

# Optimism and Pessimism in Thomas Writings of Hardy`S

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**Abstract - Analyzing the factors that shaped an author's thoughts and work is a fascinating and difficult endeavor. The same holds true for Thomas Hardy. One of his books is a particularly fascinating example of what may be considered a substantial element of idea. This study explains how Hardy's pessimism influenced his writing. This darkness, albeit permeating his works, cannot be attributed to him as an individual quality. The study also deduces the genuine foundation which inspires its appearance in all of his works. The tragic potential of his pessimistic worldview is further explored via the lens of his philosophy. - In general, Thomas Hardy is held in high regard as a worrier novelist whose works are full of tear-jerking tragedies. The antagonistic situations in all of his books stem from the uncertain states of the part of the opportunity that arise depending on the characters' psycho-logical states and erratic motivations, monetary varieties and hindrances, abnormalities of economic wellbeing and standards, communal, social, and ethnic misconception, a lack of trust in the conjugal relationship, the drive and desire for sexual pleasure, the recorded mentalities and foundations, the height of illustrious families, and an abundance of recorded mentalities and foundations.**

**Keywords - Hardy, Pessimism, Meliorist, Optimistic Psyches, Wessex; Meliorist**

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## INTRODUCTION

The reader of this essay may come away with a different perspective on Thomas Hardy than they were exposed to in another research. By the time of his death in 1922, Hardy had given up writing fiction in the hopes that literary critics would finally get him. As a result of the vicious criticisms on his last book, *Jude the Obscure*, he decided to quit writing novels altogether. At the time, reviewers had an uneducated bias against his pessimism that they let get in the way of a fair reading and an objective evaluation. Many contemporary reviewers and readers, the argument goes, missed the purpose of his great works, therefore he may have felt this way. Those who lived in the Victorian era hoped he would keep writing books like *Far from the Madding Crowd*, which provide a lovely image of country living. They constantly made fun of his finest and most serious work *Jude the Obscure* because they wanted to dismiss him as a novelty writer for the masses, reinforcing their own outdated stereotypes about life in rural England. According to Merryn Williams, "Hardy's magnificence, and his major role in the history of the English novel, is not grasped even now." This is a view shared by many critics of the twentieth century. Williams (1977) states on page xi that Even the growing number of historians and critics who admire Hardy, in general, fail to comprehend the idea/point he is writing about. This is obviously not

only because of T. S. Eliot's brutal assault on him or Dr. Leavis' rejection of his work from the great tradition. The purpose of this article is to help readers develop a more nuanced critical understanding and appreciation of Hardy's pessimism, as well as the ways in which it informed some of his masterpieces.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) is an exceptional author who has captivated readers and critics for decades thanks to his brilliant talents and unique perspective on life. Mainly, his golden pen is a symbol of boundless despair. Though it is true that man's bleak fate may be summed up in the words "he is destined to be a sad creature," this summary lacks nuance. His literary melancholy requires careful investigation, as it conceals a depth of mystery and obfuscators ambiguity. Pessimism may have a bad impact on his life, but it's also responsible for feeding his works with a wealth of undiscovered beauty. His pessimism is not a mere sickness; rather, "it is capable of tragedy... it is unity of numerous aspects and that which is terrible is merely one of them," according to one critic. The writing that results from his pessimism is a reflection of the universal pain he sees in the world. His eyes can detect the pain of humans, animals, and plants.

Ezra Pound, who portrays Hardy's talent, says, "nobody has taught me anything about writing since Thomas Hardy died," echoing the sentiments of other literary giants who have remarked on Hardy's unique genius and its underlying grief. It's instructive to examine his personal history in order to understand how his pessimism fed into his writing. A victim of "circumstances, committing brutality on one another, or pursued by a malicious destiny," in his view, man is doomed to a terrible existence. It's crucial to understand that although some of Hardy's gloom is innate, much of it is fostered by his surroundings, particularly the tragic circumstances of his youth, which serve as fertile soil for his eventual despair. The fact that he's seen criminals executed in his community just adds fuel to the fire of his pessimism. Then the practices of his upbringing unfortunately contribute to the formation of his views. When he imbues a youngster with his formidable character, he raises a capable teacher. In reality, he reaps a number of benefits from his schooling, the most important of which is that he learns to listen intently to the adult rather than the youngsters. His tragic end starts here. To force him to grow up, her teachings stifle his innocence. She puts a damper on his fun and quickly moves him from levity to somberness. When she finds out that his personality does not match his actual age, she is delighted.

