



COURSE CODE: MAEGD 204

COURSE NAME: FICTION II
(NINETEENTH CENTURY)

**CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND
ONLINE EDUCATION
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY**

MASTER OF ARTS

**ENGLISH
BLOCK II**



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MAEGD-204 : FICTION II (NINETEENTH CENTURY)

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Published by **The Director** on behalf of the Centre for Distance and Online Education, Tezpur University, Assam.

BLOCK II

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UNIT 11: READING *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

UNIT 12: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

MODULE VI: THOMAS HARDY

UNIT 13: *THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE*

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INTRODUCTION

BLOCK II

Block II of **MEG-204: Fiction II (Nineteenth Century)** will make you familiar with another two trend setting novelists of Victorian Age, Emily Bronte and Thomas Hardy. This Block is consisted of Module III and Module IV, each of which contains the detail of the works of the abovementioned authors respectively.

Module V: Emily Bronte has been designed to familiarise the reader with *Wuthering Heights* and its author Emily Bronte. *Wuthering Heights* is one of Bronte's best known and widely read novels, which is considered to be a path breaking novel much after Austen's death. Modern critics always acknowledges the novel as much ahead of its time in thinking.

Unit 11: Reading Wuthering Heights will present a detail and elaborate study of the story of the novel. Learners will be helped to understand the actions when they will go through the text more extensively. *Unit 12: Critical Analysis of the text* primarily focusses on the thematic concern of the novel by discussing themes of thwarted love and revenge, class conflict and supernatural in the novel. Also, the readers shall see how the characters engage themselves with each of these and are shaped and emerged by the considerations around them.

Module VI: Thomas Hardy will introduce you to yet another prominent luminary of English literature. A man of acute sensibility, Hardy was concerned with the impacts of the changes brought about in society and how they affected humanity in general. Though most of his novels are situated in the microcosmic fictional world of Wessex, which he created, Hardy addresses to the perennial problems dogging mankind where he is caught up in constant conflicts with his milieu.

Unit 13: The Return of the Native will acquaint with one seminal work by Hardy. The novel throws light on some of the essential part of

novel writing, particularly the setting which is palpable as a living thing, throughout the text. Also, the novel, as Ian Watt says, carries the important aspect of time. The novel begins in November and ends in November, spanning a time period of one year, within which everything changes except the landscape. A unique story set in the backdrop of the vast landscape of Egdon Heath, which is essentially a story of human relationships depicting the lives and destinies of a few characters crisscrossing each other. You will be introduced to these by means of a detail summary of the book. In ***Unit 14: Critical Analysis of the text*** the objective is to deal with *The Return of the Native* in an intensive way and to engage in a critical debate over several aspects of the novel as far as possible. In doing so we tried to explore various themes such as love, unfulfilled passion, clash of conflicting dreams and interrelationship of man and nature in the novel. The setting and the narrative technique play a pivotal role in the critical overview. Thus, special attention has been given to these aspects of the novel.

To understand any work of literature a critical and analytical capability is much desired. Reading of fiction helps you to acquire such capability and our effort is to achieve that through these carefully structured study materials.

MODULE V: EMILY BRONTE: *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

UNIT 11: READING WUTHERING HEIGHTS

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Learning Objectives
- 11.2 The Age of Emily Bronte
- 11.3 Emily Bronte: Life and Works
- 11.4 Reading the novel *Wuthering Heights*
- 11.5 Summing Up
- 11.6 Assessment Questions
- 11.7 References and Recommended Readings

11.0 INTRODUCTION

Wuthering Heights, Emily Bronte's only novel, was published in 1847 under the pseudonym "Ellis Bell". In those days writing fiction was not considered to be a woman's job and therefore, to get public response, women novelists wrote under a pseudonym. *Wuthering Heights* is considered as one of the classics of English literature, but in at the time of publication Emily's bold questions to many of the prevalent systems was not received very favourably. It was controversial because of its unusually stark depiction of mental and physical cruelty, and it challenged the strict Victorian ideals of the day regarding religious hypocrisy, morality, social classes and gender inequality. In this unit you are going to know about one of the finest stories of love and revenge, of human passion, emotion and behaviour. A detail summary of the novel will well prepare you for the next unit to understand the critical reading of the narrative.

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit will deal with one of the major figures of Victorian fiction, Emily Bronte and her only published, but famous, novel *Wuthering Heights*. After reading this unit you will be able to have:

- An overview of the Victorian age which has been reflected in the novel
- An acquaintance with Emily Bronte's life and work, the important events in her life
- A detail reading of the storyline.

11.2 THE AGE OF EMILY BRONTE

Marked by industrialization, Empire and reform, the Victorian era saw the mass movement of people from the country to the industrial pockets. This industrialisation and urbanization syndrome was accompanied with side effects such as poverty, exploitation, increasing slums, demographic changes, environmental pollution, social unrest etc. Moral debates centered on sexual codes, marriage, religious beliefs, family life made the rounds. Advancements along the line of science and industry coupled with Darwin's theory not only shook the age old beliefs of the people but also altered the prevailing views of life, divinity, humanity and creation in the later decades of the century. The stronghold of the Church was gradually crumbling in the face of the scientific advancements.

Politically it was an age where the Whigs and the Tories paved the way for the Liberals and the Conservatives. Many parliamentary debates led to the passing of several acts, chief being the act to abolish slavery passed in 1833, the act prohibiting child labour, the Factory act taking account of the workers' demand and their working conditions also passed in 1833. The Poor Law of 1834 led to the regulation of the workhouses for the poor and the unemployed. The century was a witness to the debates concerning

the condition of both the urban and the rural poor.

Although England was extending its empire throughout the globe, England was not always at peace. The disastrous Afghan campaign (1838-42) and the 1857 Indian War of Independence in India shook the foundations of the Empire.

Reading public was on a rise due to the popularity of circulation libraries, newspapers and cheap novels. The theatres remained popular and places like Covent Gardens and Drury Lane saw a change in their audiences as more members of the middle class began to acquire high cultural tastes.

“Women were apparently restricted to the home, or ‘private sphere’, while men’s field was defined as the ‘public sphere’” (Thane, 1978: 1). While it restricted women’s activities and opportunities, women nevertheless occupied public and carried on public activities. Marriage for countless women at that time meant happiness and stability. In Victorian period, women did not have their legal rights, they could not vote and had to pay workforce that appeared after the Revolution. Women, as mentioned were relegated to the domestic sphere, and were expected to clean their houses, cook and raise children. The husband controlled all the property. The rights and privileges of Victorian women were very limited for both, the single and married.

Many authors began to write about the sufferings and endurances of women in the Victorian Age. More and more novels focused heavily on traditional, typical Victorian female characters and their interactions. As to the movement for the emancipation of woman from the unjust burdens and disabilities to which the five authors made it a subject to reveal the benign qualities of woman, Hardy, Thackeray, Gaskell, Trollope and George Eliot also focused the condition of woman, besides Charles Dickens and the Brontë sisters – with a remarkable account of the social institutions of Victorian London.

11.2 EMILY BRONTE: LIFE & WORKS

Born on 1818 to the Reverend Patrick Bronte and Maria Branwell, Emily Bronte had five siblings the elder sisters Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, an elder brother, Patrick Branwell Bronte and a younger sister, Anne. The year that Anne was born the family moved to Haworth, near Bradford, Yorkshire when Emily was only two years old. The family spent the rest of their short lives at Haworth parsonage. The next year in September, Mrs Bronte died of cancer. Her sister, Elizabeth Branwell moved in with the family taking care of the household and the children. In 1821 Emily Bronte and her sisters enrolled at the infamous Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge, Lancashire, which finds a depiction in *Jane Eyre*. The two eldest sisters, Maria and Elizabeth died on May 6 and June 15, 1825 having contracted tuberculosis at school. Charlotte and Emily were withdrawn from the school on June 1. They were not allowed to return to school until they were in their teens and in the meantime continued their education at home. The year 1826 was a decisive one to ignite the literary creativity of the Bronte siblings when their father Mr Bronte brought home twelve wooden soldiers for his children. This proved a catalyst in the creation of the Brontës' juvenile fantasy worlds and writings. While Charlotte and Branwell began the "Angrian" stories and magazines, Emily and Anne were busy immortalising the "Gondal" saga.

LET US STOP AND THINK



"Angrian" stories

As teenagers and young adults, Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne Bronte wrote stories set in imaginary worlds. Glass Town, their original fictional land, was invented by the four together, though Branwell and Charlotte Bronte were the dominant players. After 1831, Charlotte and Branwell branched out into Angria, an extension of Glass Town, while Emily and Anne invented their own private world of Gondal. The manuscript written by Branwell where the mention of Angria was found is full of fragments. By putting the fragments together it was

found that those are part of a longer chronicle, entitled ‘Angria and the Angrians’, dating from 1834 to 1839.

Branwell wrote this story using the pseudonym, Captain Henry Hastings. A soldier and author, Hastings is characterised as a popular, though vain, figure who becomes a drunkard and a murderer.

(“Brontë juvenilia: The History of Angria”

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/bront-juvenilia-the-history-of-angria>)

Charlotte went to Miss Wooler’s school at Roe Head in 1831, but left seven months later to tend to her sister’s education. In 1835, however, Charlotte returned to the same school as governess, accompanied by Emily but the latter left after three months due to homesickness. In 1837, Emily became a governess at Miss Patchett’s school, near Halifax and remained there for about six months. In 1842, Charlotte and Emily travelled to Brussels to study music and foreign languages at Pensionnat Heger. However, upon the death of their aunt Elizabeth Branwell, they returned to Haworth. In 1843, Branwell joined Anne at York as a tutor to the Robinson family. Charlotte returned to Brussels and Emily was left alone at Haworth with her father; a time for her creativity and freedom. It was during her stay at Howarth that Emily began to arrange her poems in two notebooks, dividing the Gondalan from the non-Gondalan material. Charlotte discovered Emily’s poems and much against the latter’s wish convinced her to collaborate on a volume of poems. In the meantime in 1845, Emily began her project of writing *Wuthering Heights*. The next year *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* got published, but only two copies sold. Charlotte’s *The Professor*, Emily’s *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne’s *Agnes Grey* were all completed. The year 1847 saw the publication of *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* and *Agnes Grey*. Having witnessed the painful unrequited love of each of her siblings and the total, spectacular wreck of the once-brilliant Branwell, Emily caught her death at her brother’s funeral on October, 1848. Refusing to acknowledge her illness until the day

she died of tuberculosis in December 19, 1848, Emily gave substance to her sister's sense that she was not like other women. 'Stronger than a man, simpler than a child' was Charlotte's assessment of her sister, and she described the composition of *Wuthering Heights* as if it was involuntary: "the crag took human shape; and there it stands colossal, dark, and frowning, half statue, half rock"; 'whether it is right or advisable to create beings like Heathcliff, I do not know...But this I know; the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master – something that at times strangely wills and works for itself'.

LET US STOP AND THINK



Gondal Saga

Gondal is an imaginary world created by Emily and Anne Bronte. Gondal is an island in the North Pacific, just north of the island Gaaldine. It included at least four kingdoms: Gondal, Angora, Exina and Alcona. Emily's first mention of Gondal occurs in her diary paper for 24 November 1834, a series of notes written by Emily and Anne. The Gondal stories concern impulsive royalty, political intrigue, unsuccessful and abandoned love, wars, murders, and assassinations. Bronte's Gondal characters are characterized by their isolation, passions, dark crimes, and darker thoughts who are said to have been influenced by George Gordon and Lord Byron.

(<http://kleurrijkbrontesisters.blogspot.com/2012/09/the-gondal-saga.>)

11.3 READING THE NOVEL *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

An immortal creation of love, hatred and revenge Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* has a well-knit and well-constructed plot that mainly develops through three stages. The first stage ends with the sudden disappearance of Heathcliff from the Heights as he learns that Catherine whom he loved, promised to marry Linton. The second stage opens with the marriage of Catherine to Linton, moves through the return of Heathcliff after a gap of three years and Catherine's illness culminating in her death. The third stage

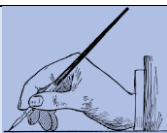
rolls through events that take place after Catherine's death, especially in the lives of the second generation characters and ends with the death of Heathcliff and the engagement of Hareton with the second Catherine. These three stages are very well interconnected, so that we imperceptibly glide from the one to the other without any sense of gap or break after each stage. The scene in each stage keeps on changing – in the first stage, the scene is exclusively set in Wuthering Heights, in the second it shifts to the Thrushcross Grange while in the third the events take place partly in both.

