

The Moral and Social Outlooks of the Women Character in Thomas Hardy's Novels

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Abstract

Hardy had a great gift as a novelist, fondness for women. He did not have to like most nineteenth century novelists, the dishevelled quarters domesticity. He was when he felt like, quite capable of treating women with withering sarcasm and using them as 'figure of destructions' but could not imagine a world without an active, even an intruding, feminine principle. As a novelist he was fascinated by the cleverness and playfulness of women, the subtle game of sexual confrontation which they were capable of playing. He understood to fickleness and charming coquetry of women and he had a strong appreciation of the manipulative and malicious powers that might be gathered beneath the surface of delight. He may not have gone as deeply into motivation as perhaps George Eliot did but he was a very keen observer. He finds an astonishing range of feminine behaviour in women. In his novels they are always more energetic and perhaps, consequently more probable 'the women, whatever their perverse absurdities, are more plausible than the men.

Every literary period has its characteristic mode of expression. The Elizabethan period expressed of itself abundantly through forms, the romantic period indulged in poetry and when we come to consider the Victorian period we find no hesitation in saying that the dominant literary form of this age could be found in the novel. Hardy had the imaginative power to transcend the value system of his age and lies novel did examine certain moral Platitudes. This is notable in the case of Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure. The restriction of Social Convention and rigid moral attitudes only Provoked Hardy's imagination to radically question assumptions which the thought were hollow and dishonest.

Key Words: Absurdities, coquetry of women, malicious power, moral platitudes and social convention

Introduction:

Hardy was a Victorian by education, by enveloping circumstances, he was the inheritor, like any other man of genius of his time, of the characteristic attitude towards life and art which the age had develop. But at the same time thought his novels belong to the nineteenth Century Victorianism they 'represent Hardy's revolt against the Conventions and Philosophy of that time.

The Victorian age, more than all previous ages, perhaps even more than the one in which we life was an age of democracy, especially in England. Individuals composing the bulk of the Society- the poor middle class and labourers and farmers both men and women asserted their rights of self determination in society, politics, religion and all other spheres of life and they had their rights recognized. The effects of the political ideas of the French Revolutions

and the influence of the prose and poetry of Scott and Wordsworth in the literary world which in Victorian age for stupendous results not only in the shape of a changed outlook on life but in the shape of democratic, social and political legislative, pledged to recognise man as man. This democratic tendency was helped by the second great characteristic of the age the progress of science and scientific discoveries and inventions. The sense of law and order, of progress thought many changes, of a sense of struggle for existence as a biological necessity, permeated the intellectual atmosphere. The cultivation of (spread thought out) science had its effects on the moral attitude of the Victorian.

Hardy attempts to overcome the prevailing of morality by the persuasive power of his art by the artistry of the 'impressions' that he seeks to convey. Hardy's women characters are vividly actualised. He insists upon the emotional life of his characters. His greatest successes are with emotional life of his characters. His greatest successes are with subtle characters, but more particularly his rustic women characters. While his portrayal of male characters is admirable, he succeeds even better in his treatment of women, and since women is swayed for more by the instinctive life, the Superiority of female characterization is another illustration of Hardy's Peculiar skills in dealing with the primal type. Hardy's women characters are moral fable.

Objectives of the Present Work:

The main objectives of the present paper are:

1. To find out the treatment of moral and social characters in the novels of Thomas Hardy.

2. To find out the different women characters in the novels of Thomas Hardy.

Methodology of the Present Work:

The present research paper is a descriptive and an analytical treatment of women characters we must analyse about the treatment of women characters and in the five great novels of Thomas Hardy are- Far From the Madding Crowd, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge and Jude the Obscure.

Discussion of Moral and Social Outlook of Women Characters of Thomas Hardy's Great Novels:

Thomas Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge belongs to light the harsh reality of Victorian Society treatment of women characters. It may be illustrated by comparing present day Society's Conditions for an attitude towards women with how characters in the story treat Susan Henchard Lucetta Templeman and Elizabeth Jane. Everywhere in his novels human beings appear to us crushed by a Superior force that of nature at first, and of an indifferent. So, most often a hostile chance, then that of the errors implied in our own desire his creed is fatalism or determinism, he is haunted by the necessity.

