

Between Individual Will and Social Environment: Naturalism in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

Regita Angelic

Bachelor's Programme in English, Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industries,
Universitas Kristen Maranatha
Jl. Prof. drg. Surya Sumantri, M.P.H. No. 65, Bandung, West Java
Email: regitaangelic2202@gmail.com

Abstract

Naturalism holds that all aspects of human life are shaped by the forces of nature. This study examines the theme of naturalism in Thomas Hardy's novel Tess of the d'Urbervilles by analysing the social conflicts experienced by its female protagonist, Tess Durbeyfield. In the novel, Tess is portrayed as a poor young woman who constantly struggles against the will of others imposed upon her, which leads her into various social conflicts with people around her. Despite her efforts to resist and, instead, pursue her own desire, she repeatedly fails, making her struggles in vain. Eventually, she submits to the pressure of her social environment – a naturalistic force beyond her control that dictates the course of her life and seals her fate. Her repeated failures finally lead her to her tragic ending, which is her death, highlighting the naturalist theme of the novel that no matter how hard one tries, one will not be able to fight against one's social environment.

Keywords: *naturalism, social environment, social conflict, theme, Thomas Hardy*

Introduction

Naturalism was a literary movement that thrived between 1865 and the early 1900s (Zhang, 2010). It was first introduced by the French writer Émile Zola, who is often regarded as the founder of literary naturalism (Zhang, 2010). The movement developed out of realism, which focuses on portraying everyday human experiences without idealistic or imaginative elements. While realism seeks to depict life as it truly is, naturalism shares this focus but goes further by highlighting the ways in which human existence is shaped and constrained by heredity, society, and environmental forces. Therefore, a defining feature of naturalism is determinism, which Maluku-Morina (2015) describes as the idea that human life is largely predetermined, most often by environmental factors. In this view, individuals cannot easily achieve their desires because their lives are continuously controlled by nature. Thus, human destiny appears fixed, leaving little room for personal freedom. This concept of naturalism is evident in many works of literature, particularly in those of Thomas Hardy.

Thomas Hardy was an acclaimed English poet and novelist of the mid to late 19th century who was closely associated with the naturalist tradition. He was a prominent literary figure, earning two Nobel Prize nominations in Literature and being appointed to the Order of Merit in 1910 ("Thomas Hardy," n.d.). Known for his naturalistic style, Hardy frequently addressed the harsh realities of Victorian life through this perspective ("9.1 Hardy's Naturalism and Fatalism," n.d.). Over his career, he wrote fourteen novels

reflecting naturalist ideas, among them is *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), which is often considered one of his greatest works.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles is one of Hardy's most famous novels, known for its tragic heroine. The novel realistically portrays the social injustices that shape the protagonist's life (Birdi, 2023). It tells the story of Tess, a young woman whose desires are repeatedly thwarted. Throughout the novel, Tess is pressured by those around her to submit to their wishes, leaving her with little or even no freedom to make her own choices and ultimately leading her to misery. Hardy illustrates how the force of nature – particularly in the form of the protagonist's social environment – exerts a powerful influence over her life. Tess's inability to resist these external pressures reflects the naturalist belief that forces beyond one's control play a determining role in shaping one's destiny.

To better understand the message Hardy conveys in the novel, this study will focus on the theme of naturalism, which is the most suitable element to be analysed from the novel. A theme may be defined as “the central meaning and deeper significance of a written work” (“Theme,” n.d.). In this case, the theme will be drawn from the social conflicts faced by the protagonist throughout the story. Conflict is generally understood as “a struggle between two opposing forces” (“Conflict,” n.d.) while social conflict refers specifically to a situation where “a character [is] in conflict with another character” (“Conflict,” n.d.). The analysis will employ an extrinsic perspective, specifically the naturalist approach, which focuses on “external causes that are responsible for all events in an individual's life. Fate, nature, or heredity explain why a character's journey unfolds the way it does. Forces beyond one's will and control determine everything” (“Naturalism: What Is Naturalism? Definition, Usage, and Literary Examples,” n.d.).

