

and solutions offered whether constitutional or violent. Secondly, it is a fact that the organisations that promoted pacifism in both questions have faded from public memory, whereas there are forty-five Easter Rising Memorials throughout Ireland together with a statue of Emmeline Pankhurst at Parliament. Although history seemingly teaches us that violence pays off, the paper claims that despite public opinion or legacy, neither the militant suffragettes nor the radical Irish Volunteers were the prime agents in bringing about a real solution to the problems of both minorities.

#### Keywords

Great-Britain, prejudice, Irish, women's rights, suffragettes, violence

#### Rezümé

Nőjogok és ír autonómia: az erőszak, mint eszköz szerepe és megítélése  
Összehasonlító elemzés

Nagy-Britanniában a huszadik század első évtizedének két legnagyobb kihívása egyértelműen a női választójog és az ír autonómia-követelések voltak. Jelen tanulmány arra vállalkozik, hogy egyrészt párhuzamba állítsa a nők és írek iránti előítéletesség forrásait és a hatalomgyakorlók jogkiterjesztéssel szembeni ellenérveit, valamint megvizsgálja a két ügy jogkövető vagy éppen jogsértő élharcosainak tevékenységét és sikerességét. Jelen tanulmány annak bebizonyítására tesz kísérletet, hogy a közvélekedéssel ellentétben a nők és az írek esetében is a militáns magatartás figyelemfelhívó volt ugyan, azonban nem tekinthető a létrejött jogkiterjesztés okának.

#### Kulcsszavak

Nagy-Britannia, előítélet, ír autonómia, női jogok, szüffrazettek, erőszak

#### ELENA RIMONDO

### From Anti-Heroism to Complete Obscurity and Return: Thomas Hardy's Modern Tragic Heroes

George Eliot, by claiming the right to the tragedy of common people condemned to a monotonous life, made the first step towards the convergence of the realistic mode of the novel and tragedy. Yet Thomas Hardy's novels induced many contemporary critics to adopt the adjective 'tragic' to describe his heroes' and heroines' destinies. This contribution will illustrate, first of all, how Hardy internalised George Eliot's legacy, then, in the second part, it will argue that in Hardy's universe, which is dominated by chance and by an indifferent nature, the hero's tragic destiny coincides with an utterly meaningless death.

When, in 1874, Thomas Hardy's novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* was serialised, many readers thought they were reading George Eliot's latest novel. One of the reasons for their mistake was probably the fact that *Far from the Madding Crowd* does not belong to the category of Hardy's tragic novels. No such confusion arose in the reception of *The Return of Native*, Hardy's first experiment with the form of tragedy.<sup>1</sup> There are indeed many reasons why George Eliot's novels can be defined as tragic, but not as authentic tragedies. For example, George Eliot attributes a fundamental role to the individual's possibility to exert his or her free will in shaping his or her destiny.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the sense of continuity following the tragic event at the end of her novels breaks with the sense of finality inherent to the tragic form.<sup>3</sup> According to Jeanette King, who defined George Eliot's novels as 'pathetic tragedies',<sup>4</sup> Eliot's most lasting legacy lies in the convergence of the realistic mode and the tragic form.<sup>5</sup> If the artist's aim is 'to extend our sympathies'<sup>6</sup> through a faithful representation of reality and life, the tragic situation is the one which, more than any other, can stimulate and facilitate our ability to sympathise. Yet George Eliot did not limit herself to claiming common people's right to tragedy. In the well-known Chapter XVII of *Adam Bede*, she introduced a short but effective apology of Dutch painting, which was generally considered inferior at the time. On the

<sup>1</sup> See Dale KRAMER: *Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy*, London, Macmillan, 1975, 48.

<sup>2</sup> See Jeannette KING: *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel: Theory and Practice in the Novels of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Henry James*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978, 90.

<sup>3</sup> See KING: *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*, 94 and K. M. Newton: 'Tragedy and the Novel.' In Phillip Mallett (ed.): *Thomas Hardy in Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 122–131, 128.

<sup>4</sup> KING: *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*, 70.

<sup>5</sup> See KING: *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*, 45 and 89.

<sup>6</sup> George ELIOT: 'The Natural History of German Life' (July 1856). In A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren (eds.): *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, London, Penguin, 1990, 107–139, 110.

contrary, in George Eliot's opinion Flemish paintings are characterised by a 'rare, precious quality of truthfulness'.<sup>7</sup> It is the very fact of being 'pictures of a monotonous homely existence'<sup>8</sup> that arouses Eliot's sympathies—in the etymological sense of the word—to the point that she recommends the subjects (and the faithfulness of representation) of Flemish paintings as models for contemporary novelists who pursue the apparently modest aim of truthfully relating stories and portraying characters on the verge of insignificance. It is the triviality and the imperfection of the subject matter represented in Dutch paintings that elicits our sympathies, also because—as Eliot reminds us—'a monotonous homely existence [...] has been the fate of so many more among my fellow-mortals than a life of pomp or of absolute indigence, of tragic suffering or of world-stirring actions'.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, a novelist should give voice to that multitude of individuals condemned to an existence so monotonous as to be, in its own way, tragic. George Eliot illustrated this new form assumed by the tragic mode, according to which even death is to be preferred to the tedium of an uneventful life, in the figure of Dorothea Brooke, the protagonist of *Middlemarch*. Dorothea marries Edward Casaubon, a pedantic scholar much older than her, hoping to contribute to the spiritual and intellectual progress of humanity. Contrary to her expectations, the marriage soon proves disastrous, and Dorothea finds herself in a situation that cannot but be defined as tragic. The narrator himself explains why Dorothea's condition is tragic in a paragraph that is also a manifesto of George Eliot's conception of the tragic form:

