

Chapter – VI

The Return of the Native

The first major tragic novel of Hardy is The Return of the Native, and in it he creates a new vision of life under a new horizon. In his earlier novels like Far From the Madding Crowd and The Hand of Ethelberta the endings were rather happy. In these novels most of the women characters were presented in a comic mode. Bathsheba and Ethelberta accepted the traditional role, and the novels ended in happy note. But it is not so in The Return of the Native. Its heroine Eustacia is a woman of vibrant sexuality. She is a self assertive and rebellious woman struggling to have a suitable place for herself in the male dominated society. Her efforts create a conflict between herself and the traditional society. This conflict with the society with her uncompromising instincts gives her image a tragic stature more because of a radical presentation of her personality. She has her own sexuality and tries to find autonomy and self-fulfillment in a society that denies women any scope for self-satisfaction. Hardy paints Eustacia as a wily and rebellious woman. She is non-conforming to the society's expectation of a submissive, docile and self-effacing ideal of womanhood. The author tries to focus light on the female desires and aspirations in the novel by projecting Eustacia's frustrations in the circumscribed world of Egdon Heath. Going against the convention, Hardy has shown her as an unconventional heroine who challenges gender discrimination and traditional sexual morality. Through the rebellion of Eustacia, Hardy tried to show the presence and emergence of such a non-conforming woman in the society. Though her rebellion remains partial and fails to shake to the root the then patriarchal society, her efforts may be seen as the beginning of the end of the male-dominated society. In the death of Eustacia, Hardy has tried to show the limitations of the values of the patriarchal society. She has accepted death as she fails to compromise with the Victorian social codes as Bathsheba and Ethelberta did. Her death puts a question mark on the traditional values of the male-dominated society.

By the time Hardy writes The Return of the Native he is sensitively aware of the legal, economic and social aspects that restricted the lives of women. He has emphasised in his writings the social restrictions on women's desires and aspirations. In the contemporary novels the image of the woman presented was passive, docile and evasive. They hardly questioned the male dominated role of the society. The social conventions of the Victorian period desired that a woman must be sexually innocent in mind and action. The society imposed certain restrictions on women to ensure sexual ignorance and silence on sex matters. Victorian women had no independent sexual identity and any manifestation of sexual passion on the part of women was regarded as highly degrading. The whole concern of woman was their children and husbands. The society had an aversion to female sexuality and the contemporary scientific literature upheld the view that a woman having sexual passion was a 'deviant' and the society termed her a fallen woman. Apart from this sex suppression by the Victorian standard, a woman of that period was also denied economic and political power. As Catherine Hall in her essay, "Private persons and Public Someones: class Gender and Politics, in England, 1780-1850" observes:

At one level the exclusion of middle-class women 'from the public world of politics is hardly surprising. After all, women never had been very much involved in the political sphere. . . . The late eighteenth and nearly nineteenth centuries marked a period of transition in English society when traditional values and beliefs were subjected to attack and criticism. Established social hierarchies were breaking down and common-sense notions were being turned upside down. It was in this context that middle class men articulated their new demand for representation. This was a demand which did not grow naturally by a process of evolution, but rather was forged out of the recognition that political influence was a necessary concomitant to their economic power. In the same way, there was nothing 'natural' about the process whereby women were not included in that demand. Certainly it coincided with the custom. But middle class men were busy challenging custom in other arenas. Customary patterns about gender divisions were reworked in this period of transition. It was in that re-working that men were firmly placed in the newly defined public world of business, commerce and politics; women were placed in the private world of home and family (Catherine Hall in Terry Lovell (ed) 1990. 52).

The contemporary power relations in the society stressed the need for subordination of the female by the male. The traditional society conceived women as objects for sexual use and possession. They were subjected to cruelty and dehumanazition. To perpetuate this sexual domination, the society propounded the theory of polarisation of women between the Madonna and the whore, the desirable and the undesirable. The Madonna or the perfect womanhood was characterised by passivity, sacrifice, self effacement, moral and physical purity. On the other hand the whore or the fallen woman was identified by her sexual passion and masculine activities. The society demanded from women only purity and chastity. Victorian society was afraid of women's sexual freedom and the repression of sexual emotion among women was a common practice. Even after marriage, fidelity was regarded as the supreme virtue in Victorian women. The ideal of restraint and chastity within and outside marriage was enforced on women and not on men. Women were denied any independent identity and self-fulfilment. Any deviation from their prescribed role termed them as fallen women.

But with the advent of the industrial revolution a new concept about the role of women in the society gradually evolved. The industrial and economic development changed the condition of the society giving rise to new socio-economic aspects of the society. New ideas about women and their role in the society were a natural manifestation of this change.

