

Analysis of the Inevitability of Eustacia's Tragedy

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Abstract

The Return of the Native is one of Hardy's famous novels about character and environment, which has shared a huge popularity since it is published in China. This paper aims to analyze the inevitability of Eustacia's tragedy. It analyzes the deep reasons of the heroine's tragedy from the feminism perspective. It reveals that people who violate the regulation of nature and society are bound to be punished. The aim of the paper is to tell people that each citizen should try to help establish a harmonious relationship with other human beings, nature and society.

Keywords

Tragedy, Fighting, Dream

1. Introduction

The research about Hardy's works in China is still developing since the 1920s. As a well-known representative analyst of Hardy, Xu Zhimo translated a lot of famous writings of Hardy into Chinese. The first publication of Hardy's novels is *Tess of the Durbervilles* which is translated by Lv Tianshi. Then, the study on Hardy has come to a new stage since 1980. Professor Zhang Zhongzai's book *On Thomas Hardy—Thought and Creation* is the first academic work about Hardy in China. "The women in Hardy's novel possess vivid images and all have their own unique personalities" (Zhang, 1987).

Keeping pace with the tendency of researching on Thomas Hardy, there is a growing number of scholars begin to harbor an awareness of his importance and the academic value of his novels and poems. As a result, his works win a huge popularity for being studied and published to a growing extent. The permanent theme of Hardy's novels is the conflicts between man and nature, between nature and society, between human beings. *The Return of the Native* is the best representative work of this kind. In this novel, the unfertile and dreary Heath seems to signify the nature's indifference to the pathetic fate of human beings. Eustacia admires the luxurious

life in big cities such as Paris, and pursues vanity every day. She hates everything on the Heath where she is living and tries to leave. Eustacia's dissolute thoughts and odd behaviors make most of the country people regard her as a witch. She is not only unsocial but also arrogant and despises normal regulations. At the end of the novel, she dies on a rainy night while she tries to leave Heath. The critics and comments about Hardy are mostly emphasized on the natural environment and women's tragic destiny. For instance, Hu Kehong puts special emphasis on the harmonious relationship between nature and human in *The Return of the Native*, and calls on people to love and respect nature. Rong Fang analyzes Eustacia's tragedy from the perspective of her personality and incompatibility with social environment. Long Juan analyses it by Lacan's post-psychoanalysis theory, she thinks it is Eustacia's ideal self and the passive narcissistic urges that make her personality split. In general, there still exists room for the exploration of this subject.

2. Embodiments of Eustacia's Tragic Life

In the Victorian Age, the reality is that the natural environment of the world has been deteriorated fiercely with the progress of modernization. Consequently, the crisis of human spirits is becoming more and more serious. Both man and woman, their spiritual environment changed fiercely. But there is always a principle that all people should live harmoniously with the nature and society. People should get close to the nature, love the nature, respect nature and live harmoniously with the nature." (Hu, 2012). Nobody is allowed to break that rule.

As a woman, Eustacia has suffered a lot from that change. After her parents died, she moves to a small village on the Heath. She lives in an era that things develop and change quickly. And in her former life, she had a good life in a prosperous city. Confronted with the old rules and traditions, she indeed shows her dissatisfaction and fights against the outside world. At the same time she also feels the trend of innovation. So many fresh invention and new stuff appear. Consequently, she develops a personality of rebellion. Compared with other women on the Heath, she has different values, needs, beliefs, motives and emotions in life. "Eustacia was not one to commit herself to such a position without good ground" (Hardy, 1995). However, in the Victorian Age, women are not allowed to have that opportunity to change their life on their own. She tries to live a wealthy life through marriage, but it turns out things aren't that easy for her. For Eustacia, she lives in a state of alienation with both nature and people on the Heath. Though Eustacia makes some efforts to struggle for fulfillment, all causes her to have various spiritual problems and finally leads her to a pathetic life.

3. Disillusion of Eustacia's Ambitious Dream

For Eustacia, she has two eager dreams: live in a rich and luxury life in a new world and fall in love with a perfect man who is worthy for her. But the reality is so cruel to her. She becomes an orphan since her parents died of an accident and then she moves to Egdon Heath to live with her grandfather. From a prosperous city to a poor village, this disparity just let her fall in great depression. Having lived in Budmouth which is an industrialized city in her childhood, the mental ecology of Eustacia is profoundly affected. She holds the dream that one day a man with huge property will change her life and by taking advantage of her beautiful appearance, she will realize her ambitious dream. As a result, her characters and lifestyle makes her separate with other people further and further. "She resolved to look for the man from Paris no more" (Hardy, 1995). Consequently, she is not able to administrate her own mental and spiritual life successfully any more.

As a beautiful and passionate young girl, Eustacia will never be satisfied with her current life on the Heath. Although she has lived there for years, she never gets familiar and gets accustomed to the life on the Heath. Eustacia indeed misses the excitement of early life in Budmouth eagerly. However, people on the Heath still keep the traditional ways of life. To the villagers, their life is totally simple and dull. So, it is hard for Eustacia to find common with these people on the Heath.

