Tragic Richness in the Major Novels of Thomas Hardy

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Abstract
Thomas Hardy is a poet, short story writer and novelist of eminence. He has freely adopted ideas from classical drama, Christian tragic element and Shakespearean tragedy and framed his own tragic pattern. He has explored the depth of silent sorrow and suffering in all his great tragedies. His heroes and heroines are all star-crossed souls, struggling against the powerful cosmic forces. Henchard, Giles Winterborne, Clym, Eustacia Vye, Tess, Jude, Sue and the other characters of Hardy meet with an end that is tragic or miserable. For them, happiness is an interlude in the general drama of pain. It is seen that the wrong choices and temperamental differences led to tragic gloom in love and marriage. The elements of chance, fate or coincidence also play a vital role in creating tragedy. To him, life is a struggle between man and impersonal forces and life is a fruitless effort of man. This tragic content in his major novels, which is considered as an important aspect of his novels by many critics, has been investigated and explored from a critical perspective in the present article.

Key words: Thomas Hardy’s Novels, Tragic conflict, Temperamental differences, Impersonal forces, Fate.

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1. Introduction
Thomas Hardy is a great writer of novels and poems, a masterful reporter of a host of memorable characters. Hardy has been classed variously as an old-fashioned novelist, a recorder of rural customs and superstitions, a display of his sensitive ego and of a tragic interpreter of life’s complexities. The appeal of Hardy, as a novelist and poet, has been vital, increasingly so in the recent years. In this respect, Kramer (1979) believes that ‘He is read not only by hundreds of thousands of school and university students or by people who buy paper backs for pleasure reading. His novels and stories are dramatized on Radio and Television and made into movies’ (P.3). It is argued that one of the reasons behind this popularity of his novels is that they represent an intensifying series of assaults upon the dark state of mind on matters of grave and social moment. Referring to the Mayor of Casterbridge (1886), Stewart (1976) believes that “Hardy is content with the single march of a protagonist to his doom—the great ineluctable fatality of things announcing loudly by means of a series of sensational set-pieces en route” (P.61). In Jude: the Obscure (1895), there are the aspirations of Jude and Sue as steadily and variously abraded by the prejudices and insensibilities of the society. In the Woodlanders (1887), everything flows from the wrong-headed social ambitions of Melbury. However, for Hardy, the Woodlanders (1887), is a book of restricted power as Stewart (1976) rightly remarks, “for he possesses the great writer’s ability to make extravagance, strong accentuations that even the monstrous and bizarre, break in upon common experience and illuminate it” (P.37). The last part of Tess (1891), in particular, exemplifies the vulnerability. In most of his novels, Hardy has achieved the sheer痛苦ness which is almost unexampled in our literature. The reason for this might be that in his native Dorset, he had witnessed plenty of poverty, sorrow and misery in rural life. Such real life situations, during his lifetime, might have instigated him to create unforgettable tragic characters in his major novels.
Most of Hardy’s novels have an atmosphere of brooding melancholy. They almost give an impression that life is a punishment inflicted by an undiscriminating hand. For instance, Henchard is foredoomed to death and disappointment in The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886). Clym, Eustacia Vye, Tess, Jude, Sue and a host of other characters meet with an end that is tragic or miserable. For these characters happiness is an interlude in the general drama of pain. It is commonly argued that Hardy’s heroes and heroines are star-crossed souls, struggling against the powerful cosmic forces. This tragic drama of life, portrayed in the most subtle ways in the unforgettable characters of Thomas Hardy, has been critically examined and explored in this article to investigate this richness reflected in his major novels.

2. Thomas Hardy: Major Literary Works and their Features

2.1 A brief background to Hardy and his writing
Thomas Hardy was one of the greatest British writers. He has written remarkable novels, short-stories as well as poems. One of the key features of his writings is that he worked consciously in the tradition of the great tragic artists. His idea of tragedy is a combination of Greek, Shakespearean and Biblical tragedy. He had Jesus and Paul in mind when he created Clym Yeobright in The Return of the Native (1878). Similarly, Saul and David
were in his mind when he created Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886). Like George Eliot, Hardy was influenced by Sophocles’ depiction of the great primitive emotions. He explored the depths of silent sorrow and suffering in his great tragedies. In this connection, Rehder (1977) superbly argues that ‘for Shakespeare, tragedies end in death, comedies end in marriage. For Hardy, some tragedies begin in marriage and every comedy contains a tragedy’ (P.23). *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) comes closer to Shakespearean pattern. In it, the tragic failure arises chiefly from character as in King Lear or Macbeth. In this respect, John Butler (1977) reports that ‘Hardy wants always to go deeper and he is prepared to face anything. Shakespeare merges the forms of tragedy and comedy to explore morally ambiguous situations and the world of his imagination. Hardy follows him in an attempt to give a more complex view of ordinary life’.