Hardy along with George Meredith and other major novelists of the period felt the need to write about women with sexual frankness and psychological realism in place of prudery and sentiments, by challenging the prevalent ideas of femininity and maternity. They tried to depict women as active participants in public spheres. They intended to write about the desires of women for power and autonomy which would result in a radical break with the social and cultural traditions As Patricia Stubbs observes, 'They almost had to re-invent women in the novel by introducing the inner conflicts and sexual feelings which had been denied to women in English Fiction, for nearly a century (Stubbs: 1979, 58).

Hardy in The Return of the Native presents unconventional women who refuse to conform to the society's expectation of ideal womanhood. These women came in direct clash with the society to attain their autonomy, identity and self-fulfillment. But the conventional society denies them these by making them powerless against the social codes. Hardy shows their partial victory against the patriarchal society.

In The Return of the Native Hardy presents an unconventional rebellious woman who tries to come out of her circumscribed existence. At the beginning of the novel Eustacia Vye is introduced as the "Queen of Night" and as 'Raw material of Divinity' (The Return of the Native 118 henceforth referred to as RN). In order to convey her dignity and glamour, the author places her alongside the goddesses Artemis, Athena and Hera. We are informed that 'Eustacia is a girl of forwardness of mind' (RN, 112). 'She prefers the Philistines to the Pious and wonders if Pilate was handsome. Her instinct towards social non-conformity is at the root of this' (RN 12). 'Eustacia Vye is the raw material of divinity. On the Olympus she would have done well with a little preparation. She had the passions and instinct which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman' (RN, 118). As Marlene Springer in Hardy's Use of Allusions (1983) observes: "In order to elevate Eustacia above her environment and place her in the company of the tragic heroines he so admires, Hardy surrounds her with largely classical allusions. In so doing he also flirts with a theme which he was to explore more fully in his later novels--namely, the feasibility and practicality of following an Arnoldian Hellenism" (Springer : 1983,109).

Hardy, being determined to elevate Eustacia's dignity, rebellious spirit and forwardness of mind, writes 'that her high gods were William the Conqueror, Strafford, and Napoleon Buonaparte as they had appeared in the Lady's History uses at the establishment in which she was educated' (RN, 122). He further observes 'that her chief priest was Byron, her anti-Christ a well-meaning polemical preacher at Crestsmouth, of the name of Slatters' (fol78) Hardy has shown the glamour and dignity in the physical appearance

of Eustacia, her urge for self-fulfillment as well as her denial of compromise with the traditional society.

As in his previous novels, in this novel also Hardy explores how women lose their autonomy and identity by the degrading influence of the male world. The autonomous world of women frustratingly gets limited when they come in touch with the patriarchal society. Elfride's vibrant sexuality is checked at the advent of Henry Knight. Bathsheba loses her independence and originality and is forced to embrace patriarchal values. Eustacia, the unconventional heroine, too, searches frantically for her autonomy in the male dominated society and tries to make her life meaningful. To quote Rosemarie Morgan's remark, "There is no area of exploration, whether occupational, sexual or merely developmental, that does not eventually, conflict with the dominant male will to disposes woman of autonomy, identity, purpose and power" (Morgan ; 1988, 58). Hardy articulates Eustacia's resentment at her lack of freedom in the confined world of Egdon Heath. Her suffocating soul does not find any fulfillment in the wilderness of that confined heath. She thinks that Egdon Heath puts an obstruction in her way of happiness: "Egdon was her Hades and since coming there she has imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled thereto" (RN 119). The author informs that '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' (RN119). By projecting the loneliness of Eustacia, the author comments that 'her loneliness deepened her desire. On Egdon coldest and meanest kisses were at famine price, and where was a mouth matching hers to be found?' (RN121). Her confined life at Egdon Heath evokes the memory of her dazzling life at Budmouth. The narrator indicates the responsibility of human being in placing Eustacia at this lonely and suffocating part of Wessex. She had 'romantic recollections of sunny afternoon on an esplanade with military bands, officers and gallants around stood like gilded letters upon the dark tablet of surroundings Egdon' (RN 120-21) .In contrast her past glamorous life at Budmouth her present drab existence at Egdon makes her frustrated . She does not surrender to the suffocating heath; her ramblings on the heath at odd hours show her

unrecognised state of mind with the heath. Eustacia was brought up as an orphan by her grandfather after the death of her parents. She was granted freedom from the end of her grand father and gradually she became an independent woman. But Eustacia was forced to live with the grandfather due to her orphan hood. "She hated the change; she felt like one banished: but here she was forced to abide" (RN 120).

