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by Thomas Hardy”

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List of abbreviations

“ET”	“Enter a Dragoon”
“FT”	“Fellow-Townsmen”
“IW”	“An Imaginative Woman”
“MH”	“The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”

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<i>Apology</i>	<i>“Apology.” Late Lyrics and Earlier: With Many Other Verses</i>
<i>Early Life</i>	<i>The Early Life of Thomas Hardy: 1840-1891</i>
<i>Later Years</i>	<i>The Later Years of Thomas Hardy: 1892-1928</i>
<i>Letters 1</i>	<i>The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy 1: 1840-1892</i>
<i>Letters 2</i>	<i>The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy 2: 1893-1901</i>
<i>Letters 3</i>	<i>The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy 3: 1902-1908</i>
<i>Letters 4</i>	<i>The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy 4: 1909-1913</i>
<i>ORC</i>	<i>Oxford Reader’s Companion to Hardy</i>
<i>Poems</i>	<i>The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy</i>
<i>Works</i>	<i>The Works of Thomas Hardy in Prose and Verse XXII</i>

1. Introduction

It is widely agreed today that Hardy was one of the greatest English novelists of the 19th century. The author's short stories, by contrast, have been largely neglected by readers and reviewers alike and, thus, his short fiction has received relatively little critical attention. This may be due to the fact that the British literary market-place of the 19th century preferred three-volume novels to short fiction. Consequently, in England the publication of short stories was usually restricted to the popular periodical press. However, educated reviewers generally had an interest in hardbacks only. George Saintsbury (264) reports that short fiction 'was very unpopular' in Victorian times 'and library customers would refuse collections of them with something like indignation or disgust.' This made Hardy (*Letters 2*, 37) complain that in England there was 'very little to be made commercially out of short tales' because publishers were 'as a rule shy of them, except those that [were] written by people who cannot write long ones successfully – an odd exception! – and have established a speciality in that line.'

Hardy's position as a writer of short fiction was, thus, unusual. That is, he was already regarded as a 'specialist in long fiction' (Page, s.v. "short story") when he began publishing short stories. Besides, his short narratives were not collected in volume form until the publication of *Wessex Tales* in 1888. At that time, being a well-known author of a good reputation enabled him to sell his short fiction in a format less short-lived than the magazine to British reviewers. Nevertheless, the author was still cautious when recommending his stories to the publishing company Macmillan,¹ saying that '[s]ome well-known critics have often advised me to reprint them, informing me that they are as good as anything else I have ever written (however good that may be)' (T. Hardy, *Letters 1*, 174).

Turning to literary criticism once again, with the remarkable exception of essays by Manchu, Ray, Herzog and others, Hardy's short stories constitute the neglected area of his literary oeuvre. As regards his stories as a group, two groundbreaking books need to be mentioned, which are Kristin Brady's *The Short Stories of Thomas Hardy* and Martin Ray's *Thomas Hardy: A Textual Analysis of the Short Stories*. Although Hardy's short stories have been marginalised by both readers and critics, 'the tales

¹ Cf. Page, s.v. "short story".

occupy an important place in Hardy's career and an interesting, if minor, one in the development of narrative form' (Brady, 1). That is to say, his short fiction was written between 1865 and 1900, which is a longer period than he spent on novel writing. Furthermore, at that time the genre of the short story was only beginning to be accepted in England.² What is more, his short fiction provides information about his novels as it is significant 'in representing ideas in embryo, in tentative rehearsing of themes to be fully explored in the later novels' (Brady, 93).

Apart from neglecting Hardy's short fiction, present understanding of the author's presentation of fate is also limited. This can be traced back to the small number of books, articles and essays which deal explicitly with this theme. Thus, in his discussion of critical approaches, Page (s.v. "critical approaches") classifies Hardy's 'view of fate' under the category 'Other Topics'. However, even if the author's concept of fate is not rejected or touched upon peripherally, the discussion generally focuses on Hardy's major fiction at the expense of his minor work, as in Reinhard-Stocker's book *Charakterdarstellung und Schicksalsgestaltung in den Romanen Thomas Hardys*, for example. That is to say, so far, no article, essay or book has been published on the author's use of fate in his short stories. Besides, to date there has been little agreement on Hardy's understanding of fate. Precisely speaking, there are two opposing strands of literary criticism which either attribute human destiny to internal forces or to a combination of these internal forces and a superior external power.

The purpose of this thesis is, therefore, to take a first step in filling this gap by analysing Hardy's presentation and understanding of fate in four short stories, tracing the development of the author's concept of fate. Consequently, the short stories are not only taken from different periods but also from different short story collections. "Fellow-Townsmen" dates from the time when Hardy started writing short fiction with some regularity, whereas "Enter a Dragoon", published in 1900, is one of his last two short stories. Besides, this thesis intends to examine which of the two strands of literary criticism can be applied to the selected short stories. Aiming at a close reading of the texts, this discussion is based on a textual analysis, including background research and text external influences, such as those of the German philosophers Hartmann and Schopenhauer, and classical mythology, for example.

² Cf. Brady, p. 1.

Thus, in order to link Hardy's concept of fate with its presentation in the short fiction, the theoretical background – including a definition of irony, an overview of Hardy's ironic vision of fate and a subchapter on controversy in literary criticism regarding Hardy's notion of fate – to this analysis will be briefly laid out.

2. Irony

Before embarking on an analysis of the irony of fate in the four short stories under discussion, relevant background information about the concept of irony has to be provided. In order to link this literary device with Hardy's ironic vision of fate, the term 'irony' will be defined. Thereafter, Hardy's concept of fate will be outlined and the differences in opinion in literary criticism regarding the author's representation of fate will be examined. The intention of this chapter is to outline the great importance of Hardy's pervasive use of irony, which can be considered 'an expression of basic outlook and temperament' (Page, s.v. "irony").

2.1 The concept of irony

As regards the nature of irony, it seems to be characterised by elusiveness due to the fact that no definition of this concept is capable of comprising all its aspects.³ Nevertheless, it is generally agreed today that irony involves a 'subtly humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparent straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance' (Baldick, s.v. "irony").

Three broad categories or types of irony can be distinguished. These three categories are verbal, structural and situational irony. Since verbal and situational irony are of no relevance for Hardy's concept of fate, they will be touched upon only peripherally. Verbal irony typically involves a discrepancy between the utterance and its real meaning, while situational irony entails an incongruity between expectation and reality. In other words, in contrast to verbal irony, which derives from statements of an individual, situational irony derives principally from events or situations themselves. The three subtypes of the latter are dramatic, tragic and Socratic irony. Dramatic irony consists of an inconsistency between a character's perception and the audience's vaster knowledge of a situation. Therefore, the audience foresees an outcome of a situation which is contrary to what the character expects. Tragic irony can be regarded as a type of dramatic irony and is characterised by a sense of foreboding.⁴ According to Murfin and Ray (s.v. "irony") '[a]s with all dramatic irony, tragic irony involves imperfect information, but the consequences of this ignorance are catastrophic, leading to the character's tragic downfall.' The term

³ Cf. Cuddon, s.v. "irony".

⁴ Cf. Shipley, s.v. "irony" and Murfin; Ray, s.v. "irony".

'Socratic irony' was coined by Aristotle and was one technique among others for political discussion in which virtues and intelligence were played down or concealed in order to entice others to make statements which were then contested.⁵ The third broad category, structural irony, typically makes use of either a naïve or deluded hero or an unreliable narrator whose flaw is easily recognised by the audience. This is attributable to the fact that the hero's or narrator's view of the world does not match the true circumstances which the audience is capable of perceiving.⁶ Structural irony is marked by an internal feature keyed to the work's structure, whereas situational irony is marked by an event or comment tied to the plot. Two types of irony, namely cosmic and romantic irony, can be classified under this heading.⁷ The latter, as defined by the German philosopher Friedrich Schlegel,

is present in poems and prose works whose authors or speakers at some point reveal their narration to be the capricious fabrication of an idiosyncratic and highly self-conscious narrator (Murfin; Ray, s.v. "irony").

Having given a short overview of the different types and subtypes of irony, the subcategory of structural irony which bears relevance for Hardy's ironic vision of fate has to be examined more closely. Cosmic irony, also known as irony of fate, derives from the incongruity between

a character's (incorrect) belief in his or her ability to shape his or her destiny and the audience's recognition that an external, supernatural force has the power to manipulate or even control that character's fate (Murfin; Ray, s.v. "irony").

This definition of irony clearly illustrates that fate plays the role of an ironic will which has the intention of mocking people's plans.⁸ That is to say, by manipulating events fate raises false hopes and creates illusions which are then inevitably dashed and shattered. Consequently, people are shown as 'the dupes of a cruelly mocking Fate' (Baldick, s.v. "irony"). This supernatural force of cosmic irony serves as a structural device and is, thus, responsible for being classified under the heading of structural irony. In other words, '[t]he use of cosmic irony is more than a matter of plot' (Murfin; Ray, s.v. "irony"). Four elements contribute to the nature of cosmic irony. First of all, this type of irony makes use of a powerful deity or of fate itself, which has both the power and the desire to manipulate or even exercise control over events in people's lives. Secondly, the character subjugated by this irony believes

⁵ Cf. Colebrook, pp. 6-8.

⁶ Cf. Baldick, s.v. "irony".

⁷ Cf. Murfin; Ray, s.v. "irony".

⁸ Cf. Shipley, s.v. "irony".

that they are in control of their destiny and, therefore, able to shape it. However, this belief in free will proves to be erroneous. Thirdly, the supernatural force toys with the character who believes, contrary to the audience's insight into the outcome, to be capable of escaping. The representative of fate or fate itself leads the character to believe in self-determination, only to raise false hopes and create illusions that – as the audience knows or at least believes – will be dashed and shattered. Finally, cosmic irony is characterised by a tragic outcome. In the end, the character's struggle against destiny is brought to naught and they have to surrender to forces superior to themselves.⁹ Cosmic irony prevails in Hardy's oeuvre because for the author irony is more than a literary device but 'may be said to inhere in [his] outlook on life' (Shipley, s.v. "irony"). That is why Hardy's outlook on life and, thus, also on fate will be analysed in somewhat greater detail in the next section.

2.2 Thomas Hardy's ironic vision of fate

As previously mentioned, Hardy's irony can be regarded as an expression of basic outlook and temperament because he thought that 'things are not what they appear to be, might be, or should be' (Page, s.v. "irony"). Consequently, irony of fate, which shows Hardy's paradoxical attitude towards life and his ironic vision, is used both in his poetry and in his works of fiction.¹⁰ It is used to reveal the cosmic disarray behind the human struggle. Like other great 19th century artists, for instance, Beethoven and Brahms, Hardy believed in the essential role fate played in shaping human lives, and, like in their works, the power of fate was a central theme in his literary oeuvre. At the same time, he was horrified at the evil and unhappiness which surrounded him.¹¹ The author held the opinion that the world was not made for human beings. He explained this in 1889 by arguing that it is a

woeful fact – that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions, the nerves being evolved to an activity abnormal in such an environment. Even the higher animals are in excess in this respect. It may be questioned if Nature, or what we call Nature, so far back as when she crossed the line from invertebrates to vertebrates, did not exceed her mission. This planet does not supply happiness to higher existences (Millgate, 227).

That is to say, people's misery can be attributed to their possession of consciousness in a world which is ruled by blind force. Hardy tried to understand and put up with

⁹ Cf. Murfin; Ray, s.v. "irony".

¹⁰ Cf. Zuo; Niu, p. 11.

¹¹ Cf. Page, s.v. "fate".

this perception, which is clearly visible when taking a closer look at his works. He approved of the fact that a part of human misery was self-inflicted but, nevertheless, he was not able to understand why human beings are bound to bear so much pain.

In his youth, the author found comfort in the Christian father but the irony and struggles of life induced him to question this belief. In his early twenties, he increasingly lost faith in Christian theology and, finally, turned away from it. This loss of religious belief, a painful process, can be illustrated by referring to an entry in his journal in 1890: 'I have been looking for God fifty years, and I think if he had existed I should have discovered him. As an external personality, of course – the only true meaning of the world' (F. Hardy, *Early Life*, 293). This entry shows that Hardy was unable to come to terms with the idea of a benevolent God, which made him give up Christianity. Elliott (20) points out that

[i]t was too much for him to reconcile the idea of beneficence in an omnipotent and omniscient deity with the fact of omnipresent evil and the persistent tendency of circumstances toward the unhappiness of human beings.

In other words, Hardy was of the firm opinion that the universe was not ruled by God's love but that it was rather neutral or indifferent. However, he never ceased to believe in 'an agency of causation in the world' (Page, s.v. "fate"), which he personified as the Immanent Will. It is also known, for example, as fate, destiny, doom, chance, circumstance, fortune or providence.¹² This power superior to human beings can be defined as a 'great impersonal, primitive force, existing from all eternity, absolutely independent of human wills, superior even to any god whom humanity may have invented' (Courtney qtd. in Elliott, 31). Elliott (54) elaborates on this definition by stating that

[g]ood and evil cannot conceive it, nor can joy and grief. It goes blindly on, weaving its web of fate, unconscious and unconcerned about its woof. It uses no check on error. The Will is without purpose, and Hardy holds that it rules a purposeless world as yet.

Consequently, the human race is caught in a dilemma as human beings believe themselves to be free agents and in command of their destinies. However, these have already been predetermined with insouciance by the blind, oppressive and cruel Immanent Will.¹³ These contradictions between a character's free will and determinism, between emotion and conventions and between illusion and self-

¹² Cf. Page, s.v. "fate".

¹³ Cf. Richards, p. 266.

awareness are shown by means of Hardy's comprehensive concept of the irony of fate.¹⁴ This facet of Hardy's ironic vision shaped his literary oeuvre in various ways. First of all, it influenced the portrayal of his characters by limiting them to mere men and women instead of depicting supermen or 'double-dyed villains' (Springer, 13). Secondly, it determined the action as it focused on coincidence. Thirdly, Hardy's irony of fate exerted a profound influence on the author's choice of scene and social class because average figures in a simple environment are shown. Besides, it is a means of highlighting the dramatic conflict of the literary works as the hostility of an indifferent fate towards human beings is emphasised. What is more, it is partly responsible for creating the atmosphere which is due to the fact that pity, terror and isolation are the natural consequences of a world controlled by a cruel Immanent Will. Finally, since the author was concerned about the characters' tragic destinies, he intervened in his stories and defended his characters, which influenced the tone of his works.¹⁵

Hardy's tragic view of life cannot only be attributed to the author's break with the Christian Church but also to various external forces, among other things, the period in which he lived. Due to scientific discoveries – primarily those of Spencer, Darwin, Huxley and Lyell – the philosophy of the second half of the 19th century was prone to diminish human significance and free will and to emphasise the transitoriness of human existence.¹⁶ Other influencing factors were the plays of Ibsen, Pinero, Wilde and their school, which had the intention of disseminating growing distrust of useless social conventions. Moreover, Hardy's reading, well recorded in his notebooks and in his biography, influenced him profoundly and, consequently, served as a source for his understanding of fate. When dealing with his reading, the Bible, classical literature in general and Greek drama in particular have to be mentioned. According to the Greeks, the gods disapproved of human perfection, being jealous of human happiness. Apart from Greek tragedies, the German philosophers Schopenhauer and Hartmann had a significant influence on Hardy's thinking.¹⁷ Schopenhauer's 'Wille', which is 'without knowledge, and is merely a blind incessant impulse' (Schopenhauer, 354), is surely the basis for the construction of Hardy's Immanent Will. Nevertheless, it can be argued that Hardy took over from Hartmann the

¹⁴ Cf. Zuo; Niu, p. 12.

¹⁵ Cf. Springer, pp. 13-14.

¹⁶ Cf. Chapman, p. 144.

¹⁷ Cf. Elliot, pp. 25-27.

melioristic belief that the Immanent Will may draw closer to a consciousness, which may mollify competing elements of the earth some day. Wotton (36) supports this belief by saying that

[t]he ‘tribal god, man-shaped, fiery-faced and tyrannous’ is replaced by the ‘unconscious will of the Universe’ which progressively grows aware of itself and ‘ultimately, it is to be hoped, sympathetic’.

The philosophical school of Positivism constituted another significant external factor. Comte’s “Positive Polity” started out from the assumption that human beings should try to ameliorate their life on earth as life after death is not guaranteed.¹⁸ Moreover, the author was also swayed by the utopian socialist Fourier, who proposed a dichotomy of head and heart. However, it has to be emphasised that Hardy’s reading did not shape his beliefs but merely reinforced them. This is due to the fact that Hardy’s fundamental philosophy was present in his mind many years before familiarising himself with these philosophers.¹⁹

2.3 Controversy in literary criticism regarding Hardy’s notion of fate

Before giving a short overview of the ambiguity inherent in the conception of fate, it has to be foregrounded that far too little attention has been paid to Hardy’s representation of fate in his works. That is to say, the number of books, articles and essays – particularly recent ones – dealing explicitly with the theme of fate is rather limited. Instead, this theme is either incorporated into the treatment of other topics, inter alia traditional ones like language, religion or philosophy, touched upon peripherally or rejected. This can be supported by the fact that to date critics seem to be attracted to the major fiction at the expense of the minor. That is to say, no study has been published to date on Hardy’s use of fate in his short stories since most scholars have paid attention to his novels only.

Literary criticism has primarily concerned itself with the philosophical content of Hardy’s works. Carl J. Weber, William R. Rutland and Harvey C. Webster tried to show the influence of J. S. Mill, Darwin, T. H. Huxley, Spencer, Schopenhauer and E. v. Hartmann on Hardy’s philosophy. Ernest Brennecke and Helen Garwood discussed the connection between Hardy and Schopenhauer, comparing their philosophical concepts, such as the concept of ‘purposelessness’, for example.²⁰

¹⁸ Cf. Page, s.v. “philosophy”.

¹⁹ Cf. Elliot, pp. 27-29.

²⁰ Cf. Taylor, pp. 241-243.

Hardy, however, refuted this thesis by saying that '[m]y pages show harmony of view with Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Hume, Mill, and other, all of whom I used to read more than Schopenhauer' (Weber, 246-7). William Budke applied a similar approach, examining the presentation of women in Hardy's novels in consideration of Schopenhauer's influence. Albert P. Elliott took a closer look at fatalism and fate as an artistic motif in Hardy's novels. He (33) argues that '[i]t is not character which is the controlling factor in Hardy's tragic works, but it is a power beyond man and deliberately opposed to his will.' Elliott identifies five instruments of fate, which are chance and coincidence, time, conventions and law, woman and time. By doing so, he tries to provide evidence for the claim that Hardy's ideology turned from fatalism to determinism. All these critics concentrate on Hardy's later works because the author's philosophy of life is more prominent in those. Taking a look at his later novels, critics have drawn the conclusion that Hardy believed in an external force which is indifferent to human beings and beyond their influence.

However, since there is an opposing strand of literary criticism, it can be argued that there is an ongoing controversy. The critics of this second strand focus principally on the novel characters as objects of their studies. Gerda Salberg, whose study addressed the relationship between Hardy's female novel characters and his ideology, is convinced that not only external factors but also characters' fatal flaws are responsible for their fate.²¹ A similar attitude is held by Alice Reinhard-Stocker, who draws attention to the fact that both character and instruments of fate, such as time, nature, human instincts and the desire for joy,²² play a decisive part in the way human destiny is shaped. The respective entry on fate in the *ORC* attributes at least some power of decision to Hardy's characters by arguing that although fate often seems to be predetermined, this implication is 'more apparent than real' (Page, s.v. "fate"). This argument can be supported by the novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (115), in which Hardy uses the quotation 'Character is Fate', which he incorrectly attributes to Novalis. That is, the character or nature of a person has at least some influence on their destiny. Roy Morrell is in agreement with this view insofar as in his pioneering work *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way* he highlights that

²¹ Cf. Salberg, p.4: „Zweifach sind die Erscheinungsformen des Schicksals: die erste ist die innere, berechenbare, die sich in der Beschaffenheit des Charakters kundgibt; die zweite ist die unberechenbare, die dem Menschen von aussen zuerteilt wird. Beide spielen in Hardy's Werk eine Rolle.“

²² Cf. Reinhard-Stocker, pp. 63-105 and pp. 106-121.

character is accountable for one's fate. He explains this point by saying that Hardy's novel characters are able to make choices but they misuse free will and choice available to them.²³ Bert G. Hornback, who discussed the metaphor of chance, shared this view, opposing the theory of fate as an abstract determiner.

Concluding this section, it can be said that to date there has been little agreement on Hardy's understanding and presentation of fate and, thus, a discrepancy in literary criticism is apparent. The advocates of one strand argue that human life is shown as controlled by a superior external force in Hardy's works. By comparison, those in favour of the second strand suggest that apart from this external force, Hardy acknowledged an internal force, that is, character, as well.²⁴ Consequently, this thesis sets out to examine whether a cosmic force superior to human beings, or the short story characters' tragic flaws, or else or a combination of those two is responsible for bringing about the individual character's final tragedy.

²³ Cf. Morrell, pp. 140-167.

²⁴ Cf. Reinhard-Stocker, pp. III-IV.

3. “Fellow-Townsmen”

The short story “Fellow-Townsmen” was published in the *New Quarterly Magazine* in 1880 and in the American *Harper’s Weekly* in five instalments from April to May 1880, before being revised and collected in *Wessex Tales*, Hardy’s first short story collection, in 1888.²⁵ *Wessex Tales* depicts the diversity of social, cultural and economic life in Dorset, which acts as a microcosm of Wessex. The short stories published in this volume, drawn together by the pastoral voice, take place in the past, ranging from Napoleonic times to the nineteenth century. They are presented as arising from oral traditions and they are based on newspaper articles and parish records.²⁶ However, due to its themes and its temporal setting, “Fellow-Townsmen” differs from the majority of the short stories of *Wessex Tales*. That is, the short story under discussion takes place in the fictional town Port-Bredy, named after Bridport, which is the largest town in West Dorset and one of the few manufacturing centres at that time. It is set in a later period than the other stories, namely in the 1840s and the 1860s, and it is a bleak narrative of marital misery and of the inability to compensate for a past mistake. Treating these typical Hardy themes, it is a predecessor of stories of the 1890s,²⁷ such as “On the Western Circuit” or “An Imaginative Woman”, which will be analysed in the fifth chapter.²⁸

Turning now to a short plot outline of this particular short story, Mr. Barnet, a man of wealth, abandoned his former lover, Lucy Savile, and married a society lady. However, this marriage has proven to be a mismatch, which makes Mr. Barnet feel envious of his friend, Mr. Downe, and his marital bliss. Since Mr. Downe, a less prosperous solicitor, sympathises with his old friend, he arranges a meeting between the two wives in order to solve the Barnets’ marital problems. In the meantime, Mr. Barnet visits Lucy, whom he has not seen for a long time, and admits that he has made a mistake. When meeting, the two married women are enticed to go sailing, but the boat capsizes and Mrs. Downe drowns. Mrs. Barnet is rescued and, owing to her husband’s assistance, survives. Later, Lucy informs her former lover that she plans to move whereupon he arranges that Mr. Downe employs her as a governess for his children. On their strolls, the children become accustomed to exploring the Barnets’

²⁵ Cf. Page, s.v. “Fellow-Townsmen”.

²⁶ Cf. Harvey, p. 114.

²⁷ Cf. Page, s.v. “Fellow-Townsmen”.

²⁸ Before discussing the individual short stories, a short summary of each story is given in order to facilitate understanding, particularly for those readers who are not familiar with the short stories but want to gain insight into Hardy’s ironic representation of fate.

new house which is being built at Mrs. Barnet's request. However, shortly after the accident, Mrs. Barnet leaves her husband and moves to London. When Mr. Barnet learns of his wife's sudden death, he believes that he is finally able to redeem his past mistake by marrying Lucy. Soon afterward, he is sent a letter saying that Lucy and Mr. Downe are to be married this very morning. After being present at the wedding, Mr. Barnet sells his property and embarks on a world tour. Coming back after twenty-one years, he finds out that many of his friends, among others Mr. Downe, have died. This encourages him to propose marriage to Lucy, who, however, does not accept him at first. When she reconsiders his proposal, she changes her mind but learns that Mr. Barnet has left the town and never to return.

3.1 Internal forces

The following chapter sets out to examine whether the quotation 'Character is Fate' (*Mayor of Casterbridge*, 115) is applicable to the short story "Fellow-Townsmen". Hence, this chapter analyses the role acts of personal will, precisely speaking character qualities, play in shaping the characters' destinies. Consequently, it seeks to explore in some detail the protagonists' natures and tragic flaws, before turning to external and cosmic forces. It has to be said in advance that the discussion of character qualities focuses on the figures of George Barnet and, to a lesser extent, on Lucy Savile, who can be considered the protagonists of this short story. This approach, which leads from human participation to superior cosmic forces beyond human control, shall be applied to the analysis of all four short stories under discussion.

3.1.1 George Barnet: Ambition, sensitivity, loyalty

George Barnet, who was brought up as a 'well-educated, liberal-minded young man' ("FT", 112), is 'of pale and refined appearance' ("FT", 111). He, a trustee of the town's savings-bank and a councillor, is portrayed as the descendant of a successful tradesman. However, his life cannot be considered a happy one as he is trapped in a loveless marriage, which can be attributed to his ambition. More precisely, it may be valid to argue that Mr. Barnet abandoned Lucy and married a woman of superior social status in order to move higher up the social scale. This claim can be substantiated by referring to the reasons George gives when trying to justify his behaviour: 'Ambition pricked me on – no, it was not ambition, it was wrong-

headedness! Had I but reflected. ...' ("FT", 122). Taking this explanation into consideration, it becomes obvious that the male protagonist regrets his decision. This reflection on his unhappy union and his former happiness is triggered off by his chance meeting with Charles Downe, in which he is confronted with his friend's marital bliss. Thus, George realises that he still has not got over the fact that he failed to marry Lucy: 'His mind fell back into past years upon a certain pleasing and gentle being whose face would loom out of their shades at such times as these. [...] I wonder if she lives there still!' ("FT", 116). As a consequence, he wants to redeem his past error and 'with a sudden rebelliousness' ("FT", 117) he sets off for Lucy's house. Hence, it is evident that he does not want to accept the present state of affairs but takes his happiness in his own hands. Confronted unexpectedly with her former beloved, Ms. Savile is pleased to meet him but it becomes clear that she is still deeply hurt, which can be illustrated by referring to her reaction:

The preoccupied expression which, like images on the retina, remained with her for a moment after the state that caused it had ceased, now changed into a reserved, half-proud, and slightly indignant look, in which the blood diffused itself quickly across her cheek, and additional brightness broke the shade of her rather heavy eyes. ("FT", 120)

Only in the following passage when George asks Lucy to give him her hand, 'seeing how often [he] ha[s] held it in past days' ("FT", 120), the readers are able to infer that the two protagonists' had a love affair, which George apparently ended. This assumption is confirmed as Lucy replies that she does not want to remember their past and explains that '[w]hen [she] think[s] of the circumstances of [their] last meeting, [she] can hardly consider it kind of [him] to allude to such a thing as [their] past – or, indeed, to come here at all' ("FT", 120). Mr. Barnet knows that he has made a huge mistake and he even wishes he 'had never seen light with my [his] eyes when [he] think[s] of that!' ("FT", 121). He continues regretting and apologising for his past error and once again he puts the blame on his ambition as a determining force for abandoning her. (Cf. "FT", 122: 'when I saw how happy [Downe] was with his wife and family welcoming him home, though with only one-tenth of my income and chances') Before returning home, he emphasises that he has made the wrong decision, failing to marry her: 'Anyhow you were the woman I ought to have made my wife – and I let you slip, like the foolish man that I was!' ("FT", 123). Hence, Mr. Barnet thinks that her cold reaction is 'what [he] deserve[s]' ("FT", 122). Mr. Carlson, a surgeon of the town, summarises Barnet's misery by saying that '[he]

dreamed that a gentleman, who has been very kind to [him], married a haughty lady in haste, before he had quite forgotten a nice little girl he knew before' ("FT", 125).

