

## **The Themes of Mortality in Thomas Hardy's Novels**

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### **Abstract**

It is possibly almost a part that the English novel with its three main categories; historical, political and social have something in common; a universal thematic value, which is mortality, death involving character or more, no matter a human being or animal. Thomas Hardy hadn't actually represented morality in his works but showed it in different social, philosophical and contextual aspects. This paper investigates to develop literary facts about mortality in Thomas Hardy novels. Death in Thomas Hardy had taken different shapes vary from novel to another, influenced by his unique experience and the morale social context that he intended to convey through his writings. The variations of death Thomas Hardy novel illustrated by murder (crime), accident, natural death, and disease, etc. The paper is depicting the them of death within three main categories; historical, political and social have something in common; a universal thematic value, which is mortality, in other words, death involving people lives and whole community.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Overview of the Problem**

It is possibly almost a part that the English novel with its three main categories; historical, political and social have something in common; a universal thematic value, which is mortality, death involving character or more, no matter a human being or animal.

The way in which mortality maybe fictively viewed, perceived and admitted or reclined should likewise bring to the mind, on the part of the novelist, the narrator and readers.

The equal extreme or the notion of eternity so to speak the two opposing concepts of mortality and eternity or ultimately markers of the philosophical landmark of unity of opposites which is characteristic of the whole Victorian way thinking and view to life.

The present study intends to investigate, depict and value the idea of death, in term of its development and variation within Thomas Hardy's novels Tess of Durburfield, The Mayor of Caster Bridge and Far From madding Crowd in the light of advancement of psychoanalysis schools, headed by Sigmund Frued in the twentieth century.

Though mortality is not suppose at any rate to occupy the thematic interest of this study it still remains an outstanding representation of an embedded, a subtle and innate motive of the novelist which this study promises to disclose to the best possible extent relying on the writer's environment, mode of his age his social life style and culture with view to the label mortality

### **1.2 Statement of the study**

The problem of this research investigates the ways that Thomas Hardy's presentation of the issue of mortality is plausibly expressed and elaborated throughout his novels? The problem overview about the writer's realistic experience and contact with the incident of death on the grounds of his own culture must have their pressing influence on his fictive works 'namely, the novels. Moreover Hardy's subconscious images of death have presented in a manner deserves to be tackled throughout this dissertation. His style and writing techniques illustrates outcomes assume such findings to an agreeable answer to the main pillar of the research problem.

The problem addresses Thomas Hardy's works within his personality interlinked with his own social, cultural and literary background. On the other hand Hardy will be considered as a pure novelist equipped with his acquired writing skills as a craft. On the basis of integrating these two extremes the problem will be ready to find out its way to solution.

### **1.3 Questions of the study**

- 1) To what extent do Hardy's Novels proficiently portray mortality in social life in England during the Victorian age?
- 2) How do double standards and moral seriousness in Hardy's characters influence the idea of mortality in most of his novels?
- 3) What effects have sociology, psychology or divinity on Hardy's conception and implementation of fate appeared in death?
- 4) Does mortality as an obsession function as an opening a bottle neck or a solution of conflict in Hardy's novels?
- 5) What could be the probable intended message in Hardy's novels and the promised response of his readers?

#### **1.4 Hypothesis of the study**

- 1) Thomas Hardy proficiently portrays mortality in social life in England.
- 2) Double standards and moral seriousness in Hardy's characters influence the idea of mortality in most of his novels.
- 3) The sociology, psychology or divinity have implemented on Hardy's conception of fate that appeared in death.
- 4) Mortality as an obsessed inclination to Hardy climax or a resolution of conflict in most of his novels.
- 5) The probable intended message that could be in Hardy's novels and the promised response of his readers.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the study**

- 1) To draw a clear distinction between Hardy's personality as an independent personality in the real world with all its physical and mental treats, with all its interaction, attachment and integration with society, environment and culture against its shadow represented the idea of mortality (Death).
- 2) Illustrate Hardy's style, writing techniques and other literary devices to invent setting, characters and events to create novels that are meant to be a mirror of mortality intrusion within nature, people and events.
- 3) To penetrate deeply in the inner most self of Hardy to match his personal identity backgrounds with his tones and themes of mortality as may be revealed in his novels.
- 4) To discover other factors implicit or explicit as effecting his characterisation and plot within setting with the idea of mortality as a focal standpoint of his themes.