Eustacia's forced living at Egdon Heath is responsible for her 'wily' nature and her romantic obsessions. Hardy comments that Eustacia is not responsible for her wily nature, the circumstances are rather responsible for her rebellious nature. "An environment which would make a contented woman a poet, a suffering woman a devotee, a pious woman a psalmist, even a giddy woman thoughtful, made a rebellious woman saturnine" (RN 123). The gloomy surroundings made her passionate. The author shows her unconventional mind that desires "To be loved to madness" because 'Love was to her the one cordial which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed to long for the abstraction called the passionate love more than for any particular lover" (RN 121). The author shows Esutacia's sexuality as a powerful force in the novel. It challenges the conventional notion of femininity and female sexual desire. Hardy by representing Eustacia's unconventional mind and sexual desires breaks away from the norms of the so- called ideal women. Eustacia is a woman of flesh and blood with natural sexual desires and urge for self fulfillment. Eustacia transcends Victorian society's polarisation of womanhood. In this society women were polarised in to two types: Madonna and Whore, desirable and undesirable. But the author shows her vibrant sexuality as the spontaneous manifestation of rebellious womanhood. The author does not consider her an immoral woman. On the contrary he considers sexuality as the expression of her unconventional personality. Hardy sympathizes with Eustacia's sense of revolt against the social codes. 'Hardy has intended to demonstrate initially the quality of Esutacia's rebellious nature through classical allusions and then through more dramatic and objective methods' (Dale Krammer; 1975,63) .

Hardy projects Eustacia's loneliness showing her unfettered movements on the heath at the odd hours of the day and night. Her unconventional behaviour marginalizes her from the Egdon community. She is called a 'witch' and a 'strange woman' by the inhabitants. As Frank R. Giordano, Jr, observes:

Eustacia's social isolation is reinforced in this scene when she builds her own bonfire, a symbol of man's Promethean rebelliousness and, particularly her own. At first the fire is thought to have been set by her grandfather old Captain Vye; but when it is found that Eustacia ignited the fire, Susan Nunsuch says, "She is very strange in her ways, living up there by herself and such things please her". So strange is her behaviour in fact, that the Egdon rustics consider her to be a witch (Giordano: 1980, 507).

Hardy shows that Eustacia's unconventional behaviour challenges the society's expectations of an ideal womanhood. She is neither a whore nor an 'angel in the house' but rather a healthy vigorous woman in search of her sexual identity. The author informs that 'Eustacia is a girl of some forwardness of mind. . . And 'her instinct towards social non-conformity is at the root of this' (RN 122). Penny Boumelha observes:

Eustacia is, however, an interestingly feminized version of Prometheus: her boundless desire is to be boundlessly desired. Her sense of her own identity constantly seeks reaffirmation, not through action but through that confirmation of value which is the desire of another. Pre-occupied as she is with love, she still displaces her entire feelings in a way which I have argued is distinctively female in male dominated society. Her aspiration sets up a circle of desire: "To be loved to madness such was her great desire" (Boumelha: 1982, 65).

Eustacia seeks passionate love to escape the loneliness of Egdon Heath. 'Love is to her the one cordial which can drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seems to long for the abstraction called the passionate love more than for any particular lover' (RN 121). To escape the eating loneliness of the heath Eustacia falls in love with Wildeve. Eustacia expects Wildeve's love would take her away from the suffocating Egdon Heath. Wildeve is a failed engineer and without any morality and has no

qualms in making love with one woman and marrying another. His fickleness fails to provide justice to either of the two women. His frequent desertions of Thomasin before the marriage considerably excites Eustacia. However, Eustacia feels a kind of thrill of power in summoning Wildeve according to her will. Penny Boumelha sees Eustacia's fascination with power as erotic in nature. She observes, "Eustacia's attraction towards Wildeve is partly determined by the eroticism of the power which his relative passivity allows her to imagine that she holds over him" (Boumelha: 1982, 56). Eustacia through her love wants to realize her sexual identity. Hardy has shown that Eustacia ceases to love the man who is not loved by others and loves him again when he becomes desirable to another person. J. Hillis Miller in Thomas Hardy ; Distance and Desire (1970) observes:

Hardy's fiction might be defined as an exploration of the varieties of mediated love. The third person standing between most influences love and most successfully prevents the lover from reaching his goal. . . . Eustacia's fluctuations of love for Wildeve and indifference toward him provide the occasion for statements which are of capital importance as formulations of the pattern of loving in all his fiction. 'What curious feeling was this coming over her? Was it really possible that her interests in Wildeve had been so entirely the result of antagonism that the glory and the dreams departed from the man with the first sound that he was no longer coveted by her rival' (P.165) . So Eustacia ceases to love the man who is not loved by others and loves him again when he becomes desirable to another person. His relation to Wildeve is mediated by way of his relation to Thomasin. When Eustacia has Wildeve to herself she soon tires of him, but as soon as he turns from her to Thomasin he becomes desirable again. . . . She has believed that the glory and the dream he radiates are evidence of power in him, his luminous glow making him so different from other people as to be almost like a god in his superiority. Now through her rival's indifference she discovers in a moment that her love has gone by way of that rival. The divine radiance which seems intrinsic to Wildeve is subjective marriage cast on Eustacia's vision of him by the fact that Thomasin loves him (Miller: 1970, 159-161) .

