

## THE LIFE OF A MAYOR IN THOMAS HARDY'S *THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE*

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### Abstract

*Literary work is fine work of art that can be easily understood by most of the people. One of the most popular works is novel. A good novel will be able to entertain the reader in such way that makes the reader keep on turning the pages. Novel is very interesting to analyze since there are no absolute rightness in exploring the meaning and message of the story.*

*Theme is the central idea that is served implicitly in the story through the other elements such as character, plot, setting, point of view, language and style, lastly irony and symbol. Understanding the theme will make reading more joyful. The challenge in finding the theme of a novel is one point that makes the analysis of intrinsic element very interesting.*

### Introduction

Literary work is any human creations and individual expression of human being which derives from the experience, feeling, thought and ideas which are originally made through human's imagination that purposed to entertain the readers. The literary work, as a work of art, can be a drama, a fiction, essays, biography or journalism and so on. Sometimes the author deals with an imaginary world such as in prose, drama, and poetry.

In order to construct a good literary work, there are seven intrinsic elements that should be considered e.g theme, plot, character, setting, point of view, language and style, and the last one irony and symbol (DiYanni, 1994: 26-86).

Among those elements, the theme is the center or 'soul' of the story, the moving force and the principle idea. It is the meaning of the entire story or whatever general idea that the writer wants to reveal from the story. From a single story, there might be more than one theme could be revealed by readers, since it is highly influenced readers point of view and knowledge.

The second point is the body of the story a.k.a the Plot. It is the arrangements of event in the story. The representation of one event to another should be closely related. The events arrangement should apply cause and effect relations. An ideal plot of a story will consist of these five parts, i.e. beginning, increasing, peak (climax), decreasing and ending.

Those ideal plot line could be arrange in three different method depend on the writers style of representation, e.g. successive plot,

flash back plot, and mixed plot. Successive plot is the arrangement of the events in a chronological way, i.e. begins with the earliest event and then moves chronologically to the last event. Flashback plot is the arrangement of the events that begins barely by to the end, and then move to the first event. Mixed plot is the is mixed arrangement between successive and flashback, i.e. in a middle of successive story arise a flashback, in order to make the story more interesting.

Character is the imaginary people that the writer creates, sometimes identifying themselves and sometimes judging them, complete with his/her personality/characterization.. The characterization of the character is much influenced by the theme of the story, so that the character will not lose track. Since it a pure creation of the writers' imagination, so it is not merely a human, but also any be other living things, or even alien figure. Kenney (1966:24) says "Whatever degree of artificial we are willing to allow in plot, we expect character to be "natural" or "lifelike".

Setting is the background of the story that involve time and place of the event of the story. A good setting should refer to a specific time and place of certain events and actions in a story, including the surrounding conditions. To have a good setting it must be as realistic as possible or entirely inspired by writers' imagination.

Point of view is the author's decisions about who is to telling the story and how it is to be told. In this case the writer should be consistent whether he/she will involve directly in the story or not. Knowing the writer

point of view will help the reader to discover the message of the story. According to Klarer (2004: 20 – 24), there are three types of point of view: Omniscient point of view which refer to the action as seen from the main character in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person in which present the action from an all-knowing point of view (God-like perspective); First-person narration refers to the action as seen through the figure of main or minor character who refers to her or himself in the first person; and Figural narrative situation refers to the action as seen through all the character in the line with the background and story line (plot).

Language and style is the element which is used by the writers in presenting the story. Every writer has their own style in telling the story. Style is the reflection of the author's way of perceiving experience and of organizing her perception. One of the elements of style which is explained in this writing is figurative of speech.

Lastly, irony and symbol. These elements are rarely found in a literary work, but their presence are very crucial to the turning point of the story. Irony is something that happened but being regretted, since the event is changeable but very important in determining the course of the story. Symbol is something which stands for something else. It is usually appeared embedded with the figurative language style.

#### **Synopsis of "THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE"**

The novel opens on a dirt road near the village of Weydon-Priors, in the English county of Wessex. Michael Henchard, a hay-trusser, is traveling with his wife, Susan, and young daughter, Elizabeth-Jane. However, a passing farmer tells the Henchards that there is no chance of finding employment or housing in the village. Discouraged, Michael takes his family to a furmity seller's tent in Weydon-Priors. The furmity seller adds liquor to Michael's meal, and after several servings Michael becomes an angry drunk. Because he believes his marriage at a young age ruined all his chances for success, he offers to sell his wife and daughter to the highest bidder. After several unanswered calls for bids, Susan says that someone should buy her, since her present owner isn't to her liking. Most of the other customers in the tent treat the auction as a joke, but soon a passing sailor hears the an-

nouncements and enters the tent. He offers to buy Susan and Elizabeth-Jane for five guineas, first making sure that Susan is willing to go. When Michael takes the money, Susan and Elizabeth-Jane leave with the sailor. Before leaving, Susan hurls her wedding-ring at Michael. Michael merely falls into a drunken slumber as the rest of the shocked customers leave.

