



**Thomas Hardy's Psychological  
Representations: A study of his Novels**

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The Paper deals with one of the prominent figures in the English novel, his fiction is controversial, for the modern qualities of his novels. His works like *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of d'Urberville* and *Jude the Obscure* are considered part of the classics of English Novel. Hardy is distinguished from other novelist of the Victorian Period in his developed philosophical views about life drawn from his own experience. This brings him closer to modern psychologist especially Freud and his theories. The paper aims at explaining Hardy's philosophy and ideas from the perspective of Freud's theories. The paper consists of an Introduction giving a brief background about the topic. Section one, talks about Hardy's philosophy about man and Fate.

Section two, deals with Hardy's theory of heredity and comparing it with modern psychology especially Freud's concepts of heredity.

Section three, is dominated by Freud's ideas of instincts of life and death and applying them on Hardy's novels. The conclusion, sums up the finding of the paper.

**Key Words:** Fate, philosophy, psychology, heredity, fiction.

### المستخلص

يتناول هذا البحث احد الشخصيات المهمة والمؤثرة في الرواية الانكليزية. تعد روايات الكاتب الانكليزي توماس هاردي مثيرة للجدل بسبب حداثتها وقربها من خواص الرواية الحديثة. حيث ان فلسفة توماس هاردي عن الحياة المستوحاة من خيرات الكاتب الذاتية والتي يمكن تفسيرها ضمن نظريات علم النفس الحديثة وبالأخص نظريات علم النفس الخاصة بفرويد. يهدف هذا البحث من ربط وشرح فلسفة توماس هاردي في رواياته من وجه نظر علم النفس الحديث .

يتألف البحث من مقدمة تلخص البحث و الجزء الاول الذي يهتم بشرح فلسفة توماس هاردي عن القدر حينما يتناول الجزء الثاني طرح افكار توماس هاردي عن الوراثة وربطها بأفكار فرويد. اما الجزء الثالث فيتناول اهم افكار فرويد عن غرائز الحياة والموت و تطبيقها على روايات توماس هاردي. المستخلص يلخص ما تم طرحه في هذا البحث.

### Introduction

Thomas Hardy is one of the most read and studied novelists in the Victorian Age, his novels are considered as philosophical creations revealing the relationship between man and his universe on one hand, and man and his instincts on the other. Hardy's style blends the Victorian and the modern methods of writing, his philosophy brings him closer to modern fiction. Hardy is concerned with investigating man and the concept of the 'free will'.

One should study and understand the background influences of the Victorian era to fully master Hardy's philosophy and his line of thought. It is an age known for the conflict between science and religion. Thus, Hardy's philosophy springs from his own lifetime experience, as well as, his influence by other philosophical views of the period. Hardy owes much to Schopenhauer<sup>1</sup> in applying his philosophy of the 'free will' in his novels.

Hardy's concept of the 'free will' shifts between man's Will and the necessities of his life. Hardy believes that man is not completely free in his will nor is he completely unfree, he presents man as controlled by a more powerful force called the 'Universal Will'. Most of Hardy's fiction depends on the struggle between will and destiny. This is reflected directly in his way of thought and philosophy and therefore in his novels.

Another philosophical idea presented in Hardy's novel is that of heredity. *Tess of d'Urberville* is a good example of this theory. This theory is based on the scientific ideas of the age especially Darwin's theories of evolution. The foreign power that might intercept man's happiness might come from the ancestors. Hardy's works is moved by the notion that external forces that affect the wellbeing of his characters, whether they might appear as forms of fate or some inherited power derived from a past life.

Hardy's tragedies sometimes spring from within the characters. Man is dominated by the power of instincts, that might bring him grief and sorrow. So, instincts are just like other forms of fate, where man has no free will to control or change. This is why throughout his novels psychological ideas are aroused.

### Section One: Hardy and Fate

Is a German [philosopher](#). He is famous for his 1818 theory [The World as Will and Representation](#), wherein he tries to prove the world as the outcome of a blind and uncontrollable [metaphysical will](#).