2.2 Classification of Hardy’s Novels
Hardy himself divided his novels into three groups- 1) Novels of Character and Environment, 2) Novels of Romances and fantasies and 3) Novels of Ingenuity. All the major novels of Thomas Hardy come under the category of ‘Novels of Character and Environment’. They are: *Under the Greenwood Tree* (18710, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Norman Page (1979) pertinently argues that “… the first group contains all the major novels … though they are given a pleasure of a different kind of unity by the reappearance of environments”. Writing about *Under Greenwood Tree*(1872), Page (1979) believes that “its brevity seems to relegate it to minor status, its remarkable poise and control are more than adequate compensation” (P.37).

2.3 Hardy’s skill of Plot Construction
Hardy was a great craftsman. This quality is considered to be one of the key features of his novels that has guaranteed him an important place amongst the most successful novelists. His craftsmanship has probably been revealed through his plot-construction. In his plots, one often witnesses a love-triangle. For instance, in *The Return of the Native* (1878), Clym loves Eustacia and Eustacia loves Wildeve. In *Tess*, Alec chases Tess and Angel also loves Tess. In *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), Gabriel Oak loves Bathsheba and Bathsheba loves Sergeant Troy. In *Jude- the Obscure*, Jude Fawley loves Sue and Sue in turn loves Phillotson. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), both Farfrae and Henchard have love affairs with Lucetta. In fact, in his plots, either two men love a lady or two ladies love a man. It is also argued that his plots present a study of human heart. All the intricate human feelings have been revealed by him. His characters represent truly different aspects of real life. In fact, his plots have universal appeal as they deal with the human problems. There is also an emotional force in his plots. That is why; his characters are very great in tragic intensity. According to David Cecil (1960: 198), “Finally it is his emotional force which makes him able to rise to the heights of tragic feeling required to do justice to his tragic themselves”.

2.4 Hardy’s art of characterization
Characterization is one of the appreciated facts of Hardy’s stories. Dale Kramer (1979) remarks, “Not only special perspectives such as psycho-analysis, but more traditional, broad character studies like Casagrande’s reveal a range of discontent with the platitudinous responses to famous characters” (P.13). He further adds that “If his characters are difficult to catch in a phrase and their roles in society to place in a verbal frieze, perhaps, it is because only part of his imagination saw, in his characters, figments of general truths” (P.13). Hardy’s imagination was large enough to project complex characters without needing to reach for abstractions to reduce them to explainable entities. The characters presented by Hardy are individuals and types both. They are divided into protagonist characters, side characters and chorus characters. Hardy’s protagonist characters have identity or personal individuality. His side characters are merely shadows. His chorus characters provide humour and relief. In all the varieties of his characters, Hardy has given matchless universal appeal.

Hardy’s sensitiveness and abnormal sympathetic mind was oppressed by the general tragedy of existence. The novels of Hardy were unrivalled for their sheer artistic perfection both in plot and in atmosphere. Grant the characters and the environment, the rest of the tragic sequent of events follow with logical precision. Sometimes as in The Return of the Native (1878), there is severity of treatment which challenges comparison with the Greek tragedy. The atmosphere of Greek tragedy pervades in all his tragic novels.

2.5 Hardy’s male and female protagonists

One of the key features of characterization of Hardy’s is that he gives more significance to the representation of male characters. For instance, in The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886), Michael Henchard, in selling his wife and daughter to the sailor Newson, repeats startlingly blatant from the definitive patriarchal act of exchange. The women of The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886) are at once the instruments for the probing of the significance of patriarchal power for the male. Taken as a whole, The Woodlanders (1887), Tess (1891), Jude (1895), and the Return of the Native (1878) are expressive, irrefutable criticism of society’s debilitating version of womanhood. Hardy was consistently interested in women and became more compassionate towards them. That is why Stubbs (1981: 80) observes that “Women are almost always at the centre of Hardy’s tragic, uncompromising vision, not merely of the universe, as is so often claimed, but of men and women in society”.

