

RE-EXPLORING HARDY'S PURPORTED PESSIMISM FROM JUNGIAN PERSPECTIVE

Musarrat Jabeen

*Lecturer in English, School of English, Iqra National University, Hayatabad,
Peshawar*

Email: musarrat.jabeen83@gmail.com

Dr. Noor Jehan

Assistant professor, School of English, Iqra National University, Peshawar

Email: noorjahan@inu.edu.pk

Abstract

*Thomas Hardy is one of the last novelists of the Later Victorian Period. Being a versatile and prolific writer, he tried his hand at writing poetry, short story, and novel successfully. Having read the works of agnostic and atheistic philosophers, he developed a belief that there is some malevolent, hostile and vindictive cosmic force that is determined to oppose man. This force is relentlessly committed to frustrating his plans and schemes. He opines that this antagonistic force is ill-disposed and inimical to those in particular who assert their authority and want to get their own way. This belief made Thomas Hardy produce a copious amount of work speaking of his pessimistic perspective on life, rendering him conspicuous for critics and expositors. This research paper aims to re-explore the purported doom and gloom in Hardy's works from Jungian viewpoint. That is to say, this delve is an endeavor to ascertain the cause of his literary pessimism, employing a lens what Carl Gustav Jung conceives as "The Shadow." As regards the trail of pessimism in Thomas Hardy's literary endeavors, countless volumes of primary and secondary body of knowledge apropos of matter have been delved deep into, involving his autobiography, biographies, and critical commentaries written on his works. A meticulous read of these volumes has led to the discovery that Hardy's perusal of the leaves of the works of his contemporary English Naturalist Charles Darwin, the gloomy Teutons Eduard van Hartman and Arthur Schopenhauer and Greek tragedians, Shakespeare and his contemporary agnostics impacted Hardy's spiritual and moral compass. Critics believe that pessimism, agnosticism, and atheism originating from The Victorian Intellectual Revolution caused Thomas Hardy to become pessimist, determinist, fatalist, agnostic and ultimately atheist viewing life, religion, universe and God in a pessimistic light. Furthermore, other elements that triggered his pessimism, involve circumstances of his intimate life, to be exact, his ephemeral yet amorous alliance with his betrothed Tryphena Sparks, and his failed marriage with his first wife Emma Lavinia Gifford. The pessimism resulting from Hardy's study of the works of all the aforementioned contemporaries, religious intellectuals, German philosophers, the influence of scientific development, and his failed intimate relationships with the aforementioned two women, became repressed in his unconscious, which later on manifested itself in his works such as *Jude the Obscure* and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* featuring people, their state of affairs, their faith resonating with Hardy himself, his own life circumstances, his own religious beliefs and with that of those associated with him in real life. In plain, this paper establishes it for a fact that literary Naturalism and Antihumanism of Thomas Hardy is inextricable from his personal and philosophical doctrine manifesting itself in the Magnum opus, unbeknownst to Hardy.*

Key Words: *Shadow, literary pessimism, personal pessimism, philosophical pessimism.*

Introduction

Hardy's work has been scrutinized and evaluated over the years. Countless such endeavors have been made to investigate different dimensions of his work. However, the most recurring motif in his work that so far has stood out to most researchers and that has piqued their curiosity quite

considerably is his pessimism. Thomas Hardy has a reputation for being a pessimist, fatalist, determinist, and an atheist. His literary works consistently reflect his conviction that man is not free to have his way. Rather, he has partial freedom because he believes that hostile forces in the universe thwart his plans, getting in the way of the fulfillment of his wishes and desires (Wotton 205). Hardy seems to be writing what can be called his appeal for an honest and hard-core Atheism, or rather, a profound Determinism (Braybrooke 47). Likewise, Hardy's pessimism is accredited to Darwin and logical positivism. It shows the intellectual growth of Hardy from determinism to Humanitarianism (Harvey 201).