Eustacia's loneliness and her desire for the 'abstraction' called 'passionate love' explain her reckless unconventionality. Throughout the novel Eustacia yearns for an object to live for. Her loneliness deepens her desire. To escape the loneliness of her everyday existence she idealises Wildeve and Clym. Eustacia sees Clym in terms of abstraction. The halo of Paris that

surrounds Clym makes him an object of infinite longing. Her desire to meet Clym proves irresistible and she fulfils it by bargaining with Charley for his place in the mumming. As Leonard W. Deen observes: "Eustacia's becoming a mummer involves her assumption of 'the heroic masculine role to which she is always aspiring. She wants to alter her essential human condition, to change her sex" (Deen:1960, 211).

The news of the arrival of Clym at Egdon fills Eustacia's mind with the glow of expectations. She identifies him with romantic Paris. She falls in love with him before she even sees him, because he promises her access to that celestial place. "A young and clever man was coming into that lonely heath from, of all contrasting place in the world, Paris. It was like a man coming from heaven" (Miller: 1970, 124). Eustacia's acting as a mummer follows a dream that foreshadows her tragic destiny in a man made world:

She was dancing to wondrous music, and her partner was the man in silver armour who had accompanied her through the previous fantastic changes, the visor of his helmet being closed. The mazes of the dance were ecstatic. Soft whispering came into her ear from under the radiant helmet, and she felt like a woman in Paradise. Suddenly these two wheeled out from the mass of dancers, dived into one of the pools of the heath, and came out somewhere beneath into an iridescent hollow, arched with rainbows.' It must be here,' said the voice by her side, and blushingly looking up she saw him removing his casque to kiss her. At that moment their was cracking noise, and his figure fell into fragments like a pack of cards (RN, 174).

Eustacia's dream implies her tragic death and her doomed marriage with Clym Yeobright. In a rare moment of self-recognition Eustacia tells Clym before their marriage: "Yet I know we shall not love like this always. Nothing can ensure continuance of love. It will evaporate like a spirit and so I feel full of fears" (RN 255). Eustacia's apprehension proved prophetic when Clym disregarding her passionate yearnings for Paris absorbs himself in his own world of philanthropy. When Clym gives her proposal for marriage Eustacia confesses to him "To be your wife and live in Paris would be heaven for me" (RN 253). She wants freedom from Egdon Heath and yearns for "life, music, poetry passion, war and all the beating and pulsing that are going on in the

great arteries of the world ". (RN345). Rosemarie Morgan observes: "Revolutionary and not aristocratic Paris would be far more to her liking "(Morgan: 1988, 77). Even though Clym leaves her in no doubt regarding his intention not to return to Paris, Eustacia clings to her illusions and persuades Clym to return to Paris. Clym rather sees Eustacia as a vision or idea .The idea he brings from Paris for moral and intellectual development of the rustics rather than material advancement. Clym's expectation of Eustacia represents ideological makeup of the patriarchal society. He looks upon Eustacia as a mistress of his proposed school. Eustacia's aspirations are secondary to him. Clym persists in his fantasy of moulding Eustacia into a model wife to match his own Utopian idea of educating the Egdon 'eremites' Clym's fantasy of moulding Eustacia according to his desire shows him as a totally conventional man . ClymYeobright like Angel Clare fails to see women in thier real flesh and blood entity. They rather see their women in abstraction. In Anne Z. Mickelson's words:

Yeobrights trouble with sexual love is due to his insistence on her mind and spirit rather than on her sexual actuality. Thus the desire to create another world than the one about him causes the individual to construct an inner world - a world often of false inner reality which creates acute disparity with the actual self. In essence these men still cling to the Victorian idea of woman as the Great Virgin (Mickleson :1976, 34).