Such characterization of men, in particular, and women in his novels poses questions like: what is Hardy’s view of his men and women? And how does he judge them? Hardy’s men have certain basic characteristics which are often ambivalent. Male egoism contrasts with the noblest self-renunciation. The aggressiveness of Henchard is at odds with his own needless reticence, apart from the contrasts with Jude’s tender selflessness. There is opposition within Jude’s nature rendering him almost ineffectual. The number and variety of characters created by Hardy is amazing. It is impossible to group characters into rigid types.

The rustics, who form another group of characters, are all varied in their peculiarities – Oak, Giles Winterborne and Diggory Venn are distinct in their characters and roles. But
Dr. Fitzpiers is different from other prototypes like Wildeve, Sergeant Troy or Alec. The positive virtues are encountered by the negative weaknesses. For instance, a strong Farfrae chooses his women rather too practically and even unwisely. The view of Man as potentially noble, patient and heroic, is often accompanied with weaknesses leading to failure, and self-destruction. The characters of Henchard and Jude illustrate Hardy’s ‘intuitive understanding’ of Man. This is the greatness of Hardy’s success as a novelist in spite of the crudeness and ineptitude in his design and style.

The central figures in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) and *Jude- the Obscure* (1895) are the products of Hardy’s mellowed wisdom gained from his writing experience of twenty-five years. They are all the sum of all his knowledge of Man and his place in the universe. Henchard, Tess and Jude – each is a tragic figure. They have all qualities in common but their destinies are different. Some characteristics of Jude link him with Henchard in *The Mayor* for instance as pointed out by Guerard (1949: 152) “the common sensitiveness to music, the imprudent early marriages, the addiction to drink, the need to punish and degrade the self publicly” (P.152). Henchard and Jude are the tragic figures of frustration and failure. Though they are simple and earnest in their pursuits, they are given to fits of gloom and depression. Both are sensitive and basically kind and unselfish. They are victims of their self-destructive impulses directing them to their individual doom. Commenting on the ending of the two novels in relation to the two characters Guerard (1949) aptly remarks that “Jude Fawley might have signed Henchard’s will” (P.152) and their desolate state at the end of the novels being almost similar. Henchard’s possessiveness is strikingly different from Jude’s self-abnegation, though these trends are curiously mixed in both. In Jude’s case, physical passion causes his tragedy; for Henchard, the lack of such intensity results in his losing Susan and later Lucetta. That is why Guerard (1949) comments about the passiveness of Hardy’s men that “His attitude to other forms of passiveness- toward sexual passiveness in particular – is ambiguous where it is not frankly critical” (PP.43-44). This aspect of Henchard and Jude is handled with some amount of reticence.

2.6 *The Openings and Endings of Hardy’s novels*

Hardy’s novels open and end in such a way that they form a key feature of his writing style. In the opening chapters, Hardy creates the physical world for his readers in which the novel takes place and the first episode of his stories and novels reveal the personalities of his characters. The first four chapters of *Jude- the Obscure* (1895) are among the great openings in the English novel. In these chapters, Hardy dramatizes a young boy’s discovery of the moral and metaphysical geography of the hostile world in which he lives. According to Daniel (1990), “The purpose of early novels is to show that Jude’s experience is universal rather than particular and idiosyncratic” (P.31). His another novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) begins by positing a world where civilization’s conventions and moral reason are in a state of suspension. In the atavistic scene, Henchard ritualistically casts off his wife as if she were the evil influence that has caused what he regards as his miserable plight.
The endings of his novels are also subtle. They fulfill the prophesy of the beginning. In *The Return of the Native* (1878), Clym duplicates the narrator as a modern consciousness who understands the distinction between man’s aspirations and the circumstances of his life. The last view of Clym is not of a man, who has triumphed, but of, one who has been defeated. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), Henchard’s demise and the marriage of Farfrae and Elizabeth would seem finally to restrain and resolve the concatenation of events set in motion by Henchard’s selling of his wife.

