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**ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

**MASTER THESIS**

**THE CONCEPTS OF FATE AND NATURE IN HARDY'S**  
***THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE***

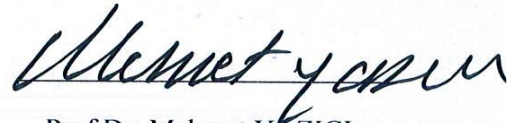
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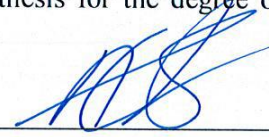
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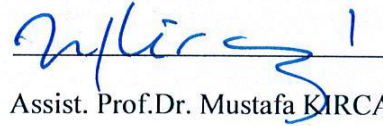
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**ABSTRACT**  
**THE CONCEPTS OF FATE AND NATURE IN HARDY'S**  
***THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE***

**AL-DULAIMI QASIM, Farah**

**Master Thesis**

Graduate School of Social Sciences

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Thomas Hardy is one of the writers who have a pessimistic outlook of human life; and accordingly, the concepts of "Fate" and "Nature" are to be considered within the frame of his pessimistic outlook. Hardy's thought was a revolt against the optimism of the 18th century and a refusal of the consolation of the Christian faith. Hardy's novels brought to England the pessimism of Schopenhauer. The nature of his personal experiences in life, together with his intellectual evaluation, assisted him well in his writing. Moreover, Fate plays a great role in the lives of Hardy's heroes and heroines as they struggle against their tragic destinies awaiting them. Hardy's characters do not have any control over their aims, as Fate emerges as a sole controlling force in their actions, which is given through "Coincidences" (chance events) moving from one incident to another reaching the final disaster in his novels. Nature is also an inimical force that has controlling power over Hardy's characters.

This point links Nature with Fate, for Nature has a considerable role in leading the character's destiny. Hardy's 1878 novel *The Return of the Native* can be read as a tragedy since by presenting characters crushed by the powers of Fate and a malicious Nature, the novel can be considered as a remodelling of ancient Greek tragedies. The aim of this thesis is to study Thomas Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native* in terms of the concepts of Nature, Fate and Coincidence in order to understand how they play a significant role in the tragic view given in the novel.

**Keywords:** *The Return of the Native*, Fate, Coincidence, Nature, Tragedy.

## ÖZ

*The Return of the Native*: Kader ve Doğa Kavramları

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Thomas Hardy, insan hayatına dair karamsar bir görüşe sahip yazarlardan biridir. Bu nedenle “kader” ve “doğa” kavramları yazarın bu karamsar görüşünün sınırları çerçevesinde değerlendirilmelidir. Hardy'nin düşüncesi 18. yy. iyimserliğine bir başkaldırı ve Hristiyan inancının tesellisini geri çevirmedi. Diyebiliriz ki Hardy'nin romanları İngiltere'ye Schopenhauer'ın karamsarlığını getirmiştir. Hayatındaki kişisel deneyimleri ve entelektüel değerlendirmeleri ona yazılarında yardımcı olmuştur. Bunun yanında; kader, Hardy'nin kendilerini bekleyen trajik sonlara karşı direnen roman kahramanlarının hayatlarında büyük rol oynar. Hardy'nin karakterleri kendi kaderlerini belirleyemezler veya hayat gayelerini kontrol edemezler, çünkü romanlardaki felaket sonuçlarına ortam hazırlayan “tesadüflerin” bir sonucu olarak kendini gösteren kader, kendi eylemlerini kontrol eden mutlak güçtür. Hardy'nin

1878'de basılan romanı *The Return of the Native*, kader ve dođanın kötücül güçleri tarafından ezilen karakterler sunduđu için, bir trajedi romanı olarak okunabilir ve Antik Yunan Trajedileri'nin yeniden yorumlaması olarak düşünülebilir. Bu tezin amacı Thomas Hardy'nin *The Return of the Native* adlı romanını, verilen trajik görüş kapsamında oynadıkları rollerin önemini anlamak için, dođa, kader ve tesadüf kavramları üzerinden incelemektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** The Return of the Native, kader, tesadüf, dođa, trajedi.

**in cherished memory of my beloved Father and to my dear Mother**



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## INTRODUCTION

*The Return of the Native* is regarded as one of the remarkable novels by Thomas Hardy, the well-known English prominent novelist and great poet. It was published in 1878 after he returned to the Wessex environment of his youth. Hardy himself classified his novels into three collections: the first collection being the novel of characters and environments including works such as *The Return of the Native* and other major novels including, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*. The second collection is defined as “Romance and fantasies”, and the third collection is defined as “Novels of Ingenuity”. The novels under the first collection made Hardy one of the most prominent English novelists. “The first group contains all the major novels though they are given a pleasure of a different kind of unity by the reappearance of environments” (Page, p.32).

Hardy tells in his novel *The Return of the Native* that all actions take place in Egdon Heath apart from Wessex. The first five books of the novel encompass a day and a year which is from the 5th of November of one year to the 6th of November of another year, and the events of the sixth book take approximately two years. *The Return of the Native* is a straightforward tragic story, and it includes great forces such as Fate, Nature and Coincidence. The novel starts with a detailed description of the dismal place Egdon Heath by which Hardy shows the reader, through the events and the characters of the novel, especially Eustacia Vye and Clym Yeobright, a hard struggle between man and Nature and the conflict between man and his destiny. In *The Return of the Native*, Eustacia Vye gets stuck in Egdon Heath, the place that she hates too much. Eustacia wishes to be in a bright life out of Egdon Heath. She marries a native Clym Yeobright who is unhappy with his superficial life in Paris that pushes him to go back to Egdon Heath. For Eustacia, Egdon Heath represents Hades that makes the conflict between the two emerge. Besides, they are different in their future

plans. Eustacia's and Clym's marriage is fated to be a disaster. Clym obviously tells Eustacia that he would not go back to Paris, but Eustacia thinks that she can convince him to alter his mind. Accordingly, she accepts to marry Clym. Gradually, her influence on him starts to vanish since Clym's insistence on his reason to stay in Egdon Heath eventually destroys Eustacia's dream of going to Paris. The events turn from bad to worse when Clym studies hard to become a teacher, and almost he loses sight. While Clym recovers, he starts to work at Furze-cutter which is a great frustration to Eustacia. Yet, the unhappy Eustacia starts to meet Damon Wildeve, her first former lover, again in Gipsy's dance party. Mrs. Yeobright tries to make peace with her son. Mrs. Yeobright comes to visit her son Clym with the hope of a possible reconciliation between Eustacia and Yeobright; at the same time, Wildeve comes to see Eustacia while Clym is asleep. Therefore, Eustacia, for fear of her scandal she can give way, does not open the door to Mrs. Yeobright. Heartbroken and disappointed Mrs. Yeobright goes back, thinking that her son does not want to see her. On her way home, she has been bitten by an adder and dies. Clym blames himself for his mother's death. Thus, he and Eustacia quarrel because he then knows about his mother's visit and Wildeve's existence at his house. Eustacia leaves the house and goes back to her grandfather's cottage in grief. When Clym learns the truth of his mother's death, Eustacia plans to leave Egdon Heath with the help of Wildeve who inherits some amount of money. In a stormy night, the events of the novel come to the climax, where Eustacia is on her way to meet Wildeve and escape with him, Eustacia falls into the pond and gets drown. Clym and Wildeve jump to rescue her but Wildeve is also drown while Clym is saved by Diggory Venn. Finally, Clym becomes an itinerant preacher and remains in Egdon Heath.

Thomas Hardy is one of the writers who adopted and applied a pessimistic outlook of human life in his fiction; thus, the concept of Fate and Nature are considered within the frame of this pessimistic outlook. The aim of this study is to discuss the concept of Fate and Nature in Hardy's novel *The Return of The Native*.

Chapter one is an introductory chapter. It tackles with Hardy's ideas concerning human life, and an account of his personal experiences which appear in his novels. Besides, the influence of the scientific developments is also represented in his writings such as the effect of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* on Hardy, and the other philosophers who impressed his writing. The second chapter, entitled "Coincidence and Fate" deals with the concept of "Fate" as represented by coincidence (chance events). It traces the developing role of Fate moving from one incident to another reaching the final disaster in the novel, After that, the focus will be on the theme "Character is Fate" as suggested by Hardy. The chapter makes a link between the novel characters and Fate as it is presented in the characters as agents of Fate in addition to chance.

Chapter Three tackles with how Hardy treats Nature in his novel. This chapter discusses the important points concerning Hardy's depiction of Nature. The first point is related to his detailed pictorial description of natural scenery which he gives life to every single minute point. The second point is related to the relation between man and Nature. The last point is related to the presentation of Nature as inimical creature that has control and power over human beings. This point links Nature with Fate since Nature has a considerable role in leading the character's destiny.

Chapter Four makes amalgamation between Hardy's novel and the ancient Greek tragedy and Aristotle's rules of tragedy. In this chapter, the elements that formed tragedy are traced in Hardy's novel. Finally, the conclusion sums up the main points raised and discussed throughout this study.

## CHAPTER I

### HARDY'S IDEAS ON FATE AND THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Considering the works Thomas Hardy produced and their themes, it can be said that Hardy's view about life is basically tragic. This is because Hardy mainly believes that human beings are products of their environment and they have no control of their lives, having only limited degree of free will, as we can understand through the analyses of the characters in his novel. Hardy holds the view that man, along with his conflict in life, has no possibility of escape from his lot. Hardy basically believes in the existence of Fate and the absurdity that man himself is, as Ifor Evans comments in his book *A Short History of English Literature* on the fact that in Hardy's novels, fate is continually "functioning in men's lives, corrupting their possibilities of happiness, and beckoning theme toward tragedy" (p.194). As a result, the struggle of Hardy's novel characters to reach happiness depends actually on chance. This is clearly seen in Hardy's multiple novels and through the tragic fates of Hardy's well-known heroes and heroines such as Tess of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Jude of *Jude the Obscure*, Henchard of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and Eustacia of *The Return of the Native*.

Hardy's tragic view of human life did not start suddenly out of a vacuum. There are various reasons behind his ideas that shaped them in time, among which his personal experience can be considered as the main base upon which he established his philosophy. The other reason is related to Hardy's education and the philosophical background of his age, for it is known that Hardy's writings were influenced by the scientific ideas of his age and the great thinkers of the time such as Charles Darwin, Arthur Schopenhauer, John Stuart Mill and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, whose

ground-breaking ideas helped to form Hardy's beliefs about man's existence in the universe. This gave Hardy the frame within which he had drawn a number of great pictures that still impress readers. Hardy lived in Dorset, which made him familiar with nature and the simplistic lifestyle of the countryside. In Hardy's novels, there is a type of nostalgia for the past with which he presents pastoral life with its simple characteristics. In *The Return of the Native*, for instance, there is a Reddleman, who cannot be seen in the real new world of urbanization.

Charles Darwin published his masterpiece *The Origin of Species* in 1859 when Hardy was a nineteen-year-old student in the field of science. In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin endeavours to prove that all life that is seen around us had once developed from other biological creatures, which he sees as lower forms of life. For the Darwinists, it is directly the denial of the existence of God. Deborah Collins relates: "They [the Darwinists] become happy enough to bid good riddance to a God whom they perceived as an omnipotent fiend" (p.31). Darwin's book greatly disturbed many religious people since it apparently contradicted the account of the creation of the world in the Bible. However, Hardy easily accepted Darwin's idea since he had his doubts about the existence of God. Hardy believed that the world was abandoned by God and man was left alone in the universe without the presence of a benevolent god. In a journal entry of 1890, Hardy himself states that "I [Hardy] have been looking for God for 50 years and I think if he had existed, I should discover him" (qtd. in Schwarz, p.19). This can be considered as a kind of summary of Hardy's religious belief which could also explain the reason behind putting his characters in a malicious world. These lines for G.K Chesterton which according to a note on the envelope containing the manuscript in the Dorset Country Museum composed by Hardy show Darwin's great impact on his view of life and the universe:

Here lies nipped in this narrow cyst

The literary contortionist



Who prove and never turn a hair  
That Darwin's theories were a snare  
He'd hold as true with tongue in jowl  
That Nature's geocentric rule... true and right  
And if one with him could not see  
He'd shout his choice word "Blasphemy" (qtd. in Poole, p. 290).

