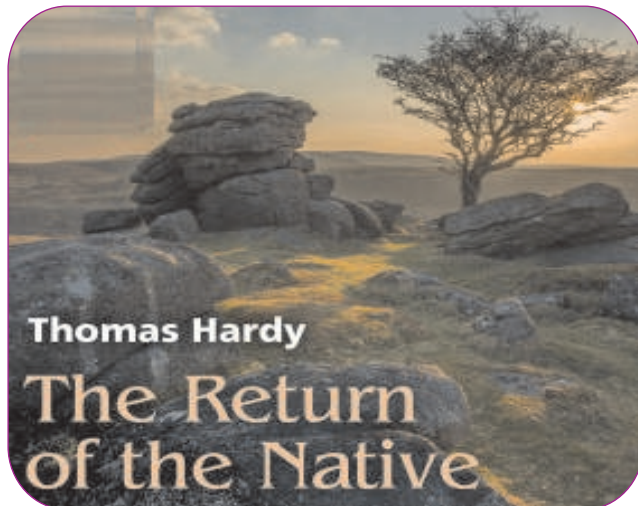




## THE THEME OF LOVE IN THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE



### ABSTRACT :

**T**he return of the native is about unfulfilled desire, marital infidelity, unrealized ambitions and the resultant frustration. The heroine of the novel Eustacia Vye, is in love with Damon Wildeve who later marries Thomasin Yeobright. Thomasin's cousin, Clym Yeobright, returns to Egdon Heath from Paris where he has been working as a diamond trader. In spite of the glamour of Parisian life, Clym decides to stay back at Egdon Heath, work among his people and educate them. Clym's subsequent marriage to Eustacia fails due to lack of mutual understanding. Eustacia wants Clym to go back to Paris and take her out of the suffocating and monotonous life at the Heath but Clym finds living and working among the people at Heath as most as rewarding and satisfying. However, things suddenly take a turn for the worse when Clym's eyesight fails and he is forced to work as a furze cutter. Under these hopeless and depressing conditions, Eustacia renews her romantic friendship with Damon Wildeve who promises to help her to get out of Egdon Heath secretly. During their attempt Eustacia and Wildeve get drowned and Thomasin enters into a second marriage with Biggory Venn, a dairy farmer who loves her and Clym finds his vocation as an itinerant preacher.

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**KEYWORDS :** Frustration, Subsequent, Furze cutter, Depressing, Renews, Itinerant.

### INTRODUCTION

Egdon Heath occupies a prominent place in the novel. There is no place more remarkable in the Victorian novels than Egdon Heath. The first chapter of novel is entirely devoted to the place. The Heath is described as a great expanse of the Wild, having some energy which is felt by all those who dwell in it. The Heath-folk meekly adjust to the harsh nature of the place. Thomasin and Clym also seem to accept its severe conditions but Hardy uses the Heath as a place of depressing, suffocating conventions and traditions that surround his nineteen-year-old heroine Eustacia Vye.

In the return of the Native, Eustacia Vye attempts to escape the boredom and lack of fulfillment imposed on her by her lonely life on Egdon Heath by indulging herself in passionate love affairs. She falls in love with Damon Wildeve, the wealthy owner of quiet woman Inn. She finds Wildeve interesting but not adequate. Therefore, she is not interested in marrying him. When she learns about Clym Yeobright's prosperous situation in Paris, she is very anxious to marry him even before meeting him. Hardy has deep sympathy for the way Eustacia feels about her frustrated and empty life. It is her cramped life that leads her to turn to the idea of passionate love as a way of fulfilling herself as a person. Woman is shut up in a kitchen or in a boudoir, and astonishment is expressed that her horizon is limited. Her wings are

clipped, and it is found deplorable that she cannot fly. Let but the future be opened to her, and she will no longer be compelled to linger in the present. Since her sphere is limited, she tries to fulfill her inborn desire of being loved and is ready to accept all the throbs around her.

Hardy lays much emphasis on Eustacia Vye's relation with Egdon Heath. He defines her as an outsider, an alienated woman barred from useful activity. Eustacia belongs to Budmouth, a fashionable seaside resort, where she has social contacts with high-society citizens. It is the death of parents that put her under the care of her grandfather who chooses to live on Egdon Heath. She hates the change of location but has no choice and is forced to live there deprived of good life she enjoyed at Budmouth. The above circumstances drive her to find an outlet for her pent-up emotions so that she could lead a more satisfying life. Eustacia Vye always prays to God to relieve her from the cruel loneliness of the Heath. "O deliver my heart from this fearful gloom and loneliness send me great love from somewhere, else I shall die". Eustacia is depicted as an ambitious passionate young woman. When she meets the Wildeve at the pool-side bonfire, it is a triumphant pleasure for her. She is sure that Wildeve did not marry Thomasin earlier because he loves her. Later, she finds reasons to shift her attention to Clym Yeobright and virtually encourages Wildeve to marry Thomasin.