In his younger years, he finds fresh inspiration for his pessimism in the Greek dramas he enjoys reading. Age, with its competing worldviews, has had a part in shaping his afflicted character as well. He no longer believes in anything, not even God's benevolent might. Hardy sinks into a deep depression as he loses faith in the goodness of God and the goodness of mankind, and as he becomes more cynical in the face of moral and philosophical dilemmas characteristic of the late Victorian era.

Hardy's pessimism extends beyond his view of the cycle of life and death to include his compassion for nonhuman species. Nothing in this cosmos can escape his compassion. Hardy feels an overwhelming sense of sympathy for these helpless beings that are up against the blind power of the cosmos. Their only solution to life's unfairness is to accept the damage done to Earth without resentment or blame and just bear it. The constant labor and compassion for Earth is the most pitiful element of their suffering. Hardy's incredible power comes from his photographic eyes, which capture every unseen victim in the universe. In the face of his ability to let emotions emerge, anguish and sadness give up. The results of his deep thought on the minutiae of everyday existence may be seen in his creations. In "Afterwards," he gives the hawk his whole attention, observes it intently, and records the falcon's courageous actions for posterity. In one passage, he describes how "the dewfall hawk comes traversing the shadows to a light upon the wind-warped highland thorn." He also describes the hedgehog's deliberate motions as it struggles in the dark in the same poem. In his words:

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness  
mothy and warm When the hedgehog travels  
furnitively over the town, one may say," he  
strove that such innocent creature she come  
to no harm.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Sundke Atif A (2016)** The human capacity for pessimism is substantial. Every day, we face a variety of challenges that might cause us to get discouraged or upset. There's no way around it for us. As such, we may safely conclude that pessimism is an inescapable part of being human. In most cases, it persists throughout a person's whole lifetime. It's a factor that can alter people's lives and futures radically. Chance, coincidence, destiny, nature, and circumstances all have a role in the pessimistic outlook that people develop. Life is not constant; rather, it evolves with time. Sometimes it's peaceful and pleasant, but more often than not it's harsh and unsettling. Pessimism is shown differently in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The predominant mood of this book is gloominess. The novel's pessimism highlights the powerlessness and disasters that befall ordinary people. Hardy, more so than any other author, has brilliantly captured the protagonist's hopelessness in this story. Ha's protagonists are portrayed as helpless, yet they nonetheless manage to captivate the reader's attention and stir emotion.

**Dr. Norah Hadi Q. Alsaeed (2022)** Poets like Thomas Hardy helped pave the way for the modern poetry of the 20th century. More than two-thirds of his poems explored a wide range of themes that are never missing, including but not limited to: frustration, pessimism, loss, agony, death, and life. The poet's invention, in which an unnamed speaker shares his thoughts on mortality, hopelessness, and other lovely gloomy themes. Trying to understand what led poet Thomas Hardy to the depths of sorrow and hopelessness that permeate his works requires a great deal of investigation and study. Many of his poems portray a bleak outlook on life, but the critics say it doesn't detract from the poetry's aesthetic appeal. To the point where his pessimism isn't seen as a mental illness, but rather an interesting and important viewpoint. The major focus of this dissertation is to explain the poet's pessimism and the literary strategy he uses to portray his pessimism in a compelling way.