The indifference of Nature for Darwin is not the indifference of God; rather it is the indifference of necessity –the power of life itself against humanity. Therefore, we can see that Darwin's ideas damaged the world view of Christianity, and people started feeling the difficulties of living in a world without a god, as Roger Robinson mentions: "feeling that pain and cruelty are built in the every structure of existence and Nature is obviously characterized by cruelty" (p.135). Hardy adopts from Darwin's work the notion that individuals and their lots are preconditioned by some mechanical forces out of their control. Hardy names these forces as "Crass Casualty" (in his poem *Hap*), and "the Immanent Will" (in his poem *The Dynasts*) or "Nature". Hardy believes in the indifference of Nature and the unconscious force controlling the lives and behaviour of human beings.

Hardy's personal life can be the reason for his dark outlook, for it is known that he deserted the church and refused religion, which should be regarded as a natural outcome and influence of Darwinism. The impact of Darwin's theory of evolution on Hardy gave him a pessimistic outlook, according to Hardy the world was not made for human beings. In his autobiography, Hardy recorded a note of April 1889: "A woeful fact that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions, the nerves being evolved to an activity abnormal in such an environment. Even the higher animals are in excess in this respect. It may be questioned if Nature, or what we call Nature, so far back as when she crossed the line from invertebrates to

vertebrates, did not exceed her mission. This planet does not supply happiness to higher existences (qtd. in Millgate, p.227). This means people's unhappiness can be attributed to their possession of consciousness in a world which is governed by blind power.

One of the philosophers who influenced Hardy to a considerable extent was Arthur Schopenhauer, "the pessimist German philosopher". Schopenhauer's works were translated into English during Hardy's time. There is a close intellectual similarity between Hardy's and Schopenhauer's ideas about the human condition. In Hardy's later works which were written after 1874, the influence of Schopenhauer on Hardy's fiction is very clear, for it is believed that Schopenhauer's work *Die Welt als Will und Vorstellung (The World as Will and Idea)* had an immense influence on Hardy. J. O. Bailey argues that "it is beyond question that Schopenhauer influenced Hardy" in terms of the philosopher's idea of the Will (p.88). It is said that Hardy benefitted from Schopenhauer's studies and adopted his pessimism in composing his notes, including one entry emphasizing that "unless suffering is the direct and immediate object of life, our existences must entirely fail of its aim" (Bjork, p.107). Schopenhauer, as a pessimist thinker, hinges his philosophy on the basic concept of will as "thing-in-itself" (Bennecke, p.16). Hardy favors Schopenhauer's ideas in that he also establishes his ideas on the concept of will and makes it the main foundation of his thought. It is usually claimed that there are similar points between Hardy and Schopenhauer such as "pessimism, dislike of Christianity, interest in art and desire for peace" (Salter's, p.57). The fundamental force in the universe that Hardy seeks is provided by Schopenhauer's concept of will as Bailey argues that for Hardy, the concept of will "is the non-conscious basic force that underlies, is expressed by, and also is all phenomena, living and non-living; it is the force that impels all processes, creates all matter, and is imminent in all its expression" (p.88).

In his philosophical writings, Schopenhauer seeks to explain man's existence. For him, human beings are the victims of will and their attempt to achieve happiness and joy are in vain. Hardy was interested in the question concerning the nature of force or the force that lies behind the universe; that is why it is argued that his fiction was mostly affected by Schopenhauer. According to Schopenhauer, it is only "the will" that gives human beings the key to their own existence (Bennecke, p.27). For Schopenhauer, looking at things, to plants, animals and natural forces we will see, as a result, that the will is behind everything—"the real essence of everything in the world, the one kernel of every phenomenon" (Bennecke, p.27). Ernest Bennecke presents and explains in his book *Thomas Hardy's Universe*, the concept of "Will" in five forms in a featured system of thought, as he states that:

- 1- *The will is one and Immanent.* Therefore there is unity in the world. The universe is explained according to Monistic Idealism as opposed to Monistic Materialism or Transcendental Theism.
- 2- *The will is Groundless and Autonomous.* That is the universe is ruled by the immutable laws of necessity. Determinism is at the base of apparent arbitrariness. Chance becomes the form and manifestation of this necessity.
- 3- *The will is unconscious.* That is, will is given the superiority over intelligence or reason. This is given the premise for psychology that Man is a willing, not reasoning being.
- 4- *The will is Aimless.* This suggests pessimism.
- 5- *The will is Indestructible.* This suggests that there is a faint hope (p.28).

This pessimistic philosophy is reflected in Hardy's novels when his heroes and heroines have a great desire to change their lives but they are defeated in pursuing to carry out the desires. Hardy wrote his fiction according to Schopenhauer's concept of will as a force underlying the phenomena of the universe. Hardy confirms this idea with his characters behaving according to blind power in order that we see them as weakness and helpless victims of powers beyond their understanding and control, similarly to Schopenhauer's ideas of Will. Hardy creates through his fiction the impression that the blind force imposes itself on human action and behaviours. We see Hardy's characters completely helpless and victims of their "will" in Schopenhauer's sensation of the world: "deterministic", "pervasive", and "irrational".

Hardy is known to have a pessimistic philosophy; nonetheless, he chooses to label himself a "meliorist," although Hardy admits having a pessimistic view (Millgate, p.410). According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, "meliorism" is the negotiation between optimism and pessimism "which affirms that the world may be made better by rightly directed human effort" (p.204). Hardy states: "People call me a pessimist; and if it is pessimism to think that 'not to be born is best, then I do not reject the designation. But my pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption that the world is going to the dogs. On the contrary, my practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist" (qtd. in Millgate, p.410). Hardy pessimism emerged from the contemporary scientific point of view which left no place for providence.

Nietzsche's ideas also influenced Hardy's view about human nature along with Darwin's and Schopenhauer's. In fact, Nietzsche confirms Hardy's disbelief: "Hardy reflected Nietzsche's agonized cry that 'God is dead' in his novel. His view of life was that since there is no God to give meaning to life, man is alone in the Universe, no better and no worse than other creatures that live or have lived for a brief moment on this speck called the Earth. The Universe is neither malevolent nor

benevolent; it is simply indifferent” (Clipper, p.6). In Hardy's poem *God's Funeral* (1908), as referred to by its title, presents the idea raised by Nietzsche's phrase “God is dead”. This phrase, which is usually associated with the liberal theology of the 1960, had a much earlier birth in the works of Nietzsche, specifically his 1882 work *The Gay Science*. It is known that Hardy was familiar with Nietzsche's philosophy and with his views on theology, and that the “God is dead” idea would have been one that appealed to him. Eugene Williams comments “Man is alone in a world deserted by God; he becomes a victim in the hand of cruel fate” (p.404).

In Hardy's philosophy, Fate is presented as the only power controlling everything in a human being's life. Fate appears in Hardy's novel first by “chance,” then by the characters themselves. The conflict in Hardy's novels is not between competing individuals but between the individual and everything in the world that foreshadows defeating him. Hardy is well-known for his fatalism, but his fatalism should not be taken as a negative one. He wants to show us through his novels that human beings never understand the Law of Fate. Hardy believes that Fate is a very powerful force beyond Man's control and one that destroys his dreams.

The Ancient Greek philosopher explained the idea of fate in different ways. Fate as an idea appeared in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Homer used abstract nouns referring to some power which planned Man's destiny. In Greek tragedies, Man was presented as the prey of some terrible, hidden power which leads him to his catastrophe. The idea of fate appeared in the works of Euripides, Aeschylus and Sophocles. In Aeschylus and Euripides, Fate was referred to as Nemesis, having a close similarity to Fate and thus recognized as “Fate” herself. Actually, in these tragedies by the abovementioned playwrights, there is a course of destiny which leads the hero to his tragic end either in the glorious self-sacrifices or of murder or suicide.

In Hardy's fiction, there is a distinct emphasis on Fate which leads to his characters' disappointment in their efforts to achieve happiness. There are specific

conditions contributed by Hardy, which can be considered the agents of Fate. The main element that represents this force is “chance”, which plays the part of Fate through series of accidents and unlikely coincidences. Clipper argues that “in Hardy’s view, man’s destiny is composed of situations like this” (p.81). This force, as Hardy supposes, works without conscious design and evokes in human malignity no good will. Hardy also depicts his characters such as Clym and Eustacia as being hindered by some unclear force that stifled their aims. Occasionally, the characters are responsible for their destinies. Those characters become agents of Fate as well as chance. According to Hardy, in spite of every human effort to do good and find happiness, it nevertheless depends on circumstances.

Hardy is also a naturalist.<sup>1</sup> Hardy attempts to show that the ways human regulate their lives are unnatural in the sense that they have nothing to do with, and are usually in opposition to, the great system of Nature of which human are a part. The word “Nature” is defined in many ways throughout English literature. These definitions are derived from the time or modes of expression, philosophical views, personal views or religion views. However, the fundamental conception of Nature is the conventional Christian view that Nature is the creation of God and with the Fall of Man, it has become devastating. Throughout the nineteenth century, that view changed when science revived the view that Nature was basically destructive and antagonistic to Man. This is identical to Hardy’s view of Nature in his works. Hardy’s view of life contributed to his treatment of Nature in his fiction. Nature in Hardy’s novels is not a mere background in the story. It is functional and a blind power that harms the characters and is indifferent to their goals. The first thing that is very clear in Hardy’s novels about the depiction of Nature is that it is given through a detailed

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<sup>1</sup>. Naturalism is one of the movements in literature which appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century (1865-1900), and it is based on the belief that man is the product of heredity and environment and that his behavior is completed - or mainly- controlled by social, economic and biological forces.

description by the novelist. Hardy sees Nature or the natural environment as an organic living whole and its constituent parts, even the inanimate parts, have a life and personality of their own. For this reason, Nature is written with a capital letter. The second point in Hardy's depiction of Nature is that he draws two different pictures for it. In the first picture, Nature appears in a friendly and close relationship with human beings. There is always a connection between Hardy's characters and their natural background. The other picture of Nature in Hardy's view is the one that shows Nature as an indifferent organism who lives her own immense life without care for Man; in fact, it is quite antagonistic to him.

Nature plays the role of Fate in Hardy's novels, for he depicts Nature as a character in his novels, that is, Nature is pictorial in many of his novels not as a background, the scenery or setting against which events take place. Moreover, Nature is active and seems to play a role in bringing disaster. Man must notice that life is a battle because Man cannot understand the vast order of Nature that appears indifferent to him, his aims and his desires. According to Hardy, Nature works against the individual's plans. Hardy comments "why it is that so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order" (qtd. in Ackerman, p.103). This statement seems to suggest that Hardy feels that there is an outside power which controls the universe, and that this power is a hostile one. Since Hardy's novels are working with the concept of fatality of an indifferent Nature, it can be regarded as the echo of the classical Greek tragedies. Hardy comments: "Good fiction may be identified as that kind of imaginative writing that lies near to epic, dramatic or narrative masterpieces of the past" (qtd. in Pinion, p.147). Thus, we can consider Hardy's novels to be classified close to the ancient tragedies insofar as they obey Aristotle's rules of tragedy.

## CHAPTER II

### FATE AND COINCIDENCE

Hardy's main assumption that "character is fate" means fate should pivot on "character" and not coincidence (Gold Knope, p.171). However, aside from characters, coincidence plays a large role in Hardy's novel. It plays an important role to show how chance workings of fate according to Hardy as well as coincidence in Hardy works clarify how things move against Man in this universe. Hardy, with the use of coincidence, has added aspects to his novels that identify them as novels of his time. Albert P. Elliott in his book *Fatalism in the Works of Thomas Hardy* claims that chance and coincidence were the first tolls of fate that developed in Hardy's mind and are, therefore, of particular importance (pp.59-60). *The Oxford Dictionary of English* defines the term 'chance' as 'the occurrence of events in the absence of an obvious intention or cause. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* adds to this definition that 'chance' can also be used to refer to 'fortune' or 'fate'. In comparison, 'coincidence' denotes "[a] notable concurrence of events or circumstance without apparent causal connection". Hornback claims "coincidence results either from chance occurrences or from the operation of causal relationships, that is, from a juxtaposition of cause and consequence" (p.6).