Thomas Hardy is one of the most influential literary figures of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He is considered as a transitional poet, novelist, and dramatist. Like any other person living in the Victorian period, he was influenced by the industrial and scientific discoveries, precisely the Darwinian theories.

For Hardy fate, chance and destiny are dominating factors in his characters' lives. As part of his philosophy of life he presented his characters as helpless creatures in the hands of such powerful forces. Characters in Hardy's novels are deprived of free will, they are mere toys in the hands of a more powerful force like fate and destiny. They have become an anti-human agent trying to ruin every plan man intends to perform in life by placing obstacles and difficulties in his path.

Hardy's philosophy in life states that there is an eternal conflict between man on one hand and an obscure force which we tend to call fate or destiny. Most of the personals in Hardy's works are aware of the existence of this force and show an acceptance of such powers.

To define fate according to Hardy's philosophy, it is all that affects human's life and which lie beyond his control. These involuntary and intrusive powers play an important role in man's life. These powers are presented through a series of coincident and circumstances that might spring out of nowhere to interrupt man's plans in life. Amongst these powers are heredity, parentage, the birth place, the position in society and the economic state of his ancestors.

Fate can dominate the nature of a character and how it reacts and behaves in certain situations, this behavior is beyond the character's control. This is clear in Tess, Eustacia, Troy and others. Eustacia is sad and impulsive these features are indevoured in her by fate. Oak is sincere but can not deal with the people he loves. These characters cannot change these features, that is why they fall as victims of fate.

There are other forms of fate such as the external powers represented by nature, circumstances and chance. In The Return of the Native nature participates in creating the tragedy of the characters Mrs. Yeobright is killed by the extreme heat of Egdon. Tess is a good victim of chance that is when her horse died it triggered the tragedy of her life. Oak's sheep are killed by accident or chance and this destroys his hopes in marriage. In almost all of Hardy's novels chance plays an integral part in the tragedy,

Thus, most of Hardy's novels depend on coincidence, unpredictable incidents, and accidents. Hardy tries to prove that there is a struggle between man and an unknown fate. So, to Hardy much of Man's life is moved by a blind fate. Hardy willingly or unwillingly emphasizes this aspect which controls all his character's actions. Even though Hardy might be blamed for his overuse of chance or fate in his novels. He believes that there is a discord in the nature of man's being. Man and destiny work separately they might meet on certain occasions but destiny has the controlling power to lead and direct man's life.

Fate is also known to be the predetermined series of actions. It can also be seen as the unpredictable future of people in general or of an individual. Fatalism on the other hand refers to the acceptance of the idea that the incident set by fate are fixed and cannot be altered by any kind of human power. Thus, humans cannot change their predetermined fate or even that of other people.

According to Vainshaavi, fate can be present in these forms, Mesocosmic fate, Microcosmic fate, Macrocosmic fate. The Mesocosmic fate is the destiny related to the fate and destiny of other human beings and other living creatures. While the Microcosmic fate is based on the behavior towards unliving things. Macrocosmic fate is the fate that depends on chance, coincidence and accident. Hardy believes that fate only exists to change happiness in human's lives. Hardy called himself a determinist because he assures that man's life is predestined by powers external and internal, which lay beyond human's control. He tries to prove that all human beings are suffering. Therefore, suffering is the general law, where happiness is an occasional episode.

### Section Two: Hardy's Heredity and Psychology

Critics tend to recognize Hardy as a pioneer novelist rather than a Victorian one. He is closer to twentieth century novelist than those of the previous century. His ideas about man and society are very much modern especially if we consider them part of existentialism. This is also true if we examine Hardy's works within the twentieth century psychological thinking and can even be studied within the Freudian theories.

Freud is one of the outstanding figures of literary criticism. Usually, critics quote him in order to solve any ambiguity in literary characters. Characters might perform incomprehensible acts that lead to their own downfall. Freud became a reference to most critics of the twenty and twenty-first centuries. He believes that human beings are derived by not only conscious derives but also subconscious behaviors.