The First Stage

The first stage takes an interesting twist with the introduction of Heathcliff into the Earnshaw family and except for Mr. Earnshaw no one likes the gypsy boy. Both the Earnshaw children, Hindley and Catherine, have a great aversion for the boy for his dark complexion and peculiar habits and manners. With the passage of time however, Catherine's aversion for Heathcliff is replaced by her love and care. Hindley's hatred, on the other hand, keeps on growing and he not only ill-treats but beats the gypsy brat mercilessly. After the sudden death of Mr. Earnshaw, Hindley who becomes the master of Wuthering Heights, further degrades Heathcliff and neglects his sister. One night Catherine and Heathcliff, who now enjoy each other's company slip into Thrushcross Grange. Catherine who is injured being attacked by a pack of dogs is detained at the Grange and being ill remains there for several weeks getting friendly with the Linton children, Edgar and Isabella. When she returns back to her home, Edgar visits her very often. He ultimately proposes marriage to Catherine. Heathcliff, who is reduced by Hindley to the low state of a servant, views their intimacy with suspicion and grows sulky and unhappy. As Catherine promises to marry Edgar, Heathcliff disappears from Wuthering Heights one night in an inclement weather. Catherine makes a frantic effort to search him out but to no avail.

The Second Stage

The second stage begins with Heathcliff's return to Wuthering Heights after a gap of three years as a refined and rich man. His return upsets the marital bliss of Catherine and Edgar as he returns with motives of revenge. He hates both Edgar and Hindley, the former for separating him from Catherine and the latter for mistreating him. During Heathcliff's absence Hindley loses his wife and takes refuge in wine and gambling. Heathcliff encourages Hindley to pursue his evil ways, and loans him money for wine and gambling. Thus gradually he takes possession of Hindley, his property and his son, Hareton, whom he keeps illiterate and fit only for farm labour. On his regular visits to Catherine at the Grange, he keeps an eye on Edgar's sister Isabella and taking advantage of her infatuation for him, he elopes with her. Catherine, overpowered by emotions falls seriously ill and moves into a state of delirium. She gives birth to a female child and dies in the process.

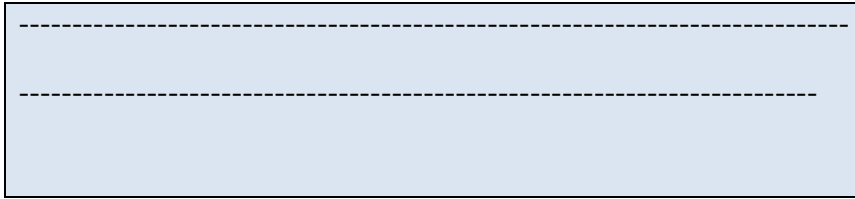


ASSESS YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is Thrushcross Grange?

2. Who is Hindley?

3. When did the second stage of the novel begin roughly?



The Third Stage

As Catherine dies giving birth to a girl child called Catherine, Isabella too dies when her son named Linton is twelve years old and the story now revolves round a set of second generation characters. Heathcliff's wrath now descends on their children, and he does all possible to ruin them. He hates not only Hindley's son and Catherine's daughter, but also his own son, because he has in his veins the blood of the Lintons, whom he hates. The third and the final part of the story present the cruelties he practices on these children. He cunningly mechanizes and designs the marriage between his frail, weak and dying son Linton and Catherine. Since Edgar has no son, his property after his death would belong to his son Linton, if he marries Catherine. And so Heathcliff applies all his cunningness to the fulfillment of this plan. Soon after the forced marriage between Linton and Catherine that Heathcliff masterminds, both Edgar Linton and the young Linton die leaving Heathcliff the master of Thrushcross Grange. Young Catherine being rendered a widow is now ill-treated and frequently beaten by her father-in-law. On the other hand, Hindley's son Hareton is virtually rendered a servant in his own house by Heathcliff. Thus having destroyed the second generation characters, Heathcliff's revenge on his enemies and their children reaches its climax. Catherine, however, is not destined to languish in widowhood for the rest of her life. So, the remaining part of the story centers round the love between Catherine and Hareton who improves in looks and manners under the influence of Catherine. Heathcliff, on the other hand, enters a shell of seclusion and private thoughts, wanders for whole nights on the moors, avoid all company and food. He does not continue

long in this state of unnatural excitement and overpowered by fatigue and fasting at last is confined to his bed and is found dead one morning. After his death, Catherine and Hareton are married.

11. 4 SUMMING UP

From the reading of this unit, we learn not only about the social and moral condition of Victorian Age, but also the reflection of that, with reference to the condition of women in one of the finest novelists of the time, Emily Bronte. The learners get a good sense of the plot, from the point of view of two narrators. Apparently, the bitter terms of the two families along with the passionate love triangle is the major content of the novel. But beneath the surface the novels tells many things that demand serious discussion. Told from two perspectives of the narrator-duo —one is the city dweller and the other is a close associate of both the families, this novel was the first of its kind where two narrators were employed to narrate the story or to present the point of view. Though the novel has some gloomy, pathetic even cruel episodes, its popularity never reduced. A reading of the complete novel will certainly enable you to learn the beauty and unique narrative technique of the novel.

In the next unit, we shall go for an in depth study of some important issues.



11.5 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. “One of Emily Bronte’s major achievements in *Wuthering Heights* is to keep alive the readers’ sympathy for both Catherin and Heathcliff.” Elucidate the statement.
2. Assess Emily Bronte as a woman novelist in the Victorian milieu.

3. Discuss the episodes in *Wuthering Heights* which reveals suspense, humour and pathos.
4. Incestuous love is very much present in *Wuthering Heights*. Show your acquaintance with this aspect of the novel.



11.6 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. (World's Classics),(ed.) Ian Jack. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. (A Norton Critical Edition),(ed.) Richard J. Dunn. Chennai: W. W. Norton and Company, 2008.

UNIT 12: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

12.0 Introduction

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Major Themes

12.3 Major Characters

12.3.1 Significance of the two houses

12.4 Style/Narrative techniques/Symbols

12.4.1 Style of *Wuthering Heights*

12.4.2 Symbolism/ Imagery

12.5 Villain in *Wuthering Heights*

12.6 Summing Up

12.7 Assessment Questions

12.8 References and Recommended Readings

12.0 INTRODUCTION

As discussed earlier, Victorian readers found *Wuthering Heights* shocking and inappropriate in its depiction of passionate, ungoverned love and cruelty, despite the fact that the novel portrays no explicit violence, and the work received little positive critical appraisal. Today, *Wuthering Heights* is placed in the canonical world literature, acknowledging Emily Bronte as one of the finest writers, irrespective of male or female, of the 19th century.

Frequently seen through the lens of Gothic tradition of the late 18th century, *Wuthering heights* has a style that features supernatural encounters, crumbling ruins, moonless nights and grotesque imagery. It constantly seeks to create the effects of misery and fear. *Wuthering Heights* transcends its genre in its sophisticated observation and artistic subtlety. The novel has been studied, analyzed, dissected, and discussed from every imaginable critical perspective, yet it remains unexhausted. While the novel's

symbolism, themes, structure, and language may all spark fertile exploration, the bulk of its popularity may rest on its unforgettable characters. As a shattering presentation of the doomed love affair between the fiercely passionate Catherine and Heathcliff, it remains one of the most haunting love stories in all of literature. In this unit you will be familiarized with all these aspects of the novel that made it one of the finest.

LET US STOP AND THINK



Gothic Novel

The word *Gothic* originally referred to a Germanic tribe called *Goth*. Later it came to signify ‘Germanic’ and then ‘medieval’.

In fiction the term came from Horace Walpole’s gothic romance *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*. Anne Redcliff’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew Gregory Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796) are few very popular novels of this genre. The setting was frequently a medieval locale with castles or catholic church, broken, untrodden by human beings for long period.

Typical theme is a young, beautiful heroine tortured by a villainous lover. Ample use of supernatural, ghosts and other atmospheric techniques to heighten the sense of horror and weirdness. Gradually the medieval settings began to disappear, and a psychological state or melodramatic setting took its place. *Wuthering Heights* is one of such example of a psychologically disturbed protagonist.

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit basically deals with the critical analyses that have been done upon the novel by various critics at different period of time. The objective of this unit is to provide some critical insights regarding the novel. After reading the unit you will be able to have an idea about:

- the major characters of the novel.
- the thematic concerns
- Emily Brontë's dexterous use of narrative techniques and symbols/motifs in the text.
- element of supernatural
- the projection of villain and the victims.

12.2 MAJOR THEMES

Love, Marriage, Money

Wuthering Heights is one of the strangest, wildest and most luridly magnificent works in the entire range of English fiction. Central to the novel are the two love triangles, that of the “children of storm”- Heathcliff, Catherine and Edgar; and that of the “children of calm”- Linton, Cathy and Hareton. Taking a chronological view of the novel, we find that the first authentic moment of tension is the introduction of the “dirty, ragged and black-haired” Heathcliff into the world of the Earnshaws. The “gypsy brat” is welcomed by none except Mr. Earnshaw and Catherine, whose fiery nature finds a responsive chord in the brooding, intense Heathcliff. The mutual passion that ignites between them is as elemental as the landscape which becomes their spiritual heaven. This relationship is further heightened by their sense of being co-sufferers, Heathcliff in terms of class and Catherine for gender. Hindley's return as master of Wuthering Heights after Mr. Earnshaw's death and his almost sadistic treatment of Heathcliff intensifies their twin sense of marginalization and draws them even closer.

The spiritual unity shared by Catherine and Heathcliff finds a suitable backdrop in the wild moorlands where their imagination could soar unshackled by the boundaries of social conventions. The moors become a sort of alternative world for them. This almost transcendental fusion between the two is

shattered by their impromptu, nocturnal visit to Thrushcross Grange. It is there that they make their first acquaintance with the Linton children – Isabella and Edgar.

Catherine is dazzled by the refinement and gentility of the Lintons and for the first time she becomes aware of the notions of class as well as socialization. Thrushcross Grange with its beauty and serenity is almost a binary opposite to the dark, disruptive world of *Wuthering Heights* which has become even more oppressive after the death of Hindley's wife Frances. Hindley's drunken violence and love for gambling and his savage treatment of Heathcliff are now augmented by Catherine's introduction to this civilized life of comfort and manners. This heralds the beginning of Heathcliff's spiritual isolation.

Catherine starts making contradictory demands about her own self which are heightened by her growing attachment to Edgar Linton. She begins to feel that an alliance with Heathcliff would not be conducive to her. She is confronted with two worlds – one which is intense, unconventional and allied to the natural extremes, of the windswept moors and doomed to poverty; the other affectionate, respectable, refined, affluent but insipid. Heathcliff is her spiritual companion while Edgar is her link to accepted society. Catherine is thus caught where she is compelled to provide sustenance to her emotional needs along with sustaining herself as a material being in society. Catherine attempts to reconcile these dual impulses by claiming that the motivating factor in marrying Edgar is not merely a comfortable life for herself but also the fact that she can aid Heathcliff to break free of Hindley's tyranny. But Heathcliff hears only a part of her damning confession to Nelly that it would “degrade” her now to marry him. That very night he disappears without a trace. As Terry Eagleton says this is “the pivotal event of the novel, the decisive catalyst of the tragedy” and if this is so, “the crux of *Wuthering Heights* is a social one.”

Heathcliff returns after three years, a tall imposing man who has acquired education and wealth by mysterious means and the peaceful tenor of Catherine's married life is irrevocably shattered by the rekindling of suppressed emotions which ultimately lead to her tormented death.