Hardy investigated the underlying drive that controls the cosmos. This concern sparked his interest in studying and subscribing to Pessimistic Voluntarism and The Philosophy of the Unconscious concerning the essential and intrinsic makeup of the authority in control of the universe. His stoic resignation consists of the following essential traits: that a blind volition is wielding authority over creation; that the man's individual will is subordinate to the universal will; and that the universal will seems to be growing aware of itself, hopefully, sympathetic (Kramer 68).

This paper aims to trace the lineage of despair in Hardy's narratives through a prism called "The Shadow" -- a concept coined by Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychologist and psychoanalyst. Carl Jung describes "shadow" as the grim, crooked, and dark aspect of human personality. It is intrinsically defiant, non-conformist, and incorrigible, suppressing taboo and proscribed behaviors and atypical, amatory and kinky preferences. These suppressed thoughts and behavior patterns bounce back later in the life of an individual, which Carl Jung calls as "projection". For this purpose, a couple of Hardy's works have been selected. The plots, people, and incidents in the novels identify themselves with those in Hardy's real life. As regards Hardy's 1895 publication, it turned out to be his ultimate creative endeavor. The story of the aforementioned work implied the issue that it is difficult for man to remain monogamous and, as such, should be allowed to indulge in moral depravity. This stance of Hardy brought him much criticism from his first wife, Emma Lavinia Gifford. Fearing that the public would mistake the story of the novel for being a shadow of his personal life, Emma advised Hardy against the publication of the novel. However, turning a deaf ear to her recommendation, Hardy did publish it. To his dismay, the publication did not go down well with the masses and the church. As Emma apprehended, people started raising their eyebrows at their marriage, thinking it was falling apart. Considering the novel irreligious and detrimental to the institution of marriage, the church set it ablaze. It ended up causing Emma to estrange Hardy for life. To sum it all up, both the novels are rooted in autobiographical details reflecting Hardy's whole life, his life circumstances, his emotional upheaval consequently causing him to become a diehard pessimist.

Methodology

This paper explores the cause of defeatism in the cited works from Jungian perspective, attributing it to numerous factors. The attempt is a descriptive, text-based examination of the works. In support of this premise, citations from biographies of Hardy authored by various authors have been incorporated. This endeavor consists of chapters and sub-chapters.

Results

Hardy's Fatalistic Realism is rooted in the formative years of personal life – idiosyncratic gloom, post-Christian skepticism, and Schopenhauerian outlook – grounding it in experiential foundations.

Pessimism: Concept and Implications

Human beings tend to have different perspectives on life. Some focus on the brighter aspect of life, while others on the darker side of it. However, instances from practical life have proved it for a fact that the latter outnumbers the former. Pessimism is a mindset that causes a person to expect a negative outcome out of every situation. Such a person always thinks of seeing the clouds instead of the silver lining. Being an intrinsic crepehanger and a prophet of doom, a pessimist is a diehard downer, defeatist, and cynic. For him, it is impossible to think straight. He just can't help expecting the worst out of life. Indecision, skepticism and irresolution become his characteristic traits. His inner being is always falling apart, foreboding signs of dilapidation, disintegration, and decrepitude. As to the root cause of this pessimism, it is believed to stem from irksome, taxing and distressing circumstances, taking a toll of a person's physical and psychological health, causing him to become pessimist. Christianity, Buddhism, and stoicism propagate teachings that are dismal, grim and sullen, reflecting life in a negative light with its core wounds manifesting as chronic emotional desolation. Alain de Botton asserts that religion, culture and philosophy are more to blame for the development of this morbid mental tendency than the general perception imputing it only to life circumstances of an individual (3:02-38:54).

