



THOMAS HARDY AS AN INTERPRETER OF NATURE

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Abstract: This article has exhaustively been dealt with Thomas Hardy unlike the other Victorian novelists, went ahead in projecting the inner consciousness of men and women. Reading this we realize at once how it is that Hardy moves with such ease and sureness over the canvas when he is dealing with simple, primal natures; how it is that a certain awkwardness and theatricality show themselves whenever he has to deal with the more complex character of the highly civilized men and women.

Keywords: mutability, ricochet, conjuror, whimsical and Meliorism.

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy represented a class of writers who had stepped ahead of Victorian conventions and prejudices. His outlook was modern due to contemporary scientific theories, philosophical realism and the deterministic philosophy prevalent in his time. whatever may be passed on it from a philosophical point of view no English novelists of our age has been affected by science than Hardy. Born and bred in the country, he had observed the peasant life closely, and projected the same through his Wessex country. An architect by profession, Hardy gave to his novels a design that was architectural employing each circumstance in the narrative to one accumulated effect. By the end of 19th century, hardy had produced fourteen novels (the Wessex series) and three collections of short stories, after which he published no more fiction. He took to another medium of writing poetry and he ended his literary career as a poet. Poetry was at all times a stronger passion with him than fiction.

Hardy work can be classified under three aspects: as an interpreter of nature _the descriptive artist; as an interpreter of character _the analytical artist; as an interpreter of life _the philosophic artist. Hardy 's great distinction lies in his putting on one side the romantic point view, and adopting a deliberating and scientific observant method of treating the life of the country _side. The immutability of nature, the mutability of human life ; the bigness of nature, the littleness of man ; the inexorable character of natural laws, the puny struggles of human personalities trying to evade them.

HARDY ON NATURE

His interpretation of nature gives us the clue to his outlook on men and women. Surely his men and women are the most vividly actualized when they are simple, primal character. To understand the self sacrificing love of Marty South we must realize the spell of the brooding woods, the magic of quit, enduring trees, whose life she knew so well. To understand the attraction of the Reddleman, with his vagrant aloofness, we must first be made to feel the fascination of Egdon heath in all moods.

Hardy's sensitive tactility shows that he is supreme. His intimate knowledge of natural phenomena, he can make us feel good, by his delicate and multifold allusiveness, the significance of the country's life. Ifor Evans says that 'his knowledge of country life added colour and life to his novels '. The individuality of the damp and fragrant woods; the meaning of the wind's voice, whether for storm or piece; the premonition of the tempest, the spirit of the heath at every hour of the day and night; above all the mystic relation between the toiling peasants and the hills and valleys where they live and move and have their being.

“Gusts in innumerable series followed each other from the northwest, and when each one of them raced past, the sound of its progress resolved in to three: treble, tenor, and bass notes were to be found therein. The general ricochet of whole over pits and prominences had the gravest pitch of the chime. Next there could be heard the baritone buzz of a holy -tree. Below these in force, above them in pitch, a dwindled voice strove hard at a husky tune, which was the peculiar local sound of the wind in the alluded to”

Hardy’s love of the earth is an intensely personal local one. What Scott felt for the tweed and Morris for the scenery of the Thames, Hardy feels for the heaths and Pastures of Wessex. It has little common with the transcendental love of nature poets like Wordsworth and Shelley; though in its concrete expression reminds us that the reverse of Wordsworthian in its note of sadness and fatality.

Everywhere the life of the earth and of its denizens is subtly and inextricably interwoven. Hardy’s greatest successes are with subtle characters.” Take, for instance the Woodlander -Winterbourne’s work sums up and explains

“The holes were already dug, and they set to work. Winterbourne’s fingers were endowed with a gentle conjuror’s touch in spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress under which the delicate fibre all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth. He put most of these roots, towards the south-west ; for, he said; in forty years’ time, when some great gale is blowing from that quarter, the trees will require the strongest hold fast on that side to stand against it and not fall.

“How they sigh directly we put ‘em upright, though while they are lying down they don’t sigh at all,’ said Marty.

“Do they?’ said Giles. ‘I’ve never noticed it.’

She erected one of young pines into its hole, and held up her finger; the soft musical breathing instantly set in, which was not to cease night or day till the grown tree should be felled _probably long after the two planters had been felled themselves.

“It seems to me, the girl continued, as if they sigh because they are very sorry to begin life in earnest_ just as we be.”

“Just as we be?’ he looked critically at her.’ You ought not to feel like that, Marty.’

‘Her only reply was turning to take up the next; and they planted to take up the next; and they planted on through a great part of the day, almost without another word.”

In reading Hardy’s prose and verse one is inevitably reminded of Anderson’s whimsical tale of The Princess and the Pea. No matter how many so ft mattresses were piled upon that couch, the sensitive princess developed bruises. In other words, Mr. Hardy’s temperament has conditioned his pessimistic outlook on life. He believed that humans were manipulated by fate or chance. Hardy also had an eye for gruesome and creepy incidents and it is said that he never missed a funeral. He hankered after the gloomy and the mysterious. Optimism, Meliorism, Pessimism, are but endeavors to express in intellectual form the temperamental bias.

Hardy’s outlook on life, there are two points especially insistent- his sense of law, and his sense of pity. The first gives him that conviction, that a spiritual logic governs men’s lives, and the Greeks call it Nemesis; but we, affected by scientific formulae, attribute it to law. There is only one novelists who has touched the logic of life with the same persistency as hardy, that is George Eliot; but whereas she considers it rather from the standpoint of retribution, and treats it as moralist. He admits, as she does, the dreadful vitality of our deeds, but he dwells far longer on the disproportionate punishment. ‘Our evil actions do not remain isolated in the past, waiting only to be reversed: like locomotive plants they spread and re-root, till to destroy the original stem has no material effect in killing them.

CONCLUSION

Hardy’s novels are rich in description, scene painting from nature. In Tess and Far from the madding Crowd, nature has a vital link in stimulating the impulses of his characters. One finds Eustacia in The Return of the Native all wild and disorderly like the wilderness around. Nature dominates and prevails over the moods of his characters. The quiet rural side also to the serious and tragic intensity in his works. Thomas Hardy’s sense of pity is perhaps more acute than that of any modern writer. As a story teller he allies rich inventive power with a sense of symmetrical development, which as a rule characterizes our lessor not our greater men. Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, so productively fertile in invention, show often little perspective on their constructive side. For all the minuteness of method, Hardy never loses sight of the harmonious side. Here he shows the economy of the great artist. Futality of life is more evident in his verse. There is a dignity and beauty about his best work. Reading this reminds us, Mr. Hardy’s loving knowledge of earth, we have the kingdom of Hardy. There will be differences of opinions of Hardy as a critic, but as an artist, he is among the greatest in literature.

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