Thomas Hardy himself was a highly influential writer of his era, which has led many scholars to analyse his works, including *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the research object of this study. Thus, it is necessary to review previous studies on the novel to identify the research gap. Previous studies have approached this work from multiple perspectives, often concentrating on the protagonist. For instance, Peng (2018) explores how the heroine, despite her purity, is made miserable by both visible and invisible societal forces. Similarly, Peng and Yan (2018) examine how the protagonist's personality, which is shaped by her environment, results in her tragic fate and makes her the greatest victim in the story.

Another study emphasizes external influences which contribute to the protagonist's suffering. Chen and Shi (2019) argue that her tragic ending is driven by factors such as social environment, false moral values, gender inequality, and poverty of the peasant families, with society's burdens eventually sealing her fate. Meanwhile, Shihab (2024), using a Marxist framework, considers the role of conflicts and describes the protagonist as a symbol of the oppressed working class.

Several scholars have further examined the role of patriarchy in the novel. Nkanka (2024) investigates the unequal power relations between men and women, highlighting double standards and hypocrisy that disregard women's well-being and lead to the protagonist's sexual and physical exploitation. In a similar vein, Hooti (2011) argues that male dominance destroys the protagonist's life, positioning her as a representation of innocent rural women.

Based on the review, no prior studies specifically address the theme of naturalism through social conflicts. While Shihab (2024) discusses conflict, the connection between the social conflicts and naturalism remains unexplored. This study, therefore, aims to fill

the gap by analysing the theme of naturalism as reflected through the social conflicts within the novel, offering fresh insights into the work.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research method, which refers to a type of research method that “involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences” (Bhandari, 2020). The non-numerical data analysed in this research is Thomas Hardy’s novel *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*.

In examining the theme of naturalism through social conflicts, naturalism theory is used. According to Surur and Dengela (2019), naturalism is a literary concept that views all events in human life as part of natural forces. Human actions, decisions, and even existence are shaped by heredity and the environment, which are the absolute determinants of everything that happens in human life. In other words, naturalism focuses on “external causes that are responsible for all events in an individual’s life. Fate, nature, or heredity explain why a character’s journey unfolds the way it does. Forces beyond one’s will and control determine everything” (“Naturalism: What Is Naturalism? Definition, Usage, and Literary Examples,” n.d.).

Surur and Dengela (2019) also identify several characteristics of naturalism, such as pessimism, objectivity, and most importantly, determinism. Determinism is the belief that people have little or no power over their lives because their fate is already determined by natural forces. From this perspective, humans are destined to face suffering or even death as a result of heredity and environmental factors (Zhang, 2010). These environmental factors can be physical, economic, psychological, or social. In the novel discussed in this study, the strongest influence comes from the social environment – meaning the expectations of society and the pressures of people around the characters, which shape their lives and restrict their choices (High, 2000). Since the novel reflects naturalist ideas, naturalism theory is deemed the most suitable approach for understanding how social conflicts in the story are connected to naturalist ideas and how these conflicts express the theme of naturalism in the novel.

With the use of naturalism approach as the framework, there are several steps taken in conducting this study. The process begins with multiple readings of the novel to gain a deeper understanding of the text. Next, data are collected from the novel, focusing on the main social conflicts faced by the protagonist. After the data are gathered, they are examined through the perspective of naturalism theory. The final step is to draw conclusions based on the analysis carried out with this method.

Results and Discussions

This study explores the theme of naturalism through the social conflicts faced by Tess Durbeyfield, the main character of the novel. Tess is portrayed as a young woman with a tragic life who struggles against the expectations and pressures of others. Despite her efforts to resist those expectations and pressures, she often fails because her choices are strongly shaped by her social environment, a naturalistic force beyond her control that directs her actions and future. Her inability to resist this influence can be observed in six major social conflicts happening throughout the story, which will be the focus of this analysis.

The first conflict arises between Tess and her family. It begins after Tess accidentally causes the death of the family horse, their only means of income. In response,

her family pressures her to seek help from the d'Urbervilles, who are believed to be their distant relatives. When Tess later receives a letter offering her a job at the d'Urbervilles' residence, her family is overjoyed, seeing it as an opportunity to ease their financial hardship and possibly arrange a marriage between Tess and a member of the d'Urberville household. Tess, however, resists this idea. She prefers to stay with her family, especially after her uncomfortable encounter with Alec d'Urberville, who attempted to harass her during her first visit. This horrible experience strengthens Tess's dislike of Alec and her refusal to accept the job, which brings her into conflict with her family. The tension between Tess and her parents can be seen in the following quotation:

'I would rather stay here with father and you,' she said.