Clym creates a fantasy world in his mind for implementing his educational plan to escape from the sordid 'ache of modernism'. 'Clym's plan' to educate the rustics who are living in abject poverty and to raise them into an intellectual and rational level of existence without subjecting them to the evils of material prosperity reveals a certain lack of insight into their existence (Arti Mathur in Subhas Chandra: 1999, 86). The narrator focuses on the impracticability of Yeobright's plan by satirically informing:

To argue upon the possibility of culture before luxury to the bucolic world may be to argue truly, but it is an attempt to disturb a sequence to which humanity has long been accustomed. Yeobright preaching to the Egdon eremites that they might rise to a serene comprehensiveness without going through the process of enriching

themselves was not unlike arguing to ancient Chaldeans that in ascending from earth to the pure empyrean it was not necessary to pass first into the intervening heaven of ether (RN 231).

Clym Yeobright is shown as a highly intellectualized Victorian. He is the product of the new thought that he has imbibed during his stay in Paris. His renunciation of body for intellect shows his gradual entombment in his imaginary world. The author shows that his intellectual and philanthropic pursuits make him blind to the aspirations of Eustacia. His abandonment of his job at a diamond establishment and his return to Egdon for a life of plain living and high thinking shows his gradual alienation from the practical world. He fails to see Eustacia's potentialities and possibilities. As Dale Kramer analyzes:

Clym represents two coexisting but separate societies, the heath and the outer intellectual world, which he had learned about in Paris and which had provided part of the rationale for his rejection of the life of business. The philosophies that these two societies impress upon Clym are not identical but they are similar enough to separate further Clym's psychic state from Eustacia's. The two societies jostle for influence in Clym, but their impacts on his character are complimentary (Kramer: 1975, 52).

He [Clym] as a member of the dominant class expects to pursue his plans however impractical that may be. Society never questions the qualification of a man to become a successful husband, for making a girl happy, just as he to demand his own happiness from her. Eustacia in spite of her potentialities as an educated, cultured, beautiful woman has no power to create position for herself in the society. She becomes a mere spectator at Clym's gradual regression into a furze cutter. She gets nothing by depending on Clym's will. This sense of desperation ultimately leads her to elope with Wildeve for her self fulfillment. Hardy exploits the marriage to expose the social background against which Eustacia's character develops. The marriage shows that one partner exploits the other, and shows the society and egoism in action against the other. Eustacia wakes up to find herself degraded by the prevalent practices of Victorian marriage as an institution. Hardy's vision of the institution of marriage remained gloomy from the beginning of his career as

a novelist. In the Victorian society women's role became limited. She accepted traditional role as a wife and mother, and she had no voice in the society. The author shows that Eustacia accepts the ideological role of Clym's wife with the expectation that someday she would be able to persuade him to return to Paris. After her marriage with Clym, Eustacia finds that her chance of self fulfillment gets thinner and thinner everyday with Clym's gradual involvement in the meaningless mire. Clym has already assigned for her the role of a mistress of his school. Eustacia finds after marriage her chance of returning to Paris gets bleaker and bleaker with Clym's insisting her to live on the heath. Meanwhile Clym's eye sight failed, he decides to become a furze cutter after abandoning his plan of educating villagers. The author shows that the patriarchal society denies her right to self fulfilment. She hoped that Clym would provide her the cherished freedom from Egdon heath where her grandfather has placed her. Rosemarie Morgan is her essay, on the The Return of the Native observes:

The world of freedom and action Hardy's greater heroines would shape for themselves disintegrates as rapidly as the man made world superimposes upon them its own curbing shape. With the advent of adulthood and fully awakened sexual consciousness, every exploratory move towards self discovery , self realisation and sexual understanding , meetswith obstruction in a male-dominated world intent upon highranking the docile woman over the daring, the meek over the assertive , the compliant over the self-determining, the submissive over the dynamic . There is no area of exploration whether occupational, sexual or merely developmental, that does not, eventually conflict with the dominant male will to dispossess woman of autonomy, identity, purpose and power (Morgan: 1988, 58).

The author shows Eustacia's struggle against the forces of the society. As Anne Z. Mickelson aptly observes, "For Hardy society is the villain - a society which denies the beautiful, the educated, the courageous and the individual woman like Eustacia the power to determine her positive potential and then realize it" (Mickelson: 1976, 70). The author points out that the institution of marriage traps her in a exploiting society and she has lost her identity as a woman.