Thus, Freud is interested by subconscious behaviors of human beings and literary characters as well. Freud is accused of being too subjective, unlike Hardy and others he does not always believe in the external

factors affecting a human's life. Therefore, the analysis of a literary work can and may depend on Freudian theories to understand the factors that stimulate human derives.

Most of the people in Hardy's fiction can be considered as psychologically ill. Being modern men and modern women makes them suffer to achieve stability and harmony between the mind and the body. They cannot escape the sense of rootlessness dominating their being. According to Hardy landscape play an important part in finding stability. Characters who maintain unity with their surrounding nature find it easier to live, than those characters who lost this unity.

Hardy is a master in bringing characters to life through allowing readers to experience what it is like to be one of the characters, this lies in his honesty in painting his characters. This gives the reader a sense of involvement and sympathy with Hardy's characters. Thus, it is not surprising that Hardy's novels are closer to Freudian theories rather than to his predecessors.

Martin implies that Heredity to Hardy is part of the natural uncontrolled forces that dominate characters, plot, and eventually tragedy. Freud announced that Hardy is a modern psychoanalyst when he read *Tess of d'Urberville* in 1929. As Freud believes that literary works mirror the subconscious of their writers. Many characters in Hardy's novels, in Freud's opinion, suffer from the inner conflict between mind and soul; social and natural derives; and above all between Eros and Thanatos.

In *Tess* she inherits traits from her family and ancestors such as crime, it was predicted for Tess to murder her seducer. Hardy himself remarked that " the murder that Tess commits is the heredity quality working out in the impoverished descendant of this once noble family" (Hardy, quoted in Waldoff, 1979, p142)

Heredity and environment are two important aspects that affect any person's growth and development. Thus, genetics have a significant influence on personalities. Heredity is as important as family and environment in the development of any human being. Lawrence Kohlberg says, " personality traits are more of expressions of human biology rather than products of life experience." (Sited in Moorehead, 1998)

Aman Sharma says " the basic sources of personality development are heredity and environment." (Sited in Moorehead,1998) Hardy's own life experience was influenced by his heredity. His lineage aroused his curiosity from a young age. Hardy's family suffered from decline as any of the Victorian families. This made Hardy obsessed with the idea of decline.

Hardy Studied and admired scientific theories of the age like Darwin's and Huxley's theories in addition to the theories of the rationalist J.S.Mill. Darwin's theory " blood theory" impressed Hardy. This theory states that parents genetically endeavor their qualities to their offspring. Hardy might have read Francis Gotton's " Heredity, Talent, and character" in 1865 this theory tries to prove that some qualities like drinking, gambling, and criminal activity may be inherited. Hardy was also influenced by Weisman's essays on Heredity when he was writing *Tess of d'uberville*. It's effect was also clear in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*.

Heredity is one form of fate in Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. It is represented in the physical appearance and nature of Elfride Swancourt. Elfride is part of the Luxellian, miss Elfride is just like the Luxellian although she is nothing to them by law. From the physical perspective Elfride looks just like her grandmother. She dies like her mother did at childbirth. The most important aspect of heredity is that of behavior it runs in them like an illness. Just like the running away which runs in the family like a disease. This proves that Elfride's fate is predetermined.

*The Woodlanders* is another work by Hardy marked with his interest with heredity as a form of fate. Fitzpiers is whatever remains from his big family. It is his ancestral link that led Melbury accepting the doctor to pursue Grace.

But amongst all his works heredity is clearly manifested in *Tess*. The action of the novel is triggered by the name d'Urberville. Hardy shows Tess to be the last of an impoverished family called Durbeyfield. Tess falls as victim to Alec who exploits her naivety being a country girl. Tess inherited qualities from her mother, they lead to Alec's attraction towards her. Tess's striking Alec on the face with her glove reveals the harshness of her predecessors. Thus, Hardy proves that Tess's behaviors are controlled by powers outside her will.

Hardy comments on Tess's loss of purity as a tribute being paid for her ancestors' crimes. Tess's physical beauty and charm inherited from her mother led to Alec's physical attraction towards her. Hardy's involvement with heredity as being one form of fate is derived mainly from the influence of the Darwinian theories, not to forget the over occupation of Victorians with degeneration of noble families.

