



IMPACT OF NATURALISM ON ENGLISH LITERATURE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE OF THOMAS HARDY'S MAJOR NOVELS

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to show naturalistic elements in two novels by Thomas Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891) and Jude the Obscure (1895). The theoretical part analyses naturalism as such and its effects on literature. It also focuses on Hardy's life and his general experience that is captured in his books. The practical part of the work deals with the features inspired by naturalism that can be found in these novels and the role within their plot construction. Naturalism, elements, determine, influence, fate, heredity. It includes social, political and economic process of the world integration. It is an international platform for maintaining consistency in the living mode of the people all over the world. Globalization can be defined as "the interconnections of global economic, political, cultural and environmental processes that continually transform present conditions" Globalization has a wide role to play the world over Globalization is the resultant of the interchange of worldly views, opinions and the various aspects of the culture everywhere around the world. This is the means for providing an international arena for intermingling of people from different sectors, culture and dialects and learns to move and approach socially without hurting and affecting each other's 'prestige. Being Global means a change in one's view of looking at life, Values, Culture & Language. This aspect has been captured wonderfully by Writers all over the World. This paper Presents how Thomas Hardy's selected work—The Mayor of Casterbridge, Far from The Madding Crowd, The Return of the native, Tess of the Derbervillage and Jude the Obscure in the light of the concept of naturalism and its various effects.

Keywords: Naturalism, Culture, Values, Language, Effects

The purpose of this research is to establish a better understanding of Naturalism in a literary meaning is a method which developed from realism. Its name was derived from the term natura which meant nature. "Originally 'Naturalism' was used in ancient philosophy to denote materialism, Epicureanism or any secularism...Eighteenth century

Naturalism...was a philosophical system that saw man living solely in a world of perceived phenomena, a kind of cosmic machine which determined his life as it did nature, in short, a universe devoid of transcendental, metaphysical or divine forces." The basic idea of this literary style is that a life of human being is determined by his heredity and the environment he lives in, his milieu. For this reason in naturalistic novels there appear elaborate descriptions of the social environment where the characters move. Naturalists believed that social development could be explained by nature, for example by the climate, geographical environment or biological and racial unusualness of people. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there developed a great passion for nature within the

Romantic Movement. The cult of nature stressed human spontaneity, the romantics admired those individuals who inclined to wild world and therefore earned disdain from the society. This obsession with environment untouched by the mechanical civilization gave a strong impulse for further study of nature. They understood the world as an organic whole where all human beings, animals, organisms, plants and even inanimate objects created the mutual symbiosis and by this harmony they were all involved in the vital functions of the universe. Even though this concept might appear momentary and fleeting, it actually contributed to the boom of various newly emerging scientific fields. Naturalism on literature as well as on the increased use of the English language with special reference of Hardy's salient features of work and how it was used within diverse societies, culture, religion, relation. It has left its footprints in every field of life. The interchange of world views and ideas has resulted in a major transformation of the lifestyle and living standards of people globally. Indian culture is no exception to this transformation process. With

the emergence of globalization, our deep rooted traditions and customs have loosened up their hold. Culture and traditions of any geographic region hold a special significance with respect to their uniqueness and that is the differentiating factor for a population within geographic boundary. This uniqueness has been disturbed in varying degrees in lieu of globalization. By reading Thomas Hardy's work of art is like reliving an age-old myth even as its multi-faceted characters, which transcend time, play out its inevitable end. It is derived from the different incidents happened in the novel, due to certain circumstances influenced on it, which recounts events while exploring the themes of power, love, lust, sacrifice, faith, duty, selfishness and jealousy. Thomas Hardy is not generally recognized as an imperial writer, even though he wrote during a period of major expansion of the British Empire and in spite of the many allusions to the Roman Empire and Napoleonic Wars in his writing. **Regionalism:** The regional novel writing was one of the features of England in the 19th century that was trending and thus the scope of 19th century English Novels is quite narrow as compared to the works of Russia. Hardy wrote regional novels they belong to the theme of regionalism because he was well aware of this area.

