

THOMAS HARDY & ROMANTIC TRADITION

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to Nazmeen Huq, as a teacher she is superb but as a human being , she is extraordinary.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims at drawing a link between Romanticism and Victorian novelist, poet and short story writer Thomas Hardy's . Since my third semester in BRAC University English Department . I have been in love with Thomas Hardy.

Romanticism : Then & Now

By The Word "Romanticism" we generally understand a literary movement which has features like taking refuge in nature, celebration of nature, nostalgia, elevated imagination, emotional use of symbolism and myth, celebration of self and individualism. Contrasts with neo-classicism, uniqueness and eccentricity of heroism and liking for the exotic are other prominent features of Romanticism. The definition of Romanticism varies in different fields like literature, painting, music, film and architecture, It, as a literary movement, flourished during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century. It was influenced by many historical events like the French Revolution (1789). However it is not limited to a certain geographical boundary like Europe. The writers of the new world were also influenced by Romanticism, Even, Mahabharata, Which is an ancient literary work, bears some salient features of Romanticism of the Indian mode.

Apart from spatial, Romanticism can not be confined with in a certain temporal frame. Romanticism flourished in different times in a myriad of geographical locations of the world. In English perspective, it was partly a revolt against aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment and a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature, and was embodied most strongly in visual arts, music and literature. It stressed strong emotion as a source of aesthetic experience. The strongholds of the Romantic Movement were England and Germany and from these two countries Romanticism emanated throughout the world. Even though the official beginning of Romanticism occurred in 1798, the year "Lyrical Ballads" was published; unofficially Romanticism existed much before that date. Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales"(written between 1386 and 1400 AD.) is an exquisite example of that. To some people, Romanticism is common element in all literatures. In Germany, "Hymns to the Night"(published in 1798 A.D.) by Novelist was published the very year "Lyrical Ballads"

was published. The end of Romanticism is called to be the year 1832 when Sir Walter Scott and Goethe both died. But, Romanticism is still existent today, in the twenty first century. From primitive age to post modern age, Romanticism is a common feature in literature.

Imagination occupies an important position in literature. It is elevated to a position of supreme faculty of mind. Reason is always at war with imagination. Intuition, imagination and feeling attained such supremacy in Romanticism that some people accuse this movement of irrationalism.

Sublimity of untamed nature is a trademark feature in Romanticism. Nature meant many things to the Romantics. It often presented itself as a work of art, constructed by a divine imagination and especially in emblematic language.

Romanticism is an intellectual experience related to sensibility. English Romanticism has been described as the "Renaissance of the Renaissance". Romanticism encompasses resembling tales of romances, wild, improbable, False, fanciful, full of wild scenery and so on. Authenticity, integrity and spontaneity occupy a special position when Romanticism is under consideration. "Spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion recollected in tranquility" and "willing suspension of disbelief" are two mostly uttered phrases in Romanticism.

Romanticism is seen as a positive artistic and intellectual assertion of extremes in the human psyche, the areas of experience beyond logic and reason which could be expressed in a direct and heartfelt way. The new concerns were seen as a valid response to the extremes of change and uncertainty which the age itself displayed. Religious and social norms were muted in this age. In this case, Bengal Renaissance and Derozio as a person is worth remembering because it developed in the similar way.

In 1798, German critic and philosopher Friedrich von Schlegel termed "Romantics" as "Progressive Universal poetry". The free expression of "imagination" and "Association" is worth noting in this movement. Two revolutions, the American revolution of 1776 and the French revolution of 1789, have serious impacts on Romanticism because both these two movements were inspired by individualism though the exhibition was collective. Romanticism is often viewed as the "problem child" of Enlightenment which showed many characteristics of the parent and displayed some equally radical differences. The enlightenment affected most of the western world during the late 17th and 18th centuries. It was above all a movement which sought to emancipate mankind, regardless of political frontiers, from the triple tyranny of despotism, bigotry and superstition. The weapons in the fight were the great advancement in learning which marks the age, concerted intellectual movement and rationalism as the common language of science, philosophy and literature. In this period, momentous advances occurred in science, philosophy and politics, Secular humanistic ideals, inquiring mind, materialisms, empiricism, determinism and utilitarianism added to the supremacy of this age. The word "Gothic" also plays a part in Romanticism as it was also coined in this era. Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" opened up the new era for Gothic literature.

