims. This belief and doctrine is clearly expressed on the tongue of the Palestinian poet J. Y. Sulaiman who, in his collection of English poems entitled: *And the Sun Rises* (2004) strengthens the idea of man's temporary being on Earth, with no might or decision when his time is due. Sulaiman says:

The angel of death looks deeply at your face

He looks anxiously at least five times a day

Looks whether your time is ripe in this play,

Makes you shudder, abiding in your place. (Sulaiman, 2004)

And that life is a temporary tragic play soon will come to its end and the actors separate with no return.

In this way, we bring to light the different beliefs and understandings concerning the super powers and gods that rule the universe according to the above mentioned beliefs, where man stand agape before them- unable to move or make any change in the story of his being, the story of his inevitable tragic end.

## **2. Shakespeare Concept of the Tragic Hero**

Shakespeare has taken otherwise liberty with his view. His tragedies show the heavy hands with which his heroes have to fight. There is no hope or help from outside, but the heroes are not cowards; they know their situation, they know their strength and they do not shirk their duty. They fight unto the end, and by their courage and fortitude, endear themselves to the audience. They bleed but never give in as in the case of Hamlet the son; they suffer but never complain as King Lear; they are ruined but they never murmur like Macbeth. Shakespeare's tragic heroes are with treasons; they are murderers and nasty avengers as Hamlet, Brutus and Anthony. They are "entailing in one way or another notion of justice and loyalty [that] must have been connected in the minds of many audience." (Coombes, 1977) His tragic characters can poison, stab, dance as mad men and women. They

provide opportunities for displays of Senecan stoicism. They do every forbidden thing with no care or consideration to conduct and moral. They exploit their kingly position and their obedient followers to fulfill a mean end. They fear nobody in their kingdom or dominate, and hence their tragic end springs.

The Audiences are divided, whether to sympathize Shakespeare's tragic heroes or gratify them, for we find that some feel sympathy with the greatest murderer Macbeth at the end of the play, and some do not as they take him as a criminal who deserves punishment. King Lear, too, obtains our sympathy as unable to handle the question of his daughters' respect and the fatherly affiliation. In the same measurement, we take into consideration the hesitant Hamlet who did not gain our sympathy for the delay he made in revenging his father's killer, and we are divided between supporting Brutus or Anthony in the tragedy of Caesar. But in the case of Othello, none of the audience stands with the awkward step towards killing the innocent Desdemona on the hand of her husband "the thick lipped" and "old black ram." (Shakespeare, 1976, p. 88) On the contrary, we, as spectators, readers, audience or even as critics stand in homage before the sacrifices of both Romeo and Juliet, before the deep and true love they store for each other. These are the tragic heroes of Shakespeare whose tragic flaws were the main factors in bringing their tragic end.

The Shakespearean hero reaches to the edge of danger; he reaches to the brink of the hole. There, he could retreat, there he could withdraw, there he could set back, but in spite of the depth of the danger he overlooks, he goes on to do what his mind tells him to do. Hamlet stands before his praying uncle and hesitates to implement his father's will of revenge, although he defiantly stepped forward and killed his uncle Claudius at the end. Before killing Claudius, Hamlet was sure that a person was behind the curtain while investigating his mother. Despite that, he withdrew his spear and stabbed the unknown figure who, later on, came to be Polonius. In this case, Polonius comes running to his death, for he knows if discovered, death will be the least penalty. So he is the maker of his own destiny, and nobody interferes in the whole process:

Polonius- [behind] What, ho! Help, help, help

Hamlet- [drawing his sapper] A rat? Dead for a ducat

Polonius- O, I am slain. (Shakespeare, 1981)

Yes, the Shakespearean heroes walked to their death consciously, they realized that their death could be the outcome of their deeds, and that is inevitable. They knew that every step towards their unattained end, and towards their forbidden or prohibited choice, could lead to their tragic destruction.

This is not only a trait in Hamlet but also in Macbeth who kills the king intentionally and not by chance, for he awaits eagerly the dark moments to come to shield him, to hide him committing his crime, the crime which is the product of his unbridled ambition to become the king. He talks and walks to his tragic end the moment he drew his dagger saying:

Come, let me clutch thee, (Shakespeare, 1981, p. 34)

Lady Macbeth snubs her husband accusing him of cowardness, she offers him to do the job herself if he refuses to do that saying:

Infirm of purpose!

Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead

Are but as pictures; 't is the eye of childhood. (Shakespeare, 1981, pp. 51-52)

So the Shakespearean heroes know their purpose, they never hide it turning their back to the consequences, as did Macbeth and his wife who were to embrace their end particularly Macbeth who saw his death in the eyes of Banquo who was not born normally. Macbeth realized that his moment had come and he had to pay back the bill of blood that he caused to gush down his opponent's children and wife. Same flavor of intended killing is there in Othello who frantically killed his innocent wife Desdemona. Othello came holding his tragic end too when he enters his wife's room bringing the fate of his wife with his hand saying to her:

Oth. Thou art to die

Des. Then Lord have mercy on me!

Oth. I say 'Amen' (Shakespeare, 1976, pp. 57-61)

External powers thus do interfere, but on the whole, it is some fatal flaws in the characters themselves which are responsible for the tragic end of their lives; the flaws that killed them as the hesitation of Hamlet; the over ambition of Macbeth; the naivety of Othello and the short coming in understanding the daughters of King Lear. So, they invite tragedy to invade their places, castles and other particular premises.

Not only the flaws of the tragic hero in Shakespeare work, but also fate and chance work too. Besides that critical moment, the accident helps the Shakespearean villain ensuring success to the plot. For instance, in Othello, Desdemona drops the handkerchief just when Iago wants the thing to happen. In King Lear ,too, the storm sets in just when Lear the king flings out of Gloucester's castle, and the 'reprieve' arrives just too late to save Cordelia. Therefore, we can say that the tragic hero in Shakespeare does not hold the helm all the way in place of Destiny, but on the contrary, at some stretches of the hero's voyage in life, destiny takes charge. However, the ultimate impression left after reading or watching any of the tragedies of Shakespeare is one of a tragic waste. This, in short, is the conception of the Shakespearean tragedy and the tragic hero.

### **3. Hardy's Concept of the Tragic Hero**

No doubt, every person in this world is born with certain intellectual and moral qualities of his own. Hardy lives in this world, moves about in society, comes in contact with all sorts of people, he is influenced by them, these influences work on him slowly and steadily and ultimately find their expression in his art. Very often it is said that he is a pessimist that he presents a tragic view of life where there is no hope for mankind. Hardy must have also not

forgotten the boy laborer who died from starvation and the woman who was publicly hanged at Dorchester and the ravages of cholera which he saw in his early life molded his mental outlook.

His novels and poems are tragic; therefore, the natural conclusion is that he himself was a melancholy man. It is said that he attended almost every funeral procession; he was so sensitive that he felt pain when he saw a branch of a tree being lopped off. Even at school, he took long and lonely walks. He was given to thoughts and meditation, and no doubt that he was a keen observer of life. He found that nature was indifferent to human values. This perplexed him very much. Therefore, quite often there is a sad sense of perplexity, almost tragic and pessimistic in his novels.

In Hardy, we witness a tragic world which is a little different from the just discussed conceptions of the Greek, the Roman and that of Shakespeare. Here we meet ordinary persons as far as their social and economic status is concerned, but they have certain qualities of head and heart, which raise them above their companions and make them leaders. Hardy's heroes become most interesting in their tragic moments. They suffer more than their situation can bear, but the brave fight that is put up by them against the mysterious forces, visible or invisible, is highly admirable and ennobling.

Hardy's tragic heroes are the victims of chance and fate, where Mrs. Yeobright, in *The Return of the Native*, was not received at her son's house to save herself, she went back to be stung by a snake in the fields, Angel Clare in *Tess of D'Urbervilles* reached too late to find Tess already connected reluctantly to another husband, the meeting which ended by the death of Alec, the real criminal and the hanging of Tess. At the end of the *Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) Hardy takes note of fate which, if not joyful enough to be called pessimistic, made Elizabeth-Jane a wonderful character in the novel. In spite of her experience in youth, happiness was but the occasional episode in the general drama of pain, she realizes that the play of the unexpected led her to unknown peace and happiness. Jane leaves Lucetta's house because of economic troubles and suffer silently. She could not go to Henchard who is morally and materially doomed. After their sufferings, Clare, Yeobright, Thomasin and few others become much wiser in life. With Hardy, man is far from being a god-like, but still a moral being rich in interest and of high capacity. Hardy believes that there is gloom in this world; there is tragedy; there is grief; there is ironic laughter that makes sport of us as human being.