'But why?'

'I'd be rather not to tell you why, mother; indeed, I don't quite to know why.'

.....
'But do let her go, Jacky,' coaxed his poor witless wife. 'He's struck wi' her—you can see that. He called her Coz! He'll marry her, most likely, and make a lady of her; and then she'll be what her forefathers was.' (Hardy, 1994, pp. 52-53)

Based on the quotation above, it is clear that Tess's family wants her to take the job as a way to improve their financial condition. Tess, however, refuses the offer because she wishes to remain at home with her family.

Eventually, the conflict ends with Tess giving in and accepting the job offer. She does this because of the guilt her family places on her for the accidental death of the horse, which was their main source of income. Her family acts as if their financial struggles will never be solved unless Tess agrees to work for the d'Urbervilles. Among them, the only one who stays neutral is her father, since he neither encourages nor forbids her to accept the job. Yet, this neutrality makes the situation more difficult for Tess. As the head of the household, her father should be a decisive figure, but his silence leaves Tess without support, and she is left with no other choice but to obey. This can be seen in the quotation below:

'Tess won't go—o—o and be made a la—a—dy of!—no, she says she wo—o—on't!' they wailed, with square mouths. 'And we shan't have a nice new horse, and lots o' golden money to buy fairlings! ...

Her mother chimed in to the same tune: a certain way she had of making her labours in the house seem heavier than they were by prolonging them indefinitely, also weighed in the argument. Her father alone preserved an attitude of neutrality.

'I will go,' said Tess at last. (p. 54)

In this conflict, Tess fails to remain firm in her decision not to work at the d'Urbervilles' residence because she is pressured by her social environment – her own family. They use their difficult economic condition to push her into compliance and make her feel guilty until she gives up her resistance. This situation reflects the concept of naturalism, in which individuals are shaped and controlled by those around them (High, 2000). It also illustrates another principle of naturalism, that events often unfold in ways that go against people's hopes and expectations (High, 2000). Tess's reluctant acceptance of the job offer then marks the starting point of her greater conflicts with Alec d'Urberville, which appears in the following conflict.

The second social conflict occurs between Tess and Alec while Tess is employed at the d'Urbervilles' residence. Over time, Tess realizes that Alec is not a good man, as he repeatedly harasses her and forces his will upon her. His real intention is to sleep with her, but he disguises it by pretending to love her in order to gain her consent. This troubles

Tess deeply, causing her to want to return home. One night, on their way back from a party in Trantridge, Alec mistreats her again. This pushes Tess to finally express her desire to leave him and go home immediately. However, Alec rejects her request and lies by claiming that he loves her. He then leads her away from Trantridge, pretending that they are lost. Later, he convinces her to wait while he supposedly checks their surroundings, which is actually a trick to manipulate her. The conflict between Tess and Alec is illustrated in the quotation below:

... ‘Just when I’ve been putting such trust in you, and obliging you to please you, because I thought I had wronged you by that push! Please set me down, and let me walk home.’

‘You cannot walk home, darling, even if the air were clear. We are miles away from Trantridge, if I must tell you, and in this growing fog you might wander for hours among these trees.’

.....
‘Very well, then, I will—on one condition. Having brought you here to this out-of-the-way place, I feel myself responsible for your safe-conduct home, whatever you may yourself feel about it. ... I don’t quite know where we are myself. Now, if you will promise to wait beside the horse while I walk through the bushes till I come to some road or house, and ascertain exactly our whereabouts, I’ll deposit you here willingly. When I come back I’ll give you full directions, and if you insist upon walking you may; or you may ride—at your pleasure.’ (Hardy, 1994, pp. 87-88)

From the quotation above, it is clear that Tess wants to return home immediately because of her discomfort with Alec’s inappropriate behaviour. Alec, however, prevents her from doing so because he wants to satisfy his own desires. He initially resists Tess’s request by claiming concern for her safety, saying she might wander too far, which is a form of manipulation disguised as care.