Hardy's novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* reveals his interest in Darwin's theory, he presents man as a victim of his heredity and environment in his famous hanging scene. Thus, Hardy's obsession with heredity as one

form of fate that dominates character's lives can be explained by Freud theories of heredity. Freud believes in the inheritability of personality traits. This is presented in Freud's theory of cultural and historical problems. Therefore, heredity is explained as the biological input of experience of past generations. As Prentice says, " The tragic effect in Hardy's fiction is, therefore, shaped by a complex network of metaphysical, secular and spiritual discourses" (p.7)

### Section Three: 'Eros and Thanatos' in Hardy's Novels

Eros and Thanatos are theories laid out by Freud, or the life and death instincts as it is some times called. There are two derives ,in human beings, one opposite to the other and one might contradict the other. These derives conflict and coincide inside man. Eros represents the urges for life, love, creativity prosperity and finally reproductivity. Thanatos a Greek word that refers to 'death', it refers to aggressive derives, destruction, and disasters.

Thus, life instincts are basic urges that keep man alive and survive happily to reproduce. These derives are responsible for the continuation of life and mankind. The power produced by the life instincts is known as the Libido. Freud believes that Eros is opposite to the ego. Which was latter called Thanatos.

All positive reactions and feelings like passion, friendship, cooperation, social success are categorized as Eros. These derives are responsible for individuals' prosperity and a prosperous society.

Death instincts are called Thanatos, Freud believes that death derives are responsible for aggressive derives in life. These death instincts might lead to self-destruction taking the form of suicide. This instinct usually arouse during disasters and traumas. In normal cases these derives are controlled by life instincts which tend to keep individuals from self-harm.

In Hardy's novels there are two tendencies towards life, one of life and the other one is of death. The first tendency is that destructive and disastrous, it represents the death instincts which leads to aggressive reactions. Freud marks that death instincts lead to aggressive tendencies, while the constructive tendencies are the result of life instincts.

Freud believes that these two tendencies work in diverse ways. Hardy in his works uses both constructive and destructive tendencies. This might explain the double personalities that might appear in Hardy's novels. In The Mayor of Casterbridge for example the main character, Henchard, is a good example of this duality. He manifests generally an act of violence, but there are also intervals of guilt and compassions. He is constructive as well as destructive at the same time. Thus, Hardy built his novels on the basis of man versus fate and nature.

Bloom (1987) has pointed out similarities between Hardy and Freud in the respect of human inner world. While Sumner (1981) implies that Hardy's psychological views are similar to those of Freud. Hardy commented in his preface to Tess of d'Urberville that the " novel is an impression and not an argument." (p.viii)

In Hardy's novel The Mayor of Casterbridge he reveals man's conflict with the outside environment and the constructive and destructive instincts. Henchard is one sample of this conflict, his struggle for material gain reveals his inclination towards life instincts. It is Henchard's selling of his wife and daughter which triggers the action of the novel. "The title refers to a public constructed identity which is not personal and makes reference to a social position" (Wolfreys 2004, 2).

Henchard trembles from one condition to the other through out his life. Freud called this Cathexis, 'the term stands for the flow of physical energy towards preservative and destructive instincts.' (Tyson, 2007)

Henchard's two personal traits work one against the other. He is skilled and sarcastic at the same time. Being skilled manifest the urge to succeed and prosper, while his cynical aspect leads to his destruction. The incident of selling his wife brings up destructive elements. He claims that his marriage stood in the way of success. Susan became a victim to his abnormal character. Henchard sold his wife and daughter under the influence of destructive instinct he feels guilty under the influence of preservative instinct. The diversity between life and death instincts in Hanchard's character are very obvious. He was not sober when he sold his wife, mainly he was under the influence of destructive instincts. He feels guilty when he becomes sober the influence is changed to instructive instincts.