Not that this inward amazement of Dorothea's was anything very exceptional: many souls in their young nudity are tumbled out among incongruities and left to 'find their feet' among them, while their elders go about their business. Nor can I suppose that when Mrs. Casaubon is discovered in a fit of weeping six weeks after her wedding, the situation will be regarded as tragic. Some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary, is not unusual, and we do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual. That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.<sup>10</sup>

In this passage from *Middlemarch* George Eliot questions the current idea of tragedy from many points of view, first of all by criticising the assumption that the

tragic must necessarily coincide with the unusual. Besides strongly claiming the right to define the ordinary, yet for this very reason omnipresent human failures as 'tragic', Eliot instils the doubt that this new shape assumed by the tragic may even require a more perceptive sensibility to be acknowledged and appreciated. If the representation of an exceptionally tragic event imposes itself in front of the reader or spectator, the account of a monotonous life characterised by daily frustrations can excite heartfelt sympathy only in human beings with the ability to feel—and, consequently, to understand—subtler passions. When mankind is able to grasp the dramatic element of an ordinary existence, it will realise—and this is the most disruptive statement contained in the passage—that an insignificant life can be even more tragic than a life characterised by one exceptional 'tragic' (in the general sense of the term) event.

George Eliot therefore fostered the encounter between the novel and that tragic mode which would characterise bourgeois tragedies,<sup>11</sup> i.e. the idea that a tragedy coincides with life itself, rather than with its ending.<sup>12</sup> At the same time the premises which allowed the birth of the modern novel, that is to say, in Ian Watt's words, 'the serious concern', felt both by the novelist and by his or her readers, 'with the daily lives of ordinary people',<sup>13</sup> became established. As hinted above, however, George Eliot's novels did not prove entirely successful tragedies. This failure was partly due to the very recourse to realism, which on the one hand enabled readers to identify with ordinary individuals, but on the other hand undermined the heroic aura typically surrounding tragic characters. Indeed, the protagonists of some of George Eliot's novels inspire compassion and pity rather than awe mixed with reverence.<sup>14</sup>

Thomas Hardy continued George Eliot's legacy, but he was able to combine the form of novel and the tragic mode in a more convincing way only by taking to extremes some of the innovations introduced by his predecessor and, at the same time, by making a clean break with her technique. As in George Eliot's novels—and sometimes even more than in them—in Hardy's works the tragic performs the function of extending our sympathies, thus promoting the perfect identification with the hero or the heroine, be that a milkmaid or a decaying grain merchant. In George Eliot's novels, indeed, the individual is part of an intricate web of social relations, which not only influence every aspect of his life, but also have the function of putting into proportion the individual's aspirations, disappointments, successes and failures. Although in Hardy the social context undoubtedly plays a fundamental role in forging the tragic destiny of the characters, as D. H. Lawrence observed,<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See KING: *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*, 46.

<sup>12</sup> See Peter SZONDI: *Theory of the Modern Drama*, English translation by Michael Hays, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Ian WATT: *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), Harmondsworth, Penguin in association with Chatto & Windus, 1972, 66.

<sup>14</sup> See KING: *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*, 70.

<sup>15</sup> See David Herbert LAWRENCE: 'Study of Thomas Hardy'. In Edward D. McDONALD (ed.): *Phoenix*, London, Heinemann, 1961, 2 Vols., Vol. I, 398–516, 419–420.

<sup>7</sup> GEORGE ELIOT: *Adam Bede* (1859), ed. Margaret Reynolds, London, Penguin, 2008, 195.

<sup>8</sup> ELIOT: *Adam Bede*, 195.

<sup>9</sup> ELIOT: *Adam Bede*, 195.