In the eyes of Eustacia, Paris seems to be an attractive and romantic city. She firmly holds the idea that there could not be another city on the earth like Paris. From her perspective, life in Paris must be wonderful and exciting. For her, Paris means everything that she pursues out of life. Paris must be fulfilled with luxury, culture and romance. "Eustacia's dream had always been that, once married Clym, she would have the power of inducing him to return to Paris" (Hardy, 1995). In addition, Eustacia is eager to have a passionate love and desires to fall in love with a man worthy for her. In her opinion, the man will finally take her away from the dreary and miserable world. But it turns out, Clym doesn't truly love her, and once came back to Heath. He never determines to go back to Paris. Consequently, there is no luxury life for Eustacia as well. So her dreams about living

a luxury life and possessing a passionate love all failed.

4. Abortion of Eustacia's Marriage

As a woman harbors a lot of rich and stormy passions, Eustacia hates the tedious life on the Heath very much. She holds the thought that this kind of life would finally lead her to destruction. What's more, the boring experience makes her think of pursuing a good marriage as a way of getting rid of the tedious life there. Also, she regards a right marriage as a way of gratifying her mental need for excitement and a way of becoming a successful person indeed. She shows her love conspicuously when she meets Clym. "She covered her face with her hands and groaned-he will rue it someday, and think of me" (Hardy, 1995). To her, a girl without vigorous love means an incomplete life.

However, women lived in the Victorian Age did not share the right of freedom and the right to choose their own life. For these women, they had no choice but to accept the situation that laid on them generation by generation. But Eustacia never submits to this situation and social status of women. At first, she only takes one man into her consideration as a worthy enough person to fall in love and get marry, the man is Damon Wildeve at that situation. Wildeve is an engineer but becomes to run an inn afterwards. To her, Wildeve is an aid to get rid of her bored, lonely and sad life on the Heath. However, Wildeve choose Thomasin as his wife rather than Eustacia. Being disgusted and frustrated by that experience, Eustacia longs for the return of a fantastic man coming back to the Heath from Paris. Despite the fact that she is unsuccessful in encountering Clym, Eustacia wins her passionate love with Clym by her beauty and scheme.

Unfortunately, it turns out that she marries a man who comes back from Paris but never leaves Heath again due to his eye problems. There was no hope for Eustacia to fulfill her dream through the help of Clym. "It was bitterly plain to Eustacia that he did not care much about social failure; and the proud fair woman bowed her head and wept in sick despair at thought of the blasting effect upon her own life of that mood and condition in him." (Hardy, 1995).

5. Failure of Eustacia's Fighting against Patriarchal Society

In the Victorian Age, women should be restricted to the house so as to be protected better and immune from the immoral influences of the outside world. "The inequality between male and female exists deeply on psychological layer with the developing of the society" (Guo, 2001). In addition, these women should exert their good influence on their family including husband and children as well. On this layer, Eustacia is neither a meek woman nor a submissive wife indeed. "The roaring inside her never ends, she never bows to the fixed rules" (Griffin, 1978). Eustacia always fights not only with the inequity between women and men, but also the old traditional rules that exist at that time. Undoubtedly, she is bound to fail. Her stubborn attitude makes her self-destroyed. Eustacia is totally a rebellious figure against the patriarchal society with her courage and self-determination.

6. Eustacia's Disharmony with Herself

It can be deduced that everything develops has its inner reasons. For Eustacia's tragedy, there are some inner elements which make her life become a doomed journey. To Eustacia, knowledge and endeavor are not important to change her poor life. She doesn't care about her spiritual enjoyment. She just holds that to marry a rich man is the key to change her life. Eustacia cannot get a good understanding about the natural environment, let alone the idea of finding a way to enjoy the life there. To Eustacia, the Heath is like a prison. She always prays "O deliver my heart from this fearful gloom and loneliness; send me great love from somewhere, else I shall die." (Hardy, 1995) "individuals are captured by their environment, by ideas, tastes, models, ways of being, the images that are constantly injected into them, and even by the refrains that go round and round in their heads" (Wotton, 1985). Having lived in the emerging capitalist industrial society-Budmouth in her childhood, Eustacia is deeply influenced by the atmosphere of that era. Her mind is severely occupied by the outside material life outside Heath while she never calms down and appreciates the natural beauty here.

7. Eustacia's Disharmony with the Society

Eustacia lives in the Victorian Age which is full of patriarchal traditional rules. At that time, women are just chattels of their husbands. Their status is obviously low and for them there are so many rigid constraints. Rights

are out of their hands, for they don't even have the chance to change their life on their own. They must be submissive to their fathers and husbands.