Although Barnet is ready and willing to redeem his past error, he is unable to do so. Morrell's work *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way* may serve as an explanation for the protagonist's wrong decision, which has brought about misery and unhappiness. As mentioned in the second chapter, Morrell argues that Hardy's characters are able to make choices but they tend to misuse choice available to them by making the wrong choices.²⁹ This argument holds true for "Fellow-Townsmen", in which Barnet's decision to abandon Lucy was definitely the wrong one. The female protagonist questions Morrell's theory because she is of the firm opinion that '[i]t is a very common folly of human nature [...] to think the course you did *not* adopt must have been the best' ("FT", 123). However, it has to be doubted if Ms. Savile is right as the readership is aware of Barnet's marital misery and his sincere feelings for her. Moreover, it can be assumed that she only wants to protect herself and her feelings, having been deeply hurt by him. Having made a wrong decision, the male protagonist has to live with its consequences, that is, he is married to a woman he does not love and who despises him because of his social inferiority. Nevertheless, he does not give up and tries everything possible to make up for his erroneous behaviour. That is why he gives in to the urge to see her although he has promised not to do so. However, this second attempt to redeem his past error also fails.

Apart from the decision not to marry Lucy, Barnet makes a second wrong choice which exerts a profound influence on the course of events. After his wife was shipwrecked and pronounced dead, George still tries to revive her and is suddenly caught in a struggle of consciousness:

Barnet had a wife whose presence distracted his home; she now lay as in death; by merely doing nothing – by letting the intelligence which had gone forth to the world lie undisturbed – he would effect such a deliverance for himself as he had never hoped for, and open up an opportunity of which till now he had never dreamed. [...] From Barnet's actions we may infer that he *supposed* such and such a result, for a moment, but did not deliberate. ("FT", 138-139)

In this moment of decision Barnet makes a choice which he is going to regret forever. After hesitating for a short time, he rings the bell for assistance and goes on

²⁹ Cf. Morrell, pp. 140-167.

reviving his wife, which proves to be successful. This second decision is not only visible in his action but also when taking a closer look at imagery. Learning of his wife's alleged death, Barnet glances through the window to Lucy's house, where its roof detains his gaze because 'out of it [rises] a red chimney, and out of the chimney a curl of smoke, as from a fire newly kindled' ("FT", 136). One tentative proposal might be that the newly kindled fire stands both for Lucy's newly formed desire and for the opportunity to marry the woman George loves. After having made his decision, '[t]he blue evening smoke from Lucy's chimney had died down to an imperceptible stream' ("FT", 139). Here, the imperceptible stream could represent Barnet's dashed hopes and the impossibility of a shared life with his beloved. Soon afterward, the readership learns that Barnet's second decision was, like the first one, wrong as it brings about misery and unhappiness. Having had a violent altercation with his wife four months after the shipwreck, George reflects on his decision, which has made him unable to live with Lucy: 'Then in solitude and silence he brooded over the bitter emotions that filled his heart. It was for this that he had gratuitously restored her to life, and made his union with another impossible!' ("FT", 140-141). When he finds out that his wife has left him and moved to London, he is 'happier than he could have expected' ("FT", 149). However, the male protagonist still regrets his first wrong decision and reflects on 'what might have been his lot if he had only shown wisdom enough to claim Lucy Savile when there was no bar between their lives, and she was to be had for the asking' ("FT", 150).

Some time later, when Lucy is employed by Downe due to Barnet's recommendation and has often been to the latter's new house with the children, George is informed that his wife died on the previous day. At first, he cannot believe the news as '[t]he fact of his wife having, as it were, died once already, and lived on again, had entirely dislodged the possibility of her actual death from his conjecture' ("FT", 155). Thus, he thinks that he is now '[a]t last' ("FT", 155) free to marry Lucy and thinks that his virtue in reviving his wife has been rewarded. However, his hopes are dashed as soon as he gets to know that his beloved and Downe are to be married that very morning. The failed attempts to redeem his past error have left their marks on his outward appearance, which the narrator describes as follows:

The sun blazing into his face would have shown a close watcher that a horizontal line, which he had never been seen before, but which was never to be gone thereafter, was somehow gradually forming itself in the smooth of his forehead. His eyes, of a light hazel, had a curious look which can only be described by the word bruised; the sorrow that looked from them being largely mixed with the surprise of a man taken unaware. (“FT”, 157-158)

When coming back from his tour around the world twenty-one years later, Barnet walks meditatively, ‘like one who was fearful of disturbing his own mental equilibrium’ (“FT”, 164). Hearing that Downe died seven years before, he makes one last attempt to make up for his failure. He goes to Lucy’s house, which ‘seem[s] to be waiting [for him]’ (“FT”, 167) and finally asks her to marry him. However, she does not accept him because she does not have the ‘least intention of marrying again’ (“FT”, 171). Reconsidering the proposal, she changes her mind and waits for him but he never returns. Taking into consideration all the points mentioned above, it is valid to argue that a missed opportunity or wrong decision based on social ambition and on insufficient consideration, even though it is much to a person’s regret, is followed by lifelong unhappiness. That is to say, Barnet’s successive attempts to compensate for his past error, which he is always reminded of, either by Lucy or by himself, fail as he cannot undo the irreversible past which keeps returning to haunt him throughout his whole life and from which there is no escape.

Another character quality which contributes significantly to Barnet’s misery is his sensitivity. This character trait is particularly prominent so that it cannot be concealed from the other characters in the short story. Being depressed after having talked to Lucy and tried to apologise, Barnet does ‘not care to speak to anybody just now’ (“FT”, 127). Downe replies that Barnet is ‘too sensitive’ and he elaborates on this claim by telling him that ‘[a]t school [he] remember[s] [Barnet] used to get as red as a rose if anybody uttered a word that hurt [his] feelings’ (“FT”, 127). The male protagonist admits that ‘there is a grain of truth in that’ (“FT”, 127) and he attributes his behaviour to the fact that he ‘often tr[ies] to make peace at home’ (“FT”, 127). Hence, it becomes obvious that he, being of sensitive nature, and his indifferent, commanding wife are incompatible, which will be dealt with in somewhat greater detail in the next chapter. Apart from this reference to Barnet’s sensitivity by Downe, there is one by the narrator when the male protagonist visits Lucy for the second time. He perceives that she flushes when seeing him again, though it ‘might [...] only [be] the fancy of his own supersensitiveness’ (“FT”, 132). These two direct

references to Barnet's sensitivity apart, there are many indirect references which illustrate this character trait. For example, when Barnet has to break the news of Mrs. Downe's death to his old friend, he reflects on the conditions of her terrible death and comes to the conclusion that informing his friend about this tragic accident '[is] made doubly painful by the circumstance that the catastrophe which [...] [befell] Mrs. Downe was solely the result of her own and her husband's loving-kindness toward himself' ("FT", 135). Hence, it is apparent that Barnet is almost destroyed by his sensitivity, which makes his marriage to a cold and materialistic society lady almost unbearable.

Moreover, loyalty, in combination with morality, constitutes an important part of the male protagonist's character. Barnet is not only loyal to his former beloved and to his friend, but also to his materialistic wife, who scorns him. Taking Barnet's loyalty to Lucy into consideration, it has to be highlighted that he respects her wishes although these may cause him to be miserable. By way of illustration, he fulfils her wish not to visit her again because 'scandal [is] a plant of quick root' ("FT", 125). In other words, he '[is] bound to obey Lucy's injunction for Lucy's own sake' ("FT", 125). Besides, he secures her a good job which she loves and he never pressures her into forgiving him. Another prominent example which illustrates this point is Lucy's rejection of George's marriage proposal. Although he is devastated, he does not try to win her over or to force her into marrying him but he reacts as follows:

After having his long period of probation rendered useless by her decision, he had shown no anger, and philosophically taken her words if he deserved no better ones. It was very gentlemanly of him, certainly; it was more than gentlemanly; it was heroic and grand.' ("FT", 172)

Turning now to Barnet's loyalty to his friend, it can be said that the male protagonist acts kind-heartedly, for example, when trying to comfort him after the loss of his beloved wife. Barnet said little 'but finding that some guiding hand was necessary in the sorrow-stricken household, took upon him to [...] manage till Downe should be in a state of mind to do so for himself.' ("FT", 139) The most prominent example of his loyalty is, however, that he does not interfere with Downe when the latter weds Lucy although this makes him a broken man. Instead, 'he greet[s] Downe heartily, offering his congratulations' ("FT", 159). What is more, he does not inform the newly married couple about his wife's death as he does not want to spoil their happiness. With regard to George's loyalty to his wife, it has to be emphasised that, although she treats him dismissively, he 'act[s] as if devotion to his wife [is] the

dominant passion of his existence' ("FT", 134) after she has been shipwrecked. Furthermore, being a man of morality, he is not able to let his wife, who has already been pronounced dead, die even though doing so bars him from living with Lucy. Besides, he has 'made it a point of the utmost strictness to hinder that feeling [for Lucy] from influencing in the faintest degree his attitude toward his wife' ("FT", 142) even though she depreciates him and does not hide her true feelings from him. Accordingly, it cannot be overlooked that Barnet's morality and loyalty to his fellow human beings lead him to neglect his own needs as he wants to please everyone.

Barnet's loyalty and morality can be said to have a self-destructive aspect because he sacrifices both his present and his future to the memory of the past.³⁰ In order to support this argument, some examples will be given. Morrell is perfectly in line with Brady, claiming that Barnet would have time to stop the wedding ceremony³¹ but he chooses instead to give way to his 'rich capacity for misery' ("FT", 157) and attends the wedding with a calm smile. This self-destructive attitude is particularly prominent when he says to the newly married couple, 'I'll stand back and see you pass out, and observe the effect of the spectacle upon myself as one of the public' ("FT", 159). This propensity to withdraw from life and emotions is present throughout the rest of his life, which begins with the graveyard scene in which he helps a sexton to fill up a grave, a symbol for burying his past self, while forming 'a design' ("FT", 160) of his future and persists throughout his world tour as he is unable to forget the past.³²

Bearing in mind George Barnet's character qualities, there is some evidence to suggest that the male protagonist's social ambition, his sensitivity and his loyalty can be regarded as his tragic flaws which are partly responsible for his misery and unhappiness. In 1880 Mrs. Procter, the widow of the poet 'Barry Cornwall' (E. Hardy, *Early Life*, 177), wrote to Hardy about the conclusion of "Fellow-Townsmen": 'You are cruel. Why not let him come home again and marry his first love? But I see you are right. He should not have deserted her' (Millgate, 140).

³⁰ Cf. Brady, p. 30.

³¹ Cf. Morrell, p. 113.

³² Cf. Brady, pp. 30-33.

3.1.2 Lucy Savile: Passivity, feeling of inferiority

Lucy Savile, Mr. Barnet's former beloved, is introduced to the reader as a 'young girl[...]' ("FT", 119) whose face has a 'beautiful outline' ("FT", 120). She is best characterised by the qualities of passivity and the feeling of inferiority, which are evident in her conduct throughout the whole story. When talking to Barnet about their separation, Lucy emphasises her inferior social position several times. This can be illustrated briefly by referring to one of those instances: '[F]eeling your position so much wealthier than mine, I fancied I might have mistaken your meaning' ("FT", 122-123). Lucy's feeling of inferiority increases considerably after hearing about Mr. Barnet's marriage to a society lady, which makes her think 'how foolish [she] ha[s] been' ("FT", 123). This character quality makes it impossible for her to follow her feelings and is, thus, the reason for her passivity. When George enquires why she has not written to him after their misunderstanding, she only responds that she had no reason for doing so, which she later elaborates on by referring to his higher position. Due to her feeling of inferiority, she assumes that Barnet's strong feelings towards her have disappeared. Therefore, confronting her former lover after the wedding ceremony 'save the natural flush and flurry engendered by the service just performed, there [is] nothing whatever in her bearing which show[s] a disturbed mind' (FT", 159). Since Lucy is unaware of George's warmth of feeling towards her, she is surprised when he proposes to her, which can be illustrated by means of considering her immediate reaction: 'She started back, and the surprise which was so obvious in her wrought even greater surprise in him that it should be so' ("FT", 170). After having rejected his proposal, Lucy reconsiders her decision and changes her mind, which comes, however, too late. Thus, Lucy's recognition of her missed opportunity constitutes the final ironic twist of the short story and highlights her unhappiness. This claim is substantiated by Paris, who maintains that although self-effacement is supposed to work, it normally does not because there is no just God in heaven.³³ Since Hardy wants to convey a realistic picture of the world, he does not reward self-effacing behaviour but 'self-effacing people, as a rule, are victimized by their fellow-men and by fate' (Paris, ch. IV). This argument is applicable to Lucy, who, after having been abandoned by Barnet, seems to have found happiness in her marriage to Downe. However, as mentioned above, Barnet's unexpected reappearance and her refusal to accept his proposal make her aware of her missed

³³ Cf. Paris, ch. IV.

opportunity and lead to her final misery. Consequently, it is valid to argue that apart from Barnet, who has made a wrong choice, Lucy has a share in their severance as she ‘said nothing’ (“FT”, 123).

It has, however, to be emphasised that although Lucy is in part responsible for her misery, she is not the sole responsible party for her behaviour, which is partly determined by external social norms. That is to say, in the Victorian era social life was dominated by the notion of decorum, which demanded women to fulfil a strict ideal of virtue. One of its chief demands was reserve towards the opposite sex, as showing unseemly willingness or “be[ing] forward” (Reinhard-Stocker, 25) were devalued as impurity of mind and body. This is due to the Victorian cultural valorisation of complete innocence, chastity and purity in women,³⁴ which was based on the belief that women were only worth as much as their chastity.³⁵ Consequently, men were supposed to take the initiative whereas women assumed a passive attitude, including, for example, remaining silent about their feelings and not confessing to their liking.³⁶ By conforming to this Victorian model of womanhood, Lucy Savile’s attitude to Mr. Barnet can be partly explained. Therefore, both her nature and Victorian social norms contribute to her character qualities, which can be regarded as one of the reasons for her misery and unhappiness at the story’s ending.

3.2. External forces

Up to now, starting out from the quotation ‘Character is Fate’ (*Mayor of Casterbridge*, 115), the analysis of the protagonists’ characters has shown that their natures can be regarded, at least partly, as responsible for their destinies. However, these cannot be considered the only influential factor leading to unhappiness and misery. Hence, the term ‘external forces’ is used in order to denote human participation other than character qualities which shapes human destiny. There are two external forces – apart from Victorian social norms, which have been discussed above in order to complete the analysis of Lucy Savile’s character – at work which play a significant role in determining and controlling human lives, namely marriage and class in combination with money.

³⁴ Cf. Page, s.v. “marriage”.

³⁵ Cf. Lee.

³⁶ Cf. Reinhard-Stocker, p. 25.

3.2.1 Marriage as an instrument of fate

This subchapter does not elaborate on the institution of marriage as an external factor as extensively as chapter five does, which, discussing the short story “An Imaginative Woman”, deals with Hardy’s aversion to marriage in great detail. This is due to the fact that in “Fellow-Townsmen” the male protagonist’s unhappiness can be attributed to a past error or missed opportunity, whereas in “An Imaginative Woman” the female protagonist’s emotionally sterile marriage is the cause for her misery and sets in motion the chain of events which leads to her tragic death.

The institution of marriage can be classified under the heading ‘conventions and law’ (Elliott, 99), which was the last instrument of fate to develop in Hardy’s works. Hardy considered conventions ‘the artificial forms of living’ (F. Hardy, *Early Life*, 279) and he, thus, attacked them fiercely. According to Elliott (100), convention, both made by humans and used to destroy them, had left its useful sphere of maintaining peace and order and ‘had assumed functions and powers to which it was not entitled.’ Thus, it became a powerful system which was hostile and burdensome to human beings.³⁷ Being an instrument of fate, Hardy regarded marriage as equally destructive because it is capable of destroying people’s lives due to the fact that ‘a temporary infatuation for the moment, accompanied by no affinities or compatibilities of any kind, was all that was necessary to constitute a marriage contract’ (Elliott, 100). As previously mentioned, Hardy’s adverse view on marriage is discussed in more detail in chapter five.

Marriage or rather marital misery is a prominent theme in this particular short story, which can be substantiated by the fact that there are numerous references to the Barnets’ affectionless and unhappy marriage. By way of illustration, when Lucy asks her former lover about the well-being of his wife, he replies that he supposes that she is well ‘though [he] only speak[s] from inference’ (“FT”, 120). Therefore, it cannot be overlooked that the Barnets’ are estranged and that their marriage is only appearance. Some time later, talking to Downe, Barnet sees his wife passing along the street and ‘turn[s] away’ (“FT”, 127). Downe tries to comfort him by saying that ‘[i]t will be all right some day’, which his friend refutes: ‘You may think it will be all right [...] [b]ut I have a different opinion...No, Downe, we must look the thing in the face.’ (“FT”, 127) It becomes obvious that Barnet does not believe in the possibility

³⁷ Cf. Elliott, pp. 99-105.

that his marital problems can be sorted out and he, therefore, regards his marriage as failed. His wife's presence 'distract[s] his home' ("FT", 138) and 'violent altercation[s]' ("FT", 140) characterise their union. These instances of marital discord, of which the above are only a small sample, result in the Barnets' separation. Hence, when his wife has finally left him and settled in London, George is by no means desperate but happy and relieved. He enjoys his regained freedom and when learning of his wife's sudden death, he 'murmure[s] some incoherent words of thanksgiving' ("FT", 155).

Mr. Barnet's affectionless marriage is in stark contrast to Mr. Downe's marital bliss. At the very beginning of the short story the readership is informed that 'though old and very good friends, they [are] differently circumstanced' ("FT", 112). Mr. Barnet has inherited wealth and is, therefore, a prosperous man who even possesses a phaeton whereas Mr. Downe is 'a struggling young lawyer' ("FT", 112). However, Downe leads a happy and fulfilled life with a devoted wife and adoring children. This contrast is particularly prominent in the scenes when the two men come home in the evening. Barnet drives his friend home where

the faces of three little girls could be discerned close to the panes of a lighted window a few yards ahead, surmounted by that of a young matron, the gaze of all four being directed eagerly up the street ("FT", 114)

Mrs. Downe's deep devotion to her husband can also be illustrated by referring to his fall and her dismayed reaction. She immediately seizes hold of him, pulls him to his feet, kisses him and calls him darling.³⁸ By comparison, when Barnet comes home, he receives his wife's cold message that she has already dined because she has the dressmaker with her and will be engaged for some time. Having witnessed the Downes's happy union, Barnet starts reflecting on his life and, thus, thinking about Lucy. Consequently, it can be stated that this incident triggers off a chain of events which finally leads to both Lucy and George's misery.

Bearing in mind the previous points about the Barnets' unhappy marriage, the reasons which lead to their marital discord need to be examined. First of all, it has to be emphasised that the natures of the married couple are incompatible, which can be attributed to their distinct character qualities. George is a sensitive and peace-loving man for whom loyalty and morality are of utmost importance. By comparison,

³⁸ For the respective passage mentioned cf. "FT", 115.

Xanthippe, George's wife, is a handsome, 'tall' and 'commanding' ("FT", 127) society lady. Her superior social status is stressed in the portrayal of her outward appearance:

His wife's clinched rein-hand in its lemon-coloured glove, her stiff erect figure, clad in velvet and lace, and her boldly-outlined face, passed on, exhibiting their owner as one fixed forever above the level of her companion [Mrs. Downe] – socially by her early breeding, and materially by her higher cushion. ("FT", 130-131)

Consequently, she contrasts with Lucy, who is rather poor and lives in a 'simply and neatly' ("FT", 119) furnished apartment. This contrast is also clearly visible when taking a closer look at imagery. Mrs. Barnet is depicted in bright colours and rich materials, such as velvet, while there is hardly any light when Mr. Barnet visits Lucy for the first time. She is sketching the outlines of flowers by candle-light at night in order to save time, which makes her former lover worry that she 'will wear [her] poor eyes out' ("FT", 121). Another example which illustrates the difference between these two women is their ambitions. Lucy wants to become a 'teacher of freehand drawing and practical perspective [...] on a comparatively humble scale' ("FT", 143) whereas Xanthippe is frustrated that she has not 'brought down [...] a peer of the realm' ("FT", 142). Mrs. Barnet's ambitious wish, which she was not able to fulfil because of marrying Mr. Barnet, clearly shows her materialism. Apart from being commanding and materialistic, Mrs. Barnet is a dominant woman, who gets whatever she wants, for example, a new house they do not need. Her husband is aware of this character trait, on which he reflects after the alleged death of his wife: '[H]er mouth and brow [...] showed only too clearly that the turbulency of character which had made a bear-garden of his house had been no temporary phase of existence.' ("FT", 136) Considering the incompatible natures of the married couple, it becomes evident that Mr. Barnet, being sensitive and peaceful, is suppressed by his dominant and commanding wife.

The different natures of the Barnets' are mirrored in their different behaviour towards each other. As previously pointed out, George behaves loyally and morally correctly towards his wife. In contrast to his attitude, she treats him dismissively and is indifferent to his feelings. A prime example of Xanthippe's dominant and hurtful behaviour towards her husband is that she imposes her will on him as regards building a new mansion although George objects to doing so, which causes 'bitterness' ("FT", 114) on his part. When talking to Downe, he explains that '[t]he

house [he] ha[s] already is good enough for [him]' ("FT", 114). Nevertheless, he agrees with his wife's plans to build a grand new house which he neither needs nor wants in order to 'preserve peace in the household' as he 'do[es] anything for that' ("FT", 114). However, he does not succeed, which becomes obvious when considering the name of the new building. The fact that Mrs. Barnet names the house 'Château Ringdale' hurts her husband deeply and makes his subjugation to his wife clearly visible:

I was firm in resisting "Château Ringdale," however; not that I would not have put up with the absurdity of the name, but it was too much to have your house christened after Lord Ringdale, because your wife once had a fancy for him. If you only knew everything, you would think all attempt at reconciliation hopeless. ("FT", 114-115)

George's attitude to naming the house after a fancy of his wife is also shown when he goes past the house and suddenly notices a post which bears a white board with the words 'Château Ringdale' at the top. The narrator informs the readership that '[a] dismal irony seem[s] to lie in the words, and its effect [is] to irritate him' ("FT", 118). Although George wants to throw the post down at first, he decides against it as he has 'declared there shall be peace if possible' ("FT", 118). However, the 'obnoxious name-board' ("FT", 118) irritates him considerably, which makes him forget to open his umbrella and, therefore, the rain pours onto him. What is more, Mrs. Barnet is indifferent to him and she even despises him because of his social inferiority, of which he is aware. The following quotation serves as an illustration of her dismissive attitude towards him, which is in stark contrast to his loyal behaviour:

[Mr. Barnet] had made it a point of the utmost strictness to hinder that feeling [for Lucy] from influencing in the faintest degree his attitude towards his wife; and this was made all the more easy for him by the small demand Mrs. Barnet made upon his attentions, for which she ever evinced the greatest contempt; [...] Her concern was not with him or his feelings, as she frequently told him; ("FT", 142)

Taking into consideration the examples of Mrs. Barnet's behaviour towards her husband, it is evident that he, due to his peace-loving and sensitive nature, is deeply hurt by her dismissive and indifferent attitude but instead of acting like she does, he always remains loyal and respectful.

Although Mrs. Barnet leaves her husband, divorce is not mentioned as a natural consequence. Therefore, the divorce laws of the Victorian Period have to be examined. Starting with The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, which authorised a

secular court to dissolve a marriage for the first time in England, the rights of women regarding marriage and divorce were improved but the double standard remained.³⁹ That is to say, equality under the law was not established and there still applied one law for the rich and one for the poor and women.⁴⁰ Besides, a husband was allowed to divorce his wife because of adultery whereas a husband's adultery was no sufficient cause to dissolve a marriage but had to be coupled with another matrimonial offence⁴¹, such as

[i]ncestuos Adultery, or [...] Bigamy with Adultery, or [...] Rape, or [...] Sodomy or Bestiality, or [...] Adultery coupled with such cruelty as without Adultery would have entitled her to a *Divorce a Mensa et Thoro*, or Adultery coupled with Desertion and without reasonable excuse, for Two Years or upwards (1875 Statute, qtd in Page, s.v. "marriage).

In other words, a woman had to prove evidence of both adultery and of incest, or bigamy, or cruelty or desertion, which was based on the assumption that a woman's adultery was more offensive than a man's. Sir John Bigham, the President of the Divorce Court during the Royal Commission on the Divorce Laws, 1912, explained this two-folded convention as follows:

Dealing with the subject of sex-equality Sir John Bigham [...] said he did not think the act of misconduct on the part of the man had anything like the same significance as such an act on the part of a woman. . . . It was not inconsistent with his continued esteem and love for his wife . . . whereas an act of misconduct on the part of a woman, was, in his opinion, quite inconsistent with her continued love and esteem for her husband. (Duffin, 243-244)

This contrasts with Hardy's view on divorce, which he clearly expressed in a letter to Florence Henniker in 1911:

[B]ut you know what I have thought for many years: that marriage should not thwart nature, & that when it does thwart nature, it is no real marriage, & the legal contract should therefore be as speedily cancelled as possible. Half the misery of human life would I think disappear if this were made easy. (T. Hardy, *Letters 4*, 177)

The double standard was abolished by the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1923, which enabled women to divorce their husbands on the grounds of adultery alone.⁴² Bearing these points in mind, it becomes clear that divorce is not an option for the Barnets. Thus, George reflects on 'what might have been his lot if he had only shown wisdom enough to claim Lucy Savile when there was no *bar* between their lives' [emphasis

³⁹ Cf. Labriola.

⁴⁰ Cf. Page, s.v. "marriage".

⁴¹ Cf. Holmes, p. 601.

