
Pursuit of Happiness and the Harsh Realities of Life: A Close Review on Characters in the Select Novels of Thomas Hardy

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ABSTRACT

The present paper attempts to explore the pursuit of happiness and the harsh realities of life from the characters in the select novels of Thomas Hardy. Like many other authors, he used his works to offer new light on the subject, language, style, and method. Hardy's viewpoint on character portrayal is revealed in the current discussion, especially in relation to female characters and a comparable environment. According to Hardy's use of picturesque language to describe men and women in his works, each character has a distinctive feature. This discourse goes into great length into the sad depth of the main characters, Gabriel Oak, Henchard, Jude, and Tess. Hardy continues to be a writer of great power and integrity. Regarding Hardy's writing style, it is admirable since it is uncomplicated, basic, and capable of nuanced connotations. It is also infused with a straightforward dignity and a captivating honesty without any strained aftertaste. In the present paper, Thomas Hardy, a legendary British novelist of the 19th century, is featured.

Keywords: Pursuit of happiness, harsh realities of life, character portrayal, power and integrity, writing style

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy, a famous novelist of the Victorian era, became well-known for his works that faithfully depicted the culture and way of life of his time. His best works are *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Jude the Obscure*, *The Return of the Native*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *Far from the Madding Crowd*. These novels stand out for their wonderful descriptions of the scenery and the characters. But in addition to the beauty, he was immediately moved by the dreadful drama of humanity, caught between the pursuit of happiness and the harsh realities of life, especially those rooted in the contradictions of both human nature and the material and social environment.

The female characters in Hardy's works can be divided into a variety of categories. They are farmers, woodcutters, haymakers, beekeepers, sheepherders, and other occupations. They all have a weird sense of comedy, with the exception of Jude the Obscure. They present a joking interpretation of Hardy's philosophy of life. This is well illustrated by Cantle, Timothy, and Joseph, to name a few.

In addition to possessing surprising characteristics, the characters are complex and difficult to understand. At a young age, the writer was deeply drawn to and comprehended. Tess and Eustacia Vye are only two examples of the lovable female characters he produced as a result of his affection and empathy.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

His in-depth knowledge, acute societal observation, admiration, love of honest people, men and women, the effect of nature, classical drama, and Shakespearian tragedy are all covered in detail. He brought an epic dimension to the well-known realism of the Victorian novel. Men from the countryside who are major characters in Hardy's writings include men like Oak and Giles. They are humble but strong, resigned but fearless. They helped the weak-minded women whom they adored. Each of these men plays a distinct personality and part in his own story.

One of the most notable aspects of Hardy's characterization is how he portrays good people with great adoration while sarcastically mocking villains and well-educated people. He dislikes people like Troy, Wildevve and Fitzpiers, who are cunning, dishonest, and hypocritical. Jude's goodness, dignity, selflessness, and thirst for knowledge elevate him in the

eyes of the readers. Jude is an anti-hero despite his intentions and aspirations, whereas Henchard is a hero despite his flaws.

The Mayor of Casterbridge is expected to be a wonderful epic novel. The novel has a vast cast of characters, but the focus is on the main character. Women typically play a supporting role. It's noteworthy that Hardy does not describe them as villains; rather, he feels sympathy for them and stands up for them. Henchard and Jude are the primary characters of *Jude the Obscure* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. In the novel, Henchard is enormous, dwarfing every other character in his proximity.

The Impact of Shakespearean Tragedy on Thomas Hardy

There is a significant impact of Shakespearean tragedy on Hardy. Shakespearean tragedy and classical theatre had an impact on Hardy. He framed his own sad pattern. Hardy argues that tragedy can be brought about by an environment that is in conflict, regardless of whether it is brought about by innate human rules or intuitions. The names of his four major tragic novels—*The Native*, *The Mayor*, *The Obscure*, and of the *D'Urbervilles*—define the central characters in such situations. According to Hardy's concept of tragedy, the highest tragedy is one that is honorable and includes the inevitable. *Jude the Obscure* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* depict a harsh and hopeless way of life. *Jude the Obscure* is the book by this author that is the most depressing.

The works of Hardy expose wrongdoing and act as accusations. In Hardy's works, there is a mood of sadness, grief, and weeping. Suffering is what sets Hardy's characters, both men and women, apart. *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *"The Woodlander"* are a few books with opening chapters that illustrate this.

However, Hardy tried to uplift the mood by including Wessex characters who aid the choric characters. The Mayor of Casterbridge says that it is one summer evening before the nineteenth century has travelled one-third of its length. The abandoned coach road that almost runs meridian ally from Bristol to the South of England is what The Woodlanders advise the rambler to use. It is said in *The Return of the Native* that "A Saturday evening in the month of November was approaching the time of twilight." Hardy defines "fulfillment" as the pattern that emerges as a result of the interaction between the main character's psyche and his surroundings. Most of Hardy's books come to tragic ends.