<sup>10</sup> GEORGE ELIOT: *Middlemarch* (1871–2), ed. Rosemary Ashton, London, Penguin, 1994, 194.

on the whole his protagonists appear as isolated and tower over both the other characters moving around them and the environment in which they live. This happens even if the natural world is often extremely oppressive and brutal, as in *The Return of the Native* or *The Woodlanders*. Hardy's heroes and heroines possess that dignity<sup>16</sup> Eliot's protagonists lacked, despite their being—it is worth remembering—of humble origins and their not being characterised by any exceptional quality, apart from the extreme cases represented by Tess Durbeyfield and Jude Fawley, who are endowed with a sensibility out of the ordinary. Hardy's heroes derive their dignity from their obstinate resistance not only to society, but also to incommensurable nature and to the obscure forces of destiny. By returning to ordinary people part of that dignity they had been deprived of, Hardy revealed that he had received the legacy left by Coleridge and Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads*.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, by so doing Hardy reinforced the bond between the form of the novel and the tragic mode. Thirdly, he made tragedy more democratic. As Dale Kramer has observed, 'what he [Hardy] brought to English tragedy was democracy, the pain of the average, who wasn't average'.<sup>18</sup> We can therefore say that Thomas Hardy carried to extremes George Eliot's intention of turning tragedy into a 'democratic' form, to the point that the social origins of his protagonists become almost irrelevant.<sup>19</sup> This does not mean that the material circumstances into which Hardy's heroes are born do not contribute to their tragic destiny. On the contrary, social status does play a fundamental role, for example in complicating Tess Durbeyfield's and Jude Fawley's lives and then in determining their fates. But even if Hardy was far from denying common people's right to tragedy, in his essay titled 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction' he explained the reason why one's tragic destiny does not depend on the social class into which one was born:

All persons who have thoughtfully compared class with class – and the wider their experience the more pronounced their opinion – are convinced that education has as yet but little broken or modified the waves of human impulse on which deeds and words depend. So that in the portraiture of scenes in any way emotional or dramatic – the highest province of fiction – the peer and the peasant stand on much the same level; the woman who makes the satin train and the woman who wears it. In the lapse of countless ages, no doubt, improved systems of moral education will considerably and appreciably elevate even the involuntary instincts of human nature; but at present culture has only affected the surface of those lives with which it has come in contact, binding down the

<sup>16</sup> See Harold BLOOM (ed.): *Thomas Hardy*, New York, Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2010, 3.

<sup>17</sup> See Elena RIMONDO: "The essence of individuality": Hardy and the Provincial Novel between Anthropology and the Romantic Legacy'. *Annali di Ca' Foscari – Serie Occidentale*, 50 (2016), 323–340, doi.org/10.14277/2499-1562/AnnOc-50-16-17, online [last accessed 13/05/2017]. 324–330.

<sup>18</sup> Dale KRAMER: 'Hardy: The Driftiness of Tragedy'. In Rosemary Morgan (ed.): *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2010, 371–385, 374.

<sup>19</sup> See KING: *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*, 44.

passions of those predisposed to turmoil as by a silken thread only, which the first ebullition suffices to break.<sup>20</sup>

According to Hardy, education, and culture in general, can do nothing or very little to counteract human passions. And since human beings, regardless of the social class to which they belong, are affected by the same passions and are driven by common instincts, it follows that we lose individual distinctions when a tragedy befalls us. As a consequence, women<sup>21</sup> and poor people—that is to say those who have often been excluded from tragic literature—have neither less nor more rights to be stricken by a tragedy.<sup>22</sup> After all, a note written by Hardy in April 1878 confirms that passions are one of the main causes of the tragic fate of the Hardy heroes:

A Plot, or Tragedy, should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions, by reason of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said passions, prejudices, and ambitions.<sup>23</sup>

It is no coincidence that Hardy insists on the fact that human passions at the core of tragedies are common and ordinary. In a note written in 1881 Hardy affirmed that literary fiction has the function of satisfying our attraction to whatever is unusual in human experience, but specified that the events must be out of the ordinary, not the characters. In this way the reader's interest is aroused and at the same time he or she can easily identify with the hero or heroine:

The real, if unavowed, purpose of fiction is to give pleasure by gratifying the love of the uncommon in human experience mental or corporeal.

This is done all the more perfectly in proportion as the reader is illuded to believe the personages true and real like himself.

Solely to the latter end a work of fiction should be a precise transcript of ordinary life: but,

The uncommon would be absent and the interest lost. Hence,

<sup>20</sup> Thomas HARDY: 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction' (1888). In Harold Orel (ed.): *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings: Prefaces, Literary Opinions, Reminiscences*, London and Melbourne, Macmillan, 1967, 110–125, 124.

<sup>21</sup> On this point, Arthur McDowall stated that in Hardy's novels passions represent the most powerful and pervasive natural force and then observed how they are able to blur the differences between men and women and between individuals with different personalities (see Arthur MCDOWALL: *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study*, London, Faber & Faber, 1931, 119).

<sup>22</sup> As Dale Kramer maintains, in Hardy 'there is no felt obligation to dignify his protagonists beyond their deserved stature, to either romanticize, aggrandize, or pardon their failings. They are, simply, individuals caught in a web of interrelated lives and influences' (Dale KRAMER: 'Hardy's Prospects as a Tragic Novelist'. *The Dalhousie Review*, 52:2 [1971], 178–189, 182).

<sup>23</sup> Michael MILLGATE (ed.): *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy by Thomas Hardy*, London, Macmillan, 1989, 123.

The writer's problem is, how to strike the balance between the uncommon and the ordinary so as on the one hand to give interest, on the other to give reality.