Coincidence is the procurator of Fate or the force through which Fate imposes itself drawing the characters to their fatal end. Coincidence in Hardy's novels does not lead the characters to happy endings; rather it shows how man is the victim of circumstances out of his control, which lead him to a fatal end. Hardy puts his philosophical experiences of life into his novels through the use these coincidences. He wants us to feel and know that Man and Fate are always inevitably at war with



one another. Hardy wants to say that human beings never understand the Law of Fate. Characters in their attempts to achieve happiness find themselves confronting a great force (Fate) which does not take their desires into account. Hardy believes that characters are governed by Fate “*The Return of the Native* is concerned with the general malaise in the life of humanity. Man is a pawn in life’s lottery. Man’s life avails him nothing. Men are just incidental in creation. Man may protest against his fate, but it makes no difference, he is only a plaything, he cannot master his destiny” (Wotton, p. 204). The characters of Hardy’s novel do not have any control over their fate Hardy depicts them as prisoners of their fate because fate controls them. Fate plays a great role in the lives of Hardy’s heroes and heroines as they struggle against their tragic destinies. Hardy deals with chance effectively and uses coincidence to enable him to show the result of a series of actions taking place in a short span of time. The characters also believe that these conditions are puppets in the hand of Date or Destiny.

### **2. 1. The importance of Coincidence in *The Return of the Native***

In *The Return of the Native*, chance and coincidence play a major role. The plot of the novel grows through a series of unexpected actions and these unexpected actions can be taken as coincidences to reach the final disaster of the novel’s plot and the fatal end. In this novel, as in Hardy’s other novels, the world is governed by Coincidence, which is symbolized by “Fate”. Hardy presents Fate as the power dominating human life. Fate appears in Hardy’s novels through chance and his characters’ choices. The tension in Hardy’s novels is not between competing individuals, but between an individual and everything in this world that threatens to crush him. The quotation “character is fate” means that a character or the nature of a person at least has some influence on his or her destiny, as Roy Morrell discusses this issue in his book *Thomas Hardy: The Will and Way*. He claims that the character is

responsible for his or her fate, explaining his point of view by saying that “Hardy’s novel characters are able to make choices but they misuse free will and choice available to them” (p.140). Albert Elliott takes a closer view at fatalism and Fate as an artistic motif in Hardy’s novels. He argues that “it is not character which is the controlling factor in Hardy’s tragic works, but it is a power beyond man and deliberately opposed to his will” (p.33).

Thus, Fate works through these unexpected actions which bring the characters to their tragic end. Coincidence as the power of Fate stands against human will to find happiness and destroys the dreams of human beings. For instance, the novel starts with a coincidence, as Norman Page argues, “that is presented in a way reflecting Hardy’s tragic realism” (p.272). This example of a coincidence is a premature accident about the marriage of Thomasin and Wildeve. It is related to the mistake of their marriage license. Wildeve acquires the license in Badmouth; however, he makes Anglebury his destination forgetting about the license. Thus, poor Thomasin mentions her frustration to Mrs. Yobright. When Mrs. Yeobright enquires about the irregularity, Thomason answers: “I don't know. Mr. Wildeve can explain. I did not think when I went away this morning that I should come back like this. It being dark, Thomasin allowed her emotion to escape her by the silent way of tears, which could roll down her cheek unseen” (Hardy, p.68).

This accident foreshadows the coming events and suggests that this marriage is not right and it is not suitable for Wildeve and Thomasin. It is clear from Wildeve’s chilly reaction that he is not in love with Thomasin, but the real reason behind this marriage is not explained in the novel, so it is not known why he wants to marry Thomasin. However, we are told that he is in love with Eustacia. Hardy starts the story with the marriage of Wildeve and Thomasin; this is why we see Wildeve so chilly and not caring about the whole affair. Wildeve appears so careless as if he is happy because he returns without marrying Thomasin. He says: “Well it was a very

stupid mistake, but such mistakes will happen. The license was useless at Anglebury. It was made out for Budmouth, but as I didn't read it I wasn't aware of that" (Hardy, p.71).

This is a perfect and evident marking which shows that the unhappy and unsuccessful marriage will bring problems to Wildeve, Thomasin and Eustacia. This marriage will cause Eustacia to think of marrying another man in revenge. Both Eustacia and Wildeve in their separated marriages will have unsuccessful married lives, which will push Wildeve towards Eustacia again and finally draw them to their tragic end. There is another example to illustrate how coincidence is important in the novel and to show how the fate of others arises less from free will and more through error, accident and chance. The world distinctly is based on such chance events. Eustacia persuades young Johnny Nunsuch to assist her with stoking a fire, after which he is dismissed. Eustacia commences a journey home on foot. Prior to arriving home, Johnny becomes startled by the light from the heath and returns to the heath to find Wildeve and Eustacia together. Serendipitously, the boy encounters Diggory Venn, the latter interrogating the former. This can be considered a minor accident. However, it will have a great effect in the story because Diggory Venn will take an active role in the plot of the novel. Diggory Venn concludes that the "gentleman" was Wildeve because the conversation had been on the matters of a postponed marriage:

Then I came down here, and I was afeard, and I went back; but I didn't like to speak to her, because of the gentleman, and I came on here again". [Johnny Nunsuch] "A gentleman--ah!What did she say to him, my man?" [Diggory Venn] "Told him she supposed he had not married the other woman because he liked his old sweetheart best; and things like that [Johnny Nunsuch] (Hardy, p.103).

The series of coincidences continues and directs the plot. Eustacia, by pure chance, overhears a conversation of two Heath workers, Humphrey and Sam, about Clym

Yeobright, who works in pairs and is expected to be on Egdon Heath the time approaching Christmas. This conversation can represent the starting point in Eustacia's tragedy. The irony of this coincidence is that Eustacia overhears a particular part of the conversation of these two men in which they link Eustacia with Clym because they say they will make a good "couple" since they are educated and handsome:

"I say, Sam," observed Humphrey when the old man was gone, "she and Clym Yeobright would make a very pretty pigeon-pair--hey? If they wouldn't I'll be dazed! Both of one mind about niceties for certain, and learned in print, and always thinking about high doctrine--there couldn't be a better couple if they were made o' purpose. Clym's family is as good as hers. His father was a farmer, that's true; but his mother was a sort of lady, as we know. Nothing would please me better than to see them two man and wife" (Hardy, p.133).

On hearing this conversation, Eustacia becomes excited and eager to meet Clym. From this moment on, Eustacia starts to dream about Clym without seeing him and forgets Wildeve, who is supposed to be her lover. In fact, she chooses Wildeve because he is the only man who can take her out of Egdon Heath, the place that she hates so much. Now things have changed because a better man (Clym) has come to Egdon Heath. Clym comes back from Paris, the romantic place, and he can take her to Paris, the lands of her dreams.

Matters from now on develop worse and worse, in that we will see later Eustacia blaming herself for her choice and she feels that with Clym her dreams will never come true. This feeling of disappointment will bring her back to Wildeve who will lead her to her tragic end. This is a clear evident to show how coincidences in Hardy's novel are working against the hopes and desire of individuals. It is "Immanent will", the will of the universe, and it never lets one to reach happiness. Eustacia is searching for a convenient and comfortable life out of Egdon Heath,

where her inimical fate will be so harsh on her and it will lead her to death not happiness.

There is another accident that changes the direction of the events and that raises Eustacia's excitement even further. On the first day of Clym's arrival, he meets Eustacia and greets her on his way at home. This chance meeting with Clym, although it is very short and comes after Eustacia hears the conversation between Humphreys and Sam, makes Eustacia think Clym is a good choice for her. She comes to know that Clym is the only man suitable to be her husband since he has returned from Paris, the place of her romantic dreams. Clym's addressing her opens the door wide to Eustacia's dreams. This can be seen from the title of Chapter Three of the second book: "How a little sound produced a great dream". The word "great" shows us that Eustacia has high aspirations. "Dream" in the title is also suggestive, implying that Eustacia's wishes will not come true easily and are actually her wishful thinking. Eustacia's astonishment at how chance can arrange this meeting reflects the importance of this meeting for her and its impact on her: "She murmured a reply, glided by them, and turned round. She could not, for a moment, believe that chance, unrequested, had brought into her presence the soul of the house she had gone to inspect, the man without whom her inspection would not have been thought of" (Hardy, p. 140).

With the development of the plot, Hardy's characters find themselves struggling against coincidences one after another. Each coincidence is worse than the previous coincidence, stifling all opportunities of fulfilling their aims. Moreover, there is another coincidence which is important for the plot development: Mrs. Yeobright sends the money (which she has been saving for a long time for Thomasin and Clym) with Christian Cantle, who loses all the money to Wildeve in a game of dice. Diggory Veen, who does not know that the money belongs to Thomasin and Clym, wins the money again and gives it to Thomasin. He also appears

serendipitously that night. This incident is the main cause behind the tensions between Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright. Eustacia becomes angry when Mrs. Yeobright asks Eustacia about the money. Eustacia assumes that Mrs. Yeobright accuses her of having stolen the money. Eustacia misunderstands Mrs. Yeobright because the money had already been given to Thomasin. As a result, this misunderstanding leads Mrs. Yeobright to her unexpected death when she is bitten by an adder while attempting to appease Eustacia:

Money from Mr. Wildeve? No--never! Madam, what do you mean by that?" Eustacia fired up all too quickly, for her own consciousness of the old attachment between herself and Wildeve led her to jump to the conclusion that Mrs. Yeobright also knew of it, and might have come to accuse her of receiving dishonourable presents from him now (Hardy, p. 264).

After Eustacia's wedding, she meets Wildeve by chance at a village festival, a "gypsying". Wildeve has not seen her since his wedding day; she was sad about her life and about Clym's illness. It is clear to see how their meeting after years strengthens Eustacia's desire to leave Egdon Heath again. Wildeve's words of sympathy to her make depress and frustrate her, especially when they talk about Clym's being half-blinded: "I am sorry to hear that your husband is ill." "He is not ill--only incapacitated." "Yes--that is what I mean. I sincerely sympathize with you in your trouble. Fate has treated you cruelly" (p.284).

Here it is clear that Wildeve puts the blame on Fate for everything that befalls Eustacia. In terms of Eustacia's miserable condition, J. Clipper argues that "Hardy continues to emphasize his theme that human beings are not completely in control of their fate once again, accident intervenes in human affairs" (p.64). This shows Hardy's own philosophy that fate is against Man's desire and behind Man's disaster. Eustacia's yearning is for a shiny life in Paris with Clym Yeobright; however,

everything has destroyed this illusion of her. Eustacia wants to leave Egdon Heath by marrying Clym, but the power of Fate always frustrates her: “The character’s struggle against destiny is brought to naught and they have to surrender to force superior to themselves” (Murfin, p.119).

Clym’s illness makes Eustacia realize that now it is impossible for her to continue with him and make her dreams come true. The events are deteriorating, and becoming more complicated with every following incidence created by their harsh lot. These coincidences, which dominate Hardy’s novel, help to receive improbabilities and show his novel convincingly within one “idiosyncratic mode” of regarding the world. “Idiosyncratic” here is defined as the way of thinking that belongs to an individual, also known as individual mannerism (Hardy’s idea of life and his way of thinking and reading the world).

The miserable coincidence in the novel pertains to Mrs. Yeobright in which the ironies of fate are very clear. She wants to seek peace with her son and his wife. Mrs. Yeobright goes through the Heath land to Clym’s cottage. Mrs. Yeobright knocks on the door while Clym is sleeping and while Eustacia is talking with her lover Wildeve. The irony in this coincidence is that Clym is calling his mother in his sleep, which makes Eustacia assume that Mrs. Yeobright is let in by Clym. It is also ironic that Clym calls out to his mother in his sleep while his mother is waiting outside to see her son. Mrs. Yeobright leaves after waiting for some time, believing that her son no longer wants to see her. It shows how things deteriorate by chance as exemplified by the fact that on her way back home, Mrs. Yeobright is bitten to death by an adder. She talks before her death with a little boy named Johnny, who carries her last words to Clym:

“Do you want me anymore, please?”