There is a principle: "Survival of the fittest" (Darwin, 1999). The consciousness of hierarchy roots in the mind of the people on the Heath. Eustacia's grandfather owns a high social status mainly due to his wealth. So, the relatively wealthier condition further affirms Eustacia's sense of superiority on the Heath. But an undeniable truth is that patriarchy is still the systematic and structural domination at that time. The implied institutions and system of patriarchy give men privilege and power upon women. In Victorian Age, women were brought up with the belief that men were their superiors and their main goal was just to make men feel happy and joyful. "Why doesn't that which belong to the wife belongs to husband too" (Hardy, 1995). The carelessness and indifference of her former captain grandfather make Eustacia feel very lonely and helpless. So, what she usually does is just wandering on Egdon Heath all day and night to kill her time for the reason that she has nothing else to do. We can conclude that the neglect of her grandfather is also one of the reasons that cause her eager desire of leaving the Heath. In the Victorian age, marriage was one of the most important factors for a woman's life. All women at that time dream to get a better and certain status both in social and economic areas through marriage. In order to escape from such a situation, Eustacia yearns for getting married with a rich man. So, it is no wonder she feels excited when she hears the news that Clym will return soon from Paris. Finally, Eustacia succeeds in getting married with Clym. Eustacia dreams that Clym will offer her the luxury life eagerly. "At present speak of Paris to me. Is there any place like it on earth?" (Hardy, 1995). In her perspective, marriage means a necessity for her survival and self-realization. Marriage in Victorian Age was also full of patriarchal atmosphere where the husband is given the right as the family representative, and woman is the chattel of her husband. Also, growing up at that age, Clym still has a hope that his wife could be submissive to him and do something to help him to establish his school. Taking Eustacia's degree of education into account, Clym holds the idea that his wife can be a good teacher in his boarding-school. At that time, Eustacia seems to be an ideal choice to Clym. What's more, Clym never has a thought to take Eustacia to Paris and offer her a luxury life. "You are ambitious, Eustacia-no, not exactly ambitious, luxurious. I ought to be of the same vein, to make you happy, I suppose. And yet, far from that, I could live and die in a hermitage here, with proper work to do." (Hardy, 1995). To him, Clym hopes their marriage can make contribution to his career.

8. Eustacia's Disharmony with the People

The disharmonious society alters not only social life, but also the attitude of people towards each other. Human being is indispensable in a society. The way human beings deal with each other as social beings is crucial for building a harmonious society. All men are equal, and human should love and live in harmony with each other. As Warwick Fow puts it, "all will become ecologically well with the world if we just put this or that inter-human concern first" (Glotfelty, 1996). Hardy also pays much attention to inter-human concern. Through exposing Eustacia's disharmonious relationship with other people, Hardy shows the great importance of inter-human relationship. Harmonious inter-human relationship contributes a lot to the building of harmonious living society. And what social ecology emphasizes is wholeness more than the sum of its parts. Born in Budmouth, a fashionable seaside resort, Eustacia looks down upon everything on the Heath. Having lived on the Heath for years, Eustacia still despises both the heath and local workfolk. Eustacia cannot get along well with the people, especially his husband, Clym. Therefore, living in isolation, there is no way for Eustacia to live a happy life on the Heath (Liu, 2012). Though Eustacia's beauty is commonly acknowledged, her personality is doubted by some of the Heath people. Mrs. Yeobright thinks that Eustacia is "lazy and dissatisfied", and she even calls Eustacia a "hussy" (Hardy, 1995). She objects to Eustacia's marriage with her own son, because there is no way for Eustacia to be a good wife and make Clym happy. Mrs. Yeobright says to Clym about Eustacia before their marriage, "I have no proofs against her, unfortunately. But if she makes you a good wife, there has never been a bad one" (Hardy, 1995). Susan Nunsuch thinks "she is very strange in her ways, living up there by herself, and such things please her" (Hardy, 1995). Susan blames Eustacia for her son's death, so that she regards Eustacia as a witch. No one can live without communication in a society. Eustacia's own sense of superiority and people's misunderstanding cause her estrangement from the group of people. Moreover, Eustacia is so arrogant that she does not try to explain when there are some misunderstandings, which only make things worse.

9. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of Eustacia's tragedy, it can be concluded that, in order to get rid of the Heath, she does

something hysterically. It can be seen that this is the internal causes of her poor fate. And also the Victorian old rules confine her to chase after freedom and passionate love, which means there are lots of things that should be considered. People need to think of human consciousness through the way of regarding themselves as gifts to enable to learn how to live in a harmonious relation between our needs and the natural system around us, rather than separating us as higher species from the rest of nature. And as a human being, one can't violate the natural rules to achieve their aims. For that if individuals want to reach their goals, they need to obey the common regulation and they need to find a proper way to realize them. However, Eustacia who tries hysterically to get close to her dream just ignores the situation at that time. She has a rebellious personality and she is too stubborn to live in that world, so she is doomed to be incompatible with the society. In conclusion, it's known by present people that to live harmoniously with nature, human beings and society are extremely important. People must act in principles and pay attention to the outside world, so they can live in this world happily and realize their dreams eventually.

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