3. **Hardy’s Philosophy and most Recurrent Themes of his Novels**

3.1 **Hardy’s Philosophy of life**

Hardy had a certain philosophy of his own. His philosophy of life is a struggle between man and impersonal forces. In the words of David Cecil (1960), “From the time he began to write, he was confirmdly directed by some automatic principle of life unknown, pursuing its mysterious and utterly indifferent to the feelings of morals” (P.24). In fact, to Hardy, life is a fruitless effort of a man. Man is a puppet in the cruel hands of fate. As a wanton boy kills a fly for his own sport, the cruel fate kills human beings for sport. The part played by malignant fate in human life creates the peculiar atmosphere of hopelessness. The terrible philosophy embodied in *The Mayor, Tess and Jude* aroused a storm of contemporary protest. These are somber stories of broken lives, of frustration and of all the pathetic futility of human effort.

Hardy’s this philosophy and pessimism towards life marked his writing. His last novels express his tragic vision, which is often wrongly defined as ‘pessimism’. Hardy had always reacted sharply against this label attached to him. He argued that Shakespeare’s tragic writings did not charge him similarly of this criticism. The classical tragedies and the plays of Shakespeare both showed Man pitted against a malign force. Hardy’s contact with the scientific theories of Darwin, Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley also accentuated his awareness of man’s pain and struggle in the universe. As Hardy often said, there can be no tragedy without revolt and consequent conflict. He said that he was a pessimist in the Sophoclean sense, in that, given the chance; he would prefer not to be born in this world. Almost all the tragic characters echo this feeling. In this respect, Scott-James (1950) believes that “Hardy is pessimistic about the governance of the universe, but not about human beings” (P.27). Hardy’s characters have both power and endurance which is defined by Dobree (1947) as the ‘tragic richness’ colouring his pessimism.

Pessimism in Hardy’s fiction consisted of his rational enquiry into the problem and a basis of human suffering. His doubts about the governance of the human destiny remained as questions. This basis of Hardy’s tragic vision, unfolded in his novels and poems, is akin to the modern existential awareness of the ‘pain of being’. To put in the words of Brooks (1971), “Hardy’s double vision of man’s greatness, in values and littleness in the cosmic scheme, keeps the tragic balance between fate and personal responsibility” (P.18).

3.2 **Most recurring themes of Hardy’s novels**

Hardy’s novels reflect his philosophy towards life. His major novels depict various themes reflecting his philosophy. Some of the major themes are briefed below.

3.2.1 **Love and marriage**
Love is the dominating motive in the major novels of Thomas Hardy. He pictures exquisitely – the peaceful, idyllic love of Dick and Fancy; the faithful, enduring, hopeless love of Gabriel Oak and Marty, and Eustacia’s searing passion. Arabella in *Jude- the Obscure* (1895) is the only hateful woman in Hardy’s books. For the most part, Hardy treats women with sympathy; the sufferings of Tess, Elfride, Marty, and Bathsheba are touched with pathos. In Hardy’s view, marriages, that are the result of love at first sight, generally end in unhappiness. The problem of marriage and love is best illustrated in *Tess* (1891) and *Jude* (1895). In *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), Hardy countenances the possibility of love based on affection and on mutual involvement in a joint enterprise. Hardy had reservations about marriage. His main objection was the irrevocability of the marriage contract. Marriage, more particularly unhappy marriage, is a key theme in *Jude* (1895), embracing not just the central characters but other marginal figures as well. Jude’s family, for instance, had a long history of bad marriages. Other figures are brought in purely to amplify the theme. Hardy attaches cynical comments about marriage to quite unimportant characters. Jude’s landlord, for example, observing a show of affection between Jude and Arabella is about to give them notice on suspicion of their not being a married couple. Hardy explored the divorce law in *The Woodlanders* (1887) where Grace Melbury is misled by her father and is able to divorce her unfaithful husband Fitzpiers. She then discovers to her cost that this is not in fact possible. Grace has allowed herself to look forward to marriage with her old lover, Giles Winterborne. That is why, Stubbs (1981) aptly remarks that “They are both scrupulously moral people, who unlike Sue and Jude, accept contemporary patterns of behaviour” (P.80).