Mrs. Yeobright made no reply.

“What shall I tell Mother?” the boy continued.

“Tell her you have seen a broken-hearted woman cast off by her son” (Hardy, p.308).

“Cast off by her son,” a sentence uttered by a broken-hearted mother makes Clym feel guilty, believing that he and Eustacia are responsible for his mother’s death. This is the cause behind his separation from Eustacia, which becomes the opportunity that draws Eustacia to Wildeve together once again. “Why these many tragic accidents are brought together in the novel by Hardy?” is a question that draws attention to Hardy’s point of view that Fate has power over human beings. The occurrence of too many coincidences makes them improbable in reality. Chance in such situations makes Man its victim, always standing in the way between Man’s will for happiness and the realization of that happiness. Clym wakes up, but when it is too late, he arrives to find his mother dying on road: “O, what is it! Mother, are you very ill--you are not dying?” he cried, pressing his lips to her face. “I am your Clym. How did you come here? What does it all mean?” (Hardy, p.313).

Eustacia day by day comes to the conclusion that her marriage was not the right decision for her life. She hears from her grandfather that Wildeve has inherited 11,000 pounds from an uncle in Canada, and upon hearing this, she thinks she has ignored Wildeve and hence lost a fortune in order to marry a half-blinded man. The news renews Eustacia’s interest in Wildeve. Eustacia goes for a walk on the Heath and chances to meet Wildeve. When they meet, he tells her that he wants to spend much money on travelling and he will stay in Paris, whether or not Thomasin cares to accompany him. Eustacia’s desire is now to find a way to leave Egdon Heath and Clym. Her thinking is completely linked to this idea. It is very clear that Hardy has timed everything to Wildeve and Eustacia in such a way that leads them to their tragic ends. Eustacia believes that now the shining world she dreams of reaching is within her grasp. She deeply loves the idea of travelling:



“Travel? What a bright idea! Where will you go to?”

From here to Paris, where I shall pass the winter and spring. Then I shall go to Italy, Greece, Egypt, and Palestine, before the hot weather comes on. In the summer I shall go to America; and then, by a plan not yet settled, I shall go to Australia and round to India. By that time I shall have begun to have had enough of it. Then I shall probably come back to Paris again, and there I shall stay as long as I can afford to (Hardy, p.321).

Eustacia blames her “bad luck” for her previous choice of marrying Clym. She says: “However it is my misfortune to be too sudden in my feeling” (Hardy, p.250). All these are accidents that occurred very rapidly one after another, as John Holloway indicated that “if the incident Hardy described had not occurred some other details could soon enough have brought the same ultimate result” (p.16).

After Eustacia separated from Clym for being the cause of Mrs. Yeobright’s death, Eustacia lives in depression in her grandfather’s house. At this time, a coincidence is created by Charley, the servant who loves Eustacia, which eventually finalizes the tragedy of Eustacia’s demise. Charley wants to make Eustacia happy and planned to surprise her by lighting a fire. His decision to do so is made on the basis of his knowledge that she is interested in bonfires. In fact, the fire means more than a surprise for Eustacia. It is the single event that she used to meet Wildeve. Upon seeing the bonfire, Wildeve assumes that Eustacia lit the bonfire and has accepted to join him to leave. Eustacia, however, denies having lit the bonfire: “I did not light it,” cried Eustacia quickly. “It was lit without my knowledge” (Hardy, p.358).

With this meeting, their tragic ends are decided and linked together. Wildeve discloses his plans of leaving Egdon Heath and wanting to take her with him to Paris:

'I will think of this,' she said hurriedly. 'Whether I can honestly make use of you as a friend, or must close with you as a lover- that is what I must ask myself. If I wish to go and decide to accept your company I will signal to you some evening at eight o'clock punctually, and this will mean that you are to be ready with a horse and trap at twelve o'clock the same night to drive me to Budmouth harbour in time for the morning boat' (Hardy, p.360).

To sum up, by sheer ill-luck Eustacia becomes an escort by misfortune, which brings to her ever-worsening coincidences with development of the story. These coincidental events make us feel that Eustacia is lost and her effort to change her life is always in vain. It is Eustacia's misfortune that cause Christian Cantle to forget to deliver Clym's letter to her till evening asks her for back to home and her grandfather did not give Eustacia the letter he thought that Eustacia is sleep. This misfortune makes Clym write a letter the same day that she wants to leave the Heath. In Hardy's novels, coincidence always links up incidents which in the end lead to fatal endings, frustration and human tragedy even though coincidence has both positive and negative meanings. In Hardy's novels, coincidence always leads to negative results and leads the characters to their tragic ends. The reader may be expecting that positive coincidences will occur;, however, they do not. D. H. Lawrence, in his *Study of Thomas Hardy*, noted that Hardy used "Chance as a way of punishing his social deviates at the same time claiming that chance itself is an indifferent force" (p.253). Hardy wants to show a realistic image of the world and that such things could happen. Thus, when Eustacia has decided to go, starts to rain heavily with storms as soon as she plans to go. The rain, interestingly, never prevents her from leaving; however, Eustacia and Wildeve ultimately die by being drowned in a pool.

## 2. 2. Fate and Character in *The Return of the Native*

Hardy has a very pessimistic point of view of life as can be seen in his fiction under scrutiny here with his characters who seem to have little control over their own lives. It is seen that Hardy's characters are no longer masters of their fate. They are exposed to indifferent forces that determine their destiny. As Davis Cecil and many other critics have argued, "[Hardy's] characters are merely puppets in the hands of all-powerful fate" (qtd. in Sumner, p. 9). Thus, there is conflict in Hardy's novels not only in which man fights man, but also when man has to fight against impersonal forces called "Fate". Robert Hudson and Edwin Arnold, in *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study*, describe a protagonist in Hardy's novels "as a victim of fate and social justice – as a victim of the cruelty of lust and the fragility of love" (p.191).

The characters in Hardy's novels seem to have their own roles in drawing their own fate. The main tragic character of Hardy seems to be in control of his or her actions by exercising their individual choices, which dominates the novel, but there are other characters that intervene in shaping that power of fate for Hardy's central characters. Whenever happiness occurs, however, Fate appears and destroys everything. This makes it clear that Fate imposes itself in different forms. Fate's unfair treatment is shown in Hardy's novels in the form of chance and coincidence. Hardy's characters have a limited degree of free will. They are prisoners of Fate, which is a very powerful force. Fate is so harsh, cruel and unfair upon the characters in Hardy's novels with the characters being aware of this fact. In *The Return of the Native*, there are the characters themselves who are aware of this fact that they are not in control of their destiny. The character who is most defeated by Fate in *The Return of the Native* is Eustacia. She herself knows this and utters in a complaining voice: "How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny is against me! [...] I do not deserve my lot!" (Hardy, p.372). Penelope Vigar argues that

“[Eustacia’s] reproach to life is directed against those forces greater than human-destiny, fate and chance” (p.138). She wants to be a free woman, but she believes that this dream of hers is being destroyed by her inimical fate. She begins to blame her fate for the bad situation she is in: “Yet, instead of blaming herself for the issue she laid the fault upon the shoulders of some indistinct, colossal prince of the world, who had formed her situation and ruled her lot” (Hardy, p.317).

Eustacia Vye, as Hardy represents her in *The Return of Native*, symbolizes what Hardy calls in his notebook “the determination to joy”. She is searching for happiness which she believes can be found outside Egdon Heath. She believes that she can achieve her self-realization out of Egdon Heath, and so she tries to escape from the lonely life that Egdon Heath offers her by putting herself in passionate love relationships one after the other. She chooses Wildeve as a lover since he is the person who is able to take her out of Egdon Heath. Afterwards, she easily leaves Wildeve for the idealistic young Clym, who appears unexpectedly because she thinks Clym is better than Wildeve and can take her out of the place that she is involuntarily ensconced. However, Catherin Belsey and Jane Moore claim that Eustacia does not know that “she effectively destroys both these men and herself” (p.71).

Eustacia’s ambition to be a new woman as well as her desire to leave Egdon Heath and change her life style makes her a rebellious person. Eustacia behaves, like other Hardy heroines, particularly Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, according to her own motives without paying attention to anything else. Especially in the last part of the novel titled “The night of the sixth of November”, she is determined to go with Wildeve and leaves Clym’s letter unopened on the table. Some critics believe that even if she has read the letter, it would not change her decision to leave Egdon Heath. She is completely determined to leave everything behind in *Thomas Hardy Novels: A Study Guide* Maureen Mahon claims that: “living in a world of fantasy has

brought hard consequences to Eustacia, among them her tragic death at the end” (p.34).

The first characteristic noted in Eustacia’s personality is that she is a rebellious woman, for she is forced to live in a place she hates much. The place, Egdon Heath, is a hellish place for Eustacia: “O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!” (Hardy, p.372).

D. H. Lawrence in his *Study of Thomas Hardy* sees Eustacia as the “Promethean rebelliousness”.<sup>2</sup> Hardy himself mentions Prometheus in his notebook, and he makes it clear that Eustacia is close to this mythological character in terms of “the fire and flame of being and kindled bonfires” and connected to “the great self-preservation scheme” with “community and conventions” (p.17). As Lawrence’s introduction suggests. Thus, Eustacia’s personality and character determine her fate. First, her indignation pushes her to an unsuccessful marriage to Clym Yeobright (“two wasted lives”), and then she becomes indignant with this marriage seeing that Clym is not the person she had dreamed of. Eustacia totally misunderstands Clym’s personality, regarding the fact that after marriage she could persuade him to return to Paris. She subsequently returns to her former lover, Wildeve. Eustacia’s yearning for a luxuriant life out of Egdon Heath causes her some confusion. She confuses her dreams with reality and mistakenly believes “Clym to be the hero who will come on his white horse and take her to the delight pairs” (Mahon, p.35). Therefore, it can be argued that Eustacia in one way or another is responsible for her fate.

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<sup>2</sup>. In Greek Mythology, Prometheus is the son of Iapetus and ocean nymph Clymene. For deceit practiced by Prometheus upon Zeus, Prometheus was chained onto a mountain where daily an eagle would consume his liver which grew again at night. He was freed by Hercules.

It is significant, on the other hand, that Clym is depicted in the novel as a character who is “a strange mixture of dreamily and idealistic person, egotist and altruist” (Clipper, p.73). The source of happiness Clym longs for is related to being a preacher on Egdon Heath, and Hardy compares him to religious asceticism through these words: “[Clym] was a John the Baptist who took ennoblement rather than repentance for his text” (Hardy, p.203). These words of Clym signify his idealistic side, ignoring the societal reality of the world in which he is living: “Get up every morning and see the ‘Whole creation groaning and travailing in pain’, as St. Paul says, and yet there am I” (Hardy, p.207). Eustacia discovers the significance of these references to her relationship with Clym. She says: “He’s an enthusiast about ideas, and careless about outward things. He often reminds me of the Apostle Paul [...] but the worst of it is that though Paul was excellent as a man in the Bible he would hardly have done in real life” (Hardy, p.302). It means that he is an intellectual idealistic person and egotist. Clym is completely certain that Eustacia is going to change her mind about leaving Egdon Heath although he never asks her opinion about that. Clym seeks to revolutionize the Heath according to his own naïve social dream and he assumes that Eustacia will be great support to realize his dreams.

The consequences of this marriage of Eustacia and Clym are inimical for the two since they long for different ends. Clym and Eustacia have different worlds although they live in the same place. The quarrel between Clym and his mother over this unexpected marriage, and her tragic death, which is followed by Eustacia’s unexpected death while she is trying to escape Egdon Heath, are said to have been initiated by Clym’s homecoming. Therefore, in this way we can claim that “Clym the fate that entered Eustacia’s world and drew her to her tragic end” (Murfin, p.119).

