

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION

After reading and analysing Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, I conclude that the novel is a great presentation of fatalism. Fatalism is presented in the novel through the life of the protagonist, Michael Henchard. At first, the readers might think that it is his fate that makes him struck by a series of unfortunate situations, but in fact there is something else that causes his sufferings. Throughout the story, Henchard often encounters situations which seem disadvantageous for him. However, these situations are not the true cause of all his misfortunes. Henchard is really the one who unknowingly turns these situations to become disadvantages for him. Henchard is able to do such a thing because he is driven by his characteristics, therefore his characteristics are responsible for the cause of his sufferings. I believe that the author portrays Henchard as such because he wants the readers to understand the idea of fatalism. Fate exists, but it does not directly cause misfortune in humans' life because in the end, humans are the ones who make choices through their characteristics.

Thomas Hardy does a great work in explaining fatalism through the portrayal of the protagonist in this novel. Based on my analysis in Chapter Two, I

argue that fate is not the only one responsible for human sufferings, and humans' characteristics can drive them to their miseries. The author has presented fate using environment which creates unexpected and uncontrollable situations. In the story, these situations are the triggers that can be pulled to result in misfortune. This misfortune will happen if the triggers are pulled by Henchard's negative characteristics, which are reckless, jealous, bad-tempered and anxious.

The author's opinion towards fatalism can be seen right at the beginning of the story through Henchard's recklessness. Henchard loses his wife and baby daughter because they are taken away by Newson. However, it is Henchard who makes this misfortune happen because he decides to drink strong liquor. This rash decision immediately brings terrible consequence, since Henchard becomes drunk and sells his family members. Then, when Henchard is trying to surpass Farfrae's successful business, he makes another rash decision as he trusts a weather-caster without considering logic. As a result, he loses much of his wealth. Lastly, Henchard lies to Newson without considering both Newson's and Elizabeth-Jane's reactions if they find out about his lie. This decision causes Henchard's ultimate suffering because it makes Elizabeth-Jane hate him. It is fate that brings Newson to the place where Henchard gets drunk. Fate also creates the good weather after Henchard buys too much grain. Further, fate makes Newson survive the storm. Still, fate is not truly responsible for causing Henchard's sufferings, as Henchard, driven by his reckless nature, is the one who makes bad decisions, which cause these situations to bring sufferings upon him.

Another example of Hardy's fatalism can be seen when Henchard becomes jealous. Henchard becomes jealous because his position as the most successful businessman and the mayor of Casterbridge is replaced by Farfrae.

However, Henchard is the one who dismisses Farfrae in the first place and this makes Farfrae decide to start his own business. It is true that fate makes Farfrae become more popular and successful than Henchard, but it is Henchard's jealousy that makes him unable to accept Farfrae's success. Because of his jealousy, Henchard turns his closest friend into an enemy he cannot defeat.

The same view is also visible in Henchard's bad temper. When Henchard realizes that Lucetta is already married to Farfrae, Henchard bursts out in anger. Also, when he is prevented from greeting the royalty by Farfrae, his temper causes him to try to kill Farfrae. Fate is involved in both of these situations, as fate brings Lucetta and Farfrae together and makes Farfrae become the mayor of the town. However, these situations do not cause Henchard to suffer. In fact, Henchard's bad temper is the true cause of his sufferings since it drives him to react badly towards the situations. His bad temper makes him curse Lucetta and tear their relationship. Yet this consequence is nothing compared to the one that strikes Henchard when his bad temper makes him nearly kill Farfrae. Even though Henchard asks for forgiveness, Farfrae ignores him, making Henchard unable to save Lucetta's life when she is ill. Again, Henchard suffers because his actions have previously been driven by his bad-temper characteristic.

Henchard's anxiety is caused by his reckless characteristic. This also represents Hardy's fatalistic view as this characteristic is the result of Henchard's decision when he is facing a situation which is caused by fate. Newson's survival in the storm is fated and because he is still alive, he looks for his daughter. It is true that Newson's arrival in Casterbridge can make Henchard suffer, since he might lose Elizabeth-Jane. But in the end, it is Henchard's impetuous decision to lie that causes him to become greatly worried, as he is not sure that his lie can last

forever or not.

In my opinion, Thomas Hardy was truly a remarkable writer. He cleverly fuses the environmental factor, which can be seen as the situations, with the idea of fatalism. This allows the readers to understand how fate provides the trigger for Henchard's misfortune. Hardy also successfully manages to show his idea to the readers. Through the portrayal of Michael Henchard, I can see that fate is not the only factor responsible for Henchard's misfortune. In fact, Henchard's characteristics are the other factor that causes his misfortunes. Every time Henchard faces situations which are created by fate, his characteristics drive him to do things which later cost him his happiness.

The idea of fatalism is truly a pessimistic view, but this view is the reason that makes this novel a timeless piece of art. It is true that fatalism was used by Hardy almost a century ago to argue about humans' life, but I believe that fatalism is not an outdated belief, which simply disappears as time goes by. In fact, fatalism can still be used to argue about human's life in the present and perhaps, the future as well. Even though many things in the present are completely different from those in the past, there are still a lot of things that make humans suffer. Humans are constantly trying to find out the reason why people are unhappy. Through *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy tries to answer this question. The idea that humans' characteristics can actually determine their future, may explain the cause of humans' sufferings. In my opinion, Hardy manages to show this through the life of Michael Henchard.