**Manoj Kumar Yadav (2020)** Thomas Hardy is well recognized as a pessimist author whose stories often end in horrible circumstances. Adverse situations in all of his novels arise from the unpredictability of the role of chance, which is based on the characters' psychoanalytic states and eccentric impulses, financial variations and barriers, irregularities of social status and standards, communal, cultural, and ethnic misunderstanding, distrust in the marital relationship, thrust and lust of

sexual pleasure, historical attitudes and backgrounds, the highness of royal families, and religion. This study, however, takes a new tack in its examination of Hardy's optimistic philosophy by focusing on the ways in which his male and female protagonists, despite the cruel comedy of destiny and chance, maintain a bright line of hope, faith, and love. He realized that mankind evolves from gloom to joy, hopelessness to optimism. He had a natural disposition toward optimism, believing that things could and would get better in the long run. Some of the most fundamental human qualities he admired include hope, love, compassion, sympathy, kindness, gentleness, and selflessness. This article is an attempt, however feeble, to find the "good things in the awful things" in Thomas Hardy's fiction. As a result, it is clear that Hardy has been established as the surveyor of the human spectrum in all its dimensions, sometimes striking a note of dissonance but on the whole providing a case of performing the mechanism of accidentalism for the sturdy optimism over pessimism in his works.

**Adrian Tait (2016)** This dissertation examines Hardy as a humanist thinker by looking at his reaction to the often-inhumane treatment of animals. Hardy's writing shows a deep-seated biophilia, as seen by sequences like the pig-killing chapter in *Jude the Obscure*, which was subsequently republished by the Victorian Society for the Protection of Animals under the title "A Merciful Man." His exposure to cutting-edge ideas of the time undoubtedly had an impact on him. He learned a deep respect for life's richness and variety, as well as a feeling of connection with all living things, from Darwin. Also, Hardy has an innate aversion to harshness. However, this was a time when animals were used and manipulated in ways never before seen. Hardy emphasized in his writings, especially in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, that this inhumane treatment — this process of instrumentalization — was not limited to non-humans. Hardy's later work suggests a growing willingness to censure cruelty and an expansive sense of what might be meant by humanity and humanitarianism, even if his own thoughts were not always fully worked out, especially when, as in novels like *The Hand of Ethelbert*, his imagination conjured extraordinary scenes of animal suffering. Despite his own pessimism about the direction of human "development," with its seeming pursuit of the material at the price of the moral, this is a significant (though frequently overlooked) part of his work.

**Adrian Grafe (2020)** What do Hardy's poetic images of inanimate things seem like? Which role(s) do they play, if any? Hardy goes beyond simple personification in his writing. Thus, "To a Sea-Cliff" opens with an address to a location that, in the end, is all about drama and nothing about Nature. Hardy gives inanimate things a voice in "The High-School Lawn" and "Green Slates," but the poems' greater purpose is not in their rhetorical skill but rather in their wider poetic construction, reproduction of feeling, and evocation of deep time. By humanizing animals, Hardy implies that the slaughter of living creatures to be used as food is a tragedy for the environment. These poems

reveal the late Hardy to be as philosophical a poet as he had ever been, an empirical one whose poetics are rooted not just in the object but also in what the item symbolizes and how it stands in for the reality of experience. If this line of reasoning holds water, it will provide a new perspective from which to evaluate Hardy's ideas, supplementing the more commonplace interpretation that centers on his disillusionment. The collection's final poem, "Why Do I?" prompts us to reflect on Tim Ingold's distinction between objects and things. This poem is a strange, spectral *ars poetica* in which the "things" the persona says he "does" are actually, in the absence of any (other) referent, the poems that make up the collection and the activities that form the writing process.

## HARDY'S OPTIMISTIC CHARACTERS

Because of Thomas Hardy's positive outlook on life, his characters are portrayed in his works with a positive tone. Characters in any work of fiction represent the author's voice and reflect the author's worldview. Novelists, by virtue of their intellectual and theological predilections, are eternal optimists.

Hardy thought that there is room for improvement in humankind because of the inherent goodness in people. A desire to improve and brighten the world is evident in his works, as expressed by Webster:

It one regards a wish to thoroughly change society as an indication of optimism, one might make out a very good case for Hardy's having been, when he wrote *The Poor Man and the Lady*, considerably more sanguine than most of his contemporaries.