According to this, Clym is standing for the Fate that destroys his young wife as well as his mother, the two women whom he loves the most. Although Clym blames Eustacia for his mother’s death, it is his calling out “mother” in his sleep

which misguides Eustacia into assuming that Clym is awake and so opens the door to his mother to allow the mother to enter while Wildeve is there with Eustacia. Although Clym is at odds with his mother, he remains instinctively committed to her; in spite of the fact that he claims to love Eustacia, it is certain that he loves his own ideas and plans more than her. Furthermore, although he appears to have a limited amount of knowledge about the place and its people, he believes he can easily change the society. He wants to keep those things dear to him close (mother, Eustacia and his ideas), but he destroys them. Hardy mentions the predicament in which Clym finds himself with these words:

Three antagonistic growths had to be kept alive: his mother's trust in him, his plan for becoming a teacher, and Eustace's happiness. His fervid nature could not afford to relinquish one of these, though two of the three were as many as he could hope to preserve. Though his love was as chaste as that of Petrarch for his Laura, it had made fetters of what previously was only a difficulty. A position which was not too simple when he stood wholehearted had become indescribably complicated by the addition of Eustacia. Just when his mother was beginning to tolerate one scheme he had introduced another still bitterer than the first and the combination was more than she could bear (Hardy, p.223).

Clym Yeobright is the opposite of Eustacia Vye. Eustacia is extremely discontent with her life in the Heath. As a result, she comes to deeply hate it and loses her life for the sake of leaving it. In contrast, Clym's tragedy is that he is extremely content with living on Egdon Heath. This results in the fact that he wishes to dedicate his life to preaching to the heath people. Clym gives up his work in Paris because he realizes that his real career on Egdon Heath is more auspicious: "He gives up his promising career because he sees that his real vocation is not in Paris but on Egdon Heath"

(Williams, p.143). However, he is not happy with the level of his education because he sees that with the education he underwent in Paris, he cannot open the school he wants in the town. Clym's satisfaction with the place itself has blinded him from seeing and feeling the miserable life he has provided to his young wife. With regard to Clym's personality, Michael Millgate places the blame on Clym, and as a result, we can say that Clym's fruitless idealism is selfish in nature and inimical to Eustacia's desires. He claims:

Clym forces his bride into a situation which blankly affronts not only her ambitions but her most fundamental sensitive as young and beautiful woman. His physical blindness becomes emblematic of his whole personality. By persisting in the work of a furze-cutter- financially dispensable, socially degrading in Eustacia's eyes, and physically exhaustive- Clym prepares the ground for those characteristically impulsive action which drive the couple finally apart" (p.139).

At the end of the novel, Clym is not only a weak person and blind to the outer realities surrounding him but also a person who devastates the dreams of others. He is in a miserable situation, as William argues: "By the end of the book he is not only sick and half-blinded, but isolated and celibate" (p.145). When Thomasin and Diggory Veen celebrated their marriage ceremony, Clym does not join in but watches them secretly from the window, with no one missing him because he feels "I might be too much like the skull at the banquet" (Hardy, p. 403).

D. H. Lawrence considers Clym's return to the heath as an act of "Promethean rebelliousness" i.e., Promethean in seeking to help his fellow creatures, rebelling against "gods", the "general situation" and the ignorance of a conventional society. Clym assumes that his self-realization ("happiness") lies in being a preacher. In actuality, the light of Promethean rebellion that Eustacia represents is the fire of passion; the light Clym stands for, similarly to Prometheus in the myth, is the light of



learning, as John Butler mentions, “Both lights are to be dimmed. In dimming lies the tragedy” (p.43).

Thus, as Hardy states in his novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* that “happiness is the occasional episode in the general drama of pain” (p.32). Therefore, in such a world, Hardy’s characters are defeated by the concatenation of unlikely episodes, by certain character traits of their own and finally by the people around them. They live in a malevolent world and their lives end in tragedy. Hardy’s characters tend to make wrong choices, which lead them to their undesired destinies. Fate is always presented as being unfriendly towards them, which becomes particularly clear when taking a clear look at the author’s use of coincidence. The critic’s utterance that Hardy makes his characters to be puppets in the hand of Fate as David Cecil mentions:

Hardy embodies fate in various forms. Chiefly, the forces of fate in Hardy’s novels incarnate themselves in two guises as chance and as love. Of these, chance is most typical. In no other novels does chance exercise such conspicuous influence on the course of event. Hardy has been blamed for this: and no doubt he does sometimes overdo it. But to condemn his use of chances altogether to misunderstand his view of life. We are witnessing a battle between man and destiny. Destiny is an inscrutable force; we do not understand its nature or its intention, and we cannot therefore predict what it will do. In consequence, their acts always show themselves in the guise inexplicable, unexpected blows of chance (p.55).

The power of Fate is beyond these characters’ control, hence leading them to their tragic ends. Hardy believes in the power named “Immanent Will” or “The President of the Immortals,” which Hardy considers to be a blind power targeted to either kindness or harm, this power being chance and identifying it with Fate. The “Immanent Will” always works against Man’s desire for happiness.

## CHAPTER III

### NATURE IN HARDY'S *THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE*

#### 3.1. The Description of Nature in *The Return of the Native*

Nature in Hardy's novels plays a more important role than the characters. Scott R. Sanders points out that "the human world is set against the overachieving background of nature. As in Hardy's novels, this landscape is no mere scenery, no flimsy stage set, but rather the energizing medium from which human lives emerge and by which those lives are bounded and measured" (p. 183). Setting is an important element in Hardy's novels which control the characters and narration. Wood Miller also agrees with Sanders' opinion that "the evocation of the heath signifies that the landscape in a novel is not just an indifferent background within which the action takes place" (p.16), but also "an essential determinant of that action" (p.16). Similar to most nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, Hardy's use of the pastoral with regard to nature "is both as partial and temporal maker".

D. H. Lawrence considers Egdon Heath to be the most important character in the novel "[w]hose dark soil was strong and crude and organic as the body of a beast the deep, black source of tragedy Egdon Heath matters more than the people who move upon it" (p. 64). William Rutland agrees with Lawrence in affirming that Egdon Heath is the major character of the novel for "we are made to feel its vast impassivity as a living presence" (p.179). These ideas consider Hardy's characters to be puppets, completely against an inimical background. Lawrence Buell admits that the connection between men and locality becomes most apparent in *The Return of the Native* in which "a nonhuman entity like Egdon Heath might be a book's main "character" or tangential force" (p.4). Hardy uses the pastoral in order to show the

contrast between a different way of life and a different situation to nature in one narrative situation. Hardy's use of the pastoral is to confirm the importance of Wessex for his novel *Wessex*, as Millgate's argues, is "[l]ocated somewhere in a vague unspecifiable past, seeming all the more elusive of historical definition because of the very success with which it evoked a remote and almost timeless rule word" (p. 248).

The three elements in this description –the past, timelessness, and rural world– suggest the description of Egdon Heath at the beginning of the novel. J. Miller has noticed that "this description takes form of an extended prosopopoeia, the heath is personified as a great brooding creature, neither male nor female, beyond sexual difference" (p.26). Hardy's major novels (with the exception of *Jude the Obscure*) are set primarily in Dorset. *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* are all set in the Dorchester area (Williams, p.104).

Pinion mentions "The place is the heath which was very close to the writer's birthplace in Dorset" (p.1). *The Return of the Native* has often been referred to as one of Thomas Hardy's best novels because the characterizations of characters such as Eustacia Vye and Clym Yeobright. However, there is another reason to call it one of Hardy's best novels: the real story of Egdon Heath and the influence it has on the lives of characters in *Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, The pomes and The Dynasts* Henry Duffin argues for the importance of Egdon Heath:

With *The Return of the Native*, we are back on the Wessex ground: and this in a special sense. *The Return of the Native* is the book of Egdon Heath. Without Egdon, it would not hold together. With most of Hardy's other novels the scene would be transposed to another part of Wessex without vitally affecting the story. Such a story could not run its course anywhere other than amid the solitudes of Egdon (p.16).

Hardy starts his novel by quoting lines from Keat's *Endymion*. Hardy puts the major theme in the novel, in which sorrow is persistent to the main characters. In the cover page of the novel, Hardy gives this poem below:

To sorrow  
I bade good morrow,  
And thought to leave her far away behind;  
But cheerly, cheerly,  
She loves me dearly;  
She is so constant to me, and so kind.  
I would deceive her, And so leave her,  
But ah! She is so constant and so kind.

Egdon Heath plays a major role by virtue of its impact on the characters themselves. The first chapter in the novel as a whole, in which Hardy shows a detailed description of the natural scenery, is devoted to a description of Egdon Heath. Hardy gives life to every single minute part of the scene; thus, the first chapter is very significant since it sets the importance of Egdon Heath in the story with a full account. Hardy provides details in twelve paragraphs in which Hardy concentrates on the sad and gloomy aspect of Egdon Heath. The description of the Heath which starts in the title of the chapter is suggestive of '[a]face on which time makes but little impression'. The embodiment of Egdon Heath begins with this sentence: "Egdon Heath embrowned itself moment by moment" (Hardy, p.33). This sentence gives the reader the suggestion that Egdon Heath will assume an important role in the novel. Many literary critics consider the description of Egdon Heath to be one of the finest passages of prose or prose-poetry in English literature (Clipper, p.16). 'Face' is used to refer Egdon Heath, which proposes that nature is treated as a human being and not another environment or setting such as a land or place. The title also suggests that Egdon Heath is an ancient place since 'time' refers to change with its passage. In the

first paragraph, Hardy says 'A Saturday afternoon' in November towards dusk. However, Hardy does not tell us which November. This is a sign of the timelessness of Egdon Heath. The sentence suggests that Egdon Heath has a power over itself. Egdon Heath is not embrowned by any extrinsic power, it embrowns itself, over the sky is evil it is blue is close out by a "hallow stretch of whitish cloud" (Hardy, p.33). The world 'unclosed' in "the vast tract of unenclosed wild known as Egdon Heath" does not mean unfenced. It is suggest that the Heath is free like the common land, old and untamed by a landlord and by unlimited time.

Hardy accompanies Egdon Heath with darkness and links the heath to night and darkness; "the heath wore the appearance of an instalment of night which had taken up its place before its astronomical hour was come" (Hardy, p.33). Hardy in the same paragraph continues to describe Egdon Heath as a "Face" which can alter the apparent time of day with its sad complexion. Hardy also discovers that the colour of Egdon Heath is more to be feared than enjoyed (Butler, p. 36). It is given in the novel as: "The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half an hour to evening; it could in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking dread" (Hardy, p.33). Hardy explains as a matter of fact that at just this moment of dusk we can hear the "true tale "of the heath that is a near relation of night:

The spot was, indeed, a near relation of night, and when night showed itself an apparent tendency to gravitate together, it could be perceived in its shades and the scene. The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as the heavens precipitated it. And so the obscurity in the air and the obscurity in the land closed together in a black fraternization towards which each advanced halfway (Hardy, p.33).

Hardy here uses the pathetic fallacy through these expressions, as Geoffrey Leech in his book *Style In Fiction* has mentioned the personality which lies behind Nature. That is, the animation of Nature is done through the use of these expressions. The pathetic fallacy is manifested in the use of inanimate noun as actor as tacit subject of verbs of motion: “The sombre stretch of rounds and hallows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom”. The animation of Nature is also become clear by attributing verbs of felling and motive to the non-living environment as in “pure sympathy”. Hardy again in this paragraph links Egdon Heath to night and darkness; it is ‘a near relation of night’. Hardy’s focus in this passage and the whole chapter is on Egdon Heath, not on the characters. The huge figure of Egdon Heath is likened to a giant Titan: “Every night its Titanic form seemed to await something; but it had waited thus, unmoved, during so many centuries, through the crises of so many things, that it could only be imagined to await one last crisis- the final overthrow” (Hardy, p.34). Egdon Heath waits a matter of fact, the heath wakes, listens and seems to be waiting for something, Egdon heath waiting for a long time ‘many centuries’. Egdon Heath is the symbol of the beauty of sorrow, winter and age.

