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Hardy as a Successful Creator of Female Characters with Special Reference to *Tess to the D'urbervilles*

Dr. K. Sundararajan^a, G. Arokiyadas^b

^aAssociate Professor & Research Advisor, Department of English, A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Poondi, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.

^b Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of English, A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Poondi, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.

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Abstract

This paper aims to present Hardy as a successful creator of female characters. Hardy's novels are illumined with a galaxy of fine women characters. The Wessex novels are rich so far as female characters are concerned. Wessex novels have rich material for women characters. The heroines or main women characters can be divided under three groups. The first group consists of high class females as Tess, Sue, Eustacia, Bathsheba and Elizabeth-Jane. The second group includes female of less personal importance though pictured in details- Elfride, Ethelberta, Grace, Viviette and Anne. The third group is a mixed one. Females who are steady but of much less importance such as Paula, Fancy, Marty, Arabella, Thomasin, Lucetta. These female characters portray different roles. The writer has shown his vast knowledge of their nature. Hardy is undoubtedly an expert character painter. He shows a great power of portraying his women. In many aspects he can be compared with Shakespeare so far as his heroines are concerned.

Keywords: flirtation, penetrating, physiognomy, consequences.

1. Introduction

Thomas Hardy was born on June 2, 1840 at Upper Bock-Hampton, near Dorchester. He was the son of a builder and he himself practiced architecture in his early life for sometime, so he received a mixed culture, in which precise notions, the sense of volumes and of equilibrium of an architect are joined to a process of artistic refining. This fact has a lasting influence over the plots of his novels. He builds his novels as a mason builds a house. The string of every part is calculated, every stone has its place, every crumb of mortar bears its part. The creative work of Hardy is governed by a powerful logic the logic of events infinitely deal, never moving by the tenth part of a millimeter from its appointed sequence. "The broad sweep of design" goes hand in hand with strict accuracy ends of final issues in Hardy's stories are foregone conclusions.

The women characters in Hardy's novels can be placed in three groups. The first group should include only Tess, Sue, Eustacia, Bathsheba and Elizabeth Jane. All these five women are full-length studies and they belong to high order of personality. The second group may cover Elfride, Ethelberta, Grace, Vivette and Anne – all of who are also full-length studies but not of the same importance as the women

of the first group. The third group is also a group of full-length studies of women but they should be classed as the mixed group and to this group Paula, Marty, Arabella, Tamsie, Lucetta and Picotte should belong. There are other women in Hardy's novels who stand in the background but who at the same time are quite interesting on their own individual account. These women are Tabitha, Matilda, Fanny, Charlotte, Mrs. Yeobright, Mrs. Swancourt, Mrs. Melbury, Susan Henchard and a few others. Of all the women characters of Hardy, Tess claims our attention first, then Sue, then Eustacia and then others. Hardy has named Tess as a 'pure woman' and also as a 'standard woman'. Tess undoubtedly possesses purity of the spirit. Tess's morals are of the mind as well as of the heart.

Regarding Hardy's female characters Lionel Johnson remarks, "Or the women, whose characters and fortunes are portrayed by Hardy most various opinions may be held. Some have that winning audacity, the charm of strength which marks in diverse manners those gentle ladies, Austen's Captain Keellar Sir Julius, and Count von Rosen, the creations of other eminent hands; some are alternately "cautious" and "temerarious old words of too exact a meaning to be lost some have a distant likeness to Miss Austen's great characters, a likeness that takes us by surprise.. Some almost incur from Dr. Johnson the charge of flirtation, since he defines a flirt to be, a pert young "hussey I cannot think that any one of them is so powerfully conceived and drawn, as are the best of Mr. Hardy's men : but more cleverness, more adroitness and dexterity of wit, more research, have gone to their portraits. An admiration of their versatility in maintaining their consistency is the sentiment, which they provoke: an amazed awe of the infinite ingenuities, which their sincerity can devise for its protection. "A very little wit," wrote Swift, "is valued in a woman, as we are pleased with a few words spoken plain by a parrot." That is too often the dangerous and important view of woman's wit entertained by Mr. Hardy's men with distressing consequences." Generally Hardy has treated women with sympathy and kindness. They can be classified under five groups. First there are full-length characters of high order like Tess. Eustacia, Bathsheba and Elizabeth Jane. The second group includes Elfride Swancourt, Grace and Anne Garland. The third group consists of women of less significance though they are fully studied. The women who form the fourth group though full of significance, are not sketchily drawn e.g. Fancy Marty, Arabella Donn, Thomasin. Lucetta etc. In the end come the auomen like Matilda, Fanny, Charlotte, Marian, Izz Huett, Retty Priddle, Mrs. Veobrightand Susan Henchard who are studied in the background. Hardy's women display his great penetrating power and his great study of their psychology. They are even better than the male ones. But he was not a misogynist. Besides observing their physiognomy, he analyses their mind and hearts. He is a true lover of the fair sex. He presents them both from outside and from within. Hardy seems to agree with Byron.

