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The effects of fate within Tess of the D'Urbervilles with specific emphasis on unlikely sequences of events and predetermined occurrences

During Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles a number of occurrences, specifically encounters, seem to be too improbable to be possible; however an analysis of Hardy's beliefs shows that he favored a fatalistic view, meaning that that which is too improbable to be chance within the novel is probably instead a manifestation of fate. For the role of fate to be properly appreciated multiple events must be put together, because it is not so much the improbability of the occurrence of one event, but rather the improbability of the occurrence of a sequence of events.

One of the first examples of this is Tess meeting Alec. For Tess to meet Alec a terribly large amount of things have to happen exactly right. First, Alec's family has to choose to take the D'Urbervilles name. Then Tess's father has to find out his origins, which leads to him drinking. Next, Tess has to kill the horse and decide to go to meet her kin. Finally, Alec had to take a fancy to her and give her a job in the hopes of a romantic interlude. It is hard to believe that a sequence of events as complex as this could occur by chance. It is rather easier to believe that fate plays a role. Another prime example of fate is the two meetings between Angel and Tess. Early on in the story, Angel just happens to be going by a dance that Tess is at, as he is leaving he thinks to himself that he should have danced with Tess (although he did not know who she was at the

time). They later in the novel end up both working at the same dairy farm and falling in love. Once again an occurrence such as this cannot be written off to simple chance so it must therefore be a function of fate. But then in a conversation between Angel and his father, Hardy takes it one step further, when Angel says that “fate or Providence had thrown in his way a woman who had every qualification to...” (163). With the combination of the improbability of the sequence of events occurring and Angel writing off the events to fate; it is impossible not to attribute them to fate. The fact that these sorts of things occur more than once in the novel makes it all the more convincing that they are in fact functions of fate.

The other form of fate is shown through individual or facts, which Hardy decides to explain as being factors of fate. For example early in the novel it is revealed that Tess had hoped to be a school teacher, however “fates seemed to decide otherwise” (49). Here Hardy makes it clear that he believes that fate determines the course of a life. Another very clear use of fate was the explanation by Alec as to why he has the reckless horse, he says “it was my fate, I suppose” (54) and goes on to explain the entire thing. Once again Hardy just lets us know broad as day that he believes in fate. Another major thing which is explained by fate is why Angel chose Tess over the other girls at the dairy, while Tess is feeling remorseful about having taken Angel, she says that “they deserved better at the hands of fate” (223). So she (and therefore Hardy) does not appear to feel that Angel took Tess not because she was the most attractive or something of that sort, but rather Hardy believes in fate so completely that he feels that she was chosen, and the others were not, due to fate (isn't that weird). And finally, the event which was probably the most cataclysmic, the ending of the maiden, is described as “meant to be” (74). And whether Tess accepted it or not, the concept that she was always predisposed to end up sleeping with Alec is the ultimate in fatalism

Throughout the novel, Hardy was able to use fate as a method to explain unlikely occurrences, which were too unlikely to be explainable by chance. So fate allows Hardy to do things in the novel that would otherwise not be possible. The use of fate also reflects Hardy's personal beliefs, showing that he believed strongly in fate.