Hardy, an optimistic author, intended to eradicate the faults of society so that people may live and have a happy life, as shown by the underlying theme of hopefulness in his first, never-published book and by the consistent presentation of this attitude in his subsequent works. Because of this, he encouraged, via the actions of his characters, that we should endeavor to hold firm in the midst of a stormy night, because the day would definitely emerge, just as joy follows suffering. Thomas Hardy's protagonists have an abundance of optimism throughout his writings. His goal was to help society in a constructive manner. Hardy was not an advocate of a pessimistic, illusion-based worldview. So, he was not a fan of optimistic resolve, either. Regarding this, Howard Baker makes a pertinent observation:

His (Hardy's) philosophy is concrete, rough and workable; it has a few more than ordinary limitations; it has somewhat more than ordinary powers because of its rude honesty. It is richly and rightly human.

Based on this remark, we may infer that Hardy's guiding philosophy leads toward more empathetic ways of living. When people live in harmony with one another, it is only natural for men to treat others with

kindness and compassion. Thus, it may be said that a man can live an optimistic and pleasant life provided he has a good grasp of human nature. Hardy's works include protagonists who are actively engaged in shaping their own destinies. Their pragmatic optimism ultimately brings them prosperity and fulfillment. This is where the insightful words of F.B. Pinion come in:

It is a timely reminder that chance is not the sole determining factor in course of Hardy's stories, and that character is an important element in the evolutions of destiny.

The preceding remark helps us see that the novelist's intent is revealed via the construction of characters. Hardy has endowed his characters with positive traits and outlooks. It's for this reason that they fight so hard to maintain their independence and self-respect. They are not God's playthings, as some skeptics would have it, but rather active members of society and the global community.

As best he can, Thomas Hardy shows us via his male and female characters that things can and do change in our world. With the passage of time, everyone obtains the outcomes in life that they deserve in accordance with their efforts. Having trust and hope in one's actions is essential for keeping oneself on the right path. No one can find an easier kind of a solution to life's challenges until they first face and accept those challenges head-on. This is also the opinion of H.C. Webster:

Hardy does not see such a universe as utterly meaningless. He wants to show us the sorry condition of man in this world and make us realize that there are some 'irremediable ills' and that there is at least a limited opportunity for happiness.

The ability to give his abstract feelings of loss and fury a tangible touch is the most striking strength of Hardy's poetry. This extraordinary ability becomes clear in "The Walk," as he acts out his grief by walking and thinking about it. This skill is also on display in "The Broken Appointment," when he describes the disappointment via the futile activity of waiting while constantly glancing at the ticking clock. This adds credibility and persuasiveness to his poetry. Even if Hardy's "Hap" doesn't proclaim the death of happiness from the depths of his soul, he does, as is his wont, universalize his outlook to declare the worldwide lack of joy. The world, he says, is a cruel place because it is ruled by chance, which plays with and threatens man's happiness. In his despair, he reflects on man's fate, over which he has no control. The world of Hardy is dominated by forces from outside. The fact that man consistently harvests sorrow rather than joy from his own efforts to generate pleasure renders such endeavors fruitless. This is what he shows in "Hap":

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain and why unbloom, the best hope ever sown Crass

casualty obstructs the sun and rain and dicing time for gladness coasts moan These purplind Doomster has as readily strown Blissess about my pilgrimage as pains.

Even someone as pessimistic as Hardy learns that everyone, no matter how much they appreciate life's pleasures, must eventually experience its pains. Any person will eventually reach this point. He appears to think that the absence of light precludes the possibility of its discovery, and vice versa. His main piece of advice for mankind is to make the most of every joy that presents itself, particularly in one's youth, when so much unhappiness still lies dormant. This joy is vulnerable to time, which is always searching for ways to crush it. In the Hardian universe, pleasure always appears to be followed by dark morbidity, thus it seems that man has no alternative except to avoid or comfort his pain. In "First or Last," time is shown as an insidious foe that destroys humanity's brilliance. Therefore, it is decreed that man, whether first or last, must experience the sting of suffering. Hardy tells the guy that both sadness and happiness are overdue or early arrivals. Intelligent man should choose to feel joy first and let pain linger for years. In "First or Late," he explains his viewpoint:

If grief come early Joy comes late, if joy come early Grief will wait; Aye, my dear and tender! Wise ones joy then early While the cheeks are red Banish grief till surly Time has dulled their dread.

