T.C.

ATILIM UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

ENGLISH CULTURE AND LITERATURE MASTER'S PROGRAMME

ELEMENTS OF TRAGEDY IN THOMAS HARDY'S *THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE* AND CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

Master's Thesis

Mohammed Bakr

Ankara- 2021

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Supervisor

Prof. Dr. N. Belgin Elbir

Ankara- 2021

ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis titled "Elements of Tragedy in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*" and prepared by Mohammed Bashar Bakr meets the committee's approval unanimously as Master's Thesis in the field of English Culture and Literature following the successful defense of the thesis conducted on 08/07/2021.

Prof. Dr. Berrin AKSOY

(Chair)

Prof. Dr. N. Belgin ELBIR (Supervisor)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nil Korkut NAYKI (Member)

Prof. Dr. Dilaver TENGILIMOGLU

(Director)

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Mohammed Bakr

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ÖZ

Bakr, Mohammed. Thomas Hardy'nin *The Mayor of Casterbridge* ve Chinua Achebe'nin *Things Fall Apart* Trajedi Öğeleri, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2021.

Bu tez, Thomas Hardy'nin *The Mayor of Casterbridge* ve Chinua Achebe'nin *Things Fall Apart* trajedi öğelerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, Hardy ve Achebe'nin romanlarının baş kahramanlarını klasik trajedi ve Shakespeare trajedisi ışığında ele almaktadır. Esas olarak, Yunan filozof Aristoteles ve Elizabeth dönemi oyun yazarı Shakespeare'in bakış açısıyla, Hardy ve Achebe tarafından anlatı biçiminde kullanılıp geliştirilen ve meydan okunan trajik hata, kibir, şans ve kader gibi klasik trajedi kavramlarına odaklanmaktadır. Aynı zamanda iki farklı yazar, Hardy ve Achebe, tarafından yazılan iki farklı romandaki kader ya da inancın antik Yunan ve Shakespeare'in trajik versiyonları arasındaki temel benzerlik ve farklılıklarına ışık tutuyor. Bu çalışma, klasik trajedi düşüncesinin günümüze kadar bir geçerliliği ve sürekliliği olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, iki ana kahraman Michael Henchard ve Okonkwo'nun trajik ve felaketli yaşamlarını da analiz etmektedir. Hardy ve Achebe, romanlarında geçiş dönemini ele almış ve tarihlerindeki bu ani değişikliklerin bireylerin karakteri üzerindeki büyük etkilerini keşfetmişlerdir. Bu tez, on dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonlarında İngiliz ve Afrikan kırsal toplumlarında teknolojik, politik ve sosyal değişikliklerin insan koşulu üzerindeki sonuçlarını tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Klasik trajedi ve Shakespeare trajedisi, Thomas Hardy, Chinua Achebe, Geçiş Dönemi, Michael Henchard, Okonkwo, Kibir, Kaza ve Kader.

ABSTRACT

Bakr, Mohammed. Elements of Tragedy in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* MA Thesis, Ankara, 2021.

This thesis aims to examine the elements of tragedy and tragic hero in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge,* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* within a historical context. This study discusses the leading characters of Hardy's and Achebe's novels in the light of the Classical and Shakespearean tragedy. It mainly focuses on the classical concepts of a tragedy such as tragic error, hubris, chance and fate from the perspective of the Greek philosopher Aristotle and the Elizabethan playwright Shakespeare that are used, developed, and challenged by Hardy and Achebe. Besides, it sheds light on the essential similarities and differences between the ancient Greek and Shakespearean tragic versions of destiny or fate in two different novels written by these two different writers, Hardy and Achebe, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively. It shows the fact that there is a validity and continuity of the classical idea of tragedy up to date. It also analyses the tragic and catastrophic lives of the two protagonists Henchard and Okonkwo. Hardy and Achebe set their novels in a time of transition, and they explore the enormous and massive effects of these rapid alterations in their history on an individual's character. Thus, this thesis examines the tragic heroes within the context of the consequences of the technological, political, and social changes on the human condition in English and African rural societies in the late nineteenth century.

Keywords: Classical and Shakespearean tragedy, Thomas Hardy, Chinua Achebe, Transitional time, Michael Henchard, Okonkwo, Hubris, Accident and Fate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor Prof. Dr. N. Belgin Elbir for giving me the opportunity to complete this research successfully and providing invaluable suggestions, feedback, and guidance throughout this thesis. Her kindness, motivation, vision, sincerity, enthusiasm and dynamism have profoundly and deeply inspired me. She has taught me the methodology to carry out the research and to present the research works as clearly as possible. It was a great privilege and honour to work and study under her supervision. I am extremely grateful for what she has offered me. Besides my supervisor, I thank profusely to the rest of my thesis committee Prof. Dr. Berrin Aksoy, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nil Korkut Naykı, for their encouragement, insightful comments, and interesting questions.

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis is the elements of tragedy in two novels written by different writers. This thesis studies *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) by Thomas Hardy, and *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by Chinua Achebe. The aim of the study is to examine the novels in the light of Classical and Shakespearean concepts of tragedy. This thesis is mainly concerned with the tragic lives of protagonists Michael Henchard and Okonkwo. Furthermore, the writers' view on tragedy will be discussed and analyzed in detail in this study. Hardy and Achebe employ the elements of tragedy in their novels, and the goal of this thesis is to explore them. I will argue to what extent these two novels use the elements of tragedy and the tragic hero. The significance of this thesis lies in its examining of the novels written in a very different historical context in terms of their use of elements of tragedy. The study will argue that in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Things Fall Apart*, elements such as hamartia, tragic flaw, hubris, accident and fate, are used to display the social and political changes in the English and African societies at a moment of crisis in their history. In this study, the elements of tragedy will be examined and contextualized to demonstrate and show that the components of tragedy enable Hardy and Achebe to describe and criticize these cataclysmic changes.

The study will endeavour to explore the following questions:

To what extent do the Classical and Shakespearean concepts of tragedy become valuable and applicable to the novels of Hardy and Achebe? Did the classical concepts of tragedy and the tragic hero still have an opportunity to stand? What are the similarities and differences between the Classical drama and the selected novels?

To what degree can Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* fulfil the traditional ideas of tragedy? Do the protagonists' deeds and behaviour contribute to their fate and downfall? In what ways do the elements of chance, accident, and the blind force of the universe determine their fate and tragedy?

Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was written and published in the late nineteenth century (1886). The entire nineteenth century witnessed radical changes regarding society, politics, human beings, religion, and loss of faith in God. In other words, the significant and crucial transition from the late Victorian time to modernism is reflected in *The Mayor of Casterbridge.* Disturbed, irritated, and drunken, a homeless hay-trusser in an auction sells his spouse Susan and their little child Elizabeth Jane to a stranger sailor called Newson. Thus opens *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, set in pastoral small-city England in the mid1800s. In the original subtitle, Hardy called his novel: *A Story of a Man of Character* and the protagonist Henchard is one of English fiction's greatest creations. Thomas Hardy's tragic protagonist, Henchard, is deeply developed as a realistic character. Nevertheless, he is larger than life in the sense of a traditional and Shakespearean tragic protagonist- immense in his will, and huge in his awful flaws. It is necessary to remark that the novel concerns the conflict between individual will, the numerous consequences of the past, and the persistent control of circumstances in a shifting society.

On the other hand, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* deals with the tragedy of society and individual. In a competition, a great wrestler beats his adversary called Amalinze the Cat, who has been undefeated for seven years. Thus begins *Things Fall Apart*, set in a rural African society in the late nineteenth century. In his essay entitled "Achebe's Sense of an Ending: History and Tragedy in Things Fall Apart", Richard

Begam argues that the novel is primarily concerned with documenting historical events and fashioning tragedy (Begam 398).

Indeed, Achebe's novel shows the tragedy of Umuofia society, at the time when the white missionaries had started to intervene in the villages and cities of West Africa. The tragic leading character of the novel, Okonkwo, is a distinguished, if tragically flawed man, one of the most powerful leaders of the Igbo community, in what is now Nigeria. A combination of overweening and arrogance brings about Achebe's tragic hero Okonkwo being exiled from his home for seven years. His tragic error is to reject the situation of the weakness in himself and his society, leading several critics and commentators such as Abiola Irele, to discuss his tragic fate in the light of Traditional Tragedy.

Henchard and Okonkwo suffer from their uncontrolled temper, rashness, and overaction against the people who reject or neglect their commands. In chapter fifteen of Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, for instance, the protagonist, Henchard, impulsively reacts to his humble and tardy employee Abel Whittle. Similarly, at a moment of impulse, Okonkwo thoughtlessly beats his youngest wife during The Week of Peace: "Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way through" (Achebe 23). "He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists" (5). Thus, the complexity, fairy temper, and impulsiveness of the protagonists' characters will be discussed in this study.

The protagonists meet difficult circumstances which make them suffer through the course of the novels. Thomas Hardy and Chinua Achebe dramatize or embody their tragic heroes' internal and external conflict. For instance, Henchard agonizes and suffers an inner struggle, and his desire to change his shameful past makes him a great tragic hero.

He finds himself in a dark and destructive condition because of his wrong decisions, uncontrollable rages, and poor judgment. Like Michael Henchard, Okonkwo's ambition to be a rich and successful man in his village leads him to conflict with himself. He has only his feelings or passions to contend with to remain a respected man in his community. Okonkwo is always afraid of his past. And, he does not want to be like his father, Unoka, who was an irresponsible debtor. As the narrator comments: "he had no patience with unsuccessful man, he had no patience with his father" (15). Thus, the internal and external conflict is an essential element in tragedy, and it will be analysed in details in this thesis.

Nonetheless, the protagonists' fall is not only a result of their wrong judgments, but it has another component, which is recognized as destiny or fate. Hardy and Chinua Achebe dramatize the role of fate and destiny in many ways in their novels. Hence, it is fruitful to argue that accident and chance contribute to their tragic heroes' suffering and downfall. For instance, in chapter twenty-eight of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, a furmity-woman named Mrs. Goodenough discloses Hanchard's secret, leading to a horrible contention in Casterbridge. Likewise, in *Things Fall Apart,* Okonkwo accidentally kills Ezeudu's son during a funeral held in the village, causing his exile for seven years to his motherland, Mbanta (Achebe 70). Hence, this study will shed light on the influential function of chance, incident, as well as fate as crucial and important factors that affect the tragic lives of the leading characters, Henchard and Okonkwo.

According to many critics, such as Jean R. Brooks, Michael Valdez Moses, and Abiola Irele, the novels' leading characters are compared with Greek tragic protagonists such as Oedipus and Achilles, and Shakespearean tragic protagonists such as King Lear. Commonly, tragedy is essentially concerned with the suffering, grief, and sadness of the

tragic hero. Indeed, a good tragedy should excite pity and fear, and ultimately bringing to purgation or what the Greek called *Catharsis*.

On the one hand, Aristotle's account of tragedy as a dramatic form that highlights human sorrow and misfortune, and simultaneously every tragic story should follow the law of probability and necessity. In this light, the tragic playwright or poet has to use the Aristotelian characteristics like *Peripeteia* and *Anagnorisis* whenever the plot and action requires, and must not exaggerate in representing the sufferings or pain of the protagonist. An ideal tragedy should formulate accurately from the beginning of the protagonist's introduction to the calamity he passes through and to his awful downfall that ending with his death (Aristotle 9). Shakespeare's tragic vision is in some measure similar to the ideas of Classical tragedy. Interestingly, tragedy "is an imitation, not of man, but an action and life...", which suggests an illustration of the lives of the individuals that evoke the tragic effect (27).

The Classical idea of tragedy regularly emerges and links the tragic flaw and misfortune of the tragic character with the superior forces of destiny, while Shakespeare connects it with the human's responsibility and agency in his/her downfall. L. T. Fitz, in her article titled "Egyptian Queens and Male Reviewers: Sexist Attitudes in Antony and Cleopatra Criticism", remarks that:

> The most significant difference between Shakespeare's mature tragic practice and Aristotle's tragic theory is that while Aristotle at one point says that" "pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune", Shakespeare insists on eliciting audience sympathy for characters who, to a greater or lesser degree, have brought their misfortunes on themselves (Fitz 213).

Yet, Hardy and Achebe make room for both the human agency and the superior force of fate as vital elements that contribute to the catastrophe and ruin of their tragic

heroes. Accordingly, this study will explore these factors which have deeply affected Hardy and Achebe's writing style. While a tragedy from Greek time to the Elizabethan era describes the rise and fall of the noble protagonist, often through a combination of fate, prideful arrogance, and the will of God, over many centuries, the concept of tragedy and the tragic hero has been modified and changed. Writers such as Hardy and Achebe represent and show the sufferings of working and humble class people in their work. Thus, the study will also focus on the idea of nobility in tragedy. To what degree does the tragedy of middle-class characters fulfil the purpose of tragedy? Does the tragedy of Michael Henchard and Okonkwo evoke the tragic emotions of pity and fear?

The study will consist of three main chapters. The first chapter will present the theoretical and historical framework of the literary term tragedy and its main elements and will draw attention to their relevance in Thomas Hardy's and Chinua Achebe's novels. The chapter will include the explanations of the tragedy and the tragic hero from the perspective of the Greek philosopher Aristotle and the Shakespearean critic A.C Bradley and relevant quotations from several critics and commentators relating to the term tragedy. The second and the third chapters will mainly explore and analyze Hardy's *The Mayor of Castlebridge* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* respectively, in the light of the theoretical and historical framework presented in the first chapter. The conclusion will present an overall assessment of the significance of the elements of tragedy in the novels under study.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Tragedy is one of the most important and significant classical literary forms of literature in the extensive history of western civilization. Significantly, the earliest tragic drama and epic poems were written by Greek poets and playwrights like Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles in the fifth century B.C. Over many ages, tragedy as a literary form has revealed a tremendous capacity to reinvent and reconstruct itself at different times and in different ways. On the one hand, a number of critics and writers have persuasively maintained that this literary genre used by many writers to examine the most critical and crucial question regarding human suffering in the moment of cultural and historical crises. The subject of tragedy has attracted the intention of a wide range of writers, poets, and thinkers. These writers and thinkers from different fields: philosophy, psychoanalysis, and anthropology, discuss this ancient literary genre following their scientific background and life experience.

Although the representations of tragedy are various and numerous, these different fields of analysis to some extents are similar to one another. Arthur Miller, the American playwright, in his essay entitled *The Nature of Tragedy*, suggests that: “there are whole libraries of books dealing with the nature of tragedy. That the subject is capable of interesting so many writers over the centuries is part proof that the idea of tragedy is constantly changing, and more, that it will never be finally defined” (Miller 8). In addition, the great variety of Western tragic drama create a frame of philosophical debates and challenges for writers and philosophers. Significantly, philosophers from Aristotle to the present day have tried to find universal elements for this complicated term, tragedy.

However, it is hard to claim that all elements and characteristics of tragedy can fit or apply equally to all tragedies. Therefore, this chapter will focus on Aristotle's and A.C Bradley's view on the plot and character because these are the elements that are the most important and relevant to the aim and scope of this study.

In his preface to his "Aristotle on the Art of Fiction", L J Potts, the twentieth-century critic, suggests:

> It is no exaggeration to say that the history of tragic criticism is a series of footnotes to Aristotle. In fragmentary treatise usually called *Poetics*, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) raises almost all the points that have subsequently been argued, such as the nature of the hero, the emotional effect on the spectator, the coherence of the plot. Whether or not he gave the right answers, it has seemed for more than two thousand years that he asked the right questions (Potts 1).

Hence, the *Poetics* is regarded as the first example of what we call literary criticism. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle discussed the ideas of Greek theatre, its values and greatest success. He presented the elements of a perfect tragedy based on the Greek tragic drama and epic poems that he has read and watched. It is reasonable to remark that there are still many scholars, writers, and critics who examine Aristotle's work and reinvent it. His theory of tragedy remains the canvas or the starting point for most discussion of tragedy.

Aristotle starts his *Poetics* by exploring the concept of *Mimesis*, which means imitation. According to Aristotle, art is the imitation, for instance, representation and recreation by imitators, of an action. Hence, he suggests that tragedy, comedy, and epic share a common quality which is imitation. Aristotle argues: "they differ, however, from one another in three respects -the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct" (7). He insists that tragedy is an imitation of a high social rank

or exceptional persons: kings, princes, and noblemen, whereas comedy is tended to imitate men below the level average of our world. Thus, he defines the term tragedy as:

> An imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play in the form of action, not of the narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions (Aristotle 23).