Hardy gives Egdon Heath a human shape. Egdon Heath waits for the ‘final overthrow’ or final disaster. Hardy succeeds in drawing a full picture of Egdon Heath in which he shows that it is an uncomfortable place haunted by ghosts and mysterious magical powers seemingly preventing the efforts of Man: “the home of strange phantoms” (Hardy, p.340). Egdon Heath has secrets and is a place of long life and sudden death. This is attested to through the description and circumstance of Egdon Heath. Andrew Entice in his book *Thomas Hardy: Landscape of the Mind* highly appreciated Thomas Hardy’s description of Egdon Heath: “Hardy himself created the myth of a vast a heath land, and exhausted his portrayal it so skilfully that, even people can recognize their surroundings in his at morphemic portrait”(p. 68). Hardy comes to the conclusion that Egdon Heath is a mysterious place and that “solitude seemed to look out of its countenance”. On Egdon Heath, tragedy is to be expected

since its “lonely face suggests tragically possibilities” (Hardy, p.33). Thus, Egdon Heath, which format the beginning of the novel, threatens that tragedy will happen. First this is done by joining darkness and night, then the storm and wind “for the storm was its lover and the wind its friend”. All of these atmospheres are familiar to tragedy and the problems for happiness and a peaceful life. Towards the end of the chapter, Hardy states that Egdon Heath is far from any modern touch for “Civilization was its enemy” (Hardy, p.35) . This means that Egdon Heath is old, in fact extremely old, and older than the seas. Everything changes, the sea is “renewed in a year, in a day, in an hour” but Egdon Heath remains as it is. From the first chapter, Hardy has presented Egdon Heath as a living character embodied with every human characteristic "The first chapter of the novel describe heath in a way which transforms it to a principles and so identified as man like- figure” (Brown, p.452).

It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man’s nature- neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly: neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony. As with some persons who have long lived apart, solitude seemed to look out of its countenance. It had a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities (Hardy, p.35).

The first chapter is dedicated to the characterization of the heath because “the heath proves physically and psychologically important through the novel”. The environment of *The Return of the Native* it is not attractive. The heath is hostile to human beings and society “The country environment of *The Return of the Native* is not attractive, in the way that woods and farmlands and hills and fields are. The heath is formidably antagonistic to human society and human ways” (Brown, p.55).

Hardy's contemporary D. H. Lawrence, too, “argued that the controlling element in *The Return of the Native* is not human action, but the setting where that

action takes place, the wasteland of Egdon Heath” (qtd.in Sanders, p.182). As Lawrence states about *The Return of the Native*:

What is the real stuff of tragedy in the book? It is the Heath. It is the primitive, primal earth, where the instinctive life heaves up. The heath heaved with raw instinct. Egdon, whose dark soil was strong and crude and organic as the body of a beast. Out of the body of this crude earth are born Eustacia, Wildeve, Mistress Yeobright, Clym, and all the others. They are one year’s accidental crop. [. . .] Here is the deep, black source from whence all these little contents of lives are drawn (p.27).

In Hardy’s fiction, we see a development in his ideas about nature. Hardy comes to the conclusion that nature could no longer be seen as a beautiful agent in human life. David Cecil comments about Hardy outlook on nature. His vision of nature, for instance: this is the most characteristic manifestation of his creative power, and it dominates his scene. This was to be expected. For one thing, nature controls the conduct of life in an agricultural community. Hardy, too, as we have seen, always stresses the poetic aspect of his subject matter. And it is in its connection with nature that the poetry of a countryman’s life resides (p.94).

From the very first description, Hardy presents Egdon Heath as a living character which embodies all the characters in the novel. The novel begins at twilight in November, a darkening time that symbolized the stormy nature of the story “Hardy is careful to spread his scene to its full extent towards the opening scene of a novel” (Butler, p.110). John Goode in his *The Offensive Truth* is conscious of the power of Egdon Heath, so much so that it has an important personality and cannot be considered to be a pure picture. In fact, it is "evocative of human moods, saddening noon, anticipating the frowning of storms, and intensifying the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread” (p.36). With Hardy's characterization of Egdon Heath, he contrasts the romantic idea with Nature, especially Wordsworth’s



idea of Nature. According to Wordsworth Nature is the source of man's happiness and he also claim that Nature takes man from happiness to happiness since it has healing power .Wordsworth essentially believes in Nature holy plan. Hardy depicts Nature's hideous face of and considers nature to be an agent that destroys human desire and an obstacle to human ambition. Again Hardy considers Nature as a means that increases man's suffer and thwart his dreams. The credibility of grievances is in Hardy's words:

Intensity was more usually reached by way of the solemn than by way of the brilliant, and such a sort of intensity was often arrived at during winter darkness, tempests, and mists. Then Egdon was aroused to reciprocity; for the storm was its lover and the wind its friend. Then it became the home of strange phantoms; and it was found to be the hitherto unrecognized original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster, and are never thought of after the dream till revived by scenes like this (Hardy, p.35).

Hardy succeeds in drawing a hideous background for his tragedy to create convinced harmony with tragic events in this novel. Egdon Heath depicted as a big monster that bring suffering to people.

### **3.2. Man and Nature in *The Return of the Native***

Man and Nature is the central theme in *The Return of the Native*. Hardy reflects in his novel the theme that man is considered to be a part of his environment. Hardy at all times wants the reader to think about his characters encompassed by a landscape to which they are subordinate. Hardy uses symbolism in creating this relationship between Man and Nature. The characters and Egdon Heath have an interesting relationship in which they are affected by each other. Egdon Heath is reflected on characters; it has features, feelings and dialogues such the wind, which

seems to be speech. Egdon Heath is not a romantic place or a place that is friendly to people. Hardy establishes a mutual relationship between the characters and the environment. Hardy writes in his autobiography the important connection between Man and Nature. J. Hills Miller mentions “Hardy stating an object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious Nature. Hence clouds, mists, and mountains are unimportant beside the wear on a threshold, or the print of a hand” (qtd. in Florence, p.116).

In Hardy’s world Nature is the main cause of tragedy. The life of human dependent on caprice of Nature from there is no way to leave. Clym Yeobright in *The Return of the Native* is indulged in “barbarous satisfaction” (Hardy, p.198) with Egdon Heath. He loves Egdon Heath; for him the Heath is the beautiful. Hardy describes his love in loving detail to show the close feeling Clym has toward Egdon Heath. Clym himself is a key figure for a right evaluation of Hardy’s art. He is the most direct representative of the novelist’s strongest desire in its simplest form: the return from town to country, and the rejection of city life. He returns to Egdon Heath with a success story from the outside world, yet he chooses to stay on Egdon Heath rather than go back to Paris. The enthusiasm of the joy of the native’s return home is very clear:

He walked along towards home without attending to paths. If anyone knew the heath well it was Clym. He was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, and with its ardours. He might be said to be its product. His eyes had first opened thereon; with its appearance all the first images of his memory were mingled; his estimate of life had been coloured by it; his toys had been the flint knives and arrow-heads which he found there, wondering why stones should ‘grow’ to such odd shapes; his flowers, the purple Bells and yellow furze; his animal kingdom, the snakes and croppers (Hardy, p.197).

Clym left his life career in Paris and returned to the Heath; in fact, Clym is in woven with Egdon Heath. There is a deep connection between Egdon Heath and Clym: “Clym had been so in woven with the heath in his boyhood that hardly anybody could look upon it without thinking of him” (Hardy, p.192). Clym lacks his human identity and becomes part of the landscape around him or an element of the heath itself especially when he is furze-cutting:

He was a brown spot in the midst of an expanse of olive-green gorse, and nothing more. Though frequently depressed in spirit when not actually at work, owing to thoughts of Eustacia’s position and his mother’s estrangement, when in the full swing of labour he was cheerfully disposed and calm (Hardy, p. 273) .

While Clym works at furze-cutting, he becomes familiar with the non-human natives of Egdon Heath, whose diversity, “The lively diversity of which is conveyed be exquisitely distinguished sensation of touch sound and sight” (Karl, p. 26).

Bees hummed around his ears with an intimate air, and tugged at the heath and furze-flowers at his side in such numbers as to weigh them down to the sod. The strange amber-coloured butterflies which Egdon produced, and which were never seen elsewhere, quivered in the breath of his lips, alighted upon his bowed back, and sported with the glittering point of his hook as he flourished it up and down. Tribes of emerald green grasshoppers leaped over his feet. ... None of them feared him (Hardy, p.274).

Egdon Heath is the real mother to whom Clym should have cleaved. For it has been upon her bosom that he first opens his eyes to the world “his estimate of life had been coloured by it”. Clym charmed by its scene. Clym chooses to be a furze-cutter as Holloway mentions “such a work makes him be close to the landscape, his real mother” (Hardy, p.273).

Clym is so identified with Egdon Heath that he has some qualities of the heath itself, mostly strangeness and obscurity. He does not mix with other people. He is idealistic and does not think of himself. He thinks only of the preacher school he intends to establish in order to teach the people On Egdon. First he is identified with the heath by working as a furze-cutter, then at the end by being the preacher of Egdon Heath.

The impact of Egdon Heath on Eustacia Vya is clear when the reader becomes cognizant of the fact that Hardy is inserting many of the aspects of Egdon Heath into Eustacia. Hardy gives the reader a description of Eustacia which is almost identical to a description of Egdon Heath:

Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled thereto. Her appearance accorded well with this smouldering rebelliousness, and the shady splendour of her beauty was the real surface of the sad and stifled warmth within her. A true Tartarean dignity sat upon her brow, and not factitiously or with marks of constraint, for it had grown in her with years (Hardy, p.94).

There is a connection between Eustacia and Nature represented by Egdon Heath. Hardy describes Egdon Heath as a “near relation of night”. Eustacia is the “Queen of Night,” Hardy links both of them to night to give the theme a tragic aspect. Hardy describes Eustacia’s appearance in the novel and makes clear her relationship with Egdon Heath "Her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies, and tropical midnights; her moods recalled lotus-eaters and the march in ‘Athalie’; her motions, the ebb and flow of the sea, her voice, the viola” (Hardy, p.94).

Eustacia hates Egdon Heath. It is prison for her; Eustacia’s hostility to the Heath is clear and she tells Wildeve this. ‘So I would!’ said Wildeve. ‘Such strange thoughts as I’ve had from time to time, Eustacia; and they come to me this moment.

You hate the heath as much as ever; that I know.' 'I do,' she murmured deeply. 'Tis my croos, my shame and will be my death! (Hardy, p.111).

Eustacia, like Clym, is affected by Egdon Heath so much so that some of its elements are reflected in her personality. Eustacia is very much like Egdon Heath in her selfishness and indifference to others. Eustacia has not "much love" for her "fellow creature" similarly to how Egdon Heath is indifferent and hostile (Holloway, p.273). Eustacia and Egdon Heath stand like huge figures of "somnolent intensity one dark force pitted against the other dark force" (Williams, p.53).

Eustacia's strength was restricted in the Heath: Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled thereto. Her appearance accorded well with this smouldering rebelliousness, and the shady splendour of her beauty was the real surface of the sad and stifled warmth within her (Hardy, p.94).

Eustacia knows that Egdon is restricted and is a restricting place for her which she hates intensely "She hated the change; she felt like one banished; but here she was forced to abide" (Hardy, p.94). Eustacia feels that she is robbed of opportunities in Egdon Heath "Her power was limited, and the consciousness of this limitation had biased her development" (Hardy, p. 94). Hardy succeeds in providing a dreadful background for his tragedy to harmonies with tragic actions in this novel. Egdon Heath is represented as a monster that creates sadness for the other. Egdon Heath has become a symbol of death and destruction, for Hardy's characters are in rebellious against their Nature.