Clym's physical blindness is symbolic of his psychological and social blindness: social and sexual. Eustacia finds that her marriage with Clym brings social degradation. This development of Eustacia reveals her creator's dissatisfaction with what Eustacia was at the beginning and what she socially represented. Hardy's sympathy for Eustacia's worsening social position is clear in the following lines: "A bitter tear rolled down Eustacia's face, which he did not see. There had been non-chalance in his tone, showing her that he felt no absolute grief at a consummation which to her was a positive horror" (RN 311). Eustacia weeps in sick despair of the blasting effect upon her own life. Hardy shows that Eustacia's urge for self satisfaction is obstructed by the patriarchal society that has no space for womanly desires and its fulfillment. Eustacia's married life with Clym becomes oppressive due to Mrs. Yeobright's over-possessive motherhood and Clym's abnormal mother fixation. Hardy has shown conventional motherhood in Mrs. Yeobright. She is possessive and wants to dominate her son to fulfill her failed aspirations of youth. She is shown by the author as a widow whom the society has denied self-fulfillment. This poor widow tried her best to give her son a good education and kept her son out of Egdon heath. She tries to protect her son from the influences of the Egdon folk. Hardy brings out the evil side of possessive motherly love. Mrs. Yeobright being jealous of Clym's selecting of Eustacia as a prospective bride makes virulent criticism of Eustacia. Apprehensive of Eustacia's influence over Clym Mrs. Yeobright warns him: "But when I consider the usual nature of the drag which causes man to promise to disappoint the world I feel uneasy" (RN 246). This is the jealousy of over possessive mother. Her jealous statements against Eustacia shows her resolve not to be robbed of her son and her self satisfaction. Her jealousy creates a rivalry with Eustacia. Mrs. Yeobright cannot tolerate the fact that the love of her son may be divided. She cannot tolerate that Clym may place his affection on Eustacia. She tells Clym, "Why do you wish to connect yourself with any body at present?" (RN 251). Being angry with Clym on his decision to marry Eustacia, Mrs. Yeobright says, "For shame Clym. But it is all through that woman - a hussy!" (RN 252). After the quarrel with his mother Clym wishes that, "he had never known Eustacia" (RN 260). Penny Boumelha observes:

Mrs. Yeobright's relationship with Clym, however, is unparalleled in the fiction in the inextricable intertwining of their lives and emotions. She lives vicariously through her son, and this gives her behaviour towards him a blend of dependence and dominance. Clym has a life and will of his own beyond this one relationship, yet remains strongly bound to his mother for emotional approval and support. However, there is a uncertainty in the writing about the relationship, possibly because of the implicit sexuality with which it is invested. Its nature is discussed as that which cannot be discussed, shown as that which cannot be shown; their love has 'a profundity in which all exhibitions of itself is painful (P. 205). And their communication takes place through a' magnetism which as superior to words as words are to yells' (Boumelha: 1982,58).

Clym's mother fixation is responsible for the breakdown of Eustacia's relationship with Clym. However Hardy presents Mrs. Yeobright as a sympathetic mother .After a few months of her rift with Clym, she walks alone on the heath to have a reconciliation with her son. We feel sympathy for Mrs. Yeobright when her only son leaves her; and in her abandoned state she feels that the tragedy of her life is want of an object to live for. Her move towards reconciliation with her son meets with a tragic death. Hardy has shown Mrs. Yeobright 's death poetically amid natural surroundings . She attains a tragic dignity through her death.

The author shows the destructive power of mother fixation even after the tragic demise of Mrs. Yeobright. Clym cannot extricate himself from the influence of the mother. When he comes to know that his mother returned from his home broken hearted after being denied entry to her, Clym reminded Eustacia of his mother's reason for rejecting her , "how can there be any good in a woman that every body spoke evil of? "(RN395). Clym is a pathetic victim of his mother's possessive love. As Marjorie Garson observes:

Certainly Mrs Yeobright, who calls her son a failure, 'Like your father' and nags him 'to push straight on, as other men do-all who deserve the names ; shows herself willing to assault his masculinity quite directly to get him to do what she wants. And her son's subsequent career that he cannot successfully defy her. Mother and son are one flesh- 'he was a part of her'. That his link with this woman is so intense that separation from her means dismemberment, emasculation, sexual death, is one inevitable meaning of the narrative (Marjorie Garson in Shanta Dutta (ed) 2004, 488).

Eustacia's descent from romantic dignified figure to the level of a 'fallen woman' is almost complete at the end of the novel. She was a sensitive, intelligent and beautiful woman who sought freedom from the stereotyped role of a Victorian woman. At the beginning of the novel she was conceived by Clym, "wrapped up in halo and ideal!" But the conventional society denies her self-fulfillment. She is a rebellious figure and snatches her right from the society. The society terms her a 'fallen women'. To Clym she is no longer the woman whom he met first. By the standarard of social belief she has lost her Olympian dignity and her polarisation as a whore is complete. To the eyes of her husband she is a whore and to the Egdon folk she is a 'witch' and to her grandfather she is a woman full of romantic 'nonsense'. Eustacia's rebellion against the conventional society challenges the Victorian stereotyped image of woman. Hardy moulded her into a rebellious self. Eustacia as a rebellious woman in search of self-fulfillment problematized the contemporary position of such women in the novel. Eustacia's confrontation with the social values that transforms man and woman to 'willing slaves'. The patriarchal society, in order to perpetuate the domination of women by retaining power restricts their freedom. Eustacia refuses to be circumscribed by the patriarchal outlook of the society. She challenges the convention of the society through her rebellion and pays for it.