⁴² Cf. Holmes, p. 601.

added] (“FT”, 150). That is to say, Mr. Barnet is not able to marry his former lover before his wife’s death. However, when this actually happens, a union between them is rendered impossible because of Downe having already proposed to Lucy and having been accepted. Therefore, one could argue that the fact that divorce is legally impossible under the given circumstances contributes to Barnet’s misery.

To sum up this section, it has been emphasised that the institution of marriage becomes an instrument of fate in Hardy’s fiction and in combination with the impossibility of divorce, it brings about unhappiness and misery if the natures of the married couple turn out to be incompatible.

3.2.2 Money and class

Money and class – one of Hardy’s favourite themes for he tried to expose class attitudes – constitute the second external factor. Both play a decisive role in shaping the characters’ lives and in contributing to their tragic destinies. According to Page, ‘[c]lass is not caste’ because ‘people are constantly moving upwards and downwards through marriage’ (Page, s.v. “class”). In other words, marriage is a potent means of rising out of the class into which one was born. This holds partly true for the short story under discussion, in which Mr. Barnet, who has inherited wealth himself, marries a haughty lady from higher up the social scale and is ‘probably the first of his line who had ever passed a day without toil’ (“FT”, 147). Thus, it may be valid to argue that Hardy had common ground with this short story character. This is due to the fact that many women in his family, for instance his mother, had been servants⁴³ whereas Hardy became a prosperous man and was, consequently, able to ‘pass a day without toil.’ As regards Mrs. Barnet’s social position, there are several references which indicate that she belongs to the upper class. An example of this is that Mrs. Downe is not ‘sure of her fitness for Mrs. Barnet’s society, who has of course been accustomed to London people of good position, which made Emily fearful of intruding’ (“FT”, 128). Besides, the depiction of Mrs. Barnet’s outward appearance on her way to the shore serves as an example of her social position.⁴⁴ Reinhard-Stocker claims that in Hardy’s literary oeuvre it is more common for men to marry

⁴³ Cf. Page, s.v. “class”.

⁴⁴ Cf. “FT”, pp. 130-131: ‘His wife’s clenched rein-hand in its lemon-coloured glove, her [...] figure, clad in velvet and lace, and her [...] face, passed on, exhibiting their owner as one fixed for ever above the level of her companion-socially by her early breeding, and materially by her higher cushion.’

women of a superior social status than the other way round. She explains this by arguing that for men climbing up the social ladder is far more important than for women, which holds true for the male protagonist of the short story as his reason for wedding Xanthippe is ambition.⁴⁵ However, Barnet's marriage to a society lady does not provide happiness but it is one of the sources of his misery because, as previously mentioned, his wife despises his social inferiority. The omniscient narrator points out that Mrs. Barnet's

concern [is] not with [her husband] or his feelings [...]; but that she had, in a moment of weakness, thrown herself away upon a common burgher when she might have aimed at, and possibly brought down, a peer of the realm ("FT", 142).

This quotation clearly illustrates Mrs. Barnet's superiority of which her husband is well aware, which can be substantiated by pointing to Mr. Barnet's reaction to his wife's reproaches: 'Her frequent depreciation [...] had at times been so intense that he was sorely tempted to retaliate on her egotism by owning that he loved at the same low level on which he lived.' ("FT", 142)

Apart from being one of the sources of the Barnets' unhappy and affectionless marriage, class is mainly responsible for driving Lucy and George apart. Page affirms this by maintaining that class can be 'a source of extreme tension when people fall in love across the divide' (Page, s.v. "class"). This claim is supported by Reinhard-Stocker, who suggests that a loving relationship between people of different social classes brings about conflict.⁴⁶ This statement is applicable to "Fellow-Townsmen" as Mr. Barnet has inherited wealth, whereas Lucy is a woman of lesser means, which leads to their separation because of him marrying a more suitable and socially more appropriate society lady. Class is referred to directly by Lucy when talking with her former lover about the reason why she did not contact him after their misunderstanding. She explains her behaviour by saying that

[e]verything was so indefinite, and feeling [his] position to be so much wealthier than [hers], [she] fancied [she] might have mistaken [his] meaning. And when [she] heard of the other lady – a woman of whose family even [he] might be proud – [she] thought how foolish she had been, and said nothing ("FT", 122-123).

Lucy goes on arguing that even if he had asked her to become his wife, she is not sure if she would have accepted him. However, this is certainly not the truth as her

⁴⁵ Cf. Reinhard-Stocker, p. 14.

⁴⁶ Cf. Reinhard-Stocker, p. 14.

voice belies her. Then she once again refers to their different social positions as a separating factor: ‘My family was so much poorer than yours, even before I lost my dear father, that – perhaps your companions would have made it unpleasant for us on account of my deficiencies’ (“FT”, 123). Accordingly, it can be stated that money and class can be regarded as malicious instruments of fate owing to the fact that they both are sources of an affectionless, emotionally sterile marriage and a potent means of separating lovers of different social positions.

3.3 Cosmic forces

So far, the analysis of the protagonists’ tragic fate has centred on their natures in order to determine their tragic flaws and on human participation other than character. These external forces, marriage and money in combination with class, have been established as important means of influencing and shaping the protagonists’ lives. This chapter seeks to explain to what extent the second strand of literary criticism, which is based on the assumption that human life is controlled by an indifferent force beyond human control, holds true for “Fellow-Townsmen”. That is to say, there are fate-determining elements operating without human intervention which control the short story characters’ lives and determine their fate. These different sets of forces are personified nature, coincidence and several abstract representatives of fate, such as God and destiny, for example, which clearly illustrate the insignificance of human beings in the world they live in.

3.3.1 Nature and fate

As regards Nature as an instrument of fate, Elliott (81) argues that Hardy ‘often seems to have used personified nature as a synonym for the actual Will’, which highlights the importance of this particular motif. Although Nature has capacities for both benevolence and malevolence, it is usually presented as an agent for evil, showing the defencelessness of human beings before the devices of fate. In other words, Nature is depicted as a ‘tentacle of the Immanent Will’ which ‘cruch[es] the desires of its people’ (Elliott, 86).

In “Fellow-Townsmen” the importance of this conscious agent of fate, which contributes significantly to the protagonists’ destinies, is emphasised by the extensive use of personified nature. The first instance of personification shows explicitly that Nature has the absolute power over people’s physical appearance: ‘But [Lucy’s]

features did not do justice to this splendid beginning: Nature had recollected that she was not in Italy' ("FT", 120). Besides, personified nature is used in order to point out to the relationship between Nature and men. Port-Bredy, the short story's setting, is a small provincial town which depicts the complex relationship between town and country. This is due to the fact that these two are 'contiguous and interconnected' (Brady, 28). In Port-Bredy the 'shepherd on the east hill [can] shout out lambing intelligence to the shepherd on the west hill, over the intervening town chimneys' and 'at night it [is] possible to stand in the very midst of the town and hear from their native paddocks on the lower levels of greensward the mild lowing of the farmer's heifers' ("FT", 111). This portrayal of the countryside contrasts with the arrival of the railway: 'Of inorganic differences the greatest was that a railway had invaded the town.' ("FT", 162) This conflict between rural and urban is paralleled by the one between Nature and the human being, which stand in opposition.⁴⁷ By way of illustration, the 'flanking hills [...] look[...] so lovely above the old roofs' but they make 'every low-chimneyed house in the town as smoky as Tophet' ("FT", 126). Moreover, the rope-walks are 'overhung by apple-trees and bushes, and intruded on by cows and calves, as if trade ha[s] established itself there are at considerable inconvenience to Nature' ("FT", 126). Furthermore, this conflict becomes evident when considering the depiction of the harbour:

Between these cliffs [...] was a little haven, seemingly a beginning made by Nature herself of a perfect harbour, which appealed to the passer-by as only requiring a little human industry to finish it and make it famous [...]. But the Port-Bredy burgesses a mile inland had, in the course of ten centuries, responded many times to that mute appeal, with the result that the tides had invariably choked up their works with sand and shingle as soon as completed. ("FT", 132)

This quotation illustrates that in spite of human effort, the seemingly natural harbour resists completion. All these references to the conflict between Nature and mankind pave the way for one devastating incident which affects the lives of the characters in the short story profoundly. Precisely speaking, when trying to solve the Barnets' marital problems, Mrs. Barnet and Mrs. Downe are enticed to go on an ill-fated rowing trip in the harbour, because the weather is fine. However, the wind picks up and the boat capsizes, which is described as follows: 'Just as they were putting in to the shore the wind shifted with a sudden gust, the boat listed over, and it was thought they were both drowned.' ("FT", 133). Here, the participation of personified nature

⁴⁷ Cf. Brady, pp. 28-29.

as a conscious agent for evil cannot be overlooked. By intervening in the short story characters' lives, Nature affects the course of events considerably. The decision of resuscitating his wife turns out to be Mr. Barnet's second wrong choice, whereas Mrs. Downe's death enables her husband to marry Lucy, which intensifies Mr. Barnet's misery significantly and makes him embark on a tour around the world. What is more, this tragic incident is partly responsible for denying the male protagonist the opportunity to redeem his past error. All these examples which focus on the power and on the malevolence of personified nature suggest that Nature as an instrument of fate is indifferent to human destiny as human life is insignificant in 'timeless Nature' (Elliott, 85).

3.3.2 Coincidence and fate

Elliot claims that chance and coincidence were the first instruments of fate that developed in Hardy's mind and are, therefore, of particular importance. This argument is supported by Hornback (6), maintaining that coincidence 'is at the centre of his vision and his technique.' The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines the term 'chance' as 'the occurrence of events in the absence of an obvious intention or cause' (Soanes, s.v. "chance"). The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* adds to this definition that 'chance' can also be used to refer to 'fortune' or 'fate' (Trumble, s.v. "chance"). By comparison, 'coincidence' denotes '[a] notable concurrence of events or circumstance without apparent causal connection' (Trumble, s.v. "coincidence"). Coincidence results either from chance occurrences or from the operation of causal relationships, that is, from a juxtaposition of cause and consequence.⁴⁸ No matter how they come about, coincidences in Hardy tend to link up incidents which ultimately lead to evil and frustration.⁴⁹

In "Fellow-Townsmen" events come apparently about as chance occurrences, such as the ill-fated rowing trip or Lucy's belated change of mind, for example. The most prominent example of coincidence as an instrument of fate is, of course, that the marriage of Lucy and Charles and Mrs. Barnet's death coincide. Taking a closer look at this incident, the alternation of hope and despair cannot be denied. As previously mentioned, George 'murmur[s] some incoherent words of thanksgiving' ("FT", 155) when being informed about the sudden death of his wife. He draws new hope from

⁴⁸ Cf. Hornback, p. 6.

⁴⁹ Cf. Elliott, pp. 59-60.

this event as he believes to be able to make up for his wrong choices. However, as soon as he reads the second letter his hopes are dashed, which makes him exercise 'his rich capacity for misery [...] to its fullest extent now' ("FT", 157). His state of mind can be best explained by referring to the following quotation: 'That his few minutes of hope between the reading of the first and second letters, had carried him to extraordinary heights of rapture was proved by the immensity of his suffering now.' ("FT", 157) As can be inferred from this example, letters are an important fate-directing element in Hardy's literary oeuvre.

Turning to the question of the motivation of this fateful incident, Hornback (6) considers coincidence a 'juxtaposition of cause and consequence' and the repetition of events as 'a kind of coincidence – a kind of moral coincidence.' Viewed against this light, Barnet's fate can be understood as a sequence of cause and consequence. That is to say, his wrong choice or guilty past makes him deserve Lucy's marriage to another man, or even causes it in a moral sense. His past error is continuously emphasised in order to show that his life leads inescapably towards tragedy. Hornback (8) sees this slightly differently:

The pattern of repetition is the oppressive element. [...] What men have to do, for Hardy, is come to terms with oppressions in order to find their freedom and their dignity. Circumstances may limit man, but will, as consciousness fulfills him. Space and time are both larger than man is, but man has consciousness, which is potentially larger than space and time.

This argument does certainly not hold true for Barnet because he is not able to find his freedom and dignity. Strictly speaking, at the end of the short story he is not freer than he was at the beginning when being trapped in an unhappy and oppressive marriage. The male protagonist seems to have found his freedom after his wife has left him, being 'free as a boy in his movements' ("FT", 149) but his regained freedom does not last. As soon as George is informed about Lucy's imminent marriage, he is miserable and even leaves the country. Thus, freedom is presented to be unattainable because of the repetitive string of events.

However, apart from being brought about through causal relationships, this fateful incident, and thus Barnet's destiny, is also caused by chance occurrence controlled by forces superior to human beings and beyond their control. Consequently, it is valid to argue that the coincidental quality of this event is highlighted. To illustrate this point, one need only refer to the following quotation:

The events that had, as it were, dashed themselves together into one-half hour of this day showed that curious refinement of cruelty in their arrangement which often proceeds from the bosom of the whimsical god at other times known as blind Circumstance. (“FT”, 157)

This quotation, which will be explained in greater detail in the next chapter, refers directly to abstract representatives of fate and, thus, takes the blame away from Barnet and attributes it to indifferent cosmic forces. Besides, the coincidental quality of the fact that Mrs. Barnet’s death and Lucy’s marriage coincide is stressed.

Concluding this section, it can, thus, be reasoned that cause and effect and coincidences as chance occurrences coexist, which enables the readers to decide whether and to what extent Mr. Barnet is responsible for his fate.

3.3.3 Abstract agents of fate: ‘God’, ‘destiny’, ‘Circumstance’, ‘the Fates’, ‘shipwrecked Trojans’

Apart from the two instruments of fate discussed above, “Fellow-Townsmen” makes extensive use of abstract representatives of fate, such as destiny, for example. These agents who are indifferent to human beings have a decisive influence on the course of the short story characters’ lives and require consequently closer examination.

The first reference to an abstract agent of fate bears no particular relevance to the discussion of the influence of cosmic forces as it can be considered a fixed phrase: ‘[A]nd God forbid that you ever should’ (“FT”, 115). Precisely speaking, this expression is used as an interjection expressing ‘desire for the benefit [...] of a particular person’ (Trumble, s.v. “god”) because Mr. Barnet hopes that his friend Downe will never be burdened by marital problems as he is.

In contrast to this reference to fate, the other direct mentions of representatives of fate do have relevance as they emphasise the existence and predominance of forces independent of human agency. When talking to Lucy about the reason for their separation, at first Barnet’s tragic flaws and then money and class are blamed, before making destiny and accident responsible for their severance: ‘Then I suppose it was destiny – accident – I don’t know what, that separated us, dear Lucy.’ (“FT”, 123) The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term ‘destiny’ as ‘[t]he predetermined course of events; that which is destined to happen’ (Trumble, s.v.

“destiny”). However, there is a great difference between destiny denoting ‘the ultimate condition’ or ‘[t]he power or agency that (supposedly) determines events’ (Trumble, s.v. “destiny”). This latter meaning of destiny applies to Barnet’s apologetic explanation as the responsibility is completely taken away from him and attributed to a malicious determiner of fate. However, bearing Barnet’s tragic flaws and the external forces which are working against him in mind, it is valid to reason that destiny is only partly responsible for the male protagonist’s tragic fate. Thus, this reference to destiny exemplifies Barnet’s tendency to put the blame of his and Lucy’s separation, which is mainly caused by his wrong choice, on indifferent cosmic forces independent of human agency. Harvey (119) is perfectly in line with this argument, maintaining that “Fellow-Townsmen” is ‘a story which focuses on the human propensity to blame fate for individual failures of nerve and will.’

This attitude of putting the blame on higher powers is also adhered to by the narrator, who comments on the fact that Mrs. Barnet’s death and Lucy’s marriage coincide by making ‘the whimsical god at other times known as blind Circumstance’ responsible for the ‘[t]he events that had [...] dashed themselves together’ (“FT”, 157). Here god is presented as ‘having power over nature and human fortunes’ (Trumble, s.v. “god”) and is, thus, able to control the male protagonist’s fate. Even though the concept ‘god’ does not have any negative connotations, it is used in an adverse sense. This claim can be substantiated by referring to the expressions ‘curious refinement of cruelty’ and ‘whimsical’ which are used to define god more closely. Bearing in mind Hardy’s own view on God, it becomes apparent that the narrator’s opinion of this superior power is in agreement with that of the author. That is to say, like Barnet, Hardy did not believe in the existence of a benevolent and just God in a world which is awash with evil and tragedy. Turning to the concept of ‘Circumstance’, this second agent of causation is defined as ‘an event or fact that causes or helps to cause something to happen, typically something undesirable’ (Soanes, s.v. “circumstance”). Being characterised by the adjectives ‘undesirable’ and ‘blind’, the negative connotations and, consequently, the malevolence of this abstract determiner become clearly visible. Thus, Barnet is presented as the toy of the whims of indifferent higher forces, which takes all kind of responsibility away from him.

Besides, this propensity to blame cosmic forces for one’s destiny does not only apply to Barnet but also to other short story characters, such as the surgeon Charlson, for

example. In a chance encounter between these two characters twenty-one years after Barnet's departure, the surgeon is described as 'a shambling, stooping, unshaven man, who at first sight appeared like a professional tramp, his shoulders having a perceptible greasiness as they passed under the gaslight' ("FT", 166). When Charlson explains his appearance, he claims that '[t]he Fates have rather ill-used [him]' ("FT", 166). In order to clarify this statement, the term 'the Fates' has to be defined. These are in Greek mythology 'the three goddesses who preside over the birth and life of humans. Each person was thought of as a spindle, around which the three Fates (Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos) would spin the thread of human destiny' (Soanes, s.v. "fate"). Each of these three goddesses, or Moirae, from classical mythology is believed to serve a particular purpose: Clotho, the spinner, spins the thread of human being's life; Lachesis, the apportioner, decides how much time each person is allowed on earth, winding up the thread; and Atropos, the inevitable, is responsible for cutting it.⁵⁰ As can be gathered from this definition, Charlson shifts the blame onto abstract agents of fate instead of taking his share of the blame for his failure. Precisely speaking, it can be inferred from previous descriptions of his conduct that he himself is mainly responsible for his present condition. This can be illustrated by referring to the narrator's characterisation of Charlson:

Sundry circumstances stood in his way as a medical practitioner; he was needy; he was not a coddle; he gossiped with men instead of with women; he had married a stranger instead one of the town young ladies; and he was given to conversational buffoonery. Moreover, his look was quite erroneous [...]. His companions were what in old times would have been called boon companions – an expression which [...] suggests fraternization carried to the point of unscrupulousness. All this was against him in the little town of his adoption. ("FT", 124)

Accordingly, it can be stated that in "Fellow-Townsmen" abstract agents of fate are used as an excuse for the short story characters' own failures by means of attributing the blame to these indifferent higher forces beyond human control.

Apart from these references to abstract determiners, one particularly relevant allusion to the 'shipwrecked Trojans' ("FT", 132) is used, which demands closer examination. One might say in advance that Hardy made profuse use of allusions and occasionally of secondary sources, which can be attributed to his extensive reading, for making up his plot lines. Consequently, Springer maintains that these references were an integral part of his style. Considering Hardy's motivation for doing so,

⁵⁰ Cf. *Encyclopedia Mythica*, s.v. "Moirae".

Springer (4) suggests that he tried to surmount the ‘vagueness, ambiguity, deceptive morphology, etymological structures and misleading figures of speech’ by borrowing from the literature of the past. Besides, allusions are an effective means of clarifying one’s intentions, manipulating the responses of an educated readership, illustrating one’s remarks or of giving an air of universality to one’s literary oeuvre.⁵¹ In Hardy’s works, the allusive technique is frequently employed to foreshadow events, which also applies to the allusion mentioned above. This allusion to the ‘shipwrecked Trojans’ is taken from classical Roman mythology, strictly speaking, from one of the most famous episodes of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Aeneas and his companion sailed across the Mediterranean with the intention to settle in Italy, hounded by the hatred of Juno, the queen of the gods. Thus, she asked Aeolus, the custodian of the four winds, to release the winds because of which the majority of the Trojan fleet was destroyed. Owing to the intervention of Neptune, the god of the sea, who was infuriated by Juno’s intervention, seven ships, among them the one of Aeneas, were able to reach a harbour in Africa which provided shelter.⁵² Having given a short insight into classical mythology, it becomes obvious that the allusion to the Trojans foreshadows the tragic shipwreck of Mrs. Downe and Mrs. Barnet. As in the Roman myth, a superior power, namely personified nature acting as an instrument of fate, is at work. Since this force is depicted as being malicious towards humans, the short story characters are hounded by Nature’s enmity which stirs up a storm. That is to say, the two women are tempted to sail as the weather is ‘so fine’ but suddenly ‘the wind shift[s] with a sudden gust [and] the boat list[s] over’ (“FT”, 133).

To conclude this chapter, it has to be highlighted that the protagonists, Lucy Savile and George Barnet, are at once victims of external and cosmic forces, such as marriage, class and Nature, and the builders of their own unhappy fates. Therefore, the four elements which contribute to the nature of irony of fate are applicable to “Fellow-Townsmen”. Precisely speaking, representatives and instruments of fate exercise control over the protagonists, who believe in free will. However, this belief turns out to be erroneous as they are subjected to cruel twists and turns of human fate, which result in their tragic outcome: Lucy waits for her beloved who never returns because he is not aware that she has actually changed her mind.

⁵¹ Cf. Springer, pp. 2-5.

⁵² Cf. *Encyclopedia Mythica*, s.v. “Aeneas”, “Juno”, “Aeolus”, “Neptune”.

4. “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”

The short story “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion” was sold to the Tillotson syndicate in 1889, published in the *Bristol Times and Mirror* in 1890 and in other provincial newspapers before being collected in *Life’s Little Ironies*, Hardy’s third short story collection. In 1912 it was, however, transferred to *Wessex Tales* for the Wessex edition.⁵³ When writing this story, Hardy used both written and oral sources. That is to say, he talked to old people who had actually known the real Phyllis Grove, the female protagonist; he knew where the graves of the two hussars were and he scrutinised old newspapers and church registers in order to find descriptions of their execution and the burials.⁵⁴ Consequently, “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion” relies heavily on local history, which is emphasised at the story’s conclusion as a transcription from the parish register and references to the graves of the dead are given. In the 1896 preface to *Life’s Little Ironies* Hardy expresses that ‘the extract from the register of burials is literal, to be read any day in the original by the curious’ (Page, s.v. “Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”). Moreover, he points to his actual meeting with the real Phyllis: ‘[T]hat she who, at the age of ninety, pointed out the unmarked resting-place of the two soldiers of the tale, was probably the last remaining eyewitness of their death and interment’ (Page, s.v. “Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”). Besides, Hardy’s diary entry for 27 July 1877 also stresses the truth of this story by saying that ‘James Bushrod of Broadmayne saw the two German soldiers [of the York Hussars] shot [for desertion] on Bincombe Down in 1801. It was in the path across the down or near it’ (Millgate, 119). It is added that ‘[t]he tragedy was used in “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”, the real names of the deserters being given’ (Millgate, 119). What is more, Hardy witnessed two public executions, which left a strong impression on him and which constituted the reason for his lifelong fascination with executions.⁵⁵

As regards a short plot outline, the middle-aged narrator recalls a tale which he heard more than thirty years earlier, being a boy of fifteen, from the old woman Phyllis, who is the female main character of the short story. He promised her to keep it a secret until after her death and he kept his promise. The story is set ninety years earlier during the reign of King George III, in 1804, when England was threatened by

⁵³ Cf. Page, s.v. “Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”.

⁵⁴ Cf. Brady, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Cf. Page, s.v. “executions, public”.

an invasion of Napoleon. At the time of the story, Phyllis Grove is a shy and lonely young girl living in an isolated spot with her eccentric and mean father, who intends to wed her to Humphrey Gould, a fashionable but superficial gentleman. His protracted stay at Bath with his elderly relative makes her believe that he has broken off their engagement and, thus, that she is free. That is why Phyllis falls hopelessly in love with Matthäus Tina, a young German mercenary stationed in Budmouth. When eloping with this melancholy and sad-looking soldier and planning to accompany him to Germany, she happens to meet Gould. She overhears a conversation because of which she thinks that her fiancé has come back to marry her, which leads to her change of mind. However, it comes to light that he has merely reappeared to announce his marriage to another woman. In the interim, Matthäus and his friend Christoph, who wanted to elope with him, have been arrested for desertion and Phyllis witnesses their execution by a firing-squad by pure chance. Phyllis tends their graves until her death.

4.1 Internal forces

This section sheds light on the role character qualities and free will play in determining human destiny. Hence, the two main protagonists' tragic flaws need to be dwelled upon in order to comprehend that human participation can be a fate-determining element.

4.1.1 Phyllis Grove: Alienation, assimilation

The female protagonist Phyllis Grove and her father are portrayed as living in almost total seclusion. To illustrate this point one need only refer to the description of their solitude:

When a noise like the brushing skirt of a visitor was heard on the doorstep, it proved to be a scudding leave; when a carriage seemed to be nearing the door, it was her father grinding his sickle on the stone in the garden [...]. A sound like luggage thrown down from the coach was a gun far away at the sea; and what looked like a tall man by the gate at dusk was a yew bush cut into a quaint and attenuated shape. ("MH", 46)

This condition is caused by Phyllis's father, a retired doctor, by whom Phyllis is forced into a life which is neither rooted in urban nor in rural culture. According to Brady (19), Dr. Grove's move to the country 'is a perverse expression of a sentimental impulse.' He relinquishes his practice in order to pursue his 'taste for lonely meditation over metaphysical questions' ("MH", 47) and withdraws to a

‘small, dilapidated, half farm half manor-house of this obscure inland *nook*’ [emphasis added] (“MH”, 47), which highlights the Groves’ complete isolation. However, there Mr. Grove grows ‘more and more irritable with the lapse of time, and the increasing perception that he ha[s] wasted his life in the pursuit of illusions’ (“MH”, 47). Having briefly depicted Dr. Grove, it can be argued that the female protagonist’s life is wasted even before being able to chase youthful illusions due to her father’s retreat from the world.⁵⁶ Consequently, the daughter’s oppressive seclusion is described as ‘twilight’ (“MH”, 47), which can be regarded as the reason of her extreme loneliness and shyness. Brady (41) is in line with this argument, adding that Phyllis’s home, ‘on the highest point of ground to which the lane ascended’ (“MH”, 50), ‘is a tower prison.’ Being isolated from the world, Phyllis becomes ‘so shy that if she [meets] a stranger anywhere in her short rambles she [feels] ashamed at his gaze, walk[s] awkwardly, and blushe[s] to her shoulders’ (“MH”, 47). Her father even threatens to reinforce her seclusion by sending her to her aunt whose house is ‘a prison to [her]’ (“MH”, 57). Phyllis takes up an isolated position in rural society and is alienated from the local culture. There are several references to Phyllis as a deracinated being which lend weight to this argument. By way of illustration, Phyllis is contrasted with the other girls because she is ‘not precisely a girl of the village’ (“MH”, 49) as she is ‘not a native of the village, like all the joyous girls around her’ (“MH”, 56). Precisely speaking, the female protagonist is not introduced as a natural inhabitant of her place of residence but rather as a being alienated from it.