The next morning, Michael awakens. Seeing the wedding ring and the money, brings the events of the previous evening back to him. He realizes that he was partly to blame for his actions, but he also blames Susan for actually thinking that the auction would be binding. Nevertheless, because his excessive drinking caused the whole situation, he makes an oath: he will abstain from all liquor for twenty-one years. Then he sets out to search for his wife and daughter. At first the search is unsuccessful because Michael refuses to explain the circumstances of their parting. Finally he learns that three people matching the descriptions of the sailor, Susan, and Elizabeth-Jane have just emigrated. Resigned, Michael gives up the search and goes to another town in Wessex, the town of Casterbridge.

Eighteen years later, Susan and Elizabeth-Jane return to Weydon-Priors searching for Michael. Elizabeth-Jane believes that Michael is just a relative, since Susan has kept her previous marriage a secret. Susan seeks Michael because she believes that he can help them now that the sailor, named Newson, has died. The women stop in the furmity seller's tent, which is still there. They learn that Michael stopped in the tent a year after the auction and left word that he lived in Casterbridge. Susan and Elizabeth-Jane leave for Casterbridge right away.

When the women arrive in Casterbridge, they learn that Michael has become extremely influential as a prosperous merchant and as the mayor of the town. The night they arrive, the townspeople are discussing Michael's bad business deals in selling sprouted grain. A young Scotsman, Donald Farfrae, overhears the discussion and gives Michael some suggestions for making the grain usable. Farfrae also engages in a light flirtation with Elizabeth-Jane.

Eventually Michael and Susan meet secretly. They decide to keep their past relationship a secret from Elizabeth-Jane. In fact, Michael suggests that they begin their relation-

ship again. Susan should rent a cottage and allow Michael to court her in a respectable manner. Susan complies, and soon after they marry. Michael hopes that someday he can openly acknowledge Elizabeth-Jane as his daughter. At the same time, Michael has success in business as well by choosing Farfrae as his general manager and confidant. Farfrae's charm impresses all the townspeople and gains the attentions of Elizabeth-Jane once again. Michael has taken the young man under his wing and regards him almost as a brother. The only enemy Farfrae has is Joshua Jopp, a man who wanted the position of general manager.

When Susan and Michael remarry, Michael has another period of prosperity thanks to Farfrae's skills. The new wealth to which Elizabeth-Jane has been introduced produces a new beauty in her. Michael becomes fond of her and wants her to take his name legally. Susan, however, is reluctant to agree. Farfrae also takes an interest in Elizabeth-Jane. However, Elizabeth-Jane's shyness and discord between Farfrae and Michael have stopped any hope of a romance. Farfrae and Michael first have a disagreement over the punishment for an habitually late worker, Abel Whittle. Next, during a public celebration, Farfrae's diversions are a success while Michael's are a complete failure. The townspeople openly praise Farfrae, which leads Michael to remark that Farfrae's term as general manger is ending. Farfrae resigns and opens up his own corn and hay store.

Susan dies, leaving a letter for Michael that is not to be opened until Elizabeth-Jane's wedding-day. Michael is lonely from the arguments with Farfrae and the lack of any tie with Elizabeth-Jane, so he tells the girl that he is her father. After thinking it over, Elizabeth-Jane is convinced. Meanwhile, Michael finds Susan's letter and reads it. The letter reveals that Michael's own daughter died, and this Elizabeth-Jane is the child of the sailor Newson. The discovery shocks and angers Michael, and he becomes cold to Elizabeth-Jane without telling her the truth.

Elizabeth-Jane is confused, but tries to win the love of Michael by immersing herself in her studies. She also visits her mother's grave. One day she meets a wealthy and charming young woman at Susan's grave, and she pours out her story to the woman. The lady, Miss Lucetta Templeman, says she will soon be a

resident of Casterbridge, and she would like it if Elizabeth-Jane can be her companion. Michael allows it despite his misgivings, and Elizabeth-Jane leaves that day.

Lucetta invites Michael to her home, even going so far as to send Elizabeth-Jane away on errands just to convince him to visit. Michael and Lucetta had an agreement long ago when he was in Jersey, but it had been put on hold because of his marriage. Now that Susan is dead, Lucetta wishes to renew the agreement. To her joy, a caller comes--but it is Farfrae coming to call on Elizabeth-Jane. Lucetta and Farfrae are instantly attracted to each other, and she begins to ignore Michael completely. While Michael tries to propose to Lucetta despite the presence of an unknown rival, Elizabeth-Jane realizes that Farfrae and Michael are in love with Lucetta, and she renounces any interest she may have had in Farfrae.