It is after Catherine's death that the latent savagery inherent in Heathcliff's character emerges. The revenge initiated by Hindley's dispossession of Heathcliff coupled with his distancing from Catherine and his calculated marriage to Isabella, continues with unabated voraciousness and depravity. It is almost as if he seeks power, money and property to enter those very classes which were the cause of his marginalization as well as his separation from Catherine. His revenge extends even to the second generation – "the children of calm" and results in the creation of an almost perverted triangle between the younger Catherine, his own son Linton and Hindley's son Hareton. At more levels than one, the second part of the novel echoes the first part but in a muted and more restrained manner. Hindley's destructive grief for his wife and Heathcliff's frenzied mourning for Catherine is offset with Hareton's "strong grief" for Heathcliff. Bronte modifies the wild emotions of the first generation by much more normal and human qualities in the second generation. The agony and ecstasy experienced by Catherine and Heathcliff cannot be felt by the younger Catherine and Hareton. In Linton, all the negative "Linton" traits like petulance, weakness inherited from Isabella exist, combined with the cruelty of his father.

The younger Catherine stands for the critique of violence engendered by patriarchy. Her resistance of Heathcliff's forceful imposition of authority, as well as her ability to give voice to her thoughts, is reminiscent of her mother. She, however, lacks the energy of the earlier Catherine. She rebels but her rebellion is within the boundaries of the accepted familial structures.

Similarly, Hareton shows shades of the young Heathcliff in his makeup. All the energy of the previous generation is concentrated in the character of Cathy and Hareton, but in a lesser degree. Through the declassing of Hareton, and the attainment of social status by Heathcliff, *Wuthering Heights* provide for role reversals of all kinds. Linton, on the other hand, is completely appropriated by Heathcliff into his diabolical designs and becomes a shadowy, pathetic and yet at times vicious character.

Cathy and Hareton are not an easy or facile recreation of Catherine and Heathcliff. They are different, perhaps lesser people, conceived on a less intense and passionate scale. It is through their burgeoning romance and impending marriage that the author is able to arrive at reconciliation across class and gender boundaries. However, the novel leaves the reader with the sense that this relationship, though tranquil, is inadequate.

Gothic Novel/Supernatural

The world of *Wuthering Heights* is a remote, exciting world and much of the novel's interest lies in its haunting quality. The very name "Wuthering" is a provincial adjective, descriptive of "atmospheric tumult" which becomes the dominant force in the world of the book; a wild, destructive force twisting the lives of everyone exposed to it. Contrary to her background, Emily Bronte presents a world of terror, excitement and tension which depends very much on the power of supernatural suggestiveness. The novel is concerned not only with life in its physical manifestations but also with something beyond the physical. There are early hints of this metaphysical existence in the novel. In Chapter I itself, we hear of fiends, magic, devil. In Chapter II, beneficent fairy, black arts, witches and ghosts and devils are mentioned. Heathcliff asserts, "I have a strong faith in ghosts, I have a conviction that they can, and do exist among us!" Such random references create an atmosphere of supernatural which pervades the novel from the beginning till the end in spite of its solid domestic setting.

In *Wuthering Heights* Emily Bronte unleashes much imaginative intensity. Her handling of ghosts, dreams and mysterious happenings is realistic. Lockwood is forced to spend a night in the forbidding house in a small room with an old-fashioned enclosed bed built against the window. On the sill are some mildewed books and he discovers a diary in a childish hand dated some twenty five years before. He falls asleep in a fitful sleep and has a terrible dream about a spectral child sobbing “let me in let me in”. He wakes up yelling from his nightmare only to confront his furious host. As Lockwood leaves the room he sees a transformed Heathcliff painfully calling “Come in! Cathy do come...” Thus a mysterious haunting excitement is generated at the beginning of the novel.

The reality of the supernatural pervades the whole novel. Its influence is experienced by many characters of the book. Nelly Dean, with her Christian upbringing, is superstitious by nature and gives voice to some of the genuine mysteries of the book. The unknown origin of Heathcliff also resembles childhood fairy tales. Mr. Earnshaw brings home “a dirty, ragged, black haired child” who wins his daughter’s heart. Nelly uses the word “diabolical” many times in connection with Heathcliff. When Heathcliff returns after an absence of three years, Nelly is uncertain whether to regard him as a worldly visitor and three itself is a fairy number. Whether he educated himself in Europe or went to America or made his fortune on the English highways is not explained and the mystery round him deepens. He becomes an enigma. Even in death, he looks “keen and fierce” and Joseph cries out “The devil’s harried off his soul”. Nelly too is convinced like the country folk that “he walks” and her words to Lockwood – “I don’t like being out in the dark now, and I don’t like being left by myself in this grim house” further intensify the mystery of Heathcliff.

There are other supernatural and diabolical elements that contribute to the supernatural atmosphere in the novel. In Chapter IX, Nelly refuses to listen to Catherine’s dream, fearing that she

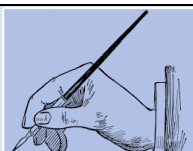
would hear “something from which I might shape a prophecy and foresee a dreadful catastrophe.” In Chapter XII, Catherine hallucinates that she is back in Wuthering Heights and imagines a face looking at her which is actually her own face reflected in the mirror. Dreams and visions thus continue throughout the novel. Even the urbane, sophisticated Lockwood comes under the spell of these supernatural events. His first meeting with Catherine’s ghost leaves an indelible impression on our minds. The child-ghost significantly says – “I’ve been a waif for twenty years”. When analyzing these words, we notice that it is twenty years since the elder Catherine is bereaved not of life but of Heathcliff. In Chapter XXIV, Heathcliff talks of how he feels in the presence of Cathy in her old room – “she was either outside the window, or sliding back the panels, or entering the room, or even resting her darling head on the same pillow.” At the end of the novel, when Heathcliff dies, there is again the mysteriously open window and Heathcliff’s hand, resting on the sill, highly reminiscent of Catherine’s ghostly hand in Lockwood’s dream in Chapter III.

Catherine also believes in the prophecy of dreams. In Chapter IX, she relates to Nelly her dream of how she was in heaven but very unhappy and the angry angels flung her out and of her unlimited joy when she found herself near Wuthering Heights. The bond between her and Heathcliff is too deep and defies all earthly restrictions. In Chapter XII she says, “They may bury me twelve feet deep, and throw the Church down over me, but I won’t rest till you are with me. I never will.” And she does haunt him “remorselessly” and “incessantly”. As Heathcliff nears his death, his communion with the dead Cathy seems to be more frequent and it causes him pleasure and pain, anguish and rapture, to catch a glimpse of Catherine and the other world.

The novel ends with the prosaic Lockwood believing that no one “could ever imagine unquiet slumbers, for the sleepers in that quiet earth”, but the whole tenor of the story suggests the possibility of Heathcliff and Catherine, happy together at last,

walking the beloved moors around Wuthering Heights in the spiritual union not allowed to them on earth.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Bronte brings to light her belief in the reality of a world beyond this world of ours. The novel is concerned with themes of love, separation, of alienation and revenge. But there is also a mystic element which overlays the incidents of the plot; the spiritual dimension is implicit in the events. Bronte's heroine does not yearn for a conventional Christian Heaven, but for oneness with the universe-one with wind and the rain, the sunlight and the stars. Both Cathy and Heathcliff fervently believe that "death, and nothing that God and Satan could inflict" can ever destroy their relationship - a view which holds its own tragic strength. *Wuthering Heights* is, as Emily Bronte's sister Charlotte describes it, is "hewn in a wild workshop" – the product of an intensely personal and uncompromising vision and reading it will always be a profound and magnificent experience.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Give at least three references of supernatural presence in the novel as experienced by the characters.

12.3 MAJOR CHARACTERS

HEATHCLIFF

Since its publication in 1847, *Wuthering Heights* has become one of the most admired and popular of all English novels.

The single-minded intensity of the characters, the forcefulness of Bronte's narrative style have captured the imagination of millions. The world of the novel is at once vividly physical and intensely spiritual and central to the drama stands the enigmatic Heathcliff – who at times is as fascinating and devilish as Milton's Satan. In following Heathcliff's strange life only we can appreciate the terror and the redeeming pity generated by this magnificent novel. Heathcliff is first introduced in the novel in chapter IV. Old Mr Earnshaw goes on a journey to Liverpool and comes back after three days to Wuthering Heights with a "dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk, yet when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand." The "gipsy brat" is welcomed by none but Mr Earnshaw and he names him Heathcliff after a son who had died in childhood and this is how in 1771, he enters into the home and family that he is to dominate and ruin. From the outset his origin is a mystery. Mr Earnshaw found him starving in the streets of Liverpool and the evening and morning following their return, Nelly consistently refers to the child as "it", as though he were animal, not human. It is only after he has been given a name does she begin to give him the dignity of human by using the personal pronouns "he" and "him".

A sullen but patient child, Heathcliff is tremendously strong in physique and passionately intense in character. Hindley hates him as an interloper but Catherine and Heathcliff become inseparable. As the years pass, their spiritual unity is intensified by their shared passion for the wild moors.

When Hindley becomes master of Wuthering Heights, he treats the adolescent Heathcliff abominably, relegating him to the position of a labourer and flogging him frequently. This constant degradation takes its toll on the body and he acquires a slouching gait and his natural reserve is exaggerated into an unsociable moroseness. He becomes a graceless young ruffian with Catherine's affection as his only sustenance. It is at this juncture

that Catherine is introduced to the refined and genteel world of the Lintons in Thrushcross Grange and her alienation from Heathcliff begins. Edgar Linton, suave and educated begins to court Catherine and she is tempted by the vision of being mistress of Thrushcross Grange. Hindley's wife dies after giving birth to her to a son, Hareton, and Hindley takes refuge in drunkenness, violence and gambling. His increasing tyranny rouses Heathcliff's implacable hatred and desire for revenge. Meanwhile, Edgar proposes to Cathy and she is confronted with a choice between him and Heathcliff. The lure of worldly advantage make Cathy accept Edgar but she feels that by doing so she is betraying Heathcliff. But she also confesses to Nelly that she loves Heathcliff—"...if I marry Linton I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother's power." Unknown to Catherine, Heathcliff hears the first part of her conversation and he leaves Wuthering Heights in rage and disgust the same night during a furious storm.

He returns after an absence of three years, a tall, imposing man who has acquired education and wealth by mysterious means and the peaceful tenor of Cathy's married life at the Grange is irrevocably shattered. He exploits Hindley's spiralling degeneracy and establishes himself at the Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff's return and altered appearance rekindles more intensely the passion between him and Cathy and he also diabolically encourages Isabella Linton's infatuation for him. His love for Catherine remains unwavering but now he is driven by his resolute desire for revenge. He elopes with Isabella and marries her since she is her brother's heiress unless Catherine bears Edgar a son and when Catherine dies after a single passionate encounter, Heathcliff remains haunted by her presence. His only reality becomes his driving obsession with thwarting the lives of the Earnshaws and the Lintons and the inhuman lengths to which he goes reveal him both as the tormented and the tormentor. He treats his bride with savage brutality and she escapes from him and he reduces Hareton

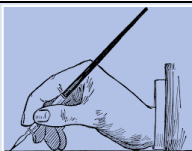
Earnshaw to an illiterate boor and assumes ownership of Wuthering Heights after Hindley's death. When Catherine's daughter Cathy is seventeen years old, Heathcliff entraps her into marrying his son Linton, a poor, puny, self-pitying fellow, to ensure his mastery over Thrushcross Grange and Cathy's personal fortune. Linton dies soon after Edgar Linton and Heathcliff is left to absolute master of both the houses and lands. Cathy and Hareton live with him in Wuthering Heights but Heathcliff's relentless campaign of hate no longer consumes him. He begins to withdraw from the world. At last he is found dead in Catherine's old bedroom and the doctor is unable to state the cause of death. He leaves Wuthering Heights as he came-an enigma.