Christianity speaks of the Serpent's beguilement and the Adamic transgression, resulting in their banishment and subsequent drawn-out retribution as being a legacy of eternal sin. Instead of stating the incident as a deterrent for the masses to come, Christianity has been glorifying the fall of the Man and his fallible nature - characteristics reflecting pessimism. To speak of the 'Original Sin' to mean inevitability of frailty of Mankind is both to perpetuate his tendency to succumb to temptation and to rule out his potential to resist it at all. Christianity offers instances of circumstances and events that reek of unmistakable pessimism. It glorifies Jesus Christ's crucifixion as atonement for or salvation from the sins of Christians. Both Buddhism and Christianity acknowledge that life is inherently imperfect; as a secular organization, we share that assessment while focusing our efforts on the tangible, human-centered world (Botton 3:02-38:54). Buddhism believes that life is essentially a suffering, which is broken down into four integral parts known as "The Four Noble Truths": Dukkha; Samudaya; Nirodha; and Magga. All four factors speak of life being a suffering, pain, and adversity resulting from our expectation of people, our attachment to them, our wish to vie with them, and our avarice to pile up fortune. Buddhism believes that this suffering can end and be renewed with a state of pure bliss provided we take the road to spiritual redemption ("Basics of Buddhism").

Like Christianity and Buddhism, stoicism has much in common with pessimism. Stoicism is a mindset that humans can develop by being indifferent to and unfazed by the aftermath of circumstances. To be exact, remaining unfazed, unaffected, and indifferent to any situation is called stoicism. For stoics, the word 'life' is synonymous with travail, hardship, and tribulation. However, these afflictions and suffering can be avoided by the use of emotional detachment, equanimity, dispassion, and objectivity. Marcus Aurelius exhorts one to dissociate from past, present, and future outcome. He states that one should not let past and present to run away with him. What is of much significance is the 'now' which can be regulated. If one is unable to put the reins on it, then one should brand it with infamy (Einzelganger 5:26-6:58). Such severance from current reality may imply remaining indifferent to heightened states of pleasure, indulgence, elation, and rapture - a stoic philosophy identified with pessimism.

Shadow in Reference to Pessimism

Shadow is a designation first introduced to the lexicon by Carl Jung. It is known by various terminologies such as Unconscious, Id, or a Sinister Undercurrent. Jung suggests that all humans possess a hidden side, or shadow, which grows more intense and darker the more it is suppressed from one's conscious awareness (214). He believes that shadow is a moral dilemma that cannot be rectified without the will of an individual (8). Shadow is the flawed self of human personality, which needs acknowledgement, integration, and rectification. However, people seldom or never recognize their shadow self. This oblivion to the dark aspect of their personality is basically their rejection of it. This rejection rules out the possibility of the realization, reformation and rectification of it. Stressing the same point Jung says that a person cannot overcome his 'inferiority' unless he becomes aware of it. If it is repressed in his subconscious then it can never be overcome (76). When the Shadow is rejected, it becomes an unconscious part of human personality. This implies that humans become unconscious of their flaws and shortcomings. As a result, they start projecting it onto the outer world by finding faults with others, accusing people of negative traits that the accusers actually have within themselves (65).

Traits of Pessimism in Hardy's Personality

A naturally reclusive figure, Thomas Hardy was known for his guarded demeanor and preference for solitude. Content and grounded, he was perfectly happy with the way things were. His reclusive, introverted, and antisocial ways are obvious from his self-image thinking "how useless he was" and realizing that "he did not wish to grow up," "that he did not want at all to be a man, or possess things, but to remain as he was, in the same spot". He remained unmotivated or listless all his life (Hardy 1:19-20). Hardy was born in The Age of Progress and The Dawn of Modernity. The progress of Physical science in this age impacted both the literature and human intellect. Scientific development rendered masses materialistic preferring this life to afterlife. Scholars and philosophers of the time tried their possible best to reconcile science with religion. They fought to stay close, yet time pulled them toward separate horizons. Rapid scientific progress inadvertently fostered a climate of skepticism and existential uncertainty among the public. What made matters even worse was the Darwinian paradigm and its implications - that man was evolved from a primate and that he was not created. This logic influenced the minds of people desiring to keep pace with modern scientific development, causing them to become skeptic and pessimistic. Evolutionary biology postulated that a world this savage suggests a Creator who is either sadistic or oblivious, being hell bent on achieving its ends. The theory of Evolution implied that man's superiority was 'amoral and contingent' and subject to climate change. Darwin's theory presented the Bible as congeries of historical events, not a word of God. The resemblance of biblical accounts to ancient religious texts caused people to question the Doctrine of Atonement, presenting God as brutal demanding that man spill blood (Pite 109). Darwin's theory of evolution caused cognitive dissonance and discursive tension in the masses. It came in conflict with the religion by denying God's hand in the creation of Man. Thomas Hardy felt convinced by Darwin's theory. His reverence for Darwin and his adherence to his rationale is evident from Hardy's regret that he expresses for his incapacity to propose a theoretical framework that harmonizes the existence of intense biological suffering with the attributes of an omnipotent and perfectly moral deity (Hardy 1:269). This scientific advancement jolted Hardy's faith in religion and the origin of Man. In mid-sixties, Hardy's study of the works of French philosophers Hippolyte Adolphe Taine, François Marie Charles and Auguste Comte, Spinoza and Hegel caused Hardy to become agnostic changing his