Wordsworth's definition of all good poetry marks a turning point in literary history. It proclaimed that individual artist can be the source of ultimate poetry. Tradition nostalgia and art's ability to imitate human life first came into limelight through Wordsworth's understanding of poetry. In Romantic theory art was valuable not as much as a mirror of the external world, but as a source of illumination of the world within. Along with Wordsworth's "Prelude", Whitman's "Song of Myself" became the paradigm of successful experiment to take growth of the poet's mind as a subject for an "epic" enterprise made up of lyric

components. Both these works exhibit Romantic Realism. In this point, it is important to take note of Goethe's "Songs of Young Werther" (1776), Chateaubriand's "Rene" (1801) and Byron's "Childe Harold".

In Visual art and literature, Romanticism dealt with recurrent themes in the evocation of criticism of the past, the cult of "Sensibility" with its emphasis on women and children, the heroic isolation of the artist or narrator, and a respect for a new, wild, untrammelled and "Pure" nature. In USA, Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne were proponents of this sort.

An early German influence came from Johann Wolfgang Goethe whose 1774 novel "The Sorrows of Young Werther" made a breakthrough in German Literary history. The young men through out Europe emulated Goethe's protagonist who was a young artist with a very sensitive and passionate temperament. Other important figures of German Romanticism were Ludwig Tieck, Novalis and Friedrich Hoelderlin. A difference between German and English Romantics is that, the English, specially William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, sought to reject Augustan poetry in favor of more direct speech derived from folk traditions. Both these poets were also involved in utopian social thought in the wake of the French Revolution. The Germans were not so.

As a Roman Catholic country, Romanticism was less pronounced in France. It tended to develop later subsequently after the rise of Napoleon. Francis-Rene de Chateaubriand is often called the "Father of French Romanticism". The movement attained full momentum in the nineteenth century. The paintings of Theodore Gericault and Eugene Delacroix, the poems and novels of Victor Hugo, the novels of Stendhal and composition of Hector Berlioz fueled this movement.

Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov and Fyodor Tyutchev were the principal exponents of Romanticism in Russia. By and large, they were influenced by the German Romantics. Adam Mickiewicz was the representative of Romanticism in Poland. Before the wake of Romanticism in Poland, Germany invaded this country. Revival and reinterpretation of ancient myths, customs and traditions by Romantic poets and painters helped to distinguish their indigenous cultures from those of the dominant nation and crystallizes the mythography of Romantic Nationalism.

Washington Irving, James Fennimore Cooper and Herman Melville were the prime forces behind American (US) Romanticism. Emily Dickinson was another notable figure in this realm. The high time of US Romanticism was the first to the fourth decade of the Nineteenth century. Romantic Gothic is a predominantly US creation.

Romanticism is not devoid of Nationalism. In other words, Nationalism is a byproduct of Romanticism. One of Romanticism's key ideas and most enduring legacies is the assertion of nationalism. Rousseau inspired the early Romantic Nationalism. The nature of Romanticism changed dramatically after the French Revolution with the rise of Napoleon. It was inspirational to movements of other nations. Self determination and a consciousness of national unity were held to be two of the reasons why France was able to defeat other countries in battle.

The term Neo-romanticism used to cover a variety of movements in music and painting which has been used with reference to very late 19th century and early 20th century composers such as Gustav Mahler particularly by Dalhaus who uses it as synonymous with late

Romanticism. It has been applied to contemporary composers who rejected or abandoned the use of the devices of avant-garde modernism.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries Neo-romanticism was considered in opposition to naturalism. In Britain, from 1880 A.D., to 1910 A.D., Neo-Romanticism emerged strongly. The people prominent in the then time are Lewis Carroll, John Ruskin, Edward Elger, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Vaughan Williams, William Morris, W.B. Yeats, Rudyard Kipling, A.E. Housman, Tadeusz Micinski and Antonio Lange. The Aesthetic movement, the Arts & crafts movements, Symbolism, Neo-gothic architecture and pictorial photography marked the age.