The character of Heathcliff arouses mixed and strong responses in the readers. The focal point of his life is his soaring, consuming, profound passion for Catherine, a need which is being denied becomes selfish and distinctive. Emily Bronte is concerned less with individual emotions of her hero than with his despair at the limitations of the world and his struggle to break through these confines. In Catherine, but more in the enigmatic and relentless Heathcliff, she exposes the basic human drives with none of the shams and cloak of civilization. Their passion is as savage and elemental as the landscape that is their spiritual home. Their relationship is set among the rocky crags, ravaged by stormy elements, away from "the stir of society" and the norms of civilized behaviour. It is a relationship that has extreme physical and sexual force as well as spiritual intensity. They are incomplete as separate beings. As an adolescent, Cathy tells Nelly-"I am Heathcliff" and Heathcliff cries when Cathy dies- "I cannot live without my soul". And his only real desire is for a union with her beyond her grave.

For all her wildness and unconventional ways, Catherine is firmly rooted in the human sphere. But in creating Heathcliff, Bronte provides no parallel base. His beginnings are mysterious,

his movements cloaked in mystery. Early on, Nelly imagines he may be a prince. Later, she suggests a more sinister lineage – “Is he a ghoul, or a vampire?” Isabella Linton also asks - “Is Mr Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?” But just as Isabella finds him an irresistible figure, despite his savage and cruel nature, so have generations of readers. Physically too, Heathcliff displays the features often attributed to the devil-black eyes, dark skin. The motif of darkness is constantly used in reference to him. His eyes are “couple of black fiends”, “clouded windows of hell”.

Heathcliff embodies all his creator’s brooding, romantic imagination-he is dangerous and fiendish, but he is also charismatic and passionate. His cruelty, his violence, his destruction of Hindley, his vendetta against the Lintons, his deliberate wickedness towards both his son and Hareton invites the reader to condemn him. But by showing him as a child – abandoned, saved only to be abandoned again. ill-treated and humiliated, yet proud and intensely loyal to Catherine , he arouses our sympathy. Through him Bronte also reveals her scorn for easy moralizing. When Heathcliff sits brooding how to get his revenge on Hindley, Nelly admonishes him-“It is for God to punish wicked people; we should learn to forgive.” Heathcliff retorts honestly – “No, God won’t have the satisfaction that I shall.” Relentless and sadistic, Heathcliff still remains a fascinating study.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Find out at least two features each in favour and against Heathcliff’s character.

2. What, according to you, is the primary reason of Heathcliff's cruelty in the later stage of the novel?

CATHERINE

“A haughty, headstrong creature, passionate and wilful”- this is how Catherine Earnshaw is presented in the novel *Wuthering Heights*. The younger child of the Earnshaw family of Wuthering Heights, Catherine certainly does not fit into the mould of a conventional Victorian heroine. Nelly Dean describes her as a “wild , wicked slip” with the “bonniest eye and sweetest smile.” We first meet Catherine as a six year old when Mr. Earnshaw asks her what she wants him to bring back for her from Liverpool, she chooses a whip for “she could ride any horse in the stable”. When her father returns home with the foundling Heathcliff and without her or Hindley's presents, Catherine grins and spits at the strange little orphan while Hindley, much older, “blubbers aloud”. As a child, Catherine is self-willed, high spirited and mercurial in temperament – the despair of her father and the servants. But she forges a close bond with Heathcliff almost immediately. Her tempestuous nature strikes a responsive chord in the even darker and more intense Heathcliff. The passion that ignites between them

is as savage and elemental as the landscape which becomes their spiritual home. When Mr Earnshaw dies and Hindley returns as master of Wuthering heights, the adolescent Catherine and Heathcliff draw closer. Their spiritual unity is characterized by their shared passion for the wild moors. When Heathcliff's education is stopped by Hindley and he is deliberately degraded and punished, Catherine becomes his sole emotional prop. One night, while wandering in the grounds of nearby Thrushcross Grange, Catherine is attacked by a guard dog and is kept back at the Thrushcross Grange to recover. This sojourn leads to her befriending the two Linton children – Edgar and Isabella and her introduction to a civilized life of comfort and manners. From this time onwards Heathcliff's spiritual isolation also begins.

Meanwhile, Edgar Linton's admiration for Catherine turns to love and she is confronted with a choice of life with him and Heathcliff. She is caught between two worlds-the one intense, unconventional and allied to the natural extremes of the windswept moors and doomed to poverty; the other affectionate, respectable, refined, affluent but insipid. The lure of worldly advantages attracts Catherine although she knows that she is betraying her own soul in accepting Edgar – “In my soul and in my heart, I'm convinced I'm wrong.” And she confesses to Nelly that although she loves Heathcliff, it would degrade her to marry him now. Heathcliff hears these damning words and that night, during a furious storm he disappears from Wuthering Heights. He does not remain to hear Catherine's passionate declaration-“I am Heathcliff,”

Catherine continues to see Edgar in spite of her grief over the loss of her soul mate and three years later, the couple marry. The adult Catherine loses her spontaneous goodness and even becomes arrogant and Nelly Dean once confesses that she “did not like her, after her infancy was past.” Life at Thrushcross Grange revolves round her with both Edgar and Isabella humouring her every whim and fancy till Heathcliff returns to disrupt the even

tenor of the Lintons' married life. His return and altered appearance and fortunes rekindles more intensely than before the passion between him and Catherine. Her waywardness surfaces and Edgar's emotions cannot match hers in intensity and perversely she expects him to be as delighted as she is at Heathcliff's return. As the discord manifests between Edgar and Heathcliff, Catherine runs into a rage and inflicts on her body the most rigorous punishments. The pressures placed upon her by her divided soul are too great. She is also pregnant and her physical as well as psychological states suffer a complete breakdown. She recovers from the terrible illness and although she already rejects her husband – "I don't want you Edgar; I'm past wanting you", she nevertheless expects him to go on loving her devotedly. Like all selfish people Catherine always places herself at the centre of her own universe. "How strange!" she remarks to Nelly once before her illness. "I thought though everybody hated and despised each other, they could not avoid loving me." Essentially childlike and capricious, Catherine in her troubled womanhood yearns for the childhood happiness she knew with Heathcliff – "I wish I were out of doors – I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free."

Her illness leaves Cathy ravaged and wasted and the mentally impaired Heathcliff visits her once again before she dies. Compared to the elemental passion they share, Edgar's love for Cathy does appear to be "paltry" and insipid Catherine sheds the shams and cloaks of civilization and exposes the basic human drives when she lashes at Heathcliff with her harsh words – "You have killed me and thriven on it – I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn't you suffer? I do!" Heathcliff too is remorseless and ruthless, brutally analysing what she has done. Catherine dies after giving birth to a daughter but her suffering continues as we are made aware by the presence of her ghost. The mystic side of her personality is reinforced at her death and we are uneasily conscious of her presence, at least to Heathcliff,

throughout the rest of the novel. It is only with his death that their love finally achieves a strange, savage fulfilment.

In Catherine, wild and passionate, Emily Bronte presents an unusual heroine trying to break through the confines and limitations of the conventional world. Both Catherine and Heathcliff act like the natural forces they feel an affinity to. Catherine belongs neither to Wuthering Heights nor to Thrushcross Grange but to the wild, craggy moors. She once told Nelly her love for the moors. She dreamt that she was in heaven and “I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth and the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the hearth on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy.” Emily too dreaded death if it meant total separation from the earth – “We would not leave our native home...For any world beyond the tomb!” Catherine and her creator are again alike in that both did not yearn for a Conventional Christian Heaven, but for oneness with the Universe- one with the wind and the rain, the sunlight and the stars.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What, as per of your study of the character of Catherine, makes her a non-Victorian heroine?

2. Differentiate in one or two sentences the personality of Catherine senior and Catherine junior.

12.3.1 The Significance of the Two Houses in Wuthering Heights

“The pale tough grass and dun heather, the tumbling becks and black rock of the wild, windswept moors” – this is the savage and elemental Yorkshire landscape which provides the background and setting for Emily Bronte’s novel ***Wuthering Heights***. Placed in this remote scene are the two houses - Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange and the enclosed world of the novel centres on these two houses and the two families. There has been an Earnshaw at Wuthering Heights since 1500 and Lintons in Thrushcross Grange probably as well. But there is little intercourse between the two families and scarcely any with the outside world. The nearby village of Gimmerton figures in the novel only to supply the servants and the Curate who teaches the children; Dr Kenneth who ministers to the families at times of sickness and Mr Green, the lawyer who looks after their legal affairs. The rest of the world has no role to play in the passionate drama that involves the two houses.

The novel begins in Thrushcross Grange where Mr Lockwood, the tenant, writes his journal about the subject of his thoughts in Wuthering Heights. Thus the two houses are interlinked from the very beginning. Emily Bronte’s geographical setting is narrow and precise. Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights are four miles apart but the mental distancing between the

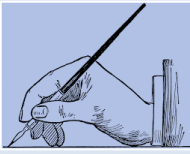
two houses is enormous. In the first chapter Mr Lockwood gives a vivid description of Wuthering Heights as it appears to him in the November of 1801. He pays a visit to his landlord and finds the grounds neglected. The chained gate signifies a lack of welcome and the house itself appears fortress-like with “narrow windows” and “corners defended with large jutting stones.” “Wuthering is a significant provincial adjective which describe the strong north wind sweeping over the house.” But the house is stoutly built of stone and well capable of keeping wind and rain at bay. Lockwood is not given a chance to study the frivolous aspects of the architecture-“crumbling griffins, and shameless little boys” but he notices the name “Hareton Earnshaw” and the date 1500 as he is ushered into the house. His host Heathcliff is dour and sullen like the unwelcoming exterior of the house. In spite of the bright and cheerful family room with its pewter and silver dishes and jugs and the fire, Lockwood senses a kind of brooding tension hanging like a pall over the house. In the time of Mr Earnshaw, the house was primitive and functional, a typical northern farm house. During this time Wuthering Heights was cared for, mainly by Nelly Dean as the house keeper, firmly rooted in local tradition and local custom. When Catherine and Edgar marry and Nelly accompanies them to Thrushcross Grange, Wuthering Heights deteriorates with only the depraved Hindley, Joseph and baby Hareton as its inmates. It never possessed any civilised adornments of existence and when Heathcliff returns to usurp the Earnshaw heritage, the gaunt house becomes a suitable background for the life of bleak and primitive passion which is characteristic of its new owner.

Thrushcross Grange is as much the home of human emotions as is Wuthering Heights but the emotions displayed here are emasculated, petty jealousy and sheer spite taking place of the elemental passions of love and hate so robustly expressed in the more primitive house. Beneath the surface of gentility, moral flaws lurk- like selfishness, insensitivity and even cruelty. When

Heathcliff looks through the illuminated windows of the Grange and sees the two Linton children squabbling over a lapdog, he feels the contempt of a fiery primitive soul, in whom the fundamental passions and energies are intensely alive. They, in turn, regard him as “worse than a brute”. When Heathcliff returns after his prolonged absence and Catherine wants to bring him up into the parlour, Edgar snootily suggests “the kitchen is a more suitable place for him.”

The graciousness of the Grange as a residence is later, corroborated by Nelly. It has a parlour and library and a large staff comprising of maids, coachman and two gardeners. Catherine has a feather pillow and a large mirror in her room. Nelly looks forward to leaving Wuthering Heights – “this grim house”, and going back to Thrushcross Grange at the end.

Throughout the novel *Wuthering Heights* is seen as a seat of unbridled emotions and passions and a place of general and abundance. Food is always plentiful and comforting fires brighten the grate. Life at Thrushcross Grange, on the other hand, is cold and inhibited, as Cathy says of its master that his veins are “full of ice-water”. It is significant that in the first generation, the tempestuous characters belong to Wuthering Heights. Edgar may love Catherine but his emotions cannot match her in intensity. If in the second generation, the distinctions become blurred, it is because Cathy, Linton and Hareton combine the equalities of both their parents. They are heirs of both houses, Cathy first marries Linton and then Hareton- that is Heathcliff’s natural and spiritual heirs. With Linton she moves from Thrushcross Grange to Wuthering Heights; with Hareton she is about to move from Wuthering Heights to Thrushcross Grange. Thus, the intricate pattern of relationships that blossomed in the two houses, is at last perfected and the two houses revert jointly and rightly to the heirs of both the families.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Mention two characteristic features of Wuthering Heights.