Brady (19) claims that ‘this feeling of inadequacy causes Phyllis to value her suitors for those things she finds wanting in herself.’ On the one hand, she admires Humphrey Gould, ‘a fashionable man of a mild type’ (“MH”, 47-48), on account of his ‘certain methodical and dogged way in which he sometimes [takes] his pleasure’ (“MH”, 48) and his ‘knowledge of what the Court [is] doing’ (“MH”, 49). That is to say, although she is not deeply in love with him but only has ‘a genuine regard for him’ (“MH”, 48), she values his urbanity and self-assurance. Besides, the female main character is aware that a marriage to Gould would guarantee her social elevation or being ‘taken to heaven’ (“MH”, 48). On the other hand, she feels attracted to Matthäus Tina as he is able to satisfy her sexual passion, which is lacking

⁵⁶ Cf. Brady, p. 19.

in her relationship with her fiancé, by portraying the ‘golden radiance [of the York Hussars which] flashe[s] in upon the lives of people here, and charge[s] all youthful thought with emotional interest’ (“MH”, 49). Irwin (119) maintains that when taking a closer look at the depiction of love in Hardy’s works, the key-words ‘listlessness’ and ‘fascination’, which are dealt with in greater detail in the fifth chapter, have to be emphasised. Listlessness, a state in which feeling has been numbed or confused, usually sets in before the beginning or after the end of a ‘cycle of emotion’ (Irwin, 122). Phyllis is ‘listlessly surveying the pasture’ (“MH”, 50) before meeting the German soldier for the first time. Hence, listlessness before the beginning of an emotional cycle includes an appetite for the feeling which is missing. In Phyllis’s case, listlessness is caused by her unfulfilled desire for passionate love, which is satisfied when meeting Matthäus. The feeling experienced both in this instant and from this time onward is fascination, which consists of ‘sexual attraction exaggerated by an element of shock to produce total imaginative absorption’ (Irwin, 123) often without any dramatic external context. This can be illustrated briefly by referring to the female protagonist, who is ‘haunted’ (“MH”, 50) by the foreigner’s handsome face and who considers the York Hussar ‘the subject of a fascinating dream’ (“MH”, 54). By means of this quotation it becomes obvious that Phyllis idealises her object of desire. For the female protagonist Matthäus is

an almost ideal being [...], with none of the appurtenances of an ordinary house-dweller; one who ha[s] descended she [knows] not whence, and would disappear she [knows] not whither’ (“MH”, 54).

After the death of her beloved, listlessness sets in once again: ‘Her listlessness was such that she did not go out of the house for several days.’ (“MH”, 63) This is due to the fact that fascination is replaced with reality.⁵⁷ The narrator emphasises throughout the short story that Phyllis’s relationships with Tina and Gould are the result of her limited experience. She agrees to marry the latter as ‘bringing him to her feet’ she has ‘accomplished what [is] considered a brilliant move for one in her constrained position’ (“MH”, 48). That is, her marriage to a member of an old local family is regarded as a good match from a social perspective. Besides, soldiers were seen as ‘monumental objects then. A divinity still hedged kings here and there; and war was considered a glorious thing’ (“MH”, 45). These attributes and the ‘golden radiance’ (“MH”, 49) of the York Hussars make Phyllis fall in love with the German soldier.

⁵⁷ Cf. Irwin, p. 126.

Apart from being alienated from rural society and local culture, Phyllis accepts and assimilates society's conventional social norms. A prime example of the female protagonist's assimilation is the pivotal moment in the lives of the main characters in which Phyllis resists her desire to elope with Tina:

Phyllis was so conscious-stricken [...]. [S]he knew well enough who had won her love. Without him her life seemed a dreary prospect [...]. [However] [s]he had promised Humphrey Gould [...]; her promise must be kept, and esteem must take the place of love. She would preserve her self-respect. She would stay at home, and marry him, and suffer. ("MH", 59-60)

Like George Barnet in "Fellow-Townsmen", Phyllis Grove is caught in a struggle of consciousness and has to take a decision which will strongly influence her future life. According to Morrell, choice and free will are available to Hardy's characters. He states, however, that they misuse choice because of being inclined to make the wrong choices.⁵⁸ As regards the female main character's decision, it may be argued that refusing to run off with her beloved is the wrong choice. Although she evades death by doing so, her life without Matthäus cannot be considered a happy one: She does not leave the house, she is punished with loneliness and when witnessing her former lover's execution by chance, she even loses consciousness.

In order to understand Phyllis's decision, her motivation for doing so has to be examined. As previously mentioned, Phyllis has assimilated conventional attitudes, which makes her value purity, morals and duty more highly than emotion and feelings. Thus, it can be said that she acts according to the prevailing moral codes which considered a woman 'the possession' ("MH", 52) of her fiancé. That is, because of a naïve sense of honour and unselfishness Phyllis does not seize the opportunity of living with the man she deeply loves but inflicts pain on herself. Although the female protagonist is presented as unruly at the beginning of the short story on account of disobeying her father's order to stop meeting Matthäus and beginning a relationship with him, she is finally unable to escape the social constraints upon her life. Brady (20) maintains that 'in the story's tragic conclusion, she becomes a truer and more visible inhabitant of the village than the girls' with whom she has been compared when discussing her alienation. This is due to the fact that the 'oblivion which [...] she courted for herself has only partially fallen on her' but fragments of her story got abroad and 'have been kept alive ever since' ("MH",

⁵⁸ Cf. Morrell, pp. 140-167.

46). Concluding this section, it can be argued that Phyllis Grove's alienation from rural society, her limited experience and her assimilation of conventional social norms are, at least partly, responsible for her destiny.

4.1.2 Matthäus Tina: Melancholy, sadness, honour

Matthäus Tina is a German soldier from Saarbrück, who belongs to the York Hussars, one of the regiments of the King's German Legion. As previously mentioned, the narrator stresses the special status and the prestige that military men had at that time in Wessex society. By way of illustration, when describing the York Hussars, the narrator informs the readers that 'their brilliant uniform, their splendid horses, and above all, their foreign air and mustachios (rare appendages then), drew crowds of admirers of both sexes wherever they went' ("MH", 49).

Matthäus is a twenty-two-year-old corporal of a striking and handsome appearance. However, his melancholy and sadness are stressed from the very beginning to the end of the short story. When Phyllis spots the mercenary for the first time, he is portrayed as follows:

[H]e moved onward with his eyes on the ground, and with the manner of one who wished to escape company. His head would probably have been bent like his eyes but for stiff neck-gear. On nearer view she perceived that his face was marked with deep sadness. ("MH", 50)

Matthäus refutes Phyllis's theory that the hearts of soldiers are 'as gay as their accoutrements' ("MH", 50) by explaining that 'a dreadful melancholy, a chronic home-sickness [...] depresso[s] many of the men' ("MH", 51-52). That is, many of the York Hussars hate England and English life because of which 'their bodies [are] here, but their hearts and minds [are] always far away in their dear fatherland' ("MH", 52). The young German soldier confirms that he himself is one of those who are the most affected by this home-woe on account of his 'dreamy musing nature' ("MH", 52). His dreamy nature cannot only be held responsible for his melancholy but also for idealising Phyllis. Like her, he sees his beloved as a romantic image, which is evident when taking their first chance encounter into consideration, in which 'the white muslin neckerchief which covered her shoulders and neck where left bare by her low gown, and her white raiment in general, showing conspicuously in the bright sunlight' ("MH", 50). It may be argued that the German soldier first perceives her 'as a vision against the sky' (Brady, 19). This is highlighted by placing great emphasis on the colour white, which may stand for Phyllis's purity. Apart from

Matthäus's dreamy nature, his home-sickness is intensified by the fact that he has left his widowed mother alone at home 'with nobody to cheer her' ("MH", 52). In order to illustrate his care for his mother, two prominent examples shall be given. Talking to Phyllis about the army, Matthäus claims that he 'should have disappeared from the world some time ago if it had not been for two persons – my beloved, here, and my mother in Saarbrück' ("MH", 55), indicating his increasing melancholy. Later on, he explains that '[i]f [his] dear land were here also, and my old parent, with you, I could be happy as I am' ("MH", 55). This quotation clearly shows his deep love for his mother and of his country, which brings about his wish to escape from the army and to return home with Phyllis. Although Phyllis changes her mind and stays behind, Matthäus puts his plan into action, which, however, does not satisfy his wish to be at home, but leads to his tragic death.

Another character quality which has to be mentioned when taking a closer look at Matthäus's nature is honour in combination with decency, which cannot be overlooked when considering his attitude to the women he loves as well as to his friend Christoph. When his beloved begs him to stay, he refuses to do so out of decency and loyalty to his friend: "I cannot break faith with my friend" ("MH", 60). This quotation clearly shows Matthäus's sense of honour because he does not abandon his plan although his hopes have just been dashed. Besides, the two deserters die to save the lives of their companions: 'Matthäus and Christoph interceded for the other two at the court-martial, saying that it was entirely by the former's representations that these were induced to go.' ("MH", 65) Apart from showing decency towards his friends, he excuses his conduct by referring to his mother, who 'ha[s] been warned of his coming; go he must' ("MH", 60). As regards Phyllis, she makes up her mind to elope with the German mercenary because he is 'so virtuous and kind' and 'treat[s] her with a respect to which she ha[s] never before been accustomed' ("MH", 57). Because of overhearing Gould's conversation Phyllis decides to abide by her promise and to follow through her engagement to Gould. The young York Hussar grieves over her choice, but honour and decency forbid him to urge her to come with him although he ironically would be able to win her over:

Unscrupulous pressure on his part, seeing how romantically she had become attached to him, would no doubt have turned the balance in his favour. But he did nothing to tempt her unduly or unfairly. ("MH", 60)

Hence, it becomes evident that the soldier's melancholy, coupled with honour and decency, plays a significant role in leading to his tragic execution by a firing-squad.

4.2 External force

So far, the analysis has focused on the protagonists' characters in order to examine the role character plays in determining their destinies. Apart from these internal forces, an external force, that is, human participation other than the main characters' tragic flaws, can be held accountable for controlling and shaping human life, namely hypocrisy regarding gender norms.

4.2.1 Hypocrisy regarding gender norms

"The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion" emphasises the harsh reality and treatment women had to face in Victorian society, which can be illustrated by referring to the conditions for and attitudes towards women at that time. That is to say, the short story under discussion deals with woman's subjugation to the male patriarch and the different norms which applied to the sexes. In order to understand this differentiation of women from men, Victorian theories of sex and sexuality have to be considered.

Jill Ker Conway, an Australian-American author who is interested in the role of women in American society, points to a highly important fact: It was not until the early twentieth century that scientists realised the connection between sex chromosomes and sex-linked characteristics and that they became aware of the strong influence of hormones on the human body and mind. Consequently, she argues that "we [begin] to see why for some forty years the exact nature of sex-differentiation and its psychic accompaniment was a subject of intense, though inconclusive debate" (Conway qtd. in Lee). Since the reason for the creation of two different sexes was not known at that time, Victorian theorists, such as Herbert Spencer and Patrick Geddes, developed a stereotypical dyadic model. According to this model, apart from the different sex organs and physical differences, men were seen as 'the active agents, who expended energy' whereas women were 'sedentary, storing and conserving energy' (Lee). That is, there was a dichotomy in temperament: Women were regarded as being of an anabolic nature, which raised energy, while men were considered of a katabolic nature, which set energy free. This belief can be attributed to the separated spheres of men and women. Since men only

worried about and took an interest in fertilisation, they were able to release energy in other areas. According to Spencer, this allows ‘the male capacity for abstract reason ... along with an attachment to the idea of abstract justice ... [which] was a sign of highly-evolved life’ (Spencer qtd. in Lee). By comparison, women, who were concerned with menstruation, pregnancy and bringing up children, had little energy left for other activities. Precisely speaking, in contrast to women, who had to stay at home, men were able and had to go hunting to provide for their families. Besides, this belief justified the assumption of emotional and mental differences between the two sexes, which can be illustrated by referring to the Victorian theorist Geddes, who assumes that

[m]ale intelligence was greater than female, men had greater independence and courage than women, and men were able to expend energy in sustained bursts of physical or cerebral activity ... Women on the other hand ... were superior to men in constancy of affection and sympathetic imagination ... [they had] greater patience, more open-mindedness, greater appreciation of subtle details, and consequently what we call more rapid intuition (Geddes qtd. in Lee).

Lee argues that this bipolar model was still applied to sexual relationships in the Victorian era. At the beginning of the twentieth century women were considered the weaker and, thus, the more innocent sex. As a consequence, they were depicted as having no sexual appetite, because of which they were regarded as the victims when having love affairs. By comparison, men were believed to be ‘the fallen, sinful, and lustful creatures, wrongfully taking advantage of the fragility of women’ (Lee). However, this conception changed considerably in the second half of the period: Women were seen as being accountable for indiscretions whereas men, ‘slaves to their katabolic purposes and sexual appetite’ (Lee), could not be charged. Furthermore, it has to be emphasised that chastity and complete innocence were women’s most important virtues. That is to say, failing to fulfil this ideal, their reputation was damaged and they were stigmatised as fallen women.⁵⁹

This double-standard, that is, the socially accepted gender-based distinction between men and women both in terms of status and treatment, is inherent in the short story under discussion as it deals with honourable lovers, Phyllis and Matthäus, who are confronted with the hypocrisy of Victorian society. Thus, “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion” may be seen as the tale of a young woman who submits to

⁵⁹ Cf. Lee.

her destiny in a world of hypocrisy and violence. Consequently, Hardy may have attempted criticism of Victorian social norms.

The first social convention which brings the different treatment of the two sexes to light is marriage. Since women had ‘no other avenue of self-fulfilment, marriage becomes the be-all and end-all of woman’s existence’ (Dutta, 94). That is to say, in Victorian times women’s ultimate goal consisted in securing a sustainer and achieving, thus, ‘the apparently conservative happy ending of marriage’ (Lee). This can be explained by the fact that apart from having been regarded as the only socially accepted form of living together, marriage was the only opportunity for women to climb higher up the social scale and to be economically secure. The short story illustrates the high importance of getting married for women by referring to Phyllis’s engagement to Gould:

As he was of an old local family, some of whose members were held in respect in the country, Phyllis, in bringing him to her feet, had accomplished what was considered a brilliant move for one in her constrained position. [...] [A]nd hence when Phyllis [...] was chosen by such a gentlemanly fellow, it was as if she were going to be taken to heaven. (“MH”, 48)

As can be gathered from this quotation, people in Budmouth are mystified at Gould’s choice as Phyllis has neither the social status nor the necessary money to marry a ‘fashionable man [...] of an old local family’ (“MH”, 47-48). Due to her humble origin, Phyllis herself ‘[is] not without a feeling of pride that he ha[s] chosen her when he might have exercised a more ambitious choice’ (“MH”, 49). However, Reinhard-Stocker rightfully states that a loving relationship between people of different social classes could lead to conflict. This was often the case when a woman of humble origin fell in love with a man of a higher class. In contrast, it was socially accepted that men married women who were well-off, which can be explained by men’s desire and need of climbing up the social scale⁶⁰ and exemplifies, therefore, the double-standard inherent in Victorian society. In the short story under discussion, the social magnitude of Phyllis’s engagement to Gould is even depicted as a violation of a law of nature: ‘In those days unequal marriages were regarded rather as a violation of the laws of nature than as a mere infringement of convention, the more modern view.’ (“MH”, 48)

⁶⁰ Cf. Reinhard-Stocker, pp. 14-21.

Besides, men were able to stand on their own, while women, the weaker sex, were regarded as men's legal property. That is, upon marriage women not only lost their nominal identity but also their legal status. This property-sense, which is the basis for the two-folded convention,⁶¹ is visible when taking a closer look at the description of Phyllis and Matthäus's relationship:

Though Phyllis, touched by all this, and interested in his history, did not disdain her soldier's acquaintance, she declined [...] to permit the young man to overstep the line of mere friendship for a long while – as long, indeed, as she considered herself likely to become the possession of another. ("MH", 52)

Apart from considering herself the possession of her fiancé, it can be said that the female protagonist is also the property of her father: He is not only responsible for her prison-like existence (Cf. p. 56: 'Her position in her father's house was growing irksome and painful in the extreme; his parental affection seemed to be quite dried up.'), but he also forbids her to meet the German soldier again, saying '[d]on't you ever set foot outside that garden-fence without my permission' ("MH", 53). Since Phyllis does not obey his order, he loses his patience and tells her that he has made up his mind: '[D]on't speak a word till I have done, please! – I have made up my mind that you shall stay here no longer while [the York Hussars] are on the spot. You shall go to your aunt's.' ("MH", 57) Moreover, the female protagonist is not allowed to marry outside her social level, particularly not a foreigner. She is aware of her father's aversion to Matthäus as she says he 'would not – certainly would not' ("MH", 55) allow her to marry a non-commissioned foreign officer. All these examples exemplify Mr. Grove's dominant behaviour towards his daughter, whom he regards as his possession. The subjugation of women to the patriarchal male is also evident when considering Phyllis's conduct. Although she plans to elope with her lover and, thus, intends to break the conventional social norms, she remembers her obligation to Gould and to her father's marital wishes and sees no other choice but to surrender to bourgeois honour.

Furthermore, the different treatment of and attitude towards men and women is also evident as regards extramarital loving relationships. The story's final irony lies in the fact that Phyllis is willing to suffer in an arranged marriage in order to live up to prevailing social norms which demanded chastity and complete innocence from women. Gould does, in contrast to Phyllis, not adhere to bourgeois honour but has

⁶¹ Cf. Duffin, p. 243.

secretly married another woman. He wants to bribe her with a handsome looking-glass, as she should apologise to his father for his secret behaviour by putting the blame on herself. Hence, it is obvious that he too is subjugated not only to a patriarch but to a system of which he has no control and, thus, he tries to circumvent it. However, it cannot be overlooked that the consequences of Gould's secret marriage are not as severe as the ones of Phyllis's relationship with the York Hussar. This is due to the fact that, as previously mentioned, women were held accountable for sexual relationships whereas men's blame was attributed to their katabolic purposes and to their sexual appetite. Thus, it can be assumed that Gould is able to excuse his behaviour, which can be substantiated by quoting one passage from the short story:

But news reached the village from a friend of Phyllis's father concerning Mr. Humphrey Gould [...]. This gentleman had been heard to say in Bath that he considered his overtures to Miss Phyllis Grove to have reached only the stage of a half-understanding; [...] He was not sure, indeed, that he might not cast his eyes elsewhere. ("MH", 52-53)

This quotation shows that different norms applied to the sexes since what held true for the two-folded convention regarding divorce, also applied to sexual relationships: '[T]he act of misconduct on the part of the man had anything like the same significance as such an act on the part of a woman' (Duffin, 243-244). In contrast to Gould, who is presumably able to defend his reputation, Phyllis's reputation is irretrievably damaged because of her intended elopement and also due to breaking off her engagement to Humphrey. By way of illustration, the narrator informs the reader that

[t]he oblivion [...] has only partially fallen on her, with the unfortunate result of inflicting an injustice upon her memory; since such fragments of her story as got abroad at the time, and have been kept alive ever since, are precisely those which are most unfavourable to her character. ("MH", 46)

Accordingly, it can be said that the limitations that gender places upon Phyllis, such as her prison-like experience and her subjugation to men, can be considered to be a fate-determining element, bringing about her final misery.

4.3 Cosmic forces

Up to now, the examination of the protagonists' fate has focused on human participation, including character qualities. This section by contrast, excludes human agency altogether. It is concerned with fate-determining elements which are beyond human control but exert a strong influence on the short story characters' lives. Four different sets of forces can be distinguished, which are Nature and emigration, coincidence and 'irony of mistaken action', allusions and, finally, fate itself.

4.3.1 Nature and emigration

As in the previous short story, Nature is presented as a malicious fate-determining element which evades the control of men in "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion". As regards Nature's maliciousness, Elliott (82) argues that for Hardy 'Nature is usually brooding, not rejoicing; weeping, not smiling', which holds true for the story under discussion. The author's notion of the cruelty of Nature can be traced back to a childhood memory: One bitterly cold day Hardy and his father found a half-frozen bird in their garden. Hardy's father threw a stone at it but instead of flying away, the bird died, which made Hardy pick it up, and he 'found it as light as a feather, nothing but skin and bones' (Pinion, 1). Because of this incident, which haunted the author throughout his whole life, he became convinced of Nature's cruelty and malevolence. However, in contrast to "Fellow-Townsmen", personified nature is not referred to directly but there are a considerable number of indirect mentions which hint at this powerful instrument of fate.

In order to discuss the acting of Nature in this particular short story, Hardy's view on the relationship between Nature and men has to be taken into consideration. Elliott maintains that those characters who live in harmony with their environment are normally the most content ones. He explains this point by arguing that Hardy is particularly interested in open Nature, which causes the author to feel more sympathy for the 'simple, close-to-the-soil' characters than for the 'highly rebellious' (Elliott, 82) ones. That is to say, Hardy has a partiality for rustic people who accept Nature as it is and who find solace and gladness in their natural surroundings. However, it has to be emphasised that a close relationship with Nature does not necessarily bring about the achievement of individual happiness but it can be stated that it 'carr[ies] with it a kind of transcendent peace' (Elliott, 83) whereas Hardy's rebellious characters are usually confronted with sorrow and misery on account of their

rebellion against Nature.⁶² Page (s.v. “emigration”) is perfectly in line with Elliott’s argument by maintaining that emigration, which is a prominent topic in Hardy’s fiction, is ‘almost always [...] a cause of disruption and loss rather than fulfilled happiness.’ According to Page, it seems to be more natural to stay at home in Hardy’s works, which may be explained by the author’s dislike of emigration. It may be valid to argue that Hardy’s aversion to emigration can be traced back to his mother’s resentment against family loss. Precisely speaking, Jemima Hardy lost Martha Hand, her sister, to Canada in 1851 and two of the Sparks’ sisters, her nieces, to Queensland in 1870. Moreover, the author was of the firm opinion that a migrant was forced to change in order to be able to adapt to the new environment as those who were unable to do so had to suffer.⁶³

Elliott and Page’s view on Nature and emigration similarly applies to both of the protagonists of “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”. Both Phyllis and Matthäus are alien in their natural surroundings because of which they can be regarded as being tragically displaced. The German soldier is particularly unhappy and miserable as he is unable to live in harmony with the foreign environment and to find happiness in the alien surroundings:

[T]he regiment was pervaded by a dreadful melancholy, a chronic home-sickness, which depressed many of the men to such an extent that they could hardly attend to their drill. [...] They hated England and English life; they took no interest whatever in King George and his island kingdom, and they only wished to be out of it and never see it any more. Their bodies were here, but their hearts and minds were always far away in their fatherland, of which – brave men and stoical as they were in many ways – they would speak with tears in their eyes. (“MH”, 51-52)

As can be gathered from this example, the soldiers do not consider emigration the natural way of acting, which would be to stay in their fatherland. This quotation also illustrates that Hardy was highly critical of English militarism, which becomes particularly evident at the end of the story when the execution of the two German soldiers is depicted in great detail. Korner argues that by means of doing so, Hardy enables us to ‘see beyond the familiar disappointment depicted in many late Victorian and twentieth century novels into a heart of darkness which stands for the whole of that society.’ He goes on by saying that because of this tragic ending ‘we realise that the baleful restrictions of Phyllis’s life exist on the same continuum as the

⁶² Cf. Elliott, pp. 82-83.

⁶³ Cf. Page, s.v. “emigration”.

violence, both aspects of authoritarian rule.’ That is, Hardy held an adverse view on war as for him it was not heroic or grand but irrational and cruel because there was no place for individual personality and family identity in military life.

Although Phyllis does not move to another country but only to an isolated spot, she is presented as being alien from rural society. She is unable to develop a feeling of association with the local landscape, which is particularly obvious in the following passage: ‘Matthäus Tina had infected her with his own passionate longing for his country, and mother, and home.’ (“MH”, 56) This quotation illustrates that Phyllis is infected by her lover’s patriotism, which she lacks, and, thus, finds wanting in herself. Besides, this particular short story clearly shows that emigration is hardly ever a cause of fulfilled happiness but rather of disruption and loss. Matthäus has to leave his mother behind in Germany, which intensifies his melancholy considerably and reinforces his wish to be at home. Since he is unable to adapt to his new environment but ‘hate[s] England and English life’ (“MH”, 52), he has to suffer enormously. Even after building up a loving relationship with Phyllis he cannot develop a feeling of association with his new homeland, which can probably be explained by referring to his lover’s lacking patriotism. Hence, he feels forced to leave England and to return to Germany. By doing so, Matthäus rebels against Nature, which does not only bring about misery on Phyllis’s part but also his tragic death. When depicting Matthäus’s execution, shrouded Nature is presented as sympathising with the tragic event. That is to say, everything is portrayed as being dreary and mournful:

There came a morning which broke in fog and mist, behind which the dawn could be discerned in greenish grey; and the outlines of the tents, and the rows of horses at the ropes. The smoke from the canteen fires drooped heavily. [...] Every blade of grass was weighted with little liquid globes, and slugs and snails had crept out upon the plots. (“MH”, 63)

In contrast to her lover, Phyllis is finally able to develop a feeling of patriotism after Matthäus’s sudden and unexpected death. The female protagonist values, for example, ‘[t]he spot at the bottom of the garden where she ha[s] been accustomed to climb the wall to meet Matthäus’ (“MH”, 63) and his grave, which she keeps neat and points out to later generations. Concluding this section, it becomes evident that Nature is after all a highly destructive element of fate because it is ultimately hostile to human happiness.

4.3.2 Coincidence and ‘irony of mistaken action’

Similar to the previous short story, coincidence is a fate-determining element in “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”, exerting an influence on the short story characters’ lives. However, there is one distinct difference inherent in the acting of coincidence in these two short stories which cannot be ignored: In “Fellow-Townsmen” fateful incidents can be understood as a sequence of cause and consequence whereas coincidences come about as chance occurrences in the short story under discussion. Due to this latter quality of coincidence, which Hardy employed frequently throughout his oeuvre, this particular story has been ferociously criticised. For example, George Cottrell, who wrote in the *Academy* in 1890, considered the story “as melancholy as its title” and added that it had “a great deal of unreality” (Cottrell qtd. in Gerber; Davis, 45). Hardy disproves this criticism by insisting that, after all, ‘such things do happen’ (Hornback, 6).