This action "implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought […] thought and character are the two natural causes from which action spring and on actions again all success or failure depends" (25).

Aristotle maintains that tragedy must have six formative elements or principles: "plot, character, thought, diction, spectacle, and the song" (25). The plot represents the kernel of the action, which he considers the substantial part of the tragedy. Aristotle remarks that "Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view of to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions […] and without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character" (27).

Yet, in his book titled *Aristotle's Poetics,* Stephen Halliwell observes that contemporary critics or readers would certainly reject the idea of the "subordination" of the character to the plot "because the wide discrepancy between the view of drama which this subordination represents the dominant post-Romantic belief in the centrality of psychological characterisation both to drama and to other forms of literature (above all, the novel") (Halliwell 139). Like Halliwell, S. Zink, in his article entitled *The Novel as a Medium of modern Tragedy*, acknowledges that: "tragedy, whatever else it requires, requires a protagonist of great dimensions. The tragic hero must be an extraordinary human specimen" (Zink 169). (This point will be further explained in this chapter).

Since the plot, for Aristotle, is the most important element in tragedy, he further regards it as "the soul of a tragedy […] or the whole structure of the incidents" (29). In this light, tragedy is a serious story associated with death, vengeance, and betrayal, having no elements of humour. It should stand independent from its trilogy. Hence, "tragedy is an imitation of a complete or whole action, containing a beginning, middle and an end" (31). According to Aristotle,

> [A] beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it (31).

Aristotle requires that tragedy must have a proper length and easy to understand by the audience or the reader. He argues that: "[t] he proper magnitude is comprised within such limits, that the sequence of the events, according to the law of probability or necessity, will a admit of a change from bad fortune to good, or from good fortune to bad" (33). Hence, Aristotle recommends that the tragedy's actions or incidents must be "according to the law of probability and necessity" (35). The unity of action is important in tragic construction. In other words, the plot in a tragedy must contain one single action, having no subplots or irrelevant actions: he suggests that "the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed" (35).

According to *Poetics*, the causality in a tragedy's plot is highly significant: because the action must respect the rules of necessity and probability. In this respect, the episodic plots and action are secondary because they explicitly do not respect these above-mentioned laws. The coincidences, chances, and events should be terrible and fearful.

Besides, these emotions are particularly aroused "[w] hen the events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time, the follow as cause and effect" (39). Accordingly, Aristotle suggests, "[t] he tragic wonder will then be greater than if they happened with themselves or by accidents; for even coincidences are most striking when they have an air of design" (39).

Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of plot: "simple and complex". On the one hand, the simple plot happens precisely when the action occurred without the tragic characteristics, *Peripeteia and Anagnorisis*. On the other hand, the complex action arises when the change of fortune is achieved within the elements of recognition and reversal (39). A *Peripeteia* is a Greek term, which translated as a reversal. He proposes that "Reversal of attention is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of necessity and possibility" (41). The other Greek term is *Anagnorisis*, which is interpreted as recognition or disclosure. Aristotle defines recognition in tragedy as "a change from ignorance to knowledge" (41). Hence, he suggests several types of recognitions. The first kind of recognition is produced by external tokens such as scars wounds, scars and birthmarks, which the Greek philosopher Aristotle regards as the "least artistic form". The second one is disclosure "invented at will" by artists. For Aristotle, this kind of recognition is considered an inartistic form; because the person says what the writer wishes, not what the incident requires (57).

The third type is disclosure or discovery that "depends on memory", which occurs when the tragic heroes remember certain events, listening to music, or sight pictures that evoke a feeling. The fourth and the best one for Aristotle is a recognition that happens "from the incidents themselves" when the unfortunate disclosure stirs by natural means:

"process by reasoning" (59-62). Aristotle highlights and emphasises that the most vital recognition is the one that happens together with the reversal. Such characteristics are significant and important: because they lead to the change of the tragic hero's fortune from good to bad. According to *Poetics*, tragedy's chief aim is to evoke tragic emotions of sympathy, pity and fear, and they deliver to purgation or purification or what the Greek called Catharsis (57-61). To understand Aristotle's idea of catharsis and its recognizable influence on the audience, we have to briefly and shortly summarise his teacher's argument on mimetic art, Plato.

In his book titled *The Republic*, the Greek philosopher Plato asserts that art, (including poetry and drama) are profoundly detrimental to the evolution of ordinary people. Thus, he maintains that the poet or artist must be expelled from the ideal republic (qut. in A Handbook to Literature 490). Hence, Plato's interpretation against mimetic art encouraged numerous writers and philosophers such as Aristotle to write and argue in defence of drama, and poetry. Therefore, it could be argued that Aristotle's idea of tragic feelings and catharsis was formulated essentially in response to Plato's attack on arts (491). Catharsis is a Greek term or metaphor adopted by Aristotle to reveal the striking impact and influence of tragedy on the viewer and reader. According to *Poetics*, a perfect tragedy should produce a proper magnitude of pity and fear in the audience (49).

In his book entitled *The Philosophy of Tragedy: From Plato to Zizek,* Julian Young puts thus: "Aristotle argues that while there are things it is perfectly proper to feel anger, pity or fear towards, one must do so to the correct degree. Too much fear amounts to cowardice, too little to foolhardiness. Courage, thus, virtue in general, is the mean, the midpoint between two extremes" (30). Besides, unlike Plato, Aristotle advocates that

tragedy should excite pleasure. He argues that "tragedy should produce the pleasure which comes from pity and fear […] the pleasure proper to tragedy" (Aristotle 49). Hence, the tragic feelings of fear and pity are intertwined with pleasure. Moreover, he asserts that the writers of tragedy do not have to formulate a pleasure or rejoice from the tragic hero's grief and sadness; they have to perform an appropriate amount of tragic emotion and pleasure whenever the plot or the accident requires (49).

Over many centuries, the concept of catharsis is still a controversial and debatable subject because Aristotle never clarified it sufficiently. Several commentators and critics have been discussed the original meaning of catharsis and its recognizable influence on the strength of tragedy. In his book entitled *Theatre of Oppressed,* Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theatre practitioner, suggests that catharsis is a crucial concept in an understanding of tragedy (Boal 26). He acknowledges that "tragedy, in all its qualitative and quantitative aspects, exists as a function of the effect it seeks, catharsis. It is the centre, the essence, the purpose of the tragic system. Unfortunately, it is also the most controversial concept" (27). Boal emphasises and highlights that people have various objectives relating to power, wealth, morality, and virtue. He recognises that "when a man fails in the achievement of those objectives, the art of tragedy intervenes. This correction of man's action is what Aristotle calls catharsis" (27).

Therefore, Catharsis is an essential concept in tragedy: because it allows the spectator to experience the tragic effect. Aristotle stresses that the most successful tragic construction almost always produces such unhealthy emotions of fear and pity in the audience. On the contrary, if a tragedy fails to excite these kinds of passions inevitably would cease to be an ideal tragedy.

While Aristotle insists that the character is the second significant part of the tragedy, he requires distinct qualifications that every dramatic character should possess in tragedy. If a tragedy tells a story of an entirely good person falling from prosperity to adversity, it is indeed repellent rather than horrible or woeful. When a tragedy offers a manipulative or evil person passing from bad fortune to good, "it evokes neither pity nor fear" because it does not have tragic qualities. According to Aristotle, when tragedy shows a story of a sinister character moving "from good fortune to bad, it promotes neither pity nor fear", since "for pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune; fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves". Aristotle prefers that a tragic persona should be in between two extremes. Since the dramatic character should be "intermediate", a person who is neither good nor evil, therefore, his downfall should be through miscalculation or what the Greeks called *hamartia* rather than a vice or wickedness (45).

Aristotle recognises four distinct characteristic features that the hero should have in tragedy. Firstly, "the character must be good". The tragic hero is good if his speech and action show that his purpose is good. Aristotle further proposes that an entirely evil person is not fit for tragedy. Secondly, "the character must be appropriate". Thus, the tragic persona must be true to his status and type. When the character in a tragedy is taken from a specific story or myth, as King Oedipus, he should act carefully according to his tradition (46).

Thirdly, "the character must be true to life". In other words, he should have some traits relating to human nature: confidence and weakness, innocence and evil, love and jealousy for the medium of humanity. The effect of such intense likeness is important since we can feel pity and fear for the tragic character's downfall. The last fundamental

tragic trait that the protagonist ought to have a consistency: "the character must be consistent". The tragic protagonist must be true to his natures, and his reactions should be consistent with his character. An impulsive, aggressive person should act impulsively and aggressively throughout. However, when the artist has to portray an inconsistent character, he should be "consistency inconsistent" (53-59).

According to *Poetics* tragedy and comedy are concerned with different social classes (61). He believes that tragedy represents persons who are "better than the norm". On the other hand, comedy imitates characters who are "baser than us". It could be argued that there is an interesting ambiguity here: because we are not quite sure what he means by the concessive phrase greater than us, whether he is referring to a moral status or the social one. In his article entitled *Tragedy, Reconsidered,* George Steiner aptly suggests that tragedy is primarily concerned with persons of high political rank. He argues:

> From Aeschylus to Shakespeare, from Sophocles to Racine, high tragedy engages the (miss) fortunes of the privileged, of the princely, of the dynastic elite. The very rubric "tragedy" "in its Senecan and medieval demarcation is that of the fall of illustrious men. Tragedy argues an aristocracy of suffering, the excellence of pain (Steiner 9).

Yet, one of the authoritative critics of the contemporary time, Stephen Halliwell, proposes that when Aristotle insists that the tragic character must be like ourselves: but at the same time, greater than us, he illustrates that ethically the tragic persona ought to be like the spectator that is seeing him, nonetheless, "in terms of status must be" a man of high rank. Halliwell puts it thus:

> [T] he point made in chapter 13 of *Poetics*, is that the characters should not stand at an ethical extreme, but should be such that an audience can experience a sympathetic moral affinity with them, while in terms of status, by contrast, the tragic characters can be allowed a more striking pre-eminence. For example, we must be able to recognise in Oedipus the

> qualities and grandeur which raise him above other men, but also his true humanity (Halliwell 160-61).

In chapter XIII, Aristotle maintains that a tragic protagonist "who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty. He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous- a personage like Oedipus" (46-47). In this statement, Aristotle refers to what Greek subsequently calls *hamartia*, which becomes known as the dramatic character's error, mistake, or miscalculation. According to *Poetics,* hamartia does not mainly indicate the protagonist's fatal error but an act perpetrated in ignorance. The tragic character in some measure contributes to his catastrophe, but simultaneously, the tragic persona is not entirely responsible for his mistake since he is perpetrated in error. For this reason, Aristotle recommends that the tragic character must be highly prosperous and renowned, a person who is vulnerable to collapse or fall.

Aristotle concentrates on an individual's action and responsibility rather than anything else. In his article entitled *Myth into Muthos: The Shaping of Tragic Plot,* Peter Burien argues that: "The Aristotelian schema emphasises hamartia and its punishment. The tragic hero, although caught in circumstances beyond his ken and control, is finally to be understood as destroyed by the gods (or fate) because of his own failings" (Burian 181).

It could be argued that the hero's defects and suffering are arising from his exaggerated pride, stubbornness, and arrogance. The tragic error often attributed to the tragic hero is *hubris*, meaning "overweening pride". Michel de Montaigne has argued that: "the tragic hero forgets that on the loftiest throne in the world, we are still sitting only on

our rear" (qut. in *Types of Drama,* Sylvan Barnet, 20). And he sees his actions and deeds are always perfect and infallible.

In a series of lectures usually called *Shakespearean tragedy,* the English literary scholar A.C Bradley explores the substance, construction, and elements of Shakespeare's tragedies. Shakespearean tragedy is exclusively concerned with one exceptional person who experiences suffering and calamity, which ends with his death (Bradley 3). According to Bradley, "Tragedy with Shakespeare is concerned always with persons of 'high degree'; often with kings or princes; if not, with leaders in the state like Coriolanus, Brutus, Antony; at the least, as in Romeo and Juliet, with members of great houses, whose quarrels are of the public moment" (4). In this construction, Shakespeare seems to reinforce the concept of rank or nobility in tragedy, which was derived from Greek tragedy. Characters such as Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth are noble in birth and highly regarded men. Accordingly, the fall of the dramatic characters from greatness to adversity affects the whole community and "produces a sense of contrast, of the powerlessness of man, and of the omnipotence perhaps the caprice— of Fortune or Fate, which no tale of private life can possibly rival" (5).

The story of a Shakespearean tragedy contains three additional factors that make them stand out from Greek and medieval dramas. Shakespeare represents the abnormal psychological situation of the mind: insanity, somnambulism, hallucinations. These deeds issuing from sleep-waking, insanity, and like are "not deeds in the fullest sense, deeds expressive of character" (7). Secondly, Shakespeare introduces the role of the supernatural elements in some tragedies. Significantly, Shakespeare has never tried to show the ghost or witches as the origin of tragic action.

However, he modifies his argument by saying that: “the supernatural element does contribute to the action, and is in more than one instance an indispensable part of it: so that to describe a human character, with circumstances, as always the sole motive force in this action would be a serious error” (8-9). The supernatural power is “always placed in the closest relation with the hero”, but its impact is never compulsive. Hence, the reader or the audience can never feel that the visitation of fairies or ghosts removes the tragic character’s “capacity or responsibility for dealing with his problem” (9).

Finally, in most of his tragedies, Shakespeare allows the matter of chance or accident to have a recognizable impact to some degree in the tragic action. Additionally, Bradley frames this essential factor thus: “any occurrence (not supernatural, of course) which enters the dramatic sequence neither from the agency of a character nor from the obvious surrounding circumstances”. He emphasises that the process of the accident and chance is a predominant and crucial truth in human life. Hence, to exclude and ignore it entirely from the tragic action would fail to reach the truth. A. C Bradley, on the other hand, argues that: “any large admission of chance into the tragic sequence would certainly weaken, and might destroy, the sense of the causal connection of character, deed, and catastrophe” (9).

Shakespeare utilises the element of the accident very sparingly. It is frequently possible to see the dramatic attention of accidents and chance have a close connection with the hero and are, therefore, not catastrophic misfortunes in the fullest sense of the word. Almost all the distinct accidents and mishaps happen when the deed or action is well developed and “the impression of the causal sequence is too firmly fixed to be impaired”. These additional factors or components are essentially a part of the action,

while they are subordinated to one important factor, an action issuing from the dramatic character (10).

Bradley asks a very important question: “Can we define this ‘action’ further by describing it as a conflict? He observes that the idea of conflict is fit to Shakespearean tragedy, but it is so complicated. However, to make it more explicit, we will ask, who are the combatants in this conflict”? Any Shakespearean tragedy contains two antagonistic groups, the protagonist and his party versus their adversaries. Hence, in most tragedies, the reader cannot face great difficulties in understanding this kind of conflict. Bradley proposes, in some prominent cases, it seems like an external process of looking at things (11).

Shakespeare shows that Hamlet and his uncle are mortal foes, while what engrosses our interest or at least dwells in our memory is the conflict within Hamlet’s soul. Bradley says that “[t]he truth is that the type of tragedy in which the hero opposes to a hostile force an undivided soul is not the Shakespearean type” (12). He displays his extraordinary talent in portraying the tragic hero’s inner conflict, especially in his later plays (12). Indeed, the relationship between the idea of conflict in Shakespearean tragedy is deeply linked with the aforementioned ideas of character and action. As Bradley observes, “the notion of tragedy as a conflict emphasises the fact that action is the centre of the story, while the concentration of interest, in the greater plays, on the inward struggle emphasises the fact that this action is essentially the expression of character” (13).

Shakespeare’s tragic hero need not be good though he is generally good; however, he must have sufficient greatness that in his fault and defeat we may be precisely aware of the possibilities of human nature (16). Accordingly, almost all Shakespeare’s tragedies

are never depressing. The tragic hero may be shown in tragedy as wretched and awful, but he is not small: “His lot may be heart-rending and mysterious, but it is not contemptible” (16). Thus, it is important to highlight that due to the greatness of dramatic character that the centre of the tragic emotions is the impression of waste. As Bradley notes: “with Shakespeare, at any rate, the pity and fear which are stirred by the tragic story seem to unite with, and even to merge in, a profound sense of sadness and mystery, which is due to this impression of waste” (16).

As well as, the readers who are well aware of Shakespeare’s mind will observe two important facts at once they start their investigation: Shakespeare, on the one hand, represents the tragic fact as “something piteous, fearful and mysterious. Such a representation does not leave the spectator crushed, rebellious or desperate”. It follows from that the two main accounts of Shakespeare’s tragic world that it is either a moral order or that it is merely ruled by fate, is not sufficient, for either one, taken alone, amplifies or exaggerates either the aspect of action or that of suffering in a Shakespearean drama (19).