In working out this problem, human nature must never be made abnormal, which is introducing incredibility. The uncommonness must be in the events, not in the characters; and the writer's art lies in shaping that uncommonness while disguising its unlikelihood, if it unlikely.<sup>24</sup>

This refusal of the monotonous, though realistic, homely existence reveals how Hardy combined a personal and autonomous conception of tragedy with the legacy left by George Eliot. In order to increase the tragic potential of his novels, in a certain sense Hardy had to forgo some realism, or at least to subtract it from the events and direct it towards the characters.<sup>25</sup> In fact, Hardy himself declared that an artist's duty is to transform reality in order to emphasise some aspects which would otherwise pass unnoticed. From that he deduced that realism, whose purpose is to faithfully represent reality, cannot be true art:

Art is a disproportioning—i.e., distorting, throwing out of proportion of realities, to show more clearly the features that matter in those realities, which, if merely copied or reported inventorially, might possibly be observed, but would more probably be overlooked. Hence 'realism' is not Art.<sup>26</sup>

Fortuitous coincidences, unexpected encounters leading to equally unexpected consequences, a past event emerging again at the right moment, the sudden return of a character everyone deemed dead: these are the improbable events taking place around Hardy's ordinary protagonists. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* ends with the narrator's famous comment that 'the President of the Immortals [...] had ended his sport with Tess',<sup>27</sup> but the reader should not be deceived. We have indeed to bear in mind that, in a certain sense, it is the author himself who puts various kinds of individuals to several tests. In so doing, he aims at bringing out the very 'ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions' which would have remained unexpressed if his heroes and heroines had led a monotonous homely existence. According to Arthur McDowall, the complex plots characterising Hardy's novels, where action prevails over description and introspection, leave 'little room for an elaborate psychology'<sup>28</sup> because they are 'planned in a way that shows the behaviour of the characters but much less, as a rule, of their inner life'.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> MILLGATE: *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 154.

<sup>25</sup> On this point, see Francis O'GORMAN: 'Thomas Hardy and Realism'. In Phillip Mallett (ed.): *Thomas Hardy in Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 113–121, 116.

<sup>26</sup> MILLGATE: *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 239.

<sup>27</sup> THOMAS HARDY: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), ed. Tim Dolin, London, Penguin, 2003, 397.

<sup>28</sup> MCDOWALL: *Thomas Hardy*, 125.

<sup>29</sup> MCDOWALL: *Thomas Hardy*, 116. After all, Aristotle himself suggested in his *Poetics*, after having de-

The Hardyan conception of tragedy, however, cannot be reduced to a mere combination of ordinary characters (ordinary because driven by instincts and passions to be found in any individual) and exceptional events. In fact, Hardy carried to extremes, rather than rejected, George Eliot's conviction that the tragic destiny coincides with an insignificant existence, deprived of momentous events and great ambitions. If, on the one hand, Hardy's common heroes are the protagonists of extraordinary vicissitudes, on the other hand they are condemned, as if by a *contra-passo* punishment, to a fate far from exceptional. Yet, unlike what often happens in George Eliot's novels, Hardy's novels and short stories usually end with the classic death of the hero.

The protagonist's death, however, has a peculiar meaning in Hardy, which can be understood if we analyse and compare the four novels generally considered as 'tragic', that is to say *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Woodlanders*<sup>30</sup> and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, plus a fifth novel, *Jude the Obscure*. Critics tend to disagree about whether the latter is a 'tragedy',<sup>31</sup> and indeed, it has been defined by Ronald Draper as 'at once the most and the least tragic of Hardy's novels'<sup>32</sup> because of the absence of a serious wrong committed by the protagonist and the lack of an ineluctable fate. In fact, the epilogue of *Jude* confirms a tendency detectable since Hardy's first 'tragic' novel and which will be developed in different directions in the following works. Although the tragic hero (or the heroine) dies in all of the novels mentioned above, their deaths do not give them any of the advantages, so to speak, offered to the heroes of Greek tragedies. In *The Death of Tragedy* Steiner has

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 clared that plot is the most important element of the six parts a tragedy is made of (see ARISTOTLE: *Poetics*, English translation by Malcolm Heath, London, Penguin, 1996, 11), that a character's spoken words and actions concur in defining his personality (see ARISTOTLE: *Poetics*, 25). Moreover, it is worth reminding that, according to Nietzsche, the very tendency to portray definite characters with psychological depth is one of the signs of the future victory of the Socratic rationalism over the Dionysiac spirit, or 'of the individual phenomenon over the universal' (Friedrich Nietzsche: *The Birth of Tragedy* [1872], English translation by Shaun Whiteside, London, Penguin, 1993, 84).

<sup>30</sup> In fact, critics do not agree on *The Woodlanders* either, since it contains some elements which are typical of comedies (see, for example, Michael MILLGATE: *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist*, London, Bodley Head, 1971, 257–260). Conversely, Kramer argues that in this very novel Hardy was able to move away from classic models and to write a completely new kind of tragedy, where the fates of all the characters are disrupted by the strict social conventions (see KRAMER: *Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy*, 105–110). Finally, David Ball maintains that in Hardy, as in Shakespeare, it is the ending (where the hero—in this case Giles Winterborne—dies) that obliges us to read the preceding events in a tragic way instead of a comic one (see David BALL: 'Tragic Contradiction in Hardy's *The Woodlanders*'. *Ariel*, 18 [1987], 17–25. 17 and 19).

