

Thomas Hardy as a novelist

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Thomas Hardy is a great novelist

and occupies an important place in the history of English literature. He is great not only because he portrays the later Victorian scene but mainly because of his distinct style that he has evolved and perfected which is the most suitable for the art of a pessimistic reality. His fictional work bears the distinct traits of an original and highly sensitive mind. He is incomparably a better story teller with a spacious, deliberate manner and a rare insight into the simple, uncultured elemental natures. He shows little interest in the jostling crowd of the city that attracted Dickens or in the complexities of man as a civilized animal that fascinated Meredith. Hardy's main concern has been to depict the primal things of life and to paint men and women as the inevitable result of certain environment. In the very beginning, he gives a definite shape to his imaginative world of Wessex by portraying it vividly. Through out his writings the sombre beauty of the country side and the quaint peasant life are unmistakably penetrated. His language is simple but quite a fitting instrument for the expression of his dark view of life. He feels his way by dint of sagacity and uncompromising sincerity to the phrases he wants.

Hardy's art as a novelist is completely revealed in his plot construction. His plots are a combination of rich imagination and inventive powers with a sense of symmetrical development. He was a son of a builder and himself was attached to the business of an architect and designer. This mastery over the art of building proved a great help in the construction of his novels. He builds the story as a mason builds a house. The strain of every part is well calculated. His plots are always on the massive scale - almost on epic scale. He projects a long and vivid background in the first scene and then peoples it with the protagonists. The second part is usually struggle created by the circumstances or the invisible

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fate. In the third part, generally a compromise is set in and the novels end most in tragedy. He is a novelist of situation. He conceives a setting and then invents accordingly his plots. Like other novels, his for an example, the first chapter of the Mayor of Casterbridge is a prologue to the main plot, life and deeds of Henchard, that develops subsequently, with a number of incidents both deliberate and inevitable outcome, of into a tragic end of the central character.

Hardy is also a master of characterization. His characters are drawn from the most common walks of life. Though they belong to their particular region, they demonstrate varieties of human traits. They are not big men, but peasants, shepherds, farmers, sailors or teachers. They lead simple life. But Hardy is not satisfied with the depiction of exterior of his characters. He goes deep into human nature and gives a psychological interpretation to their inner or deeper world. The characters of Henchard and Parfroe quite contrast in their inner selves can be cited. Henchard, for example, is rash in his decision, selfish in his action and jealous in his dealings. He sells his wife and daughter in a state of intoxication, develops enmity with Parfroe without any concrete reason, and alienates Elizabeth-Jane by telling lies to Newton and breaking promises to his dead wife. On the other hand, Parfroe is noble, magnanimous, alive to the situation, sincere in duty and true in friendship.

Another feature of Hardy is his distinct treatment of love. It is effectively described with its pain, agony, grief, sorrow and sadness. Love is present in almost all his novels. In the Mayor of Casterbridge, all the major characters display this elemental trait. Henchard, a spending husband, develops love-affairs with Lucetta, a foreign lady who has to suffer silently after Susan's return. Parfroe loves Jane but is deceived by Lucetta's coquetry who ignores her former love just out of a feeling of revenge. Jane has also to suffer from the pangs of love, but at the end, she succeeds

in getting back her lost love by marrying Farfrae.

Further more, Hardy deals with the rustic life. He is a novelist who dives deep into the emotional eyes of the lower class of people and brings out their mental outlook on life. Their depressions, failures and joys are what Hardy presents. Casterbridge is the centre where all class of people assemble and display their fated activities. The novel presents not only the physical features of the country side and villages but also country customs both convivial and cruel. The 'skimmity-ride' is as much a part of life as the church choir their-bass-viol, fiddles and flutes.

Superamacy of Fate is another feature of Hardy's attitude towards human life. In most of his novels, Hardy shows that man is just a puppet in the hands of powerful destiny. All plans and hopes of man are dashed to the pieces by one sweep of destiny. This presents an atmosphere of melancholy in his novels. These under currents of melancholy are the effects of ballads and folk tales which usually have a sad ending. Henchard, a poor hay trusser, who becomes a mayor by sheer dint of his sincerity and commands all respects, becomes a hapless victim of situation and is compelled to die a poor death.