Eventually, the conflict ends with Tess giving in. Instead of leaving on her own, she decides to trust Alec and wait as he suggests. Alec’s persuasion and trick succeed in trapping her, even though she knows his true nature: “She accepted these terms, and slid off on the near side, though not till he had stolen a cursory kiss. He sprang down on the other side” (p. 88).

However, Tess’s decision not to leave immediately creates the circumstances that allow Alec to rape her. The novel narrates this event symbolically by questioning where Tess’s guardian angel has gone and why such a pure and innocent girl is destined to be violated, suggesting implicitly that Tess has been assaulted: “Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, ...” (p. 91).

In this conflict, Tess is unable to hold on to her intention of going home because she is controlled by Alec, who is her social environment. His manipulations make her believe that it is impossible to return home alone, even though she feels unsafe with him. This situation reflects the idea of naturalism, where the character’s life and decisions are controlled by external forces (High, 2000). It also shows another principle of naturalism – that events rarely happen according to people’s expectations (High, 2000). Later, it turns out that Tess’s decision to wait, which eventually opens an opportunity for Alec to have his way with her, becomes a turning point that leads her to the next conflict, as it causes her to feel unworthy of marrying the man she loves.

The third social conflict takes place between Tess and Angel during her time working at Talbothays dairy farm. After being raped by Alec, Tess returns home, becomes pregnant, and later gives birth to a son who dies from illness. This traumatic experience leaves Tess longing to escape her past and begin a new chapter in life. Seeking a fresh start, she goes to Talbothays, a farm far from her home. There, she meets Angel Clare, and the two fall in love. Angel eventually proposes to Tess, but she rejects him, believing that she is unworthy of him and fearing he would suffer if he learned the truth about her past. To avoid the marriage, Tess tries several strategies to discourage him, such as questioning whether his family would ever approve of their relationship. However, Angel continues to counter every excuse she gives, insisting on marrying her. This conflict is shown in the quotation below:

‘O Mr. Clare—I cannot be your wife—I cannot be!’

.....
‘But why?’

Driven to subterfuge, she stammered—

‘Your father is a parson, and your mother wouldn’t like you to marry such as me. She will want you to marry a lady.’

‘Nonsense—I have spoken to them both. That was partly why I went home.’

.....
‘If you will let it pass, please, Tessy, I will give you time,’ he said. ‘It was very abrupt to come home and speak to you all at once. I’ll not allude to it again for a while.’ (Hardy, 1994, pp. 219-220)

From the quotation above, it is clear that Angel wishes to marry Tess out of genuine love, while Tess refuses because she feels undeserving and worries about hurting him with the truth of her past.

In the end, the conflict is resolved with Tess accepting Angel’s proposal. After all her reasons are dismissed, Tess – who secretly loves Angel as well – comes to believe in the sincerity of his feelings and eventually gives in to his persistence. She realizes that there is no way to stop him from continually proposing, and so she agrees to marry him. This resolution is shown in the quotation below:

‘I mean, that it is only your wanting me very much, and being hardly able to keep alive without me, whatever my offences, that would make me feel I ought to say I will.’

‘You will—you do say it, I know! You will be mine forever and ever.’

He clasped her close and kissed her.

‘Yes!’ (p. 243)

In this conflict, Tess does not succeed in keeping her decision not to marry Angel, as she is ultimately swayed by him, her social environment. Angel’s refusal to accept any of her excuses leaves her powerless to resist, making marriage her only choice. Tess’s situation reflects the naturalist principle that individuals’ lives and decisions are shaped by the people around them (High, 2000). It also highlights another idea of naturalism, which emphasizes that events seldom unfold in the way people expect them to (High, 2000). Tess’s acceptance of Angel’s proposal later becomes the root of another conflict, when their marriage forces them to face Angel’s inability to accept her past.

The fourth social conflict occurs between Tess and Angel on the night of their wedding. Tess decides to reveal her past, telling Angel that she was once raped and bore a child who later died of illness, as she feels he deserves to know the truth. However, Angel cannot accept this revelation. His inability to forgive Tess leads her to keep

pleading with him, hoping he will accept her just as she accepted his own past mistake. The conflict between Tess and Angel on their wedding night is shown in the quotation below:

‘Am I to believe this? From your manner I am to take it as true. O you cannot be out of your mind! You ought to be! Yet you are not. . . . My wife, my Tess—nothing in you warrants such a supposition as that?’