<sup>31</sup> This vision has been influenced by the already mentioned essay by D. H. Lawrence on Hardy (see LAWRENCE: 'Study of Thomas Hardy', 420). According to Albert Guérard, who yet defines *Jude the Obscure* as 'an impressive tragedy' (Albert J. GUÉRARD: *Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories*, London, Oxford University Press, 1949, 32), Jude is not a tragic hero for the very reason of being a modern man (see GUÉRARD: *Thomas Hardy*, 152).

<sup>32</sup> Ronald P. DRAPER: 'Tragedy'. In Norman Page (ed.): *Oxford Reader's Companion to Hardy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, 428–432, 431.



written that, since the tragic hero always has to suffer a punishment exceeding his guilt, the disproportion between the sin committed and the chastisement inflicted allows him to acquire dignity in our eyes.<sup>33</sup> In Hardy, on the contrary, the punishment for the guilt committed by his heroes is even more excessive compared to those inflicted by the obscure divine forces in Greek tragedies. This is all the more true if we consider that at the same time Hardy questions the very concept of guilt. He does so by contrasting man and his passions not only with blind universal forces, but also with the rigid human institutions and society. Certainly the romantic ideals derived from Rousseau and listed by Steiner (that is, the centrality of the self and the individual's fundamental goodness) survive in Hardy, and this has been confirmed above. Yet his notion of guilt did not undergo that radical revision undertaken by Rousseau and completed by the Romantics:

In the Rousseauist mythology of conduct, a man could commit a crime either because his education had not taught him how to distinguish good and evil, or because he had been corrupted by society. Responsibility lay with his schooling or environment, for evil cannot be native to the soul. And because the individual is not wholly responsible, he cannot be wholly damned.<sup>34</sup>

In fact it would be inappropriate to say that Hardy's heroes—with the only exception of Michael Henchard—are completely guilty. Tess can be blamed for a certain passivity, Eustacia Vye for her bovaryism and Grace Melbury for her wrong choice, but in any case their punishment always appears as excessive if compared to their mistakes. Moreover, the combination of the natural environment (especially in *The Return of the Native*), the material conditions into which Hardy's heroes are born and the social conventions plays a fundamental role in triggering the tragic mechanism.<sup>35</sup> Hardy's tendency to exculpate the individual is particularly evident in *Tess*, whose provocative subtitle reads 'A pure woman faithfully presented'. Notwithstanding this, a punishment far more severe than death is in store for Hardy's heroes: it is complete obscurity, which threatens to make their sacrifice useless and meaningless.

Now, the 'damnatio memoriae' bears different characteristics and meanings in Hardy's various tragic novels. For example, it is a spontaneous choice only in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, whose protagonist, Michael Henchard, has been defined by the already mentioned Ronald Draper as the most Aristotelian of Hardy's heroes because the origin of his tragic fate is a true 'hamartia', that is to say, a mistake he made when he was young. Besides, Henchard's tragic course aims at the final

catharsis.<sup>36</sup> The subtitle of the novel, 'A story of a Man of Character', states at the very beginning that here the character of a man is his fate. Moreover, during one of the turning points of the novel, when Henchard orders his young rival Farfrae not to see his daughter Elizabeth-Jane anymore, thus hindering a union advantageous for both, the narrator explicitly quotes Novalis's famous words, 'Character is Fate'.<sup>37</sup> Also in the other novels by Hardy—not only the 'tragic' ones—the hero's (or heroine's) character plays an important role in shaping his or her destiny, but only in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* does the protagonist choose obscurity of his own free will. This happens because Michael Henchard has a personality that could be literally defined as 'overflowing'. Henchard is proud, obstinate and endowed with an extraordinary strength, so that his personality cannot be contained by (and in) the rural town of Casterbridge, whose community is strictly divided into castes and whose inhabitants perform a specific role and have to abide by a series of non-written rules. Casterbridge, in addition, is an only apparently motionless town, for transformations take place in an almost imperceptible way and novelties have difficulties in imposing themselves. Yet the main tragic aspect of the novel consists in Henchard's inability to acknowledge progress (and changes more at large) and to adapt to them. Henchard's personality, indeed, undergoes no substantial evolution in the course of the novel.<sup>38</sup> Therefore we can say that Henchard cuts himself off from the town of which he had been mayor and the most noteworthy person, to go and die far from civilisation because he does not want to and cannot forgo his identity. Unable to find a place that can contain his instinctual and egotistic personality, Henchard prefers to end his life as it had begun, that is to say as a wanderer. Thus his experience as mayor and merchant of Casterbridge appears as a rather brief interlude in his life.