Importance of Wessex: Hardy's novels were confirmed to Wessex as for Hardy what happens in Wessex is what happens everywhere in the world. The problems faced by the people of his district are common to the whole mankind. Thus his novels, though confined to Wessex have universal application.

Unity of Time and Place: As Hardy's novels have been set in small area, the characters live near one another and often meet to each other. They do not meet accidentally but because they desire to meet each other. By limiting the action of the action of the novel to a small and confined area he creates a unity of place. Hardy also wants a unity of time because the action was to take a year and a day.

Human Relations and Aspirations: Instead of criticizing society, Hardy is interested in human aspirations and relationships. Love, Marriage and family form the central themes of his novels. Hardy was the first novelist to explore man – woman relationship out of the marriage that caused in the different are. His novels were mostly read age as they portrayed the life and culture of the middle class who had acquired money and had the leisure to read. We also find ample references to classical writers like Homer, Oedipus and Sophocles. Hardy's poetry explores

the themes of rural life and nature, love and loss, cosmic indifference, the ravages of time, the inevitability of death and the inhuman ironies of war. Hardy's poetry is characterized by fatalistic pessimism, earthy realism, and abstract philosophizing. These defining attributes of realism were quite similar to those which described naturalism. However, there was a difference between those two movements: naturalism as a style with its characteristic elements such as the theme of heredity, genetics and scrupulously descriptive parts differed from realism and thus represented a new movement, though it could not really exist without realism. Both styles were similar as far as the basic structure was concerned but they had different approaches, so the parts that were in those books essential remained alike. "What the Realists and the Naturalists have in common is the fundamental belief that art is in essence a mimetic, objective representation of outer reality... This led them to choose for their subject matter the ordinary, the close-to-hand, and also to extol the ideal of impersonality in technique" Both types of literature then used more or less the same techniques to express the objective reality they focused on. Although naturalism and realism have much in common, there are certain aspects that enable us to find some further distinction between them. For example, some of the distinctive features of naturalism lies in the themes and subjects its representatives chose for their literary works, which tended to be more shocking, rude and sometimes even brutal. The language contained noticeable phrases, naturalists used racier vocabulary and the concentration on details was definitely more characteristic of the works of naturalists. Still the substantial difference lay somewhere else – while the realists expressed their detachment from reality, the naturalists with their specific view described man from a point of view of his heredity. Thus naturalists further developed and deepened the elementary writing trends of realist writers, and it in fact turned the movement into a definable literary method. Most critics of the literature of the nineteenth century have accepted this notion and have established a new perspective for studying the period by demonstrating that what is now referred to as the "modern situation" or the "modern artistic dilemma" actually began with the breakup of a value-ordered universe in the Romantic period. Thomas Hardy (1840 – 1928), in both philosophical attitude and artistic technique, firmly belongs in this modern tradition. What is often called Hardy's philosophy can be summed

up by one of his earliest notebook entries in 1865: "The world does not despise us; it only neglects us." An interpretation of any of Hardy's novels must begin with this assumption. The difference between Hardy and other nineteenth century artists who experienced similar loss of belief is that while others were able to achieve a measure of faith—William Wordsworth reaffirmed an organic concept of nature and of the creative mind that can penetrate it, and Thomas Carlyle finally came to a similar affirmation of nature as alive and progressive—Hardy never made such an affirmative leap to transcendent value. Hardy was more akin to another romantic figure, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, who, having experienced the nightmarish chaos of a world without meaning or value can never fully get back into an ordered world again. In essence, the naturalists relied on observation and contemporary scientific theories. "They chose subjects from the contemporary scene which they could observe; they collected 'documentation' with care and depicted milieu in scrupulous detail." They usually focused their literary interests on the negative aspects of life. Naturalistic writers concentrated on human beings and their behaviour in their social environment, and 3 because the milieu played such a significant part in naturalistic perception, it featured in elaborate descriptions throughout all naturalistic pieces of literature. For that reason the heroes who occupied majority of a particular work's plot were not usual characters but they seemed rather unrealistic. "The heroic is alien to the scientific view of man: freedom of choice and responsibility for his actions are implicitly denied to a creature determined by forces beyond his control." Naturalistic reading may seem gloomy or give an impression of pessimism and this fact is rooted in the idea of a person who was basically deprived of all his free will. No matter how hard one tried there was always the greater power of determinism, which directed one's fate. Also the choice of rather disagreeable themes may contribute to the pessimistic impression of the naturalistic literature. However, once the initial surprise from the shocking conception of reality subsides, there can be found a pleasant feeling of melancholy.