The quality of the characters in Hardy is that of normality. In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, (1874) we have Gabriel Oak, a farmer and shepherd as a hero. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, (1886) we have Henchard, the hay-trusser. In *Tess of the D'urbervilles* (1891) we have Tess, a girl of poor family and a worker on farms especially in dairies. In *Jude the Obscure* (1896), we find that the hero is an ordinary boy Jude, who, at the age of eleven, aspires for high academic attainment, and in *The Return of The Native*, (1878) the hero is Mr. Yeobright, a man who returns disgusted with the busy and sophisticated life of Paris, becomes a furze-cutter after his marriage. In spite of their low positions in society, the heroes and heroines of Hardy have qualities, which have given them the place they occupy in the novels.

The cause of tragedy in Shakespeare is one fatal flaw in the character of the hero. But in Hardy is brought about by the crisis cross of circumstances and that the hero's efforts are

doomed to failure by some jealous power. The ever immanent will to Hardy is the cause of tragedy. Things are so arranged by fate that tragedy is inevitable. Therefore and according to Hardy's understanding, there is no God in heaven and everything is wrong with the world, the belief that goes contradicting the church's teaching concerning theology, hence man always proposes but the power beyond human control disposes, this is what happens in the tragedies of Hardy. The interference of fate in the human drama assumes various forms. Sometimes we find it in the case of Henchard's commercial ruin. He knows that he is in the grip of some "sinister intelligence" that bent up on ruining his happiness yet he is not daunted by his misfortunes, and, declares heroically: "my punishment is not greater than I can bear." (Hardy, 1985) and sometimes it is the social conventions that ruled the happiness of good and pure persons as in the case of Tess and Jude. Hardy sees that Providence is nothing "but coquettish" as he remarked in the Return of the Native. (Hardy, 1974)

As a matter of fact tragedy is of an external force to Hardy; to him life is a mystery, and no true artist can afford a complete explanation thereof. Nor is it man's task indeed. He was widely awake at the tragedy of human life. As he saw it, he painted it without any idea of the coming next in the realm of unknown.

#### **4. The Tragic Heroes to Both**

A novelist can present his characters from the upper class, the middle class and the poor. He can present saints as well as sinners in his novels. A novelist like Tolstoy can present human beings from many spheres of life. This is called a novelist's range. Compared with Shakespeare, Hardy has a greater range of characters; they are not very much limited to high ranked class. Unlike those of the classical drama, the tragic heroes and heroines of Hardy belong to the low and humble classes of rural society. They are not kings, ministers, generals or warriors but farm-hands, woodlanders, shepherds, dairy maids, furz-cutters, carriers, non-descript laborers and servant cottagers. However the low position of Hardy's chief characters in no way deprives them as figures of an intensely tragic world of the Greek or Elizabethan drama.

No doubt that there is more subtle study of the heart and mind in Hardy than in Shakespeare, for the former remains with his character suffering the crisis of his hand-made character, while on the other picture we see that Shakespeare was so happy to get rid of his tragic character at any cost, leaving no sympathy for him neither in the heart of the reader nor the spectators. Hardy could not present an aristocrat from high society because, simply, people from these spheres do not interest him. On the contrary, Shakespeare's main interest goes in this class as we noticed in his tragedies where kings, queens, princes, and princess, and army leaders in the state like Coriolanus, Brutus, Antony, or at least as in Romeo and Juliet, with members of great houses. But as Othello is concerned he is "no mere private person" he is the general of the Republic and the Council Chamber of the Senate in Venice. (Bradley, 1904) Hardy's main interest is in rustic life and in the tragedy of the simple and the poor. Hardy, thus, has always given the central part in the tragic novels to persons of poor and low classes as in the case of Tess, Eustacia or Elizabeth. These tragic persons are not highly lettered and cultured in the Elizabethan sense. This is main obvious point of difference to be noted between Hardy and Shakespeare is in their conception of the tragic

hero. Hardy's novels are full of rustic characters and ordinary people. Without these rustic characters, the novels of Hardy would have suffered very much for the lack of country air which breathes through them. On the contrary Shakespeare avoided the rustic characters believing that high-ranked people would give the action more effect and leave deeper impact on the watchers or even on the readers.

