

# Regional Touch in the Novels of Thomas Hardy

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**Abstract:** Thomas Hardy is one of the great regional novelists. He has imparted global interest to a particular region. Hardy's novels generally called as the Wessex Novels, of which *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Caster bridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are the most celebrated ones. These Wessex novels have recognized Hardy as a regional novelist.

**Keywords:** Thomas Hardy, novel, regional.

## 1. Introduction

Thomas Hardy is one of the most famous regional novelists in English literature. Love is prolonged theme of Hardy's novels [1]. The generic scenes of all his novels are situated in one particular region. He treats only of its life its history and its geography. He represented the imaginative world of Wessex – its geography, landscape, agricultural pursuits, folkways, of his main characters. As a novelist, his greatest strength lays in his peculiar depiction of Wessex- a fictitious region of England. He established the landscape by beautifully depicting the nature and environment of the particular land and the people therein, particularly highlighting the conflict between man and nature [2]. The same physical features- hills and dales, rivers, pastures, meadows, woodland, and heaths etc. of this native land appear and reappear so prominently and vividly in Hardy's novels that they are called the Wessex Novels, of which *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Caster bridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are the most celebrated ones. These Wessex novels have established Hardy at the height as a regional novelist [3].

This paper illustrates the regional touch present in Hardy's novels, and thereby to reassess his greatness as a regional novelist.

### A. Features of the Regional Novel

The regional novel is a genre of fiction that is set in a perceptible region.

It illustrates the features of life, social relations, customs, language, the culture of that area and its people.

Fiction creates the sense of geography; landscape or topography is also covered by the region.

Regional culture illustrates an aspect of life in general or the effects of the environment on the people living in it.

### B. Characteristics of a regional novel

Detailed portraits of a place, region, generally rural, bear an

appraisal to a real place. They generally characterized the middle-class origin.

Thomas Hardy creates a great historical setting for his regional novels in the area of Wessex.

Over the years his perception and representation of nature and the landscape changed. There is an evolution, moving from the pastoral to a more realistic depiction of rural English society.

Regional writers are generally associated with rural regions.

### C. Hardy's Wessex

Hardy is a distinct regional novelist, and Wessex is the region which forms every scene of action of all Hardy's works. Hardy's Wessex has been geographically identified with South- western England. He portrays the interaction of his characters with the natural since it might be sentient. He had great acquired knowledge over the region. He has demonstrated the physical characters of his Wessex with great realistic in nature. He has expressed very soulfully in his works. He has immortalized the land of Wessex which is a living, breathing reality in his novel. He illustrates the human emotions in relation to nature and great love and concern for nature. Also, he concentrates on passions and emotions which are global. They are the real themes of his novels. Characters in the Wessex novels are not created from the upper state of society, rather it creates from the lowest and humblest rank of a human's life. This is so because he has succeeded in globalizing the regional and the typical.

### D. Regionalism

Of the wessex novels, "The Woodlanders" elucidates the most balanced and satisfying work.

In "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", he tells about the human nature, personal emotions, and the meaning of man's existence. It tells the story of a country girl whose parents discover that they are related to a noble family. Tess eventually finds work as a dairymaid in a peaceful and rural setting but continuous to be haunted by her past. He tells about the details of their professions, skills and the hardships of their lives. Also, he explains the dignity of their souls, their persistence and their struggle against heavy odds.

In "The Mayor of Casterbridge", he reveals that the Wessex farmer often regards the weather-God as a person hostile to him and bent upon destroying him. He tells about a man who attempts to scape his past and whose past actions come back to destroy him. Hardy rejects the convention that good qualities

will lead to prosperity and bad ones to devastate. Character is fate, but not in the Christian sense that people "get what they deserve". Hardy is fully alive to the historic character of the region that he has chosen as a background to his works. Every sod in Hardy's Wessex breaths history. He invokes history, even pre-history and geology, to cast over the land of Wessex a romantic glow. In the „Mayor of Casterbridge „, for example, we are told that even if we dig a few feet we are sure to find some skeleton of a Roman warrior, with its feet touching its abdomen and its vessels buried near him. Such "Skelingtons" are common sight for the Wessex farmers and urchins. Near Casterbridge there is the Roman ring or Amphitheatre, the ancient relic of the Roman Empire, which no one likes to frequent out of fear of its bloody associations. In Tess we get the temple of Stonehenge which the ancient had built to placates of ancient Wessex families like that of the D'Urbervilles, now in ruins and unfrequented, but still important landmarks in Hardy's landscapes. In "A Pair of Blue Eyes" we are given an account of the various races and tribes that came to Wessex from time to time. We are then taken into the realm of pre-history, and made to see with our mind's eyes the different animal species that have successively stalked the land of Wessex. A similar condition of things obtains in all other Wessex works.

In *The Return of the Native*, he represents the family relationships are tragic and that the people who try to rise above their class have to suffer.

In "Far from the Madding Crowd" he proposed to avoid the modernized life of a city, modernized government, crowds and industry. He tries to fashion a portrait of what he saw as an endangered way of life and to create an awareness for future generations.

## 2. Conclusion

Thomas Hardy is a great writer. His style is the microcosm of his talent exhibiting all his merits and demerits in their most characteristic form. The basic theme of his novels is the place of man in this universe and his predicament. He revealed the beauty and charm of Wessex to the reader's eye and immortalized it. It must not be supposed that he inhabited a region with which none could compare in beauty, or that such spots exist nowhere else. The physical feature like hill and dales, rivers, pastures and meadows, woodlands and heaths-appear and reappear in all his works. This imparts to his works a kind of scenic continuity and a touch of realism difficult to match in any fiction. Every event in his novels takes place in this locality. It is seldom that he stays out of it. It is for this reason that he is also called a regional novelist.

## References

- [1] Mc Dowall, Arthur, *Thomas Hardy: A critical study*, London, Faber and Faber (1931).
- [2] M. Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A biography*. New York Random House, 62, 1982.