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REVIEW ARTICLE

HARDY'S POETIC VISION IN *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

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ABSTRACT

Hardy is considered as a novelist cum poet. He abandons the writing of novels from 1890 and then afterwards goes for the writing of poetry. He succeeds in both of the fields but his tragic dilemma is more found in his novels rather than in his poetry. He is a fatalist and his characters always fall in the hands of fate. Chance and coincidence is at the core of his works. The poetic self of the writer is patently greatly intimidated by the potentiality of the human spirit which makes the atmosphere around him so exciting and vibrating. He falls in love with a range of aspects of the living environment around him as easily as any other sensitive poet and countryman but his deeply sensitive self also goes deeper than the surface thus perceiving a tragic dichotomy between nature and human. This paper explores the relations between nature and human beings and the impact of nature on the lives of the characters, which evidently led to their tragic dilemma.

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INTRODUCTION

Impressions play a vital role in the novels of Hardy, especially impressions of sound and sight of nature which arouse in him the emotional content and principally these impressions are received by the novelist in diverse lights as natural and transformative. At the first glance, the generalized pictures of rustic scenes and figures which Hardy draws with immense felicity, in fact, he looks deeper into the sense of all such mundane facts of life. Florence Emily in her book *The Life of Thomas Hardy* said, "Hardy's art is to intensify the expression of things, so that the heart and inner meaning is made vividly visible" (170). The moments fascinating sensation was never a comfort to him for an extremely sensitive artist as he was, he was all the time drawn into the life's irony. Hardy's intellect was a poet's intellect with an artist's felicity, whose determining instinct drew from natural descriptions to symbolize his spiritual trepidation of the essential reality. Conjoining man's internal and external worlds with a figurative import of subterranean intensity is just a trait of a poet. Hardy creates imagery from nature to make perceivable the earnest mental and arousing tides in a character in his or her personal existential condition. At the broad-spectrum level each of the grand characters; Tess, Clym, Henchard direct their selves in a meaningless world where life offers only to reject! In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Henchard walks next to his wife to the market where he sells her; from that summit onwards he is embarrassed to bear the fate maintenance on that drifting till death meets him in a ruined hut too far from Casterbridge, his native place. To Hardy all these characters are but imagery rumbling the very tormenting facet of their living with enlightening figurative and ironic effect. In the works of this powerful poet-spectator there are a number of passages where the scenes described become theatrical externalization of characters' exciting state. The recurrent interaction between human and non-human, the real and metaphoric or for that substance the humanization of the landscape helps in crystallizing the pressure about the quandary of human being. The images as such are absolutely titled to communicate a sense of the subsistence of a different gap, a dichotomy between the world of nature and the human life, a wisdom of what the things have to be and the way they are. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* too Hardy arrives at the finish which could best be called very important in nature; it is a disclosure which crystallizes through his unusual musings springing out from his poetic vision of both human life and nature. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is the matchless sample of Hardy's poetic and aesthetic response to life, a life in which he apprehends both the loveliness and fright that are inextricably netted into a single hole of subsistence. Through his command of visualization, he dwells ornately on an ample variety of scenic details, metaphors, similes, ironies, and allusions etc., which donate considerably to the overall improvement of the Hardy's insight on the life's essentialities. The chapter four of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* can give us an idea about the Hardyan vision of life. The wobbly little wagon in which Tess along with Abraham was travelling got into an appalling collision with moving mail cart and Horse Prince was

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rigorously wounded by the shaft of the mail cart coming from the opposite direction. The picture of the pool of blood of Prince in the representation of the tale holds consequence due to the irony invested upon it through a depiction of the sun's prismatic hues reflected over it as in the *Tess of d'Urbervilles* by Hardy as:

The huge pool of blood in front of her was already assuming the iridescence of coagulation; and when the sun rose a hundred prismatic hues were elected from it. Price lay longside still and stark; his eyes half open, the hole in his chest looking scarcely large enough to have let out all that had animated him. (29-30).