Hardy has shown Eustaica's uncompromising struggle against the institution of marriage, and the social conventions that forces her to accept a few limited and stereotyped roles. The author shows her death in the process of her self-assertion. She accepts death but does not submit to the stereotyped roles imposed on her, Eustacia, after a few months of her marriage with Clym, decides to leave her husband and start for Parish with Wildeve. But she feels it beneath her dignity to take financial help from Wildeve . She thinks it a poor compromise. As Penny Boumelha observes:

So, love and lovers as Eustacia experiences them prove to be not enough, and the point is that they could never be so, as she has hung the meaning of her life upon them. But the text matches its exploration of the frustrating limitations of nineteenth-century femininity with an awareness of the equally damaging ideologies of

masculinity that shape such a situation. For Eustacia, happiness and fulfillment cannot be imagined except as they derive from the intervention of a man. She can imagine herself only through the roles she plays in relation to man, and so she depends upon the men she encounters in their turn to live up to the ideologies of excitement, adventure, escape and fulfillment (Boumelha, Introduction to The Return of the Native 2000, XXIV).

Eustacia retains her dignity till the end of her life "Can I go ! Can I go!" She mourned , "He's not great enough for me to give myself to , she doesn't suffice for my desire" (RN 421) . She thinks that death can only retain her dignity. As Marlene Springer observes:

Finding every alternative open to her despicable, Eustacia reaches the nadir of her despair, with the very 'wings of her soul...broken by the cruel obstructiveness of all about her'. All her dreams now piercing nightmares, Eustacia is no longer Queen of Night, Queen of Love, as she cries out, in the set speech of high tragedy, against a Heaven which tortures her, though she has done no harm to Heaven at all. Yet even in her wretchedness she is allowed-as few of Hardy's characters are - a final rebellion, and we are reminded, by previously used allusions to her heroes Saul and Napoleon, of the unbroken Queen (Springer: 1983, 113).

The author proves that her mental condition perfectly matches with the chaos of the outside world. Eustacia feels herself alienated from the human community, extreme unhappiness descends on her mind as she considers whether to compromise with Wildeve or not. Hardy finds out that lack of economic independence chains Eustacia to the conventional role. Hardy gives voice to Eustacia's mental anguish at the injustices of the society and its oppressive codes. The society refuses to fulfil her inner urges and aspirations. Hardy's voice is clearly felt when Eustacia, standing alone on the barrow drenched with rain, cries: "How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me!" (RN421). On the fateful night of the storm when Eustacia meets her death, Hardy's sympathy for Eustacia's tragic fate is implicit in the following lines: "Any one who had stood by now would have pitied her, not so much on account of her exposure to weather, and isolation from all of humanity...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" (RN 420-21). Hardy tells that Eustacia's soul has plunged "in an abyss of desolation seldom plumbed by one so young" (RN 424). Hardy voices Eustacia's complaint against the unjust social code that doesnot recognise her potentiality, quality and assertiveness. "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 beyound my control"(RN 421). She understands the meaninglessness of her existence and decides to end her life in a turbulent weir of Egdon Heath. As Rosemarie Morgan observes, "Eustacia's death is a kind of moral victory against social ideology "(Morgan, 1988:81). The narrative pronouncement on Eustacia's dead body shows Hardy's extreme anger against the social codes that grant death to a rebellious woman. The author feels Eustacia's transfiguration at death. "The expression of her finely carved mouth was pleasant, as if a sense of dignity had just compelled her to leave off speaking "(RN 442- 43). Hardy shows his emotional commitment to his heroine. Hardy indicates that the dignity that the patriarchal society denied her was attained by Eustacia through her death. Hardy did not allow the narrator to dominate Eustacia's voice. He gives Eustacia's voice a revolting tone that represents the condition of women in the patriarchal society .Breaking away from the masculine ideology Hardy gives voice to Eustacia's frustrations and puts in to her voice a strong protest against patriarchy. By giving vent to Eustacia's feelings of frustrations and her non conformist opinion, he projects the contemporary situation of women in the society.