Eustacia Vye's marriage with Clym is doomed from the beginning since it was based only on the prospect of persuading Clym to return to Paris, the centre of the fashionable worlds where she could live a glamorous life and leave the disgusting Heath far behind. But, for Clym, life in Paris is contemptible and unattractive since he has to live in an alien culture. His decision now is to work among the people he knew best and to be useful in their progress. In other words, Clym is ready to give up his name and successful business for the benefit of his fellowmen much against Eustacia's wishes. While Eustacia cannot endure the Heath, Clym feels that the Heath is the most exhilarating and soothing thing. He would rather live on Egdon Heath than anywhere else in the world while for Eustacia, it has to be Paris.

Lack of understanding of Eustacia's needs makes Clym fail to see that she has never given up her worldly ambitions, but believes, instead, that she will make a good teacher. Thus, Eustacia's hopes of getting to Paris remain a delusion and her materialistic ambitions clash with Clym's idealistic ones. Shortly after their marriage, Eustacia requests Clym: "take me to Paris and go on with your occupation, Clym, I don't mind how humbly we live there at first, if it can only be Paris and not Egdon Heath". Clash of interests is evident here. But if Clym's experience is taken into consideration, it is clear that Hardy views this desire for materialism and its fulfillment as a path that leads to self-achievement. Clym has passed through this stage earlier in his life while for Eustacia, it is a dream yet to be fulfilled. Hardy believes that such a stage cannot be cut out of the natural stages of development. The same thing applies to Eustacia who cannot proceed from a stage of ignorance or placidity to intellectuality without going through one of the intermediate stages namely worldly ambition. Hence there is a great desire in Eustacia to go Paris.

Let the future be opened to her and she will no longer cling desperately to the past. When women are called upon for concrete action, when they recognize their interest in the designated goals, they are as bold and courageous as men. Hardy's Eustacia Vye is a girl with some forwardness of mind. She possesses an unconventional and rebellious nature. It is unbearable for her to see the Heath. To avoid this sight, she would stay indoors, overhauling the cupboards or humming some ballads. She would sing a psalm on Saturday nights and read the Bible on week days to pass her time. Such acts were due to the effect of her unpleasant situation which places her in a strange state of isolation. It is true they are provided with food and raiment, for which they neither toil nor spin, but health, liberty and virtue, are given in exchange.

Besides the lack of understanding between Clym and Eustacia Vye there were other factors that caused unhappiness in their relationship. Such factors are represented in Clym's possessive mother, Mrs. Yeobright and Wildeve disenchanted with his own marriage to the mild and conventional Thomasin Yeobright. Mrs. Yeobright is very possessive of her son, Clym. She rebukes Clym when she learns that he has left the Paris diamond establishment and compares him with his own father who failed to live up to her expectations: "I suppose you will be your father like him you are getting weary of doing well". By failing to acknowledge her husband as a worthy model and by pinning hopes on her son as the 'one idea' which has occupied her since the death of her husband, Mrs. Yeobright compounds the oedipal dilemma of her son and makes it difficult for him to separate

from her and strike out his son.

It is interesting to note that Jemima Hardy, Thomas Hardy's mother, resembles Mrs. Yeobright in some respects, Mrs. Yeobright is intolerant of both Thomasin's and Clym's romantic attitudes. She refuses to back their decisions to marry and strike out on their own and she is unwilling to attend either of their weddings. Similarly, Jemima Hardy did not attend Thomas Hardy's wedding with Emma Gifford. The depiction of Mrs. Yeobright suggests a woman lacking insight into the needs of her children. However, the breach between mother and son does not occur over the issue of Clym becoming a school master though a great tension between them is already established. It is the presence of Eustacia Vye as a potential rival which upsets Mrs. Yeobright. In her opinion Eustacia is not the right woman for Clym as she will cause him only sorrow. She calls her a hussy and dissatisfied woman.

Mrs. Yeobright is utterly shocked at Clym's final decision taken without consulting her. Mrs. Yeobright remarks, "It is incredible to me that a man accustomed to the attractive women of Paris and elsewhere should be so easily worked upon by a girl in a heath". She also asserts that Eustacia is of no use either to herself or to other people. Finally Mrs. Yeobright forces the breach between Clym and herself. "You have come only to distress me, a lonely woman, and shorten my days! I wish that you would bestow your presence only where you bestow your love". The strong mother-son relationship is broken and Mrs. Yeobright's death on the Heath without reconciliation with her own son, Clym, causes an immense grief to Clym which affects him very deeply. In his major novels, Hardy extensively discusses parental relationship and its influence extensively. The fatal entanglement of Damon Wildev's marriage with Thomasin Yeobright and Eustacia Vye's with Clym Yeobright bring a dramatic twist to the story. Damon Wildev, an engineer, abandons his profession and becomes the landlord inn. He is a rich and resourceful man who inherits a fortune after the death of his uncle.