## PESSIMISM IN THOMAS HARDY`S

The mindset of pessimism. Situational pessimism is the tendency of a person to think negatively about a specific circumstance, or the belief that one is more likely to experience unfavorable events than positive ones. As a group, pessimists are prone to seeing only the bad in any given scenario or in life itself. According to Jeffery Rossman, there are two distinct varieties of pessimism. These people are;

- Pessimism as a personality trait [that is, an innate propensity to always expect the worse]
- Defensive Pessimism [It is expecting the worst and making preparations for it]

The Mayor of Casterbridge and Tess of the d'Urbervilles are two of Hardy's most gloomy novels. The protagonists of both of these books share the trait of being a "depositional pessimist" with the authors. The Mayor of Casterbridge, written by Thomas Hardy, is predicated on a theme of irrational pessimism and is based on the real-life experiences of a man named Michel Hanchard. Hardy's personal viewpoint on the events of The Mayor of Casterbridge seems distant and disconnected, adding to the novel's pervasive air of gloom. Even though he is a hard worker, he has become a puppet of his own luck and is the protagonist of the story. He



makes an effort to improve himself and the world around him, but is met with obstacles at every turn. But his life experiences combined to produce a profound gloominess. To a large extent, the novel's gloomy mood may be attributed to nothing more than a series of unfortunate coincidences.

## COINCIDENCES

Contributed much to Michael Henchard's negative outlook on his life's journey throughout the narrative. Therefore, a slightly alternative presentation of Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge's* gloomy mood has been provided. There's no denying that the novel's protagonist is a gloomy schizo, but his gloominess isn't all on him. But people's luck, destiny, and conscience have created the gloom in the main. A fatalistic outlook on life as something left to chance has been proposed. Our gloomy outlook on life has some basis in reality, but its origins lie beyond our ken. This skepticism is also present in Hanchard's life. It's hardly surprising that Hardy was labeled a "pessimist," given that he often depicted the most negative aspects of human nature. Regarding this issue, the viewpoint is both correct and incorrect. In reality, there are a number of reasons why we have to conclude that he is a pessimist. He was very sensitive, and his personal life was filled with tragedy and sadness. On Hardy, Hardy comments:

"My pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption that the world is going to the dogs. On the contrary my practical philosophy is distinctly Melioristic."

If anybody is doomed to life's tribulations, it's Tess. She tries desperately to break the cycle of bad luck that seems to be following her, but to no avail. She continues to go in the same vicious loops set out for her by her harsh destiny throughout the whole tale. She is the oldest kid and hence must work in *D'Urbervilles*. The act of her seduction is crucial to her demise. When she becomes pregnant, people turn their backs on her. In order to provide for her family, she will be working at Talbot hays. She is a victim of traditional societal attitudes because of her romantic involvements, her marriage, and her subsequent rejection by Angle Clare. That Hardy is a meliorist rather than a pessimist is without dispute. A gloomy attitude was not what R. A. Scott James expected to get from Hardy, he says. About the management of the Cosmos, Hardy is gloomy, but he has no such reservations regarding the human race. It is my firm belief that those who accuse Hardy of being a pessimist do so because of the bleak and dark outlook he presents on life.

## CONCLUSION

From Hardy's perspective, every single Live is in agony. Everyone in the universe is dealing with their own set of troubles and anguish. While he acknowledges that suffering is an inevitable part of life, he insists that happiness is more of a rarity, and that

while external factors like fate play an important part in everyone's story, there are still some things that are under our control, and we can influence our own destinies through our own cleverness and foresight. Therefore, Thomas Hardy's concept of life is both gloomy and hopeful, at least in terms of his characters' portrayals and presentations. This essay, however, argues and provides evidence that Thomas Hardy is one of the Victorian era's novels who celebrates the positive over the negative outlooks of the Wessex ordinary people who surrounded him.

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