To say that the tragic system is merely moral order puts much emphasis on “the close and unbroken connection of character, will, deed and catastrophe”; “it shows the tragic figure simply as sinning against, or failing to conform to, the moral order and drawing his just doom on his head”. Claiming that the tragic nature is merely bound up with ‘fate’ is to confirm the power of external forces, collisions, and accidents. The two views entirely contradict and oppose each other, “and no third view can unite them; but the several aspects from whose isolation and exaggeration they spring are both presents

in the fact, and a view which would be true to the fact and to the whole of our imaginative experience must in some way combine these aspects" (19-20).

Bradley explores some important impressions which give rise to the concept of fatality. It is a central part of the tragic effect that "we at times feel that the hero is, in some sense, a doomed man, and their fault is far from being the sole or sufficient cause of all they suffer; and that the power from which they cannot escape is relentless and immovable. In tragedy, we can see the tragic heroes confidently act, while what they achieve is not what they intended; it is terribly unlike" (20). Furthermore, they act rashly and blindly in the horrible dark. And, they achieve their end, which is the last thing they dreamed of, and the idea of destiny is aided by the impression that is the hero is terribly unlucky (21). Indeed, the tragic heroes act "in accordance their characters; but what is it that brings them just the one problem which is fatal to them and would be easy to another, and sometimes brings it to them just when they are least fitted to face it"? (21). It appears that the tragic figures' virtues help to destroy them; their greenness is intertwined with their terrible weakness or defect (21).

Bradley believes that there is no trace of crude or primitive fatalism in Shakespearean tragedy. In other words, there is no vivid illustration that the pain and suffering of the protagonist had been arbitrarily fixed beforehand, nor are the facts ever so presented that it seems to us as if the supreme power, whatever it may be, had a special spite against a family or an individual. He argues that "the name fate may be intended to imply something more to imply that this order is a blank necessity, totally regardless alike of human weal and of the difference between good and evil or right and wrong". Hence, many readers or audiences undoubtably would immediately discard and reject such an

idea. They would, on the contrary, maintain to describe that the impressions they receive from the consequences of actions "as a moral order and its necessity as a moral necessity" (22-23).

Another important and indispensable element of Shakespearean tragedy to consider is the conflict between evil and good. "[T] he ultimate power or order is 'moral' to mean that it does not show itself indifferent to good and evil, or equally favourable or unfavourable to both, but shows itself akin to good and alien from evil" (26). Hence, the main source of the suffering, convulsion and conflict is evil. This evil force is "not mere imperfection but plain moral evil" (26). It could be argued that the commotion of conflict proceeds essentially from the conspiracies and actions of the manipulative or evil characters in the play. If the evil force violently disrupts the tranquillity, peace, and order of the world, then, the ultimate power must have an opposing reaction against this ominous power (26).

Again, A.C Bradley draws attention to the leading character in a Shakespearean tragedy. Although the hero is shown in tragedy as an honourable and admirable man, he still reveals imperfections or terrible flaws. These tragic traits are despicable and "contribute decisively to the conflict and catastrophe" (26). The ultimate power must have an inimical reaction to evil to reform the order of the universal condition. Bradley discusses another essential and vital concept of evil force. Evil is illustrated in the tragic world "as something negative, barren, weakening, destructive, a principle of death. It isolates, disunites, and tends to annihilate not only its opposite but itself. If existence in an order depends on good […] the soul of this order must be akin to good" (27).

Undoubtedly, moral power shows the concepts of vengeance, justice, and merit in the tragic world. Therefore, it suggests the notion of fate. But, although the punishment is served, there is an absence of 'poetic justice'. The moral order operates following its distinct nature. It reacts against the vigorous attack of the destructive power to sustain and asserts itself. Within this horrible collision, evil is eliminated and goodness triumphs over the corruption of the tragic world.

Thomas Hardy's tragic version is similar to Classical and Elizabethan concepts of tragedy. However, the most prominent distinction between the Elizabethan playwright Shakespeare's tragic view and Hardy's tragic vision is that while Shakespeare indicates or emphasizes the responsibility of tragic character on his downfall, Hardy, on the contrary, blames the blind forces of the universe that have the ultimate influence on his tragic protagonists. Several important similarities can be found in Hardy's tragic novels. Firstly, the element of chance, accident and mishap. Secondly, the psychological situation of mind which is understandable in Michael Henchard's overreaction to the tardy worker Abel. Furthermore, the fatal error, nobility, and the tragic view of world are vital and crucial in Hardy's tragic novels.

The entire nineteenth century is indeed a time of anxiety, trouble, and changes, which can be noticed with technological discoveries, political issues, and philosophical development. In his book entitled *The Victorian Period,* Robin Gilmour remarks that "The frequency of Victorian retrospect and cultural evaluation, their debates about 'the spirit of the age' or 'the condition of England', their anxious scrutiny of the reality or otherwise of their 'progress'- testifies their historical exposure" (Robin Gilmour 2).

The ideological, technological, and intellectual alterations of Victorian age bring about Hardy's dolorous and pessimistic vision of life. The twentieth-century critic Pinion argues that "contemporary scientific thought led Hardy to believe in the insignificance of humanity in the stellar universe, and the cruelty of Nature, which everywhere evinced the struggle for existence and the Unfulfilled Intention" (144).

According to Douglas Brown, there is a tremendous impact of the Industrial Revolution on Hardy's major fiction. Hardy emphasises "the destructive effect on a stable peasant culture of the revolution in the industry" (qut. in Jean Brooks 9). Altogether with the revolution in thought, these historical and social transformations portrayed human beings as "product and victim of a soulless mechanism" (9).

Hardy's philosophical view, according to Pamela Gossin, has been advanced under the great influence of several writers, philosophers, and thinkers, both classical and modern:

> Thomas Hardy's eclectic reading of the classics of medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment literature as well as contemporary works, both verse and prose, exposed him to a variety of authors who had created fictional, dramatic or poetic accounts of human life in the cosmos, on minute to magnificent scales. The influence of Dante, Milton and Shakespeare on his conception of the human relation to the natural, social and supernatural can hardly be overemphasized (Gossin 44).

Indeed, various impacts and influences mentioned above could be noticed in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge.* Jean Brook contends that the book's major action is indeed archetypal: "The myth of human responsibility and rebellion against the human condition is deep-seated" (199). Several critics examine the protagonist Henchard in terms of comparison and contrast with the traditional tragic protagonists such as Oedipus and Elizabethan characters such as Macbeth and King Lear. Therefore, it is fruitful to argue

that Hardy was interested in Classical and Shakespearean dramas. Still, he manages to illustrate the social and political issues of his time, providing an authentic and unique way in writing tragedy.

Following the objectives and aims of his thinkers and intellectual precursors, Thomas Hardy doubted and disbelieved in the moral system and the ethical convictions of the English society in the late nineteenth century. His tragic outlook of life is originated essentially from the idea of determinism. Significantly, he was a determinist who believes that the woman/man's lives are highly constrained by a mysterious and superior power, which he occasionally terms the Fate of Circumstances in The Mayor of Casterbridge. He argues that man is determined by both heredity and environment. It can be said that the conflict between the man and the superior power and terrible circumstances plays a considerable part in Thomas Hardy's fiction. For instance, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge,* the protagonist, Henchard, meets various challenges in his life, from renowned and prosperity, retribution, and downfall. Indeed, he was strongly affected by both the concept of fate and destiny and the human responsibility for their destruction and downfall. In his definition of tragedy, Hardy suggests that,

> A plot, or tragedy, should arise from the gradual closing of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions, because of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said passions, prejudices, and ambitions (qtd. in Pinion 144-45).

This description comes close to the Greek philosopher Aristotle's interpretation of tragedy and tragic hero that the miserable lives of the tragic protagonists arise from their blunders as he depicts it as "miscalculation". The tragic protagonists' errors and miss judgments push them to perpetrate their blunders that come together with morality. In addition, the

leading figures' virtue and weakness put them in a condition of ambivalence and contradiction. In his book already discussed in this thesis, Eagleton argues that the tragic protagonists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tragic novels are trapped between the consequences of the past and the disconcerting present. They struggle to be in decent positions as admirable human beings in their society. He remarks,

> [They are] split between worldly ambition and *contemptus mundi*, their canny outer conformity is matched by an obdurate inner refusal, in an epoch when power and idealism are no longer reconcilable. The very impulse which drives them to scale the social hierarchy is also the sense of spiritual superiority which leads them finally to spurn it (182).

According to the "Norton Anthology", Thomas Hardy's "skepticism about the existence of the benevolent God, his sense of the waste and frustration involved human life, his insistent irony when faced with moral or metaphysical questions-is part of the late Victorian mood" (1915). In his major work, the reader can see an explicit skepticism in divine justice. He regularly and steadily defines the human condition in bleak and tragic words. For instance, in his short poem titled "Hap" (1866), Hardy stresses that God or the divine justice is neglected human's misery and sufferings. He writes,

> If but some vengeful god would call me
> From up the sky, and laugh: Thou suffering thing,
> Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy (Norton Anthology 1932).

Although he had been brought up as a Christian, Thomas Hardy lost his faith at the age of 27, primarily under the impact and influence of Darwin's theory of evolution. Darwin's *The Origin of Species* diluted and ignored the prevailing idea of the divine creation of human. Hardy has pointed out, "I have been looking for God for fifty years and think that if he had existed, I should have discovered him" (qut. in Duffin 196).

Commonly, the Darwinian theory of heredity plays a prominent role in shaping the contents of nineteenth-century tragic fictions. In her book entitle "Tragedy in the Victorian Novel", Jeanette King discusses the significance of heredity as a substantial concept on the tragic heroes in Hardy's major tragic novels, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Jude the Obscure*. Jeanette King proposes that almost all Victorian novelists show an explicit preoccupation with the consequence of the ideas or themes of family effect and extensive social pressure. Indeed, Hardy was steadily interested in heredity, and this is not attained by chance because "the time of Darwin, heredity was a major preoccupation of nineteenth-century scientists and writers" (Ingham 25). More specifically, and according to Ingham: "Hardy was interested in the recent theory of germplasm, thought to transmit characteristics changed from generation to generation" (25). His novels display a conflict between men/women natural desires or instincts and their community.

Still, Thomas Hardy's attitude to the Christian faith is complicated and seemed to be filled with complexity. He had some uncertainties about the function of religion in the society, and at the same time, Hardy suggested that: "the Christian doctrine of 'charity' or 'loving-kindness', and an alliance between this humanitarian religion and 'complete rationality" (qut. in Brook179). Accordingly, he had a deep faith in man's power and effort to improve himself in an uncaring universe: "The Immanent Will was not percipient, but percipience was to be found in humanity" (179-80). Therefore, he preferred to call himself a meliorist instead of a pessimist. In a discussion of his literary career with William Archer, Hardy claims,

> My practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist. What are my books but one long plea against 'man's inhumanity to man – to a woman – and to the

> lower animals? Whatever may be the inherent good or evil of life, it is certain that men make it much worse than it need be (qut. in Pinion 178).

He further emphasises the components of unforeseen, chance, and coincident: "[People] live in hope, and the simple reason why they do not take measures to ward off disastrous events is that they are unforeseen. Human nature deceives itself, and it is in the element of the unforeseeable that the tragic irony is implicit" (Pinion 144-45). For Hardy, accident and mishap are vital fictional devices. As Karl Frederick remarks, "In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, as well as in *The Return of the Native, Jude the Obscure*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, chance becomes a universal symbol of Hardy's personal philosophy" (qut. in Pinion 196). Hardy's main literary works were often accused of being questionable since they exaggerate in representing sequences of accidental and unexpected actions. According to many critics and commentators, the accidentalism of Hardy's fictional world dramatizes his bleak and pessimistic view. He profoundly believed in the inconsistency of the universe.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy demonstrated his idea of coincidence, a belief that coincidence, an indifferent power of nature, can critically change a man's fate. His philosophy of chance is depicted that man have no control to overcome and change their fate and destiny. He claimed that tragedy happens when the will of man and woman quarrel with a chance. According to him, chance is neither wicked nor good. It is a blind and uncaring power of the universe. Therefore, he described a fate- filled universe wherein human beings become its tragic victims. Accident or mishap determines the lives of his tragic heroes, which provides it worthless. The superior force of the universe is an unmerciful force that has no sympathy for human's suffering.

Hardy revealed his dark pessimism when he criticized the universal system. Significantly, he dramatized a catastrophic and deterministic sense of human existence, admitting the inescapability and of affliction and suffering. Human existence in some measure has a trivial function in absolute terms; its intensity and peak prevail in man and woman relative virtue. Thus, virtue is an individual reward in this absurd and secular world. T. Hardy highlighted that tragedy is produced by superior forces of the universe, which man struggles in vain. According to R. M. Rehder, [Thomas Hardy]'s "idea of tragedy represents a combination of Greek, Shakespearean and Biblical tragedy" (qut. in Butler 23). Thus, he shows the tragic lives of his heroes as acutely restrain by destiny, accident, heredity and environment. Hardy, in other words, wanted to reveal the essence of the human features of man/woman's existence: it is primarily dramatic characters and distinguished individualism. For instance, the tragic life of the protagonist Henchard was Hardy's major preoccupation in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. The book shows the tragedy of a man who is trapped between the rules of nature and the rules of society.

Furthermore, the idea of writing tragedy becomes significant for the Anglophone author Achebe. As mentioned before the inter-relationships between chance, accident, and fate are the essence of tragedy. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe is explicitly asserting his experience of writing a tragedy based on the Classical scheme. Achebe himself elaborated this idea in an interview with Charles Rowell, saying "the tragic hero is the man who's larger than life, who exemplifies virtues that are admired by the community, but also a man who for all that is still human. He can have flaws, you see; all that seems to me to be very elegantly underlined in Aristotle's work" (17). Undoubtedly Okonkwo is larger than

life "[H]e was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very severe look" (Achebe 3).

Indeed, many African and nationalist critics read *Things Fall Apart* in terms of tragedy. In his important book "Studies on the Nigerian Novel", first published in 1991, Ernest Emenyonu considers *Things Fall Apart* a tragedy of one individual character. He refers to the analogies between Achebe's novel and the classical tragedy and the novel of the nineteenth century. Referring to Achebe's book, Emenyonu says,

> Very often . . . Things Fall Apart is seen as a classic study in character – the complex character of the hero, Okonkwo, is memorable and indelible, in much the same way as Thomas Hardy's Michael Henchard or Shakespeare's King Lear. The perspective emphasizes Okonkwo's inflexibility, his stubborn individualism, his resistance to change and his perfect role as a cog in the wheel of inevitable progress. His death, therefore, had to be, if Christianity and Western civilization must permeate the dark continent (Emenyonu 46).

Another critic who regards the novel from the similar perspective is Abiola Irele, who was one of the first nationalist critics to discuss *Things Fall Apart* as representing historical as well as tragic conflict. In his essay "The Tragic Conflict in the Novels of Chinua Achebe", Irele suggests that *Things Falls Apart* is "concerned with the dislocation of the African society caused by impact with another way of life. The reconstruction of Ibo village life is directed at revealing the forces at work both inside and outside traditional society that prepared the way for its eventual disintegration" (10). Irele argues that Achebe's portrayal of the Igbo community in both good and evil sides. The writer reveals the horrible crisis within befalls the drama of the Igbo's people as they face horrible and unexpected historical forces. In the context of these cases, the novel explores the

persuasive interaction between the tragic hero's desires and the "social determinations" that has shaped him. According to Irele,

> The double level of action is realised through the relationship that exists between Okonkwo, the principal character, and his society. In many ways, Okonkwo represents his society in so far as the society has made the man by proposing to him certain values and lines of conduct. On the other hand, the man's personal disposition, his reaction to these social determinations stemming from his subjective perception of them, prepares his individual fate (10-11).

It is important to highlight that Abiola Irele successfully manage to merge the notion of historical and cultural contention with classical philosophy of Aristotle. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* adopts the Aristotelian concept of tragedy, regarding the cultural specificity of the manuscript and its situation as a document of social and political decolonization. Irele states:

> The immediate subject of Chinua Achebe's novels is the tragic consequences of the African encounter with Europe […] His novels deal with the social and psychological conflicts created by the incursion of the white man and his culture into the hitherto self-contained world of African society, and the disarray in the African consciousness that has followed (10).