Hardy understands the significance of country work and occupations, the use of the scythe, the plough, the sheep-shears, the reaping-hooks, the harrow, the harvest, all in their different seasons; he catches the carter, the riddle-man, the corn factor, the shepherd, the miller, the dairyman, all are stick to their background, while Shakespearian characters use the swords, daggers, spears and cannons. Hardy tries to persuade his readers of his gloom and somber philosophy- that man's lot is to endure in a malevolent universe, while Shakespeare thrust in his readers the culture of catastrophes, coup making as in *Macbeth*, It is well remarked that the ordinary people do not flocked to Shakespearean plays as they flocked to Hardy's novels.

David Cecil, a noted Hardy critic (1934) points out that Hardy's characters represent all mankind, for instance, "Giles stands for all faithful lovers, Tess for all betrayed women, Eustacia for all passionate spirits" who all were tenants of Hardy's Wessex. (Newman, 1977, p. 33) While different places and even different countries formed the environments and background to the Shakespearean characters, they are more international than Hardy's. Even before Hardy the practice of all character-creators, had been that the tragic heroes must be a man of high rank. It was originally Aristotle's theory which Shakespeare followed. Hardy did not follow this practice at all.

The heroes and heroines of Hardy do not care much for money or immediate self preservation. The chief factor in their struggle is love, to succeed or to suffer in it. From here, love gives meaning to their existence, love and marriage are the center of Hardy's novels, love is always instinctive, emotional, of a man for a woman or vice versa. In Shakespeare all of these are of no importance to the characters, for they aimed only to achieve glory through ascending thrones or defeating armies and becoming rulers over others. Another thing about Hardy's characters is that they are temperamentally queer, while in Shakespeare, they are clear enough that they are known to the common. Hardy's characters go against the course of life where they meet with those of Shakespeare's. Hardy's characters revolt against established values, authority or convention and in this behavior they are unexpected and explosive. They decide and act, all within a moment while Shakespeare's characters have long plans before they perform their action. Hardy's characters act independently and perhaps absurdly. While Shakespeare's act collectively and openly within the group. Hardy's tragic heroes revolt against their climate of common place, nature and circumstances while in Shakespeare they revolt against each other in an open conflict, the conflict of kings and princes; the conflict of the great.

## **5. The Conflict with Fate to Both**

The conflict to Hardy's heroes is the conflict between institutionalism and individualism; they are the masters and makers of their own conflict, and ultimately of their own fate. In Shakespeare they walk to meet rather to create, intentionally, a conflict while among Hardy's



characters the conflict lurks there hidden waiting for them but in the shape of destiny. Therefore, Hardy's main characters are tragic and their misfortune is a mark of pre-eminence and their elected souls are sealed for calamity only, while in Shakespeare they start as with no misfortune.

Thus there is conflict in the novels of Hardy not only between one man and another, but man has to fight against impersonal forces called fate. Henchard is full of hatred for Farfrae; Bathsheba considers Troy as the main cause of her unhappiness, but actually those whom they think their enemies are as much as themselves puppets in the hand of fate. Same is the case with the Shakespearean tragic characters; they find themselves face to face with the Omnipotence fate that draws their end. Fate in Hardy and Shakespeare is ultimately responsible for characters' dissatisfaction. The wicked characters, to Hardy, are so much the creatures of circumstances that they are more to be pitied than to be blamed; on the contrary Shakespeare tragic characters are to be blamed not to be pitied. Tess is a noble girl; she has no wish to make other people unhappy; she throws aside everything that checks her way. Fate becomes her enemy and her rival.

Man and his fate thus form the puzzles of life that remained unsolved throughout the ages of man. Shakespeare had to work on these puzzles embodying the facts of his tragedies, simultaneously, joy and gaiety, and both plunged into the dark underworld of crime and punishment, passion, terror, lies, deception, madness and remorse, and that it is said that William Wordsworth, a Romantic poet (1771-1855) sees that man is unable to stand before fate and that he saw nothing "loftier than the human hope and nothing deeper than the human heart" (Samdani, 1970) but those words seem to be truer of Hardy and Shakespeare although the former gave easily the lives of his characters to fate and destiny as we see in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *The Return of the Native*.

But the Shakespearean tragic hero has a story of exceptional calamity leading to the death of a man in a high state while to Hardy this exceptional calamity is not found at large where each tragic hero has to be stunned before his sudden fate and devastating calamity. In Shakespeare, consciousness of greatness is mingled with pain and solemnity in a mystery that man can't measure. In Hardy's novel, fate plays a very important part. Sometimes it appears as if human beings have no individual life of their own, for they are controlled by fate from outside and from within. In another word it means that fate interferes in the lives of human beings through some external happenings, while in Shakespeare, the tragic heroes seem to invite fate to their bedrooms; they paved the way for fate to have the main part in their lives, and thus fate broods within the characters of Shakespeare.