One can read Hardy's words in *The Life of Thomas Hardy* by Florence Emily as, "the sorriness underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things" (171). The above image is too allusive of the lone image which the novel brought out all in its entirety, the image depicting life in its duality. The image of Tess and Clare as Adam and Eve in the chapter twenty of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Hardy intensifies the sensation of the novelist about the limpidness of love and infatuation grew strongly hot after the morning, Tess lost her eccentric and unearthly beauty. At this juncture through juxtaposition of the poetic with the mundane the narrator builds up a delicate expression about the susceptibility of life's gorgeousness as it comes inextricably tossed into an apathetic world of tactless victim. Angel's sleep walking in chapter thirty seven of this same novel unfolds itself as a figure of speech of the necessary nature of tragedy of man. The panorama is an indicator to man's internment on the hands of a strange force. Man is a fervent appliance having his own will, yet, intended to live a life of obedience being continually aware of the looming doom. Within this somnambulistic state Clare thinks his wife has died and walks in his sleep carrying Tess in his arms. At this point both Tess and Clare are reflexive bodies deficient in individual wills of their own. Whereas Clare was walking diagonally the dangerously narrow footbridge of the river, Tess, who was together with-in his arms being lifted, was feeling no fright about promising fall into the river, but was to a certain extent simply speculating if it would have been really healthier for them both to die drowning! The illustration of the river predominantly intensifies the metaphoric significance of the sight. A heedful Tess in the arms of Clare was wondering whether it would be healthier for her to die the faster than comatose her-self on along her throbbing subsistence since they were believed to part with each other the very next day.

Totally ignorant of such a turmoil being endemic inside her the river was then entirely obsessed in its own game of tossing, distorting, and splitting the moon's reflection of the moon on its surface, and it were with a great wisdom of contentment as in the *Tess of d'Urbervilles*, "The swift stream raced and gyrated under them tossing, distorting and splitting the moon's reflected face" (27). The scene efficiently adds to the readers' trepidation about the human dilemma in the cosmos. The mesmerizing wistful aspects of the life always keep men unconscious of its deeper reality. In the conduct of Clare man generally remains snared into a sleep. The scene containing young Abraham's naive and characteristic queries to Tess on the nature of the universe in the chapter four of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* allegorizes man's lack of knowledge about nature's desertation and separation as:

Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess?

'Yes.' 'All like ours?'

'I don't know; but I think so. They sometimes seem to be like the apples on our stabbard-tree. Most of them splendid and sound- a few blighted.'

'Which do we live on-a splendid one or a blighted one?'

'A blighted one.'

'It is very unlucky that we didn't pitch on a sound one, when there were so many more of'em!' (27-28).

Adolescent Abraham's quizzical about the stars archetypal of a child, evoke definite warmth in our mind and after captivating our passions, his words accordingly breathe into our realization a fresh mood of inquiring about the reality underlying the surface of all the spectacles of life. The protagonist of the novel Tess, with all her limpidness of spirit gets inextricably tossed into an unconcerned world and hence she is conceived by the narrator as one entrapped like an imprisoned bird. The same image recurs recurrently in the novel which inexorably goes to the heart of Tess' susceptibility, virtuousness and her situation. The passion of Angel and Tess seems to grow analogous with the improvement of the seasonal patterns. This may be apparent in the subsequent picture penned by Hardy in the chapter twenty four of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as:

Amid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of the Var Vale, at a season when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization, it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate. The ready bosoms existing there were impregnated by their surroundings…

July passed over their heads, and the Thermidorean weather which came in its wake seemed an effort on the part of Nature to match the state of hearts at Talbothays Diary. The air of the place, so fresh in the spring and the early summer, was stagnant and enervating now. Its heavy scents weighed upon them, and at mid-day the landscape seemed lying in a swoon. Ethiopic scorching browned the upper slopes of the pastures, but there was still bright green herbage here where the water-courses purled. And as Clare was oppressed by the outward heats, so was he burdened inwardly by waxing fervor of passion for soft and silent Tess. (165). Such a concurrence of the representation of the landscape of Talbothay's with the impregnated fervor of Clare towards Tess conjures up a figurative leitmotif. The lyrical descriptiveness is also in complete play in the depiction of the drunken party going home by moonlight on the night Tess was seduced. In this outlook Hardy pictures the phenomenological world around him as a sheer dream in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as:

Then these children of the open air, whom even excess of alcohol could scarce injure permanently, betook themselves to the field- path; and as they went there moved onward with them, around the shadow of each one's head, a circle of opalized light, formed by the moon's rays upon the glistening sheet of dew. Each pedestrian could see no halo but his or her own, which never deserted the head-shadow, whatever its vulgar unsteadiness might be; but adhered to it, and ersistently beautified it; till the erratic motion seemed an inherent part of

the irradiation, and the fumes of their breathing a compponent of the night's mist; and the spirit the scene, and of the moonlight, and of Nature, seemed harm- oniously to mingle with the spirit of wine. (96).