Following the notion of the classical tragedy, the Nigerian critic Irele considers Achebe's tragic protagonist Okonkwo as representing a tragic error through his consciousness of individualism that drives to his own dehumanization. He further suggests that *Things Fall Apart* is a perfect exemplification of Greek drama, remarking: "Things Fall Apart turns out to present the whole tragic drama of a society, vividly and concretely enacted in the tragic destiny of a representative individual" (14).

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

The novel entitled *The Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge: A Story of a Man of Character* was published in mid-1886. It essentially reveals the significance of an individual character and portrays his tragic journey due to his past distresses. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Hardy indeed depicts the crucial and critical circumstances that were faced by the leading character Michael Henchard during his tragic life. Arguably, these inevitable situations were primarily shaped up by the traditional values and customs of the English society soon after the Industrial Revolution. Thus, this novel demonstrates and discloses the questions of the author concerning the evolution of such disastrous and catastrophic life during the historical transition period in the late nineteenth century in the English rural society.

In her book entitled Thomas Hardy – The Poetic Structure, Jean R. Brooks convincingly asserts that *The Mayor of Casterbridge* […] "was primarily a depiction of the environment related to the character" (Brooks 196). Additionally, the political and social alterations during the transition period play a paramount role in the life of working-class people. "[T] he factor that controlled the action was essentially the evolving social organism of Casterbridge the county town" (Brooks 196). In this regard, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* appropriately draws attention to the nineteenth century sudden developments and transformations in English society. As Brook observes, "[T] he increasing mastery over environment, the advance of mechanisation, the development of new business methods to keep pace, the importance of education for a rapidly changing

world, the breaking down of social barriers, the spread of co-operative and humanitarian principles" (196).

According to Brooks, the prosperity and adversity of the characters in the novel were essentially determined by the approaches they dealt with those rapid alterations and developments occurring in Casterbridge. Besides, the protagonist of the novel Henchard is "flawed by a tragic vulnerability that unfits him for the particular tragic situation he has to face" (Brooks 14). Consequently, Brooks remarks that "Michael Henchard's rash and inflexible temper cannot ride the agricultural changes that overtake Casterbridge" (14).

Henchard is an itinerant and humble hay-trusser who initiates his difficult journey in a semi-fictitious village termed Weydon-Priors in Upper Wessex. The narrator describes him as [A man] "of fine figure, swarthy, and stern in aspect; and he showed in profile a facial angle so slightly inclined as to be almost perpendicular" (Hardy 6). At the beginning of the novel, Henchard, his wife and their pretty little child are introduced walking side by side to attend the "Fair Day" in that old-fashioned village. The husband pretended to be busy with some trivial activities to "escape intercourse" with his spouse. As the narrator states,

> [O] n closer view it could be discerned that the man was reading, or pretending to read, a ballad sheet which he kept before his eyes with some difficulty by the hand that was passed through the basket strap. Whether this apparent cause were the real cause, or whether it were an assumed one to escape an intercourse that would have been irksome to him, nobody but himself could have said precisely (Hardy 5).

Henchard is represented as an impulsive, headstrong, and passionate man, who fond of drinking. Therein, Henchard starts drinking rum while the couple arrives at the furmity tent. He complains about his difficult marriage by saying, "I married at eighteen,

like the fool that I was; and this is the consequence o't. He pointed at himself and family with a wave of the hand intended to bring out the penuriousness of the exhibition […] The woman is no good to me. Who'll have her?" (10). In an impulsive moment, Henchard auctions his spouse and little child for five guineas to a strange sailor named Richard Newson. In fact, he makes his first tragic error by selling his family, thereby leading to his subsequent unfortunate blunders. Since Henchard was drunk and under the influence of alcohol, he failed to realize the nature of his shameful action, "Yes, that's what happened, and here am I. Now, what am I to do- am I sober enough to walk, I wonder? [Henchard] stood up, found that he was in fairly good condition for progress, unencumbered" (16). Subsequently, the man sobers up and notices that neither Susan nor Elizbeth-is Jane with him anymore.

The hay-trusser goes to the Church and takes a gospel oath that he will never touch or drink any tempting liquors for more than twenty years. Henchard exclaims aloud,

> I, Michael Henchard, on this morning of the sixteenth of September, do take an oath here in this solemn place that I will avoid all strong liquors for the space of twenty years to come, being a year for every year that I have lived. And this I swear upon the book before me; and may I be struck dumb, blind, and helpless, if I break this my oath! (18).

Later, the humble hay-trusser Henchard decides to begin his career in an old-fashioned town called Casterbridge. After many years, he becomes a highly principled tradesman and afterwards the Mayor of Casterbridge. The rural territory in which Hardy sets his novel is portrayed as a place "untouched by the faintest sprinkle of modernism" (27). As the narrator recounts,

> Casterbridge differing from the many manufacturing towns which are as foreign bodies set down, like boulders on a plain, in a green world

> with which they have nothing in common. Casterbridge lived by agriculture at one remove further from the fountain-head than the adjoining villages- no more (59).

Furthermore, the townspeople were helping each other during the root and harvest seasons,

> [And they] understood every fluctuation in the rustic's condition, for it affected their receipts as much as the laborer's; they entered into the troubles and joys which moved the aristocratic families ten miles round—for the same reason. And even at the dinner parties of the professional families the subjects of discussion were corn, cattle disease, sowing and reaping, fencing and planting (59).

More than nineteen years had passed by when Mrs. Newson, and her young daughter Elizbeth-Jane visited the Wyden Fair and looked for Henchard. Thus, Susan reaches the town of Casterbridge and searches for her former and legitimate husband, who improves himself as a very successful hay merchant and becomes the number one man in his community. The woman notices that her former husband does not drink rum and wine anymore. Meanwhile, Henchard sets up a secret plan to meet Susan and re-marry her to keep up his sophisticated social standing, reputation, and 'their' lovely daughter Elizbeth-Jane from his irreverent and scandalous past. While Henchard is speaking with Susan, he says, "These things, as well as the dread of the girl discovering our disgrace, makes it necessary to act with extreme caution. So that I don't see how you two can return openly to my house as the wife and daughter I once treated badly, and banished from me; and there's the rub" o't" (70).

In the meantime, a young Scotchman named Donald Farfrae has arrived at Casterbridge. In the novel, Farfrae is presented as an intelligent, attractive, lively, and quite modern character. The mayor meets Farfrae and they discuss the obstacles that the

town of Casterbridge was facing due to the bad weather. Accidentally, Henchard hires Farfrae as a manager of his corn business because of his skill in dealing with such trade. Henchard ironically comments on the differences between them by mentioning that "[I] n my business, tis true that strength and bustle build up a firm. But judgment and knowledge are what keep it established. Unluckily, I am bad at science, Farfrae; bad at figures– a rule o' thumb sort of man. You are just the reverse– I can see that" (85).

Nevertheless, Henchard shares a part of his disgraceful life with Farfrae because he trusts him and wants to confide in him. Henchard says,

> I made such an impression on me that I swore, there and then, that I'd drink nothing stronger than tea for as many years as I was old that day. I have kept my oath; and though, Farfrae, I am sometimes that dry in the dog days that I could drink a quarter-barrel to the pitching, I think o' my oath, and touch no strong drink at all (48).

During their discussions about family matters, Michael Henchard tells Farfrae the secret of his life. Moreover, Henchard discloses to Farfrae that he has an illegal affair with another innocent woman, but his long-lost wife has lodged in the town again with 'their' daughter. Henchard deeply and bitterly feels annoyed because of his illegal relationship with that beautiful young lady called Lucetta. He says, "Heavens knows why, for I wasn't worth it. But being together in the same house, and her feelings warm, we got naturally intimate. I won't go into particulars of what our relations were. It is enough to say that we honestly meant to marry ...." (74).

Finally, Henchard marries Susan and begins to live together with Elizabeth- Jane in his great mansion, when he believes to be his own daughter. Susan and Henchard decide to keep her parentage secret from her, sine she does not know about the incident that

occurred at the beginning of the novel. Unfortunately, a few months later, Susan dies, leaving a short letter to her husband Henchard, wherein she discloses the history or the truth of her daughter Elizbeth-jane. She writes,

> MY DEAR MICHAEL: For the good of all three of us, I have kept one thing a secret from you till now. I hope you will understand why; I think you will; though perhaps you may not forgive me […] Elizabeth-Jane is not your Elizabeth-Jane- the child who was in my arms when you sold me. She died three months after that, and this living one is my other husband's ... (117).

This turning point or accident has a profound effect on Henchard's life. Henchard begins to treat his step-daughter Elizabeth Jane in a very severe and inflexible way. Ironically, this discovery occurs when Henchard has revealed to Elizabeth- Jane that he is her father. Consequently, she decides to leave the house and live with a new resident young lady of Casterbridge named Lucetta. Accidently, Miss Templeman, also known as Lucetta, happens to be the former mistress of Hanchard and his "dear comrade at a critical time" (90).

Meanwhile, Farfrae improves himself in his business as a professional and skilful manager. He becomes close to the townspeople as well as field labourers who begin to respect him more than the Mayor: "They like him because he's cleverer than Mr. Henchard and because he knows more; […] And he's better tempered, and Henchard's a fool to him [...] He's the most understanding man o' them two by long chalks. I wish he was the master instead of Henchard" (94). Therefore, his closeness to the poor workers and Elizbeth-Jane stimulates the jealous temper of Michael Henchard. Being a quite authoritarian man without any "moderation in his requests and impulses" (110), the popularity of Henchard gradually becomes less significant in his community.

Henchard threatens Farfrae that he would dismiss him: “Mr. Farfrae’s time as my manager is drawing to a close- isn't it, Farfrae”? (150). Thus, they “had decided to dispense with each other”. The extreme rivalry and tension between the two men start precisely after Henchard humiliates the humble employee named Abel. Besides, the Mayor believes that Farfrae challenges him in his field, and Farfrae desires to be the most respectable corn merchant in Casterbridge. Michael Henchard states,

> Well, he’s a friend of mine, and I’m a friend of his […] Didn’t he come here without a sound shoe to his voot? Didn’t I keep him here- help him to a living? Didn’t I help him to money, or whatever he wanted? […] I’d have shared my last crust with that young fellow at one time, I liked him so well. And now he’s defied me! (170).

He thus feels regretful and deeply sorry for trusting the Scotchman and sharing with him his life history. As the narrator remarks, “whenever he thought of Farfrae, it was with a dim dread; and [Henchard] often regretted that he had told the young man his whole heart, and confided to him the secrets of his life” (180). Henchard and Farfrae have very different qualities. In his book entitled “Thomas Hardy: The Mayor of Casterbridge”, Dale Kramer remarks that “Farfrae has other qualities which enable him to triumph over Henchard. Farfrae is deliberate and patient, Henchard impulsive and impatient. The interaction of these qualities ruins Henchard and makes Farfrae wealthy in the grain-buying season of uncertain weather” (Kramer 73).

In his novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy repeatedly refers to the often-unforeseen consequences of human beings’ actions. For instance, in an unanticipated scene, the furmity woman (Mrs. Goodenough) reappears in the court, disclosing the mayor’s secret: “and in four and twenty hours there was not a person in Casterbridge who

remained unacquainted with the story of Henchard's mad freak at Weydon-Priors Fair, long years before" (Hardy170). This misfortune also displays a very critical turning point in Henchard's tragic life. In other words, Henchard loses his position, social standing, and wealth as a hay merchant and as mayor of the town at that moment.

The long-standing oath of Henchard regarding not drinking of spirituous liquor has expired, "and the era of recklessness begun anew" (230). Besides, the netted lion (Henchard) starts "fortifying his heart by drinking" rum again and now "with a good conscience" (230). While he fails in his love, business, and above all sobriety, Michael Henchard decides to live in a humble cottage in Casterbridge. Meanwhile, Miss Templeman askes Henchard to burn all the documents and letters related to their love affair.

Henchard hastens to the mansion of High Place Hall, where Lucetta with her companion Elizabeth Jane were dwellings, trying to make an amend with them. His complicated dilemma as a childless man leads him to think selfishly and sentimentally about his relationship with Elizabeth Jane. He does not want to believe the fact that the girl is none of his, therefore, as the narrator says: "His bitter disappointment at finding Elizabeth-Jane to be none of his, and himself a childless man, had left an emotional void in Henchard that he unconsciously craved to fill" (250).

Donald Farfrae, in the meantime, decides to seek for Elizabeth-Jane, and he accidentally comes across Lucetta in her new lodging. Although there is an apparent difference between their nature and characters, Farfrae and Lucetta fall in love and finally get married. Afterwards, Henchard discovers the love affair and the secret marriage

between his former manager and Lucetta. Consequently, his hatred towards them reached its highest levels wherein Henchard faced exceptional circumstances that brought him to be trapped in a queer and mysterious situation. His hot temper, unusual mindset, and rashness indeed contributed to his suffering. As a result, he loses his social standing, reputation, and his corn business.

While the desire for vengeance from his former mistress (Lucetta) had still in his mind, Henchard insisted on revealing the fact to her husband, Mr. Farfrae: "I am a fearful practical joker when I can choose! [Farfrae] has taken away everything from me, and by heavens, if I meet him, I won't answer for my deeds"! (240). However, the conscience of Hanchard prevents him from humiliating the couple because he still carries little love and respect for them. Hence, he does not read the full details of Lucetta's letters in front of her husband. The narrator comments on this scene by saying,

> The truth was that, as may be divined, he had quite intended to effect a grand catastrophe at the end of this drama by reading out the name; [Henchard] "had come to the house with no other thought. But sitting here in cold blood he could not do it. Such a wrecking of hearts appalled even him. His quality was such that he could have annihilated them both in the beat of action; but to accomplish the deed by oral poison was beyond the nerve of his enmity (244).

Ultimately, Henchard recognizes that his hatred and malice were worthless. Therefore, he decides not to destroy the marriage of poor Mrs. Lucetta. "Such a woman was very small deer to hunt; he felt ashamed, lost all zest and desire to humiliate Lucetta there and then, and no longer envied Farfrae his bargain" (250). Furthermore, "Henchard was anxious to wash his hands of the game". He then meets Lucetta at the Ring, promising the woman that their love affair related documents and history will be secured. Henchard carelessly ignores to seal up the package of her letters properly, and unfortunately, they

are opened by a malicious man called Jopp. Subsequently, Jopp and the townsfolk decide to reveal Lucetta's secret, and they organize a skimmington in the streets of Casterbridge: "it is an old foolish thing they do in [long earrings] when a man's wife is-well, not too particularly his own" (290).

A few days later, Lucetta dies. After her death Farfae becomes close to Elizbeth-Jane again. Meanwhile, the sailor Newson actual father of Elizbeth-jane, unexpectedly reappears in Casterbridge, searching for her. Henchard selfishly lies to Newson by claiming that the young girl had died a year ago and more, although the trick is revealed later. Richard Newson revisits Casterbridge and reunites with his daughter Elizbeth-jane. Then, Henchard decides to leave the town of Casterbridge to escape from his miserable condition because he feels that "his own haughty sense that his presence was no longer desired" (320). Finally, he becomes an outcast and vagabond. However, Henchard tries to make reconciliation with his step-daughter and suddenly decides to attend her wedding ceremony. He purchases a wedding gift, "a caged goldfinch", but Elizabeth-jane considers his lie on her father as an immoral deed. Therefore, his attempt to get close to her has been fails. Ultimately, Michael Henchard dies in Abel Whittle's cottage, wishing that nobody would feel grief and sorrow for his tragic end.

In his aforementioned book, Dale Kramer explains that,

> The range of response to Henchard has not altered substantially since 1886, nor have the terms of the debate about his character. He is aligned with a now-lost world not only because of his old-fashioned methods but also because of his resemblance to such traditional tragic figures as Sophocles' Oedipus and Shakespeare's Lear (Kramer xx).

Several critics have persuasively argued that there are distinct "parallels among the tales of these three tragic heroes, particularly in respect of their exiles, relationships with a beloved 'daughter', and self-willed deaths" (Kramer xx). Moreover, Kramer proposes that "of all Hardy's protagonists, Henchard is the one who most closely conforms to the Aristotelean model: hamartia (literally, 'error of judgement') leading to anagnorisis ('recognition') and peripeteia ('fall')" (Kramer xx).