Hardy's style is always deliberate and grave. His thoughts fall into phrases and paragraphs. He gives the readers a comfortable sense of dealing with the realities. His paragraphs, sentences and measured expressions each contributes its just service in composing an organic whole. He communicates a thing rightly in right manner that is rightly accepted by the readers without any sensation of surprize or wonder. Hardy is not a great humourist like Dickens or Thackeray. yet his novels show the glimpses of delicate but grim humours and irony.

Thus, we see that Hardy enjoys an important place in the world of fiction and displays all the traits of a great novelist.

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Mayor of Casterbridge: - A Tragedy - Character is Destiny - Hardy's
Philosophy - Theme: - Eng. 11-2 P. 4th

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Thomas Hardy, a distinguished modern novelist, is a thorough realist. His novels give a realistic picture of actual life. He belongs to an age of doubt and uncertainty. He has experienced more of bitterness and sorrows. That is why he has developed a pessimistic attitude to life. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* also, he depicts the tragic life of Henchard who finds happiness as an occasional episode in the general drama of pain. However, Hardy emphasises that: "the character is destiny."

The dictum, 'character is fate', implies that man is not helpless or a puppet in the hands of fate. It means that man is the master of his destiny. In other words, character is destiny. No doubt, chance and circumstances play some roles in moulding character, but man is free to choose what he likes. He is at liberty to choose his course of action and so choosing he decides his own fate. This is Hardy's concept of human character. It has been clearly demonstrated in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

The Mayor of Casterbridge is sub-titled as 'A story of a man of character'. This man of character is Henchard. He is a simple hay-trusser. He is married and blessed with a child. But, he is over enthusiastic and ambitious. He wants to do great things in life. He ~~sells~~ ^{sells} his wife in a mood of stubborn drunkenness to a sailor at a fair. He goes to Casterbridge and becomes Mayor by sheer dint of his labour. Farfrae, a passer-by comes in his life who causes destruction to every thing. At last, he dies as a poor hay-trusser.

As a matter of fact, Susan's auction at Weydon Priors fair is the main event in Henchard's life that brings about his tragedy. But, who expedites it? It is ambitious and impulsive Henchard himself. In Casterbridge, Farfrae

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becomes his rival and causes his down fall by replacing him in business as well as social life. But, here also, Henchard himself is responsible. It is he who persuades Farfrae to stay with him. Farfrae works as his manager and is always his sincere well-wisher. But, Henchard develops prejudices against him without any concrete reason. He alienates Elizabeth Jane at the disclosure of her real identity. But, it is only because of the fact that he does not respect Susan's 'will' and commits a blunder in opening the letter that contains the ~~truth~~ ^{unpleasant} ~~truth~~ ^{undesirable} truth about Jane. Elizabeth finally rejects his love on her wedding day, when he comes with a cage. Yes, his hope for reconciliation is shattered and his heart is finally broken. But, this is also only because of Henchard's selfish and foolish lie told to Richard Newson, Jane's father.

Thus, we see that Henchard is himself responsible for his plight and tragic end. Of course, there are many events that go beyond Henchard's control. But he is obviously instrumental behind every far reaching event. Henchard is never happy. In the beginning he is poor and complains against his marriage. As a mayor, he weeps for his sold wife and abstains from the luxuries of life. His intimacy with Lucetta is shadowed with Susan's return. No doubt, Susan's appearance kindles some hope for happiness. But, she dies soon. Farfrae whom he loves like any thing becomes his rival and marries Lucetta. Jane is alienated and she dies a poor death.

In short, Hardy successfully presents his philosophy of life through the character of Henchard, a poor hay-trusser, whose rise and fall demonstrates the perpetual process of changes. Though, in case of Henchard, prosperity sans happiness, life is really a general drama of sorrow.