- 5) To devise a calibre of portraying social reality considering good and bad things within it moral norms conventional beliefs leading the social lower, middle and upper classes late the Victorian age and in the earlier twentieth century, so past can be brought close to observation, the present seems clear ready at hand to be investigated and a possible transition to the future may be predicted by the idea of mortality.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

- 1) This research attempts to illustrate Hardy's own personality and intellectual traits as opposed to be regarded from between the lines of his novels as far as the question of mortality and fate.
- 2) The research primarily makes use of conclusion of modern psychoanalysis school in exploring the drives and motives that lacked behind in his sub consciousness evoking novels representing their innate being and expressing interaction of the self, the other and outer world as long as novels are supposed to be at best an imitation of real life in retrospect by the idea of mortality in most of his novels.
- 3) The research generically focuses on twentieth century's novels reflect Hardy's attitude that imparts much sympathy with secular way of thinking and belief with fate (tragic death), sin and innocence.
- 4) This research evaluates Hardy's view and presentation of mortality as fictively regarded by him.

### **The Connection between Hardy's Life and Novels**

Beginning his life as an Anglican, a true believer's Hardy reached the first third of the path of faith to become an agnostic, that is doubt or scepticism till at last he was transformed into an atheist or non-believer. Of course these crucial changes in belief largely affected his view to his people and surroundings a long with his way of thinking and life style. His novels with their characters reflect those transitional stations of life. Hardy's fourteen novels reviewed here illustrate the influential impact of some literary and philosophical schools of his time, for example, romanticism, transcendentalism; modernism and Marxism, what helped him to visit all these schools is the fact that he was a contemporary of both the late Victorian age and early twentieth century or intersectional novelist.

In five out of Hardy's fourteen novels included here only five death cases are described by the novelist as being and an inevitable evil meaning that death is a necessary evil or an act of nature or destiny of all living things. However, these five cases do not represent the majority of death cases described in the rest of the novels, a matter that looks

almost of realistic reporting than fictional writing. In other words death itself can rarely be treated in fictional writings as fictional incidents. Death always remains death either in fiction or non-fiction.

Anyway, some novelists tend to open the novel with death incidents and go on narrating to give other character new life, new future, new aspiration, but a limited life again. Other writers prefer to end their novel with death after having done the same as what previous writers have done.

Richard, e.tal (2002;109) comment on death of Hardy, in this sense may be utilised as a narrative device, as a literary technique, as stylistic instrument and not merely an element of the plot structure though it may occupy exposition; rising action; tuning point; falling action or resolution.

Death may be either the cause or effect conflict, no matter whether it occurs naturally or by means of other factors. The same applies to other instances of deathlike murder; suicide; illness; capital sentence; war and accidents.

In the case of narrating death incidence, a novelist cannot help to adopting a tone that goes far beyond the realms of fictive reporting as the fate destiny some up the occurrence of mortality as a factual fact incapable of being imagined though supernatural or superstitious justification of death might not be excluded absolutely in some cases. It can all be decided on the tone of the novelist which is, in turn, necessarily imparts the novelist's view to life, belief and tradition.

Death out of illness or old age is something common in reality so when a novelist mentions it he actually does nothing but seeming to imagine a fact or let us say to reduplicate it, not to forget that the novelist's religious point of departure concerning the scatological aspect of the problem, that is whether the novelist believes in God and the after world. Whatever the case may be reporting the incidence of death as used in fictional narrative is purposed fully utilised in favour of narration engineering.

Readership or audience will have to decide for themselves whether to accept or reject the novelist tone, critics only have the right to mention that tone but preferably without being biased or misled by their own beliefs, reading populace, however, are free to express their opinion.

God predestined peoples' fates upon his own will and according to His own end and through His own means. These canons are unquestionable on their own rights, novelists' believer, sceptic or atheist can do nothing but follow the same line in their fictional narrative.

The third case of death in Hardy's novels may be related to accidents as in *Under the Green Wood Tree*, *A pair of Blue eyes*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. It seems that faith never enjoys a condition of stability throughout Hardy's life. His religious life that was interrupted by scepticism and concluded by atheism drew its shadows on his writings, however, he didn't lose control over the plots of his novels because his treatment of mortality proved to be plausible; he merely imitated the actions of the Creator or even tried to be a creator who disposes.

Death in Hardy's novels is not only meant to mention a normal occurrence, it is rather aimed to be a writing device or technique to serve the overall fabric of the plot, to develop an action or to stamp a tragic hero.

Patricia (2012;223) elaborates, "Research, as distinguished from pure criticism, refers to using primary and secondary sources to assistance in solving a literary problem" Hence the valuing of the idea of mortality in Thomas Hardy's novels as an existential point of view.

In general, the research knowledge keeps poling up a new representation of death in Hardy's work at human existence, fuller, and wider to find more about this historical period in which his works were written, or about prevailing some critical opinions which may be supplemented by reading introductions, critical articles, biographies, critical studies, histories and the like.