Yet, in the case of Henchard, the most prominent and recognisable tragic error is his sale of his family, his illegal relationship with Lucetta, his decision of employing Farfrae, and his lie to Elizbeth-Jane's actual father, Richard Newson. Henchard committed his first hamartia when he was intoxicated, and he auctions his wife and daughter. The discovery and fall happen when) Mrs. Goodenough) the furmity hag publicly exposes the Mayor's past transaction of selling his wife. The suffering and downfall of Henchard starts after the woman's revelation. This event, in other words, causes the Mayor to lose his successful career and his corn business. Michael Henchard's first fall, both economically and mentally, leads him to commit awful and offensive deeds during the rest of his life. In addition, his secret love affair with Lucetta can be defined as an error of judgment (*hamartia*). The recognition happens when his new manager Jopp steals Henchard's secret love documents and read them openly. The peripeteia occurs when Jopp and the townspeople organize a skimmington ride and reveal the illicit affair that had been between the Mayor and Lucetta.

Moreover, Henchard's offer to Donald Farfrae to manage his hay business can be seen as hamartia and a rapid decision. The recognition happens when Farfrae becomes the

most admired corn dealer in Casterbridge; the reversal befalls when Fanfare elected by the town council to be the new mayor of Casterbridge instead of Henchard. As a result, Henchard feels his authority and power are increasingly declining, while Fanfare's popularity is rising between the townspeople. Therefore, "Henchard continued moody and silent, and when one of the men inquired of him if some oats should be hoisted to an upper floor or not, he said shortly, Ask Mr. Farfrae. He's master here!" (Hardy 98). The narrator further remarks: "Morally he was; there could be no doubt of it. Henchard, who had hitherto been the most admired man in his circle, was the most admired no longer" (98). Michael Henchard's last tragic error happens towards the penultimate chapter of the novel when Newson reappears, looking for his actual daughter, Elizabeth-Jane. Henchard's lie to Newson that the girl is dead can be described as hamartia. Newson's return and the discovery of the fact of Elizbeth- Jane also can be seen as anagnorisis leading to the peripetia and Henchard's fall at the end of the novel.

Thus, in his novel, Hardy applied the characteristic features of the Classical tragedy, which formulated by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. Nevertheless, Hardy challenges Aristotle in some crucial points regarding the concepts of fate and responsibility of the individual in his fatal errors. Based on this factor, the present chapter will endeavour to answer the following question: Does the tragic hero Henchard make his decisions or is every event governed by destiny and fate?

The Mayor of Casterbridge portrays the naturalistic facts and exhibits the agrarian life, linking it with nature. The town of Casterbridge appears to be a significant and crucial character in the book. It has feelings, desire, and an irresistible attraction that considerably

influences the lives of other characters. Hence, Hardy emphasizes that nature has various features, and it does not offer kindness and mercy to humankind. In his book "Hardy A Collection of Critical Essays", professor Albert J. Guerard states that "Founding itself upon an ancient psychology, The Mayor of Casterbridge celebrates, first of all, the subordination of the passions that link man with nature to the reason that unites him with God" (9). Fundamentally, the power of nature, to some extent, can punish and victimize human beings according to their own actions and behavioural patterns. For example, Gipsies and showmen in the "Weydon Priors Fair" had lost their morality, principles and were indeed malicious people. As a result, the uncaring force of the universe can react to human beings to assert its rule and power in the world.

Hardy considers the blind force of nature as having multifaceted shapes, and many people do not fully understand their rightness and wrongness because of the embodiments of nature. In her book "The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928", F. Emily Hardy claimed that her husband (Hardy) once remarked, "The Hypocrisy of things. Nature is an arch dissembler". […] ["Human beings seldom get to realize that nothing is as it appears" (176). While Henchard perpetrates his dehumanizing action in a rural community and several men were committing the same thing, maybe more. In addition, in the first chapter of his book, Hardy explicitly indicates that the law of nature is responsible for the occurrences of enormous and ruthless matters. Nevertheless, the existence and universe absolutely do not discontinue from advancing on, "[t]he difference between the peacefulness of interior nature and the wilful hostilities of mankind was very apparent at

this place. In contrast with the harshness of the act just ended within the tent was the sight of several horses crossing their necks and rubbing each other lovingly" (Hardy 20).

In his essay "The Mayor of Casterbridge as Tragedy," John Paterson affirms and asserts that nature plays a prominent and substantial role in Hardy's novel. The novel reflects the significance of the moral system and its function as a judicial factor in the world. In addition, Paterson remarks that *The Mayor of Casterbridge* embraces "the existence of a moral order, an ethical substance, a standard of justice and rectitude" […] "and [w]here nature [enters] the novel, it enters as a force obedient and instrumental to a moral order whose rights and claims take priority over a man's" (Paterson 92-100).

Persistently, Michael Henchard does not want to accept his shortcoming and imperfection. Thus, he seeks in vain to resolve his complicated perplexity and revives himself from his weakness. Unfortunately, his endeavours highly contributed to his tragic end. Hardy stresses and emphasizes that the tragic circumstances undoubtedly enable the man to manage his wrongdoing. In addition, he suggests that tragedy can show numerous daunting situations in the dramatic character's life. Simultaneously, it drives or permits the man to achieve his fate and density freely (F. Emily Hardy 189).

M. Henchard commits various mistakes in the judgments and hurried decisions, although several mishaps and sad incidents pose serious difficulties in his life. At the very beginning of the novel, Henchard startles by recognizing that his wife moves with a strange sea sailor, Newson. Afterwards, his long-lost wife's death and her unanticipated letter have made him confused. Later, Elizabeth-Jane's actual father suddenly reappears, seeking for her. Furthermore, he accidentally meets the Scotchman Donald Farfrae and

encourages him to reside in the town to support him in the corn trade. R. P. Draper, in his celebrated article, "The Mayor of Casterbridge" argues that "Hardy's novel character is not exclusively fate. Chance, or coincidence, also plays a significant part in determining the form of action in which character can express itself" (Draper 58). The influence of the reappearance of some characters and the vagaries of the weather intensifies Henchard's failure and suffering. As Brooks remarks,

> The return of Susan, Newson, Lucetta, and the furmity hag (who appears on the one day when Henchard is sitting as substitute magistrate): the appearance of Farfrae at the very moment when Henchard needs his knowledge to get out of a difficulty; the bad weather that intensifies his failure by the failure of others involved in his speculations – stress the long arm of coincidence (Brooks 199).

Hence, these external circumstances and coincidences intensified his anxiety, depression and scared him of losing his reputation and business. Undoubtedly, the element of chance and accident play a pivotal role in the tragic construction. Accident broadly participates in the tragic protagonist's deeds, actions and temperaments. In this regard, A.C Bradley suggests that the factor of the chance or accident can work, creating a dramatic sequence to sympathize with the tragic character (15). Bradley's statement matches with the Classical ideas wherein the tragedy aims to excite the tragic emotions of pity, sympathy, and fear. For instance, the vulnerability and nobility of Henchard are sympathetic, although his fatal errors are the consequences of his deeds and acute moods.

Numerous critics discuss the ambiguous relationships between the character and external circumstances, referring to the suffering and "fate" of Henchard. According to Brooks, the novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* primarily focuses on the foreseeable intersection between character and external circumstances. The critic emphasizes that it is

hard to discuss these two features separately. In addition, she acknowledges that hardly "character and circumstances" as the causal factors of "destiny" and suffering do serve apart. She points out that "Henchard's impulse to self-punishment places him in the way of bad luck. Nothing else can account for his entrusting Lucetta's letters to his enemy Jopp or his rashness in acting on the long-range forecast of the weather-prophet without waiting for the oracle's full development" (Brooks 199).

Thus, the tragic emotions of fear and pity are triggered not simply because the readers could deeply sympathize with the dramatic character but also due to the fact that destiny could convey an unexpected chance, mishap, and accident that the tragic protagonist's character may not face or tolerate these external circumstances. Brooks suggests that,

> These blunders release forces of death and destruction which inspire tragic terror at the contemplation of the painful mystery of the workings of inexorable law Tragic pity is aroused, as Dobrée points out, 'not because someone suffers, but because something fine is bruised and broken – something too sensitively organized for an insentient world of defect (14-15).

Considering the aforementioned fact, it is essential to highlight that Hardy utilizes the element of chance and accident to enhance the tragic feelings. Hardy repeatedly provides some equilibrium between character and external circumstances by making their correlation mysterious. "Hardy's double vision of man's greatness in values and littleness of the cosmic scheme keeps the tragic balance between fate– the impersonal nature of things – and personal responsibility" (Brooks 18). Brooks gives an important instance from the novel that is "when Henchard disregards his wife's last wishes and reads the

letter in which she discloses that Elizabeth-Jane is not his child". (18). In this view, the following passage proves the statement:

> [Henchard] could not help thinking that the concatenation of events this evening had produced was the scheme of some sinister intelligence bent on punishing him. Yet, they had developed naturally. If he had not revealed his past history to Elizabeth, he would not have searched the drawer for papers, and so on (124).

These important turning points in the protagonist's tragic life reveal "the painful ambiguity and inscrutability of things; a poetic asset. While it is true that Hardy's poetic pattern stresses the action of fate, it does so to stress too the human responsibility to deflect fate from its path before it is too late" (Brooks 18-19). Therefore, there is a good reason to believe that certain events and circumstances determined the suffering and pain of Henchard rather than his final fate. In this context, the concept of the responsibility of an individual on his/her fate is underlined later in this chapter.

Although the sequences of circumstances were extremely unfortunate to some extent, in essence, they can be conceivable. In addition, Hardy illustrates that some circumstances can be unexpected but definitely possible. In his essay entitled "Thomas Hardy – The Forms of Tragedy", Kramer convincingly argues that *The Mayor of Casterbridge* contained "as does Aristotle's outline of dramatic principles, the necessity that all narrative devices be appropriate to the plot, atmosphere, and final significance" (Kramer 12). Kramer further states that it "is modelled to a large degree on Aristotle" (14). Accordingly, it can be claimed that Hardy uses the Aristotelian characteristic features of the "probability and necessity law" in tragedy. In other words, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

fulfills the final significance of tragedy, thereby exciting the tragic emotions of fear and pity in response to its protagonist's sadness together with suffering.

Although Hardy conforms to the Aristotelian approach of tragedy, he does not believe in the entire responsibility of the superior force of nature in shaping or determining the characters of the dramatic fate. Accordingly, one can argue that Hardy challenges the *Poetic* attributes of Aristotle at this significant point. In his essay entitled "Hardy's Mayor: The Anti-traditional Basis of Tragedy", Lawrence J. Starzyk states that Hardy indeed coverts and challenges the traditional idea of fate. Furthermore, Starzyk concludes his argument by stating that *The Mayor of Casterbridge* explicitly follows the essentials of a Classical tragedy, nonetheless the novel is an innovative and unique tragic version of the modern world (Starzyk 593).

It can accurately be remarked that Hardy manages to create a room for both Classical and Shakespearean tragedy in his tragic novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Jeanette King, in her book entitled "Tragedy in the Victorian Novel", suggests that Thomas Hardy repeatedly attempts to produce or provide a realistic tragic novel without entirely neglecting or dismissing either the Classical or Shakespearean model. For instance, similar to the view of Shakespeare, T. Hardy believes in the accountability and agency of individuals for his/her tragic flaw and destiny (King 5). In other words, Hardy tries to explore the role of human responsibility in the tragic destruction, and indeed, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is a remarkable example of this kind of exploration.

In a full title of the novel *The Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge: A Story of a Man of Character,* the writer wants to emphasize that the disastrous destiny of

the protagonist Henchard are the outcomes of his actions, poor decisions, and passionate temperament. In fact, the destiny and fortune of Henchard are not entirely decided or resolved by the uncaring power of nature like the traditional construction of tragedy. In addition, Hardy advocates that the qualities and habits of the character may be accountable for its failures regardless of how many chances or accidents the hero encounters. He further states that "it is not improbabilities of the incident but improbabilities of character that matter" (qut. in F. E. Hardy 175).

Concerning the leading characters, there are several similarities and differences between the Classical or Greek drama and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as pointed out by many critics including D.A. Dike, John Paterson, and Duane D. Edwards. Dike in his essay entitled "A Modern Oedipus: The Mayor of Casterbridge", points out that Henchard (the Mayor of Casterbridge) is compared with Oedipus (the King of Thebes). He also remarks that the fierce rivalry and external conflicts between old-fashioned and modern life are portrayed in the tragedy of both tragic protagonists Oedipus and Henchard. Arguably, the rivalry or jealousy between Henchard and Donald Farfrae is similar to that of Oedipus and his brother-in-law Creon (Dike 169). Like Oedipus, Michael Henchard's endeavours to compensate for his grievous and incredible mistakes leads him to commit many miscalculations. In other words, his tragic error and unforgettable sin drive him to lose his sophisticated position as the mayor, corn tradesman and father. Regrettably, his desire to reconcile with his with his step-daughter Elizabeth-Jane and his former mistress Lucetta intensifies his suffering.

According to Dike, the form of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* fairly resembles the traditional drama of *Oedipus Rex* wherein Michael Henchard is symbolized as the tragic protagonist who attempts to make amends for his wrongdoing. Later, Michael Henchard follows his conscience by desiring to prove his love for the family and purify himself from the blunders that he made in the past. Furthermore, D.A. Dike remarks that Fanfare as a modern character is the instrument for the unstoppable suffering of Henchard. Dike also comments on the relationship and rivalry between Henchard and Farfrae by stating:

> The central *agon* of the novel, Henchard's struggle with Donald Farfrae recalls the antagonism between Oedipus and Creon, and also the sacred combat between the old God, priest, or father and the new, around which was constructed the primitive rite of the Seasonal King. As a conclusion to that ceremonial combat, the rejected king was torn asunder and spread over the land. So Henchard, supplanted mayor, father, and corn merchant- for his profession is significant, reminding us of its religious antecedent-losses official authority, positions, both wife and daughter, social function to his figurative son (Dike 169).

Therefore, Thomas Hardy indicates the traditional idea of the antagonism between the old-fashioned and modern ways thinking, representing two different characters (Henchard and Fanfare) in a new tragic version of the late nineteenth century.

Dike claims that Hardy tries to illustrate the concept of moral order in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, which is derived from the Greek tragedy. In other words, Thomas Hardy picks up the concept of the moral system that exists during the Greek time and employs it in his own time and society. In their tragic versions, the tragic playwrights and poets such as Sophocles and Aeschylus refer to Gods and deities. In addition, they extensively correlate these Gods and deities with the wheel of inevitable fate. In this rationale, Hardy demonstrates this vital notion in a symbolic and realistic form in relation to the standards of the 19th century. It is worth noting that Hardy was profoundly conscious about the Greek

mythology and serious thoughts of the Greek writers that God decides the fate of human beings. Conversely, he symbolically presents the concept of moral order in his major tragic novels, and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is an example of this (Dike 170).

However, the livelihood of the community of Casterbridge were ascertained by the agricultural, traditional, and mythical rules of their ancestors, which were too far from the development and changes of modernity. For instance, townsfolk always looked for trivial things such as gossips and rumourers under such situation. In other words, they did not care about modern progress to improve their lives. The following statement may exemplify such societal beliefs and traditions:

> When all has been said about busy rumourers, a superficial and temporary thing is the interest of anybody in affairs which do not directly touch them. It would be a truer representation to say that Casterbridge (ever excepting the nineteen young ladies) looked up for a moment at the news, and withdrawing its attention, went on labouring and victualling, bringing up its children, and burying its dead, without caring a little for Farfrae's domestic plans (Hardy 287).

Casterbridge people follows the ethical and spiritual principles of the past. Indeed, Hardy was deeply aware of the social values and customs of his society. Consequently, he portrays the influences and impacts of these social-traditional and conventions in his novel by demolishing the moral system through the tragic protagonist Michael Henchard. According to Dike, Henchard breaks his moral responsibility by auctioning his wife and daughter for five guineas in a "Weydon-Priors fair", he realizes his immoral deed, although too late.

Hardy, in the original subtitle called *A Story of a Man of Character,* deliberately tries to call the attention of the readers to the character of Michael Henchard and his

qualities that enabled him to be a great tragic protagonist. In this regard, Dike describes Henchard as a sinful and immoral man. Additionally, Dike puts forward that the hubris, ambition, and uncontrollable passion of Henchard drives him to besmirch his moral principles. In fact, the violent temperament of Henchard makes him a man who does not care about the punishments and the consequences of his actions/deeds. Dike states that "Henchard's pride, jealousy, ambition, and violent temper are the tragic vices associated with nobility; his sense of duty" (171).