In 1920s, artists such as F.L. Griggs had begun to reevaluate and rediscover the works of their Romantic forebears; from the visionary work of Samuel palmer and William Blake via high Romanticism, to the neo-romanticism that flowered between 1880 and 1910. This led to a further revival in the Depression and war years between 1930 and 1955 and this can be seen in other artist's and film maker's works. Neo-Romanticism was almost dormant from 1955-1970. But, in late 1970s it resurfaced. From 1975 to present, it is a movement exploring new horizons.

Thomas Hardy: Achievements & Tradition

In order to discuss about romanticism in a particular novel, it is pertinent to discuss about the author. Literary works and writing process are intimately related and these two spring from the litterateur's psychological buildup. Even a trifling incident or little experience about something can leave an indelible imprint on the author's mind, and Thomas Hardy, the author of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" is no exception. For this purpose, I will discuss about Thomas Hardy's life in this chapter (which is second in the numerical order) which will prepare us for the final and seminal chapter.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) achieved the status of both major novelist and major poet. His long life, beginning when Victoria was still a young queen and ending a decade after the First world war, saw many revolutionary social and intellectual changes that are refracted in complex ways in his writing. Hardy rose from rural obscurity of Dorset to scale the social heights declining a knighthood but accepting the order of Merit and being accorded the honour of burial in West Minster abbey. Geoffrey Harvey says about Hardy:

"Intensely private, evasive and ironic, Hardy has proved an elusive subject for biographers. His public life and career were relatively uneventful, and his personal life was marked by the absence of drama. "Much of Hardy's life," as he observed, "is present in his novels, poems and short stories, and the complex strands of relationship between his life and his writings. This encompasses uniquely his adoption of the topography of Dorset. Where he was born and grew up, for his fictional country of Wessex, and his exploration of its society and history" ²

Further contexts are intellectual and social. In his writing Hardy engages with the ideas and trends of his age: development in science, new philosophies that sought to fill the vacuum left by the loss of religious faith, the growth of a radical politics that gave expression to the striving of the working class for social equality and democracy, the struggle for a new status for women and the implications of the First World War. Another important context is literary market place in which his work was published, especially since the majority of the novels and some of his short stories first appeared as serials in the popular magazines of the day. The Victorian writer's relationship with editors and publishers was difficult. Hardy in particular, the scourge of established values, had to run the gauntlet of Mrs. Grundy, the mythical publish censor who scrutinized magazines and books for their immoral content. 3

Hardy had greater affinity for the Romantic poets who were his predecessors than for many of his Victorian contemporaries. He expressed lifelong admiration for Shelley and Keats, although his own verse intensifies the skeptical side of Shelley's skeptical idealism and the stoical side of Keats's stoical optimism. His robust and vivid naturalism owes lasting debts to Wordsworth and Coleridge, even while he remains at philosophical odds with romantic idealism in all its forms. He often adopts the meditative style of so many Romantic lyrics, but he tends to replace the consolations found often in Wordsworth or Coleridge with a stark and diminished sense of sadness or longing. His lyrical descriptions of nature are more likely to be harsh and cruel than they are to be pastoral and calming, but his naturalistic impulse provides powerful sensory moments that are realized with astonishing sharpness and immediacy.

Hardy's "Shelley's Skylark," for example, imagines the literal dust that Shelley's poetic symbol has become: it "Lived its meek life; then, one day, fell --/ A little ball of

feather and bone.” It often seems as though Hardy is struggling to be a Romantic poet but finding it impossible to do so. He manages to combine what looks like the subjectivity of the Romantic first-person speaker with the more objective voice of a ballad or folk song. A poem like “A Singer Asleep” invokes pastoral elegy to achieve an almost visionary intensity, but the pastoral is more usually invoked in Hardy’s lyrics in order to be shown up as a poetic illusion.