There are strong suggestions that Hardy's stance on religion swayed between agnosticism and atheism. Most of his works draw heavily upon the strength on all-powering fate and question the existence of God in the times of human suffering. As an author and poet, Hardy seemingly was fascinated with fatalistic ends and expressed pessimism that was impassive, indifferent. His own life was marked by a religious view that was a mixture of philosophy and spiritualism which did not discard the existence of God, yet questioned it. Hardy rather showed an interest in writing about external supernatural forces, and fascination with ghosts and spirits. However as a Church devotee, Hardy drew heavily upon the role of God in the irony and tragedy of life and human suffering.

Hardy's stance with view to his way of characterising his protagonist and antagonist, his major and minor character are complex and flat ones imply his own point of departure as far as his religious status is concerned. As mentioned above he sways between a believer and

atheist, a matter that heavily laid its apparent impact on his characters, and first of all, upon his choice of point of view between the first person perspective and omniscient or third person perspective.

Death incidence that may be traced in Hardy's novels may be categorising as natural deaths; suicide; accidents; murder and death penalty against murder. All these five instances are in reality closely interwoven with fate and destiny of man so the novelist used the mirror of narration to reflect them as they are actually are. He cannot help to evade a fact as such though he might as well resort to some literary devices and techniques as well as stylistic touches and not excluding some findings of psychoanalytical findings wherever needed as means of support and decoration.

Starting a novel with the first person point of view has its own imbedded motives basing itself on psychoanalysis grounds. It also would be contrasted against novel starting with the third point of view. The novelist involves himself or herself within the character of the novel, which of course affects his or her tone at large, as it is seldom that writer of fiction can be objective on the contrary most of them tend to be subjective so far, emotion and sympathy often draws heavily fictional writing, that makes one clear difference between fiction and non-fiction.

It seems rather impossible to discard a certain element in analysing mortality in Hardy's novels chief among them are politics; society; economy; religion; culture; literature and environment or nature. These elements influence Hardy and all other literary figures as well stamping their literary works so clearly that any eye can never miss that impact. Novels reflect more or less traces of these elements between the lines of the novels; however tone is as a unique element provides critics with ad justifiable means of measuring the work on its merits.

Scrutinising mortality in Hardy's novel should be established on two factors, firstly his what circumference? And secondly his personality but not disregarding the interaction of these two factors.

### **Hardy's of Relation with God**

Samuel (2000:52) shows that God created man, predestined his fate and disposes his destiny; Hardy like all other novelists invented a god-like act by creating characters for their novels suggested their fate and determined their destiny as well as an act of imagination. Novelists, however, cannot evade being influenced by imitating god's own free will and

disposition even though if those novelists publicly or implicitly lose their recognition of the existence of God.

So, considering Hardy's adherence to Christian value he was closely bound to the church and the Bible as a true believer descending from a family of true believers. He was a true Christian with all the virtues of Christianity humanity, compassion, love for all life, truthfulness to a remarkable extent. This can better be exemplified throughout his novels particularly *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Wherein certain opposing values clash against one another, for instance honour versus meanness; dignity versus humility; purity versus sin apparently arisen in most of Hardy's novels.

David (1988:111) presents Hardy's religious faith as in fact his family was whole-hearted devoted family and he was himself fiddled to the church, he was also a regular attendant to the church like his character angel Clare in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. a character that was created by Hardy to cut a good example for himself.

### **Naturalism and Mortality**

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century a new literary form of novels and naturalism, was imported from France, namely, the works of Emile Zola, and interdisciplinary form combining science and literature that largely falls under the influence of Darwinism and novels writing regarding mankind like other objects of nature; born, grow, get mature and death affected by the laws of heredity and environment. As regarded to Hardy implements mortality in its final proximity extinction, but he determines and directs the incidence of death in a way that serves this ends following the law of nature; being born growing getting mature and decaying under the strict law of passage of time as a necessary reasoning. In this context the passage of time is the ultimate determination of both existence and extinction so the fictive time in Hardy's novels play a decisive role in the plot structure of these novels.

Clive (2009:212) states that mortality in Hardy's novels is not restricted only to laws of nature alone, man-made damage or offences also have their apparent effect, for instance, the industrial revolution, scientific and technological advancement. Human passive qualities that may end or lead to negative or dramatic consequences summed up in the quality of evil may also leave their impact on the whole course of the plot, theme and symbol.

