原著

ハーディのThe Hand of Ethelbertaにおける女性 像

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The Hand of Ethelberta

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Abstract

The Hand of Ethelberta, the fifth published work of Thomas Hardy's fourteen long novels, is regarded as minor novel in every respect, especially because of his failure to make it a comedy in spite of appending the subtitle, A comedy in Chapters. However, the heroine Ethelberta, the daughter of a butler, is more interesting and unique than most other women in Hardy's novels. She is a woman with a man's disposition who has innate respect for the upper class. From the moment that she decides to marry a rich but old aristocrat for the sake of her poor large family, she rejects her true love, but succeeds in getting her husband as well as his estate under the control of her own hands. In addition to this, she can continue to write an epic poem which is her long cherished desire. This is, so to speak, the story of a woman's success in life. The theme of self-sacrifice in marriage for the security of her family is very tragic in cases like Tess in Tess of the d'Urbervilles, but in the case of Ethelberta, even if her attempt to persuade herself to be the wife of a wealthy viscount and achieve her ambition is only a sophism, we don't feel any tragic, because she lives with her own philosophy of life and pushes it through. I will treat, in this essay, the current ideas and background of 19th century and Ethelberta's life-style as the New Woman aiming at women's independence by marriage.

要約

『エセルハータの手』(The Hand of Ethelberta)でトマス・ハーディ(Thomas Hardy)はシェイクスピア風の貴族社会を風刺した軽いタッチの喜劇を書こうとしてか,副題に『数章から成る喜劇』と付加しているが,失敗作としてその評価は極めて低く,minor novelに分類されている.しかし,ヒロイン・エセルバータは,Hardyが創造した他の女性たちより興味深くユニークな存在である.家族のために恋人

を諦めて裕福な老貴族と結婚する自己犠牲的行為は,人身御供として本来ならテスの場合のように悲劇的であるが,エセルバータの場合,考えようによっては,環境の犠牲者(召使いの娘として,10人の兄弟姉妹の5番目に生まれたという)とも言えるが,彼女の自尊心及び虚栄心がらみの野心にのっとり,自ら選んだ道を邁進し,子爵夫人として夫も財産も管理・支配する姿には,悲劇よりむしろしたたかな生命力を感じる。この小論では,19世紀の時代背景と,その思潮に触れ,ヒロインが職業で果し得なかった女性の自立,並びに持てる才能の開花を結婚によってどのように達成し維持していくか,彼女の生き様を「新しい女」と位置づけ論を進めていく.