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Thomas Hardy: Biography and Literary Criticism of His Work

Thomas Hardy, a novelist and poet was born in England in the year 1840, in June, 2nd.He was the first born son of Mr. Thomas Hardy who was a builder and stonemason and Jemima Hardy. His mother like reading stories to him before joining school at age of 8 years. To some extent author Hardy lived an isolated life within the region’s open fields. As he grew up, he focused on exploring the rural life just as it’s evident in his works. He completed his primary school education level at age of sixteen years. He taught himself various languages such as Latin, Germany and French. It was after completion of primary education when his father apprenticed him to John Hicks, a local architect. Under the tutelage of Hicks, Thomas learnt about old churches’ and houses’ restoration and architectural drawing. He really enjoyed this kind of work since he got the opportunity of studying histories of families and houses that existed in the past. In spite of engaging in architecture work, Thomas, never abandoned his studies. In the evenings, he would study with Horace Moule, a Greek Scholar (Catherine, 71).

In the year, 1862, Thomas went to London where he worked with an architect known as Arthur Bloomfield. He lived there for five years during which he engaged in cultural scene through visiting theatres and museums and reading classic literature. In addition, he started writing his own poetry and after abandoning London, he upheld his newly-discovered writing talent (Hardy, 2).

From 1867, Thomas Hardy engaged in writing novels and poetry although at start he focused more on novels. He ensured that his works were published anonymously until people gained interest in his work. That is when he began using his own name. His novels were published in series in magazines making them popular in America and England (Thomas, 122).

Most of the novels he wrote were criticized and this made him give up on novels. A novel known as ‘The Well-Behaved’ written in 1892 and published in 1897 was the last to be published. It was after that when he turned to the field of writing poetry. The first volume of Hardy’s poetry work, that is, ‘Wessex Poems’ was published in the year 1898. Poems that were composed for a duration of thirty years. And from early twentieth century, Thomas engaged in writing poetry alone. He focused in every form of poetry including dramatic dialogue and monologue, satire, ballad, and lyrics (Phillip, 99).

As a poet, Thomas Hardy combined contemporary modernity and traditional conventionality. Despite of being influenced by ballads and folk songs he was not a typical poet. This is because he was instead involved in experimenting with various forms, like inventing meters and stanza forms. He even utilized colloquial diction and rough-hewn rhythms. The key elements of his poetry were satire and irony (Boumelha, 18)

In 1910, Thomas Hardy won Order of Merit and was nominated for Nobel Prize in the sector of Literature. He also got eleven more nominations for Nobel Prize. This shows how he was devoted in his writing (literature) career (Catherine, 83).

Author Thomas Hardy, got married to Emma Lavinia in 1874 in Kensington. She really helped her husband in carrying out his literary endeavors. Unfortunately, Emma died in 1912 and two years later, Thomas married Florence Emily who worked as his secretary. Thomas Hardy passed on in 1928, January 11 in Dorchester (Thomas, 213).

In spite of the efforts that Thomas Hardy put on his literary work, particularly on the novelistic work, he faced some literary criticism. One of the literary criticism was placed on the novel: ‘Tess of the D’Urbervilles’. This was the first book to be published by Thomas Hardy in the year 1891. This book narrates about a poor girl who was sent by her own parents to purportedly an imposing family. The parents hoped that their girl would get a fortune and a well-up husband. However, the young girl ends up being seduced and eventually faces doom. The critics of the novel argues that Hardy promotes immorality in the society through narrating such a story (Boussaad, 27).

Another novel by Thomas Hardy met criticism is the ‘Jude the Obscure’ that was published in the year 1895. His novel narrated story concerning an earnest couple two attempted resisting day’s social conventions. Most of the criticism came from Victorian public arguing that Thomas had a controversial treatment for marriage, sex and religion. However, sex has been scarcely mention in the book. Critics argued the author apparently attacked the marriage institution. And hence, this book was not allowed to be sold at all and who sold it did that in secrets. For instance, some of the booksellers sold this book in a brown paper bag. Other people who got a copy of the novel burnt it a good example being Walsham, a Wakefield’s Bishop (Bernard, 3,6).

The critics of this novel ‘Jude the Obscure’, did not view the positive part of it like a moral lesson to the society. Thomas Hardy through his writing tried to portray the fate that falls upon those flouting convention just like the characters Jude, the unmarried, and Sue, the child begetting. It is a morality tale that shows the fruits of engaging in social pressures. The issue that has brought criticism on this book is on the marriage of women that has faced mixed interpretations. Those who came up with the negative perceptions about this novel are the reviewers from both America and England. They might have been angered by the story because it portrayed the western life. They argued that since children are an important element of family should not have been engaged in the abolition of family (Kumar, 3).

The critics also argue that problem of communication as portrayed in the novel lead to the loss of the meaning of marriage which is an important stage of life. The theme of murder and suicide as portrayed in the novel becomes another point for the critics to build their criticism on. Death occurs after the problems in communication persists in the marriage. It signifies torture that should not be tolerated in the society. Critics argue that the novel made the greatest failure by showing a father killing his own son. However, Hardy wanted to show how failure of language can have great consequences in our lives that would lead us to regret forever (Guo 654).

To conclude, it was due to the increasing criticism in novels that made Hardy to abandon writing novels and shift to poetry work. He wanted to focus on work that people could find interest in. I don’t support this literary criticism as the author, Thomas Hardy wanted to teach the society effect of living immoral lives.

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