.....
‘In the name of our love, forgive me!’ she whispered with a dry mouth. ‘I have forgiven you for the same!’

And, as he did not answer, she said again—

‘Forgive me as you are forgiven! *I forgive you, Angel.*’

‘You—yes, you do.’

‘But you do not forgive me?’

‘O Tess, forgiveness does not apply to the case! You were one person; now you are another. My God—how can forgiveness meet such a grotesque—prestidigitation as that!’ (Hardy, 1994, pp. 292-293)

Based on the quotation above, Tess wishes for Angel’s acceptance and forgiveness, yet he rejects her because of his disappointment in her past.

In the end, the conflict reaches a resolution in which Angel remains unwilling to forgive Tess or live with her. He fears society’s judgment if they stay together and insists on taking time apart to reconsider their relationship. As a result, they agree to separate, with Tess returning home and Angel leaving for Brazil, as can be seen in the quotation below:

‘Quite sure. We ought to part, and we may as well get it past and done. . . .’

‘And you would like to go home?’ he asked.

‘I want to leave you, and go home.’

‘Then it shall be so.’ (pp. 312-313)

In this conflict, Tess fails to gain what she longs for – Angel’s forgiveness and acceptance – since she is ultimately controlled by him, her social environment. Angel’s rejection leaves her with no choice but to follow his decision. Tess’s experience here mirrors the concept of naturalism, where external forces shape an individual’s choices and life (High, 2000). It also reflects another key idea in naturalism: events rarely unfold in the way people wish or expect them to (High, 2000). Later, Tess’s acceptance of Angel’s decision to separate becomes a turning point that exposes her once again to Alec’s obsession, as seen in the next conflict.

The fifth social conflict arises between Tess and Alec after her separation from Angel. When Tess returns home, she unexpectedly encounters Alec, who apparently remains obsessed with her. Learning about her troubled marriage, Alec attempts to win her back by offering support for her and her family, knowing well about their poor financial condition. He even forces her to move into one of his properties. Tess, however, refuses his offers, determined not to reconnect with him and still holding onto hope that Angel will return. This conflict is shown in the following quotation:

‘But your mother’s family are not fit for lodgings, and in a little hole of a town like that. Now why not come to my garden-house at Trantridge? There are hardly any poultry now, since my mother’s death; but there’s the house, as you know it, and the garden. It can be whitewashed in a day, and your mother can live there quite comfortably; and I will put the children to a good school. Really I ought to do something for you!’

‘But we have already taken the rooms at Kingsbere!’ she declared. ‘And we can wait there——’

‘Wait—what for? For that nice husband, no doubt. Now look here, Tess, I know what men are, and, bearing in mind the *grounds* of your separation, I am quite positive he will never make it up with you. Now, though I have been your enemy, I am your friend, even if you won’t believe it. Come to this cottage of mine. We’ll get up a regular colony of fowls, and your mother can attend to them excellently; and the children can go to school.’ (Hardy, 1994, p. 453)

From the quotation above, it is clear that Alec persistently urges Tess to accept his help, motivated by his obsession with her. However, Tess refuses, as she does not want any involvement with him and continues to wait for Angel.

Eventually, this conflict is resolved with Tess yielding to Alec’s insistence and becoming his partner, as he continually pressures her. Alec manipulates her by exploiting her family’s financial problem, leaving her unable to resist. Though not directly narrated in the novel, this outcome is implied through Angel’s later conversation with Tess’s mother, who reveals that Tess is staying in Sandbourne – Alec’s place of residence. This indicates that Tess has returned to him, as can be seen in the quotation below:

‘Please tell me her address, Mrs. Durbeyfield, in kindness to a lonely wretched man!’

