Landscapes in the Fiction Jane Austen

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Abstract: Landscape description in English is very common. Fiction gets a poetic touch by portraying landscapes which are the epicenters of natural beauty. The fiction writers find their scopes to make the fiction artistic by describing the beauty of the landscape. The fictions of Jane Austen are full of such examples which prove her artistic talent.

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Description of landscapes and their beauty is common thing in literature. The Victorian Age poetry and fictions portray landscapes lavishly. Shakespearean plays go on describing the beauty of landscapes which his predecessors followed. In ‘Mid-Summer-Night Dream’ Shakespeare describes landscape lavishly. In the Romantic Age Nature and its beauty was the central theme of their writings. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Byron describe the beauty of landscapes. Wordsworth’s description of Lake District is very natural and ecological in content. Wordsworth gives stress on Nature and natural objects treating it as a spirit. In order to unite the nature with man Wordsworth develops the theory of pantheism in which he feels a spirit permeated in nature, as if it has life. After the Romantics, the Victorian writer Thomas Hardy portrays landscape which is very poetic. His Wessxss, the imaginary landscape, is very poetic and heart touching. Hardy’s fiction contains the most specific portrait of landscape which is a mixture of imagination and reality. Hardy’s description of nature is very scientific and has a lot of ecological significance. Hardy attempts to unite man and woman with nature. He analyses both nature and human natures in his writings. Like him Jane Austen goes on describing the landscapes in her fiction bringing a unity, co-operation and integration among man, woman and nature. In case one goes deep into her writings one will find Austen’s description of landscape bears a lot of ecological significance like Thomas Hardy. She attempts to bridge a gap between man and woman in one hand and man and woman with nature with other hand. Echofeminists are of the opinion that there should be an integration between man, woman and nature for a peaceful and healthy society. Through the description of landscape both in Highbury and Hartsfield Austen gives nature and its beauty a significant place in her writings.

George Henry Lewes one of critics of Jane Austen coins the phase ‘Prose Shakespeare for Jane Austen not only for giving her fiction a dramatic touch but also poeticizing the nature by describing a landscape. Austen is an artist who portrays nature, characters and beauty as they are without imposing her opinion or ideology. Like Shakespeare, her perception to study women character is very intuitive and realistic. She studied the character of women, nature and her surrounding very well and she could go into the core of things and nature while delineating them. In his essay Jane Austen As a Prose Shakespeare (1851, Lewis says “dealing as she does with everyday people and everyday life , avoiding all the grander tragic emotion and more impassion aspect of life related with nature surrounding with her environment, her at consisting charming us by describing landscape ‘ as they one’ (130). Austen makes her characters speak as they are and describes nature just like natural portraits without adding any imagination. We cannot conceive Shakespeare under prosaic conditions, poetry begin so essentially involve whole structure of her works analyzing, nature of human beings and the nature surroundings the small villages which she takes in her fictions. If we set aside her passion, imagination, fancy and rhythm will find, there will a central power of dramatic creation only focusing on human nature with special reference to women who are indirectly related with nature.

Jane Austen’s treatment of nature is like Shakespeare and Wordsworth though she gives less stress to landscape and description of its beauty she tries to link nature with women and vice-versa. In eco-feminism nature is protected by a graphic of women for the preservation and conservation of creation. The women characters of Austen like Elizabeth, Emma and Miss Bates are seen of wandering in the village streets or on the long stress that connects between Highbury and Hartsfield on the way Emma enjoys nature, i.e. loaded with beauty. Summer approaches to the Hartsfield bringing flowers on the tress and color in the grass and warmth in air to make the young people romantic. In the fiction of Jane Austen the
landscapes are not seen him in turmoil or ravaged by natural calamities unlike the landscape of Shakespeare and P.B. Shelly where nature is in ‘tooth and claws’. In the fiction of Jane Austen the landscapes are evergreen and ever enchanting without confronted with natural calamities bringing death and destruction. In the words of Keats, Austen’s landscape is “A thing of beauty is joy forever” Endymion. (1)