Although the other tragic heroes of Hardy's novels distinguish themselves from Henchard by the lack of an authentic 'hamartia', they nonetheless share the common wish to maintain their own identities. Every Hardyan hero desperately struggles to defend his or her uniqueness, but the battle between them, on the one hand, and society, nature and even the universe on the other, is so unequal that death appears as a desperate act—the only possible one—to exert their will. There is actually no other option, given that some individuals cannot maintain their identities in the real world, or, to be more precise, in the world as conceived by the author. Unlike Henchard, the other heroes do not have an unrestrainable personality; moreover, it would be incorrect to say that they are unable to adapt to changes. Hardy's tragic heroes are generally young people sufficiently educated, who had the opportunity to travel. Thus they have temporarily left behind their birthplace, characterised by

<sup>33</sup> See George STEINER: *The Death of Tragedy*, London, Faber, 1961, 10.

<sup>34</sup> STEINER: *The Death of Tragedy*, 129.

<sup>35</sup> Jeannette King has rightly defined Hardy's novels as 'tragedies of situation, rather than of character' (KING: *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*, 99).

<sup>36</sup> See DRAPER: 'Tragedy', 430.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas HARDY: *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), ed. Dale Kramer, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, repr. 2008, 107. On the origin of this maxim, quoted by both Hardy and Eliot, see Dale Kramer's note to Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, 328n.

<sup>38</sup> See KRAMER: *Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy*, 90.

traditions of pagan origin and often by an inclement environment. For instance, Tess has received an education of a modern kind which has created between her and her mother 'a gap of two hundred years';<sup>39</sup> Grace Melbury has studied in a prestigious school by her father's will; Eustacia, who was born and bred in a fashionable seaside resort, becomes infatuated with Clym Yeobright primarily because he spent some years in Paris. In fact, the tragedy of the protagonists of Hardy's novels, apart from Henchard, is not so much that of belonging to an endangered species, as to be in a sort of limbo between modernity and an archaic world to which they keep returning because they are unable to part with it once and for all.

In some ways, Hardy's heroes are therefore even too modern, especially in comparison with the surrounding environment, which is still closely characterised by a traditional and pre-industrial past. Some Hardyan characters, in particular Clym and Jude, could be said to be born in the wrong place at the wrong time. As for Clym, who leaves Paris to return to Egdon Heath, his native soil, he is described as a typically modern man, also from the point of view of his physical appearance: 'In Clym Yeobright's face could be dimly seen the typical countenance of the future. Should there be a classic period to art hereafter, its Phidias may produce such faces'.<sup>40</sup> Not long after, the narrator explicitly says that Clym's attempt to educate the heathmen fails because he belongs to a later era than Egdon Heath:

Mentally he was in a provincial future, that is, he was in many points abreast with the central town thinkers of his date. [...]

In consequence of this relatively advanced position Yeobright might have been called unfortunate. The rural world was not ripe for him. A man should be only partially before his time: to be completely to the vanward in aspirations is fatal to fame.<sup>41</sup>

If in *The Return of the Native* Clym is conscious of his modernity until the end, in *Jude the Obscure*, on the contrary, the protagonists themselves have the impression of being ahead of their times and, as a consequence, of being never understood by the society they live in. Jude Fawley, after realising his failures, comments: 'It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one'.<sup>42</sup> This is all the more true of Jude's son, Little Father Time, who commits suicide after having killed his siblings because he has already been tainted by the 'cupio dissolvi', a self-annihilating tendency still unknown to his contemporaries. To Sue, who feels guilty about the murder-suicide committed by Little Father Time, Jude replies by reporting the doctor's diagnosis:

<sup>39</sup> HARDY: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 23.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas HARDY: *The Return of the Native* (1878), ed. Simon Gatrell, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, repr. 2008, 165.

<sup>41</sup> HARDY: *The Return of the Native*, 170.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas HARDY: *Jude the Obscure* (1895), ed. Dennis Taylor, London, Penguin, 1998, 326.

'It was in his nature to do it. The doctor says there are such boys springing up amongst us—boys of a sort unknown in the last generation—the outcome of new views of life. They seem to see all its terrors before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them. He says it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live.'<sup>43</sup>

Although modern and cosmopolitan, Hardy's protagonists are still characterised by a well-defined identity, even if, as it has been said above, their inner self must be deduced from their actions and their behaviour in the extraordinary situations contrived by the author. The very fact of possessing a unique personality is the reason why Hardy's heroes are not entirely modern. The most enlightening declaration on the close bond between progress and the loss of identity is contained in one of Hardy's earlier novels, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, which has nonetheless been defined as 'neither properly comic nor properly tragic, but something in between—and something other than a tragicomedy'.<sup>44</sup> The young architect Stephen Smith, an even too pragmatic man originally from a Cornish village, has lost—also because of the years spent in London—the distinctive characteristics his father John still preserves:

John Smith [...] was a satisfactory specimen of the village artificer in stone. In common with most rural mechanics, he had too much individuality to be a typical 'working-man'—a resultant of that beach-pebble attrition with his kind only to be experienced in large towns, which metamorphoses the unit Self into the fraction of the unit Class.<sup>45</sup>

Lacking a unique physiognomy and personality, Stephen Smith cannot be listed among Hardy's tragic heroes. At the opposite pole there is of course the 'man of character' by definition, that is to say Henchard. Yet all the protagonists of Hardy's tragic novels, as hinted above, share the necessity and the desire to protect their uniqueness from the attacks launched by an overwhelming nature and the advance of progress into the remotest corners of the rural South West of England, that is to say Hardy's Wessex.