2. Mention two specialties of Thrushcross Grange.

12.4 STYLE/NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

12.4.1 *The Style of Wuthering Heights*

In those [introductory] chapters, Lockwood, the diarist, is facing the immediate present, is barging into it, to use a vulgar expression, but one which happens to fit the way he behaves on his visits to the farm. He cannot see ahead; there is no time dimension to reckon with in describing his experience; all that he is concerned to convey to the reader is what is taking place where, at the moment, he is. But in the main part of the book, the present is

behind Lockwood; he is looking the other way, under Mrs Dean's guidance, across and through a long period of years. It is not enough that he should see past scenes vividly; his attention must also be guided to crucial, determining events. The seizure of these, the emphasis placed on their relationship to each other, and on the links between them, is the equivalent, in a survey of the past, of the accent upon movement which, in the description of a scene, is essential to make it vivid. Crucial events, in short, may be regarded as the hinges of action in a story, and cogency and stress upon these are the incisive tools with which a writer must work, if the story is to be dramatically told.

12.4.2 Symbolism/ Imagery

Wuthering Heights remains a unique work of art, perhaps because its author was an individualistic who spurned the easy road of convention. She never wanted to write the typical Victorian novel with its study of normal men and women in the ordinary pursuit of life. She chose as her theme the psychological study of an elemental man whose soul was torn between love and hate and the background for her volatile protagonists are the wild moorlands of Yorkshire. To exalt the power and force of human feelings, Bronte uses an imagery rooted in the fierce life of animals and in the relentless life of the elements – fire, wind, water. The title itself, we are told is “a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of atmospheric tumult....” Lockwood's first impressions of the house is bleak, buffeting the onslaught of the strong north wind, with “a few stunted firs” and “gaunt thorns” surrounding it. The application of landscape to character continues throughout the novel.

Critics have likened Bronte's use of natural imagery in Wordsworth's affinity to nature. Wordsworth used the pastoral to emphasize the spontaneity as well as authenticity of one's emotions and created an idyllic world of nature itself. This alternative world, than implicit critique of city life, became the

objective of all great Romantics. Bronte's wild and windswept moors do not provide an El Dorado but they provide a proper setting for tumultuous passions and also expose the trivialities and inadequacies rampant in human society. The moors where Catherine and Heathcliff find solace are as elemental as themselves and free from all human bondage.

The world of *Wuthering Heights* is dark and full of disruptive energy. This wildness and savagery is immortalized through brilliant imagery. Human conditions are like the activities of the surrounding landscape where rains flood, blasts wail, the snow and wind whistle wildly. Edgar's soul is different from Heathcliff's "as a moon beam from lightning, or frost from fire". Heathcliff's "face and hands was dismally beclouded" with dirt. Later, his face "brightened for a moment, then it was overcast afresh." Darkness and gloom, clouds, shadows and sunshine constantly recur to exhibit mental states. From childhood, Heathcliff is relegated to the kitchen, near the fire. The image of the fire is used to show the stirrings of a passion

The four important Elements found in the nature are Air, Earth, Water and Fire. Can you name characters symbolically representing each in *Wuthering Heights*?

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

in him who is fiery and uncontrolled. Catherine too is fiery. Her eyes "flash". To Heathcliff, the open moorlands provide an alternative to his cloistered existence in *Wuthering Heights*. It is a habitat where his social tensions find an outlet and his dilemmas are resolved. The metaphor of earth is interestingly few. Twice Heathcliff is likened to "an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone." There is a reference to his "flinty gratification". Then there is Catherine's impassioned assertion – "My love for Heathcliff is like the eternal rocks beneath."

Bronte uses the imagery of animals, devils and ghosts frequently. Heathcliff constantly arouses fear. Isabella wonders at

his brutality – “Is Mr Heathcliff a man?...If not is he a devil?” Nelly Dean too often doubts his human origin. He is also compared to wild animals “an evil beast”, “wolfish man”, “ferocious gaze”, “basilisk eyes”. Darkness is a metaphor associated with Heathcliff from the beginning of the novel. When Mr Earnshaw brings him home, he comments “it’s as dark almost as if it came from the devil” and just before he dies Nelly asks – “Is he a ghoul, or a vampire?”

Edgar Linton on the other hand, is associated with gentler animals. Heathcliff insults him again and again by calling him a “sucking leveret”.

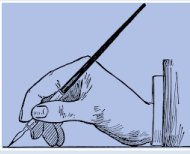
The supernatural is symbolically exploited by Bronte in *Wuthering Heights*. She begins in the very first chapters and the climax is reached in Lockwood’s dreams and Catherine’s delirium. In his first dream Lockwood indirectly makes a comment on the sadism and tyranny associated with religion. But in his second dream, he himself becomes a sadist where he willfully rubs the spectral Catherine’s hand across the broken window pane to protect himself. He hereby shows that beneath the veneer of urbane cordiality there is an inherent streak of violence in every man. In Catherine’s fever-induced delirium, she tries to recapture her childhood – “I wish I were a girl again...savage and hardy and free” suggesting that the superficial appeal that life in Thrushcross Grange had held for her was now gone.

The window image is a recurring one in *Wuthering Heights*. It serves as a key to an inexplicable, mysterious world which the inmates long for. As Dorothy Van Ghent says in her essay “The Window Image in *Wuthering Heights*”: “The window pane is the medium, treacherously transparent, separating the “inside” from the “outside”, the “human” from the “alien” and the terrible “other” ”. Throughout the novel, windows serve as separators in Thrushcross Grange as well as in *Wuthering Heights*. The world of *Wuthering Heights* is essentially one of contrasts. Heathcliff suffers abominably in Hindley’s hands but this is offset

by moments of perfect rapport he shares with Catherine and the mutual passion for the moors. His untrammelled passion is again contrasted to the ceremonial love of Edgar Linton. The natural laws which govern Catherine and Heathcliff are again set against the pious chant of old Joseph and the social moralising of Nelly Dean. The greatest contrast is however presented between the gaunt, lonely farmhouse - Wuthering Heights, which is the binary opposite of Thrushcross Grange which with its parlour, library represents gracious living, warmth and comfort. In Wuthering Heights domestic life is basic and bleak whereas Thrushcross Grange with red carpets and crystal chandeliers represent refinement and gentility. The inmates of Thrushcross Grange are simple, urbane and uncomplicated while those of Wuthering Heights are complex, elemental and even savage at times. They therefore empathize more with the untamed world outside than does the conservative Edgar or Isabella. To Heathcliff and Catherine the moors become a symbol of an alternative space removed from societal pressures.

Heathcliff remains a symbol of rebellion. He caters the world of landed gentry, brutalizes it and denigrates all the institutions held sacrosanct. His defiance goes beyond the framework of rational thought and action, and at times, acquires an almost other-worldly dimension. However, his demoniac energy finally destroys him and he dies arriving at the realization that social power is a means not an end. His aim is to be united with Catherine and this he finally achieves only on a spiritual level. It remained impossible in the material world.

The novel's symbols and imagery thus can be read both at a social and a metaphysical level. Bronte uses nature, the physical world, the supernatural to establish the importance of love and emotions in the context of society and to illuminate the characters. Her metaphors colours her diction. Through wonderful use of imagery and symbols Emily Bronte brings about an ultimate cohesion between the ideal and the approximate.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What does Wuthering Heights symbolically stand for?

2. Give Example of two important 'nature imagery' used the novel.

3. What image of nature is used by the narrator to describe Edgar's goodness?

4. Give two examples from the novel where 'earth' is used metaphor.

12.5 VILLAIN IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS

No doubt that *Wuthering Heights* is a passionate love story of two immortal souls: Catherine and Heathcliff. But, in this love story the lovers are unable to unite with each other as it concludes at a tragic point. In every tragic love story there is someone or something which may be held responsible for the unfortunate ending. Here too, there is someone who might be responsible for the separation of the two love birds, in other words the presence of “the villain”. The fact is quite disputed that Mrs. Ellen Dean, also known as Nelly, is the villain in *Wuthering Heights*. Charlotte Bronte, another prominent Victorian author remarks that Nelly is “a specimen of true benevolence and homely fidelity”. Another critic V.S Pritchett opines that Nelly’s villainy was the turning point of the story. He adds that “she is an obdurate architect of the tragedy, for if she had told Catherine that Heathcliff was listening, the great confession scene... the novel would not have had its tragic climax.” Nelly is a woman who always liked to identify herself with the Lintons, as in Chapter IV she informs Lockwood that “Hareton is the last of them (the Earnshaws), as our Miss Cathy is of us — I mean, of the Lintons.” Nelly’s having dinner and playing with the Earnshaws best exemplifies her ambitiousness. Moreover, like other Earnshaw children, Nelly also refers to Heathcliff as ‘it’: “Mr Earnshaw told me to wash it, and give it clean things; and give it clean things; and let it sleep with the children”. (Chapter IV). It seems that Nelly considered Heathcliff as a threat and possibly that is what causes her villainy.

It is clear that Nelly does not like Heathcliff, so her cold treatment towards him gets illuminated in the incident when Hindley beats Heathcliff with an iron weight. Narrating this to Lockwood she confesses, “...had I not prevented it, he would have gone just so to the master, and got full revenge by letting his

condition plead for him, intimating who had caused it. ... I persuaded him easily to let me lay the blame of his bruises on the horse: he minded little what tale was told since he had what he wanted.” This best shows Nelly’s hatred for the gypsy brat. Nelly is so much into the family that she almost turns against Hindley, the new master and owner of the house after Mr. Earnshaw’s death, when he orders both Nelly and Joseph to leave the house for the family.

Since Nelly is the primary narrator of the story, so there is a possibility that she may manipulate her narration — what and how to narrate to the outsider. She places herself at an innocent spot and blames herself when it seems easy to earn sympathy. Very cunningly she makes herself silent at some crucial points.

In Chapter VII Nelly changes her attitude towards Cathy after she returns from Thrushcross Grange. Prior to this Nelly used to complain about the childish habits of Cathy, but seeing her transformation she treats her very well. Another revelation of her ambitious desires occurs through her telling to Heathcliff, “Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth.” Here it seems that Nelly’s thinking is like Miriam of *Sons and Lovers*, who frames or builds a romantic past for herself. Lockwood himself remarks that Nelly has “no marks of the manners which I am habituated to consider peculiar to your class.”

Nelly’s true nature appears clearly in the confession scene in Chapter IX when Cathy reveals before Nelly that she loves Heathcliff but “It would degrade [her] to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how [she loves] him; and that, not because he’s handsome, Nelly, but because he’s more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same;” Ellen first of all lies to Cathy that Heathcliff has gone to the barn whereas she is aware of his presence over there and later witnesses him leaving the house after overhearing the conversation. She,

perhaps to defend herself, informs Cathy about his departure but only to cause her serious illness. Ellen could see her profit from Edgar-Cathy union and how much it is useful for her ambition leading to her sudden alteration of treatment towards Edgar Linton. First as mere “a servant” she finally reaches to become his “housekeeper”. Ellen’s intention is quite clear to the readers when she states that it is Cathy’s “lamenting” followed by consistent orders of the Earnshaws that compels her to leave Wuthering Heights for Thrushcross Grange. It seems as if she covers her ambitions under those words. At Thrushcross Grange she fuels the hatred of Edgar for Heathcliff. His gradual disliking for the later often makes Ellen delightful whereas the same affects Cathy badly.