Wessex Epic from the Nineteenth Century

Hardy's writings are highly different, although they have a lot of characteristics. He applies what he knows about how sheep form in *Far From the Madding Crowd*. The agricultural roots of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the grain trade of Casterbridge's mayor, and furze-cutting in *The Return of the Native*. Hardy changes the locations and occupations in each of his books. They gradually resembled a Wessex epic from the nineteenth century. All of his novels deal with catastrophic stresses as well as societal, emotional, and personal conflicts. These are joined by the conflict between rural and urban areas, free will, and predestination. Finally, the reader feels sympathy for the poor hero. How self-aware characters are affects how heroic they are. The beginning and end of any epic novel are the protagonists.

Hardy's Success as a Novelist

Each of the group's eccentric rustics has an own eccentricity. Hardy's innate understanding of the human condition is shown in detail by a close investigation of his characters. He does not require the instruments of modern psychological theories when the problems of the unconscious are suggested. This is the distinguishing feature of Hardy's success as a novelist, despite the carelessness and inadequacy of this design and style.

The Mayor of Casterbridge and *Jude the Obscure*'s leading men are reflections of Hardy's mature wisdom and experience. They stand for his complete grasp of us and our place in the universe. Jude, Tess, and Henchard are all tragic characters with a few features in common, but their outcomes are different. Henchard and Jude are both laborers who, due to their direct approach to setting goals and propensity for depressed periods, are tragic characters of disappointment and failure. Both are kind and giving. They suffer as a result of their own destructive habits, which ultimately cause their own death.

In order to create a mental picture, he carefully examined the people, their jobs, and personalities as well as the sensitive nature of women and the attitudes of men, the landlords' actions, the environment in the area, and other facts. The same can also be seen in his writing. He was such a creative genius that he offered his books topics that were perfect for them and gave readers delectable recipes to savor. He has always enjoyed writing novels that are well-known in his own period. He is recognized as one of the best Victorian writers as a result, and his audience continues to be affected by his works.

Nature is friendly to his characters, according to character interactions. Occasionally hostile, other times neutral. The damaged pigs, stoned birds, nettles, and dying bunnies all serve as evidence of Jude's portrayal of nature as almost wholly hostile. Bathsheba escapes her family in *Far from the Madding Crowd* only to land in a dangerous marsh. In *The Woodlanders*, Hardy paints a picture of a world that is both healthy and sick, both kind and terrible. It's good that nature can be both a trap and a refuge. One can see a kind of social theory that the facts, in his opinion, fit into in all of his major works. As this idea develops, it elevates to the status of a universe-perspective.

In *The Return of the Native*, a young man from a rural upbringing goes too quickly towards cerebral and sophisticated ambitions, creating an imbalance between the two in him. Tess, like the semi-emancipated woman who shrinks and withers to death in the play, shares Jude's and the Mayor of Casterbridge's harshness against those who defied its norms. Jude was wrecked by his relationship with the unpleasant and promiscuous Arabella.

Love is the fundamental theme in Hardy's writings

Hardy seems to be a keen observer who has a solid grasp of the social mores of his era. He expertly described the setting and precisely described the roles played by his characters in the various towns and cities that make up the Wessex region. Along with a focus on the value of love, there is also an emphasis on the part that women play in the drama of human life. For Hardy, the purpose of women was to express their love. He draws attention to their fragility, caprice, and submission. Even when they are at fault, he still speaks of them with subtle chivalry. This attitude was influenced by Hardy's innate admiration of the fair sex.

In his novel, Hardy made reference to Wessex. Hardy's first and second category novels can be compared on a single scale, but his third category works well and is sufficiently long. Women serve as a particularly powerful illustration of humankind's inherent fragility and reliance on fate because of her passivity and frailty. Fate is employed as a tool to bring about the tragedies that befall Hardy's heroines. Hardy dislikes idealism since he has a lot of natural empathy. Tess and Elfrida are frequently the targets of superhuman forces since they represent all of humanity.

CONCLUSION

Love is the fundamental theme throughout Hardy's writings. Along with the significance of love, the function that women play in the drama of human life is underlined. His depiction of life has an unsentimental largeness that is unmatched by any other Victorian. Hardy highlights their compassion, obedient nature, fragility, and caprice. Even when they are at fault, he still speaks of them with subtle chivalry. Tess and Elfrida serve as symbols for all of mankind and are usually the targets of superhuman forces in Hardy's works. This is due to his keen awareness of the limitations of experience, ongoing compassion for everyone whose actions limit and distorts human goals, and his constant search for the essential in a given time and place.

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