In contrast with this rebellious womanhood Hardy presented Thomasin as an ideal woman by the Victorian standard. He has shown Thomasin with those positive qualities that constitute an ideal Victorian woman. She remains circumscribed by the male dominance and never questions her stereotyped role in the society. Thomasin, with her submissive, docile and demure personality is the opposite of Eustacia. As Michael Millgate observes , "Thomasin as Hardy emphasises is the good heroine and her moods of acceptance and endurance provide a contrast to Eustacia's rebellious impulsiveness even more striking than the opposition between Diggory and Clym "(Millgate : 1994, 140) . Our first glimpse of Thomasin is when Diggory

positive qualities. She urges Mrs. Yeobright to initiate reconciliation with her estranged son and requests Clym to be more generous to Eustacia urging him to write a letter to Eustacia asking her forgiveness. This shows her positive qualities. Even Wildeve considers Thomasin as a confoundedly good little woman and wishes that he could be faithful to Thomasin. Like the ideal Victorian woman she never questions the double standard of the society and does not rebel against the infidelity of her husband. Thomasin is thus presented by Hardy as a conventional heroine of the Victorian fiction. She is the symbol of the renewal and stability of the society. After that tragic incident in the novel Thomasin provides a dynamic force in the time worn drama of the novel. Thomasin is not what Eustacia is. The heath holds no terror for her and it has never been a 'gaol' to her, and although she leaves Egdon Heath and the Yeobright home she candidly admits , "I am not fit for town life- so very rural and silly as I always have been" (RN 462) . Her marriage with Diggory Venn recuperates her from the marginalized position she was thrown into after bungling her marriage with Wildeve. She represents the ideal Victorian womanhood and integrates herself with the Egdon community. On the day of her wedding with Diggory Venn the entire Egdon community are present at Clym's residence to congratulate her and present her with a bed made of bird feather. Her conventional marriage and motherhood, shows the Victorian ideal of womanhood. Unlike Thomasin, Eustacia fails to integrate herself with the Egdon community. Thomasin represents triumph of the traditional values and carries on the message of the rural stability and submission to traditional values. Hardy, having to submit to the circumstances of the serial publication, abandoned his original conception of the Return of the Native by showing Thomasin - Diggory marriage. He was forced by the public demand for a happy ending. Hardy's original conception of the novel was up to the 'Fifth book'. His addition of the 'sixth book', however, can be said to have served a double purpose: a compromise on the one hand and a contrast to offset the rebellion, he demonstrated through Eustacia, the protagonist.

In Far From the Madding Crowd Hardy created Bathsheba Everdene who after passing through bitter experiences of life submitted to the society. But in spite of the tragic potentiality of his first successful novel he ends it as a

comedy. At the end of the novel Bathsheba visited Oak's cottage and the novel ended with a happy marriage. The author adjusts with the Victorian convention by ending the novel apparently in a happy note. If the author had not submitted to the ideological pressure of the Victorian society to adjust with the Victorian values, Far from the Madding Crowd could have been a tragic novel. But in the Return of the Native the author does not make an adjustment with the ideology of the society. The Victorian social values are interrogated in the Return of the Native. Eustacia comes in full clash with the society. The author accuses the repressive codes of the society and demonstrates the society as the main villain. Hardy outgrows the conventional ideology in the Return of the Native. Hardy shows Eustacia as resisting the conventional submission to the society. He shows Eustacia embracing death at the end of the novel. Death is a Victorian symbol. An assertive woman either ideologically submits to the society or accepts death. Hardy presents Eustacia as a rebellious woman. Such a woman has to embrace death for violating the codes of the society. She cannot submit like Bathsheba. Society cannot give her anything except death. Hardy is successful in presenting female desire and articulating their frustrations. Hardy lends a muted voice to Bathsheba's frustrations but in The Return of the Native he gives Eustacia's voice a loudness and identifies himself emotionally with Eustacia's frustrations. Hardy's voice is everywhere present in the novel. It accuses a society that turns an assertive woman into a fallen woman and punishes her by death. In presenting Eustacia Hardy becomes radical. The more he is radical, the more tragic becomes his novels. Eustacia dies but triumphs over the oppressive patriarchal values. As Patricia Stubbs rightly comments:

The sordid death of Flaubert's Emma Bovary, whose impulses stem from the same boredom and frustrations as Eustacia's, points to this contradiction in Hardy's conception of the heroine. . . . Emma dies a horribly painful, protracted death from self poisoning. Her death is a final degradation. But Eustacia's is an escape from degradation and further compromise. It gives her the tragic stature which she has always yearned for (Stubbs: 1979, 85).

In the next novel Hardy continues his attack on the society. In The Mayor of Casterbridge he shows the inhuman extent to which the patriarchal society can go to turn a woman into a commodity. The dehumanization of the society is equally registered in the degradation of the men who can sell their women.