### 3.3. Fate and Nature in *The Return of the Native*

Nature was an important element in Hardy's view of life. Fate appears in Hardy novels in Nature. The indifference and hostility of Nature are the characteristics common in Hardy's novel. This is the second portrait of Nature in Hardy's work, which is obvious in *The Return of the Native*. In this novel, Egdon Heath is not only a place for the story. Egdon Heath has power in determining the destinies of the characters. The first chapter in the novel clarifies the importance of Egdon Heath in the story. The characters are ruled by the Heath and are finally overwhelmed by it. In this case, Egdon Heath becomes the means of Fate (force ruling life). This is the Immanent Will whose business is to defeat the desire of the people in Hardy's novel. Deborah Collins talks of Egdon Heath saying:

In its 'lonely face suggesting tragical possibilities' and in this primitive 'antique browns dress, 'man sees reflected his own solitary image and finds himself restored in earth's simplest clothing. There is no deceiving the ancient earth, for it/she recognizes man's own creation and knows, without knowing his destiny (qtd. in Mahon, p. 50).

Eustacia Vye is Egdon Heath challenging the victim. Eustacia's life has been governed by Egdon Heath and her way has been ordered by the Heath. Egdon Heath has imprisoned her. She cannot bear the isolation of Egdon Heath. It always frustrates her. She hates the heath and she wants to escape, but there is no way out for her. The fires that light up, as Jagdish Dave mentions in his book *The Human predicament in hardy's Novels*, are "emblematic of Promethean rebelliousness of Eustacia against her fate, Egdon Heath for her is Hades" (p.20). Egdon Heath is inimical to Eustacia and Wildeve because they are Hostile toward Egdon Heath. They try to find way to escape but the heath prevents them. They die in their hopeless endeavor. Rains and storms are set to crush them at the end. Egdon Heath swallows them and ends their lives. It finally drowns Eustacia and Wildeve at the bottom of a river. Egdon Heath

wins and Eustacia and Wildeve are defeated. Eustacia submits to the tenacious Egdon Heath although she tries to manipulate her fate (by trying to leave Egdon Heath). She cannot and Egdon Heath becomes her inimical resident. Thus, Egdon Heath can be considered the centre of the world in the novel:

Anyone who had stood by now would have pitied her, not so much on account of her exposure to the weather, and isolation from all of humanity except the mouldered remains inside the tumulus; but for that other form of misery which was denoted by the slightly rocking movement that her feelings imparted to her person. Extreme unhappiness weighed visibly upon her. Between the drippings of the rain from her umbrella to her mantle, from her mantle to the heather, from the heather to the earth, very similar sounds could be heard coming from her lips; and the tearfulness of the outer scene was repeated upon her face. The wings of her soul were broken by the cruel obstructiveness of all about her (Hardy, p.371).

Mrs. Yeobright is also crushed by Egdon Heath. The long distances of Egdon Heath have an effective role in avoiding casual meetings between Egdon people. Even if there is any meeting, it tires people because of the long distances they are required to walk in order to reach their destinations. For this reason, Egdon Heath is used as a “dramatic factor or as a factor of causation“ (Dave, p.20). After the estrangement between Mrs. Yeobright and her son and Eustacia, she is set on seeking reconciliation. She starts the journey on a hot summer’s day in August. Egdon Heath is dressed in the colours of the rainbow, and the grass appears round and stuffed like soft downy pillows. The distance to her destination is too great and this can be considered the main cause in ending her journey in disaster:

Mrs. Yeobright’s exertions, physical and emotional, had well-nigh prostrated her; but she continued to creep along in short stages with long breaks between. The sun had now got for to the west of south and stood directly in

her face, like some merciless incendiary, brand in hand, waiting to consume her (Hardy, p. 308).

In this novel, then Hardy begins to emphasize his belief that Man does not control his life, but man is acted upon by a force greater than Man. Egdon Heath in this novel is a symbol of these great forces. Hardy's characters struggle against Egdon Heath and are destroyed because of it. Thus, Egdon Heath becomes the main character in the novel because of its qualities to dominate the characters. Man is passive and hopeless. Egdon Heath is active and tyrannical. The characters who struggle against Egdon Heath struggle against a fate that controls their lives and against a fate from which they cannot escape.

Egdon Heath symbolizes "more than the futile attempt of man to overthrow the control of a particular place; it symbolizes man's vain struggle against the uncaring universe itself" (Williams, p.32). Eustacia mutters these words in a second of hysterical passion:

I do not deserve my lot!" she cried in a frenzy of bitter revolt. 'O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill—conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and crushed by things beyond my control! How hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all! (Hardy, p.404).

Nature as symbol of Fate with what Hardy confirmed Man as being in a clash with Nature as Hardy says in his novel *Jude the Obscure* "I said it was Nature's intention, Nature's law and raison d'etre that we should be joy full in what instincts she afforded us instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart at her word" (p.413).

In a world abandoned by God, Hardy's characters remain helpless without a guardian, and become the prey for the forces of Nature. This is the theme of the



second picture that Hardy presents. First he relates Man to Nature and then presents Man as the prey of hostile Nature, which represents Fate in this case, As Williams mentions “The implacable Heath controls and destroys its residents, asserting itself as the one great force, caring nothing for puny man’s resistance” (p. 55). Thus, in *The Return of the Native*, Hardy wholly adopted Darwinian ideas that man is completely governed by his environment. Hardy wants to attest to the fact that the power of Nature is very hostile to the human being. Hardy’s depicted his characters were affected by Nature through its bleak philosophy which is man’s destiny is to endure in a malignant universe

## Chapter IV

### TRAGEDY IN *THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE*

In the previous chapters, it has been argued that Hardy's characters cannot escape from suffering and miseries destroying their hopes because Fate as the inimical force and indifferent Nature are seen to be controlling the world of Hardy's characters. His novels are classified as tragedies because they are gloomy in terms of their atmosphere and tragic in terms of the fall of his characters at the end, which is seen as a result of the novelist's fatalism as the preferred theme of tragedy. The hero's desire for happiness in Hardy's novel is collapsed into the terrible misery that he has to accept. Such condition makes Hardy's novels close to Greek tragedies. There are signs in Hardy's novels themselves that Hardy attempts to present tragedies of Greek drama in the novel form. It can be said that Aristotle's definition of tragedy can be applied to Hardy's *The Return of the Native*. Aristotle defines tragedy in Chapter Six of his *Poetics* as:

A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions (qtd. in Imgram, p.35).

It can be difficult to compare novels to tragic plays because they are written in narrative form. However, the word (tragedy), as defined in *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, is used not only to designate plays but also to "other works of a serious or sorrowful character with a fatal or disastrous conclusion"(Harvey, p.828). This same characteristic feature is found in Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native*,

in that Eustacia Vye, the heroine of the novel, is suffering from being frustrated by some other forces beyond her control and as the plot develops, it reaches its calamitous end. The performance of Hardy's novel onstage as a tragic play demonstrates that the novel is close to tragedy, and thus makes it close to drama. *The Return of the Native* was performed in 1920 in which Miss Gertrude Bugler, the daughter of South-Street Dorchester, appeared and played the role of Eustacia, which she performed successfully, most notably the scene in which Eustacia joins the Christmas mummers (Gitting, pp.196-97).

Lord David Cecil says that "Hardy's real talent was much more like that of Elizabethan dramatist and playwrights than it was like of his great contemporaries" (qtd. in Johnson, p.96). This implies that this feature of Hardy's novel is dramatic and his knowledge of Greek tragedies had a great effect upon him and his philosophical knowledge. Hardy assumed that the Wessex countryside was the dwelling place of the spirit of tragedy and that the histories of certain people who lived there bore a strong family resemblance to those ancient and legendary characters (Tilloston, p.397).

In general, Hardy's novel confirms Aristotle's definition of tragedy, but Hardy himself gave his own definition of tragedy, which was identical to Aristotle's general concept of tragedy. Moreover, Hardy had transformed Aristotle's definition to make it appropriate for the contemporaneous realities of his time. Hardy puts forward his definition after finishing his novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*: "It may be put there in brief; tragedy exhibits a state of things in the life of individual which unavoidably cause some natural aim or desire of his end in catastrophe when carried out (Karl, p.20). According to Hardy's description, Eustacia Vya and Clym Yeobright are tragic figures because they are disappointed by desire. This is another philosophical concept that has appeared in tragic literature during different ages. The concept of Fate has appeared as the reason factor in Greek tragedies.

The struggle of desire appears to be the basis of tragedy in which Man is usually against mysterious destiny. Thomas Hardy, in his novel, besides having a power against the universe, had a feeling of discontent against the face of justice, of which Man is a fatality. “[Hardy] himself proposes no remedy, suggests no escape – his business not being to deal in his readers pause and consider and pity” (Cox,p.202). A sinister power controlling the universe prevents any efforts of Man to obtain happiness such that events full of pain as well as coincidences are always used against man. Most heroes and heroines in Hardy’s novels are frustrated and miserable in cases of damnation. As J. H Miller mentions:“The goal of the desire is to find that something is missing” (p.167).

It is clear that Hardy is philosophically critical of Man’s conditions. The struggle for happiness and for existence and other obstacles on the human path are normal. There is hardly any possibility of escape from any conflict. Man is not able to control his own rebel nature and a “mysterious spiteful power places snares in his path” (Kumar, p.7). A notable role of chance and coincidence is clearly observed in Hardy’s novel which clearly becomes the main cause of tragedy. According to J. I. M. Steward, “Always in Hardy it is certain that the incidence of fatality within the general operation of chance will be higher than we are commonly prepared to accept of its being in nature. Why does he thus so often seem to be against his characters with loaded dice?” (p.19). Many reasons such as destiny, nature, supernatural power and social conditions are working together create a scene of mysterious life. A scene which appears in every tragic work is a conflict of wills and ambition between many characters, all of which create trouble without any possibility of escape. The incidence of chance makes Hardy’s novel close to tragedy as “they occur unexpectedly in a cause and effect device. This makes them marvellous since they are well designed” (Hamilton, p.27).

Aristotle declared the elements of tragedy in his *Poetics* as plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and Melody. The most important features in a tragedy according to Aristotle is the plot and then comes the character (Hamilton, p. 17), which should be explained here because these two elements are important in Hardy's novels as tragedies. Aristotle says that the plot is the most main element of the play, "for tragedy is not an imitation of men, per se, but of human action and life and happiness and misery" (Hamilton, p.12). He explains the plot as the arrangements of the incidents in a tragedy. Central elements in the plot are *peripeteia*, meaning reversal, and *anagnorisis*, meaning recognition. Character comes in second place to plot and action for Aristotle, being not as important as plot because "According to their characters men have certain qualities; but according to their actions they are happy or the opposite" (Hamilton, p.112). Aristotle even goes as far as to say that without "character" tragedy would still be possible, while without "action" it would be impossible. In Greek tragedies, the three unities—unity of action, of time and of place, are maintained (Olson .p, xxi).

Aristotle's three unities can be applied to Hardy's *The Return of the Native*. Paterson argues that "Hardy originally intended the novel [*The Return of the Native*] to have only five books corresponded to the classical five-structure, and sought to maintain the unity of time at least to the extent of confining the action within space of a year and a day" (p.142). The unity of action is presented in *The Return of the Native* which has one story with no subplot or different stories. It can be said that in Hardy's novel, one event is related to the previous events and can lead to the following events, which we can find in Hardy's novel through a series of coincidences reach the final disaster. In *The Return of the Native*, there is an attempt to limit time and place wherein the action is limited (in Books One to Six) to a year and a day. Therefore, there is a sign of unity of time. Unity of place is also observable in this novel. All actions occur on Egdon Heath; we do not move off Egdon Heath at all. Even when Thomasine and Eustacia later marry, we feel they have gone out of

Egdon Heath. Thomasine is married in Wildeve's parish church, but we are never be there and Eustacia is married in the nearest church and we are also never be there. It can be utilized to Hardy's novel also.

Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, discusses the structure of tragedy and considers the point of recognition as the essence of tragedy. There is some measure of ignorance which is followed by a realization, or what Aristotle calls "anagnorisis". When Aristotle's recognition forms a turning point, the tragedy is complex and the ideal tragedy is complex as he himself said. This means that a character is ignorant of either some vital matter or of the true identity of one of the characters or his own character (Locas, p.292). The recognition scenes in Hardy's work are not as great as those found in Greek tragedy. The element of discovery in Greek tragedy is as always, as exemplified by King Oedipus, the realization that he is in fact the murderer of his father and his mother's lover. In *The Return of the Native*, Clym Yeobright, even though he lives with Eustacia in the same house, does not recognize her true identity until after the death of his mother when he is told that she has returned from his house. He is shocked upon hearing the reason for his mother's death. Mrs. Yobright utters: "Cast off by my son. No by my best life, dear mother is not so: But by your son's- May all murderesses get the torment they deserve" (p.328). These scenes have a deep emotional effect on the characters, and change the way of these characters in the novel. In *The Return of the Native*, Clym Yeobright is separated from his wife after his mother's death, which gives Eustacia an opportunity to leave Egdon Heath with her former lover, Wildeve. This leads her to a tragic end.