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle argues that tragedy "is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse" (27). For example, the attributes of the character that is carried by people during the entirety of their lives are responsible for their deeds and behaviour. In other words, the qualities of the individual can initiate miscalculations into wrong actions, thus causing internal and external conflicts during the rest of his/her lives. Henchard regularly and steadily conforms to Aristotle's concept of the tragic hero in reference to the traits of the character and their impacts on his dramatic life. The following passage may justify such concepts: "[T] hough under a long reign of self-control he had become Mayor and churchwarden and whatnot, there was still the same unruly volcanic stuff beneath the rind of Michael Henchard as when he had sold his wife at Weydon Fair" (95).

Although Michael Henchard explicitly accuses his friend Farfrae of being the main reason for his failure and defeat, he finally understands that his queer circumstances are associated with something greater than anyone. Therefore, Henchard's downfall is an

outcome of his fatal blunders, fluctuating passion, and immoral actions rather than anything else. In terms of an individual's responsibility for his action, Lawrence J. Starzyk mentions that "[t] he real greatness of Henchard as a tragic figure is not that he recognizes in the end that the universe is ordered and just, that his suffering is deserved; it is rather that he has accepted his lot as something almost entirely of his own making and in part of the very essence of life" (Starzyk 605).

Besides, the narrator comments on Henchard's isolation time: "Even [Henchard] could not admit that the perpetrator, if any, might be Farfrae. These isolated hours of superstition came to Henchard in a time of moody depression when all his practical largeness of view had oozed out of him" (Hardy 270). The loneliness or alienation time of Henchard greatly affects his judgments and moods, wherein he repeatedly exaggerates in his overreaction towards the people around him because of his rashness and inflexible temper. In this context, Dike states that "[a]lienation is the penalty for Michael Henchard's sin. Separateness from society, particularly from the family he might have had, is a logical extension of the irresponsible economic individualism which has been his ruling principle" (Dike 178). He further claims that although the economic crisis might have ruined Henchard's life, he is still accountable for his deeds: "Henchard is not [...] the hapless victim of his cultural circumstance, index to that cultural circumstance though he be" (Dike 179).

In his essay entitled "Modernist Hardy: Hand-Writing in The Mayor of Casterbridge", H. Miller suggests that "The Mayor is presented from the perspective of a somewhat detached spectator who sees what anyone who was there might have seen, often

as a kind of spy, voyeur, or invisible looker-on seeing from the outside in, or from the inside out" (Miller 435). It is important to mention that Hardy well-illustrated the tragic isolation of Henchard, especially towards the end of the novel. In brief, Henchard's condition of alienation as a modern tragic hero qualifies him to be comparable with the tragic heroes of the Greeks. Henchard says that "I- Cain- go alone as I deserve- an outcast and a vagabond. But my punishment is not greater than I can bear!. [Henchard] sternly subdued his anguish, shouldered his basket, and went on" (Hardy 370).

The comparison between the tragic lives of Michael Henchard and Oedipus is not quite comprehensive. The destiny of Oedipus is unavoidable because of his horrible circumstances that are conspicuously linked to his present. Conversely, the difficulties of Henchard are the outcome of his wrong-doing, rashness, and hubris in the past that altered and affected his life and present. In a word, Henchard's fate is not inevitable rather it could have been avoided. In addition, the misfortune and suffering of the king was already predetermined by the superior power of God. In this perspective, Draper states that "Henchard's tragedy, however, is more evidently the product of his character" (Draper 57).

The ambition of Michael Henchard is the major factor that causes his tragic error and final downfall towards the end of the novel. According to Starzyk, "If there is a necessary law in Thomas Hardy's universe, it is that he who seeks the vortex of life in an effort to control its contrarious inconsistencies by imposing his own will upon its random developments precipitates tragedy upon himself" (Starzyk 596). After selling his family, Henchard decides to start his career in Casterbridge. He impatiently attempts to climb the

social ladder, emerging a wealthy and respectable man in his society. Nevertheless, his remorseful feeling and love towards his wife and step-daughter whom he believes to be his daughter until Susan's death, stimulated him to do something fair and right by them after they returned to Casterbridge. Hence, the reappearance of Susan places him in quite an ambivalent status between the shameful past and glorious present. It can be argued that there is an indispensable and complex relationship and interaction between the past and present in the fate and tragedy of Henchard.

It is important to note that the past transgressions of Henchard intensify his anxiety and depression, leading to his final destiny. He strives to forget and overcome his haunting past and illegal affair with his former mistress Lucetta, as he utters "by doing right with Susan, I wrong another innocent woman" (Hardy 90). Although Henchard had a variety of choices to manage his judgments and temper, his tragic errors that occurred in the past have substantially influenced him and changed his vital decisions. In other words, his past deeds completely and decisively ruin as well as shatter his present living. Henchard takes the responsibility for his fatal blunder by making an oath of not touching rum for more than twenty-one years. Moreover, he narrates about his suffering and depression time to Farfrae, which is the consequences of his past: "I sank in one of those gloomy fits I sometimes suffer from, on account o' the loneliness of my domestic life" (91).

A comparison between the two cited tragic heroes exclusively suggests the matter of the rivalry concerning the old and new generation. Duane D. Edwards, in his essay entitled, "The Mayor of Casterbridge as Aeschylean Tragedy" proposes that "[w]hen the structure of the novel is duly considered, it becomes clear that Henchard's life resembles

Agamemnon's more than Oedipus's" (Edwards 608). Edwardes points out that the catastrophic life and fate of Henchard can be explicitly compared with that of Agamemnon regarding the relationship between the past and the present. In addition, the suffering of Oedipus is out of his fatal errors at the present and without any relation to the past. Regarding the relationships between the past and present, "the reappearance of Susan, Newson, and furmity woman are, of course, a contrast to the causal relationship between deeds and suffering found in Sophocles" (609).

Regarding the motive, action, and ambition of the tragic protagonists, Edwards recognizes a strong resemblance between Agamemnon and Henchard characters. For instance, Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia to Artemis to stop the winds' blowing. In an impulsive moment, the Mayor persists in selling his spouse and daughter to achieve his ambition, starting a new life. Accordingly, he decides to flee from his unpleasant marriage, ensuring a glorious future without family. The fate of Henchard and Agamemnon is an outcome of their wrong decisions and bad judgments in the past. In other words, both were highly involved in making their lives disastrous.

Nineteen years later, Henchard appears as a man with his social standing and reputation in society. Hardy highlights the relationship between the past and present for two significant reasons. First, he seems to say that the relationship is "indeterminate rather than causal" (Edwards 610). Second, Hardy "wants to stress that the past is unalterable but may be revived in the present and work to an individual's disadvantage" (Edwards 610). Meaningfully, the sudden reappearance of Susan does not contribute to the fate and downfall of Henchard. Instead, he suffers when his secret of life is revived. The past is

revived when the furmity hag discloses that the Mayor had sold his family. Basically, the suffering and downfall of Henchard begin when his secret is revealed to the townspeople of Casterbridge. The narrator displays the consequences or the results of the court scene by remarking:

> Small as the court incident had been in itself, it formed the edge or turn in the incline of Henchard's fortunes. On that day- almost at that minute- he passed the ridge of prosperity and honour, and began to descend rapidly on the other side. It was strange how soon he sank in esteem. Socially he had received a startling fillip downwards; and, having already lost commercial buoyancy from rash transactions, the velocity of his descent in both aspects became accelerated every hour (Hardy 216).

Edwards points out that the selling of wife and daughter by Hanchard is not majorly responsible for his misery and downfall. The social and moral deterioration of Henchard is essentially initiated when the townspeople responded to his deeds as if that had happened recently. Conversely, his amends and endeavours to deal with his fatal errors also lead to his suffering. It can be reasoned that a combination of circumstances and character is primarily accountable for the defeat of Hardy's tragic hero Henchard. Therein, Hardy demonstrates that the character and events together can determine the pain and sufferings of an individual. Accordingly, the failure and decline of Henchard occurred when he is financially destroyed, and Mrs. Goodenough publicly revealed his shameful past. In his essay entitled "Character and Fate in Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge," Robert C. Schweik aptly states that:

> Henchard's first downfall is the product of a variety of interconnected causes, some related to Henchard's character (as he is variously prompted by instinctive antagonism, superstitiousness, Southern doggedness, disappointment, unconscious cravings, rashness, rivalry in love and some more clearly matters of chance coincidental discoveries, inopportune revelations, the vagaries of the weather (253, note 5).

Agamemnon is penalized for his immoral action by divine justice because the world of Aeschylus is largely associated with the Gods and the superior force of the universe. On the other hand, the world of Hardy is different without any God and is not moral. As a result, the punishment and fate of Henchard is determined by the social and moral laws immediately after his fellowmen discover his past secret. Hardy claims that,

> My imagination may often have run away from me; but all the same, my sober opinion-as far as I have any definite one- of the Cause of Things, has been defined in scores of places, and is that of a great many ordinary thinkers: that the said Cause is neither moral nor immoral, but *"ummoral":* 'loveless and hateless' I have called it, which neither good nor evil knows (qut. in Edwards 611).

In the aforementioned quotation, Hardy emphasises that the world is *"ummoral"* wherein he seems to say that human beings are relentless, ruthless, and uncaring to each other's pain and suffering. Edwards refers to the differences between the worlds of Aeschylus and Thomas Hardy: "Aeschylus's world is populated by people whose misdeeds will without fail be punished by the gods, Hardy's Mayor lives in an "*unmoral*" "world and will probably be punished by his fellowmen if his wrong deeds are discovered" (612).

Thus, it is correct to assume that Hardy's novel suggests the suffering of man at the hands of others. It needs to be said that Henchard experiences deep suffering due to his feeling of love towards Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane. In fact, he treats Farfrae as his younger brother: "Your forehead, Farfrae, is something like my poor brother's- now dead and gone; and the nose, too, isn't unlike his. The narrator notes that the Mayor puts his arm on Farfrae's shoulders as if Farfrae were a younger brother" (Hardy 120). Edwards comments on Henchard's feeling of love towards Elizabeth-Jane: "[Henchard] loves Elizabeth-Jane initially because he believes she is his daughter, certainly, that love is

fostered by the fact that she, like a natural daughter, resembles him: she is shy and proud; she is concerned with social propriety but remains socially awkward" (Edwards 616).

Edwards mentions that both Hardy and Aeschylus use the *dysfunctional* (the italic is mine) family as the major theme in their literary works, however in different ways. In addition, he states that "Ironically, Agamemnon suffers because he has a family; Henchard, because he does not" (Edwards note 17). In essence, Hardy uses such an important theme or idea to explore the man lives in an existentialist or secular world, whereas Aeschylus proposes that "man's world is inseparable from the gods'". For further explanation, Edwards indicates that, "Since Hardy's world is godless, it is necessary that the past be revived in the present if the past is to be an indeterminate cause of the present deeds and suffering. The idea of reviving the past is already discussed in referring to the reappearance of the furmity woman".

The Mayor of Casterbridge is comparable with *Agamemnon* regarding the inseparable relationship between the past and present in which both Agamemnon and Henchard strive to achieve a glorious future. However, their plans, motive and ambition prompt them to reject family life, thereby deciding their fate willingly. Although both tragic protagonists were able to create a good future and avoid their disastrous fate, they persistently preferred to fulfil their aims and ambitions over the social and moral laws in their respective dissimilar worlds. In a nutshell, the analogies between Henchard and Agamemnon primarily suggests their immoral deeds in the past rather than in the present. For further elaboration, Edwards concludes that,

> *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is, then, tragedy; specifically, it is Aeschylean tragedy. As a result, what Henchard did in the past is more important than what he does in the present. It is this that makes *The Mayor* unlike either the *Oedipus Tyrannus* or *Jude the Obscure,* two works in which the central character's motives and errors combine with a particular situation so that the central character is forced to make a choice. In each work, the emphasis is on the choice that the hero can make in the present (Edwards 619).

Thomas Hardy, in the preface to his novel, acknowledges that "The Mayor of Casterbridge is more particularly a study of one man's deeds and character than, perhaps, any other of those included in my Exhibition of Wessex life" (Hardy VVI). He wants to emphasize that the novel primarily focuses on the impact of individual character on his fate. Consequently, Edwards argues that it is appropriate to read or discuss the novel in the light of "the relationship of Henchard's character to both past and present". Consequently, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* can be considered as a tragedy of character rather than a situation. Therein, the flawed character of Henchard determines his ultimate fate and downfall. Yet again, it can be reasoned out that the chance or coincidences and circumstances hardly works against him, but "it is [The Mayor] who is made to appear more sinned against than sinning" (Schweik 260). According to Schweik, towards the end of the novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge:*

> Hardy emphasises most strongly the disjunction between Henchard's moral stature and the circumstance which has blindly nullified his repentance, his recantation of ambition, and his new capacity for a higher kind of achievement; and in doing so Hardy seems intent on reversing the fable-like correspondence between character and fate which figures so conspicuously in the first half of the novel (Schweik 260).

According to Schweik,

> Hardy began *The Mayor of Casterbridge* with an action that strongly implied a connection between Henchard's moral stature and his fate. However, the gradual shift in aspect and emphasis which takes place throughout the second half of The Mayor of Casterbridge suggests that [...] Hardy tended to reflect more deliberately upon the implications of

> Henchard's fall and did so within the framework of his consciously considered views on man's place in a Darwinian world (Schweik 262).

Referring to the above quotation, it may be legitimate to say that Schweik suggests the first half of the novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* conforms to the Aristotelian scheme of tragedy, with the tragic protagonist determining his deeds and destiny. Conversely, the second half of the novel reveals the concept of 19th century or Darwinian perception linked to the horrible transitions and circumstances that devastated the helpless individual.

It is reasonable to conclude that the novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* truly fulfills the essential aim of tragedy wherein it does evoke the tragic emotions of pity and fear through its protagonist Henchard. Nevertheless, Hardy challenges the recommendation of Aristotle concerning the superiority of the plot over the character. Unlike Aristotle, Thomas Hardy wants to focus on the tragic experience of an individual rather than the plot or action. In this insight, one can argue that Hardy applies the salient Aristotelian elements and demonstrates the validity and relevance of Aristotle's *Poetics* to some extent, wherein he successfully illustrates his unique and remarkable style in writing tragedy. On the other hand, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* represents the influence of the Elizabethan playwright Shakespeare. Like Shakespeare, Hardy portrays the life of his tragic hero Henchard in the secular world in which he suffers and experiences internal and external conflicts during his long tragic life. Therefore, it can be said that Hardy's tragic view is characterized as a combination of Classical and Shakespearean tragedy.

CHAPTER THREE

THINGS FALL APART

Things Fall Apart was written and published in the second half of the twentieth century (1958). Chinua Achebe's novel primarily resolves around the catastrophic human consequences of the conflict between the European and African's beliefs, thoughts, and cultures in southeastern Nigeria. As a matter of fact, the novel is set in a conservative and traditional Igbo society, at the moment when the Christian missionaries had started to invade and exploit the Nigerian villages and towns. Okonkwo, the protagonist of Achebe's novel and the most powerful man in his community, stubbornly attempts to fight against the sheer invasion of the white missionaries, but the vast majority of his fellow villagers do not want to stand with him in his great endeavours to throw the enemies from their land. While his people persistently refuse to follow him, Okonkwo perpetrates suicide in fury, disappointment, and hopelessness.

*Things Fall Apart'*s narrative starts in the late nineteenth century and discloses the initial severe collision and inevitable tensions between the European colonizers and the native Igbo people. It is worth noting that the British colonizers see the indigenous Igbo people as primitive and uncivilized people and, they claim that they are in desperate need of a new and well-organized system. In a broader sense, the sense of European superiority over the African society leads to a long and harsh clash over religion, thoughts, and traditional values between these two different civilizations. In order to achieve their aim and have control over the Igbo people, the white missionaries had to create such a big lie as a pretext or reason to initiate the cultural exchange between these two cultures.

Crucially, this unjust and unfair pretext poses an adversarial scene between the two mentioned civilizations. In his book mentioned earlier in chapter one, Ernest Emenyonu suggests that,

> *Things Fall Apart* is indeed a classic study of cross-cultural misunderstanding and the consequences to the rest of humanity, when a belligerent culture or civilization, out of sheer arrogance and ethnocentrism, takes it upon itself to invade another culture, another civilization. Seen from this perspective, the lesson of *Things Fall Apart* comes across clearly as the unique manifestation of human blindness and blissful ignorance at a point in time (Emenyonu 47).