Jane Austen does not treat nature and landscape like her successor George Elliot. In the fiction Jane Austen, Nature is co-operative and harmonious with human being and is very much integrated for a smooth living. In the fiction of George Elliot the nature is in tooth and claw. And it is the source of the destruction of the human being and civilization. Nature nurtures in the fiction of Jane Austen while it is very opposite in the novels of George Elliot. The valley on the fertile belt of the river Floss is not attractive and heart touching as Highbury in the fiction of Jane Austen. It is to say that nature in ‘The Mill on the Floss’ brings a sudden and unexpected calamities that the river swells in flood and inundated the surrounding of the valley, as a result it took the life of Magi Tulliver and her brother Tom. It is nature which brings the saddest demise and separation of the two characters for the family and society. Here nature is portrayed in a destructive way but in Austen’s fiction the nature in very constructive, co-operative and integrative. Nature acts as a medium to bring about a union between the heroes and heroines who are motivated only for the husband- hunting activities. Again to say Austen is an artist of high rank, to the most rigorous sense of the world is an opinion related to the description of landscape and nature. Her works are widely known and enjoyed for well treating the nature of woman and their beat of activities relating to man and society. It is intelligible how the blaze of Scott should have thrown her into the nature besides his fresco her works are but miniature. Her heroines - at least lovable flesh- blood, young women who are fond of her co-operative, integration and harmonious relationship in their society. They all like to wander in the landscape to enjoy nature and derive beauty from them. They are all good people and really good without being goody.

George Lewis says in Quarterly Review (1851) that “she herself compares her production to a little bit of ivory , two inches-wide, worked upon with a brush so fine that little effect is produced with much labor. It is so her portraits perfect likeness admirable finished, many of them James: but it is all miniature painting just like nature” (153).

It is obvious that the nature and landscape in the fiction of Jane Austen determine degrees in art. Raphael will always rank higher than Teniers; Sophocles and Shakespeare will never be lower to the rank Lop de Vega and Scribe. It is a greater effort of genius to produce a fine art of landscape than a fine Pastoral, a great drama than a perfect lyric.

The description of landscape in the fiction of Austen is echofeministic because she brings a balance between nature and ecology and both nature and ecology are seen co-opening human being and vice-versa. In Gothic Novels such type of description of landscape are found. It is said that Austen is influenced by the Gothic novelist to compose novels describe landscape in an echofeministic way. The landscape Austen portrays in her novel are Mansfield Park, Northanger Abbey, Highbury, Hartsfield, Fullport, etc. these are the note worthy places in which the story of her novels set. These places are portrayed in such ways which look like natural because nature and human natures coexist for a stable and peaceful society. Austen describes Northanger Abbey in a satiric way because the majority of the people do not know themselves and behave according to their instinct. Austen says while opening her opinion about the landscape, “I leave it to be settled by whomsoever it may concerned whether the tendency of this work is all together to recommend a parental tyranny or reward filial disobedience. (35)

This opinion of Austen about Northanger Abbey is enough to Judge about the natural dealing of the people who grow like nature becoming as a part of nature to adjust, adopt and accept the nature and its call.

North-Anger-Abbey is directly derived from a Gothic novel as Bildungstoman. This place is famous for education and natural beauty. This place Austen directly places in this place Northanger Abbey. North Anger is famous for education in which the heroine, Catherine Moorland begins as an over imagination reader of Gothic novel. Catherine mistakes the mannered citizens of Fullerton, Bath and North-Anger-Abbey for heroes, heroines, and villains and learns from the sober and meticulous Henry Tinley. Catherine learns how to navigate the true social and moral landscape of her world. Austen portrays Northanger Abbey in the style of Gothic novel’s landscape which is the moral landscape of heroes and heroines portray in a heroic way to stir the imagination of the reader and to take them to the world of anthology fairy tell and theodicy.