Chapter XII is very crucial in showing Nelly’s villainy because here she willingly hides Cathy’s illness from Edgar. She even creates a misunderstanding between the couple. Edgar is responsive to Cathy’s ill health, but Mrs. Dean projects him in front of Cathy like, “He’s tolerably well, I think, though his studies occupy him rather more than they ought; he is continuously among his books, since he has no other society.” Ellen even neglects the doctor’s advice that Cathy’s condition “should not be crossed.” Although later Edgar manages to discover the real condition of Cathy, but it’s too late — “you encouraged me to harass her. And not to give me one hint of how she has been these three days! It was heartless!” Amidst her delirium, Cathy is able to see the evil in Nelly, “I see in you, Nelly... an aged woman... you have helped to unsettle me Ah! Nelly has played traitor...Nelly is my hidden enemy. You witch.” It is very doubtful that Nelly informed Heathcliff about Catherine’s illness but not Edgar who is right there under the same roof. When Catherine faints and is about to collapse, Nelly thinks in her mind, “She’s fainted, or died, so much the better. Far better that she should be dead than lingering a burden and a misery maker to all about her.” These lines themselves speak for Nelly’s true intention.

After Catherine's death, Nelly becomes almost all in all at the Thrushcross Grange, since everything seems to be under control. She even tries to overpower Isabella and thus commands her as a mistress, "Have done! How dare you to show your giddiness here?" Nelly's confession is even more awful than that of Catherine. Her delight over Heathcliff's misery, "I couldn't miss the chance of sticking in a dart: his weakness was the only time when I could taste the delight of paying wrong for wrong."

Gradually, Nelly tries to manipulate each and every member of the house, even the master Edgar. Nelly advises him to dismiss Joseph who has come to take Linton Heathcliff. Cathy's visits Wuthering Heights without Nelly. Afterwards she explains Edgar without any mention of the conversation between Cathy and Hareton or any mention of Hareton. She also assures her master Edgar not to worry about his daughter and that she will be there for her. "I'll stand her friend and counsellor to the last." (Chapter XXV)

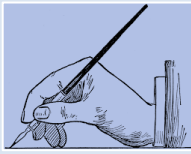
On their next visit to the Wuthering Heights Nelly insists Isabella to stay till Linton wakes up, whereas Isabella wants to leave, "we must not leave him asleep... wait till he wakes, and be patient." (Chapter XXVI). James Hafley in his essay "Nineteenth-Century Fiction" states that Nelly acts like a traitor to young Cathy, as it is Nelly herself who has arranged for Cathy's riding out beyond Thrushcross Grange. Nelly also convinces Cathy to accompany Heathcliff and his son to the Heights: "however I disapproved, I couldn't hinder her: indeed how could she have refused him herself?" which leads to their subsequent imprisonment at the Heights. When the servants come from Thrushcross Grange asking about the two ladies, Nelly could easily have called for help from them, but she doesn't do anything like that, instead she passed the night by sitting at a rocking chair and "passing harsh judgements on [her] many derelictions of duty;"

After coming back to Thrushcross Grange Nelly lies to Edgar, who is on his death-bed, “I said Heathcliff forced me to go in: which was not quite true.” (Chapter XXVIII) and thus she saves both Linton Heathcliff and his tyrannical father. In a way she makes herself comfortable so that she doesn’t have to face Edgar’s interrogations.

After Heathcliff’s death, when Lockwood once again visits the Heights, he learns that Nelly by now is the housekeeper there and that she has a command over many members there, like Joseph, Cathy — “she has not learnt to manage her affairs yet, and I act for her: there’s nobody else” and Hareton — with whom Nelly wants Cathy to get married to. Nelly, undoubtedly, encourages the friendship between both and states, “I did not notice how time got on. You know, they both appeared in a measure my children.” (Chapter XXXIII)

It can be summed up with that Mrs. Ellen Dean or simply Nelly could be seen as a mother figure since she has witnessed the childhood of almost every child of Wuthering Heights. She even witnessed the Earnshaw children for quite a period of time. She has been there for both the families. There can’t be any question regarding her efforts for her masters, wherever she stays. Nelly, undoubtedly, is an impressive character of the novel. It seems as if she functions as a controlling force of the action of the novel. The judgement of her character is purely based on a few decisions that she has made in the course of the novel. She has a caring and loving nature and has been sympathetic towards the people of the houses, but behind all that she has her own intentions and ambitions. The fact is that the mistakes committed on her part eventually led to the misfortune of other people. For example: Nelly’s hiding about Heathcliff’s presence nearby proves to be a turning point in the story and hence it changes everything. Again, her negligence in informing Edgar about the seriousness of Cathy’s

illness is definitely a blunder on her part. And those mistakes of Nelly project her as “the villain” of the story.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Give two examples that help in projecting Mrs. Ellen Dean (Nelly) as one of the prime villains of the novel.

12.6 SUMMING UP

Wuthering Heights is the only novel by Emily Bronte and that single work owns her so much fame and reputation. As a nineteenth century author she thought to such an extent that it seems quite shocking for the contemporary readers. The knitting of the plot with so many dramatic situations arouses the feelings of pity, awe, suspense — all at the same time. The second part of the story is equally interesting as the first part. The former shows the eternal love of Cathy and Heathcliff, from the first generation and the latter narrates the stories of young Cathy, Linton and Hareton, from the next generation. The author does not allow the readers’ interest to go down even for a single moment. Although at times this novel gets criticized for its brutality and the worst form of humanity, but it can be seen as a part of the story.



12.7 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. “Heathcliff fails as a man as catastrophically as he succeeds as a demon.” G. K. Chesterton. Discuss Heathcliff’s character in the light of this comment.
2. Attempt a character sketch of Edgar Linton contrasting it with Heathcliff’s character.
3. Discuss the appropriateness of the title *Wuthering Heights*.
4. Examine *Wuthering Heights* from the structural point of view.
5. Attempt a character sketch of Catherine Earnshaw.
6. Write a note on the narrative technique and the use of time in *Wuthering Heights*.
7. Comment on Emily Bronte’s linguistic style and extensive use of symbolism and imagery in the novel.
8. “In *Wuthering Heights* Emily Bronte presents a world of supernatural passions and supernatural happenings”. Discuss.
9. Write a note on the atmosphere of cruelty and suffering in *Wuthering Heights*.



12.8 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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MODULE VI: THOMAS HARDY'S *THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE*

UNIT 13: THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Learning Objectives
- 13.2 Thomas Hardy: Life and Works
- 13.3 Brief synopsis of *The Return of The Native*
- 13.4 Critical Reception
- 13.5 Summing up
- 13.6 Assessment Questions
- 13.7 References and Recommended Readings

13.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent luminaries of English literature Thomas Hardy was born in 1840 when Queen Victoria was still reigning. Hardy witnessed, as Geoffrey Harvey notes, “many revolutionary social and intellectual changes that are refracted in complex ways in his writing” until his death in 1928, almost a decade after the First World War. A man of an acute sensibility, Hardy was concerned with the impacts those changes brought about in society and how they affected humanity in general. Though most of his novels are situated in the microcosmic fictional world of Wessex, which he created, Hardy addresses to the perennial problems dogging mankind where he is caught up in constant conflicts with his milieu. In a similar vein, Hardy’s sixth published novel, *The Return of the Native*, set in the backdrop of the vast landscape of Egdon Heath, is essentially a story of human relationships depicting the lives and destinies of a few characters crisscrossing each other.

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As a novel *The Return of the Native*, explores the themes of love, unfulfilled passion, clash of conflicting dreams and interrelationship of man and nature. The purpose of this Unit is to offer a basic overview of the life and works of Thomas Hardy and introduce the readers to the novel, thereby performing a basic spadework for a detailed analysis of the novel in the next unit.

After reading this unit you will be able to know

- detailed account of Thomas Hardy as a man and as an artist and the explore the Victorian context in terms of situating the novel
- a brief discussion of Hardy's works
- a brief summary of the story of the novel
- a summarized account of the critical reception of the novel

13.2 LIFE AND WORKS

LIFE

Thomas Hardy was born on 2nd June 1840, in a tiny hamlet of Higher Bockhampton close to Dorchester, England. His father, Thomas Hardy Sr. was a small-scale stonemason and a musical man who played violin among other instruments. Hardy's mother, Jemima was an educated farmer's daughter who had refined tastes in music and literature. Thomas Hardy was born just after five months of his parent's marriage as a fragile child making them suspect him as a premature baby doomed to die. The local midwife, Lizzy, however took great care of the infant and revived him to health. Thomas Hardy had three siblings, Mary, to whom he was particularly close, Henry and Katherine. The sisters later entered teaching profession while Henry went into building trade.

Thomas Hardy had a natural knack for both music and literature, a direct influence from his parents. Hardy's biographer, Robert Gittings says: 'His father's enjoyment of nature was matched by his mother's extraordinary store of local legend and story. Together they filled Hardy's world with landscape and human dealing, the special blend that was to mark his poems and novels'. Initially he went to the village school at Bockhampton but gradually moved over to Issac Last's Academy in Dorchester where his natural talents were nurtured under proper tutelage and he turned out to be quite an outstanding student with considerable command over Latin, French and advanced mathematics. He, however couldn't pursue academics anymore and joined as an apprentice under John Hicks, an architect and a family friend of the Hardys. There he befriended Horace Moule, a well-educated man who acted as a guide to Hardy and introduced him to literary criticism and liberal theology. Hardy moved to London enrolling there as a student at King's College in 1862. He stayed there for five years till 1867 but gradually grew miserable and returned back to Dorchester as he found the city and its ambience not as agreeable as he wanted it to be. Settling there as an architect, working occasionally for his previous employer Hicks, Hardy began his writing career. On March 1870, Hardy went down to Cornwall on a professional tour where he met an elderly clergyman, Reverend Caddell Holder, his young wife and her sister, Emma Gifford. Hardy and Emma, almost of the same age got attracted to each other and fell in love, though they went on to marry four years later in 1874. Emma was quite encouraging of Hardy's literary career and supported him in more ways than one, though their marital life remained strained throughout. Intellectual and class difference drew them apart gradually. In the later years of their marriage, Emma, estranged and unhappy, moved up to the attic at Max Gate, the house Hardy had designed and built in Dorchester in the 1880s. Though they were domestically estranged

Emma's death in 1912 came as an intense shock to Hardy. To rekindle the memories of their courtship Hardy went to Cornwall and wrote several poems. In the meanwhile (circa 1906) Hardy met a young intelligent woman by the name of Florence Emily Dugdale who was nearly forty years younger to him. In February 1914, Hardy married Florence who was then working as Hardy's secretary. Hardy enjoyed a quiet life with Florence thereafter entertaining admirers, literary figures and guests at his house. On 11th January 1928, at the age of eighty seven, Thomas Hardy breathed his last. His funeral caused much controversy regarding where it should be held. Finally it was decided that his heart was to lie buried in Stinsford as wished by his family and friends while his ashes was to lie buried in Westminster Abbey's famous Poet's Corner, next to Charles Dickens.

WORKS:

Thomas Hardy began his career as a novelist in the autumn of 1867 with *The Poor Man and the Lady* making Will Strong its protagonist and structuring the novel as a satire. The novel however failed to find a publisher and ultimately made way to oblivion. Hardy's next novel was *Desperate Remedies* which was published anonymously in 1871 depicting the story of a young woman named Cytheria Graye. Hardy's second novel *Under the Greenwood Tree*, also published anonymously, deals with a group of Mellstock musicians. Hardy here paves a path for the creation of his fictional landscape Wessex with its rural idyllic beauty and makes the rustics take the centre stage of the novel. In 1873, Hardy's third novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* bearing his own name was published after being serialized in *Tinsley's Magazine* between September 1872 and July 1873. Its hero Stephen Smith is an architect who while arriving to repair a church tower at Endlestow falls in love with Elfride Swancourt, the daughter of a vicar. The story echoes Hardy's personal affair with his first wife Emma and has much autobiographical elements in it. Hardy tasted first major

success in 1874 with his fourth published novel *Far From the Madding Crowd* which revolves round the relationship between a poor shepherd Gabriel Oak and a young woman-farmer Bathsheba Everdene. It is in this novel that Hardy introduced his readers to his fictional topography of Wessex, which originally approximated to Dorset, but later grew into a much larger and varied region. Hardy's next novel *The Hand of Ethelbreta* which came out next year was soon followed by *The Return of the Native* published in 1878 featuring the famous Hardyesque topography of Egdon Heath. *The Trumpet Major*, *A Laodicean* and *Two on a Tower* came in quick succession in 1880,, 1891 and 1882 respectively before Hardy's next big success *The Mayor of Casterbridge* which was published in 1885 depicting the tale of Michael Henchard and his change of fortunes. Next came *The Woodlanders* in 1887 where Hardy continues his tradition of Wessex novels situating his tale in a village named Little Hintock. 1891 saw the arrival of Hardy's master-piece *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* which was subtitled by him as "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented". Hardy's presentation of a young beautiful girl who gets entangled into affairs which taint her honour invited controversy and disapproval from a section of the hypocritical Victorian society. Hardy's last completed published novel *Jude the Obscure* came out in 1895 exploring several issues such as education, religion, institutions of marriage during the Victorian period also met with harsh criticism and this is often considered the reason why Hardy stopped writing novels. Hardy's *The Well Beloved* was serialized in 1892 though published in 1897 as a book.