Man thus is a creature in the hand of an impenetrable and indiscriminating fate that rules over Hardy's characters: Henchard's plans for making himself rich are brought to nothing by a bad harvest; which means that the weather takes the part of fate here. In Shakespeare fate lies there at the corner of Hamlet's apartment and in Othello's chamber. To go back to Hardy where at the very beginning of her life as a young girl Tess meets the wrong man. A few days before she marries Angel Clare, she pushes under the door of his bed room a letter full of passion which, by chance, slips under the carpet where it remains until found by Tess in the wedding morning. On a Sunday, Tess walks fifteen miles to Clare's house to seek protection; there is no answer to her ring at the door, for the family is at church. It was just a matter of chance, just at the wrong time she now meets Alec once more. (Hardy, 1957) A letter she

sends to Angel in Brazil is delayed, and he reaches home a few days later. On all of these occasions fate, in the form of chance, stood in the way of Tess' happiness. Hardy's chance is not there among the Shakespearean tragic characters rather chance could be interpreted as the provoker to these characters to commit their sinful deeds as we see in Macbeth. Hardy has been blamed for the role of chance and fate that works hard throughout his novels for which Shakespeare has been praised for the role of other forces that worked hard throughout his tragedies.

From the above account, it is clear that fate plays a dominant part among the tragic characters of Hardy. Quite often fate acts on the lives of characters in the form of chance happenings. It is no use blaming Hardy for the excessive use of fate and chance in his novels for by the struggle between man and destiny, destiny is an unknown force; we do not know how it acts. So a result of this fate shows itself in the form of unexpected blows of chance. Thus, considering his philosophy of life, Hardy is justified in the use of fate and chance to a great extent in his novels, where on the contrary Shakespeare's tragic heroes and heroines are not victimized by fate and chance, they are responsible for the blows of fate; they are ready to such blows as if they are fully aware of these blows and keep waiting for the shape and the time of these blows to occur. Therefore, Shakespeare, too, was not to be blamed for leaving his tragic heroes faces their destiny alone.

Fate of individual in Hardy is in the universe, the war of Hardy's emotion with circumstances and conventions is the theme of his novels while among Shakespearean characters different themes are being demonstrated. Hardy is the creator of the metaphysical novels, his novels are metaphysical in their establishing the relationship of man and his destiny, where there is a strong relation between both while in Shakespeare the relation between man and fate is merely predictable. The spirit among Hardy's tragic characters is in torment confrontation of the individual with destiny which is expected at any moment while among Shakespearean tragic character is expected but on the long run as we see in Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello and King Lear. This is why human predicament comes suddenly to Hardy's characters due to their unintentional behavior while Shakespearean tragic heroes themselves are the maker of their own predicament. Take, for example, the tragedy of Tess, it does not lie in her desertion, nor in struggle for bread, nor in her frightful death. It lies in her sin, in her bewilderment at Clare's behavior, therefore Hardy's tragic heroes innocently invite their fate and slowly without their knowledge that they might suffer the outcome of their deeds, while among Shakespearean tragic heroes and heroines fate or destiny is more expected, that they remain waiting for their, let us say, destruction. That is why the Shakespearean hero from the first page to the last page remains on alert. These understandings and speakable philosophies of Hardy, encompassed by chance, show man and his fate as eternal riddles that no philosopher or sage has ever been able to solve.

The supernatural power to Shakespeare is a must, it is within the sphere of blind fate, it helps disclose or reveal the secret among the characters; it works as one of the characters; it solve the problems of man; it helps man save effort to know the reality; it may complicate the problems among the Shakespearean characters; it has its chance and scopes; it is believed, it is true and never lies, it comes from the real world to the world of the supernatural as the ghost of Hamlet, the witches of Macbeth, and the handkerchief of Othello and many other hidden and secret powers. These powers and these supernatural forces are not found among

Hardy's heroes, rather they (characters) do not believe in them for the Victorians differ from the Elizabethans in this matter. In Hardy's novels, the hero often expresses his grave concern at the untimely and ruthless intervention of this force, while in Macbeth we see Lady Macbeth calls for that power, the spirit to unman her to kill Duncan the king:

.....Come you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty... (Shakespeare, 1981, pp. 38-41)