### 3.2.2 Nature and its Symbolism

Nature is another theme, with Hardy’s philosophy of life, recurring in his major novels. Nature is sometimes benevolent to his characters, sometimes hostile and sometimes indifferent. In *Jude* (1895), nature is almost uniformly hostile, represented by stuck pigs, worms, stoned birds, nettles and dying rabbits. In *Tess*, landscape and season follow the heroine’s fortunes from Stony upland to Stonehenge. In *The Woodlanders* (1887), Hardy presents with a world that is both fruitful and diseased, both friendly and harsh. It is harsh but familiar to Marty South. It entangles the town-bred Felice and the town-educated Grace, and it finally kills its old friend Giles Winterborne. Egdon Heath in *the Return of the Native* (1878) is nothing but a heath to Thomasin. In *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), in a tragic scene, Bathsheba runs from home to find herself in a poisonous swamp. Nature in fact, is likely to be snare as a comfort. Although Hardy reinforced his picture of the harshness of nature with the alarming ideas of Darwin, his response to that was personal. As a child, he had seen a frozen bird, a starved man, and the images remained with him. In *The Woodlanders* (1887), owls catch mice as remarkably as rabbits eat winter-greens and even the snake, that kills Mrs.Yeobright, is beautiful. The dog that destroys Gabriel Oak’s sheep is over-enthusiastic, not malicious.

### 3.2.3 Education

Education, especially in *Tess* (1891) and *Jude* (1895), is presented by an instrument of social change and usually shown as generating unhappiness. The superiority of *Tess*
(1895) in education to the average girl of her class renders her especially vulnerable to a gentle man-seduce. In Jude (1895), education becomes a major theme – indeed, initially it is the theme of the novel. For this reason only Norman Page (1979) pertinently remarks that-

“If Jude has the makings of a fine scholar motivated by a disinterested intellectual passion, he is also an at-least averagely sensual man; and his frustrations stem partly from the lack of provision for working-class boys to enter the universities, but also from the very different kinds of problem represented by Arabella and Sue –different from his intellectual disappointments” (P.57).

4. Tragic Gloom in the Major Novels of Hardy

As discussed in the previous sections, Hardy’s philosophy of life dominated the themes of his master-pieces. His most of the characters are victims at the hands of fate or society and suffer and meet tragic end. He portrayed this theme and his philosophy in such an excellent way that his characters are observed in many living human beings today.

4.1 Brooding melancholy in Hardy’s major novels

His novels present an atmosphere of brooding melancholy. They offer an impression that life is a punishment inflicted by an undiscriminating hand. For instance, Henchard is foredoomed to death and disappointment in The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886), Clym, Eustacia Vye, Tess, Jude, Sue and a host of other characters meet with an end that is tragic or miserable. For them happiness is an interlude in the general drama of pain. Hardy’s heroes and heroines are, thus, star-crossed souls, struggling against the powerful cosmic forces.

Each of Hardy’s finer novels is a projection of his state of awareness. The content of the world, when he wrote Under the Greenwood Tree (1872), was the Wessex of life and all memories of youth it included. The village, which is the scene of action, stands for all the English villages whose life is cast in the traditional mould. The country life in Far From the Madding Crowd (1874) is in essentials the same, on a large scale. When one is arguing that a thought or an attitude comes increasingly into focus in a writer’s work, it is always to claim too much. The Return of the Native (1878) has a half-tragic ending in its present form, and Hardy’s original intention would be to make it more tragic. Throughout the novel he stress on the revitalizing power of rural life than urban modernity. Henchard is a major figure in The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886) who stands integrally for the traditional qualities. From beginning to end, Henchard’s course is downward. Whenever his older way of life meets the new, it is defeated. Step by step, he comes to work for the man, whom he once employed, and in the end, he feels himself driven away to his death. In the words of Holloway (1953),

“He is violent and a liar and in one sense intensely selfish, but his generosity is true magnanimity, and he has reserved of affection and humility. Farfrae prospers through skill, which the new mode of life has impersonally taught him. Henchard blocks out something like the full contour of the human being” (P.236).
The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886) is a tragedy on Aeschylean lines, in as much as Henchard submits and accepts, whereas Hardy elsewhere rebels and accuses. The sarcasm at the end of Jude (1895) is not aimed at anything external to man, but at Arabella’s callous indifference towards the husband whom she has ruined. The jest in Tess of the D’Urbervilles (1891) at the expense of the President of the Immortals may be taken as a mere rhetorically sally. However, the main charge is that Tess is the victim of men’s misdeeds and lack of understanding. Henchard’s calamities are principally due to his own folly and circumstances.