Maxwell Anderson in his essay "*The Essence of Tragedy*" states that "the leading character must make a discovery, which in turn must affect him emotionally and alter his direction in the story" (p.116). Maxwell, here, speaks of a tragic play and not narrative. However, it can be applied to Hardy's novel because these scenes have

deep emotional effect on the characters and change the way of these characters in the story.

The discovery scene must be placed near the end of the story as Maxwell mentions in his essay: in a three-act- play, it should be put near the end of Act Two. In a five-act play, it is should be put near the end of Act Three. *The Return of the Native* is divided into six books and the discovery scene is found near the end of the fourth book. Clym's discovery of Eustacia's "responsibility" for his mother's death is a very clear sign that "his mouth had passed into the phase more or less imaginatively rendered in studies of Oedipus" (Hardy, p.342). Clym goes on to blame his wife for his mother's death and says:

Instead of there being before him the pale face of Eustacia, and masculine shape unknown, there was only the imperturbable countenance of the heath, which, having defied the cataclysmal onsets of centuries, reduced to insignificance by its seamed and antique features the wildest turmoil of a single man (Hardy, p. 342).

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle refers to the tragic flaw as "Hamartia," a term from Greek tragedy that literary means "missing the mark". This refers to a tragic flaw in Aristotle's ideology wherein the hero falls as a result of some error of his own doing, which reinforces the malignity of Fate. In Greek tragedy, the protagonist has some kind of Hamartia that causes disastrous result, after which he fails to be aware of a factor truth that could have saved him had he admitted it earlier. In *The Return of the Native*, Eustacia's flaw is her wrong decision leading to her unsuccessful marriage to Clym Yeobright such that Eustacia's misfortune occurs by some Hamartia or error. Hardy's characters make mistakes one after another thereby leading them to misfortune. In *The Return of the Native*, the influence of the Greek tragedy can be seen in the domination of the central character, the nature of whom determines the nature of the drama since the element of character follows the element of plot in

terms of importance for the tragedy (Kral, p.27). Eustacia and Clym dominate the story in the novel with the events mostly being divided between themes that both are tragic figures, both of them are blinded by the desire, so they are defeated at the end of novel. Aristotle says that "the change in the hero's fortune must not be from misery to happiness, but on the contrary from happiness to misery". The sad fate of Eustacia is a clear sign at this point. Everything is settled from the beginning as she is living a love story with Wildeve. Later, after suffering because of her unsuccessful marriage to Clym, she dies with Wildeve. Thus, the story ends with tragic death.

There is one point in Hardy's novel that makes theme slightly different from Greek tragedy. In ancient tragedies, the central characters are people of high class or high social status, such as the King Oedipus. In Euripides *Medea*, the heroine Medea is a princess. However, Hardy's works avoid such depictions of higher classes. Hardy shows his characters as poor people in an attempt to demonstrate the protagonist "like ourselves", who come from the ranks of the common man. Hardy's characters are simple and ordinary people from the countryside. This is indicted on the common man, Eustacia and Clym are not high social class people and nor are they powerful in Egdon Heath. On the contrary, they are simple people. David Cecil mentions that Hardy's characters represent all humanity, for instance, "Giles stands for all faithful lovers, Tess for all betrayed women, Eustacia for all passionate spirits" who all were tenants of Hardy's Wessex (Newman, p.33).

The main purpose of tragedy as Aristotle mentions is confirmed to reach Catharsis of the emotion of pity and fear. Aristotle gives some suggestions of what he means by pity and fear: "pity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune, and fear by that [misfortune] of one like ourselves. There remains, then, the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgment" (Aristotle, p.1467). It must make us believe that what we are expecting or reading is



real and it could happen to us. Therefore, the feeling of pity and fear we feel toward the tragic character are the released emotion which is accompanied by the peculiar pleasure (Catharsis), the aim of any tragedy (Hyland, p. 84). This means that the result of these emotions is not to be felt as unattractive; they should have positive effects on us. In Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native* we pity Eustacia for her disaster and we experience fear at the same time because of the possibility of such events befalling us. Hardy incarnates his feeling in the action and when we read it becomes our own. The clash of wills can be the major centre of tragic action, so that, in Hardy's tragedies that is palsy of will is what escorts the heroes and heroine through the novels. We pity the characters for their "noble endurance of pain" which penetrates the heart and it is worth having in a tragedy. Eustacia and Clym show great endurance of pain. Their suffering makes us pity them when they are crushed at the end (Baker, p. 82).

To sum up, we can say that Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native* embodies an explanation of Hardy's philosophy of life within the scope of tragedy. He creates a drama in which the characters play their respective parts as symbols of humanity at war with the universe (Baker, p.28). In fact, Hardy's reading of Greek tragedies together with his philosophical ideas has led him to produce a number of great novels in English literature. He makes the reader sympathize with Man since Man is presented as a pitiful victim of Nature and Fate. Accordingly, it can be said that *The Return of the Native* is a tragedy since there are many signs in the novel that Hardy was attempting to present Tragedy – in its novel form – the old model Greek drama.

## CONCLUSION

Each writer has his own style, shaped through the nature of his personal experience in life, to convey his views and ideas to his readers. It must be emphasized that intellectually Hardy had his own attitudes. He was skeptical of the various systems of ideas of his day. Nevertheless, the elements of contemporary thought of his time did influence his fiction. Hardy's ideas about Fate and Nature are reflected in his novels. As can be seen in his *The Return of the Native*, his view of life is basically tragic. It can be considered to be an outcome of his personal life, which was rich with remarkable experiences and philosophical and scientific knowledge. Hardy's essential belief was that human actions are governed and determined by the great impersonal power of Fate, the force which represents the Will of the universe, the indifferent universe whose aim is to defeat Man's desire. Thus, Hardy's philosophy concerning human life is integral to his novels. The events in Hardy's novels show that heroes and heroines of the novelist are challenged with a plethora of great forces out of their control, including chance, Fate and environmental nature. *The Return of the Native* contains an enormous number of direct signals to hateful deities and great forces beyond the control of the characters. Penny Boumelha proposes that *The Return of the Native* presents its readers with a distinctive fictional universe of an unusual and an unsettling kind, because "[it] is a world in which the presence of witches or Mephistophelian visitants seems as plausible as the presence of retired sea captains or innkeepers" (p.256).

The analysis of *The Return of the Native* shows that the working of Fate is revealed through the exaggerated use of coincidence. The action of the novel develops through a series of unlikely accidents of chance through which the characters' destinies change to unhappiness and catastrophe. These accidents create circumstances which deteriorate as the (narrative of the) novel progresses.

Coincidence, in this case, becomes an agent of Fate, or the power through which Fate imposes itself, leading the character to their inevitably fatal end. Coincidence in Hardy's fictional worlds does not lead to happy endings; rather it denotes how Man is the prey of the harsh circumstances beyond his control, which leads him to a fatal end. Hardy wants to show that Man and Fate are constantly and inevitably at war with one another. Consequently, all the actions of Fate reveal themselves in terms of an unexpected befalling. Hardy's heroes and heroines in their attempts at gaining happiness find themselves facing a power (Fate) which does not take their desire into account. According to Hardy, coincidence makes clear how things move against Man in the malevolent world. Hardy announces in his novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* that "Character is Fate" (p.115). Consequently, the character or nature of an individual has at least some influence on their lot. This is clearly seen in *The Return of the Native*, where Eustacia and Clym show through the plot of the novel that they have certain weaknesses in their personalities that lead them to their defeat so much so that the characters are also used as agents of Fate in the novel. He considers man as a victim that is trapped in the tragic web of "circumstances, inflicting cruelty on one another, or pursued by a malign destiny" (Abrams, p.112). This makes clear a sign that Fate imposes itself in different forms. Thus, we have seen how Fate's unjust treatment is revealed in the novel in the form of coincidence and chance events. Hardy uses his character as an element of chance that finally determines fate. Furthermore, Fate is so cruel, so unjust in Hardy's world that his characters are aware of this fact. In *The Return of the Native*, there is a conception of the realization of Fate with characters themselves.

Hardy believed in an external power which is indifferent to human beings and completely independent of their influence. In *The Return of the Native*, Hardy's characters live in a world ruled by a cruel and indifferent ironic God. Hardy shows the reigning power of the universe as being basically unfair and blind. He attempts to show the great system of Nature of which Man is a constituent part as Hardy reflected

in his fiction. Hardy constantly wants the reader to visualize his characters encompassed by a landscape to which they are subordinate. Humans come to catastrophe precisely because they attempt to go against Nature and of course cannot be content with it, they being so tiny and it being so vast.

Hardy shows Nature as a character in his novels; that is, Nature is presented in many of his novels not as a background, the scenery or setting against which events take place. Nature is active and seems to take a hand in bringing disaster. Throughout his novels, Hardy takes great pains to oppose Nature's purpose to those of Man, and to contrast the tiny scale on which Man acts with the vast one of Nature. Nature is unconcerned with man's aims and works only to satisfy its own purposes. Man cannot understand the vast order of Nature; it appears indifferent to him, to his aims and to his desire. Hardy has enriched his novels with detailed descriptions of the natural environment. Hardy presents Nature as a conscious agent rather than a passive background in which it is eventually the characters' reaction to the environment that closes their fates.

In *The Return of the Native* Hardy has totally accepted the Darwinian idea that man is governed by his environment, which gave way to the naturalistic aspect of his fiction. The implacable of Egdon Heath controls and destroys its people, emphasizing itself as the one huge force caring nothing for man's resistance. Darwin's theory of adaptation respectively confirms it to be a powerful source of the characters' ability to stay alive. The failure of Eustacia Vye, the heroine of Hardy's novel, to adapt herself to the demands of her environment puts her in danger. Eustacia regards the environment of Egdon Heath as an antagonistic power committed to her demise, the environment in which she eventually founders on her misguided ideas. On the other hand, the characters (such as Clym Yeobright) who display patient staying power (and resilience) when faced with the harsh side of natural forces are usually rewarded. Clym Yeobright is well-adapted with his environment so that he is favorable. Nature

appears as the indifferent, or rather the hostile, power in Man's life. This forms the points where Fate is interrelated with Nature. Hardy first relates Man to Nature and then he gives it power over Man, with the force of Nature governing and destroying Man's destiny.

Apart from the scientific and philosophical influences which contributed to Hardy's understanding of human fate, it is also crucial to look at Hardy's appropriation of the genre of tragedy since his dependence on the tragic form also has a significant effect on his shaping of human fate. Greek tragedies often portrayed man as helpless victims borne along by destiny. The action of Fate is blind and extremely cruel. Hardy presents characters that are defeated by the powers of Fate and malicious Nature. His novels maybe considered to be a recall to ancient Greece. The elements of tragedy stated by Aristotle in his *Poetics* appear in Hardy's novels. Thus it can be said that *The Return of the Native* is a close relation to the tragedy in the Greek model. J. King states that "Hardy sees life itself as a tragedy. Hardy's novels show the formal influence on tragedy. Hardy's novels are dominated by the form of tragedy" (p.88). *The Return of the Native* contains tragedies of desire, the desire of fascination, which are never fulfilled.

Finally, we may venture to say that the nature of Thomas Hardy's personal experiences in life together with his intellectual evaluation was a good assistant for him in his writing. By all means, in Hardy's view, every effort to create happiness goes in useless when man harvests pain instead of the seed of happiness. In Hardy's world in which justice does not exist, accordingly man is defeated. Man is left alone in this universe without any guardian to protect him since man is abandoned by God. Thus, Man is an easy prey of the harsh forces of Nature and Fate.

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