Tess’s mother again restlessly swept her cheek with her vertical hand, and seeing that he suffered, she at last said, in a low voice—

‘She is at Sandbourne.’ (p. 479)

In this conflict, Tess is unable to resist Alec’s offers because of his manipulation, which is tied to her family’s circumstances. Alec uses their poverty as a means to control Tess and push her into submission. Her experience illustrates naturalism’s principle that individuals’ lives and decisions are shaped by their environment (High, 2000). It also represents the naturalist notion that events rarely proceed as expected (High, 2000). Tess’s return to Alec eventually contributes to her downfall, leading her toward the tragic fate awaiting her at the novel’s end.

The last social conflict occurs between Tess and Angel after she has gone back to Alec. Angel, now regretful and having come to terms with Tess’s past, searches for her in the hope of reconciliation. When he discovers that Tess has become Alec’s partner, he still refuses to give up and tries to persuade her to return to him. Tess, however, refuses, believing that it is too late since she now belongs to Alec. This tension is portrayed in the quotation below:

‘Tess!’ he said huskily, ‘can you forgive me for going away? Can’t you—come to me? How do you get to be—like this?’

‘It is too late,’ said she, her voice sounding hard through the room, her eyes shining unnaturally.

.....
‘He has won me back to him.’ (Hardy, 1994, pp. 483-484)

The quotation above shows that Angel longs for Tess to return, while Tess rejects him, convinced that her situation has made reconciliation impossible.

Ultimately, the conflict ends with Tess returning to Angel. Although she initially insists on staying with Alec, her encounter with Angel awakens her true feelings. Realizing she has been deceived and controlled by Alec, and still deeply in love with Angel, Tess kills Alec to free herself and reunite with her husband. This is shown in the following quotation:

‘Angel,’ she said, as if waiting for this, ‘do you know what I have been running after you for? To tell you that I have killed him!’ A pitiful white smile lit her face as she spoke. (p. 491)

In this conflict, Tess abandons her earlier resolve to remain with Alec, influenced by Angel’s presence. Angel’s return makes her aware that she has been misled by Alec, who falsely convinced her that Angel no longer cared. Seeing Angel again proves otherwise, making her unable to suppress her feelings. This reflects the naturalist perspective that individuals are shaped and directed by their environment (High, 2000), as well as the idea that life rarely unfolds as expected (High, 2000). Nevertheless, Tess’s decision to go back to Angel directly leads to her final fate – her tragic execution after killing Alec.

At the end of the novel, Tess and Angel flee together, aware that she will inevitably be punished. During their brief time on the run, they share a fleeting moment of love. However, Tess is eventually captured and willingly accepts her punishment, meeting her death by hanging for the murder of Alec.

Based on the analysis of the social conflicts experienced by the protagonist, it becomes evident that the novel strongly reflects the theme of naturalism, which is that no matter how hard one tries, one will not be able to fight against one’s social environment. This can be seen from the social conflicts that occur in the novel as Tess struggles against the pressures of others, yet she ultimately fails, as her choices are constantly influenced or constrained by forces beyond her control. Thus, the social conflicts demonstrate that human beings cannot escape the dominance of their social environment, which dictates both their lives and their destinies.

Conclusion

This study has explored the theme of naturalism as reflected through social conflicts in the novel. All six social conflicts faced by the protagonist occur because she continually resists the will of others that is forced upon her. From the first to the last conflict, it is clear that her social environment consistently tries to control her and make her obey their expectations. In the first conflict, her family persuades Tess to accept a job offer by using her sense of guilt. In the second and fifth conflicts, she must confront Alec, who continuously manipulates her. Meanwhile, in the third, fourth, and final conflicts, Tess is again dominated by her husband, Angel, who pressures her to fulfil his wishes.

Ultimately, Tess fails to achieve her own desires because of the people around her. She submits to her family, Alec, and Angel, which eventually leads to her tragic death. This suggests that, no matter how hard a person tries, it is impossible to completely resist the power of one’s social environment. Through these conflicts between Tess and her surroundings, readers may feel a sense of connection with her experiences, as such struggles remain relevant even in the modern era.

This study itself has certain limitations. It only focuses on the theme of naturalism as reflected in the six social conflicts found in the novel. Other aspects, such as different literary elements or comparisons with Thomas Hardy’s other works, are not discussed. Additionally, this study does not analyse the novel through any theoretical perspective other than naturalism. Future research could therefore broaden the discussion by exploring the novel through other approaches, examining different elements, or comparing it with Hardy’s other writings.