4.2 Pastoral elegy in ‘Far from the Madding Crowd’

Far From the Madding Crowd is in the form of pastoral elegy. Hardy has adopted the title from Thomas Gray’s poem, Elegy Written in a country churchyard. In this novel, Hardy paints a gloomy and tragic picture of life. He believes that man is born to suffer. Gabriel’s hope of becoming an independent and shepherd-farmer is frustrated at an early age. His love for Bathsheba does not bear any fruit for a long time. Boldwood’s passion towards Bathsheba drives him crazy, and his ultimate fate is very sad. Bathsheba’s experience of love and marriage is very bitter and painful. Her love for Troy leads to the tragedy of her life. The principal characters in the novel suffer mainly owing to their own errors, follies and faults. Hardy hates life because life is so unpleasant, so bitter and so full of distress and misfortunes. The only people who are happy in the novel are the rustics who have no desires and aspirations.

4.3 Marital pathos in ‘the Woodlanders’

The main tragic component in The Woodlanders (1887) is marital themes. In his preface to the novel in 1895, Hardy himself stated, ‘… it is tacitly assumed for the purposes of the story that no doubt of the depravity of the erratic heart who feels some second person to be better suited to his or her tastes than the one with whom he has contracted to live enters the head of reader or writer for a moment’ (P.35). Almost every character in the novel has more than one partner. The final chapter in The Woodlanders (1887) is concentrated on the contemplation of Giles’ death. Also, it is the speculations of the future married life of Grace and Fitzpriers. Hardy cynically fixed up a happy ending for his heroine to please the readers. The ending of The Woodlanders (1887) upset many contemporary readers because Fitzpiers is awarded rather than punished for his sins.

4.4 The tragedy of a pure woman in ‘Tess’

Tess is the heroine of the novel. She ranks with Elizabeth Bennet, Jane Eyre, Becky sharp and a few other great female characters of nineteenth century fiction. It is argued that the temptation of Sue, the endurance of Marty, the troubled consciousness of Grace, come together and find a fresh definition in Tess. However, Tess was a Dorset milk maid, but she is in her own right, a queen in English literature, with Rosalind, Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth. It is widely acknowledged that the strength of the novel mainly rests on the tragic characterization of Tess. It is believed that in a novel, the heroine is so central to every important consideration, an outstanding of how her character shapes her fate is essential for an interpretation of the meaning of her tragedy. In Tess of the D’Urbervilles (1891), Tess is the victim of irony of fate. According to Draper (1975), ‘Tess is the loving
demonstration of these tragic ironies. She attracts the incompatible forces represented by Alec and Angel. That is why she, who is a lover, is also a killer’ (P.205). The grotesque incongruity between Tess’s crime and its punishment is the like sin of Oedipus and his punishment.

Towards the end of *Tess* (1891), Hardy remarks, ‘Justice was done, and the president of the immortals in Aeschylean phrase, has ended his sport with Tess’. It implies that the power that rules has no shape and attributes. Secondly, it is conscious of its own actions. Thirdly, it is malicious and takes pleasure in causing suffering to poor mortals. Therefore, Cox (1970) very aptly remarks that ‘the last scene fitly and terribly ends story, having read which, we could not wish for any other, dark and tragic almost beyond comparison as the ending is’ (P.183). According to Butler (1980), ‘Just as Sophocles appears as a sort of clue at the beginning of *The Woodlanders*; Aeschylus appears here at the end of Tess’ (P.107).

5. Conclusion

Thomas Hardy has been universally acknowledged as a great tragic novelist. It is obvious that he elevated the function of the novel, and succeeded in placing it among the greatest of the literary forms. Each episode in his life became a tale in his literary works. In addition, each character in his novels is faithfully drawn from his own personal experiences. The action is significant in all his works. It moves to a pattern of all life, and ultimately to the universe. Thus, all the major novels of Thomas Hardy portray and exemplify his philosophy of life – the heroism and futility of the human will against the fate. The result is always a grandeur that stuns the reader into an awesome acquiescence making one oblivious of the limitations of the artist. This is the essence of Hardy’s integrity as a tragic novelist.

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