The Mayor of Casterbridge:

The tragic pattern of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* has been said by most critics to be more explicit than that of *The Return of the Native*; by the late twentieth century, however, critics were quick to point out that there are

serious difficulties involved in seeing *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as an archetypal tragic ritual. Although Henchard is Oedipus-like in his opposition to the rational, Creon-like Farfrae, the plot of the novel, like that of *The Return of the Native*, involves the reactions of a set of characters to the timeless indifference of the world. In this case, the mute and intractable world is imaged in the dead myths and classical legends of Casterbridge. It formerly had been the gallows site, but now it is a place for illicit meetings of all kinds, except, Hardy notes, those of happy lovers. A place of man's inhumanity to man is no place for the celebration of love. The inhumanity of one person to another and the human need for love play important roles in the action of the novel. While the classical Oedipus is guilty of breaking a cosmic law, Henchard is guilty of breaking a purely human one. By selling his wife, he treats her as a thing, not a human being. He rejects human relationships and violates human interdependence and solidarity. This is the sin that begins to find objectification years later when the blight of the bread agitates the townspeople and when his wife, Susan, returns. The relationship between naturalism and realism The founders of naturalism are said to be brothers Edmonde and Jules Goncourt with their first naturalistic novel *Germinie Lacerteux* (1865), a story based on a real event, about a girl who led double life. However, the author best known for his naturalistic style used in his novels. The ambiguity that arises from the combination of all these forces makes it difficult to attribute Henchard's tragedy to any one of them. His death in the end marks the inevitable disappearance of the old order, but it is also the only conclusion possible for the man who has broken the only possible existing order when a cosmic order is no longer tenable—the human order of man himself. The reader is perhaps made to feel that Henchard has suffered more than he deserved. As a representative of the old order, his fall must be lamented even as the search is carried on for a new foundation of value and order. At the death of the old values in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, a new order is not available.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles:

The form and meaning of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* springs from Tess's relation to the natural world. At the beginning of the novel she is a true child of nature who, although sensitive to painful incongruities in her experience, is confident that the natural world will provide her with a basis of value and will protect and sustain her. When nature fails her, her perplexity throws

her out of the comfortable world of innocence and natural rapport. Tess then begins a journey both inward and outward in search of a stable orientation and a reintegration into a relationship with the natural world. Tess first appears in her “natural home” in the small hamlet of Marlott, where her innocence is dramatized as she takes part in the May Day dance. There is sensitivity in Tess that sets her apart from the other inhabitants. Shame for her father’s drunken condition makes her volunteer to take the beehives to market, and despair for the laziness of her parents makes her dreamily watch the passing landscape and ignore where she is going. When, as a result, the horse Prince is killed, Tess’s sense of duty to her family, now in economic difficulties, overcomes her pride, and she agrees to go to her aristocratic relatives for help. The facing of the idea of death without a firm hope for transcendence is the conclusion of Tess’s inward search in this second phase of her experience, when, still maintaining a will to live and enjoy, she has hopes of submerging herself into the natural world again. Tess realizes that she is not guilty by the laws of such a world. After this realization she can go to the barren world of Chalk-Newton and not feel so much the incongruity of the place. With its “white vacuity of countenance with the lineaments gone,” Chalk-Newton represents the wasteland situation of a world without order or value. Tess can remain indifferent to it because of her new realization of its indifference to her.