Along with his novels, Hardy produced short stories and poems too in considerable numbers. Most of Hardy's short stories are collected in the volumes *Wessex Tales* (1888), *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891) *Life's Little Ironies* (1894) and *A Changed Man and Other Tales* (1913). Geoffrey Harvey notes, "Hardy's stories frequently appeared in American periodicals, because while

British readers preferred the three-volume novel, the American market favoured the short story. And since his stories did not attract much attention in Britain, Hardy felt freer to experiment.” Thomas Hardy’s first volume of poetry was published in 1898 bearing the title *Wessex Poems*. It was followed by *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901), *Time’s Laughingstocks* (1909), *Poems 1912–13*, *Satires of Circumstance* (1914), *Moments of Vision* (1917), *Late Lyrics and Earlier with Many Other Verses* (1922), *Human Shows, Far Phantasies, Songs and Trifles* (1925), *Winter Words in Various Moods and Metres* (1928). Hardy’s monumental verse drama *The Dynasts* was published in three parts during 1904, 1906 and 1908. Geoffrey Harvey writes, “In his early poems Hardy experimented with poetic forms, notably sonnets and ballads. There was a broadening of range during the years of his career as a novelist and the 1890s, when he resumed poetry full time. This output included poems about the universe, war poems, love lyrics, as well as narrative poems and ballads. His poetry had achieved considerable technical assurance, was more reflective, with a greater development of metrical form. From the turn of the century until Emma’s death in 1912, although Hardy continued to produce significant verse, his poetic energy seems mainly to have gone into the writing of his monumental epic-drama *The Dynasts*. [Hardy’s verse after the period following 1912] contain a wide range of poems: love poems, philosophical poems, nature poems, elegies, war poems, poems on public events, and a tribute to his revered Swinburne. Hardy’s later poetry, which he continued to write up to his death in 1928, reveals a degree of anxiety, an inclination towards the surreal, and a sense of increasing detachment, expressed through a variety of subjects and poetic forms.”

13.3 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

The novel opens with an intricate description of a vast tract of unenclosed wild land known as the ‘Egdon Heath’. It is described

as “a face on which time makes but little impression” suggesting its mythical and eternal nature. The heath is as if in a state of permanent twilight and against this background of a veritable heart of darkness much of the novel’s action takes place. It is a November afternoon and soon readers are introduced to an old man whose sartorial sense makes him appear like an erstwhile naval officer. He meets another man down the highway who would later be revealed as Diggory Venn. Venn’s appearance, his rusty dress, his reddish complexion and his van all indicate that he is a reddleman by profession. Venn is found to be leading a horse drawn van and at frequent intervals he goes on to check the interior of his van .It is soon disclosed that he is carrying a young woman who later turns out to be Thomasin Yeobright. As Venn stops the coach midway, the old man proceeds ahead of him. Venn notices a mysterious figure of a woman standing atop a barrow on the highest peak of a hill. The woman’s movements seem edgy and soon she disappears climbing down the other side of the barrow as if scared and in haste. Moments later, a group of people are seen to be crowding the barrow and this group would later be found to be Hardy’s representative choric characters. The group engages in celebrating Guy Fawkes Day by lighting fire on pyramids of furze and functioning as the chorus of ancient Greek dramas they present forth significant information about the main characters through their conversations. They begin discussing a wedding between two locals, Damon Wildeve and Thomasin Yeobright. Thomasin is mentioned to be the cousin of Clym Yeobright, manager of a diamond merchant staying in Paris, who in turn is returning home from abroad to his native land to take care of her mother. The reddleman, Venn comes up to the group and asks for direction towards Mrs.Yeobright’s house and once he leaves, Mrs.Yeobright herself appears on the scene. She too leaves soon along with another young woman and they have a chat over how her niece, Thomasin, in marrying Wildeve, has chosen to marry below her

rank. In her way back Mrs. Yeobright meets Diggory Venn who discloses that he has brought back Thomasin in her carriage from a far off place where Thomasin intended to marry. Thomasin climbs down the van, thanks Diggory and leaves with her aunt Mrs. Yeobright. Once she loses Diggory, she reveals to her aunt that she wasn't able to marry her intended, Damon Wildeve owing to some technical complications that day but wishes to do so in a couple of days. Mrs. Yeobright, though not fully approving of the marriage, agrees to it as she sees no other option. They go on to meet Damon Wildeve in the pub who it seems hesitantly promises to go through the marriage soon. The heath folk after their celebration come to Wildeve to serenade but he manages to get rid of them. Once he succeeds in diverting the crowd, he heads towards a fire signal lit close to Captain Vye's house.

The fire has been lit by Eustacia Vye, Captain Vye's granddaughter as a signal for Wildeve with whom she has had a romantic involvement in the past. Though neither of them was seriously involved anymore, their relationship never had a proper closure. Wildeve though engaged to Thomasin still has a lingering clandestine feelings for his ex-flame Eustacia. Eustacia on the other hand is a woman with high hopes who feels trapped in the environs of Egdon. She was born in Budmouth but as her parents died when she was young, she had to leave the comforts of the big city and come to stay in Egdon with her grandfather Captain Vye. Eustacia's free spirit feels bogged down in what she thinks a mediocre life of Egdon and she harbours desperate dreams to flee this place and go live in a big city where she naturally belongs. Eustacia is wildly romantic and a non-conformist and she has been involved with Wildeve only because there was no better suitor for her in the vicinity. She is not particularly interested in Wildeve any more, yet agrees to these night time trysts with him. By accident Diggory Venn, learns about these meetings between the two from a little boy. Diggory himself has a romantic history of his own. He

has been an ardent admirer of Thomasin and had proposed marriage to her long time back. He had been rejected by Thomasin gently but even then her devotion towards her had hardly diminished. Given such a history, Venn sees here an opportunity to prove his steadfast devotion once more by making an unselfish effort to save Thomasin's marriage. Diggory spies on Eustacia and Wildeve and once he becomes sure of their connection, he goes on to confront Eustacia and tries to persuade Eustacia not to marry Wildeve but his efforts go in vain as Eustacia hardly pays any attention to him. Finding no success in this quarter, Digoory goes forward to reveal the details to Mrs Yeobright and even asks for Thomasin's hand in marriage claiming that he would take much better care of her than Wildeve ever can. Mrs Yeobright thanks Diggory for his kind offer but says that she needs to talk to Thomasin. Once Diggory leaves, Mrs Yeobright goes on to visit Wildeve presenting Diggory's offer as a trump card saying that if Wildeve doesn't give a word about marrying Thomasin soon, she would marry her off with someone else as she has enough good suitors. Wildeve again gives Mrs Yeobright a nebulous answer and sends her off. Later she goes on to visit Eustacia to discuss the matter, but Eustacia is hardly interested anymore.

Amidst this perplexity of relationships in Egdon, Clym Yeobright returns from Paris (hence the title of the novel). Clym, Thomasin's cousin and son of Mrs Yeobright, is the manager of a successful diamond merchant who has made it big in the city of Paris. Clym's return becomes the talk of the town and his arrival opens up a portal for Eustacia, who imagines a possibility to realize her dream of leaving Egdon, a place she detests and moving to a big city like Paris. Eustacia finds herself excited at such a prospect and plans to arrange a meeting with Clym someday or the other. She even goes to the extent of visiting Clym's place in a disguise of a man for a Christmas mumming. Charmed by Clym's personality even more, Eustacia makes up

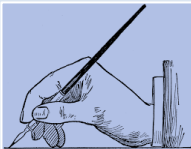
her mind to have him as his husband. She is piqued by the tenderness among Clym and Thomasin too. The next day she returns some things back to Wildeve through Diggory Venn and once Wildeve understands that Eustacia is deliberately avoiding him, he decides to marry Thomasin to spite Eustacia. Wildeve and Thomasin get married soon with Eustacia as a witness. While Wildeve sees the marriage as a revenge mission accomplished on her ex-lover, Eustacia is rather pleased to finally let go off Wildeve. The entire marriage proceedings happen in haste and in the absence of Clym who went out of station. Once he returns he learns the details from Diggory Venn.

Once Thomasin's marriage is over, the narrative focuses on the returned native, Clym. As he tells his mother he finds the life of a big city hollow and meaningless and has actually returned back to his homeland to make himself effectively serviceable to the society. Thus he has decided to leave his diamond business and start a school for the underprivileged, a decision which shocks her mother. In the meantime, Clym and Eustacia have grown a mutual affinity for each other, though their respective reasons for liking each other are hardly the same. While Clym sees in Eustacia a support system for his charitable endeavours, Eustacia dreams of escaping to Paris from where Clym has returned. When they planned to get married, Mrs Yeobright vehemently opposes such a match along with opposing Clym's decision of opening of the school. When Clym fails to convince his mother, he decides to go forth along with his decisions. He even rents a cottage to live in after the marriage. Though Mrs Yeobright does not attend the wedding, she gives a gift of a sum of money to be divided among Clym and Thomasin. Wildeve, with all his shrewdness wins all the money from the deliveryman but his cunning plan is foiled by Diggory Venn who in turn wins the money back from him and delivers it to Thomasin.

Clym and Eustacia start a married life though with a very short span of happiness. Eustacia soon realizes that her dreams of moving to a big city would never actually materialize through Clym for he is more interested in a career as a schoolmaster in his native land. To this end Clym dedicates day and night reading voraciously indirectly blinding himself. His physical condition deteriorates further, and to earn a temporary living he joins the profession of furze-cutting. Deeply frustrated with their claustrophobic and gloomy marital life Eustacia grows apart from Clym and chances and circumstances bring her close to Wildeve once again who also feels his old passions towards Eustacia ignited. Venn who becomes aware of the Eustacia-Wildeve affair coaxes Mrs Yeobright to revive the somewhat strained relationship between her and her son, asking her to pay a visit to Clym. Mrs. Yeobright does likewise in the hope of a possible reconciliation but is denied an entry into the house by Eustacia who fears being discovered with Wildeve who is already present in Clym's house. Heartbroken and crest fallen at the thought that she has been deliberately denied an entry to their house by the couple, Mrs Yeobright begins her walk back home but the heat and exhaustion prove too much for her to handle. To make matters worse she suffers a snake bite and dies within a short span. Clym soon discovers what has happened. Stricken by terrible remorse he considers himself responsible for his mother's death. When he probes farther regarding what actually happened he comes to learn about Eustacia's role in the whole matter and also learns about her renewed connections with Wildeve. He vehemently accuses Eustacia and their long pending estrangement finally occurs as Eustacia leaves Clym. Eustacia grieving and lamenting at her own place and expecting a reconciliatory approach from her husband Clym, is gradually approached by Wildeve who promises her to provide an escape from the hated heath. Clym, whose anger and resentment towards her wife has

subsided by now is in the meanwhile persuaded by his cousin Thomasin to write a letter to Eustacia asking for a reunion. The letter however reaches Eustacia's place at a time when she has already left the house for her final escape. Wildeve waits for Eustacia as a storm starts raging but she doesn't appear. Instead she throws herself deliberately or accidentally into a stream near a weir. Wildeve and Clym both try to save her but in the process Wildeve gets killed and it is by the heroic efforts of Venn that Clym somehow survives.