Yet at every term Catherine is disappointed by a world of modern comfort and luxury that concerns to the material world according to her expectation. It is seen the landscape and its natural beauty keeps all the characters in good humors if they may be positive or negative characters. Catherine and Bath change their mood when they came outside from their home because due to spell of the landscape’s beauty. The most obvious critical reading of North-Anger has also been the most wide spread viewing Catherine’s expectation as her primary folly in the calm and rational late 18th century landscape.
Henry’s logic offers an obviously a clear vision of many of the novels even that Catherine’s fantasy’s. This novel makes explicit stops for his instruction. In his speech delivered to Catherine while giving assurance that the General has murdered his wife.

North Anger Abbey is recognized as a proper place for Catherine’s Gothic expectation. And it is a place which can translate the heroine’s dream into reality. The time of Austen popularized the Gothic fiction which the writer takes advantage of it and delineates the landscape in Gothic style to catch the attention of the reader. The distinction was the pervasive view in Austen’s style. Gothics were fictions, Breezy entertainment at best and at worst morally deprived romps in a rape, insist and necrophilia and the work from which “nothing like useful knowledge could be gained” (7)

Bristol is a place which connects to other places like Bath, King Weston and Blaze Castle. These places are portrayed as the landscape in the fiction of Jane Austen. John Throp visits these places one after another and enjoys the location and these natural beauties of the landscape. In Emma, Mr. Elton marries August Hawkins, the youngest daughter of a Bristol merchant. Hawkins describes these small towns which consoles and nurtures her by its natural beauty and social system after the sudden and unexpected demise of her parents. She grows up under the loving care of her uncle, who was a lawyer, in Bristol. Bristol and its surrounding are described through the lips of August Hawkins is very poetic.

Another small Hamlet named Brainsere is very beautiful for its natural setting just on the foot of a heel and its other site is touched to the sea. According to Mr. Parker the beauty of Brainsere is just like the paradise on the earth. Austen takes few words describing the natural beauty of the sea that goes on washing the feet of Brainsere which is very amicable and heart touching. This landscape is just like Cleveland which lies few miles away from Bristol. It is a place where the home of palmer is located. This place is famous for its specious modern building, situated on sloping lawn. These houses are made up-up in a straight line dotted over with timber and under the guardianship of the fire, the mountain ash and the acacia. Here, Marian is seriously ill when he heard that she was dying. Willoughby travels from London to Cleverland to explain the past and proves he is not altogether a villain. It is a dark and stormy evening when he arrives, and Elinor thinks colonel Brandon has returned with her mother, she hears Willoughby recals her treating Marrian heartlessly in London and marrying misery.

Caroline is a small landscape of Highbury. Here Austen describes Highbury as a landscape which is very amicable as far as its socio cultural setting is concerned. Most of the people living here are rich and belong to the middle class. Here John Abbey, Mr. Weston, and Mrs. Elton live: the place is famous in the fiction Emma. The story sets in the place and ends here after the union of Emma and Mr. Knightly. Austen takes pain describing the beauty of the landscape poetically. Hartsfield is a landscape like Highbury which is the home of Mr. Woodhouse and his younger daughter Emma. Hartsfield is the birth place of Emma where she grows up and has lost her childhood and her mother. She is emotionally attached to Hartsfield because this places which is nearest and dearest to her after her father Mr. Woodhouse and her maid servant Miss Weston. She goes outside on the narrow roads connecting Hartsfield and enjoys the beauty of nature which fells her happiness. Whenever Emma feels bore she comes out of her home and wanders on the village street to meet her neighbors for a gossip. It has been discussed earlier that both Hartsfield and Highbury are the neighboring landscape harboring inhabitants to nature in an echo-feministic way. People here are very co-operative and live harmoniously. It is seen there is integration between nature, people and their human nature. Their peaceful existence with each other in a co-operative is nothing but the echo-feministic existence.

References:


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