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Swift as a Misanthrope = Satirist

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Jonathan Swift is pre-eminently a satirist and no body can pretend to dispute his title of the Prince of Satirists. He is the greatest English Prose Satirist. Satire has been in his blood. Whether he writes of the courtiers' intrigues or speaks of the atrocities of English in Ireland or exposes false learning and corruption in religion, his aim has always been to make 'Sin and folly bleed.' His three principal works, 'The Battle of the Books', 'A Tale of A Tub' and 'Gulliver's Travels', are basically satires. In these books Swift shows his ^{tremendous} satirical powers at their height. But his 'Gulliver's Travels' displays the bitterest of satirical visions that earns him a name of a Misanthrope.

Swift was very much sensitive to his surroundings. He was tormented by discontentment and anger against the follies and corruption of the society. His objective analysis of the socio-political environment prevailing around him did much to ferment his anger and dissatisfaction. However, apart from his objective observation of life, his subjective experiences of life were, to some extent, responsible for provoking his satiric outburst. Thwarted ambition, neglected merit, physical ill-health, ungratified erotic appetite, state of servility in childhood and adolescence contributed towards making him the most bitter satirist. Besides, his age deserved it and his personal frustrations were keen enough to give it.

Swift is a ferocious satirist. Human sin and folly did not amuse him, rather they made him terribly angry. In a critic's words, 'Swift's satire is a spontaneous overflow of powerful indignation'. This indignation is not against any particular persons or groups. It is against human nature as a whole. After finishing the Travels, Swift wrote to Pope.

"I have ever hated all nations, professions and Communities; and all my love is towards individual. for instance I hate the terrible tribe of lawyers, but I love Counsellor such-a-one and judge such-a-one. . . . But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter and so forth."

At another place Swift writes:-

"Oh if the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it, I would burn my Travels."

In 'The Gulliver's Travels', Swift lashes at the mankind, but there are lovable persons like Reldresal, Gmundalclitch and Lord Manodrags etc. In fact, Swift observes the physical, intellectual and moral diseases of mankind, the supermost creature in the universe. In the society of these rational beings:

"Vast numbers of people are compelled to seek their livelihood by begging, robbing, stealing, cheating, pimping, forswearing, flattery, forging, gaming, lying, fawning, hectoring, voting, scribbling, slandering, poisoning, whoring, canting, libelling and like occupations."

Swift finally dissects human nature itself and finally concludes in the words of the King of the Brobdignag, who patiently listen to Gulliver's description of social, political and religious affairs of human beings:-

"But, by what I have gathered from your own relation and the answers I have with much pains wringed and extorted from you, I could but conclude the bulk of your natives, to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface

of the earth" MAHAQUE

A critic while talking of Swift's satiric vision refers to his misanthropism and says "the essence of his misanthropy is his hatred of bowels." This view is not correct. No doubt, Swift had a morbid obsession with dirt and bowels and has often referred to in the Gulliver's Travels, it does not explain his misanthropic vision. The real explanation lies somewhere else. As a matter of fact, Swift is critical of man not because he has bowels, but because he is constantly falling short of ideals. Like other satirists, Swift is also an idealist. His conclusion is that man should be a rational being. He should be guided by reason like the Houyhnhnms and not by passion like the Yahoos!

The more acceptable explanation of Swift's misanthropy is that it is a type of 'flagellation' a form of furious self-accusation for being born a yahoo. Gulliver is frequently called 'a yahoo' by the Horses that he does not like.

"I expressed my uneasiness at his giving me so often the appellation of yahoo, an odious animal for which I had so utter a hatred and contempt."

Leslie Stephen has exactly hit the problem of Swift, specially his morbid interest in the ~~filthy~~ ^{filthy} side of life, when he says: -

"... his state of mind is strictly analogous to that of some religious ascetics who stimulate their contempt for the flesh by fixing their gaze upon decaying bodies."

Though it cannot be denied that the main trend of Swift's satire is negative, he should not be called a misanthrope. He visualises even those evils and vices which may be invisible

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to the ordinary eyes. In fact, he is more interested in destroying evils than glorifying virtues. His ideal creatures, the Houyhnhnms, stand for ^{the} human Augustan ideals of Reason, Truth and Nature that should be acquired and practiced by the human beings.