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
"Tis woman's whole existence."

Love is there "the end all and be all." Love plays the most important role in Hardy's novels most of which are love-tragedies. It is their passion of love that makes them the instrument of fate. They love only to lose the game of life. Tess, Bathsheba, Elfride Swancourt, Anne Garland, Fancy, Grace, Eustacia Vye and Lucetta- all love and all of them are lost. Pierre d'Exidemil has observed, "Of one of his heroines Hardy says that her reason played with her imagination as a young cat play with a dead bird. This inferiority explains the role of love in the existence of Hardy's women. This desire for admiration, which we behold in all of them indeed, but most highly developed in Fancy Day and Bathsheba Everdeene (two of Hardy's heroines from his novels) shows us that Nature herself acquaints them with the destined role of their charm and with the power which it wields, at the same time instructing them in its necessity. With them a special kind of sensibility is always triumphant whereas in the case of men intelligence tends to emancipate. But this very Sensibility accords to love a wider role in woman's life."

They resemble Hardy at least in one respect that they have no faith in GO For them passion is more important than religion. They are controlled by sudden and constantly changing passions and surrender themselves to the men they love.

Hardy found complexity in women. In this connection a critic has observed, Hardy is above all a painter of women. Nothing indeed is as rare as a writer capable of depicting with equal success the

characters of both sexes does not handle masculine psychology with the same penetration. His male characters are either sensual or effeminate or else victims of a kind of internal attraction. He doubtlessly discovered in a woman a complexity which remained more prominently before his eyes; a submission to instinct which involved her in more intimate relations with the whole ordering of things."

Hardy calls them the radiant daughters of nature. But he makes them suffer more than men. For example in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Tess suffers more than any other character in the novel. It is only because she belongs to the weaker sex. Moreover she like other women of Hardy, is guided by her passions and falls a prey to the cruel fate. "Eustacia Vye, Lucetta Templeman, Arabella, all conjure forth from their desire the sensual whirlpool of love. One is conscious of their abdication before the masters of their hearts and of their submission to the fleshly instinct and to everything which must lead them to disaster. These are the passions driven among the Women. But there are also Sue, who is almost lacking in sex, Elizabeth Jane, and the smiling group of girls who belong to two lovers, and many others who see coquetry and feminine refinement make charming creatures of them, and whose misfortune it is to be condemned always to choose the inconstant or unworthy suitor and to turn aside from a warm and more certain affection. In their frank and native abour of their passion the women in Hardy's gallery are only comparable to Shakespeare's Women. All these women in Shakespeare closely resemble their sisters in the Wessex Novel, for their love is often a love that knows no limit and is almost always born at first sight."

Hardy represents their minutest fluctuations of emotional experience and makes them real and actual. Rickett observes, "But if his best characters are not subtle and complex, the art that depicts his characters assuredly is; for he can record the minutest fluctuations of emotional experience, and make them real and actual, it is this power which brings home to us with sureness the vital, full-blooded, and essentially fine-hearted Tess. I am not sure, however, that Eustacia Vye is not drawn with even greater power than Tess-for the philosopher obtrudes less often here than he does with the latter creation."

2. Conclusion

Cyril Alfred rightly remarks, that Hardy "excels above all in the portrayal of passionate, emotional types, chiefly women, who predominate in the novels. Yet he manages to balance them with restrained, self-controlled characters thus for a Henchard or Eustacia or Felice there is a Farfrae or Thomas in or Marty, even in his last work the contrast is marked between Jude's questioning hesitancy and Sue's impulsive certitude.

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