The competition between Farfrae and Michael extends into business, complicating the situation. Michael hires Joshua Jopp as his general manager, and orders Jopp to do all he can to force Farfrae out of business. Michael tries to base his grain purchase on the predictions of a weather-prophet, but the prediction is incorrect, and the bad investment drives Michael into debt. Farfrae buys wisely and gains money.

Despite his losses, Michael is still determined to marry Lucetta. After learning that Farfrae is the secret suitor, Michael forces Lucetta to agree to marrying him--or he will reveal their past connection by using her earlier love letters. Lucetta reluctantly agrees. The next day, Michael hears the trial of an old woman. The old woman is the furmity seller from long ago, and she tells the story of the wife auction. Lucetta is so horrified that she runs away to Port-Bredy. There she marries Farfrae secretly, and she tells Michael a few days later.

Meanwhile, Michael has terrible luck in business. One of his debtors fails; his men make bad decisions about corn to bring about Michael's bankruptcy. Farfrae takes the opportunity to buy Michael's headquarters and offer a job to Michael. Michael accepts, but feels real hatred at Farfrae's success. After all, Farfrae is the popular choice for mayor, and he has Lucetta. Michael looks forward to the ending of

his oath not to drink liquor.

Elizabeth fears that Michael will hurt Farfrae, and the townspeople know all about Michael's hatred of Farfrae. Although Farfrae gives up the idea of giving Michael his own shop, he cannot leave Casterbridge because he is offered the position of mayor. Lucetta begs Michael to return her letters, and a combination of pity and contempt makes him agree.

Joshua Jopp meets Lucetta after her meeting with Michael. He asks her to help him get a position with Farfrae. Lucetta refuses. Michael gives Jopp a package to deliver to Lucetta, and Jopp reasons that they are love letters. He shares the letters with some poor townswomen who hate Lucetta. They plan to have a skimmity-ride through town the next night. When the effigies of Michael and Lucetta ride through town, Lucetta sees and is so shocked that she has a seizure that kills her.

The whole world has crashed around Michael, yet he still has the love of Elizabeth-Jane. Even this reconciliation is threatened by a surprise visit from Newson, whom everyone thought dead. Michael tells him that Elizabeth-Jane is dead, and the sailor accepts this, then leaves. Although Michael and Elizabeth-Jane soon settle into a peaceful life, Michael constantly worries about Newson's return.

Meanwhile, Farfrae returns to court Elizabeth-Jane. Michael is nervous about their courtship, and he becomes even more nervous when Elizabeth-Jane says she must meet someone. She meets Newson, who tells her the truth about her birth. At the wedding of Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae, Michael comes to reconcile with his step-daughter, but he sees Newson and decides to never trouble Elizabeth-Jane again. Later, Elizabeth-Jane realizes that Michael wanted to make peace with her, and she sets out to find him. Abel Whittle, the man whom Michael wanted to fire once, cared for Michael in his last days. He tells Elizabeth-Jane that Michael is dead. Michael's last will state that no man should remember him. Elizabeth-Jane resolves to do as she is told, preferring to concentrate all her love on her husband and family.

### **Theme Construction Analysis**

#### **Theme**

A theme is constituted from the intrinsic elements of the story. Theme of the novel "The Mayor of Casterbridge" is "the ironic life of a Mayor". It is considered to be the soul of the story since the life of Michael Henchard as

the main character that keeps on changing in an ironic ways. First, he sells his family in drunk conditions that led him to his oath and made him Mayor in Casterbridge. Then he rejoined with his family but not as family. Since his wife told her daughter that Michael is their relatives. So, in order to be stay together, he should re-marry to his own wife. Finally, he found that his own daughter is died and Elizabeth is his step daughter.

In order to have more intensive comprehension of the theme, the analysis should be in corresponds to the other elements, such as :

#### **Character**

This novel consists of many characters. It is about Michael Henchard's ironic life story. It starts when Michael Henchard whilst drunk sells his wife and child in a fairground auction. By his oath he becomes rich, respected, and become the Mayor of Casterbridge. Here is the analysis of the main and secondary character of the novel.

#### **Michael Henchard**

Michael Henchard is the main character. He is swarthy, sturdy with dark hair. He is physically strong, standing more than six feet tall and has dark eyes. "*The man was of fine figure, swarthy, and stern in aspect (page 5)*"

#### **Elizabeth-Jane Newson**

She is the secondary character. She is sweet tiny beautiful girl with long and light-colored hair. "... *a tiny girl in short clothes and blue boots of knitted yarn (page 6)*". She is kind and a hard-worker.