In short, Swift's bitterness while satirizing human nature makes some conclude that he is a misanthrope. As a matter of fact, his bitterness is the result of his sincere observation and analysis of human life as it is really lived in his society and not the outcome of his ~~hater~~ being a misanthrope. Had it been so, he would not have been living among friends. Really, he wants human nature to beings to include all the ~~re~~ rationality and moral truth.

Jane Austen occupies an elevated position in the hierarchy of English novelists. She is not only a great novelist but also a great artist and stylist. Her novels reflect the human life with all its minutiae. She has a good knowledge of social problems and gives a realistic interpretation to them. She enjoys a deep insight into the human nature and dissects it like an expert Psychologist. Delicate irony, vigorous humour and mild satire are the special traits of her novels. Like her *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma* is also a successful domestic novel, for it also deals with the domestic problems specially those of love and marriage. The main Theme of the novel is delusion to self recognition and from illusion to reality, mingled with other subtle complexities of social life. Let us see the novel in a brief.

Undoubtedly, *Emma* is a masterpiece of ^{domestic} ~~social~~ novels. All domestic novels, at bottom, are social novels for every family described belongs to some society. Just as a domestic novel brings out or develops the family relations between the various characters so also a social novel reflects the social relations of the various families as also of the various members of the families with one another or among themselves. *Emma* also deals with a number of human families belonging to different strata of social life. These families are related with one another either by domestic ties or by social ties. The Woodhouses are related to the Knightleys, the Campbells are related to Dixons and the Churchills are related to Westons and so on. There are also a few families which are not domestically related but they are brought together by social engagements or functions such as tea, ball and dinner parties. These families are the Martins, the Coles, the Ellons etc.

In fact, Austen talks of only those families which are thoroughly known to her. That's why she describes all the families very intimately and graphically as if only she

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understands their domestic problems and social relations. Harriet Smith, an orphan, is brought in touch with Emma who befriends her and wants to elevate her social status. Jane Fairfax, a girl of reserve and calm nature, is placed by circumstance in the way of Frank Churchill, a representative youth of the aristocratic class. Miss Taylor, a true friend and governess of Emma, is placed in touch with Weston. Mr. Elton is pulled out from Highbury to Bath to be in close affinity with Miss Augusta. Mr. Knightley is made to associate with Woodhouses. All these personages are brought still closer by marital ties which have to pass through various knots before they are formed into certain solid domestic blocks or what we call as families.

But what are the touches or domestic about Emma. The chief touch is the marital touch which has to pass through various stage of love in order to mature into conjugal relation. In Emma, we find at least five couples of lovers who prepare themselves for the conjugal life. There are also two or three couples who have already settled down into regular families. There are some fortunate or unfortunate individuals who were married but are now widows or widowers. Miss Bates and Miss Cox are two characters who are not united with anybody, but they are not free from domestic or family relation. Thus, we see that almost all the characters of Emma are involved in and represent the complexities of families.

Emma is chiefly a novel of domestic problems, particularly of love, and sometimes of jealousy, hatred and rivalry and at occasions, of misunderstanding and enmity, culminating into marital union. Jane Austen herself a life long spinster was prompted to have the fulfillment of her unfulfilled life through the love tangles which she creates and dissolves by making the young men and

women pass through the same thrills of pleasures and displeasure, fulfilment and disappointment at every stage of their ~~to~~ advancing life. Emma Woodhouse assumes that she understands the feelings of other people and plays the role of a match maker. She approves the marriage of Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston. Now she tries to develop love between Mr. Elton and Harriet. But, contrary to her belief, he shows love to Emma instead of Harriet. When refused, Elton goes to Bath and married Augusta. Then she strives to bring Frank Churchill closer to Harriet, though she herself has soft corner for him. But, Frank finally announces his engagement with Miss Fairfax. But, when Harriet speaks out her heart for Mr. Knightley, Emma does not bear it. Finally, Harriet is united with Martin whom she had refused under the influence of Emma and Emma herself is wedded to Mr. Knightley.