As far as *The Return of the Native* is concerned, both protagonists are unique specimens in the circumscribed environment where the story takes place. Clym's peculiar appearance and personality has already been dealt with. Regarding Eustacia, who appears isolated and in contrast with the surrounding environment from the very beginning, she is perceived as an intruder by the natives of the heath. After all, her tragedy consists in her proud and obstinate wish to affirm her uniqueness<sup>46</sup> in

<sup>43</sup> HARDY: *Jude the Obscure*, 336–337.

<sup>44</sup> Tim DOLIN: 'Introduction' to Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, ed. Alan Manford, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, xi–xxxviii, xxix.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas HARDY: *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), ed. Alan Manford, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, 83.

<sup>46</sup> D. H. Lawrence made this remark about Eustacia: 'What does she want? She does not know, but it is

an environment where man is constantly engaged in a useless fight against a nature all the more malignant because of her indifference. In the attempt of getting out of her bovarysm, Eustacia ironically dies (or, more probably, kills herself) in the heart of the loathed heath.

A similar fate lies in store for the male protagonist of *The Woodlanders*, Giles Winterborne, who lives in total harmony with nature. Unlike Eustacia, he does not try to oppose nature because he is well aware that it is a battle lost before it began. Yet, even if the cause of his death is nature in the shape of a series of rainy days, the tragic mechanism is set in motion by the strict rules in force in the close-knit community of Little Hintock and, again, by human passions. As the narrator announces at the beginning of the novel, it is in microcosms like this that the greatest tragedies have their origins. The reason is the clash between fierce passions and the tendency to normalise typical of society:<sup>47</sup>

[Little Hintock] was one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listlessness than meditation; where reasoning proceeds on narrow premisses, and results in inferences wildly imaginative; yet where, from time to time, no less than in other places, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives therein.<sup>48</sup>

After having long repressed his passions, Giles dies because of the excessive pressure exerted by an unnatural structure of conventions and moral principles, which is even more oppressive in such a small community and faraway place. And since in microcosms of this kind the lives of the individuals are tightly bound together,<sup>49</sup> by sacrificing himself Giles brings about not only his own tragedy, but also Marty South's and Grace Melbury's, who are condemned to a life that promises to be worse than death.

However, it is in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and in *Jude the Obscure* that the protagonists' will—combined with the impossibility—to defend their own identities to the bitter end merges with the tragic mode. Tess and Jude are constantly engaged in an

.....  
evidently some form of self-realization; she wants to be herself, to attain herself' (LAWRENCE: 'Study of Thomas Hardy', 414).

<sup>47</sup> See KRAMER: *Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy*, 96 and 106.

<sup>48</sup> THOMAS HARDY: *The Woodlanders* (1887), ed. Patricia Ingham, London, Penguin, 1998, 8.

<sup>49</sup> The concept of the interdependence of human lives is crucial in George Eliot, who used the image of the web in *Middlemarch* as a metaphor to describe the dynamics underpinning human destinies in the microcosm where the novel is set. The affinity between Eliot and Hardy on this point would require a more extensive investigation, which cannot be pursued here for reasons of space. Illuminating observations can be found in Jeannette King's study, regarding in particular the analysis of the greater importance assumed by human institutions and biology in Hardy (see KING: *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*, 16–17).

ineffectual struggle to claim their uniqueness, and maybe it is no coincidence that their personalities and the reasons for their choices always remain elusive. Even if Tess is aware of the insignificance of human lives, she does not consent to conform to the various stereotyped identities, from impure woman to murderer, that society and single individuals, especially Alec and Angel, try to impose on her. The seven phases forming the novel correspond to as many visions of Tess, but none coincides with her true identity, which is so unique and complex as to defy any classification. The calm pervading Tess in the scene at Stonehenge is due to her being aware that death will put an end to every attempt to reduce her personality to a stereotype. Tess is convinced that her final sacrifice is necessary to assert and protect her identity.

On the other hand, the tone of Jude's existential parable and death is totally different. Unlike Tess, Jude does not have a precise physiognomy and he himself ignores his origin and his identity. In other words, Jude is characterised by a certain vagueness, both physical and psychological. His inclinations are subject to frequent changes, and there are only two constants in his life: his love for Sue and his attachment to Christminster. Yet those pivots turn out to be not only insufficient, but also deleterious to his quest for a precise and stable identity, given that Sue is in her turn unable to accept and express her own nature, while Christminster continues to arouse false hopes in him. Jude's tragedy is therefore even greater than those of the other Hardy heroes, since he does not possess a strong identity to oppose the normalising forces of society. Moreover, these same forces, together with the inevitable human passions, crush all his attempts to discover his inclinations.