“The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion” consists of a conjunction of fateful incidents which combine to lead to the final catastrophe. In order to understand this development, the coincidences which are relevant to the story’s tragic ending have to be mentioned briefly: Phyllis happens to meet Matthäus when sitting on the garden wall and surveying the pasture; she refuses to elope with him because she happens to overhear and to misinterpret Gould’s conversation and, finally, she witnesses by accident her lover’s execution. As can be inferred from these references, fate is partly based on the timing of events due to the fact that these three fateful incidents have a coincidental quality. Strictly speaking, these coincidences come about by chance as accidental happenings and act, thus, in conjunction with time, as destructive instrument of fate. As previously mentioned, the working of cause and consequence does not apply because Phyllis does not motivate these incidents on account of a past error as Mr. Barnet has done. Consequently, she has been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The most prominent example of coincidence acting as an indifferent instrument of fate is certainly the overheard conversation, which occurs at a crucial part of the plot and exerts, thus, a decisive influence on the complication of the short story. When waiting at dawn for Matthäus to elope with him, Phyllis’s plan is foiled by the working of coincidence. This can be explained by the arrival of Gould’s stage-coach which halts a few yards away from her. From her hiding place the female protagonist

overhears his conversation with a friend in which he apologises for his careless behaviour towards her:

Well – she deserves it. I’ve treated her rather badly. But she has been in my mind these last two days much more than I should care to confess to everybody. Ah, well; I’ll say no more about that. (“MH”, 59)

Consequently, she is ‘conscious-stricken’ (“MH”, 59) and filled with remorse because of her lacking confidence in him and abandons her plan to elope with her lover, which saddens her greatly. Although her engagement to Gould is finally broken off, she is still not free and lives in unhappiness and with a seriously damaged reputation for the rest of her life. As can be gathered from the depiction of this fateful incident, this particular coincidence is largely responsible for the story’s tragic ending.

Apart from this coincidental twist, the so-called ‘irony of mistaken action from ignorance of facts’ (Richards, 273) can be held responsible for Phyllis’s havoc-wreaking decision. Richards (273) defines this ironic mode by explaining that ‘the irony occurs when a person is deceived by appearance and acts out of ignorance in a way which he would radically alter if he possessed complete information.’ This definition is applicable to “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”. After it is too late to elope with her lover, Phyllis becomes aware of the fact that she has misconstrued Gould’s words as he is not a true suitor but married to another woman. Hence, it is evident that Phyllis’s decision is based on ignorance as she does certainly not possess the complete information. Consequently, she falls victim to an irony of mistaken action from ignorance of facts.⁶⁴ Brady, who is perfectly in line with Richards’s argument, adds an important point to Richards’s line of reasoning. She (20) argues that Gould’s present for Phyllis, ‘a very handsome looking-glass in a frame of *repoussé* silverwork’ (“MH”, 61), ‘is an appropriate image to focus this irony in the story’s plot’ as the looking-glass can be regarded as a symbol for Gould’s falseness to his fiancée. He gives it to her as a sop to ‘propitiate [her], and to get [her] to help [him] out of a mighty difficulty’ (“MH”, 62). Precisely speaking, his present serves the purpose of bribery because Phyllis’s former fiancé uses it in order to convince her not to act honourably but to deceive his father.⁶⁵ Gould explains this by saying that his wife ‘is not quite the one [his] father would have chose for him’

⁶⁴ Cf. Richards, p. 273.

⁶⁵ Cf. Brady, p. 20.

(“MH”, 62). As a consequence, Phyllis should ‘say that [she] never could have married [Gould]’ (“MH”, 62) in order to avoid his estrangement from his father. Accordingly, it can be summed up that not only coincidences caused by chance occurrences and, thus, linked closely to time as instrument of fate but also irony of mistaken action from ignorance of facts are responsible for leading to the final catastrophe.

4.3.3 Allusions to Shakespeare’s tragedies and the Bible: Characterisation and foreboding

In “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion” Hardy makes use of allusions both to foreshadow events and to characterise the female protagonist by explaining her character and circumstances. Compared with the previous short story, the allusions are not taken from classical mythology but from two of Shakespeare’s tragedies and from the Bible. This latter source of reference can be attributed to the author’s extensive reading of the Bible as well as to his religious upbringing. Evelyn Hardy (39) states that the author ‘was kept strictly at church on Sundays until he knew the Morning and Evening services by heart as well as the rubrics and large portions of the Psalms.’

As regards allusions to Shakespeare’s tragedies, Hardy employs a significant reference to Desdemona in *Othello*. Taking into consideration this secondary source, the author is said to have performed a sketch of this tragedy in ‘a canvas booth in Dorchester market-field’ (E. Hardy, 194). Phyllis Grove is compared to Desdemona, one of Shakespeare’s greatest heroines, by saying that ‘[l]ike Desdemona, she pitied him, and learnt his history’ (“MH”, 51). According to King (qtd. in Ray, 30), this comparison alludes to “the quiet yet passionate yearnings of this isolated daughter of an emotionally remote father.” In order to facilitate the understanding of this intertextuality, a short comment on the Shakespearean tragedy needs to be provided. Desdemona, the daughter of a Venetian senator, elopes with Othello, a Moorish general of Venice, and marries him secretly. Othello is believed to have used magic in order to win her around. However, he declares to the Senate that ‘[s]he loved me for the dangers I had passed, And I loved her that she did pity them’ (*Othello*, 165). Finally, Desdemona is allowed to accompany her lover to the war to Cyprus. Due to misunderstandings deriving from a revenge plot by Iago, who is furious because of having not been promoted to the position of Othello’s lieutenant, Othello is

persuaded of his wife's alleged unfaithfulness and he strangles her as a consequence.⁶⁶ It becomes evident that a parallel between Hardy's and Shakespeare's works can be drawn. King (qtd. in Ray, 30) argues that Desdemona 'falls in love with Othello listening to his military stories. Unlike Phyllis, she asks for and is granted permission to accompany her soldier to war.' It has to be added to King's line of reasoning that before being allowed to accompany her lover, Desdemona elopes with him, which highlights the similarities between these two plots. Taking a closer look at Shakespeare's tragedy, it can be assumed that it was a model for the destiny of Hardy's female protagonist. Although Phyllis is not killed by her lover, falling in love with a person of different, precisely speaking lower, social rank is presented as having tragic effects on the female protagonists: Desdemona is strangled and Phyllis lives in unhappiness and regret for the rest of her life. Consequently, the allusion to Desdemona may be used in order to foreshadow Phyllis's tragic destiny, which is originally caused by her pity for Matthäus's stories.

Apart from this reference to *Othello*, there is another instance which hints at one of Shakespeare's tragedies, namely at *Antony and Cleopatra*. When Phyllis is presented with her freedom, that is, fleeing with the man she loves, the narrator describes her fateful decision as follows:

For one moment she was sufficiently excited to be on the point of rushing forward and linking her fate with his. But she could not. The courage which at the critical instant failed Cleopatra of Egypt could scarcely be expected of Phyllis Grove. ("MH", 60-61)

In *Antony and Cleopatra* Mark Antony, a triumvir and Roman military leader, is desperately in love with Cleopatra, queen of Egypt. When contention with Octavius, who is a triumvir, too, erupts into warfare, Cleopatra accompanies Antony to the Battle of Actium, but in the middle of the battle she flees with her ships and deserts to the enemy, which enables Octavius to defeat Antony. In order to win back the latter's love, Cleopatra sends a false report of her suicide, which leads him to wound himself mortally. Due to her lover's death and the fact that she does not want to submit to Roman conquest, the queen of Egypt commits suicide, using the poison of a venomous snake.⁶⁷ Consequently, Hardy uses this comparison as a means of characterisation both to elevate Phyllis and to excuse her conduct. Like the tragic queen, Hardy's female protagonist fails to take action in the decisive moment and,

⁶⁶ Cf. Stokes, s.v. "Desdemona".

⁶⁷ Cf. Merriam-Webster; Encyclopædia Britannica, s.v. "Antony and Cleopatra".

thus, both women desert their lovers. Besides, this equation serves, like the previous allusion, as a model for the lovers' destinies because it highlights the ill-fated nature of their relationship.

Taking a closer look at these Shakespearean allusions and the trajectory of the plot, it can be suggested that Hardy attempted to create a tragedy in the short story under discussion. Hence, it has to be examined whether this claim can be substantiated by referring to a definition of tragedy. The *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia* (s.v. "tragedy") defines the term "tragedy" as

[a] drama of a serious and dignified character that typically describes the development of a conflict between the protagonist and a superior force (such as destiny, circumstance, or society) and reaches a sorrowful or disastrous conclusion.

The Oxford Companion to the English Language sets out this definition in more detail, explaining the features of tragedy by referring to Aristotle. First of all, the tragic hero or heroine should be a person of high worth, that is, high character, or high standing who faces his or her destiny with nobility of spirit. However, the tragic protagonist is not perfect but possesses either a tragic flaw, weakness, transgression ('hamartia') or a surplus of arrogant ambition ('hubris'), which causes his misery and leads to his downfall. This series of events in the life of the tragic hero culminates in an inevitable disaster ('catastrophe'), which should arouse pity and fear in the audience and, consequently, bring about the proper purgation ('catharsis') of these emotions through watching the spectacle.⁶⁸ Taking these characteristics into consideration, it can be affirmed that Hardy linked successfully the form of the short story with the characteristic features of classical tragedy. Phyllis and Matthäus, the tragic heroes, however, are plebeian figures – contrary to Aristotle's theory which said that a hero should be of high rank. However, they are not perfect because of their tragic flaws, which have been dealt with when examining the internal forces that contribute to the characters' tragic destinies. Thus, their 'hamartiae' in combination with the workings of fate lead to a catastrophe, namely Matthäus's death and Phyllis's misery and unhappiness. Finally, reading this short story arouses pity in the readers and, thus, brings about purgation. To conclude this discussion about tragedy, Hardy's own opinion on this subject should be mentioned briefly. One might say in advance that Hardy did not have a consistent view of tragedy but that it underwent a development, which can be supported with notes on tragedy taken from

⁶⁸ Cf. McArthur, s.v. "tragedy".

Florence Hardy's two-part biography of her husband. A note from 1878 comments that

[a] Plot, or Tragedy, should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions, by reason of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said passions, prejudices, and ambitions' (F. Hardy, *Early Life*, 157).

This perception of tragedy stresses the importance of character as fate-determining element, which is, thus, in line with the first strand of literary criticism. It bears some relevance to the short story under discussion because, as outlined above, the protagonists' tragic flaws are partly responsible for their destiny. In 1885, when writing *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy focused on the inexorability of fate by writing down that 'a tragedy exhibits a state of things in the life of an individual which unavoidably causes some natural aim or desire of his to end in a catastrophe when carried out' (*Early Life*, 230). Here, Hardy's thoughts on tragedy were still concerned with human beings' tragic flaws in a given environment, while, at the same time, there are forces which work against the achievement of human happiness. From 1888 to 1895, a blurring of the distinction between tragedy and comedy becomes visible: 'If you look beneath the surface of any farce you see a tragedy; and, on the other contrary, if you blind yourself to the deeper issue of a tragedy you see a farce' (F. Hardy, *Early Life*, 282). Indeed, the tragic destinies of Hardy's protagonists possess grotesque qualities,⁶⁹ such as the unlikely timing of events which causes the main characters' destinies or the overheard conversation. Finally, in 1889 Hardy (*Later Years*, 44) expressed his view that

[t]ragedy may be created by an opposing environment either of things inherent in the universe, or of human institutions. If the former be the means exhibited and deplored, the writer is regarded as impious; if the latter, as subversive and dangerous; when all the while he may never have questioned the necessity or urged the non-necessity of either.

This definition of tragedy clearly is in line with the second strand of literary criticism, which says that environment plays a large role in shaping human destinies, such as, abstract representatives of fate, Nature, society and marriage, for example.

Turning now to Hardy's allusive technique once again, the author did not only make use of allusions taken from classical literature but also from the Bible when writing "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion". Pursuing her way homeward after having made her decision, Phyllis hears the tattoo in the camp 'but there was no

⁶⁹ Cf. Martin, p. 24.

camp for her now. It was as dead as the camp of the Assyrians after the passage of the Destroying Angel' ("MH", 61). This intertextuality is taken from the *Second Book of Kings*, a part of the Hebrew Bible which was later included in the Old Testament. It recounts that the King of Assyria, Sennacherib, threatened and attacked King Hezekiah and the Nation of Israel, showing off about his great strength. Therefore, the Lord sent a destroying angel to Assyria. This angel made dreadful havoc in their camp, killing 185,000 of the Assyrian troops in that night.⁷⁰ This allusion, which clearly illustrates that the York Hussars are of no importance to Phyllis any more after the departure of her beloved, may have been used in order to indicate that something terrible, namely Matthäus and Christoph's executions, is going to happen in the camp and, thus, foreshadows the male protagonist's tragic death. Accordingly, it has to be emphasised that "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion" employs allusions to foreshadow events as well as to illustrate Phyllis's character. Consequently, it can be affirmed that they serve both an illustrative and a prophetic purpose.

4.3.4 Reference to 'fate' as a superior cosmic force

Compared with "Fellow-Townsmen", there is no mention of abstract agents of fate in "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion". Besides, in contrast to the previous short story, in the one under discussion fate is not blamed for individual failures. Instead, fate is referred to directly by the narrator when depicting Phyllis's struggle of conscience, which is a decisive moment because it is responsible for determining and altering the course of events in the short story: 'For one moment she was sufficiently excited to be on the point of rushing forward and linking her fate with his. But she could not.' ("MH", 60)

The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Trumble, s.v. "fate") defines the term 'fate' as '[t]he power or agency which, according to popular belief, predetermines all events from eternity.' In the context of the short story the second meaning of fate has to be examined more closely, that is, '[t]hat which is destined to happen, especially to a person' (Trumble, s.v. 'fate'). The *Oxford Dictionary of English* (Soanes, s.v. 'fate') elaborates on this definition by stating that 'fate' can be regarded as 'the development or events outside a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a

⁷⁰ Cf. <http://publicliterature.org/kings-second-king-james-bible/>, 18:1-19:37.

supernatural power.’ As can be gathered from these definitions, determinism is strongly emphasised as being responsible for determining human fate. However, these definitions are not applicable to the narrator’s portrayal of the female protagonist’s moment of decision because fate is not considered being outside Phyllis’s control. In contrast, she is portrayed as having the power to decide her own fate. Precisely speaking, the female main character is the one who has to decide if she wants to ‘link[...] her fate with’ (“MH”, 60) Matthäus’s or if overhearing Gould’s conversation prompts her to adhere to conventional social attitudes. Thus, due to her assimilation of social norms, such as duty and purity, for example, she makes the decision to stay behind. Nevertheless, it cannot be overlooked that cosmic and external forces, for example, gender and social norms, coincidence and Nature, exert a profound influence on Phyllis. This can be illustrated briefly by referring to the narrator’s expression ‘[b]ut she could not’ (“MH”, 60), which may not only hint at the presence of internal forces which hinder her from listening to her heart but also at the acting of fate-determining elements other than character. Consequently, her decision can only partly be regarded as being based on free will as various instruments combine to lead to the female protagonist’s misery at the short story’s ending. Thus, the predominance of cosmic irony or irony of fate is apparent.

5. “An Imaginative Woman”

The short story “An Imaginative Woman” was written in 1893 and first published in the *Pall Mall Magazine* in April 1894. Initially collected in the short story collection *Wessex Tales* (1896), it was then transferred to *Life’s Little Ironies* (1912) in order to give more coherence to the volume. The latter collection deals primarily with bourgeois life which was criticised by Hardy because of its philistinism and conventionality⁷¹ and, consequently, was increasingly regarded as tragic.

As regards the plot of the short story under discussion, the Marchmill family spends their holidays at Solentsea in Upper Wessex where the landlady of Coburg House allows them to occupy apartments which are leased by a poet, Mr. Robert Trewe. Mrs. Marchmill, who has little in common with her husband, a gunmaker, is fascinated by Trewe, writing poems herself under the pseudonym John Ivy. Her fascination increases steadily and even leads her to put on his mackintosh, to study his poems by heart and to place his portrait by her bedside. When business summons her husband home, Ella persuades him to prolong her holiday as Trewe is supposed to call. However, after a series of frustrated meetings, Ella and her three children finally return home. Back home, Mrs. Marchmill begins a correspondence with the poet, using her pseudonym and praising his poetry, even sending him some pieces of her own. One day, she hears that Robert and the brother of her husband’s friend are in Wales, whereupon she invites them. However, the friend arrives alone because Mr. Trewe was too dirty and depressed to accept the invitation. A day or two later, Ella reads in the newspaper that the poet committed suicide after having composed a volume of verse with the title ‘Lyrics to a Woman Unknown’, which had been ferociously criticised. A letter written by Trewe to a friend indicates that he has never been blessed with a devoted woman for whom it would have been worthwhile to continue his existence. Ella Marchmill is desperate and some months after having received a lock of Trewe’s hair and his photograph, she dies in childbirth. Two years later, her husband comes across these two items and draws the conclusion that his wife had been adulterous because their son bears strong resemblance to Trewe.

The story seems to have been inspired by both intellectual and personal sources. On the one hand, August Weismann’s *Essays on Heredity* served as an impetus but, on the other hand, Hardy’s meeting with Florence Henniker in May 1893 exerted a

⁷¹ Cf. Harvey, p. 114.

crucial influence on composing the story. Mrs. Henniker was a writer whom Hardy had advised for several years and with whom he wrote the short story “The Shadow of the Real”.⁷² Due to the content of some of his poems, it can be assumed that Hardy was attracted to her. This claim can be substantiated by referring to some details of the story which make reference to the authoress. By way of illustration, Mrs. Henniker had lived at Southsea, the ‘Solentsea’ of the story. Apart from this, her second name, Ellen, and her husband working in the military field are similar to the heroine’s name, Ella, and her husband’s profession, a gun-manufacturer. Like Ella Marchmill, Mrs. Henniker had literary ambitions. What is more, the poet’s name in the manuscript was that of Mrs. Henniker’s mother, Crewe, but it was then altered to Trewe. Concluding, it has to be mentioned that the story’s portrayal of philistine bourgeois life in a provincial town may also have been inspired by Ibsen, with whose plays Hardy was familiar.⁷³

5.1 Internal forces

The following chapter seeks to explain whether the individual will of a character can be made responsible for tragic events. Thus, the main focus of interest is the nature of the protagonist, Ella Marchmill, and her tragic flaws.

5.1.1 Ella Marchmill: Dreaminess, passion, emotionality

Ella Marchmill is a dreamer who tries to escape from her emotionally sterile marriage by ‘letting off her delicate and ethereal emotions in imaginative occupations, daydreams and night-sighs’ (“IW”, 4). Apart from resorting to private fantasies, she turns to poetry, like, for instance, when her husband catches up with her on the shore, she ‘start[s] out of the reverie into which the book ha[s] thrown her’ (“IW”, 3). Being a dreamer, Ella is prone to turn not only away from active life but also from reality.⁷⁴ Besides, another factor contributes considerably to her fascination by the poet, which is her frustrated sexuality. Since Mrs. Marchmill is a ‘woman of very living ardours, that require[...] substance of some sort’ (“IW”, 12), she develops an imaginative relationship with Robert Trewe. This character trait is reinforced through her ‘nervous and sanguine’ (“IW”, 4) nature. However, her passion is not only visible in her character but also in her physical appearance as she is described as

⁷² Cf. Pinion, p. 10.

⁷³ Cf. Page, s.v. “Imaginative Woman”.

⁷⁴ Cf. Reinhard-Stocker, pp. 71-76.

having ‘that marvellously bright and liquid sparkle in each pupil which characterises persons of Ella’s cast of soul, and is too often a cause of heartache to the possessor’s male friends, ultimately sometimes to herself’ (“IW”, 5). The following depiction of the protagonist and her character aims at showing in which way her living ardour causes heartache.

In the article entitled “From Fascination to Listlessness: Hardy’s Depiction of Love”, Michael Irwin claims that fascination and listlessness play a significant role in Hardy’s portrayal of love relationships. According to him, the listless state is produced by ‘a projection of appalled intensities of feeling [which] are so diverse as to cancel each other out’ (Irwin, 122). Hence, listlessness typically sets in before the beginning – where it is normally characterised by a hunger for the feeling which is absent – or after the end of a cycle of emotion. Fascination, on the other hand, is used to denote ‘sexual attraction exaggerated by an element of shock to produce total imaginative absorption’ (Irwin, 123). Irwin states that the effect which is achieved is sudden, involuntary and produced in spite of near-total ignorance of the object of fascination. It has to be pointed out that fascination is usually a product of the passionate imagination of the fascinated person without any dramatic external context.⁷⁵

This theory holds true for “An Imaginative Woman”, which can be regarded as a case-study of fascination. When the protagonist realises that she knows the poet, her interest is purely intellectual and, being a poet herself, she searches ‘the apartment with the interest of a fellow-tradesman’ (“IW”, 9). However, soon her literary interest is replaced by personal interest, she ‘flushes without knowing why’ (“IW”, 10) and becomes ‘possessed by an inner flame’ (“IW”, 11). ‘Possessed of her fantasy’ (“IW”, 12), she memorises all of Trewe’s volumes of verses and she even puts on his mackintosh, ‘[t]he mantle of Elijah’ (“IW”, 12), which is an allusion to the biblical figure. Throughout his whole literary oeuvre Hardy made use of biblical allusions as a result of reading the Bible extensively. Elijah was a prophet in Israel in the ninth century BCE, who had the power to raise the dead, to bring fire down from the sky and to miraculously part the Jordan by touching it with his mantle. In the end, Elijah was taken to heaven by a whirlwind.⁷⁶ One tentative proposal regarding the allusion

⁷⁵ Cf. Irwin, pp. 117-137.

⁷⁶ Cf. Freedman et al., s.v. “ELIJAH”.

to this prophet might be that the protagonist hopes to work miracles by wearing Trewe's raincoat, that is, to rival him. However, she realises immediately that Trewe is a 'glorious genius' ("IW", 12) whereas her verses are only 'feeble lines' ("IW", 8), which makes her feel weak and inferior beside him. Although Mrs. Marchmill is aware of her feelings for the poet, she is not able to comprehend them:

The personal element in the magnetic attraction exercised by this circumambient, unapproachable master of hers was so much stronger than the intellectual and abstract that she could not understand it. ("IW", 11)

This passage illustrates that fascination is achieved involuntarily and without knowledge of the beloved to whom Ella appears to be inferior, calling him her master. Besides, Ella's subjugation to Trewe is addressed when she is wearing his raincoat and her tears are explained by saying that '[t]he consciousness of her weakness beside him made her feel quite sick' ("IW", 12). The following passage questions, however, if it is really Trewe whom Ella adores or if he is only a 'chancing material' ("IW", 12):

[B]ut he was a man she had never seen and all that moved her was the instinct to specialize a waiting emotion on the first fit thing that came to hand did not, of course, suggest itself to Ella. ("IW", 11)

Irwin (122) argues that Ella is 'roused from her languor by just the kind of romantic passion she has been craving.' The protagonist's fascination increases continually and finally turns into love (Cf. "IW", 13: 'The longing to see the poet she was now distinctly in love with overpowered all other considerations.'). Her love for the elusive poet is shown when he, contrary to arrangements, does not drop in at her apartment, which makes her 'miserable [...] so aching [is] her erratic little heart, and so tearful her eyes' ("IW", 14). Ella's desire to meet Trewe supports Irwin's argument, which says that courtly love, that is, admiring the beloved from afar, is not satisfactory for the infatuated. Precisely speaking, Hardy never implies that the enamoured might be content with worshipping the vision from afar, but that it has to be reached in physical terms.⁷⁷ Thus, as soon as Mrs. Hooper tells Mrs. Marchmill about Trewe's photograph in her bedroom, the protagonist believes something ecstatic might come. The ecstasy is shown in the way Mrs. Marchmill responds to the photograph because

as she gazed long at the portrait she fell into thought, till her eyes filled with tears, and she touched the cardboard with her lips. Then she laughed with a nervous lightness, and wiped her eyes ("IW", 16).

⁷⁷ Cf. Irwin, p. 126.

Being overwhelmed by her passionate feelings, Ella has to remind herself of ‘how wicked she [is], a woman having a husband and three children, to let her mind stray to a stranger in this unconscionable manner’ (“IW”, 16). However, she justifies her behaviour by reasoning that the poet is not a stranger but nearer to her real self than her husband. Ella’s claim can be substantiated by referring to the different natures of these two men. Mr. Marchmill is portrayed as unsentimental and ‘equable, if not lymphatic’ (“IW”, 4) whereas Trewe is characterised as sensitive, ‘dreamy’ and ‘rather melancholy’ (“IW”, 6). Consequently, it can be stated that Mrs. Marchmill forgets that she has a husband because her emotionally sterile marriage forces her living ardour to find love elsewhere. When she finally has to return home from the place which has produced so much fervour in her, she is ‘heavy-hearted’ (“IW”, 20). Hearing that Trewe has turned away from her very gates, Ella is overcome with disappointment and grief and she ‘trie[s] to let off her emotion by unnecessarily kissing the children, till she ha[s] a sudden sense of disgust at being reminded how plain-looking they [are], like their father’ (“IW”, 20). This almost morbid feeling grows considerably when she learns of Trewe’s suicide:

Her grief and distraction shook her to pieces; and she lay in this frenzy of sorrow for more than an hour. Broken words came every now and then from her quivering lips: ‘ [...] O, if I had only once met him – only once; and put my hand upon his hot forehead – kissed him – let him know how I loved him – that I would have suffered shame and scorn, would have lived and died for him. (“IW”, 26)

Caring only about her dead beloved, she falls into a ‘sad and listless mood’ (“IW”, 29). Hence, it is obvious that Ella’s listlessness sets in after the end of a cycle of emotion. Irwin makes the point that falling in love, which is the great antidote to listlessness, is regarded as a delusive process. This is the case because it is based on a subjective dream or a ‘vision’ (Irwin, 126). When fascination is replaced by reality, listlessness is to be found once more.⁷⁸ In “An Imaginative Woman”, the disillusion occurs when Trewe dies and Ella realises that all possibilities of meeting her beloved are over. Her disillusion is strong enough to cause her morbid state and is, therefore, the indirect cause of her death. She herself admits that ‘I feel almost sure I am going to die; and I should be glad, if it were not for Nelly, and Frank, and Tiny’ (“IW”, 29). In her deathbed confession, Ella apologises to William, saying ‘I can’t tell what possessed me – how I could forget you so, my husband!’ (“IW”, 30). Finally, she tries to justify her behaviour by claiming that she ‘wanted a fuller appreciator,

⁷⁸ Cf. Irwin, p. 126.

perhaps, rather than another lover' ("IW", 30). However, this final self-justification does not match her erotic behaviour in the earlier scenes, in which she kissed the poet's photograph passionately.⁷⁹

Due to this depiction of Ella's fascination, it becomes apparent that Trewe is only – and not more than – a vision. The protagonist idealises the object of her adoration, which she is never able to pursue in physical terms. Instead, she has to make do with his poems, his photograph, his raincoat and the landlady's comments. However, her 'passionate curiosity' ("IW", 16) and 'subtle luxuriousness of fancy' ("IW", 15) do the rest. As a consequence, Irwin (123) states that '[h]er story is one of several in which Hardy suggests that passionate love, or something that is very akin to it, is a quasi-neurological phenomenon.' Besides, Paris (ch. IV) argues that 'the pursuit of sexual conquest [...] always cause[s] trouble.' He elaborates on this claim by explaining that '[i]n Hardy's universe, passionate aspiration of any sort invites disaster; his romantics are either chastened or destroyed, and sometimes both' (Paris, ch. IV). Accordingly, it can be said that Ella's self-delusion – the event of misrepresenting the external world in order to make it harmonise with the inner world of feeling⁸⁰ – in combination with her passion, dreaminess and emotionality are her tragic flaws which contribute to her dramatic death.