Jane Austen describes development of this marital relation so intimately and minutely that realism comes to the surface. The reader is rightly persuaded to feel that as if he or she is Emma or Frank, Harriet or Elton, Knightley or Weston. They are made pass through such situations as if of actual life and after a succession of hurdles they are united as we find in our day to day life. As a matter of fact, love and marriage form the greatest realities of social life. These two chief elements form the core of this novel. That is why Emma has universally been described as a domestic novel.

Thus, we see that Emma is a great domestic novel revolving round the domestic problems love and marriage with all the sweet and bitter moments. The novel also exhibits Austen's grasp and complete understanding of human relations. She is really a great novelist who knows human life and its intricate problems.

Jane Austen's ironical vision: Irony in Emma.

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Jane Austen occupies an elevated position in the hierarchy of English novelists. Her novels reflect human life with all its minutiae. She has a good knowledge of social problems and gives a realistic interpretation to them. She enjoys a deep insight into the human nature and dissects it like an expert psychologist. Delicate irony, vigorous humour and mild satire are special traits of her ^{style} novels. However, irony is the most striking feature charm of her novels. In fact, her very vision of life is ironic. It seems as if irony is an indispensable element of her life and art.

The essence of irony is a double vision. It is a device of rhetoric by which we say something and intend its opposite. It is a contrast between the reality and the appearance. Jane Austen is a mistress of irony as it is at full play everywhere in her novels. Like *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* is thoroughly drenched in irony. Everything goes by contraries and yet everything is natural and probable. All the characters do opposite what they wish to do and experience the opposite of what they expect to experience.

Emma is the story of self-deception and the problem of the heroine is to undeceive herself. If Elizabeth Bennet is self-deceived under a set of special and doubtful circumstances, if she waits mainly for facts, *Emma* is absolutely self-deceived who takes and refashions whatever circumstances may arise. We read the novel as an ironic portrait of a girl who falls into mild deceptions and whose trustworthy friend always and finally helps her out. But this mild deception of *Emma* gives rise to a number of irony in the novel.

Emma is the centre of attraction in the novel who plays the role of a match-maker. She is the manager of other people's affairs. Accustomed to look after her father's every whim and desire she tries to extend her duty

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over her circle of friends. She befriends Miss Smith and tries to elevate her socially and intellectually. She makes her turn down the offer of marriage from Martin and tries to arrange her marriage with Elton. But she is wrong about Elton's feelings towards Harriet. Emma believes that since men are attracted by pretty face, Harriet will have handsome offers. She says:

"She is... a beautiful girl, and must be thought so by ninety-nine out of a hundred."

But no man, except Martin, shows the slightest interest in her. When Emma tries to cool ardent Elton that his attention has been directed not towards her but towards Harriet, he rejects the very notion

"Good Heaven! what can be the meaning of this?"

Emma is also wrong about Harriet's feelings towards Churchill. She says:

"Dear Harriet, it would have grieved me to lose your acquaintance, which must have been the consequence of your marrying Mr. Martin."

But, at last she comes to face her own disastrous series of errors in her protegee's affairs. She is utterly pained when Harriet falls into the patient arms of Martin.

Emma is angered by Fairfax's reserve. She creates, without any evidence, the outrageous slander about her affairs with another woman's husband. She fabricates love affairs between Frank and herself with no more encouragement than the gentleman's flirtation. Finally, Frank declares her secret engagement with Fairfax.

Emma quite misconceives her own feelings towards Mr. Knightley. She loves him from the core of her heart. But she does never think of it. When Harriet discloses her heart about Knightley's love for her, Emma fails to control her agitation of heart. The possibility of

losing Knightley to another woman opens the gate of her own love which has not been realised as yet.

Thus, we see that, in Emma, Austen's vision and instrument is irony. Irony runs through out the novel. The very texture of the novel is ironical. In fact, it is this ironical vision of Austen to the relations of characters in the novel that imparts vividness and realism to Austen's understanding of human life.

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