

On the western circuit: a twist of irony assignment

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A Twist of Irony Reflection on Thomas Hardy's critical exploration of moral issues in ' On The Western Circuit' Thomas Hardy's On The Western Circuit narrates the story of the country girl Anna who madly falls in love with lawyer Charles Bradford Rare on a fair. Rare asks Anna to write him during his travel around the Western Circuit. Anna, who can neither read nor write, enlists the help of Edith Horsham, who recruited her as a housemaid and expresses deep affection for her.

Eventually, Edith falls in love with Rare as well. This essay will prove that On The Western Circuit demonstrates Hardy's sense of waste and frustration involved in human life and the twist of irony which presents itself when trying to deal properly with moral issues, establishing " The sadness in his work" which is " considered part of the late Victorian moral" (Bubbles and Class 98).

This essay will argue that the three protagonists of the story have the best moral intentions and that these intentions, quite ironically despite their moral goodness, will lead to the destruction of their lives. Charles Bradford Rare, to begin with, falls in love with a simple country girl and does to expect her at first to be intellectually developed. Thus he is very surprised when reading her first letter: " It was the most charming little missive he had ever received" (Hardy 1923).

As the story evolves Rare is convinced that Anna is a decent woman worthy to support him in making a social career. When he heard of Anna's pregnancy at first he thinks he might have to alter his career protections but then he makes up his mind, because of" the unexpected mines of brightness

and warmth that her letters had disclosed to be lurking in her sweet nature had led him to abandon that somewhat sad prospect" (Hardy 1927). Thus, Rare can be seen as morally good, exceeding social superficiality by acknowledging the intellectual capabilities of mere country girl.

The second important protagonist Anna madly falls in love with the beautiful, charming lawyer Rare. Determined to become his wife she calls upon her mistress Edith Horsham to function as her scribe. Anna, being fully aware of the fact that she is deceiving Rare, still can be considered as acting morally good, having faith in her love and capabilities of standing by Rare's side as a worthy woman, bringing him a lifetime of happiness. Anna delivers proof of these good intentions by trying to reach

Edith's level of intellectuality by practicing writing and reading to become a woman as worthy as she is: " I have brought with me my copybook you were so good as to give to me, and I practice every day, and though it is so, so hard, I shall do it well at last, I believe, if I keep on trying" (Hardy 1928).

Fondness of Rare began when Rare " wrongly caressed her hand" (Hardy 1921) in spite of Anna's hand. Caring deeply for Anna, she is determined to help Anna in her quest for love, given the fact that " it behaved her, as Anna's only protector, to help her as much as she could" (Hardy 1924).

When Edith's husband kicks Anna out of the house because of her pregnancy by Rare, Edith continues the correspondence in Anna's absence. Due to her own growing love for Rare she even hides some received letters from Anna. Despite all this Edith is morally good because she continues subscribing the letters with Anna's name and thus stays loyal to her and does not uncover

their deceive. She realizes Ray's marriage will lead to his ruin " yet she could not, in mercy to her maid, do anything to hinder this plan" (Hardy 1928).

Fourthly the irony in all of these morally well intended decisions of the protagonists and the waste and frustration it causes, will be analysed. In general, the great sense of Irony lies in the fact that their maintenance of good moral thoughts causes their very own downfall. Charles would actually have been better without Anna, a mere country girl, not reaching the standard of women he needs by his side, given the fact he wants to make a social career.

It is simultaneously ironic and tragic that Charles' assumption of Anna's intellectuality is based upon letters written by Anna's mistress Edith Horsham. Anna on the other hand could have avoided Charles' ' social ruin' if she did not persist in somewhat naively believing that she could make a decent wife of Charles. Thus quite ironically, Anna's morally good belief in her capabilities and her love causes Charles' ruin and now she's doomed to live with a man frustrated because of his ruined career.

When focused on Edith, the irony and simultaneously the tragedy lies in the fact that in maintaining the correspondence in Anna's name and showing loyalty to Anna she causes the destruction of the man she deeply loves. In the last lines of the story Edith's frustration is almost tangible. She's found weeping on the floor and crying out: " I have ruined him; because I would not deal treacherously towards her! (Hardy 1931). She now understands that her morally good intended decision to keep faithful to Anna has caused the waste of both Anna's and Charles' life.

As a way of conclusion it can be stated that all three protagonists try to deal properly with moral issues motivated by the best intentions. Charles is brought down by his belief in the capabilities of a country girl. Anna causes the social ruin of the man she loves persisting in the belief that she can make a good wife to him. Edith causes the downfall of the man she loves, by staying loyal to Anna. Both Anna's and Charles' lives are wasted and Edith will have to live with the fact she caused this situation.