Naturalistic elements in Tess of the d’Urbervilles:

are several features in the novel that are based on the naturalistic theory. The most significant naturalistic influences in this novel are the milieu, the environment where people live, which plays an important role in all the lives of the characters and the heredity which determines the temperaments of the characters, their behaviour, their deeds and also their physical and mental dispositions and the fate which imposes various traps upon the human beings and so it pulls the strings in order to fulfil one’s predetermined destiny. The social and natural setting and its effect are most visible by the major characters of the novel because their background is portrayed in greater details. The milieu consists of different layers that in a different degree influence people’s lives. The most important part of the milieu that has impact on a person is his immediate family, with this background the heredity goes hand in hand and it also occupies a noteworthy role. The family setting governs one’s urges, whereas the heredity

shapes one’s inclinations. Tess was born into a family, which thrived on false impressions, of the Durbeyfields. The parents lived their normal, humble life. They had many children who were entirely dependent on their parents. They hired a small piece of rented land, they owned a horse and although there was nothing in their lives that could be called abundance, the family members never actually starved. The mother, Joan and the father, John Durbeyfield, were quite modest people who dropped by the local inns from time to time to variegate their everyday life. In fact they were plain and simple but they were by nature very naive and impractical.

Jude the Obscure: With some significant differences, *Jude the Obscure* is concerned with the same problem that animates *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*—the absurdity and tragedy of human hopes for value in an indifferent universe. As a literary creation, it is a “process” through which Hardy tries to structure the symbolic journey of every person who searches for a foundation, a basis for meaning and value. The problem, however, is that all the symbols that represent meaning to Jude—the colleges, the church, the ethereal freedom of Sue Bridehead, and even the physical beauty of his wife Arabella—are illusory. By contrast, those things that have real symbolic value in the world are the forbidding, sacrosanct walls of the college complex, which Jude cannot enter; the decaying materiality of the churches that he tries to restore; the neurotic irrationality of Sue, which he fails to understand; and his own body, to which he is inextricably tied. It is precisely Jude’s “obscurity,” his loss of “at-homeness” in the world, with which the novel is concerned. He is obscure because he is without light, because he tries in every way possible to find an illumination of his relation to the world, but without success.

Naturalistic elements in Jude the Obscure:

In this novel, the influence of the naturalism is more evident than in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* in terms of heredity and milieu, there are statements literally referring to these phenomena. Both Jude and Sue were damned by their family histories, both of them were pruned to make mistakes as far as their choice of partners was concerned and also the genetics determined their rare, subtle characters. The milieu and the surrounding society also had crucial impact upon the couple, since the people around gave them hard time when the lovers decided to live according to their own convictions. The fate in this novel is not much visible since all the naturalistic scenes are rooted

in the heredity of the characters. Since his childhood, Jude was permanently reminded of his uselessness. He was an orphan whose aunt took care of him because she had more or less no other choice. Therefore, his heredity here determined him to upcoming lack of success. Another thing that Jude inherited from his ancestors was his character which was rather unusual; he was very sensitive, maybe even too much. He could never harm a living creature. Jude took everything, especially all his failures, very personally. His physiognomy was also rather delicate. He loved every single animal and nature as such. "He had never brought home a nest of young birds without lying awake in misery half the night after, and often reinstating them and the nest in their original place the next morning. He could scarcely bear to see trees cut down or lopped, from a fancy that it hurt them. This weakness of character, as it may be called, suggested that he was the sort of man who was born to ache.") In this sense Jude was slowly growing up. A 25 child so perceptive as himself truly suffered during this period of early adulthood. "Growing up brought responsibilities, he found. Events did not rhyme quite as he had thought. Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony." Soon he was old enough to start thinking about his career. Much influenced by his obsession with Christminster he chose to become a stonemason, although he never gave up his university aspirations. Therefore, he dedicated all his free time left to books, which were as obsession according to his aunt in the family, especially grammars of ancient Latin and Greek. All was going according to his plan: apprenticeship by a stone cutter, then reading and studying, but one day as he was walking home, the fate set its trap in guise of Arabella. She was a complete opposite of him. Arabella grew up in the rough, rural family, her environment since childhood contained pig killing and dealing with its meat and offals. She was a resolute and energetic girl. She knew what she wanted from the very beginning, she had strong character and was very passionate. She served as a mighty temptation, as he found her pretty and gradually sacrificed his studies to spend time with her. She knew well about his ambitions but did not care, it was in her character to prove that she could accomplish everything she set her mind to. It was rooted in the heredity of Jude to pick the wrong partners and afterwards to confirm their relationships in unhappy marriages that mostly ended with