Hardy the physical world holds within its form and structure as many meanings as the imagination of the observer has power to encompass. The physical expression of things-the way the world looks and is looked upon-yields one significance to the acute observer but immeasurable significance to the imaginative poet whose endeavour, as Hardy saw it, should be to draw out the essential existence of things unseen and

render them visible. This is also the part real, part imaginary world of the Wessex novels a world shaped by an imaginative seeing into nature, human and pastoral but a world found no less by hard material fact life as it is lived.

Hardy's characters, the novelist show a vast range. His women all have distinct personalities, thought as an idealist sometimes traits appear in different characters which have common elements. It seems that Hardy was specially fascinated by the possibilities of expressing his vision of life thought the agency of the female characters. In life he saw a fundamental waywardness and idiosyncrasy and he could judge how this could be expressed through the fickleness of women. If his fate could be blinded at times malignant or passionate in its ruthlessness against human hopes it could essentially be linked up with the feminine principal in life. Very often there are tragic movements in his story his in the hand and hearts of the women in his novels. In the conclusion, the moral and social outlooks of the women characters in Hardy's novel were most realistic in the society. It is the most imaginative and powerful spirit of Thomas Hardy.

Hardy seems to suggest that there is the moral problem on which the entire novels hinge. We shall see later how critical opinion on this point is sharply divided we also get the feeling that very many critics have understood Hardy's aims and consequently their exposition of Hardy's art seems curiously irrelevant. Hardy attempts to overcome the prevailing motion of morality by the persuasive power of his art-by the artistry of the 'impressions' that he seeks to convey.

Hardy is intensely aware of

(A) The problem of women in Victorian Society.

(B) The wide disparity between practice and conventional motions about purity and chastity

(C) The feeling in contemporary society that basic problems are not discussed.

(D) These customary attitudes cannot be refuted by logical arguments developed within the framework of fiction.

(E) The best way to put across his ideas would be rely on the intensity of his impressions.

(F) To arouse the greatest pity and sympathy for the suffering of Tess and

(G) Thereby to focus attention on the basic moral problem of women purity.

The rustic women characters constitute the comic relief in this generally sombre story of Far From the Madding Crowd. These characters, who represent Wessex peasantry are almost invariable treated in light and playful manner. A major trait of these rustics is their tendency to take a complacent view of their circumstances, even when these reflect no particular credit and specially to make the most of their defects. "A mild complacency" later we find him actually regarding his extreme reserve in the presence of women as a sort superior gift with which he was born.

In The Return of the Native, there is the special reference to the most creative women characters. They are simple and ignored characters, Hardy's talent is a narrow one compared with that of some writers. His memorable characters all have a family likeness. Among them, there is the patient, devoted, forgiving women Tess, Marty and Elisabeth Jane. There is

the hearted girl Bathsheba, Grace, Fancy and Anne. There is the passion tormented romantic enchantress-Eustace's, Lucetta and Lady Constantine. All the characters are portrait of the advanced and intellectual women characters of Hardy's great novels.

Conclusion:

Thomas Hardy's novels are always more energetic and perhaps consequently more probable. The women whatever perverse, absurdities are more plausible than men. His women all have distinct personalities; though as an idealist sometimes traits appear in different characters which have common elements. It seems that Hardy was specially

fascinated by the possibilities of expressing his vision of life through the agency of the feminine characters. In life he saw a fundamental waywardness and idiosyncrasy and he could judge how this could be expressed through the fickleness women. If his fate could be blind and at times malignant or passionate in its ruthlessness against human hopes it could essentially be linked up with the feminine principle in life. Very often the tragic moment of his stories lies in the hands and hearts of the women in his novels. In the conclusion, the moral and social outlook of the women characters in Hardy's novels, were most realistic in the society. It is the most imaginative and powerful spirit of Thomas Hardy.

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