There is a resemblance between Damon Wildev and Frantoy of far from the madding crowd, in their infidelity to their wives. The only thing that can rouse Wildev to an emotional fever is to see his wife, Thomasin, desired by someone else and that explains his mentality that women are sexual objects to be exploited and possessed. Wildev is solely responsible for the unfortunate death of Mrs. Yeobright and the misfortune of Eustacia Vye which ends in his as well as Eustacia's tragic death. "Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments. All men, except the most brutish, desire to have, in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave but willing one, not slave merely, but a favourite".

Hardy analyses Wildev's nature as erratic and fitful. Being incapable of loving Eustacia Vye, he remains a constant danger in her course of life. When he finds Eustacia Vye feeling miserable, he assures her that he is ready to help her in case she wants to leave the place altogether. At Eustacia's request, Wildev agrees to help her to reach Budmouth harbor without her grandfather's or husband's knowledge. But the unsuccessful plan to escape turns out to be the most ill-conceived and fatal one. In contrast to Wildev, Diggory Venn has all the virtues of loyalty, resourcefulness and devotion to Thomasin Yeobright, who does not love him until experience has taught her to value him better. Venn's devotion and selfless love of Thomasin surprises Eustacia Vye. "What a strange sort of love, to be entirely free from that quality of selfishness which is frequently the chief constituent of the passion, and sometimes its only one".

Diggory Venn remains devoted to Thomasin for years. Through bad times, he stands beside his beloved, Thomasin. Even when Thomasin refuses his offer of marriage, he continues to strive for her happiness. His intention has been to be close to Thomasin whom he still loves. Such constant love ignites the spark of love in Thomasin's heart. They are finally, duly rewarded with the promise of a contented life together. Diggory Venn resembles Gabriel Oak in his selfless love of Bathsheba Everdene in far from the madding crowd.

In the Return of the Native, the impression of Eustacia Vye as a tragic heroine with a sense of loss grows out of Hardy's sensitivity to the frustration and helplessness present in Eustacia Vye. Eustacia is undoubtedly a woman of considerable intelligence and ability but an ambitious woman becomes self-destructive in a society which has no appreciation for such women. At one place, Wildev remarks that Eustacia is such a rare plant in such a rare place! Hardy fully sympathizes with her spirit of revolt even though it is misdirected towards materialistic goals. "The adolescent girl often thinks that she can simply scorn convention; but even there she is engaged in public agitation; she is creating a new situation entailing consequences she must assume. When one fails to adhere to

an accepted code, one becomes an insurgent”.

Eustacia Vye miserable as she is reduced to living in a cottage with Clym, now a blind furze cutter who does not understand her needs. It is in such a humiliating and extremely insufferable situation that she plans her escape with a lover for whom she has no respect and whom she considers unworthy of her. However, Hardy views her desperate action, dissipated energies and her triviality with remarkable compassion. Eustacia Vye and Thomasin Yeobright are two characters with contrasting natures. We see Eustacia as one who is unable to conform to conventions while Thomasin is quite conventional and content in her role as a wife and mother, a typical Victorian woman who accepts the superiority of man over woman and the social norms of the period. Therefore, she is under no psychological pressure to revolt against anything, and revolt is repugnant to her. “In a generous woman resignation takes the form of forbearance: She puts up with everything, she condemns no one, because she holds that neither people nor things can be other than they are”.

While Thomasin is carved in the mould of a forbearing woman, Eustacia Vye is a rebel who rejects society’s concept of a woman’s status. Eustacia’s ceaseless search for excitement and love should be interpreted in the context of the boredom and frustration. She is made to cope with and not according to Mrs. Yeobright as some sort of innate deficit. Eustacia’s depression is tracked back to her living in Egdon Heath, a place she never liked.

Eustacia Vye’s strategy to fight depression is to be passionately in love with attractive men. “To be loved to madness such was her great desire; love was to her the one cordial which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days”. Her need to feel loved is so great that it eclipses her realization of the fact that she is not loved in return. In case of Wildeve, her pride rebels against her passion for him and she longs to be free but she can be free only under one circumstance and that is, with the arrival of a greater personality than Wildeve. In the case of Clym Yeobright too, Eustacia’s love for him is not based upon any proper understanding of his character.

She is attracted to Clym through rumours about his glamorous life in Paris and decides to marry him without seeing him. Her obsession about Clym is based on daydreams and fantasies. With her marriage to Clym, she realizes the differences between her romantic image of Clym and the real Clym who is now her husband. Hence, she goes back to Wildeve, even though she is aware of her foolish act. Her unlawful romantic relationship with Wildeve brings her greater miseries and more disillusionments which finally lead to their untimely death.

In the nineteenth century, women were educated so as to be well equipped with the means to find fulfillment in life through family relationships and affections. Such a satisfaction derived from life was regarded to be more than adequate compensation for the restrictions imposed on women by the society. Through his heroine Eustacia Vye, Hardy presents a social situation to show how unsatisfying and how dangerous women’s total emotional dependence could be. Hardy’s concern can be justified here since dependence is a major hurdle in women’s way to progress. We also find that Thomasin’s dependence and conventionality are responsible for her sufferings.

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