The novel has three main sections. The first section consists of thirteen long chapters and presents the tragic protagonist Okonkwo and his family. It portrays the traditions and customs of Igbo society. The first section ends with Okonkwo's departure or exile from his house to his motherland, Mbanta. The second section of the novel centres around Okonkwo's seven years of displacement and exile. It also covers the initial arrival of the white missionaries and their great influences and impacts on the Igbo community. This part concludes with the clash between Okonkwo and his son, Nwoye, which finally leads to his defection from his community. Crucially, the final part mainly illustrates Okonkwo's return from his motherland to Umuofia, the alterations that have happened in his community with the arrival of the British invaders, and concludes with his death.

Noticeably, the novel manifests a well-organized community wherein close relationships are retained with the old traditions and conventions of the ancestors. The primary concentration of the narrative is on the struggle and contention between African and European cultures. Achebe dramatizes and embodies both the positive and negative sides predominating in the African community as well as in the British community. In his essay "African Literature: A Critical View", David Cook argues that "Chinua Achebe

prefers to reveal the darker side of both the traditions as well as the better side and leaves us to draw our own conclusions" (Cook 142).

Regarding the tragic storyline of Okonkwo, Achebe demonstrates the political and cultural history of the Igbo society at the moment of change from independence to the dominations of the British colonization in the late nineteenth century. Achebe portrays the tragic story of Okonkwo, vividly referring to the social and political crisis in the history of Africa, wherein he emphasizes and indicates a parallel line between the individual's fate and colonialization's tragic destruction of indigenous African cultures. In her book titled *Long Drums and Cannons,* Margaret Laurence observes that in his novel *Things Fall Apart* "Achebe deals with the traditional society of the Ibo people, the reasons for its breakdown and the ways in which social changes have affected the lives of individual men" (Laurence 105-106). On the other hand, the reader can clearly and readily understand the fruitless endeavour of the tragic hero Okonkwo to resist the crucial and immense changes which ultimately overthrow him.

Therefore, it is necessary to remark that Achebe describes both the tragedy of the prosperous individual as well as society in his novel *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe's book can fully satisfy the interpretation of the tragedy offered by the Greek philosopher Aristotle and the British critic Bradley through its protagonist Okonkwo. Aristotle and Bradley have argued that an ideal tragedy must fundamentally deal with exceptional and highly regarded individuals: "[a] tragedy is a story of exceptional calamity leading to the death of a man in high estate" (Bradley 16). Besides, in most tragedies, the protagonists are remarkable and extraordinary characters. Their social standing and fates are not only

theirs but are highly connected with the prosperity and adversity of their nations. They definitely become tragic protagonists by achieving outstanding things for their countries, gaining considerable respect as a consequence. Okonkwo fits Classical and Shakespearean definition of the tragic hero. The notion that Okonkwo is a fierce warrior whose calamity and fate is highly bound with that of his community is instantly confirmed in the opening paragraph of the novel. As the narrator remarks,

> Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights … The drums beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath. Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water. Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their backs and their thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point. In the end Okonkwo threw the Cat (Achebe 3).

The prime responsibility that Okonkwo persistently decided to undertake first is to challenge Amalinze the Cat in a wrestling contest. As a result of his triumph over the wrestler Amalinze, his fame and reputation grow "like the bush fire in the harmattan" (3). Chinua Achebe exemplifies Okonkwo as a tragic protagonist who possesses the qualities of glory, bravery, pride, and selfishness. Oknokow, in other words, symbolizes strength, manliness, and aggressiveness. Standing with this substantial point, Okonkwo can be, according to Michael Valdez Moses, compared to archetypal hero Achilles:

> Like Achilles, Okonkwo is "a man of action, a man of war" (p. 7). His "fame" among the Igbo rests "on solid personal achievements" (p. 3), foremost of which are his exploits as the greatest wrestler and most accomplished warrior of the nine villages. He is a man renowned and respected for having brought home from battle five human heads; and on

> feast days and important public occasions, he drinks his palm wine from the skull of the first warrior he killed (Moses 110-111).

Okonkwo is descended from a poor and humble family who lived and worked in Umuofia tribe, a pastoral territory in Nigeria. His father, Unoka, had died in debt and shame when Okonkwo was eighteen. The narrator further comments on Unoka's character: "[he] was, of course, a debtor, and he owed every neighbor some money, from a few cowries to quite substantial amounts […] Unoka was such a man that he always succeeded in borrowing more, and piling up his debts" (3). Unoka's scandalous past stimulated his son Okonkwo to work hard in order to gain a prosperous future in his land. Significantly, the history of his father immensely engenders in the protagonist Okonkwo a fear of defeat and failure. Okonkwo is ashamed of his effeminate father because of his carelessness, feebleness, and his lack of a great title in his community. While he sees his father as an example of a failed man, he impatiently tries to be a very different person in all possible ways.

Thus, Okonkwo's ambition is the essential factor that motivates him to keep trying to have a respectable position in his community. Although he was young and still has no title, he is already a fearless warrior and ambitious man. According to the narrator,

> [Okonkwo] neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife. But in spite of these disadvantages, he had begun even in his father's lifetime to lay the foundations of a prosperous future. It was slow and painful. But he threw himself into it like one possessed. And indeed, he was possessed by the fear of his father's contemptible life and shameful death (18).

In his essay mentioned earlier in the theoretical framework chapter, Abiola Irele suggests that,

> In the case of Okonkwo, he is a man who has grown up in a community which, because of its passionate desire for survival, places its faith above all in the individual quality of 'manliness'. And it is an irony of fate that makes Okonkwo start off with a disadvantage on this score – the failure of his own father to satisfy this social norm, which adds an urgency to his own particular position. It is the need for him to live down the shame of his father that compels him to an excessive adherence to the social code to an extent which in fact transforms a value into a weakness (Irele 12).

Noticeably, "Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger. To show affection was a sign of weakness; the only thing worth demonstrating was strength" (Achebe 28). Like Macbeth, Okonkwo, to justify his wrongdoing, frequently looks for "distinction with an obsessive single-mindedness" (Irele 12). On the other hand, his hot temper and single-mindedness eventually turn "into egocentricity, until he comes to map out for himself very narrow limits of action or reflection" (12). In this view, the following passage proves this statement:

> Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived-in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children. Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruet man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and of the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo's fear was greater than these. It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father. Even as a little boy he had resented his father's failure and weakness, and even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was *agbala*. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that *agbala* was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title. And so, Okonkwo was ruled by one passion-to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness (Achebe 12).

According to Arele, such passages are indeed revealing the complicated and intricate phycological condition of Okonkwo's mind. He further argues that "Okonkwo's way of shutting everything else out of his view, aware only of himself, is an indication that his

ambition has become a blinding passion of a pathetic kind. The stage is set in the very mind of the character for a tragic career" (Arele 13).

Okonkwo has to work as a sharecropper for a rich and prosperous farmer called Nwakibie. However, he believes that he should not keep working as a sharecropper with that wealthy man. Thus, he decides to ask him for yams to start his own business and career in the seeds and grains trade. Indeed, he strives to be a great farmer and a famous merchant. Nwakibie unexpectedly gives the ambitious man Okonkwo "eight hundred seed-yams" (21). Although the first year of the tragic hero's planting and harvesting "was the worst year in Umuofia's living memory", Okonkwo, with his quality of strength survives (23). As a consequence of his great achievements, he "had two barns full of yams and he had he had just married the third wife" (25). The narrator further comments on Okonkwo's charismatic personality:

> Although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders (5).

This passage illustrates that Okonkwo was still young, but he has gained a great reputation and respect regardless of his poor and humble family background. He drinks and eats with the leaders of the Umuofia's clan. Besides, Okonkwo is a man of principles who works hard and rises himself from poverty to a distinguished status by his sincere efforts: "at an early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler in all the land" (Achebe 27). It can thus be said that Okonkwo is a heroic character, and he is greater than life. He obtains a

decent position in his clan despite his young age. He becomes a memorable tragic hero like the Greek hero Achilles by his personal achievements.

Since the rulers and elders of Umuofia believe in his heroic and brave spirit, they frequently invite him to attend the secret and important meetings of the Umuofia council and the wedding festivals of their children. Indeed, the clansmen respect Okonkwo for his success and feats. It is a result of his fame and social standing among his community: the rulers of the land asked him "to look after the doomed lad who was sacrificed to the village of Umuofia by their neighbors to avoid war and bloodshed. The ill-fated lad was called Ikemefuna" (8). This is another indication that Okonkwo, as a renowned and respected man, is indeed conforming to the Aristotelian definition of tragedy and the tragic hero.

However, Okonkwo could be seen as a tragic hero who has several fatal errors (*hamartia*). Therefore, it would be fruitful to discuss or read the protagonist of Achebe's novel Okonkwo in relation to Aristotle's *Poetics*. Okonkwo's rashness, hot temper, and carelessness seem to be his dominant tragic errors. In a furious moment, Okonkwo breaks a sacrosanct tradition by beating his youngest spouse heavily during the "Week of Peace". "Oknokow was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a goddess" (29). Ezeani, the priest of the earth, comments on Okonkwo's illicit action: "The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish" (30). This accident is foreshadowing how his uncontrolled rage affects his life and relationship with others.

Numerous factors bear the parts of Okonkwo's catastrophic and disastrous life. As a consequence of his internal conflict and mental turbulence, his relationship with his

family becomes disturbed and unbalanced. His toughness and hardness towards himself are reflected in his anger and impatience with the people around him, particularly with his son, Nwoye. According to the narrator,

> Inwardly Okonkwo knew that the boys were still too young to understand fully the difficult art of preparing seed yams. But he thought that one could not begin too early. Yam stood for manliness, and he who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a very great man indeed. Okonkwo wanted his son to be a great farmer and a great man. He would stamp out the disquieting signs of laziness which he thought he already saw in him (Achebe 33).

Arele further explains that,

> Okonkwo's way of conforming, besides being an inverted sort of non-conformity, is a perversion. The meaning he attaches to 'manliness' amounts to fierceness, *violence*. His insistence is such that he becomes a menace to his society even within the limits of its code […] his concern for a public image takes him to a point where his actions become a pure contradiction of the values they are meant to defend (Arele 13).

Although Okonkwo climbs the social ladder and manages to gain a prosperous position in his land, his boldness and bravery become his weakness. His self-esteem turns into arrogance (*hubris*), his masculinity grows into tyranny and dictatorship, his physical power develops into an uncontrolled temper. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Okonkwo is entrusted by the elders to look after the ill-fated boy Ikemefuna: thus, he qualifies to be the guardian and protector of the sacrificed lad. By the time the boy had spent nearly "three years in Okonkwo's household", he has become "wholly absorbed into his new family". Meanwhile, he becomes too close and is "like an elder brother to Nwoye" (Achebe 55) Okonkwo feels satisfied and pleased with Ikemefuna, but he does not show much affection to him. This mental situation displays the tragic error of the character because he thinks that it is weak and timid to express his sincere feelings openly.

On one occasion, the oracle tells the rulers and elders of the clan that the hostage lad must be murdered. Okonkwo is afraid of being coward and emotionally weak in front of his clan, so that he supports the execution and assists the Umuofia's people in the achievement of the oracle's inevitable demand. Hence, he stubbornly decides to obey the order of the oracle and slays the boy, although one of the elders warns him to "not bear a hand in his death". According to the narrator,

> As the man who had cleared his throat drew up and raised his matchet, Okonkwo looked away. He heard the blow. The pot fell and broke in the sand. He heard Ikemefuna cry, 'My father, they have killed me!' as he ran towards him. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his matchet and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak (Achebe 61).

Indeed, this tragic event demonstrates and indicates the dehumanizing side of Okonkwo. His contribution in the execution of the young boy engenders a series of conflicts, particularly with his first son, Nwoye. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the killing of Ikemefuna signalises Okonkwo's subsequent tragic blunders. In other words, the crime can be considered the starting point of Okonkwo's deterioration and downfall, leading to his ultimate tragic fate at the end of the novel. Arele argues that,

> On a greater scale than his passion is the struggle of the man with his fate *symbolised by his chi*. His ambition and impatience drive him on to calculate on a larger scale than others, to demand more of his fate and to force the pace. Ironically, the reversals begin with his own son, who is the very antithesis of his father. There is an Oedipus touch to the relationship of Nwoye with his father – further emphasised by the way Achebe portrays Okonkwo's predilection for his daughter, Ezinma. In the immediate context of the novel, the conflict is created out of the gradual breakdown of a normal relationship between father and son, and Nwoye's final alienation from his father which prevents a resolution. The final breaking of the filial bond is directly related to the killing of Ikemefuna (Arele 17).

The narrator remarks that "as soon as his father walked in, that night, Nwoye knew that Ikemefuna had been killed, and something seemed to give way inside him, like the

snapping of a tightened bow" (Achebe 61). Concerning the relationship between Okonkwo and his son Nwoye, Achebe deliberately implies the collapse of the familial bond and the sense of loss of the moral and social values of the African society. He simultaneously criticizes the old system of his society, referring to the dark side of tribal life in the late nineteenth century in Africa.

Indeed, the killing of the adoptive son of Okonkwo discloses a significant and crucial event not only as an indication of the tragic protagonist's neurosis and unstable mental situation but its repercussion through the narrative, as a consequence of its huge effect upon Nwoye. Okonkwo's dehumanised action has double consequences. Firstly, it signals the beginning of Nwoye's loss of disaffection and resentment towards his father. Secondly, and the most important, it leads the boy's reaction towards the restricted and old order, which Okonkwo represents. The destiny of the sacrificed boy Ikemefuna, its firm and severe revelation of the dark foundation of the tribal ethos, stimulates the blankness in Nwoye's soul that affects him to new faith conversion. According to the narrator,

> But there was a young lad who had been captivated. His name was Nwoye, Okonkwo's first son. It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul-the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikernefuna who was killed. He felt a relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul. The words of the hymn were like the drops of frozen rain melting on the dry palate of the panting earth. Nwoye's callow mind was greatly puzzled (Achebe 184).

Furthermore, Achebe uses the element of chance or coincidence in his novel *Things Fall Apart*. He insists on the essential role of accident in the tragic life of Okonkwo.

However, Bradley suggests that the factor of accident intensifies the dramatic characters' suffering and pain but not entirely determines his/her ultimate fate. Hence, it seems that the element of chance is subordinate, "while the dominant factor consists in deeds that issue from character" (Bradley 16). More specifically, like Shakespeare, Achebe utilises the element of accident and mishap to reinforce the tragic emotions of pity and fear in the readers very sparingly.

Coincidentally, Okonkwo kills a sixteen-year-old boy from his village during Ezeudu's great funeral. This accident takes place when Okonkwo's rifle explodes and a piece of iron pierces the boy's heart (124). The narrator says that "[t]he confusion that followed was without parallel in the tradition of Umuofia. Violent deaths were frequent, but nothing like this had ever happened" (124). The consequences of this unfortunate accident can be seen in the following passage: "[t] "he only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the clan. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land. The crime was of two kinds, male and female. Okonkwo had committed the female because it had been inadvertent" (124).

It is highly apparent that the crime happened by accident, but this disgraceful deed is still forbidden in the Umuofia community and tradition. As the narrator remarks, it is against the earth goddess, and the wrestler Okonkwo must be punished and expelled. As retribution and vengeance, Okonkwo's family is exiled to their motherland Mbanta after the accidental death of Ezedudu's son. The narrator further says that the next morning "a large crowd of men from Escudo's quarter stormed Okonkwo's compound, dressed in

garbs of war. They set fire to his houses, demolished his red walls, killed his animals and destroyed his barn" (124).

While the second year of Okonkwo's exile and isolation was reaching its end, incredible alterations and accidents were happening in Umuofia's villages because of the arrival of the white evangelists and their illegal injunctions. Obierika, Okonkwo's closest friend, used to visit him in his new residence in Mbanta. In his first visit to Okonkwo, Obierika brings the news of the arrival of the white men and their first violent intervention in the village termed Abame. Furthermore, the village people have assassinated the first white foreigner who comes on his "iron horse" after the prophecy or oracle warrened them that "the strange man would break their clan and spread destruction among them" (138). The oracle further says, "that other white men were on their way" (138). "When nearly two years later Obierika paid another visit to his friend in exile the circumstances were less happy. The white missionaries had come to Umuofia. They had built their church there, won a handful of converts and were already sending evangelists to the surrounding towns and villages" (Achebe 143).