allegiance to God for something called blind force coined by Hippolyte Adolphe Taine. Hardy also felt impacted by Francois Marie Charles who was known for the establishment of utopian socialism. Hardy lent himself to the meticulous study of the works of Charles Fourier who influenced Hardy's iconoclasm (Morgan 46).

Moreover, Hardy immersed himself in the writings of two German thinkers who viewed the world through a lens of profound gloom, eventually finding himself swayed by their bleak outlook on existence. One noted pessimistic German thinker envisioned a blind, irrational "Universal Will" as the driving force of existence, while his successor in metaphysical philosophy proposed the concept of an unconscious mind that could be stirred into awareness through human intervention (Bailey 570). The pessimism of Schopenhauer stems from "tragic spirit" speaking of the philosophy that the mundane is not meant to bring ultimate gratification and therefore it is not worth pursuing.

The brutality of the Boer and First World Wars forced Hardy to reconsider his belief that mankind was slowly becoming more noble. Hardy believed in "revolutionary meliorism" - things might have been bad but they could and would take a turn for the better (Butler 11). The horrors of war forced Hardy to confront a grim reality: the "Will" he once hoped was evolving into a self-aware force remained blissfully unconscious. He realized that humanity is not a rational master of its own destiny, but rather a pawn caught between internal impulses and a cold, indifferent universe that remains blind to human suffering (Wotton 205). Hardy's pessimism also stems from his failed intimate relationships with two women: Tryphena Sparks whom he broke up with after five years of engagement and Emma Lavinia Gifford, his first wife who estranged Hardy for life.

Traits of Pessimism in Hardy's Beliefs and Convictions

The Hardy lineage possessed a deep-rooted devotion to ecclesiastical music, evidenced by their subscription to 'Thirty Select Anthems in Score'—a testament to the family's musical passions during that era (Hardy 1:10). Like his family, Hardy was "sensitive to music" and had "ecstatic temperament". He could play violin and dance on songs played by his father. Such was his commitment to liturgical music that, regardless of inclement weather, he would don a garment and partake in the service alongside his cousins and the choir (19). In 1850, when aged only ten years, he started going to an unorthodox educational institution in Dorchester. During this time, he felt intrigued by French and Latin. When young, he started reading Roman, Greek and Bible. Driven by a passion for the Romantic genre, he immersed himself in the literary worlds of William Harrison, Walter Scott, Alexandre Dumas, and Ainsworth. He conducted a study of the Bard's dramatic catastrophe, which subsequently shaped the thematic direction of his own works. Despite the wish to pursue higher education, financial constraints did not allow Hardy to continue. Consequently, he started off as an apprentice at Mr. John Hicks in 1856. During his apprenticeship, he made his acquaintance with Bastow, a Baptist and religious youth; William Barnes, an educator and man of letters; and Horace Moule, a devout Christian with a flair for unconventional and libertarian ideologies. Under his influence, Hardy explored everything from classical Greek plays to the latest English prose, as well as the scientific discoveries then challenging established religious doctrines. He gifted Hardy the 1858 edition of *The Wonders of Geology* by Mantell, with incidents mirroring the events in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. Moule also recommended reading books of Alfred Tennyson, George Eliot, and George Meredith. In the mid-19th century, Darwin's *The Origin of Species* served as a catalyst for Thomas Hardy, leading to a profound crisis of faith and

a re-evaluation of his perspective on existence. Later on, his poetry and fiction reflected this influence.