Hardy's departure from naturalism idealizing man as an object and his transition into a new literary school: 'Modernism' that witnesses invasion of the realm of psychology and psychoanalysis that opened wide avenues not only for scientist but also for literary men to

regard man not as an object but as spirit, as a soul as a package of needs and drives. This may be quite clear in Hardy's novel *Far From The Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Woodlanders*, *Teas of the D' Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscur* where *the capital of which* are exposed to psychological anatomy, yet with no dichotomy of body and soul. The main focus here is on the psyche considering its correlation with the physics and environment.

Arnold (2011:297) elaborates upon the complexity of Modern age along with the dramatic transition from the Victorian age into the twentieth century with all its changes that may be considered relatively revolutionary and abrupt and even shocking brought about new trends in the way of thinking, way of living, and way of creating a new literature. It made great use of the triumph of science and the superiority of reason. Hardy brilliantly utilized these new circumstances to characterize his novels with modernized features and qualities, particularly when he took to characterization.

Psychoanalysis findings served as a master mind of Hardy's novels plot and characters. Mortality now is formulated to be a logical reasonable, justifiable and decisive conclusion of sustainability. Survival is viewed in his novels as shared between Darwinism and pessimism despair and uncertainty; it may also bears some early sign of the rise of the school of absurdity basing the whole existence on meaninglessness. Opposite to what is generally believed that literature may be categorized on the bases of its contents into distinct literary school or movement, such a way of classification does not look sensible as no solid partition could be set up between what literary scholars belief as separable individual literary schools. In fact each two successive literary schools are two closely intermingling, interwoven and interacting to the extent that it becomes somehow difficult to differentiate between them and less otherwise an innovation concerned with qualities, features or characteristic is as apparently is noticed in the following literary movements.

This is exactly what had happened in the case of Hardy's novels from his early attempts of writing novels and further on through the following periods of time that he lived, and that time was not a short one. He got to know an experience in Romanticism, the Victorian Compromise and Modernism which renders his work varied and colourful thus providing rich materials for literary critic to consider. Boasting of its triumph as a relatively recent discipline literary criticism felt satisfied enough of treating and handling literary works with full and noticeable concern and interest contributing with a great deal to this new-born field, yet this literary criticism failed to bear in mind the personality of literary men, makers

and creators of literary works. No doubt a literary work is not detachable from its creator, thus, examining the personality of Hardy that must add much to anatomizing his work. One way of exploring the correlation between a novelist and his novels is to match between two parallels; the passage of his real age and the fictive time in his novels on the bases of any newly introduced thoughts, ideas or views to life and people so as to measure such changes.

Other elements of the novel; characters and events nearly but not exactly follow the same line of matching, the reason why characters and events are not identical to time as an abstract concept while people and acts are not so. Moreover a novelist's view and utilization of time both in real life and time consumed in completing a novel also have their effect on the whole process of narration.

Considering Hardy himself as a well known literary man, namely, a novelist, shall the paper regard him as escape goat within his people, within his country, within humanity or shall we dignify him as an icon idealizing him as a genius and may be later on as a wonder. This question will add best be answered on its merits by literary critics they will have to decide where Hardy failed and betrayed the cannons maxims and principles they have already set either he meant or otherwise, they also will have to determine where ,when, how and why he was victorious.

One distinguished feature characterizing most of Hardy's novels could be protagonist defeatism leading abruptly, directly and distinctly to ultimate annihilation, extermination and extinction of living existence. To reach this end Hardy masterly made fate identified with destiny through gearing the former to overwhelm the latter to saturate it and finally to absorb and swallow it. Hardy employs the quality of defeatism to put an end of his stories, and seemingly a logical one to Tess as being a murderer for avenging her virginity and purity which appear to be a natural right, if right is to be done at all, if wrong is to be penalized at all. 'Tess' as one of his novels' character faced her destiny heroically, yet her seducer cowardly enjoyed his life. Defeatism is not concerned only with human characters. in Wessex novel even nature met the same lot, in some way victimized through ill- treatment of man or on its own part thus contributing in self extermination and determining a gloomy destiny with no one to agonize for it. Defeatism in Hardy's novels betray the dark side, uncertainty and pessimistic view to life, view to people and view to events. Hardy kept in mind and pushed a head the constant notion of defeatism a long with its subsequent, annihilation, extinction and extermination or in the final analysis absolute mortality concluding in the meaninglessness of existence. This embedded belief inspired the French writers headed by Emil Zola who evoked

absurd school as a literary movement. The protagonists in Hardy's romantic novels find themselves fighting brutally some high ideal but tragically needs a merciless, hardness and cruel destiny; extermination of both will and action, body and soul.