His own “darkling thrush” is a long way from Shelley’s skylark or Keats’s nightingale, but it is a sign of their influence over Hardy that he gains astonishing poetic resonance by imagining a hitherto “romantic” creature as “frail, gaunt” and “blast-beruffled.” Hardy was not the “last” Romantic, but he may have been the last poet who longed for, while not being able to assert, the confidence and poetic authority of his Romantic predecessors.

The reason behind the evidence of romantic elements in Hardy’s prose and poetry is probably his rural childhood. He was a son of a master mason from Dorset. After training and working as an architect he became a writer, gaining fame firstly as a novelist and then later in his life as a poet. Three lasting experiences on his life were a feeling of social inferiority that never quite left him, a troubled and erratic marriage to Emma Gifford and the death by suicide of his close friend and advisor Horace Module. The first two influences may have been reasons why he made a conscious and determined effort to hide certain features of his life from later generations, and only in recent years have parts of the smokescreen he tried to erect round his life been blown away by modern researchers and critics. Privacy is a privilege that few great writers in the past century have been allowed to keep.

Hardy's rural childhood played a part in his makeup. He was exposed to nature in this phase which culminated in his involvement with romance and romanticism. Thomas Hardy's father's name was also Thomas Hardy. The first child of Jemima and Thomas Hardy, he was born in the family cottage, situated on the edge of heath land, up a lane in the hamlet of Higher Bockhampton in the parish of Stanford, some two miles east of Dorchester. Jemima was a determined reader, with a fund of stories embodying local lore, while her husband loved nature and music. Together they filled Hardy's world with landscape and human dealing, the special blend that was to mark his poems and novels. Young Hardy was extraordinarily sensitive to melody and the effect of this is evoked superbly in his poem, "The self Unseeing," which captures a memory of dancing enraptured to the music of his father's violin.

In this era of post-modernism, magic-realist writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez is worth noting. He was influenced by his grandmother. Her store of anecdotes was ever-fresh and unremitting. This is the reason why it is not difficult to find romantic elements in Marquez's creations. Hardy had a similar experience. It is told that Hardy's paternal Grandmother, Mary Hardy, celebrated in the poem, "one we know", had a similar stock of stories. She used to live in the family home. To the family's stock of folk tales, she added anecdotes about the period 1804 particularly, when coastal Dorset was on alert for Napoleon's invasion, her husband's enrollment in the Puddle town Volunteer Light Infantry and the maintenance of a warning beacon on nearby Rain barrow. These stories aroused Hardy's lifelong interest in the Napoleonic era that later was to find expression in his writing. And her grandmother's youthful memories of the cottage at Higher Bockhampton awakened in him a awareness of its extreme solitude, and a profound love of nature, as his first poem, "Dom cilium" reveals, written when he was eighteen or so.

In course of time, Hardy married a girl namely Emma. On 3 July 1876, Hardy and Emma moved to Sturminster Newton in north Dorset, in the Vale of Blackmoor (the "Valley of the Little Dairies" of "Tess of the D'urbervilles"). They rented Riverside villa, by the Stour, a setting described in the poem "Overlooking the River Stour." They entered into the town's social life and as the poem "Two-Years' Idyll" testifies, this was to prove one of the happiest periods of their married life. This period of his life certainly played a part for his Romantic preoccupation.

Hardy moved to Wimborne. There he wrote a shorted fiction "The Romantic Adventures of a Milkmaid" published in the "Graphic" on 25 June 1883. It is one of his best short stories.

Hardy's major novels are "Under the Greenwood tree", "Far from the Madding crowd", "The Return of the Native", "The Mayor of Casterbridge", "The Woodlanders", "Tess of the D'urbervilles" and "Jude the obscure". His lesser novels are "Desperate Remedies", "A Pair of Blue Eyes", "The Hand of Ethelberta", "The Trumpet Major", "A Laodicean", "Two on a Tower" and "The Well Beloved". He has also written some short stories and composed some poems.