5.2 External force

So far, Ella Marchmill's tragic fate has been attributed to her character, that is, to her tragic flaws. However, these cannot be considered the sole influence leading to her tragic downfall because human participation other than her character qualities can be regarded as being responsible for driving her towards tragedy. This external force which is extremely prominent throughout the whole short story is the institution of marriage.

⁷⁹ Cf. "IW", p. 16: 'till her eyes filled with tears, and she touched the cardboard with her lips' and p. 17: 'she was sleeping on a poet's lips, immersed in the very essence of him.'

⁸⁰ Cf. Nelson, p. 56.

5.2.1 Marriage as an instrument of fate

Like the majority of the short stories compiled in the third short story collection *Life's Little Ironies*, edited in 1894, "An Imaginative Woman" focuses on the theme of loveless marriage. Before embarking on a discussion of the marriage question in this particular short story, Hardy's view of the institution of marriage has to be examined.

5.2.1.1 Hardy's adverse view on marriage

At first, it has to be highlighted that Hardy held an unfavourable view on marriage, which is best expressed by the following quote:

[W]hether marriage, as we at present understand it, is such a desirable goal for all women as it is assumed to be, or whether civilization can escape the humiliating indictment that, while it has been able to cover itself with glory in the arts, in literatures, in religions and in the sciences, it has never succeeded in creating that homely thing, a satisfactory scheme for the conjunction of the sexes. (T. Hardy qtd in F. Hardy, *Early Life*, 262)

Hardy's aversion to marriage, which is clearly illustrated by the above quotation, may have risen from his personal disillusionment in marriage in the 1890s. Although there is no conclusive proof, it can be assumed that the poem "The Division", which shows the division between the Hardys, was written to his wife. In this poem he laments that although they are in the same room (Cf. 3: 'And I am here, and you are there'), there are 'hundred miles between' (4) them. The 'thwart thing betwixt' (9) them is, however, 'more than distance, Dear, or rain / And longer than the years' (11-12).⁸¹ In line with this poem, Hardy (*Letters 2*, 98) bemoaned that 'a bad marriage is one of the direst things on earth, and one of the cruellest.' Evelyn Hardy (267) affirms the drifting apart of the Hardys by reporting that Mrs. Hardy reached the conclusion that she was socially superior to her husband, criticising 'his 'peasant' traits, his meanness, and other boorish qualities.' Emma Hardy's harsh and dismissive attitude towards her husband and its consequences are the subject of a vast number of poems. By way of illustration, the poem "The Wound" refers to a wound 'Of which none knew [...] / That it pierced me through' (6-8).⁸² Apart from the convictions mentioned before, Mrs. Hardy believed to be a writer of genius and, thus, intended to compete with her husband. However, she lacked any talent. As time

⁸¹ For the text of the poem see appendix.

⁸² For the text of the poem see appendix.

passed, her bitterness and eccentricities increased and gave way to delusions.⁸³ This is confirmed in a letter written by Hardy to Mrs. Henniker three weeks after his first wife's death in 1912, in which he alluded to the severance of his marriage:

In spite of the differences between us, which it would be affectation to deny, and certain painful delusions she suffered from at times, my life is intensely sad to me now without her. (Rutland, 108)

Influenced by his personal disillusionment in marriage, Hardy came to the conclusion that the institution of marriage took advantage of a temporary weakness of human beings, trying to convert a passing infatuation – frequently without any kind of common ground – into a life-long contract.⁸⁴ This argument is supported by *Jude the Obscure*, the last novel written by Hardy, in which the incompatibility of man's nature and the life-bondage of marriage is foregrounded:

[...] it is foreign to man's nature to go on loving a person when he is told that he must and shall be that person's lover. There would be a much likelier chance of his doing it if he were told not to love. If the marriage ceremony consisted in an oath and signed contract between the parties to cease loving from that day forward, in consideration of personal possession being given, and to avoid each other's society as much as possible in public, there would be more loving couples than there are now. (*Jude the Obscure*, 249)

This quotation shows clearly that Hardy considered the institution of marriage a sure means of endangering loving relationships which it ought to try to protect. Hardy's opposition to marriage laws becomes particularly evident in the poem "The Christening". In this poem from 1904, Hardy regarded men and women as 'chained and doomed for life' (36) because of marriage which is 'sweet Love's sepulchring' (40).⁸⁵ Hardy's adverse view on the marriage question is reflected in his literary oeuvre, which Page explains by arguing that

getting-married-and-living-happily-ever-after, the traditional literary mode of closure in all but works of tragedy, remained, for Hardy, an undesirable, ethically unjustifiable, narrative convention. In terms of mimesis alone he considered it as a false representation of the world (Page, s.v. "marriage").

5.2.1.2 *The portrayal of marriage in "An Imaginative Woman"*

Turning now to the treatment of the marriage question in the short story under discussion, it cannot be overlooked that "An Imaginative Woman" highlights the theme of marital mismatches and the resulting loneliness and frustration of women 'trapped in emotionally sterile marriages' (Dutta, 94). Furthermore, Dutta (94) argues

⁸³ Cf. E. Hardy, pp. 261-272.

⁸⁴ Cf. Elliott, pp. 100-101.

⁸⁵ For the text of the poem see appendix.

that '[h]aving no other avenue of self-fulfilment, marriage becomes the be-all and end-all of woman's existence.' This quotation indicates that in the Victorian period marriage was still believed to be the fulfilment and the ultimate goal in women's lives, offering them dignity and protection. This view is supported by Elliott (92) who argues that '[s]ince Woman's chief purpose in life is to live and be sustained, she bends every effort to secure man as a sustainer.' This holds true for the marriage of the 'equable, if not lymphatic' William Marchmill and the 'nervous and sanguine' Ella ("IW", 4), whose reason for entering matrimony is presented by the narrator as

the necessity of getting life-leased at all cost, a cardinal virtue which all good mothers teach, kept her from thinking of it at all till she had closed with William, had passed the honeymoon, and reached the reflecting stage. Then, like a person who has stumbled upon some object in the dark, she wondered what she had got; mentally walked round it, estimated it; whether it were rare or common; contained gold, silver, or lead; were a clog or a pedestal, everything to her or nothing. ("IW", 4)

This passage indicates that Ella's reason for acceding to a marriage can be traced back to her mother, who, despite having good intentions, clings to Victorian morals and regards her daughter as a marketable good. That is to say, Ella's mother is of the firm opinion that women are incapable of standing alone without the support of marriage, which could be explained by the fact that in the Victorian Period only few careers were open to women and, therefore, opportunities limited. Moreover, marriage was an indispensable means for women of meeting the demands of time.

The term 'life-leased' denotes the fact that the wife was degraded by regarding her as the legal property of her husband upon marriage, losing her nominal identity and her legal status. That is, the conjugal rights of the male head-of-household who constituted absolute authority in a patriarchal society contained the right-of-access to his wife as well as his owning of her property. The subordinate position of women can be illustrated briefly by quoting Ella's anxious apologetic question 'But I am sorry if you have wanted me, Will?' ("IW", 3) or by the way the narrator refers to Ella's husband, that is, 'her proprietor[...]' ("IW", 4). Another significant example is Ella using a masculine pseudonym. This is explained by referring to the different treatment of the sexes: '[...] Robert Trewe, who with a man's unsusceptibility on the question of sex, had never once thought of passing himself off as a woman.' ("IW", 8) Ella, however, has a reason for doing the contrary

since nobody might believe in her inspiration if they found that the sentiments came from a pushing tradesman's wife, from the mother of three children by a matter-of-fact small-arms manufacturer ("IW", 8).

By means of this quotation, which suggests that poetry written by women is of no general interest, the gender discrimination, based on the subjugation of women to the patriarchal male, becomes evident.

The issue of marital incompatibility is addressed at an early stage of the short story by informing the reader that in 'temper this couple differed' ("IW", 3). This difference is exemplified by means of characterising William as 'equable, if not lymphatic' and Ella, in contrast, as 'nervous and sanguine'. ("IW", 4) The couple is the same in terms of age, personal appearance and domestic requirements but their tastes and fancies differ considerably: 'Marchmill considered his wife's likes and inclinations somewhat silly; she considered his sordid and material' ("IW", 4). Due to these differences in nature, the couple has hardly anything – apart from age and outward appearance – in common. Mrs. Marchmill can be regarded as a dreamer, who, as mentioned before, tries to escape from her empty and lonely marriage by turning to private fantasies and daydreams as well as to poetry. Her husband, a gunmaker whose 'soul was in that business always' ("IW", 4), is characterised by materialism. He is highly satisfied that weapons are a necessity and therefore, his business thrives whereas his wife is sensitive to his profession, being "a votary of the muse" ("IW", 4). Hence, she shrinks from reflecting that her husband's trade aims at the destruction of life. When taking a closer look at the way Ella characterises her husband, there is some evidence to suggest that she considers herself superior to her husband. She pities his 'obtuseness and want of refinement' ("IW", 4) and later on she laments 'bearing children to a commonplace father' ("IW", 8). As a result of having married a man she despises because of his character, Ella feels degraded. Although William is usually kind and tolerant to his wife, he seems to be indifferent towards her. His indifference runs through the whole story. By way of illustration, Ella's daydreams and night-sighs 'would not much have disturbed William if he had known of them' ("IW", 4) and when she collected her poems into a volume he 'had paid the publisher's bill with the doctor's' ("IW", 9). Another example of what is meant by indifference would be that Mr. Marchmill regards it as much more pleasant to pursue his active vacation style, like, for instance, sailing, without his wife. Moreover, he is not jealous of Ella's attachment to

Trewe. His indifference is even addressed directly by telling the readers that '[h]e [is] indifferent, and [goes] his way' ("IW", 13) when Ella decides, contrary to her original intentions, not to go sailing with him.

Considering the theme of marital incompatibility, the interrelation of marriage and fate needs to be discussed. As pointed out above, the Marchmills' differ considerably in temper and nature. Due to these differences, the chance of finding individual happiness is refused for the couple. Elliott (101) agrees with this argument by stating that

the sorrow of marriage lies in the action of Fate which mates Its people in a hit-or-miss fashion without any attempt to consider their suitability. In doing this It hides behind the man-made laws which aid in carrying out the nefarious business.

Since the couple is definitely not suitable for each other, marriage turns out to be a destructive element in their lives, denying them individual happiness. Consequently, '[o]ne moment of passion may destroy a whole lifetime' (Elliott, 100). Another aspect which was vehemently criticised by Hardy, namely the incompatibility of man's nature and a life-long marriage contract, is also addressed when the narrator explains that

[i]n the natural way of passion under the too practical conditions which civilisation has devised for its fruition, her husband's love for her had not survived, except in the form of fitful friendship, anymore than, or even so much as, her own for him ("IW", 12).

Here time, which is another destructive instrument of fate, is at work, showing the disillusionment and change which come with the years. Elliott suggests that time attacks our illusions, above all happiness and love. In Hardy's works, the illusion of happiness and love is believed to be real but it does not endure long as Hardy was of the opinion that the joys of life are only transitory and replaced with sorrow and grief.⁸⁶ This line of reasoning is illustrated by the narrator's explanation which shows that love does not endure long but is replaced with indifference or friendship at the most.

Concluding this section, the story illustrates the frustration, isolation and emotional sterility stemming from marital incompatibility and the coercive and irrevocable nature of the institution of marriage. Thus, marriage, here in combination with time,

⁸⁶ Cf. Elliott, pp. 71-79.

is a destructive element of fate, capable of shaping and destroying the characters' lives in the short story.

5.3 Cosmic forces

Up to now the discussion of Ella Marchmill's fate has focused on the character's tragic flaws and on human participation, precisely speaking, on marriage, which has been shown as one of the sources of the protagonist's tragic ending. As in the two short stories discussed above, there are, however, fate-determining elements which are beyond human control. These are shown as indifferent cosmic powers which lead to Ella's final downfall. Three instruments or agents of fate can be determined: God and doom, chance and coincidence, and, finally, Nature.

5.3.1 Nature and fate

As in the previous short stories, "Fellow-Townsmen" and "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion", in "An Imaginative Woman" Nature is presented as a device of fate, intervening in the short story characters' lives. In this particular short story Nature plays tricks on the short story characters and, therefore, illustrates the defenceless condition of human beings before the instruments of fate.⁸⁷ There are two instances which clearly show the deceiving nature of this conscious agent of fate. The first instance does not contribute to Ella's tragic destiny but it should be mentioned in order to illustrate Nature's deception. When talking about Trewe's age with Ella, the landlady guesses that the woman is younger than she really is: 'Ella was, as a matter of fact, a few months over thirty herself; but she did not look nearly so much' ("IW", 15). It becomes visible that the physical appearance and the actual age of a person do not necessarily have to match.

The second instance does not shape or determine Ella's destiny but that of her offspring, her own flesh and blood, and contributes significantly to the story's final irony. Therefore, the trick which Nature plays on Mrs. Marchmill's son cannot be ignored. After the protagonist's death her husband comes across the photograph of Trewe, which was given to Ella by the landlady, and compares the countenances of his youngest son and the poet. The narrator presents the results of Mr. Marchmill's examination by telling the readership that '[b]y a known but inexplicable trick of

⁸⁷ Cf. Duffin, p. 85.

Nature there were undoubtedly strong traces of resemblance to the man Ella had never seen; the dreamy and peculiar expression of the poet's face sat, as the transmitted idea, upon the child's, and the hair was of the same hue" ("IW", 31). This passage shows that their son bore resemblance to Trewe, whose 'large dark eyes [...] showed an unlimited capacity for misery' ("IW", 16). Thus, it can be argued that Ella's unconscious desire that the coming child was that of the 'striking' ("IW", 15) poet rather than that of 'plain-looking' ("IW", 24) Marchmill ironically triumphs in the end.⁸⁸ After comparing the countenances and calculating the date of his child's conception, Mr. Marchmill decides that 'she did play me false with that fellow at the lodgings!' ("IW", 31), that is, that his wife has been unfaithful. This false conclusion is supported by referring to 'the inexplicable trick of Nature' and 'the dreamy and peculiar expression' ("IW", 31), which make the mistake credible. Believing that his wife has deceived him with her unmet beloved, Mr. Marchmill wants his son, whom he calls 'poor little brat' to go away as he '[is] nothing to [him]' ("IW", 31). The narrator foresees this tragic development when informing the readers at the child's birth that 'the infant for whose unnecessary life she was slowly parting with her own being fat and well' ("IW", 30). In his book *Thomas Hardy: A Textual Study of the Short Stories*, Ray (176) argues that the ending's real irony is 'that a story about an imaginative woman becomes a story of an imaginative man' who is ready to believe his own fancies and, consequently, ironically rejects his biological son. In a 1906 letter to his feminist friend Millicent Fawcett, the women's suffrage leader, Hardy (*Letters* 3, 238) explained in their discussion on women's suffrage that he was in favour of enfranchisement because he thought that the tendency of the vote would be 'to break up the present pernicious conventions in respect of manners, customs, religion, illegitimacy, [...] the father of a woman's child (that it is anybody's business but the woman's own, except in cases of disease or insanity).' In other words, Hardy believed that the father of a woman's child was entirely the woman's business. However, in an age which valorises chastity, purity and sexual innocence in women, Marchmill is not able to live up to this order and rejects his own son. This lends weight to the argument that Nature as a conscious agent of fate is mainly responsible for the destiny of Ella's offspring by means of playing cruel tricks.

⁸⁸ Cf. Dutta, p. 98.

Although the readership is not initiated into the course of her son's life, there is some evidence to suggest that his life will not be a happy one.⁸⁹

5.3.2 Frustrated meetings as a structural pattern

Similar to the two previously analysed short stories, chance and coincidence act as fate-determining elements in "An Imaginative Woman". However, in contrast to the stories which have already been examined, there is a direct reference to chance in this one. Precisely speaking, when the narrator explains the failure of the Marchmills' marriage and Ella's attraction to the poet, the readership is informed that 'being a woman of very living ardours, that required sustenance of some sort, they were beginning to feed on this chancing material, which was, indeed, of a quality far better than chance usually offers' ("IW", 12). Here 'chance' is presented as 'the absence of design or discoverable cause' (Trumble, s.v. "chance") or even as 'the cause or determiner of events' (Soanes, s.v. "chance"), 'fortune, fate' (Trumble, s.v. "chance"). Consequently, it might be assumed that fate is responsible for Ella getting better acquainted with and fascinated by Trewe.

"An Imaginative Woman" is structured by a series of frustrated meetings between Ella and Trewe which punctuate the story. However, through various incidences Ella is unsuccessful in meeting him each time their paths nearly cross. One day the landlady tells the protagonist that Trewe is supposed to select some books from Ella's room. She is delighted and '[goes] to bed musing of him' ("IW", 13). However, the next day he unexpectedly sends a note saying that he has changed his mind and does not require the books, which causes Mrs. Marchmill to be miserable. Thereafter, the poet is said to call as he is staying with a friend in the neighbourhood but, again, he does not call. Before returning home, Ella makes the attempt to visit her beloved at home on the opposite island. However, since she only vaguely knows where the house is situated and since she does not have the courage to call upon him, the meeting does not take place and Ella mournfully goes home. The fourth attempt to meet him fails as well as the poet surprisingly declines Ella's invitation to stay at her house for a short time. Ella is 'blithe and buoyant' ("IW", 22) when waiting for the arrival of the object of her fascination but she is informed that he is not going to come because he is too 'dusty' and 'depressed' ("IW", 23). As soon as Mrs.

⁸⁹ Cf. "IW", p. 30: 'unnecessary life' and p. 31: 'Get away your poor little brat! You are nothing to me!'

Marchmill learns about Trewe's rejection, she longs to 'cry her eyes out' ("IW", 23). Reading about the poet's suicide in the London paper, she knows that 'the meeting [is] stultified' ("IW", 26). In his essay "Character is Fate in The Mayor of Casterbridge", Schweik (132) argues that

[t]he largest element in 'The Mayor of Casterbridge' are four relatively self-contained and structurally similar 'movements' of progressively diminishing lengths [...]. Each provides a variation on a common pattern: an initial situation which seems to offer hope for Henchard is followed by events which create doubt, fear, and anxious anticipation for an outcome that comes, finally, as a catastrophe.

When taking a closer look at the happenings in 'An Imaginative Woman', it cannot be overlooked that Schweik's argument also can be applied to the structure of this short story. Like in "The Mayor of Casterbridge", there are four 'movements' or intended meetings which follow a particular pattern: There is a constant alternation between hope and despair until the final blow strikes and Ella's hopes are dashed forever.

After having depicted the series of unsuccessful meetings which runs through the whole story and serves as a structural pattern, it is clearly evident that coincidence is a fate-determining element for Ella.

As in the short story "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion", in "An Imaginative Woman" the protagonist suffers from happenings which cannot be explained by human understanding. The most prominent example of the intervention of coincidence as a malevolent power determining human fate is that Ella stays in the room which Trewe normally occupies. From this moment onward Ella is doomed to be the victim of unexpected happenings which lead to her tragic death. Thus, Hardy's story world seems to be ruled by determinism. Elliott (59) argues that 'coincidences have usually proved links in a concatenation of incidents tending toward evil.' It is obvious that this argument holds true for Hardy's use of coincidence in this particular short story. The frustrated meetings can be regarded as being part of a system of determination, even a system determined for evil. That is to say, the linking of fateful incidents leads toward one end, namely a tragic or doomed one.⁹⁰ It is coincidence – the fact that the Marchmills' occupy the rooms of Trewe – which starts this chain of events that finally leads to Ella's tragic death.

⁹⁰ Cf. Elliott, pp. 58-69.

5.3.3 Abstract agents of fate: ‘doom’, ‘God’

In the short story three direct references to abstract agents of fate which are beyond human control are made, two by the narrator and one by Ella herself.

After two frustrated meetings between Ella and Trewe, the omniscient narrator blames ‘doom’ for the protagonist’s misery: ‘It seemed to be her doom not to meet the man for whose rival talent she had a despairing admiration; and to whose person she was now absolutely attached’ (“IW”, 19). The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines the term ‘doom’ as ‘death, destruction or some other terrible fate’ (Soanes, s.v. “doom”). The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* elaborates on this definition by saying that it denotes ‘[t]he fated ending to a person’s life, career or cause of action, impending ruin or disaster’ (Trumble, s.v. “doom”). This ‘[i]rrevocable lot, fate [or] destiny’ is especially ‘evil’ (Trumble, s.v. “doom”). By means of these two definitions the negative connotations, as opposed to the more neutral terms ‘fate’ and ‘destiny’, become apparent. This is supported by the Greek personification of doom, Moros, – which signifies ‘destiny’ – son of Erebus and Nyx.⁹¹ The *Encyclopedia Mythica* (s.v. “Erebus”) states that ‘Erebus was known as the embodiment of primordial darkness’, ‘often used metaphorically for Hades itself’. Nyx is ‘the goddess and embodiment of the night’ , who bore, apart from Moros,

black Fate and Death Thanatos, and she bore Sleep Hypnos and the tribe of Dreams. And again the goddess murky Night, though she lay with none, bare Blame and painful Woe, and the Hesperides who guard the rich golden apples and the trees bearing fruit beyond glorious Ocean. Also she bore the Destinies and ruthless avenging Fates [...]. Also deadly Night bore Nemesis Indignation to afflict mortal men, and after her, Deceit Apaté and Friendship and hateful Age and hard-hearted Strife. (*Encyclopedia Mythica*, s.v. “Nyx”)

The meaning of ‘doom’, the adverse sense of which has been exemplified by the above quotation, holds true for this short story. That is, the series of frustrated meetings leads finally to the protagonist’s tragic death. By referring to this abstract agent of fate, the narrator seems to be sympathetic towards Ella, taking all kind of responsibility away from her and attributing the blame to a superior force. However, Mrs. Marchmill does not want to accept her irrevocable fate but decides to take her fate in her own hands: ‘Yet she determined to make a last effort’ (“IW”, 19). This contrasts with Reinhard-Stocker’s argument which says that women put up with and

⁹¹ Cf. *Encyclopedia Mythica*, s.v. “Moros”.

suffer their fate as inevitable. Therefore, Reinhard-Stocker maintains that women are generally characterised by passivity. She justifies her interpretation by quoting a phrase from Hardy's novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (84): 'Women accept their destiny more readily than men.' This statement does, however, not hold true for the protagonist of "An Imaginative Woman" because she herself tries to shape her destiny. In other words, Ella Marchmill persuades her husband to stay longer at Solentsea, she makes the attempt to visit Trewe, she establishes a correspondence with this poet and she even invites him to stay at her house for a short time. As mentioned before, all of Ella's attempts are in vain. Nevertheless, it has to be emphasised that she is by no means a passive victim of fate. Thus, Reinhard-Stocker's claim appears to be an overgeneralisation and not applicable to all of Hardy's works.

Apart from the narrator who blames doom for Ella's destiny, there is a reference to 'the God of Love' ("IW", 23) when Ella is waiting for the arrival of her beloved. This notion of 'the God of Love' has its parallel in classical mythology as well, strictly speaking in Eros, the Greek god of love and sexual desire, who was also worshiped as a fertility god.⁹² Eros, one of the oldest gods, is usually portrayed as 'a young winged boy with his bow and arrows at the ready, to shoot into the hearts of gods or mortals which would rouse them to desire' (*Encyclopedia Mythica*, s.v. "Eros"). Hence, it might be said that the protagonist seems to be in need of – and aware of – a superior force which should help her with raising Trewe's desire.

After three frustrated meetings and Trewe's suicide, Ella is aware that '[a]ll possibilities [are] over' ("IW", 26). Hence, she puts the blame on an abstract representative of fate, which is God, by stammering '[b]ut no – it was not allowed! God is a jealous God; and that happiness was not for him and me!' ("IW", 26). Although Ella thinks that she has tried everything possible, she is not able to escape from her tragic fate, which catches up with her in the end. 'God' is defined in Christian theology as being 'the creator and ruler of the universe and source of all moral authority' (Soanes, s.v. "god"). This 'supreme being' (Soanes, s.v. "god") is 'regarded as having power over nature and human fortunes' (Trumble, s.v. "god"). This quotation shows that 'God' is, like 'doom', used by Hardy to refer to a higher power directing and shaping his characters' fates. In contrast to the concept of

⁹² Cf. *Encyclopedia Mythica*, s.v. "Eros".

'doom', 'God' does not have any negative connotations. It is clear from these observations that Ella Marchmill's view on God is based on the author's own view. Hardy doubted the existence of a benevolent God in a world in which unhappiness and misery predominate.⁹³ Ella's distrust of a benevolent God, the awareness of her irrevocable fate and her insight into the fact that 'the meeting was stultified' ("IW", 26) can be considered as the sources of her tragic death.

All of the arguments presented in this chapter point to the conclusion that internal as well as external and universal forces shape the destiny of Ella Marchmill – and ultimately that of her offspring. This story of mismatched love bears the Hardy signature as it shows a flawed universe which is hostile to human happiness. Thus, the definition of 'irony of fate' given in the second chapter applies to this short story: Fate manipulates the protagonist's destiny; she believes in free will but fate toys with her, which, finally, leads to her tragic death.

⁹³ Cf. Elliott, p. 20: 'It was too much for him to reconcile the idea of beneficence in an omnipotent and omniscient deity with the fact of omnipresent evil and the persistent tendency of circumstances toward the unhappiness of human beings.'

6. “Enter a Dragoon”

The short story “Enter a Dragoon” was written between November 1899 and January 1900, published in the New York magazine *Harper’s Monthly* in 1900 and collected in *A Changed Man and Other Tales*,⁹⁴ which, published in 1913, is the last of Hardy’s four short story collections. This volume does not have an apparent organising principle as it comprises twelve stories which were published over a period of nineteen years. The short story under discussion is of particular importance because after the publication of “Enter a Dragoon” and “A Changed Man”, written approximately at the same time, Hardy ended his career as a prose fiction writer and turned to composing poetry.⁹⁵ “Enter a Dragoon” was written and published during the Boer War, which was fought over the control of southern Africa between the British Empire and the two independent Boer, that is, Dutch-Afrikaner settlers, republics. These two republics were the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Republic.⁹⁶ However, the historical background of the story is the Crimean War, which had taken place nearly a century earlier, between 1853 and 1856, and had arisen from a leadership contest for the territories of the diminishing Ottoman Empire. It was fought between the Russian Empire on one side and an alliance of France, the Kingdom of Sardinia, the United Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire on the other.⁹⁷ Regarding a categorisation of “Enter a Dragoon”, it is a successful blending of elements from *Wessex Tales* and *Life’s Little Ironies*. That is to say, the story is set in Mellstock in the 1850s, the narrator pays close attention to the details of the local way of life and there is even a direct reference to the short story “The Distracted Preacher”, published in *Wessex Tales*, by mentioning the ‘old Owlett’s’ (“ED”, 160) liquor under the stairs. All these elements suggest that “Enter a Dragoon” can be regarded as a ‘Wessex tale’. However, the story’s structure and its treatment of social themes do not strengthen this impression as they show similarities to the stories in *Life’s Little Ironies*.⁹⁸

Turning to the summary of the short story, the female protagonist, Selina Paddock, intended marrying John Clark, a soldier, three years before the story opens. However, John was conscripted to fight in Crimea and is supposed to have been

⁹⁴ Cf. Page, s.v. “Enter a Dragoon”.