Somewhere Lady Macbeth says:

.....come to my woman's breasts  
And take my milk for gall.....  
.....  
.....come, thick night,  
And pall thee, in the dunnest mischief! (Shakespeare, 1981, pp. 45-49)

Othello sees only his power where some sinister intelligence bent upon ruining him, saying to Desdemona as if he is the destiny in a voice full of evil:

Thou art to die, (Shakespeare, 1981)

But both Shakespeare and Hardy used the element of nature before the tragedy of the character occurred. This natural element comes in the shape of the unseen; of fate and blind chance the unpredictable. Shakespeare implemented nature and its force to make the atmosphere suitable to the coming tragic action; both prepare us as readers to what coming next through the element of nature. This is much a remarkable trait in his tragedies of Hamlet, Macbeth, Caesar and others, for he presents the tempest, the river, the waves, the wind and darkness, stars, and fire before the tragic action is done. Caesar sees, before his death, the sky is full of sparks, then, the sparks changed into fire:

The skies are painted with unnumb'ed sparks,  
They are all fire, and every one doth shine; (Shakespeare, 1981)

Hardy was not far from using the natural elements to tell his readers what is coming next or to let them, at least, predict that. In *The Return of the Native*, in *Tess of D'urbervilles*, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and many other novels Hardy uses the weir, the dam, the heat, the snake, the cliffs, precipice, the river, the wind and so many other natural elements of nature throughout his tragic novels to show that the tragic hero is going to fall. In this respect, we can say that the Shakespearean hero's fate affects the welfare of a whole nation or empire; and when he falls suddenly from the highest of earthly greatness to the dust; his fall produces

a sense of contrast, of the powerlessness of man; and of the omnipotence of God. On the contrary, we find the end of Hardy's hero inefficient, and leaves no impact on man, for his fall is hardly known more than a few miles around, no state is shocked, no army is affected, and no news to prevail over the country or to the neighboring ones. In this respect we can conclude that the Hardy's heroes live and die unknown as compared to those of Shakespeare's.

### **Conclusion**

We come to conclude that the Shakespearean tragedy is far from being pessimistic, for it never shows evil triumphant, nor does it lead us to believe that a struggle against it is not worthwhile. On the contrary, the tragedy of Hardy is very near from pessimism, for the tragic heroes are gone with no return for a sin most of them did not commit. Thus the good in Shakespeare, in the long run, is neither triumphed nor overshadowed by evil, for almost the evil ones are to go. We may also conclude that though these tragic artists lived in two different atmospheres and eras, and worked in different fields of literary composition, yet their achievements in their own ways are equally great and immortal. Hardy has done in fiction what Shakespeare did in the drama. Hence, the Greeks, the Romans, the Elizabethans and the Victorians are all agreed that man is victimized by the power of gods- that is to say the supernatural elements in Shakespeare and the Providence in Hardy both depict man as the only target of these invisible powers. Therefore, and according to Hardy, the governing power of the universe is going on and on without considering the feelings and sufferings of mankind. Man may come and man may go, but this power will go on forever, like a railway engine; this power is altogether regardless of the incidents and accidents that occur in its way, for its purpose seems to be in motion, the motion that takes man in its way. Humanity may perish but this power goes on performing its function without pausing or waiting or staring, it neither sympathizes nor pities us.

Finally, destiny is the wall before which all have to bow whether the character is a good virtuous person or a villain, for we witness Cordelia, Desdemona, Tess and Mrs. Yeobright all perish because of their sovereign goodness not because of their faults. This is why chance, fate and destiny interfere in these tragic ends, for the final words are ever to destiny and hence our defeat lies. It is when the character that we love and sympathize saves his own life on the account of his soul as we noticed in the case of Eustacia and Hamlet. However, and apart from the hero being villain or good, the truth of life represented in destiny, seems to be imposed on us all, where tolerance is the question in this gloomy life; where an inevitable end hovers above all heads. The end, encompassed by decay, awaits every creature not only every man. Hence we must be satisfied since nobody is going to survive; it is an unwelcomed satisfaction which settles among us, rather it is an imposed satisfaction, where Man is the loser in this equation. From what is mentioned above it is obvious that not only the tragic hero in Hardy or in Shakespeare who finally suffers the outcome of his deeds, but it is broader and wider than that, it is more comprehensive to say that the background of life in general is gloomy and was thrust and imposed upon Man with its black unsatisfactory end where no way trying to skip it.

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