Thus, Henchard makes an oath to leave drinking for twenty years. Henchard is seen again after twenty years, now he has become the mayor of the city. He has become a successful person because of his destructive instincts. The positive side of the destructive instinct is called Cathexis. Freud says (1961) "we have reckoned as though there existed in the mind whether in the ego or in the id-a displaceable energy,

which, neutral in its self, can be added to a qualitatively differentiated erotic or destructive impulse, and augment its total Cathexis."

The energy according to Freud springs from the narcissistic derives of the libido. Henchard was influenced by life instincts, that's how he achieved materialistic gain. Henchard falls in conflict between passion and materialistic prosperity. Hardy reveals the psychological features of the feeling of guilt in Henchard's personality. This is reflected in his decision to remarry his wife, which springs from his sense of guilt. This sense of guilt springs from the inner struggle between the ego and id. However, the destructive derives are not always bad. These derives might be useful as in Henchard's material prosperity. Henchard's aggressive nature appears after his remarriage to his wife. This nature springs from his sense of insecurity. Since Henchard started to see Farfrae as his rival and enemy, both feeling belong to the death instinct.

Hardy, throughout his novels, pictures an anti-social aspect of human beings, because of the contradictory forces dominating their existence. The Mayor of Casterbridge reflects internal as well as external forces dominating man's life. This is presented through Henchard's competition with Farfrae, the social elevation of Henchard, and Lucetta's preference to Farfrae over Henchard. Hardy believes that destructive derives would lead to losing what ever was built and achieved by characters. This brings Hardy close to Freudian ideas, Freud (1955) says that "the presence of the death instincts confirms that all intellectual achievement and ethical sublimation are illusions." Henchard before the appearance of Lucetta was aggressive, cynical, frustrated, self-centered and ambitious all these features work against life instincts. But he changed the moment Lucetta entered his life.

Destructive instincts reappear strongly when he learns that Lucetta is interested in Farfrae more than him. This leads him to gamble his fortune on a superstitious weather prediction, which ends up in a complete lose of fortune. More over Lucetta reveals his secret of selling his wife. Henchard's destructive instincts is directed towards himself and not others. At the end of the novel when Henchard is left alone he says **Here and everywhere folk dying before their time like frosted leaves, though wanted by their families, the country, and the world; while, I, an outcast, an encumberer of the ground, wanted by nobody, and despised by all, live on against my will. (p.244)**

Hardy throughout his novel tackled the issue of violence and being aggressive which was later discovered by psychologists like Freud. The Mayor of Casterbridge is unlike Hardy's other novels where the destructive forces springs from the inside rather than the outside. In this novel hardy presents life as a conflict between constructive and destructive instincts or as it called later life and death instincts.

### Conclusion

To conclude this paper, it is obvious that the conflict between characters' free will and internal and external powers is dominant in Thomas Hardy's novels. The external powers could be one form of fate like chance, coincidence, or even nature.

Tess of d'Urberville is one good example of the fallen women because of internal and external mysterious powers beyond her control. Freud in his theories about heredity supports Hardy's views. Darwin's theories of evolution were of primary influence on Hardy's works. While, Schopenhauer's ideas of suffering, the concept of the freewill were in Hardy's way of thought, will and desire force his characters to walk towards their downfall.

The ideas of egocentricity and the human derives are also presented clearly in his novels, The Mayor of Casterbridge is one proof of this. The main character sells his wife and daughter in a state of unconsciousness, he later spends his life trying to repent his deed. The feeling of guilt motivates him to be a better social and financial human being, Freud calls this Cathexis, where instructive derives spring from destructive ones.

Hardy's personals are victims of personal flaws as well as the flaws of a supernatural power inherited or brought up by an unexpected moment. Chance, coincidence, accidents, and natural disasters play freely in disturbing the plans of Hardy's characters.

The concept of the free will has no existence in Hardy's novels. Most of his characters are deprived of this privilege. They are always derived by external and internal derives to act in a certain way that might interfere with their free will. Finally, to sum up this paper it is right to say that Thomas hardy is a modern Psychoanalyst, his schemes of building characters are explained within the scope of modern Psychology. Many critics witness the resemblance between his thoughts and the psychological theories of Freud.

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