⁹⁵ Cf. Page, s.v. “*Changed Man and Other Tales*”.

⁹⁶ Cf. <http://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/boer.asp>.

⁹⁷ Cf. Mawson.

⁹⁸ Cf. Brady, p. 189.

killed in the battle of Alma. Selina, who has given birth to Clark's illegitimate child, Johnny, is on the point of marrying Bartholomew Miller, a wheelwright, when she suddenly receives a letter from her long-lost soldier, who then shows up and regrets having not come back earlier. Selina decides to follow through her original promise and consents to John's plan to emigrate to New Zealand. However, as a result of having been in hospital and being exhausted both by the long journey and the vigorous dance, Clark suffers from a heart attack and dies. After these three failed attempts to marry, Selina remains single but passes herself off as her first fiancé's widow and opens a small fruit and vegetable shop. Although Miller tries to win her over, the female protagonist does not change her mind but sticks to her decision, which makes him tired of waiting and he marries another woman. One day at Clark's grave, Selina happens to meet a woman whom Miller has wed in Yorkshire before returning to Selina and who has also given birth to a boy. This final ironic twist of the two women meeting and confronting each other at the grave leads the way to Hardy's series of poems titled "Satires of Circumstances", collected in the volume of the same title.⁹⁹ By way of illustration, in the poem "At Tea" 'the happy young housewife does not know / That the woman beside her was [her husband's] first choice' (7-8).¹⁰⁰

6.1 Internal forces

This section addresses the question as to whether and to what extent free will and character qualities can be held responsible for shaping the protagonists' tragic destinies. Thus, the characters' natures and tragic flaws demand close examination. Since the male protagonists play a considerable part in leading to Selina Paddock's final misery, the tragic flaws of both suitors will be explored in some detail.

6.1.1 Selina Paddock: Virtue, duty, morality

Selina Paddock, the only daughter of 'Mr. Jacob Paddock, the market-gardener' ("ED", 146), is portrayed as being of womanly virtue throughout the whole story. This character quality is stressed at the short story's very beginning when Selina's neighbours talk about the sudden reappearance of John Clark and Selina's imminent wedding to Bartholomew Miller. Although, according to the villagers, Mrs. Paddock

⁹⁹ Cf. Page, s.v. "Enter a Dragoon".

¹⁰⁰ For the text of the poem see appendix.

‘was too proud, or too timid, to go and hunt for [her first fiancé]’, “[s]he’d have stuck to him all through the time [...] if t’other hadn’t come along” (“ED”, 147).

Another village inhabitant adds to this point that

she’d that faith in en that she’d no more belief that he was alive, when a’ didn’t come, than that the undermost man in our churchyard was alive. She’d never have thought of another but for that – O no!” (“ED”, 148)

As can be gathered from these examples, despite having an illegitimate son, Selina is still regarded as a respectable woman of virtue. Her respectability is addressed directly by referring to the ‘great plum-cake guarded as if it were a curiosity by a glass shade of the kind seen in museums’ (“ED”, 148), which is ‘the mummy of the cake intended in earlier days for the wedding-feast of Selina and the soldier’ (“ED”, 149). The female protagonist preserves it ‘religiously and lovingly [...] as a testimony to her intentional respectability’ (“ED”, 149). These references to Selina’s respectability and womanly virtue by the villagers and the narrator are supported by her own view on her position as she sees herself as ‘a widow [...] – which is what [she] ha[s] always felt [herself]’ (“ED”, 150). Therefore, she explains to Miller that accepting his marriage proposal was ‘entirely owing to [her] believing [Clark] in the grave’ (“ED”, 152). Besides, her duty and morality are clearly visible in this passage as she argues that she ‘must agree to be his wife if he forgives [her] – of course [she must]’ (“ED”, 152). Considering the story’s ending, the irony of this statement is apparent: It is Selina who has to give serious thought to whether she is able to forgive her dead lover after being confronted with his legal wife. Apart from addressing Selina’s respectability directly, there is a direct mention of her virtue: ‘[N]ow terminated so suddenly, and so happily for her heart, and her sense of womanly virtue’ (“ED”, 155). By mentioning the consequences of the engagement’s break-off, the narrator explains that Selina is not only acting out of duty when deciding to follow through her original promise but that she also follows her heart. This becomes obvious when taking a closer look at the female protagonist’s attitude after her former lover’s reappearance: Thinking about her first abortive attempt to marry, her eyes become ‘laden with wet’ (“ED”, 157). What is more, she wants to accompany Clark anywhere ‘[he] decide[s] upon’ (“ED”, 158) which clearly exemplifies both her obligation and her devotion to him. This claim can be substantiated by quoting the passage which precedes Selina’s confession: ‘Her eyes were full of tears of trepidation, and he might have felt a sob heaving within her’ (“ED”, 159). Finally, shortly after the female main character has the heart to tell her

first intended husband about the imminent wedding, he dies of a heart attack, which makes Selina believe that his sudden and unexpected death is entirely her fault. The fact that she firmly believes that ‘the shock of her statement [was] the immediate stroke which [...] felled a constitution so undermined’ (“ED”, 162) even though the medical practitioner refutes her theory, and the fact that she passes herself off as Clark’s widow, serve as examples of her purity of intentions. Elliott (96), who considers women an instrument of fate, argues that women ‘see no harm in deceit, if there is anything to be gained by it.’ According to him, deceit comprises a motif which inevitably brings about tragedy, that is, a woman’s secret. Thus, Elliott (96) maintains that women ‘are undecided about telling it, and usually wait until confession leads only to disaster.’ Although some of the points mentioned by the critic hold true for the short story under discussion, his claim is not entirely applicable to “Enter a Dragoon”. It is certainly true that Selina’s confession leads to tragedy, that is, to Clark’s death and to her widowhood, and that she is undecided about telling her lover her secret. However, it has to be emphasised that she is aware of the harm her confession may bring about and, hence, she does not share her secret willingly. Besides, as previously mentioned, it is not her admission which causes tragedy but rather Clark’s own fault as his exhaustion is responsible for his heart attack.

After her lover’s death, Selina’s morality, duty and virtue combine to make her strive for independence by opening a miniature fruit and vegetable shop and by rejecting Miller’s second marriage proposal because she is ‘not ashamed of [her] position at all’, believing to be ‘John’s widow in the eyes of Heaven’” (“ED”, 164). However, the female protagonist’s behaviour could also be regarded as self-punishment. Reinhard-Stocker states that self-punishment arises from a feeling of guilt and sin,¹⁰¹ which applies to “Enter a Dragoon”. Since Selina believes to be guilty of her beloved’s death, she refuses to marry again and lives alone with her son, which is perfectly in line with Paris’s view on self-effacement. Paris (ch. IV) believes that although self-effacement and self-punishment ought to work, they normally do not as ‘there is no just God in the heavens.’ Due to the fact that Hardy does not want to violate his austere artistic code but to convey a realistic picture of the world, ‘expansive people are struck down and self-effacing people, as a rule, are victimized

¹⁰¹ Cf. Reinhard-Stocker, p. 43.

by their fellow-men and by fate' (Paris, ch. IV). Paris's argument is perfectly applicable to the short story under discussion as Selina's self-effacing behaviour and her self-punishment do certainly not lead to happiness but bring about, and are the reason for, her final misery. Consequently, living alone with her illegitimate son and striving for independence could be regarded as a wrong choice when taking the story's ironic ending into consideration. Being confronted with Clark's legitimate wife, the female main character's 'throat seem[s] to stick together as she just [begins] to perceive its possibility' ("ED", 166).

It may be valid to argue that Selina Paddock makes three wrong choices which coincide with her three abortive attempts to marry. Consequently, Morrell has to be referred to once again in order to explain the main protagonist's decisions. Morrell argues that Hardy's characters are able to make choices but they are prone to misuse choice and free will available to them by making the wrong decisions.¹⁰² Precisely speaking, Selina's choice to marry Clark 'against her father's wish' ("ED", 146), her decision to break off her engagement in order to marry her former fiancé,¹⁰³ and her refusal of Miller's second marriage proposal¹⁰⁴ turn out to be the wrong choices as neither of them brings about happiness and joy but unhappiness, misery and tragedy. Although Selina says that 'she [can]not for the moment fancy herself happy as Mrs. Miller' ("ED", 165) it can be assumed that this statement is connected to believing that she is the legitimate widow of her dead lover, being unaware of his marriage to another woman. Thus, as in the previous short story, 'irony of mistaken action from the ignorance of facts' (Richards, 273) can be held responsible for Selina's havoc-wreaking decisions. Richards (273) defines this ironic mode by explaining that 'the irony occurs when a person is deceived by appearance and acts out of ignorance in a way which he would radically alter if he possessed complete information.' This definition holds true for "Enter a Dragoon" as Selina's decision is based on ignorance because she does not possess the complete information. Only after Miller has wed another woman, the female protagonist finds out that Clark is already married, which bears a strong resemblance to "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion". Thus, the female protagonist, who falls victim to this ironic mode, would certainly have changed her mind if she had known about Clark's

¹⁰² Cf. Morrell, pp. 140-167.

¹⁰³ Cf. "ED", p. 152: "'O! I must agree to be his wife if he forgives me – of course I must.'"

¹⁰⁴ Cf. "ED", p. 164: "'I'd rather bide as Mrs. Clark, I think,'" she answered. "I am not ashamed of my position at all; for I am John's widow in the eyes of Heaven.'"

unfaithfulness before. Concluding this section, it has to be emphasised that apart from the irony of mistaken action and Selina's wrong decisions, the female protagonist's conformity to the Victorian model of womanhood, which demands conventional values, such as virtue and duty, from women, is responsible for leading to the female main character's final misery.

6.1.2 John Clark: Egoism, lying

John Clark, a soldier who has been conscripted to fight in Crimea, is portrayed as a 'good specimen of the long-service soldier of those days' ("ED", 154) when suddenly reappearing after three years. He is

a not unhandsome man, with a certain undemonstrative dignity, which some might have said to be partly owing to the stiffness of his uniform about his neck, the high stock being still worn. He was much stouter than when Selina ha[s] parted from him ("ED", 154).

Apart from indicating the passing of time, this passage depicts John as 'glamorous and romantic because he is an outsider' (Brady, 189), that is, not 'of local extraction' ("ED", 158), which may be one of the reasons for Selina's attraction to him. This portrayal of the sergeant-major of dragoons contrasts with the description of the second suitor, Bartholomew Miller, whose character qualities are examined in chapter 6.1.3.

The male protagonist is presented as an egoist because he gives priority to his needs and desires, disregarding the feelings of his fellow human beings. According to Reinhard-Stocker, egoists are characterised by fickleness in love. Precisely speaking, people of such a character trait are not selective in choosing their object of love but they are able to love more than one woman or man at the same time. Since they tend to be driven by their immediate wishes and impulses, they are usually not able to experience true love. For egoists, making a conquest is of utmost importance because doing so mirrors their own appeal. Thus, men who regard the other sex as prey in order to boost their ego, do usually not have much respect for women. As a consequence, they constantly try to run away from their bad conscience, which is the cause of their inner disquiet.¹⁰⁵ Reinhard-Stocker's definition is applicable to John Clark in "Enter a Dragoon". He is certainly not selective in choosing his love interest as, although being engaged to Selina and having promised her marriage when

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Reinhard-Stocker, pp. 63-68.

coming back from Crimea, he weds another woman secretly. Hence, he seems to be in love with two women at the same time. However, the reader does not know if his motivation for reappearing is true love or if the male protagonist rather wants to boost his ego after ‘a particularly sharp quarrel’ (“ED”, 167) with his legitimate wife. What is certain is that John is troubled by his restlessness, which his wife addresses directly:

“Ah! – I remember about you,” returned the legitimate widow calmly and not unkindly. “You must be Selina; he spoke of you now and then, and said that his relations with you would always be a weight on his conscience. (“ED”, 166)

This lends weight to the argument that Clark’s inner disquiet could be the reason for his wish to emigrate to New Zealand, which he explains by saying that he ‘shall never be happy in England’ (“ED”, 158). Accordingly, John Clark’s egoism is highly destructive for the female protagonist as he ruins her marriage to Miller, who is deeply in love with her, by pretending that nothing has happened in the three-year interval.

Furthermore, this male protagonist can be characterised as a liar because he keeps his marriage to another woman secret from Selina, which is the reason for her decision to break off her engagement to Miller on account of not possessing the complete information. Although John seems to repent his belated reappearance throughout the story, he belies his first intended wife, which makes him sound dubious. To illustrate this point, some examples from the short story under discussion are given. When Selina asks her lover why he has not come back earlier, he replies “[t]hat’s just what I ask myself! Why was I such a sappy as not to hurry here the first day I set foot on shore’ (“ED”, 154), which clearly shows that he is by no means willing to tell her the truth even though he has no rational explanation for his long absence. When asking him the same question again, the soldier keeps the truth secret from Selina again and tries to apologise by using pretexts: “‘O – dilatoriness and want of thought, and a fear of facing your father after so long. I was in hospital a great while, you know.’ (“ED”, 157) Later on, he adds to this statement that ‘[i]t was by the merest accident that [he] came just at this date to make peace with [her] for [his] delay’” (“ED”, 159). However, by giving this explanation, the male main character does not tell the truth, either, which is obvious when taking a closer look at the story’s tragic ending. That is, Selina learns about the true reason of her beloved’s delay from Clark’s wife:

When he came back from the Crimea he became acquainted with me at my home in the north, and we were married within a month of first knowing each other. Unfortunately, after living together a few months, we could not agree; and after a particularly sharp quarrel [...] he went away from me, declaring he would buy his discharge and emigrate to New Zealand, and never come back to me any more. (“ED”, 167)

Hence, John’s excuses and apologies, such as, ‘[w]hat a fool [he] ha[s] been altogether’ (“ED”, 160), cannot be taken too seriously by the reader. Viewed against this light, the narrator’s comment on Miller’s opinion about the second suitor is highly ironic as he tells the reader that Miller is ‘so impressed with the excellently faithful conduct of the sergeant-major of dragoons’ (“ED”, 152). Since the reader finally finds out that Clark has not been faithful at all, his sudden and unexpected death does not arouse pity, not even if the male protagonist may have partly repented his decision.

Accordingly, apart from John Clark’s egoism and his propensity to lying, his decision to marry another woman after coming back from war, which is based on his egoism as well, can be held responsible for his tragic death. He seemingly repents his hastened marriage and his wife affirms that he has definitely not found happiness. Thus, one proposal might be that both he and Selina would have been far happier if he had not changed his mind and wedded another woman. It has to be stressed that the male protagonist’s decision to stay in the north sets in motion the chain of events which leads to the protagonists’ tragic destinies. Precisely speaking, because of believing her lover to be dead, Selina takes the decision to marry Miller, which emphasises her innocence. That is, her choices, apart from wanting to marry Clark, are based on the male main character’s havoc-wreaking decision, which only brings about misery and even death. That is why John Clark’s tragic flaws, including egoism and lying, contribute not only to his tragic ending but also to that of the other protagonists.

6.1.3 Bartholomew Miller: Calmness, morality

Bartholomew Miller, the second male protagonist, is ‘a rubicund man about thirty years of age, of thriving master-mechanic appearance and obviously comfortable temper’ (“ED”, 151). He contrasts starkly with Clark as he is not a glamorous outsider but a ‘familiar inhabitant of the area’ (Brady, 189), who is characterised by morality and calmness. Reinhard-Stocker argues that Hardy’s calm and moral characters are unselfish and helpful, industrious and reliable. Their physical

appearance is neither glamorous nor bewitching, but they are thorough and follow through what they have begun with determination and calmness, even if this may inconvenience them. Thus, these people make a trustworthy impression on their fellow human beings. What is more, they remain faithful to the love of their lives a whole lifetime.¹⁰⁶

Having considered Reinhard-Stocker's definition of Hardy's calm characters, it becomes apparent that almost all of these characteristics are applicable to Miller, who is depicted as a 'genial young man' ("ED", 151) of 'comfortable temper' ("ED", 151). His calmness is not only emphasised by the narrator but also by the female main character. When being asked about the reason why she has accepted this second suitor, Selina replies that '[h]e has been so good and faithful! Not minding about the child at all' ("ED"). Her answer does not only illustrate her trust in Miller but also her fiancé's unselfish and helpful nature. This is also stressed when Selina tells him about the imminent arrival of her first fiancé and apologises for breaking off the engagement: 'You were very very kind, Mr. Miller, to ask me to have you; no other man would have done it after what had happened.' ("ED", 152) Here Selina once again refers to her illegitimate child and the problems and difficulties involved. In spite of the fact that his beloved has given birth to a child out of wedlock, Bartholomew is deeply in love with his fiancée and cares about her and her offspring: "Well, Selina, 'tis for you to say. I love you, and I love the boy; and there's my chimney-corner and sticks o' furniture ready for 'ee both.'" ("ED", 152) However, despite his feelings for her, he acts unselfishly and morally correctly by not trying to persuade her but by encouraging her to marry Clark, saying '[b]ut Selina – you're right. You do belong to the child's father since he's alive. I'll try to make the best of it'" ("ED", 153). Furthermore, he even wants to make friends with Clark 'as he seems one o' the right sort'" ("ED", 153). All these references to the second male protagonist's unselfish and morally correct behaviour stress the irony inherent in Miller's opinion about Clark, who is believed to have an 'excellently faithful conduct' ("ED", 152). At the end of the story it is revealed that these terms do not describe Clark's behaviour at all but rather that of Miller. Thus, Selina's mother's 'little bitterness' ("ED", 153) about her daughter's broken off engagement to Miller is justified.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Reinhard-Stocker, pp. 79-81.

Apart from being unselfish, helpful and reliable, Bartholomew Miller is industrious because he is a 'thriving master-mechanic' ("ED", 151), who is 'much better off than [Selina]' ("ED", 150). Besides, this male main character, who is not glamorous but 'rubicund' ("ED", 151), remains faithful to Selina. However, it has to be mentioned that he does certainly not carry out with determination what he has begun as he accepts Selina's wish to marry the father of her son. Thus, not all of Reinhard-Stocker's characteristics of Hardy's calm characters hold true for this particular short story. Nevertheless, Miller proposes to his beloved a second time, which may be regarded as an indicator of his determination. He explains his second marriage proposal by saying that '[Clark's] coming back for [her] proved what [he] always believed of [her], though others didn't'" ("ED", 164). When Selina answers that she 'rather bide[s] as Mrs. Clark' ("ED", 164), Miller tells her the truth about his urgent wish to marry by explaining that his 'mother is growing old' ("ED", 165) and, thus, he needs somebody to look after her. However, despite this practical reason, it cannot be disregarded that he still loves her as he adds '[t]hat's the practical consideration which forces [him] to think of taking a wife, apart from [his] wish to take [her]; and [...] there's nobody in the world he care[s] for so much' ("ED", 165). Here it becomes obvious again that Bartholomew does not follow through his plans but rather behaves morally and unselfishly. Although he finally marries another woman, he does not cease loving Selina, which can be supported by quoting the narrator's comment on his marriage: 'His chief motive, it was reported, had been less one of love than a wish to provide a companion for his aged mother.' ("ED", 166-167) Consequently, it can be assumed that in contrast to the other two protagonists it is not a wrong choice which brings about his unhappiness but rather calmness and morality, which are normally considered good character qualities. However, in Miller's case they are an obstacle in the way to individual happiness because they are one of the reasons which hinder his marriage to the woman he truly loves.

6.2 External forces

Apart from internal forces, that is, character and free will, there are external forces at work which determine the protagonists' destinies. These forces, which include human participation other than character qualities, are prevailing social conventions in general and illegitimacy in particular on account of exerting a profound influence on the female main character's life.

6.2.1 Victorian social conventions: Illegitimacy as a fate-determining element

Similar to “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”, “Enter a Dragoon” focuses on moral double-standards, that is, the gender-based distinction between men and women both in terms of treatment and status, inherent in Victorian society. Consequently, this subchapter deals with the subjugation of women at the hands of the patriarchal male and the different norms and regulations which applied to the sexes. Since Hardy considered conventions ‘the artificial forms of living’ (F. Hardy, *Early Life*, 279), he attacked and criticised them fiercely.

The social convention which is particularly prominent throughout the whole short story and requires, thus, a closer examination is illegitimacy. Giving birth to a child out of wedlock is an important topic in the short story as it determines the course of events considerably. In order to provide a complete understanding of the adverse consequences and difficulties which bearing an illegitimate child brings about, the historical context needs to be considered. One might say in advance that illegitimacy was always stigmatised in English Society because great emphasis was placed on the importance of marriage, the only accepted form of living together. Thus, unwed mothers were regarded as an offence to morality and, therefore, ostracised by society. Haller illustrates this point by saying that ‘[s]ince the 17th and 18th centuries, the negative attitude toward bastards was evident in legislation which denied them assistance from the poor rates’, which are taxes levied on the parish’s property to support the parish’s poor. The ‘New Poor Law’ of 1834, enacted both to remedy illegitimacy and to restore female virtue and morality, included The ‘Bastardy Clause’, which absolved the putative father of any kind of responsibility for his illegitimate child while the mother was socially and economically stigmatised. To be more precise, mothers had the sole responsibility for their children until their sixteenth birthday. Besides, women were supposed to provide for themselves and for their offspring without the support from poor relief. Being unable to sustain themselves, they had to enter workhouses. What is more, unwed pregnant women could not rely on the support of their families and friends. Instead, they were often forced to abandon their families and to live in areas where they were not known. This course of action was based on the belief that social and economic ostracism was an effective means of guaranteeing chastity and purity in women. Consequently, Lord Althorp (qtd. in Haller) argues that making the ‘victims of the seducer’s art maintain their own bastard child is a ‘boon to the female population’.’ That is to say, it was

assumed that those women would serve as warning examples to others, putting a stop to giving birth to children out of wedlock. The establishment of this new law was the cause of the growth of a ‘modern and murderous form of an old institution’, namely of baby farming, which ‘preyed on the infants of these humiliated and alienated mothers’ (Haller). Furthermore, the shame was so awful that unmarried mothers were often forced to place their offspring in workhouses and they even committed infanticide. Hence, illegitimate childbirth did not only cause fear and starvation but also alienation from family and friends and condemnation from society.¹⁰⁷

Having given a short overview of the destructiveness of illegitimate childbirth in the Victorian era, the presentation of illegitimacy in “Enter a Dragoon” has to be discussed in more detail. Due to having born a child out of wedlock, Selina Paddock is stigmatised. However, in contrast to many of her fellow-sufferers, her family does not scorn her or force her to leave their house. Instead, the female protagonist can rely on her parents, who allow her to stay with them. One of the villagers explains her father’s reasoning by stating that

“[o]ne reason why her father forgave her when he found out how matters stood was, as he said plain at the time, that he liked the man, and could see that he meant to act straight. So the old folks made the best of what they couldn’t mend, and kept her there with ’em, when some wouldn’t (“ED”, 147).

As can be gathered from this quotation, Selina’s parents constitute an exception in Victorian times (Cf. “ED”, 147: ‘when some wouldn’t’) as they do not ostracise their daughter because of having given birth to an illegitimate child, but they try to understand the lovers’ behaviour and their motivations. Thus, one of the village inhabitants explains that ‘for what happened [Selina] was not much to blame, so near as they were to matrimony when the war broke out and spoiled all’ (“ED”, 147). Consequently, it becomes evident that the villagers act in unison with Selina’s parents, trying to justify Selina’s behaviour and emphasising her good intentions: ‘She’d never have thought of another but for that – O no!’ (“ED”, 148) Here it becomes clearly obvious that they are sympathetic to the female protagonist and that they do not put the blame on her but on the ill-fated circumstances. That is to say, at this point of the short story the female protagonist is by no means socially ostracised. However, her parents’ and the villagers’ attitude contrasts with that of social institutions as her parents are the ones who have to provide for their daughter and her

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Haller.

offspring. This means that Selina is economically ostracised whereas her lover is absolved of any kind of responsibility, which Hardy attacked fiercely. According to him (T. Hardy, *Letters 3*, 238), ‘the father of a woman’s child [...] is anybody’s business but the woman’s own, except in cases of disease or insanity.’ In other words, Hardy believed that the father of a woman’s child was entirely the woman’s business. However, in the Victorian era, in which a woman was only worth as much as her chastity, people were not able to live up to these moral standards, which made unwed mothers, like Selina, face difficulties, obstacles and criticism.

Therefore, Brady (189) argues that Selina’s ‘odd’ (“ED”, 150) predicament, having given birth to a child outside marriage, ‘elicits from herself and others a typical spectrum of Victorian attitudes toward sex and marriage.’ In order to justify Brady’s argument, some examples of the short story are given. Selina keeps ‘the mummy of the cake intended in earlier days for the wedding-feast [...] as a testimony to her intentional respectability’ (“ED”, 149), in spite of being the mother of an illegitimate child. Even though she does ‘not feel half so warm as [she] ought’ (“ED”, 152), she consents to marry Miller in order to have ‘a comfortable home’ (“ED”, 150). Thus, it may be argued that she accepts his proposal out of two motives: First of all, a woman’s ‘whole life is given to securing the best mate she can’ (Elliott, 92), which means that marriage was the ultimate goal in a woman’s life, offering dignity and protection. As regards Miller, he is definitely the ‘best mate’ for Selina as he is not only ‘much better off than [her]’ (“ED”, 150), but also calm and generous. The second reason for agreeing to marry Bartholomew is certainly the female protagonist’s constrained position. Due to the illegitimacy of her child, she is a wholly unworthy candidate for marriage, of which she is aware. Hence, when she talks to her neighbour about her motivation for accepting her second suitor, she says that “[h]e’s been so good and faithful! Not minding about the child at all; [...] He’s dearly fond o’ Johnny, you know – just as if ’twere his own’ (“ED”, 150). Apologising to Miller for breaking off their engagement, she maintains that it was ‘very kind [...] to ask [her] to have [him], no other man would have done it after what had happened’ (“ED”, 150). However, as soon as Clark returns, Selina automatically believes, in spite of his unexplained absence, to be rightfully his: “O! I must agree to be his wife if he forgives me – of course I must.” (“ED”, 152) Besides, she agrees to accompany him ‘anywhere that [he] decide[s] upon’ (“ED”, 158), which clearly shows that she regards her lover as her proprietor. Miller has

assimilated this conventional view on women as well and, thus, he argues that Selina ‘belong[s] to the child’s father, since he’s alive’ (“ED”, 153). This belief was based on the doctrine of ‘separate spheres’ (Page, s.v. “marriage”), which Page (s.v. “marriage”) defines as follows:

Above all else, woman should uphold, as her highest mission, the pieties of selfless wifeness and angelic motherhood, and man, the exemplar of all that was knightly and chivalrous, would serve as her protector, her provider, her sovereign lord.