disastrous consequences. Therefore, deeply influenced by this predetermination Jude actually could not have avoided the same scenario. Their future prospects were not bright, especially the lack of money aggravated Arabella. Having found out that Arabella lied about her pregnancy, Jude fell into depression. "Their lives are ruined...ruined by the fundamental error of their matrimonial union..." Jude knew well about the misfortunes bad marriages brought upon his parents and other relatives. He had listened to his aunt's warnings that his family was doomed to make wrong decisions for which they had to suffer afterwards, but it was then too late to change anything. "Whereas Arabella in *Jude the Obscure* has what one might call the selfish instinct for love, Jude himself has the other, the unselfish. She sees in him a male who can gratify her. She takes him, and is gratified by him. Which makes a man of him. He becomes a grown, independent man in the arms of Arabella...This makes a man of any youth. After his short, resentful marriage Jude in fact grew mature. It was not in a pleasant way but since then he became more resistant to displeasing situations than he had been before. Partly, also alcohol helped Jude to endure his misery. After some time even Arabella had to admit that their marriage had nothing to offer her and they decided on mutual separation. At Christminster, he was at first excited at seeing everything what he had so far just dreamt about. This letter let Jude understand that he, an ordinary, poor young man, could never attend the honourable world of great scholars and therefore was predetermined to stay in his social class of the end of his life. The only thing that gave him pleasure was his cousin, Sue. She represented all the qualities that he admired: intelligence, erudition, brightness, talents, ethereal beauty and general knowledge. "He affected to think of her quite in a family way, since there were crushing reasons why he should not and could not think of her in any other...In a family like his own where marriage usually meant a tragic sadness, marriage with a blood-relation would duplicate the adverse conditions, and a tragic sadness might be intensified to a tragic horror.

Although he consciously devotes himself to the Christian framework, one night after having read a classical poem, he kneels and prays to Diana, the goddess of the moon. Both of these value systems—His discovery that Arabella has deceived him is only the first reversal in his search for unity and value. He sees the human desire for meaning as absurd in a world that has no concern for humanity, a universe that cannot

fulfill dreams of unity or meaning. This is a typical Hardy technique for moments of realization: The natural world becomes an inimical reflection of the character's awareness of the absurd. After this, Jude's reaction to the world around him is indifference: He allows himself to be seduced by Arabella again and marries her. Jude's final journey to see Sue is a journey to death and final rejection of the indifferent universe of which his experiences have made him aware. Scott has said of him, "not only does he lead us back to that trauma in the nineteenth century out of which the modern existentialist imagination was born, but he also brings us forward to our own time. Hardy shows the struggle between these characters and the indifferent universe, they have been thrown into by the accident of their birth. However, a careful arrangement of various events and situations has been helpful in imparting a unity to the structures of his novels despite the complex nature of these structures. On the whole, Hardy makes his plots serve as a compact unit to convey his tragic view of life, and all the scenes and events lead towards, reality of life which focuses on literature also intermingled with the concept of Naturalism.

Conclusion:

The novels of Hardy discussed in the Paper are present tragic stories. The most significant dissimilarities grew from the distinction that Tess of the d'Urbervilles is a female tragedy, whereas in Jude the Obscure the major protagonist is a man. Tess as a female character bore all the feminine features, hopes, aspirations and dreams. Unlike her mother, Tess had rather modest ambitions as far as her future was concerned, she only wished to sustain her true self, her integrity. She was, whether she liked it or not, dependent on men. She was vulnerable because of her gender and this weakness was fatal for her. Both novels that inspired this thesis have similar motifs and themes and it is so due to the influence of naturalism. However, naturalism is not the only literary style that is visible in these novels, there are, for instance, elements of romanticism and symbolism. It is the stylistic and thematic diversity that makes these books still interesting and worth discussing more than a century after their publication.

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