In conclusion, the novel uses the protagonist's social conflicts to illustrate how human life is controlled by natural forces that cannot be resisted, suggesting that human beings lack true free will to shape their own destinies.

Acknowledgement

This article is developed from the undergraduate thesis of Regita Angelic (2141014), completed in the Bachelor's Programme in English, Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industries, Universitas Kristen Maranatha. The author acknowledges the academic environment and institutional support that made the completion of both the thesis and this article possible.

Reference

- Bhandari, P. (2020, June 19). *What is qualitative research? | Methods & examples*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research/>
- Birdi, A. (2023, November 3). *Tess of the d'Urbervilles novel by Hardy*. Britannica. Retrieved December 10, 2024, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tess-of-the-DUrbervilles>
- Chen, D., & Shi, X. (2019, May 17-19). An analysis of Tess of the d'Urbervilles from the tragedy of Tess. *The 4th International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Humanities (ICCESSH 2019)* (pp. 1331–1334). Atlantis Press.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334628861_An_Analysis_of_Tess_of_the_DUrbervilles_from_the_Tragedy_of_Tess
- Conflict*. (n.d.). Literary Devices. Retrieved December 5, 2024, from <https://literarydevices.net/conflict/>
- Conflict*. (n.d.). Super Summary. Retrieved December 5, 2024, from <https://www.supersummary.com/conflict/>
- Hardy, T. (1994). *Tess of d'Urbervilles*. Penguin.
- 9.1 Hardy's naturalism and fatalism. (n.d.). Fiveable. Retrieved December 5, 2024, from <https://fiveable.me/british-literature-ii/unit-9/hardys-naturalism-fatalism/study-guide/kOV3tajPlyuiXeBS>
- High, P. B. (2000). *An outline of American literature*. Longman. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.scribd.com/doc/200762516/An-Outline-of-American-Literature-by-Peter-B-High-Longman-2000>
- Hooti, N. (2011). The apprehensive and suppressed soul of the fallen woman in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(6), 630–634. Academy Publisher. Retrieved November 14, 2024, from <https://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/tpls/vol01/06/08.pdf>
- Maloku-Morina, M. (2015). Extreme realism and American naturalism. *Anglisticum Journal (IJLLIS)*, 4(6), 233-238.
<https://www.anglisticum.org.mk/index.php/IJLLIS/article/view/124/1654>
- Naturalism: What is naturalism? Definition, usage, and literary examples*. (n.d.). Super Summary. Retrieved December 5, 2024, from <https://www.supersummary.com/naturalism/>
- Nkanka, L. (2024, June 7). *Gender dynamics in Tess of the d'Urbervilles and The return of the native by Thomas Hardy*. OpenSIUC. Retrieved November 14, 2024, from https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2605&context=gs_rp

- Peng, Y. (2018, June 25). The analysis of the character of Tess of the d'Urbervilles. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 5(6), 39–42. Society for Science and Education. Retrieved November 14, 2024, from <https://journals.scholarpublishing.org/index.php/ASSRJ/article/view/4686/2883>
- Peng, Y., & Yan, R. (2018, June 8). An analysis of tragedy of Tess of the d'Urbervilles. *English Language Teaching*, 11(7), 71–75. Canadian Center of Science and Education. Retrieved November 14, 2024, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1182174.pdf>
- Shihab, M. N. P. (2024). Class conflict and chance in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Marxist interpretation. *UC Journal: ELT, Linguistics and Literature Journal*, 5(2). Retrieved November 14, 2024, from <https://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/UC/article/view/9541>
- Surur, A. N., & Dengela, S. T. (2019). Elements of naturalism in McTeague by Frank Norris. *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Sciences (IJELS)*, 4(6), 1721-1732. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.46.15>
- Theme. (n.d.). Literary Devices. Retrieved December 5, 2024, from <https://literarydevices.net/theme/>
- Thomas Hardy. (n.d.). King's College London. Retrieved December 5, 2024, from <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/people/thomas-hardy>
- Zhang, X. (2010, June). On the influence of naturalism on American literature. *English Language Teaching*, 3(2), 195–198. Retrieved March 12, 2025, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1081555.pdf>