"Under the Greenwood tree" Ones its title to one of Shakespeare's plays. It suggests a secluded pastoral world characterized by harmony with nature, love, music and the celebration of love. "Far from the Madding crowd" is strongly influenced by the world of the ballad, but as its title a line from Gray's 'Elegy written in a country churchyard' – suggests, it also celebrates the removed rural life.

The opening of the return of the Native, devoted to the description of a wild tract of unenclosed heath land, is unique in Hardy's fiction. The initial description of Egdon, given from the point of view of the narrator in the central valley of the heath, is of a vast bowl claustrophobically blocking out the outside world. Hardy's reference to the chanceless nature of Egdon, which encompasses all time from prehistory to present, which acknowledges only the rhythm of the sun and the seasons and in which clock time is meaningless, introduces a destabilizing vision as space and time expand dizzyingly.

"The Mayor of Casterbridge" has a subtitle "The life and death of a Man of character". All the terms of the deliberately chosen title are important in suggesting this novel's strongly Aristotelian tragic form, which records the rise of Michael Henchard, a hay-trusser, to a position at the apex of the community of Casterbridge, after committing the sin of 'selling' his wife at Weldon Priors Fair years before, and the subsequent decline of his fortune based on economic misjudgment and the public revelation of his past shame.

The setting, concerns, and mood of the Woodlanders are consonant with the Wessex of his earlier novels. There is an element of nostalgia such rural economies were very much alive in Hardy's day, he strikes an elegiac note in his evoking of a world that will inevitably pass away.

Although Hardy revealed in his life that the world of Tess of the d'Urbervilles was close to his own experience, as the son of a society, his attitude to this world was ambiguous. Moreover, the publication of this novel was tortuous and painful. It was courted for serialization and revised for the first edition, to which Hardy added the famous subtitle 'A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented by Thomas Hardy'. These may have been some of the reasons why

Hardy, in this text more than in others succumbed to his restless habit of continual revision, a major effect of which was to emphasize Tess's purity and her position as victim.

Jude the Obscure is the story of Jude Fawley the stonemason from a poor rural background, an autodidact whose dreams of university education are thwarted and whose love for the idealized Sue Bridehead ends in despair. Hardy was drawing to some extent on his own experience. It also gave impetus to his bitter attack on marriage and his interest in the topical issue of divorce.

His lesser novels are also infesting George Meredith's advice, on reading *The Poor Mind and the Lady*, that Hardy should concentrate on producing a stronger plot produced his first published novel, *Desperate Remedies*.

Hardy classified *A Pair of Blue Eyes* among 'Romances and Fantasies' A favorite of Tennyson its melancholy treatment of youth love and death is expressive of late nineteenth century susceptibilities.

Hardy described the hand of Ethelbert, which followed far from *The Madding Crowd*, and was later classified among 'Novels of Ingenuity' 'plunge in a new and untried direction. *The Trumpet Major* is a historical novel set in the era of Napoleon, the bogey man who exercised a lifelong fascination over Hardy.

"*A Laodicean*" is a novel which deals with the love between a young architect, George Somerset, and Paula A Power, the wealthy daughter of a railway engineer, is a variation on the subject of the poor man and the lady,

Two on a Tower is one of Hardy's lesser novels. In his life, Hardy recorded his infinite trying to reconcile scientific view of life with the emotional and spiritual, so that they may not be interdestructive.

Hardy subtitled the well-loved 'A Sketch of a Temperament'. Generically, it is a counter-man, a novel about an artist, which is developed around three stages in the life of the successful London sculptor Jocelyn Pierston, who pursues ideal feminine beauty, both in life and as inspiration for his art, at the ages of twenty, forty and sixty.

Hardy produced nearly fifty short stories between 1860 and 1900. Hardy's career as a poet, from the 1860s, when he commenced writing through to the 1920s, spanned a period that included not only great social upheavals, but also considerable changes in poetic style. All his poems contain romantic elements.

Probably, Hardy is the most romantic of all Victorians.

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