Hardy finished his training in Dorchester and moved back to London in mid-April 1862 to work as an architect. Amidst this phase Hardy frequented three churches: St. Stephen Church, All Saints Church and Saint Mary's Kilburn. These churches suggested persistent low-church affiliation (19) and had been visited by Hardy for three reasons: architectural purposes, church music and their reminiscence of Stinsford's native ecclesiastical regime (Hands 25,26). In 1860 Hardy heard speeches of John Stuart Mill, social events of Aldous Leonard Huxley and Charles Darwin's 'Natural Selection' which left an impression on Hardy. Moreover, he also felt impacted by his acquaintances such as Sir Leslie Stephen, George Meredith, Granville Barker, Aldous Huxley, John Stuart Mill, Horace Moule, Swinburne and Edmund Gosse (Patil 71). Darwin's theory acquainted Hardy with descent with modification and a realization about painful struggle for existence. Huxley's teachings caused Hardy to doubt his Christian faith. Huxley's views spoke of ceaseless human suffering, connecting the alleviation of it to sincere human effort (Kalla 140).

Hardy was not mature enough intellectually and spiritually to keep his faith intact against the doubt and pessimism of the time. He failed to reconcile religion with science. As a result, he ended up viewing God, religion, and universe in a light different to what religion had taught humanity. To be exact, borrowed beliefs of his agnostic acquaintances and atheistic philosophers brought him round, turning him from a devout Christian to an agnostic and ultimately atheist (Hands 30, 31). Hardy embraced rationalistic views of Darwin, conceptualizing human descent as a systematic progression of evolutionary development. He mirrored Darwin's theological doubts, perceiving the world not as a divine creation, but as a theater of perpetual suffering and evolutionary strife. Darwin's impact is unmistakable in a suspenseful moment from *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. While Henry Knight and Elfride Swancourt stand on a cliff's edge watching for Stephen Smith's approaching ocean liner, Knight loses his footing and tumbles over the precipice. Standing on the wet and slippery ground, Knight finds it difficult to climb back up. After a string of failed efforts to scale the cliffside once more, Knight is left dangling, desperately struggling for his life. Watching him hanging and being face to face with death, Elfride Swancourt comes to his rescue by tearing apart her skirt, turning it into a rope for him to latch onto and help himself back on top. Elfride's timely shrewdness to use a piece of her garment to rescue Henry Knight and help him climb back up, once again, mirrors Hardy's commitment to Darwinian principles and his conviction regarding human supremacy (Kalla 145).

By the close of the 1880s, Hardy's religious convictions had been supplanted by the bleak philosophical frameworks of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann. Schopenhauer's influence on Hardy was significant. Both shared the view that the universe is indifferent, if not outright hostile, to human happiness, making the tragedy of Jude Fawley a "perfect" case study for Schopenhauer's theories (Watts 15,16). All through the novel Hardy uses his characters to reflect his pessimism - a legacy that he owes to Schopenhauer.

Pessimism in Hardy's Themes, Subjects and Characters

Besides being influenced by his agnostic mentors and atheistic philosophers, Hardy also came under the influence of his mother and her notion implying that a presence looms over us, ready to shove us away from any hopeful or happy future (Deacon and Coleman 80). This notion rendered Hardy pessimistic, causing him to write on a subject bleak, fatalistic, and predestinarian. The predominant theme of his works was 'the old man and the lady', which remained with him so long

as he tried his hand at writing prose (Deacon and Coleman 140). The two selected works are also based on this theme. *A Pair of Blue Eyes* is about love, social stratification, and betrayal. The novel's central conflict hinges on the class divide between Stephen Smith, the son of a laborer, and Elfride, who occupies a higher social standing (Deacon and Coleman 151). Elfride feels smitten by Stephen Smith and promises to become his wife. However, she ends up leaving him for a rich Londoner Henry Knight who leaves her after he gets wind of her past love affair with Stephen. Virginia Woolf believes that Hardy views love as a devastating, tragic influence. For his male characters, it becomes a catalyst for rebelling against the hardships of existence; for his female characters, it manifests as an endless endurance of pain. This overwhelming force governs even the most deeply hidden aspects of his characters' identities. It is this mastery of tragic depth that distinguishes Hardy, marking him as the preeminent tragic figure in the history of English prose (qtd in Ozturk 16, 17). The novel also highlights the detrimental effect of betrayal and deception on relationships. Elfride hides her past from Henry Knight, which costs her relationship with Henry Knight and her life.