At this stage a question arises spontaneously: do Hardy's heroes succeed in preserving their identities thanks to death? In my opinion, in most of Hardy's novels death is only the latest joke played on the protagonists by a blind and malevolent fate. Death, which they are obliged to accept in order to preserve their uniqueness, in fact turns out to be the final phase of the total annihilation of their identities. Both society and the obscure forces that dominate in the Hardy universe witness the tragic event with mute indifference. The death of Eustacia, the heroine of *The Return of the Native*, cannot in any way move the cruel and terrible nature of the heath, just as Tess's execution does not spoil the beauty of the spires of Wintonchester illuminated by the sun. And while Jude is dying completely alone, Christminster is celebrating Remembrance Day, a coincidence that does but emphasise the utter uselessness of his sacrifice. To make matters worse, most of Hardy's protagonists, and especially his tragic heroes—from Clym and Eustacia to Henchard, from Winterborne to Tess—die childless, so that few, or no one, remains to hand down their story to posterity. The case of Jude is emblematic, to the point that his obscure destiny even becomes his epithet.

Yet, it is thanks to the same puppeteer, who had delighted in inflicting any kind of torment on his characters, if all is not lost and if not even Jude's death is meaningless. The omniscient narrator and the author hiding behind him not only re-as-

sign a meaning to the hero's death, but also glorify his uniqueness and his individuality, by momentarily opening a gap in the wall of mute indifference enclosing Hardy's Wessex.

### Abstract

*George Eliot, by claiming common people's right to tragedy and by showing how a monotonous life is probably a tragedy worse than death, made the first step towards the convergence of the realistic mode and tragedy. Thomas Hardy continued Eliot's legacy and made common people dominated by ordinary passions the protagonists of tragic destinies. Yet Hardy had to take some realism away from the plot in order to give his heroes the dignity Eliot's protagonists lacked. At the same time, however, Hardy carried to extremes Eliot's conviction that the tragic destiny may be an insignificant existence. Although Hardy's tragic novels usually end with the hero's classic death, this is not the cruellest punishment inflicted on them. The present contribution takes into consideration Hardy's tragic novels and aims at illustrating how his heroes' efforts to defend their identity are mockingly punished with a sort of 'damnatio memoriae' only the author can relieve.*

### Keywords

Hardy, Thomas; tragedy; Eliot, George; realism; identity; Jude the Obscure; Tess of the D'Urbervilles

## TAMÁS JUHÁSZ

### On the Prince Rudolf Motif in Joyce's *Ulysses* and Krúdy's *Jockey Club*

The mysterious death of Prince Rudolf and his lover Maria von Vetsera in 1889 provoked a large number of artistic and literary responses. These ranged from novels through musicals to films,<sup>1</sup> and *The Waste Land*, T. S. Eliot's supercanonical, exemplary modernist poem evokes the memory of the young baroness in the very first section: 'And when we were children / staying at the arch-duke's / My cousin, he took me out on a sled, / And I was frightened. He said, Marie, / Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.'<sup>2</sup> Eliot's reliance on ominous wording suggesting fear and a downward move is in harmony with the manner in which many others—by then distinguished by their ability to review World War I in retrospection—believe that the Crown Prince's death in Mayerling revealed a major discord within the skeletal, but still powerful communal frame of the monarchy, and thereby anticipated the eventual demise of dynastic rule. In my paper, I would like to discuss and compare two early twentieth-century reactions to the famous incident. One of them is another supercanonical modernist text, James Joyce's *Ulysses* from 1918/1920 (1922). The other, in terms of its influence and reputation, is a somewhat peripheral novel, especially for non-Hungarian audiences. Even though Gyula Krúdy's *Jockey Club* from 1925 bears a somewhat unusual English-language title, one with a reference to a still existing international organization, there is no English translation available, and the book has arguably fallen into relative critical neglect, even among Krúdy scholars. While Joyce, like Eliot, treats the Rudolf motif in a distanced, quite oblique manner, Krúdy wrote a kind of historical novel with very directly portrayed characters, and this, in the context of his otherwise brilliantly impressionistic, quintessentially modernist writing may seem to be a romantic and overtly nostalgic engagement with a popular, sensational subject matter. Yet neither Joyce's seeming casualness nor Krúdy's obvious concern with marketability discounts the artistic relevance of Prince Rudolf's presence in the two novels. As I will argue, portraying the archduke helps both authors capture deep and complex

<sup>1</sup> Examples are numerous, and they include, but are not limited to, two novels (Claude Anet's *Mayerling* from 1930, Michael Arnold's *L'Archiduc* from 1967), a musical (composer Frank Wildhorn's *Rudolf—The Last Kiss* from 2006), and a ballet (choreographer Kenneth MacMillan's *Mayerling* from 1978). The list of films is quite long, and while some of the Western productions feature such notable actors as Audrey Hepburn and Omar Shariff, two Central-European productions should also be pointed out in the present context: Alexander Korda's *Tragödie im Hause Habsburg* (1924) and Miklós Jancsó's *Magánbűnök, közkeréksök* (1976).

<sup>2</sup> T. S. ELIOT: 'The Waste Land': *Collected Poems 1909–1962*, London, Faber and Faber, 1963, 63.