#### **Susan Henchard**

Susan is Michael's wife. She is secondary character. She is humble and poor woman. She is an honest, simple minded woman and full of love. "*The poor woman smiled faintly; she did not enjoy pleasantries on a situation into.... (page 13)*"

#### **Donald Farfrae**

Donald is the secondary character. He is fair, fresh, and slenderly handsome. He has good humor, patient, polite, careful and controlled. "*He was years younger than Mayor of Casterbridge; fair, fresh, and slenderly handsome (page 233).*"

## Plot

Plot is the arrangements of series of events which have causal effect relationship. The plot of this novel is successive plot. It is presented as follows :

### Beginning

The problems begin when Michael Henchard, his wife and his daughter enter the furmity shop. He gets drunk and tells those around him that he has ruined his chances for success by marrying too young and would sell his wife if he could. Michael refuses to drop this idea, and finally a sailor offers to meet the five-guinea price that Michael has set. To the shock of the crowd, the sale is made, and Susan and the baby leave with the sailor.

### Increasing

The problem increase when Michael Henchard who is the Mayor of Casterbridge decided to re-marry Susan, his long lost wife. Unfortunately, he did not realize that his own daughter is died and Elizabeth is his step one.

### Peak (Climax)

Soon after Susan's death, Henchard reveals to Elizabeth-Jane that he is her father. In looking for proof of his original marriage to Susan (he needs this to prove that he is her father and have her name legally changed to his). Later, he found out that Elizabeth-Jane is not Henchard's daughter but she is Newson's daughter. Henchard is distraught and decided not to tell Elizabeth-Jane.

### Decreasing

The decreasing of problem is when Michael decided to avoid Elizabeth-Jane and went on a five years travel. He reaches Weydon-Priors, where he reflects on the auction and his failed attempts to fix the wrongs made then.

### Ending

The end of the problems is when Michael Henchard died and could fulfill his reconciliation with Elizabeth.

## Setting

A good story setting should resemble the real life setting. Here are the setting of this novel in correspond to the plot line of the story :

### Setting of Place

Beginning	: in Weydon Priors
Increasing	: in Casterbridge Church
Peak	: in Casterbridge
Decreasing	: in Weydon Priors
Ending	: in Casterbridge

## Setting of Time

There are no clear explanations about the time when the events happen. Instead the author used phrases like: one summer evening in the middle of 1800s, on windless morning, in the evening, in the blue on the morning, etc.

## Point of View

Point of view is the way the author tell the story or how the author narrate the story. In this story, the narrator is Michael and Elizabeth, because throughout the story we use Michael and Elizabeth point of view to see and understand the story. Besides, we are also presented with the thought of the character in such way that we are inside them. In this case we can say that the point of view that is used in "Major of Casterbridge" is 3<sup>rd</sup> person point of view with limited omniscient.

*... But Susan Henchard's fear of losing her dearly loved daughter's heart by a revelation had little to do with any sense of wrongdoing on her own part..(page 36)*

*... Meanwhile Henchard was sitting up, thinking over his jealous folly in forbidding Farfrae to pay his addresses to this girl who did not belong to him, when if he had allowed them to go on he might not have been encumbered with her...(page 200)*

## Language and Style

Language and style is the analysis of style that is used by an author in his/her work. It means that we should read more than one book of an author to be able to understand the language and style that he/she uses. In this case, the analysis of language and style will be limited to the author style in this story.

This story uses simple and common language with no poetic insertion so that it is easy to understand. The author in some cases uses metaphoric style in expressing the thought or feeling of the character. "*The morning sun was streaming through the crevices of the canvas when the man awoke*" (page 17). The "crevices of the canvas" in this expression means that the sun light pass throug Michael Henchard as he just a canvas, hence he has just severed the bonds between himself and humankind by selling his family in an auction.

## Irony and Symbol

This story is full of irony but lack of sym-

bol. This is in a line with the theme of the story that is the ironic life of a Mayor. It starts with an irony, struggles through an irony and ends with an irony. The most obvious irony is the letter of Susan upon her death to Michael. It is a striking condition to Michael to know that Elizabeth-Jane that he lived with is not his own daughter but the daughter of the man whom he sells his family to.

*“... I can hardly write it, but here it is. Elizabeth-Jane is not your Elizabeth-Jane the child who was in my arms when you sold me. No, she died three months after that, and this living one is my other’s husband.” (page 185)*

## CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing analysis, it can be concluded that the theme of the story is constructed through the other intrinsic elements of the story such as character, plot, setting, point of view, language and style, lastly irony and symbol. The thematic construction could be explained as follows: Character (Michael Henchard, main character), Plot (successive in a line with Michael's life and its irony), Setting (a life-like setting that supports the bitter life of Michael), Point of view (3<sup>rd</sup> person (through Michael's eyes) so that the irony is obvious), Language and Style (simple and common language makes it easy to understand), and Irony and Symbol (irony is explicitly presented and easy to understand the situation).

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