Likewise, *Jude the Obscure* sheds light on the themes of marriage, cosmic indifference, classism, sexism, and dogmatism. It is a story about Jude - an orphan helping in a farm and a working-class stonemason; his cousin, Sue Bridehead, who is intellectual, well-read, highly educated, irreligious, and unhappily married to Mr. Phillotson; and Arabella whom Jude is unhappily married to. Being stuck in his loveless marriage with Arabella, he establishes an illicit connection with Sue Bridehead and ends up having children with her. Like Jude, Sue is not happy in her marriage with Mr. Phillotson either, but she has to stay with him for social and religious reasons. In the 1912 postscript to his novel, Hardy clarifies that the story is built on a specific tragic premise: marriage should be legally terminable when it becomes unbearable. He suggests that once a union loses its emotional and moral essence, it ceases to be a true marriage, making it a fitting foundation for his narrative. Since religion did not approve of the dissolution of marriage, Jude is shown to have a secret love affair with someone he loved and procreate children out of wedlock.

Hardy's pessimism is evident from the choice of his literary themes, subjects, and characters. Hardy is devoted to highlighting marriage, casteism, sexism, and religious orthodoxy. All his characters hail from proletariat class. Both Stephen Smith and Jude are typical examples of it, both being Hardy's attempt to project his own self associated with architecture and masonry. Both the characters suffer for social and religious reasons as Hardy himself did. Both his characters Elfride Swancourt in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and Jude in *Jude the Obscure* meet with fatal tragedies. Elfride is Hardy's portrayal of his own wife Emma Lavinia Gifford and Sue Bridehead is that of his cousin Tryphena Sparks. In both novels, it is only the female characters that get judged by the society, which shows sexual discrimination against women in the Victorian Age. Moreover, all characters in both novels are painfully dissatisfied with their lives by being unhappily married to their spouses. In both novels, we are given to understand that man is up against ontological void, cosmic solitude, and some hostile universal will, which is indifferent to human pain and suffering - a pessimism that Hardy owed to his mother and his religious and philosophical mentors.

Conclusion

Thomas Hardy was a devout Christian who essentially held transcendental belief, believing in an all-loving and all-powerful God (Webster 209). However, his mother exposed him to the latest trends and fields of knowledge. It was an era characterized by significant scientific progress and the transition to industrial manufacturing, which allowed Hardy to study books written by Greek

and Latin tragedians, contemporary agnostic philosophers, and German atheistic philosophers. The philosophy of these mentors impacted Hardy's mind considerably, allowing him to pursue his own creative endeavors reflecting the influence of his philosophical mentors. From Greek and Latin tragedians, he came to know of some hostile force controlling the universe. Darwin's theory presented God in a negative light, portraying Him as blind and indifferent to Mankind (Pite 109). His theory portrayed life as a source of ceaseless pain and suffering and a persistent quest for viability. The philosophy of contemporary agnostics caused Hardy to begin to question the divine presence within the cosmos. The philosophical frameworks of Arthur Schopenhauer and Eduard von Hartmann were instrumental in dismantling Hardy's religious convictions and his belief in the divine. All these philosophers imparted to Hardy secular ethics (Kramer 64). For Schopenhauer and Van Hartmann, it was the universal will which they considered "blind," "indifferent," and "unconscious. Hardy could not take his mind off of the inherited beliefs. His works such as *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Jude the Obscure* function as mirrors of Hardy's own life. Through his characters' struggles and spiritual beliefs, Hardy projects his personal philosophy and lived history onto the page, giving his fiction a distinctively autobiographical soul.

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