Finally, Okonkwo's seven years of exile expire, and he prepares for his return to his fatherland. The warrior then returns to his clan and finds out that profound things have changed regarding the Umuofia's community during his seven years of exile. Some rulers and even ordinary people converted to Christianity. The narrator states that,

> Okonkwo knew these things. He knew that he had lost his place among the nine masked spirits who administered justice in the clan. He had lost the chance to lead his warlike clan against the new religion, which, he was told, had gained ground. He had lost the years in which he might have taken the highest titles in the clan. But some of these losses were not irreparable. He was determined that his return should be marked by his

> people. He would return with a flourish, and regain the -seven wasted years (Achebe 170).

The white missionaries and their several ways were spreading through Umuofia's nine villages. Hence, the newcomers win several converts, and they build sacred places such as churches and holy temples. They also establish a new government system, having no respect for the tradition and custom of Umuofia's culture. Besides, as the narrator states the white men "had built a place of judgment in Umuofia to protect the followers of their religion. It was even said that they had hanged one man who killed a missionary" (155). "[T] "hey had built a court where the District Commissioner judged cases in ignorance" (174).

The great warrior Okonkwo feels disdainful and contemptuous towards his fellow villagers because they adopted the new "lunatic religion" and accepted the peculiar administration. He is deeply grieved, distressed, and disappointed when he sees these unexpected alterations were taking place in his community. Okonkwo greatly laments for his land, which he sees "in breaking up and falling apart" (183). He does not realize or understand why his fellowmen have failed to resist and fight against the strangers. Significantly, Okonkwo insists on fighting the white men, trying to them from his land. Still, Obierika gloomily tells Okonkwo that "it is too late" to start physical resistance against the settlers. Because a bunch of Umuofia's people "have joined the ranks of the stranger. They have joined his religion and they help to uphold his government" (176).

Towards the penultimate chapter of the novel, Okonkwo and some of his fellow villagers arrange a meeting, preparing to fight against the Christians to gain their exploited land. However, the impertinent messenger, sent by the white men, commands Umuofia's

meeting to disperse. Okonkwo, in an impulsive moment, decides to attack the messenger and cuts him down. The huge influence of this event on the great warrior Okonkwo prepares the ultimate stage of his tragic end. The narrator points out that, [a]s "he lay on his bamboo bed he thought about the treatment he had received in the white man's court, and he swore vengeance. If Umuofia decided on war, all would be well. But if they chose to be cowards he would go out and avenge himself" (Achebe 199). Arele observes that "Okonkwo sums up the situation in terms of violence. His final action in killing the messenger of the colonial administration is in a sense his revenge. And his final defeat is the utter futility of his action, his final realisation that he has gone so far beyond reasonable limits in championing his society as to have lost touch with it". (Arele 13) According to the narrator,

> In a flash Okonkwo drew his machete. The messenger crouched to avoid the blow. It was useless. Okonkwo's machete descended twice and the man's head lay beside his uniformed body. […] The waiting backcloth jumped into tumultuous life and the meeting was stopped. Okonkwo stood looking at the dead man. He knew that Umuofia would not go to war. He knew because they had, let the other messenger's escape They had broken into tumult instead of action. He discerned fright in that tumult. […] He heard voices asking: Why did he do it? He wiped his machete on the sand and went away (Achebe 204-5).

In the ultimate scene of defeat and discontent, Okonkwo, against the restricted tradition and custom of his community, perpetrates suicide by hanging himself on a tree behind his big compound. The suicide act undoubtably reveals Okonkwo's tragic error because of his incapacity and failure to embrace the transformations in his society. He was always looking to adhere to the traditional values that he had grown. Moreover, he takes everything concerning his community in a personal way, and he behaves accordingly. While Obierika looks at his best friend's dangling body, he suddenly turns his head to the

District Commissioner and furiously says: "[t] "hat man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; -and now he will be buried like a -dog. He could not say any more. His voice trembled and choked his words" (208).

As a man of principles and a fearless warrior, Okonkwo could not adopt and accept the new and rapid alterations which were taking place in Umuofia. Even when he decides to run away from these new circumstances, he commits something forbidden against the "goddess of the earth". According to Obierka's last words and feeling about Okonkwo's downfall and ultimate miserable fate, it is maybe reasonable to say that Achebe's tragic hero finally understands and believes that he could not live anymore in such a weak community. By committing suicide, he wanted to show himself as a great example for his people, who embrace and adopt the new religion. One can say that Okonkwo willingly sacrifices himself for something precious, hoping that one day his nation will rise up again and free itself from the domination of colonial authority. Still, Okonkwo, in a desperate moment, loses his hope and faith in his people, thus, he ultimately feels that he does not have a place in his land.

Arele observes that,

> *Things Fall Apart* is the tragedy of one man worked out his personal conflicts-his neurosis almost-as well as out of the contrariness of this destiny. Yet the title is not without relevance, for the novel does have another dimension. Okonkwo's suicide is a gesture that symbolizes at the same time his personal refusal of a new order as well as the collapse of the old order which he represents. For Okonkwo's inflexibility, his tragic flaw, is a reflection of his society; his defeat, though a deformation derives form a corresponding trait in his society, an aspect of it pushed to its extreme logical frontiers (Irele 14).

The novel clearly and concretely illustrates the tragic drama of both character and society. Achebe dramatizes the tragic fate of the character individual who refuses the new order of the colonial authority and prefers to die rather than living in such a queer situation. At the same time, the tragic error and the traits or qualities of the character plays a prominent part in the life of the tragic protagonist. As Aristotle suggests that character "determines men's qualities" (Aristotle 27). Okonkwo's inflexibility and flawed character bring about his destruction and ultimate fate. His suffering is an outcome of his hot temper and rigid ways.

In his essay titled "Chinua Achebe", Michael Echeruo convincingly asserts that Okonkwo, the hero of *Things Fall Apart,* "is a fit subject for the tragedy because he looked life in the face and did what he thought was right. But he is destroyed in the process, and Achebe deliberately lets the District Commissioner decide to allot to him an untidy and insignificant place in the official history of the times" (Echeruo 151). He sees his deeds, actions, and decisions are always infallible and perfect. Thus, it is necessary to note that Okonkwo is defeated and ruined in the process due to his nature, unstable condition of mind, single-mindedness, and a tragic error of his character.

Things Fall Apar as a tragedy is indeed embodied by the annihilation of the fearsome warrior Okonkwo, who is typically the portrayal of the African ethnic principles and their dynamism and vulnerability. Okonkwo's bravery, perseverance, and desire to standing away from his father's notorious past and make a glorious future for himself and his family by following the models of the tribal community are commendable. However, his stubbornness and rigidity become his pre-eminent tragic error, causing his

deterioration and downfall. The tragic breakdown of the African individuality following the degeneration of the older cultural and social system, as the reader can vividly understand it in the protagonist Okonkwo and his society, is immensely profound. In other words, the intensity and harshness of the individual tragedy stand out in all its lamentation and vividness in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart.* While the calamity and catastrophe of the Achebe's tragic hero is on the one hand individual, it is, on the other hand, a tragedy of the whole Igbo community. Okonkwo is a great tragic hero who has the courage and the quality of a Homeric hero, but he fails to realize and recognize his actual tragic error and dilemma. Okonkwo's ambition, motive and rapid decisions do not "allow him to do the retrospection" (Arele 20). Although he finally realizes his solid and inflexible ways, he still insists on holding his traditional and older values till his demise.

Things Fall Apart is Achebe's first tragic novel that describes the sufferings of humankind through its leading character Okonkwo. He deeply suffers from inward and outward conflicts in his long tragic journey. Like Achilles, Okonkwo's sense of social responsibility leads him to experience unexpected and horrible circumstances. In many ways, Okonkwo can be seen as a dramatic character because of his endeavour to fight against the British colonizers to drive them from his fatherland. Simultaneously, like Shakespearean tragic protagonists, Okonkwo chooses his fate willingly. Like Macbeth, Okonkwo's ambition and motive to become the strongest leader in his community also brings about his ultimate deterioration at the end of the novel.

Furthermore, Okonkwo conforms to the Aristotelian model: tragic error leading to recognition and downfall. Okonkwo's most obvious tragic error is his carelessness, his

contribution in killing Ikemefuna, his accidentally killing Ezeudu's son, his failure in adopting the new changes which were taking place in Umuofia. He commits his first error of judgment when he persistently decides to fulfil the order of the oracle and kill the ill-fated boy Ikemefuna. The recognition and reversal take place when his son Nwoye disowns him and joins the white men, causing his first downfall.

The second fatal act takes place when he accidentally kills Ezeudu's son. The recognition happens when the leaders of the Umuofia's clan decide to banish him out of the village for seven years, leading to his loss of social standing, house, and yams. The reversal occurs when he returns to Umuofia and sees the white men establish a new system and control over Umuofia's community. Okonkwo's rejecting of the new religion and his slaying the messenger of the colonial authority can be seen as his last hamartia, bringing about his ultimate act of suicide at the end of the novel. According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, a combination of disclosure and reversal arouses the tragic emotions of sympathy, pity, and fear which is the essential purpose of tragedy. For Aristotle, the best form of discovery (anagnorises) is the one accompanied with (peripeteia) or reversal (41). The combination of these two significant factors frames an ideal and complex tragedy. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a complex tragedy wherein Achebe follows the Aristotelian recommendation of "probability and necessity law" in tragedy appropriately well.

To sum up, *Things Fall Apart* truly fulfils the final significance of the tragedy: it excites the tragic emotions of fear and pity wherein Aristotle asserts that must be found in an ideal tragedy. Achebe conforms to the Classical principles of tragedy and tragic hero,

showing that his novel embodies a tragedy of society and character. He explicitly refers to the calamity of the Igbo society at the time of great change in the history of Africa. Achebe stresses the impact of the rapid transformations at the moment of the coming of the British colonizers on the individual's character. He, at the same time, highlights the tribal and the dark side of African society. According to Arele, "this use of an individual character as a symbolic receptacle, the living theatre, of a social dilemma, is what gives Achebe's Things Fall Apart its real measure of strength" (20). He exemplifies Okonkwo as a representation of the African community in all its good and evil sides. On the other hand, Achebe's novel shows the impact of the Elizabethan writer William Shakespeare. Macbeth, Okonkwo's ambition and single- mindedness lead to his ultimate fall.

CONCLUSION

Thomas Hardy was writing in a time of transition and change approximately between the late Victorian era and the new starting of the twentieth century. Hardy was deeply affected by the sudden and rapid developments of science, technology, and social spheres. The novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* reflects and demonstrates the writer's bleak and pessimistic view towards the technological and social alterations that were taking place in the rural English community during the mid-1800s. He deliberately presents the tragic protagonist Henchard as an old-fashioned man who deeply suffers during his life because of his failure and inability in adopting the new advance of business approaches and the development of mechanisms. Simultaneously, Hardy exemplifies Farfrae as a modern, fair-minded, and professional young man, particularly in his dealing with the industrial changes and the new commerce methods. Accordingly, it is reasonable to remark that Henchard's nature, flawed character, quick temper, and "introspective inflexibility" allow Farfrae to triumph over him at the end of the novel.

Similarly, Achebe sets his novel *Things Fall Apart* at the moment of change in the late nineteenth century in Africa, referring to the end of one time and the beginning of another. Achebe wanted to document a tragic moment of transition in the history of Africa wherein one culture in contact, conflict, and conversation with another culture. Thus, *Things Fall Apart* is indeed both a tragedy of community and character. It is quite clear that the tragedy of a society is aggravated by the sudden and rapid interference of the evolutionary process by the intrusion of the white men. And, the title of the novel indicates the tragedy and collapse of civilization as a result of conflict between the internal

weakness of the Igbo society and the external forces of the British colonizers. On the one hand, Okonkwo's tragic error can explicitly be seen in his rejection of the new changes and orders, causing a harsh and bloody conflict between him and the white missionaries. Furthermore, his hyper-masculinity, violent temper, and single-mindedness contribute to his tragic fate, allowing the British colonizers to triumph over him.

Thomas Hardy and Chinua Achebe use various elements and characteristic features of the Classical and Shakespearean tragedy, such as hamartia (error of judgment), hubris, accident and fate. For instance, like Shakespearean tragic heroes, Henchard's ambition and "cursed pride" are indeed his most prominent tragic errors, leading him to his deterioration and fall at the end of the novel. His hideous egoism, abominable deeds in the past, and wrong decisions bring about his calamity and demise. Henchard's suffering is an outcome of his rigidity and rashness, as the author Thomas Hardy originally subtitles his novel as "A story of a man of character", highlighting the considerable role of the protagonist's character in his tragedy and final fate. It is quite clear that almost all Hanchard's misfortunes and tragic circumstances are consequences of his fatal flaws. Therefore, it difficult and perhaps inconvincible to blame the blind force of nature, fate, and destiny for the wretched things that occur to him.

Henchard's tragic life reflects an explicit image of the late nineteenth century's English society. Thomas Hardy mainly focuses on the middle-class characters in his major novels to show the reality of the English rural life in a shifting society. At the beginning of the novel, Henchard is presented as a poor worker who looks for a job opportunity. He impatiently tries to climb the social ladder and forgets about his disgraceful past. And he

manages to become respected man and wins great fame in Casterbridge. However, his past is revealed accidentally when the furmity woman attends a court and witnesses that the mayor had sold his family. Crucially, the factor of the accident is pivotal in Classical and Shakespearean tragedy. In this regard, the English writer Hardy employs this element to show and clarify that chance and accident are a vital part of life. Therefore, it is right to say that Henchard's suffering and sadness intensify by the factor of coincidence or chance, but his flawed character determines his ultimate tragic fate.

On the other hand, Okonkwo's remarkable and exceptional character indeed fits Aristotle's explanation of tragedy. Although he descended from poor and hummable family, Okonkwo manages to be a renowned and strong leader in his community by his extraordinary efforts. However, much like the classical tragic heroes, Okonkwo's most obvious and considerable tragic error can be seen in his fear of feebleness and defeat, his flawed character, and his rashness and hubris. It is right to say that his fear of weakness stimulates him to work hard and win prosperous fame and reputation. However, this exaggerated fear is considered one of the main reasons for his downfall and tragic fate.

On various occasions, Okonkwo's single-mindedness and fear of failure lead him to behave and react harshly and impulsively towards his family members and the people around him. Since he does not want to be seen as a sentimental and weak man, he is always violent, harsh, and strict with his wives and sons. His character's trait and unstable condition of mind leads him to commit several immoral acts during his life. Okonkwo's accidentally kills a little boy during a funeral held in Umuofia's clan, brings about exiled and banished out of his fatherland. Chinua Achebe, like his tragic writer precursors, uses

the element of accident and chance to clarify the role of an unforeseen factor in the hero's suffering. According to Bradley, the factor of coincidence does not completely determine the tragic protagonist's ultimate fate. Thus, in case of Okonkwo, his flawed character is the only factor that really responsible for his tragic destruction and downfall.

Indeed, Hardy and Achebe successfully and accurately follow the traditional and Shakespearean concept of tragedy. They emphasise and highlight the validity and continuity of Aristotle's *Poetics* as well as Shakespeare's tragic version. The essential concentration of their novels is concerned with the leading character's pain and suffering. In other words, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Things Fall Apart* shed light on the suffering of an individual character. Hence, the novels fulfil the prime objective of Aristotelian tragedy: they excite the tragic emotions of fear and pity in the readers, which ultimately leads to what the Greek called catharsis or purgation.

The two novels discussed and analyzed in this study, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Things Fall Apart*, Hardy and Achebe imitate to some extent the concept and tragic vision of the Greek playwright like Sophocles, Homer, and Aeschylus. They apply the Aristotelian tragic construction in their tragic narratives. They show and demonstrate the individual pain, sadness, and suffering through the catastrophic lives of Michael Henchard and Okonkwo according to their circumstances and environments. Accordingly, their tragic versions explore the effect of the social and political changes on the man's character. However, both writers challenge the Greek thought in the tragedy because they do not exclusively bound up the fate and destiny of the individual with God and the superior power of the universe. In other words, Hardy and Achebe believe in the concept of

responsibility and agency of the character in their tragedy. Therefore, both Thomas Hardy and Achebe were influenced by the Shakespearean tragic vision and portrayed the internal conflict of their tragic heroes, Henchard and Okonkwo, in changing societies. Finally, it is reasonable to say that Thomas Hardy's and Achebe's tragic vision are characterized as a combination of traditional and Shakespearean tragedy.

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Bibliyografyayı Çıkart	Üzerinde		

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name and Surname: Mohammed Bakr.

Place of Birt:h

Date of Birth:

Education:

Degree	Field	University	Year
Undergraduate	English Language and Literature	University of Mosul	2011

Foreign languages: English, Turkish, Arabic.

E-mail Address:

Phone Number:

Date: 08/07/2021.