

Nativism and Rustic Language in the Select Novels of Thomas Hardy

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Abstract: 'Nativism' refers to the lifestyle of a particular geographical area reflecting the culture, tradition, and language of those people born and brought up in that soil. 'Nativism' is the strength of practice. Native life is synonymous with rural life. Rustic or bucolic language is the medium of communication of the illiterate natives, which was unsophisticated, unrefined, but endearing to one's heart.

Keywords: nativism, communication, language, rustic, unsophisticated, unrefined

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was a versatile novelist and poet of the Victorian age. Hardy used the language in England's rural areas in the nineteenth century. Hardy as a regional novelist, wished to deal with older themes in the old style. This implies his devotion to the native countryside life of the people disintegrated by globalization's onslaught. All his novels deal with the natural principle, which is not influenced by external sources. In general, nativism in his stories evokes a whole constellation of feeling, perception, thought, enlightenment, and memory, which has grown due to one's attachment to a specific geographical area.

The Wessex region, an ancient nucleus of all his novels, has its unique dialect, popularly known as the 'Wessex dialect.' It was as old as the place itself, and the people found it was a beautiful dialect to express the native culture of the land. Native dialect, which reflects nativism, also hints at a particular region's history, tradition, and milieu. Hardy's novels *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* were published in 1878 and 1891, respectively, are representative stories of nativism and rustic language.

According to Raymond Chapman: "Thomas Hardy's novels had the allure of the old-fashioned. They are fundamentally regional novels, they held, that is all the beautiful outdated forms of language which preserve the memory or usages and ways of feeling that no longer exist". Hardy's language not only gives knowledge but also creates interest and curiosity among the readers. The bucolic or rustic language used by Hardy is the outcome of nativism, which is different from today's sophisticated and formal language. Hardy's use of diction has the aural qualities of conversational voice, which is remarkable in his novels. Even the nature of syntax and vocabulary has a distinctive quality and structure. Another essential feature of Hardy's language is that he gave prominence to the use of onomatopoeia. The design and sound of

words that Hardy used originated from England's rural society, representing the native life and culture. The language of the rustics in Hardy's novels determines the social status, class, and educational level, religious and economic conditions of the natives.

Class-based language in Hardy's Novels

People who belonged to the upper class in the social hierarchy and those who were economically stable and sound were using formal English in their day-to-day conversation as the language of the educated class. For example, in *The Return of the Native*, Mrs. Yoebright, Clym Wildev, Thomasin, and in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Angel Clares's family, Alec D'urberville, Mr. Krick, and the village landlords were using such standard language. However, they were living in a rural area of England. Their language was different in accent, diction, pronunciation, and structure from that of the other class of people in the same environment. Their language was called standard or formal language. And most of them were somewhat educated or at least literate and they had the worldly knowledge of different places and were exposed to social and economic activities; consequently, their use of language naturally differs from the other rustics.

The second category comprises people who belonged to some professional class, who traveled between Egdon Heath and the outside world for trade and other reasons. Because of the external influence, their accent and diction are pretty different from the natives of the Wessex region. For example, Clym, in *The Return of the Naïve*,

had been to Paris and returned to his native, Eustacia, and her grandfather Captain Vye who came down from Budmouth and settled in Egdon Heath.

In the third category, there are people from the working class or labor community who have occupied a significant part in novels of Hardy. They are the spokespersons of native life and culture by following and retaining the age-old nativity in all respects. They are agricultural laborers, servants, soldiers, petty traders, vagabonds, etc. Diggory Venn, Timothy, Humphrey, Gander Cantle, Charlie, Susan Nonsuch of *The Return of The Native*; Tess, Izz, Marian, of *Tess of the D; Urbervilles* were using the rustic language of the Wessex region, and they are true representatives of the native language. The fragrance of the native language can be seen only in the language of the illiterate rustics in their everyday conversation. The language that the socially, economically, and educationally backward, working-class people use is the language of the soil which is the native language. Though these people were illiterate, innocent, and simple, their language reflects the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of native life. Speaking about the Wessex dialect, the novelist himself admitted that the fact that: "In it lay what may be called the linguistic peculiarity of the heath; and being audible nowhere on earth of a heath, if afforded a shadow of reason for the woman's tenseness, which continued as unbroken as ever ." This statement of the novelist shows he has skilfully exploited the rustic language to portray the life of Wessex in his novels. Hardy named this vernacular 'Dorset

Dialect,' a sub-language of the region. Many linguists have observed that this language of the Wessex region was on the verge of extinction.