Consequently, Selina’s engagement to her second intended husband ‘terminated so suddenly, and so happily for her heart, and her sense of womanly virtue’ (“ED”, 155) because she is now re-engaged to Miller, which makes her believe that her respectability is restored.

Brady (190) points out that ‘[t]he sergeant major’s sudden death reveals the absurdity of Selina’s logic.’ Although the medical practitioner refuses to accept the female main character’s theory, she is of the firm opinion that the revelation of her marriage to another man has been the reason for Clark’s sudden death. Selina, who was spared from ostracism after her first failed attempt to marry, is now confronted with criticism and lack of understanding:

Her narrow miss of the recovered respectability they had hoped for from the tardy event worked upon her parents as an irritant, and after the first week or two of her mourning her life with them grew almost insupportable. (“ED”, 163)

Besides, the fact that she passes herself off as Clark’s widow leads ‘the old people to indulge in sarcasm at her expense whenever they [behold] her attire’ (“ED”, 163). Being partly socially ostracised and ridiculed, Selina leaves her family and opens a miniature fruit and vegetable shop. On account of considering herself ‘John’s widow in the eyes of Heaven’ (“ED”, 164), she does not give up her ‘respectable’ (“ED”, 167) widowhood for a second marriage although she is ‘practical enough to know that she ha[s] lost a good and possibly the only opportunity of settling in life after what ha[s] happened’ (“ED”, 166). This quotation clearly illustrates that due to being an unwed middle-aged mother her life will always be a difficult one. At the end of the story Selina’s quest for respectability, which runs like a thread through the whole story, is presented as being completely meaningless because she meets Clark’s legal wife and child at his grave.¹⁰⁸ This closing scene makes Selina’s stigmatised position

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Brady, pp. 189-190.

in society clear because Clark's wife apologises for 'spudding up with the point of her umbrella some ivy-roots that Selina ha[s] reverently planted' ("ED", 166) by explaining that she '[is] sorry [she] pulled up [Selina's] ivy-roots; but that common sort of ivy is considered a weed in [her] part of the country"' ("ED", 167). Thus, one tentative proposal may be that the female protagonist can be regarded as a weed for society because of being an unwed mother and, thus, an offence to morality. Accordingly, it can be concluded that Selina's illegitimacy, which was stigmatised in Victorian Society – characterised by its conventional social norms and its moral double-standards –, is highly destructive as it determines the course of events and is, at least, partly to be blamed for the female protagonist's tragic downfall.

6.3 Cosmic forces

Apart from internal and external forces, cosmic forces can be made responsible for shaping the short story characters' lives and leading towards tragedy. These fate-determining elements operate without human participation and are presented as superior powers which are indifferent to human beings. In the short story under discussion, two different sets of forces can be determined, namely coincidence and abstract agents of fate. Hence, it becomes apparent that in "Enter a Dragoon" those forces which have been presented as having a strong influence on Hardy's characters in the previous short stories are at work once again.

6.3.1 Coincidence: From chance to determinism

As in the previous short stories, coincidence plays a significant role in Hardy's presentation of fate in "Enter a Dragoon". Like in "An Imaginative Woman", Schweik's study of "Character is Fate in The Mayor of Casterbridge" serves as a starting point for analysing this particular fate-determining element. Schweik (132) argues that

[t]he largest element in 'The Mayor of Casterbridge' are four relatively self-contained and structurally similar 'movements' of progressively diminishing lengths [...]. Each provides a variation on a common pattern: an initial situation which seems to offer hope for Henchard is followed by events which create doubt, fear, and anxious anticipation for an outcome that comes, finally, as a catastrophe.

When taking the happenings in the short story under discussion into examination, it becomes obvious that Schweik's argument holds partly true for the structure of "Enter a Dragoon". Like in "The Mayor of Casterbridge", Hardy's eleventh novel,

there are ‘movements’ which follow a common pattern. Precisely speaking, hope and despair alternate constantly, leading inevitably to a tragic outcome. That is, false hopes are raised and illusions are created which are then dashed and shattered. However, in contrast to Hardy’s novel, there are not four but three movements, that is, Selina’s abortive attempts to marry, which punctuate the short story and determine, thus, its structure. Consequently, the similarities between the presentation of coincidence as instrument of fate in “An Imaginative Woman” and “Enter a Dragoon” are clearly evident. In order to illustrate this point, the female protagonist’s abortive attempts to marry should be discussed briefly. One might say in advance that although Selina is on the verge of marrying three times, coincidence hinders her from tying the knot each and every time. Selina is on the point of marrying John Clark, whom ‘[s]he picked up [...] against her father’s wish’ (“ED”, 146) and to whom ‘she [is] determined to stick’ (“ED”, 147), which shows her deep love to him. However, shortly before the wedding takes place, Clark is conscripted to fight in Crimea. The consequences of this event throw ‘a shadow over her life’ (“ED”, 149). Intending to marry Miller, who has been ‘so good and faithful’ (“ED”, 150), Selina learns that her long lost first lover has not died in action but is going to come back to her. At first, she does not “know whether [she’s] happy or – frightened at it” (“ED”, 149) but when Clark finally arrives, she ‘[runs] across to him directly she [sees] him’ (“ED”, 154) and decides to accompany him ‘anywhere that [he] decide[s] upon’ (“ED”, 158). However, this third attempt to marry also fails as Clark dies suddenly following his recent stay at hospital and because of the exhausting journey and his exhaustion from a much too vigorous dance. Thereafter, the female main character passes herself off as Clark’s widow and refuses to marry again, being ‘John’s widow in the eyes of Heaven’ (“ED”, 164).

Apart from these coincidences which serve as a structural pattern, there are several other coincidences which exercise considerable control over the characters’ lives, such as the fact that the name ‘James Clark’ is on the list ‘of the names of the killed and wounded [which] was nailed up against Casterbridge Town Hall door’ (“ED”, 149), for example. This leads Selina to believe ‘James’ was a misprint for ‘John’ and, therefore, she accepts Miller’s marriage proposal. Besides, Miller is on the point of leaving when Clark arrives, and the latter dies when Selina tells him about her imminent marriage to Bartholomew, which makes her believe that she is responsible for his sudden and unexpected death. What is more, Selina meets her first fiancé’s

legitimate wife and their young son at the grave. This final coincidence, which Brady (190) regards as a 'rather heavy-handed satire of circumstance', leads to the story's final ironic twist and is the reason for the female protagonist's misery. Both these coincidences and those mentioned above come about by chance as accidental happenings and do not imply the operation of causal relationships. Precisely speaking, Selina, who is the most affected by these coincidences, does not cause these events in a moral sense or deserve them. Thus, the juxtaposition of cause and consequence, which has been given as one of the possible reasons for Barnet's downfall in "Fellow-Townsmen", does not apply to Selina Paddock in "Enter a Dragoon". Hence, these happenings cannot be explained rationally but are, as in "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion", closely linked to time, the malicious instrument of fate in that the coincidental timing of these fateful incidents is destructive to the protagonist's hope for happiness.

Accordingly, it may be argued that Selina is doomed to be the victim of coincidence from the moment she agrees to marry John Clark, her true love. Elliott (59) maintains that 'coincidences have usually proved links in a concatenation of incidents tending toward evil.' This argument is applicable to Hardy's presentation of this particular instrument of fate in "Enter a Dragoon", in which a large number of accidental occurrences combine to lead to the female main character's final tragic ending. Thus, the fateful incidents in the short story under discussion can be considered to be part of a determined system, even 'a system determined for evil' (Elliott, 59). Elliott (59) also states that 'Hardy's philosophy has been a development from a conception of the Universe as chaotic, ruled by Chance to a world ruled by determinism.' That is to say, coincidences did not have predetermined causes at the beginning of Hardy's oeuvre whereas they later clearly became part of a determined system. Hence, Elliott (59) goes on arguing that in Hardy's later novels 'coincidences are allied with a unity of purpose which persuades us that they are not only part of a determined system, but parts of a system determined for evil', which holds true for Selina in "Enter a Dragoon". Once coincidence sets in action, there is no escape for the female main character and she may be merely seen as a toy in the hands of fate. This concatenation of fateful incidents towards one end is absent in Hardy's early works. That is, '[t]here is not the same tight linking of incidents toward doom which appears later' (Elliott, 62). This becomes clearly obvious when comparing "Fellow-Townsmen", which was composed when Hardy started writing short stories with

regularity, and “Enter a Dragoon”, one of the author’s two last stories. In “Fellow-Townsmen” there are only few coincidences which can be interpreted as having no determined causes, whereas in the latter one coincidences are a structural device which inevitably lead towards tragedy. In the novel *Desperate Remedies* (168-169) Cytherea, one of the protagonists, explains the nature of coincidence as follows and gives a suggestion of Hardy’s method of presenting coincidence in his later books:

“Yes, one [coincidence] will occur often enough – that is, two disconnected events will fall strangely together by chance and people scarcely notice the fact [...]. But when three such events coincide without any apparent reason for the coincidence, it seems as if there must be invisible means at work. You see, three things falling together in that manner are ten times as singular as two cases of coincidence which are distinct.

Therefore, Elliott believes that coincidence is divided structurally into a series of accidental happenings or fateful incidents which pile up and combine to one crowning coincidence.¹⁰⁹ Concluding this section, it can be said that in “Enter a Dragoon” coincidence acts as an instrument of determinism and, thus, exerts control over the protagonists’ lives.

6.3.2 Abstract agents of fate: ‘doomed’, ‘fate’, ‘Heaven’

One might say in advance that in “Enter a Dragoon” Hardy remained true to the way in which he presented the acting of abstract agents of fate in the previously discussed short stories, which were written earlier. Similar to “Fellow-Townsmen” and “An Imaginative Woman”, both the narrator and the protagonists refer to superior forces either to excuse individual failures by attributing the blame to a higher power beyond human control or to emphasise the inevitability of human fate. However, in contrast to Ella Marchmill from “An Imaginative Woman”, who takes her fate in her own hands, or Phyllis Grove from “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”, who seems to have the power to decide her own fate, Selina Paddock is portrayed as the toy in the hands of her irrevocable fate and, thus, as subjugated to indifferent, malicious higher forces, such as doom and fate, for example.

At the very beginning of the short story under discussion, the irrevocable nature of fate and the tragic outcome of the story are stressed. Precisely speaking, the narrator informs the reader that he ‘had a melancholy experience’ which ‘was that of going

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Elliott, pp. 58-69.

over a doomed house with whose outside aspect [he] had long been familiar' ("ED", 145). In this cottage-residence, which

ha[s] been occupied by families not quite of the kind customary in such spots – people whose circumstances, position, or antecedents were more or less of a critical happy-go-lucky cast ("ED", 146),

'an exceptional number of abrupt family incidents had taken place' ("ED", 145). The narrator emphasises these tragic happenings by saying that 'to reckon only those which ha[ve] come to [his] own knowledge. And no doubt there were many more of which [he] ha[s] never heard' ("ED", 145). The meaning of the term 'doom', which has already been defined in chapter 5.3.3, should be briefly explained once more in order to facilitate the understanding of this particular reference. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, the noun 'doom' is used to denote 'death, destruction or some other terrible fate' (Soanes, s.v. "doom"). Thus, this '[i]rrevocable lot, fate [or] destiny' is especially 'evil' (Trumble, s.v. "doom") as it implies an 'unfortunate and inescapable outcome', being 'doomed to failure' (Soanes, s.v. "doom"). These negative connotations of 'doom' hold true for Selina, who is doomed to failure. This claim can be substantiated by referring to her numerous abortive attempts to marry. These serve, among other things, as an illustration for her irrevocable and inescapable fate, which catches up with her in the end. Consequently, it becomes obvious that the female protagonist's destiny is evil as it leads towards misery without any possibility to escape. Hence, it may be argued that the narrator is sympathetic towards Selina and her tragic fate because all kind of responsibility is taken away from her, being doomed right from the beginning, that is, from occupying the 'doomed house' ("ED", 145) onwards.

Apart from this reference to 'doom' by the narrator, which clearly shows the defencelessness of human beings towards fate, there is a direct mention of 'fate' by Selina when telling her first fiancé about the imminent wedding:

There's a strange fate of interruption hanging over me, I sometimes think! He had bought the licence, which I preferred so that it mightn't be like – ours. But it made no difference to the fate of it." ("ED", 159)

The term 'fate' is defined as '[t]he power or agency which, according to popular belief, predetermines all events from eternity' (Trumble, s.v. "fate"). The *Oxford Dictionary of English* (Soanes, s.v. 'fate') elaborates on this definition by maintaining that 'fate' can be considered 'the development or events outside a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power.' This is in

accordance with the points made about coincidence in chapter 6.3.1 because determinism is presented as the controlling power over human fate. Accordingly, Selina is portrayed, or rather portrays herself, as being innocent because fate, which is beyond her control, has predetermined the course of events and has, therefore, hindered her from marrying the man she deeply loves. However, since it is the female main character and not the narrator who blames this superior force, one tentative proposal might be that she is either aware of this controlling power or uses it as an excuse for her lover's behaviour. That is to say, although fate is certainly responsible for determining the course of events by timing the happenings and exerting control over human beings, John Clark contributes to Selina's destiny. Due to his prolonged absence he is the one who indirectly makes her consent to Miller's marriage proposal. What is certain is that Selina does not fully accept her destiny as she wants to marry a third time even though 'a strange fate of interruption [is] hanging over [her]' ("ED", 159). Nevertheless, this third attempt to marry fails as well. However, this time it is fate, and not Clark, which is in charge of thwarting the female protagonist's wedding because coincidence, acting as an instrument of fate, is responsible for letting the male protagonist die before being able to marry Selina.

These two direct references to indifferent higher forces apart, a third reference to a religious concept of fate can be detected. When being asked to marry Miller after Clark's sudden death, Selina replies that she is 'not ashamed of [her] position at all; for [she] [is] John's widow in the eyes of Heaven'" ("ED", 164). The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Trumble, s.v. "Heaven") defines the term 'Heaven' as '[t]he abode of God, the angels, and the beautiful spirits.' By referring to 'Heaven' and, thus, also indirectly to God, 'the creator and ruler of the universe' and the 'supreme being' (Soanes, s.v. "god"), the female protagonist tries to justify her behaviour. That is, although she is not Clark's rightful and legitimate wife, she assumes to have 'a moral relationship to the deceased' ("ED", 163), which is, in her opinion, acknowledged by God. However, this statement tragically anticipates the story's ironic twist and tragic ending as it comes to light that Clark has already been married to another woman. Thus, Selina's, and maybe also the reader's, illusions about her moral relationship to her dead lover are shattered.

The general conclusion of this chapter is that the protagonists, above all Selina Paddock, are both somewhat responsible for their tragic destinies because of their

tragic flaws and their helplessness in view of fate as various external and cosmic forces, such as social conventions and coincidence, determine their lives. In contrast to the previously discussed short stories, these forces are more prominent and play a more decisive role, diminishing the responsibility of Hardy's short story characters. This may be attributed to Hardy's belief in a world ruled by determinism, which can clearly be perceived in the author's later works. Consequently, the four characteristics of fate given in the second chapter do apply to "Enter a Dragoon": That is, fate is presented as a superhuman power in control of the protagonists' lives, who still believe in free will. However, this belief does not correspond to reality as fate only toys with them and causes suffering and, finally, their tragic destinies.

7. Conclusion

This thesis has examined Hardy's understanding and presentation of fate by means of analysing four selected short stories, which have been taken from different periods of the author's career as a writer of short fiction. The aim of this analysis was to assess which of the two strands of literary criticism, which either attribute human destiny to a superior external force beyond human control or to a combination of external and internal forces, can be applied to the stories selected. Returning to this issue posed at the beginning of the analysis, it is now possible to state that Hardy's characters are not alone the causes of their own unhappy fates, but they are also and primarily so the victims of external and cosmic forces. That is, in Hardy's short fiction a combination of these three forces is responsible for the inevitable way to human tragedy, which clearly supports and is perfectly in line with the other strand of literary criticism regarding the author's idiosyncratic notion of fate.

The term 'internal forces' has been used to examine whether character qualities or tragic flaws contribute to bringing about the protagonists' final misery. It has been shown that the characters' fates are partly built on their weaknesses, such as George Barnet's ambition, Phyllis Grove's alienation and assimilation, Ella Marchmill's dreaminess and Selina Paddock's uncritical acceptance of conventional social norms. Besides, Hardy's characters are inclined to make the wrong choices, which determines their destinies significantly. In the author's short fiction, the protagonists cannot undo the irreversible past, which keeps returning to haunt them throughout their whole lives and from which there is no escape. However, due to the fact that apart from these internal forces, both external and cosmic forces are at work as well, the quotation 'Character is Fate' (*Mayor of Casterbridge*, 115) is not entirely applicable to the selected short stories.

Internal forces apart, external forces, which imply human participation other than character qualities, exert considerable influence on Hardy's characters and contribute to their tragic downfall. In his short narratives, social conventions in general and marriage, money and class, and the hypocrisy regarding gender rules in particular, feature as prominent themes. Hardy considered conventions 'the artificial forms of living' (F. Hardy, *Early Life*, 279) and he, thus, attacked them fiercely. This may be the reason why social law and natural law tend to work in conflict with a destructive effect in his works. In brief, in the short stories all these elements have a destructive

effect on the main characters: Marriage turns out to be a malicious instrument of fate if the natures of the married couple are incompatible; money in combination with class is both a means of causing an unhappy marriage and of separating lovers; and illegitimacy is able to wreck a woman's life.

The third element which contributes considerably to the protagonists' tragic fates are cosmic forces, which are indifferent superior powers beyond human control. In the four selected short stories, four different sets of forces could be determined. First, Nature, which has capacities for benevolence and malevolence, is always depicted as an agent for evil, being indifferent to human destiny. Coincidence, the second cosmic force, tends to link up incidents which ultimately lead to evil and frustration. Besides, allusions to Shakespeare, the Bible or classical mythology are frequently used to foreshadow tragic events. Finally, abstract agents of fate are either employed to excuse individual failures by attributing the blame to a higher power beyond human control or to emphasise the inevitability and irreversibility of human fate. Thus, the four characteristics of cosmic irony, also known as irony of fate, can clearly be discerned in all the selected short stories.

As regards the development of Hardy's understanding and presentation of fate, which was the reason for choosing short stories from different periods, it is now possible to argue that although Hardy made use of the same external and cosmic forces throughout his literary oeuvre, a development becomes manifest. In Hardy's earlier short stories, such as "Fellow-Townsmen" and "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion", the protagonists' tragic fates are largely built on their tragic flaws. In his later short stories, by contrast, the responsibility of his protagonists is diminished by attributing greater power to external and, above all, to cosmic forces. For example, Selina Paddock is presented as being doomed from the very beginning of the short story, which creates the impression that she is only a toy in the hands of fate. This development may be ascribed to the author's growing belief in determinism. Precisely speaking, his philosophy developed from a perception of a chaotic universe ruled by chance to a world ruled by determinism in which coincidence is of particular importance. That is, Hardy believed in a determined system, even in a system determined for evil.

Concluding, it may be stated that Hardy's world view was rather egocentric and biased as he projected his personal world picture onto others. That is, due to the fact that his view on reality was selective and almost morbidly pessimistic, he presented a very one-sided perception of reality to his readers. For example, on account of his personal disillusionment in marriage, he appears to have become convinced that this institution took advantage of a temporary weakness of human beings by trying to convert a passing infatuation into a life-long contract. This adverse view on marriage, which stresses the incompatibility of man's nature and the life-bondage of marriage, is apparent in his short fiction as his protagonists are never able to live happily ever after but suffer in emotionally sterile marriages. This illustrates that Hardy's selective perception of marriage made him believe that happy unions do not exist. Another example of his selective world view is inherent in his presentation of fate. In his short fiction, fate is always presented as being hostile towards human beings, which becomes particularly obvious when taking a closer look at the author's use of coincidence. In Hardy's works, coincidences always link up incidents which ultimately lead to misery, frustration and human tragedy. That is to say, although coincidence has both a negative and a positive aspect, there are no positive coincidences which save his characters from disaster. Hence, the reader often realises that positive coincidences could have taken place but did not. Hardy, who wanted to convey a realistic image of the world, insisted that after all, 'such things do happen' (Hornback, 6). However, even though negative and fateful incidences can happen, they do certainly not occur so frequently and one-sidedly. As a consequence, a large number of reviewers criticised the portrayal of Hardy's characters, trapped by chance and circumstance, as overbearing and highly unlikely. Therefore, for today's readers, Hardy's view on human existence seems to be all too pessimistic. Hardy, however, defended himself against the charge of pessimism and added to his system of belief the classification 'evolutionary meliorism' (T. Hardy, *Apology*, IX), which he defined in 1904 as follows:

I believe, indeed, that a good deal of the robustious, swaggering optimism of recent literature is at bottom cowardly and insincere ... my pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption that the world is going to the dogs ... On the contrary, my practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist. What are my books but one plea against "man's inhumanity to man" – to 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. (Hardy qtd. in Pinion, s.v. "Pessimism and Meliorism")

8. German abstract

Thomas Hardy gilt als einer der bedeutendsten Romanautoren des 19. Jahrhunderts. Im Gegensatz zu seinen Romanen wurden Hardys Kurzgeschichten großteils sowohl von Lesern als auch von Rezensenten vernachlässigt und erhielten relativ geringe kritische Aufmerksamkeit. Nichts desto trotz verdient diese Gattung Beachtung, da sie einen bedeutenden Platz in dem literarischen Schaffen und der Entwicklung des Gedankenguts des Autors einnimmt. Abgesehen von fehlender Auseinandersetzung mit seinen Kurzgeschichten, ist der derzeitige Wissensstand in Bezug auf Hardys Schicksalsdarstellung ebenfalls begrenzt. Bis zum heutigen Zeitpunkt ist keine Studie zu finden, die sich eingehend mit Hardys ironischem Schicksalskonzept in den Kurzgeschichten beschäftigt. Weiters ist Hardys Darstellung des Schicksals umstritten: Es existieren zwei entgegengesetzte literarische Standpunkte, die menschliches Schicksal entweder inneren Kräften, wie zum Beispiel Charaktereigenschaften oder Willensentscheidungen, oder einer Kombination von diesen inneren Kräften und einer höheren äußeren Macht zuschreiben.

Der Zweck dieser Diplomarbeit bestand deshalb darin, einen ersten Schritt im Füllen dieser Lücke zu setzen. Daher wurden Hardys Schicksalsdarstellung und -verständnis in vier ausgewählten Kurzgeschichten – “Fellow-Townsmen”, “The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion”, “An Imaginative Woman”, “Enter a Dragoon” – analysiert, um der Entwicklung von Hardys ironischem Schicksalskonzept nachzugehen. Ein weiteres wichtiges Ziel dieser Diplomarbeit bestand in der Untersuchung der entgegengesetzten Standpunkte, um deren Anwendbarkeit auf die verwendeten Kurzgeschichten zu überprüfen. Deshalb basierte die Untersuchung auf einer Textanalyse, die sowohl Sekundärliteratur als auch textexterne Einflüsse, zum Beispiel die der deutschen Philosophen Schopenhauer und Hartmann oder klassischer Mythologie, einbezog.

Im Zuge dieser Analyse hat sich gezeigt, dass Hardys Protagonisten nicht allein für ihr tragisches Schicksal verantwortlich sind, sondern dass dieses großteils von äußeren und kosmischen Kräften und Einflüssen kontrolliert und bestimmt wird. Weiters konnte festgehalten werden, dass Hardys egozentrische und voreingenommene Weltanschauung die Macht des Schicksals immer als feindselig gegenüber dem Menschen ansieht. Im Lauf seines literarischen Schaffens wälzte Hardy die Verantwortung für menschliches Scheitern zunehmend von inneren

Kräften ab und schrieb sie höheren Mächten außerhalb menschlicher Kontrolle zu. Dieses Schicksalskonzept, das auf Hardys wachsende Bejahung des Determinismus zurückzuführen ist, zeigt sich deutlich in seinen Werken.

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Appendix

“The Division” (1893)

Rain on the windows, creaking doors,
 With blasts that besom the green,
 And I am here, and you are there,
 And a hundred miles between!

O were it but the weather, Dear,
 O were it but the miles
 That summed up all our severance,
 There might be room for smiles.

But that thwart thing betwixt us twain,
 Which nothing cleaves or clears,
 Is more than distance, Dear, or rain,
 And longer than the years!¹¹⁰

“The Wound”

I climbed to the crest,
 And, fog-festooned,
 The sun lay west
 Like a crimson wound:

Like that wound of mine
 Of which none knew,
 For I'd given no sign
 That it pierced me through.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Text from T. Hardy, *Poems*, p. 221.

¹¹¹ Text from T. Hardy, *Poems*, p. 465.

“The Christening” (1904)

Whose child is this they bring
 Into the aisle? –
At so superb a thing
 The congregation smile
And turn their heads awhile.

Its eyes are blue and bright,
 Its cheeks like rose;
Its simple robes unite
 Whitest of calicoes
With lawn, and satin bows.

A pride in the human race
 At this paragon
Of mortals, lights each face
 While the old rite goes on;
But ah, they are shocked anon.

What girl is she who peeps
 From the gallery stair,
Smiles palely, redly weeps,
 With feverish furtive air
As though not fitly there?

"I am the baby's mother;
 This gem of the race
The decent fain would smother,
 And for my deep disgrace
I am bidden to leave the place."

"Where is the baby's father?" -

"In the woods afar.

He says there is none he'd rather

Meet under moon or star

Than me, of all that are.

"To clasp me in lovelike weather,

Wish fixing when,

He says: To be together

At will, just now and then,

Makes him the blest of men;

"But chained and doomed for life

To slovening

As vulgar man and wife,

He says, is another thing:

Yea: sweet Love's sepulchring!"¹¹²

“At Tea”

The kettle descants in a cosy drone,

And the young wife looks in her husband's face,

And then at her guest's, and shows in her own

Her sense that she fills an envied place;

And the visiting lady is all abloom,

And says there was never so sweet a room.

And the happy young housewife does not know

That the woman beside her was first his choice,

Till the fates ordained it could not be so....

Betraying nothing in look or voice

¹¹² Text from T. Hardy, *Poems*, pp. 260-261.

The guest sits smiling and sips her tea,
And he throws her a stray glance yearningly.¹¹³

¹¹³ Text from T. Hardy, *Works*, p. 179.

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