Dale (1975:179) mentions that London was a new theme and the time Hardy lived there differed much, this perhaps may be so far match with setting of his London novels as comparison and contrast between both fictional narration and real experience might be or are preferably be matched, be considered and even be stressed, for the writer and his works are not attachable. Characters in Hardy's modern novels are characterized by "The wanderer, the loner, the exile, and the restless and rootless and homeless individuals". They all dwell the bottom of society, they all are destined to remain there, all of them are un able to get a chance of flight out of this doomed destiny where are all destined to pass a way un mentioned with no body to pity on them. Who put them to this miserable end? It is the novelist who drew out all these detail of misery.

As Hardy co-existed several successive historical periods, acting meanwhile not only as a novelist but also as an eye-witness of influential as well as trivial incidence accompanying his wandering experience. He could also be regarded as an honest trustee of a whole historical record of his country keeping a true chronicle of his society, social condition, economic circumstances and political situation. Hardy's from one literary school to the other held much to enrich his writing career as he moved from naturalism to romanticism and from romanticism to realism, he might also be thought as a forerunner of existentialism, some of his works might be summed up thematically as an early revelation or inspiration of the school of absurd if some of his works are thoroughly investigated. Some of his novels conclude that life hasn't got any meaning at all, the whole existence is unjustifiable, and the man's life on this planet has come to mean nothing. According to this sort of mentality and gradually other writers followed the same line and by degrees came to bring about the school of absurd.

Others factors interfered to influence other writers, destruction of the material civilization following the two world wars in addition the rapid of advancement the science and technology as appeared in his early novels.

Robinson (1999:77) writes that 'digging deep still into Hardy's personality and depicting his mental traits for the purpose of exploring his crafty techniques as far as point of view as well as fit in with one another in an interchangeable interactive relation, the following three arguments are possible firstly, first person perspective might positively or negatively affect tone, secondly, second person perspective might positively or negatively

affect tone, thirdly neither first person perspective nor third person perspective affects tone'. Novelists are more or less susceptible, not deliberately prone to lie under the influence of the point of view of the novel which, in turn, would influence their tones. Let us suppose as a start that the omniscient point of view somehow reveals a degree of sympathy with its characters particularly the protagonists accompanied by a heavy attack on the antagonist, while at a balance of opposition the first person perspective might manifest moderate sympathy with the protagonist paired by less cruel attack on the antagonist.

These arguments that cannot stand as a researcher would probably and preferably be tested and checked in the light of each of Hardy's individual novel, not to forget that the third angle will be the social environment and cultural background.

### **1.7 Limitation of the study**

This study involves three of Hardy's late Victorian and early twentieth century novels; far from madding crowd the life and death of mayor of Caster Bridge and Tess Durbeyfield, focusing on the notion of mortality on the part of the novelist's attitude and presentation.

As it may suggest from the first look, the label: Victorian literature could possibly leave an impression of wholly political sense; the reign of queen Victoria 1837-1901), however, the nation goes further and yet further behind this to include a sum of characteristics not having being witnessed in the earlier age of romanticism 1800 -1837 and not anticipated in the following age of modernism 1901-1999).

## **2. Findings**

- 1) A large part of Hardy's works can be measured as a kind of the social change, which appeared in his Wessex's Novel in term of realism and picturing of mortality (Death).
- 2) Hardy, in balanced contrast with his contemporary novelists, was almost a unique genius in that his novels could be distinguished by the Wessex novels where he highlighted characters and settings described in careful details and even in a realistic style, a technique that renders his novels look nearly none fictive.
- 3) Mortality in Hardy's novels is not restricted only to laws of nature a lone, man-made damage or offences also have their apparent effect for instance the industrial revolution, scientific and technological advancement.
- 4) The quality of mortality will at best be viewed from two major standards; form and content taking into consideration that mortality is not attributed solely to mankind, nor

shall it comprised living things like animals and plants, it rather extents to include abstract qualities and objects.

### 3. Conclusion

Since Hardy completely and finally lost his religious faith in his youth he had to adopt his own justification and rationalisation of mortality or let the readers say in a far-reaching points extinction or even nothingness which sets a pessimistic conclusion of existence involving the whole world. Thus predicting the after world.

Thus, announcing the advent of eternity in Hardy's novels and without admitting it plainly and openly out of any divine belief but appeared as an inevitable logical conclusion is opened the door for strong literary debate. These thought could have been arisen in Hardy's sub-consciousness, or may be the other way around the final and total nothingness of everything physical or abstract. However, have Hardy's thought ever ventured, dared or even tried to come to wonder where would cosmos eventually go to? If he really had, he left us no direct answer throughout his novels; if he hadn't, then he failed to lay down a logical pretext and set up an agreeable reason.

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