In *The Return of The Native*, one can see the uniqueness of the rustic language used by people of the lower strata from the novel's beginning. The villagers like Gander Cattle and others came to know that Wildeve and Thomasin got married, and they wished the couple: "It is worthy of being married, Mr. Wildeve, and the woman you've got is a diamond so says I.....". Instead of 'diamond,' they are pronounced 'diamond.' While commenting on Clym Yoebright, Timothy said: "It's his mother's side where Master Clym's figure comes from, bless ye', 'I know her brothers well....". Here the words like 'ye' and 'know' are archaic or Anglo-Saxon but still used in 19th century rural England. When Clym returned from Paris and stayed instead of going back, villagers were commenting like, "Master Yoebright, I'll own that we were talking about thee ." In the formal usage, this sentence is not grammatically correct. Still, it was an acceptance for the natives who used their native language daily.

Thomas Hardy's other novel, *Tess of the D'Urvilles*, also reflects rustic language in all its features. Tess and her family communicate in a real native accent. While Tess was leaving for work, her mother's advice to her father was that: "I tell 'ee what 'tis, Dubey field,' he'll never have the heart not to love her. But whatever you do, don't say too much to Tess..... She is such an odd maid that it mid zet against him.....". Here one can identify the

difference in morphemes like 'thee,' 'say,' 'mid,' and 'set.' The Anglo-Saxon or archaic English like 'thee' for 'you; and 'Z' for 's' and 't' for 'd' while pronouncing are found throughout the novel. Those people involved in various petty professions used such colloquial and rustic language in their daily lives. For instance, the owner of the dairy, Mr. Crick words, "Oh, if ye can swaller that, be it so.....'tis what I hadn't touched for years. Not I....". Here 'ye' for 'you,' 'hasn't for 'haven't' were used peculiarly, but it suited the accent of the rustics in their everyday life situation. The sentences like, 'who be ye?' (Who are you?), 'I ain't (I am not), 'himself for'(himself for), 'If you be not too young? (If you are not too young?), 'what will I be? (what am I) etc., have become the very part of the rustic language. In the words like, 'diamond' for 'diamond', 'natty for 'naughty', 'sheening' for 'shining', 'chiel' for 'child', 'folks' for folk', 'gad' for 'god', etc. have added strange beauty to the native accent.

Besides the differences concerning word structure, intonations, and pronouns, we can also find differences in sentence structure, dialect, and grammar. For example, in the dialect of the rustics, 'he has several acres of heath ground .'Here the use of pronouns like 'he' is third person singular, but it is followed by 'have,' which must be used to indicate a first person in the present tense. Again 'we were talking about the,' 'they were married,' and 'we were all standing up, ' all these sentences indicate an error concerning the subject-verb agreement. Third person plural followed by singular 'be- was' form of the verb is used.

Similarly, 'she doesn't come, and 'she has waited' indicate differences concerning the subject-verb agreement. The dialect of Egdon Heath involved the Anglo-Saxon language, which was still in use in the remote rural villages of England.

The language of the working class people was entirely different from that of the people of higher social and economic positions. For instance, people like Angel Clare and his family, Alec D'Urbevilles, used to converse in a refined tongue because of their education and knowledge about other places, unlike the uneducated and illiterate working-class people in the same region. Thus social status and economic position would play an essential role in determining and distinguishing the native language from the standard or formal language. Without transport and communication to other parts of the geographical area, the working class and farm laborers were restricted to regional dialects only. The dialect that the people of different types and professions used to communicate in their daily life reflects the unspoiled tradition and culture of the Wessex region.

Conclusion:

Thomas Hardy, thus in his novels, by focusing the disappearing and degenerating nativistic features like rustic language, which was the colloquial tongue of the innocent, children of the soil, and their customs, traditions, beliefs, food habits, dress, festivities revitalized the life of traditional England.

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