Here are a range of other images by Hardy as allusions to Tess' dilemma at various junctures of her survival. The scene of the commencement of the snow storm at Flintcomb-Ash in the chapter forty three of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* bears a poetic leitmotif about Tess' veracity. At the wider level the passage also illuminates up the narrator's vision of life in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as:

After this season of conjealed dampness came a spell of dry frost, when strange birds from beh- ind the North pole began to arrive silently on the upland of Flintcomb-Ash; gaunt spectral creatures with tragical eyes-eyes which had witnessed scenes of cataclysmal horror in inaccessible polar regions of a magnitude such as no human being had ever con- ceived, in curdling temperatures that no man could en- dure; which had beheld the crash of icebergs and the slide of snow-hills by the shooting light of the Aurora; been half blinded by the whirl of colossal storms and terraqueous distortions; and retained the expression of feature that such scenes had engendered…..

Then one day a peculiar quality invaded the air of this open country. There came moisture which was not of rain, and a cold which was not of frost. It chilled the eye balls of the twain, made their brow ache, and penetrated to their skeletons, affecting the surface of the body less than its core. They knew that it meant snow, and in the night the snow came. (321-22).

The representation of the setting sun as a lesion in the sky in chapter twenty one of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* makes a reflection in the affecting state of Tess at one of her crises as, "The evening sun was now ugly to her, like a great inflamed would in the sky" (316). In reality the sun has its recurring presence in the novel. There is an abundance of sunlight scenes in the sequence of events. The sun's negative feature as carried out by the above lines in the novel on the other hand holds connotation in that the literal light of the sun does not have to do anything other than enlightening the landscape. Tess and Marian swarming like flies over the facade of the farmer Gerby's turnip field, Tess standing at the entry of the diary (which was a spreading grassy field) like a fly on the table of imprecise length and of no more outcome to the environs than that fly, Tess regarding Clym as eve at her second waking night have regarded Adam, Tess lying down in her clothes as temperate as a sunned cat, her discernment of the fire in the gate after her declaration of guilt to Angel and colloquial forms like of the dust and ashes of things, the silvery multitudes, a look with the impossible insolence of the sparrow's stare before its vanquisher twists its neck, such and a variety of other shifts in visual perspectives offer inexorable resonances to the general thematic facet of the novel.

Surroundings where the interpenetration of the man and nature is a principal characteristic the narrator's masterful visualization helps in the crystallization of the reader's ultimate trepidation of the life's irony. One of these scenes is the moonlight night scene where Alec takes a cue of the moonlight to seduce Tess. One can also pass on in this circumstance the scene of rustic virtuousness of Tess when she is suckling the baby in the openly corner of the wheat-field. The sexuality of the girl gets a corresponding with the element of nature here. The interaction of the fruit of her sexuality and the fruit of the wheat-field give birth to a pattern of arousing truth for the poet-novelist even out of the mundane experiences of that spectacle. Tess along with her fellow workers had been gathering fallen sheaf of the corn in the field at the rear the reaping machines and when the time for rest came, she over and done with her lunch and then as marked by Hardy in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*:

She called up the big girl as her sister, and took the baby off her, who glad to be relieved of the burden went away to the next shock and joined the other children playing there. Tess, with a still rising color, unfastened her frock and began suckling the child. (117)

Conclusion

One does not find the end of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as rhythmical as the rest of its body. It is to a certain extent interpretative in nature. All the way through the process of imagination one is led to a stirring of sort about what could have been better. Hardy's visioning over the landscape lastly illuminates up this truth in his own singular way. At the end of the novel Hardy seems to put forward that the life of Tess was preoccupied by the role of an omnipotent power that played aggressively with her. He also seems to recommend that if her life had been just the reverse, she could have been able to live with great potentials as the elements of the nature are able to do. In his way of representing a passionate picture of this human susceptibility, the novelist invests all the genuine resources of his imaginations. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* therefore emerges as a distinctive sample of Hardy's poetic and sumptuous response to life.

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