In the final section of the novel Thomasin and Diggory Venn are seen to be united and they eventually marry while Clym Yeobright, battle worn and weak in eyesight becomes a wandering preacher.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. To what extent is Chapter 1 a significant exposition of *The Return of the Native*?

2. What time was it when the novel opens?

3. How is the beauty of Edgon Heath described in Chapter 1?

4. Why is the description of Edgon Heath remarkable?

5. Describe the physical description of Riddleman.

6. Who is the young lady carried in the Van by Riddleman?

7. What were the different opinions of the crowd about Thomasin's marriage?

8. Who is Eustacia Vye?

13.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION

The Return of the Native, Hardy's sixth published novel coming out in 1878, stands unique among the entire body of his works with its meticulously detailed description of nature. The novel however was not quite a success during its time commercially. Critics, too, weren't too pleased with this novel. Like many other novels of Hardy, *The Return of the Native* too was dogged by the moral question. The novel was rejected for serial publication in Hardy's first choice of periodical, for example, on these grounds; the editor of the *Cornhill*, Leslie Stephen, detected on the basis of only a short section of an early draft the germ of something "dangerous" in the triangulations of desire and relationship forming around Eustacia, Wildeve, and Thomasin. Journals like *Times* and *The Eclectic* weren't too pleased with the characterizations. The Academy reviewer, W. E. Henley speaks of "affectation" of style and "arbitrary and accidental" tragic plotting commenting that "In Mr. Hardy's work there is a certain Hugoesque quality of insincerity", and it is widely echoed by fellow reviewers in the British periodicals, who complain variously of "mannerisms" and "clumsy style," "quaintness of expression" and "eccentricities of language," "eccentric forms of expression" and "strained and far-fetched" figurative language, or an "air of affectation" in the writing. Reviewers in the American journals were no more impressed, objecting to the "obscurity" of the title or its "far-fetched and infelicitous" nature, to "padding" in the plot, and generally to unusual vocabulary and affected writing. Recent critics like Judith Mitchell, John Hughes and Rosemarie Morgan also have engaged in critical endeavours regarding various facets of the novel. Morgan for example has questioned the gendered and unfavourable portrayal of the novel's heroine Eustacia Vye.

13.5 SUMMING UP

In this unit we have considerably elaborately discussed the storyline of *The Return of the Native*. A reading of this synopsis will not only help you to understand the action of the novel, but also you will be introduced to different characters and their role in the action. Besides, you can form some idea about the theme/s of the novel and the critical reception the novel had received in its days and after. A careful reading of this unit will help you to prepare yourself for the succeeding unit in which we shall discuss the important aspects of any fiction such as characters, theme, narrative techniques, symbols and images, importance of setting etc.

It is always suggested that apart from reading the summery that we have carefully prepared for you, learners will certainly read the novel in details for better understanding.



13.6 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What does the novelist want to depict in *The Return of the Native*?
2. What does the 'native' mean in the novel?
3. Write about the significance of the novel.



13.7 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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UNIT 14: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Learning Objectives
- 14.2 Setting
- 14.3 Major Themes
- 14.4 Major Characters
- 14.5 Images and Symbols
- 14.6 Narrative Structure
- 14.7 Chances and Coincidences
- 14.8 Summing Up
- 14.9 Assessment questions
- 14.10 References and Recommended readings

14.0 INTRODUCTION

The *Return of the Native*, despite its rejection by many critics and periodical novels of the age is an important and seminal work by Hardy. The novel throws light on some of the essential part of novel writing, particularly the setting which is palpable as a living thing, throughout the text. Also, the novel, as Ian Watt says, carries the important aspect of time. The novel begins in November and ends in November, spanning a time period of one year, within which everything changes except the landscape.

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to deal with Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* in an intensive way and to engage in a critical debate over several aspects of the novel as far as possible. The purpose of this unit is to:

- setting of the novel
- basic themes of the novel
- major characters of the novel
- symbolism in the novel
- narrative structure of the novel
- Hardy's use of chances and coincidences in the novel

14.2 SETTING

Egdon Heath is the basic setting where the story of Hardy's *The Return of the Native* unfolds. Hardy devotes the entire first chapter to exquisitely describe the 'vast tract of unenclosed wild' Heath in all its variety. Entitled "A Face on Which Time Makes but Little Impression", the first chapter presents Egdon Heath as a timeless ageless colossal entity controlling the destinies of the mortal beings who come to its vicinity. Hardy notes – "The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained." Such is the power of the Heath that it seems to cast its spell even over other natural elements – "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 and dread the storm was its lover, and the wind its friend. Then it became the home of strange phantoms;" Michael Millgate comments that Hardy "apparently saw in the heath not only a suitably bleak and open stage setting for the neo Greek drama he proposed to unfold, but an opportunity to achieve an approximation to the classical unity of place". He adds that "Egdon provides, of course, a close and isolated situation in which the action of the novel can be worked out as if in a laboratory, with little hope of escape for the inhabitants and the minimum of interference from outside"

Egdon Heath however outgrows its function as a mere setting to evolve as a prominent character with its own distinct personality in the novel. Notes Rosemarie Morgan : “The very center and apex of the Wessex world, Egdon is anthropomorphized—human characteristics are projected onto it—to embody a whole complex of human values and traits, from endurance to inconstancy, reciprocity to caprice, lightness of being to darkness of spirit, and a good deal more. Indeed, these moods and characteristics shape, in turn, the thoughts and actions of the heathfolk in profound ways. There is death, of course, at the hands of Egdon, just as there is life and continuity in the form of a little girl born of the union of Thomasin and Wildeve and named after Eustacia.” Simon Gatrell echoes a similar view when he suggests that “the heath is the element in which the story moves, the element which has conditioned the formation of the characters, and which is an agent in their ends”

The Heath acts as a mirror to all the characters in the novel reciprocating their feelings towards its self. Geoffrey Harvey comments that Hardy “defines his characters and concerns against the heath. It represents one term of the dialectic between the ineluctably material and permanent, and the state of flux of the modern mind.” Eustacia, an outsider, who always despises the Heath- ‘Tis my cross, my shame, and will be my death’ and wants to escape from its clutches ultimately fails to do so and dies being consumed by the Heath along with Damon Wildeve. Clym, on the other hand, though has grown intellectually distant from the Heath, is a native of the Heath and has emotional roots there. Hardy notes – “If anyone knew the heath well it was Clym. He was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, with its odours.” Diggory Venn with his nomadic old world lifestyle can be considered as the true product of the Heath. He is temperamentally akin to it and is at home with its elements. Desmond Hawkins points out that “it is he most of all who embodies the very spirit of Egdon in his outlandish

nomad life". Egdon Heath therefore emerges out as a prime motivator in the plot of Hardy's *The Return of the Native*.

14.3 MAJOR THEMES

The Return of the Native incorporates quite a few major themes within the corpus of its narrative. The essential Hardy-esque theme of human beings struggling against an antagonistic force of Destiny is the pivotal theme of the novel. Characters in the novel appear to be trapped in the vicious circles of fate which enforces undeserved sufferings and hardships to them often destroying them in the process. Hardy, for whom happiness is an occasional episode in the general drama of pain pitches his character in unequal battles against their unfavourable lots evoking tragedy out of the incessant struggles and misfortunes. Human beings who try to defy or rebel against their fate get crushed under cruel cycles of chances and coincidences working against them as in the cases of Eustacia and Wildeve. These cycles are mostly arbitrary though for even the ones who don't wage war against their fortunes aren't spared as in the case of Mrs Yeobright and Clym.

The theme of struggle is extended to the clash of ideals between the rural and urban worlds of the novel. Egdon Heath along with its native dwellers offer an image of an old conservative and insular world wrapped up in a different time zone altogether with its specific cultural beliefs and rituals as opposed to the modern cosmopolitan sensibilities of Clym and company. Clym, who has been a successful diamond merchant in Paris and indoctrinated in the sensibilities of an urban life inevitably finds it difficult to implement his ideals in the rural Egdon. His unrealistic plan of helping the heath community fails miserably and in the pursuit of such an utopian goal he brings forth untold miseries upon himself and upon people associated with him. On the other hand, Eustacia who dreams of having a colourful life in a throbbing

pulsating metropolis feels trapped and claustrophobic in Egdon and tries fighting hard to break away the chains that keep her tied to the place. She is the essential 'other' from the perspective of the rustics, never one of their own.

Amidst all these clashes relationships bloom as Hardy introduces his theme of love. Love is however mostly tragic and doomed in the novels of Hardy and here it is no exception. All the major characters get entangled into deeply convoluted relationships which prove to be disastrous in the end leading to some of their deaths even.

The enigmatic issue of relationship of man with the natural world is also a major theme in the novel. Egdon Heath proves to be not just a mere backdrop of the story but an important entity interacting with the characters of the novel moulding their lives and consciousness in the process. The natural world in the novel is present with all its glorious as well as terrifying manifestation both sustaining and wreaking havoc in the lives of the characters.

14.4 MAJOR CHARACTERS

CLYM YEOBRIGHT

Clym Yeobright is the titular native in the novel *The Return of the Native*. We get a description of Clym in the chapter entitled "The Two Stand Face to Face" (Page 142), where Hardy notes that his face is "well shaped, even excellently". He adds that had "Heaven preserved Yeobright from a wearing habit of meditation, people would have said, "A handsome man." Had his brain unfolded under sharper contours they would have said, "A thoughtful man." But an inner strenuousness was preying upon an outer symmetry, and they rated his look as singular." He is different from all the people inhabiting the Egdon realm of the novel and thus he is "singular". Clym left his birthplace at quite an early age and went to Paris where he became a diamond merchant.

He however eventually returns to his native land giving up a promising career out of some deep-rooted idealism inherent in him. He abhorring material success wants to serve his native community by becoming a teacher to the heath workers' children and plans to settle down in Egdon much to the bewilderment of the inhabitants there. His sort of utopian plan of opening a school however doesn't materialize and he has to take the lowly profession of being a furze-cutter. His marriage with Eustacia also doesn't work out and he is rendered almost blind by the end of the novel.

Clym's short sightedness is not only physical but metaphorical as well. He fails to foresee that his idealistic philanthropic plans wouldn't hold ground in the rugged terrains of Egdon. Moreover Clym's vision regarding love also proves to be extremely muddled. As Rosamarie Morgan notes Clym is not in love with the person Eustacia, but with the idea of her. Morgan suggest that Clym invests Eustacia "with mystery and romance but also the malleability, dependency, and obedience he expects of a woman, persuades himself that the restless girl will settle down to become a contented wife. That she has an educated, if over imaginative, mind, a philosophical thoughtfulness he doesn't appear to possess, and a fervent—sometimes obsessive—desire to "be in the world" is entirely ignored." Clym is trapped between the two most important women of his life, his mother and his wife and later feels responsible for both their deaths. Merryn Williams in *A Preface to Hardy* comments that in the final analysis "Clym deserves kindness, because he has suffered so drastically, and his moral philosophy closely resembles Hardy's in being a simple system of ethics, divorced from theology." Hardy himself admitted that Clym is the "nicest" of all his heroes and that is the reason observes Williams that "in his later work Hardy became more and more interested in this kind of hero, the lonely misfit, the intellectual who is thought of as an eccentric, the man with a haunting and indestructible feeling of guilt.

EUSTACIA VYE

Eustacia Vye is one of most complex characters in the entire oeuvre of Thomas Hardy. An enigmatic free-spirited young beauty, Eustacia is not a native of Egdon, rather is born in the port town of Budmouth. Circumstances have forced her to live with her grandfather in Egdon, but she, an eternal romantic, is always in the lookout for a route to escape the drudgeries of the place and move out to some bigger city suited to her passionate temperament.

Though Eustacia is initially introduced to the readers by the idle chitchats of the rustics who consider her to be “strange” at quite an early stage of the novel, it is in the VIIth chapter of the novel entitled “Queen of the Night” that Hardy elaborately presents Eustacia before the readers. Eustacia is described as the “raw material of a divinity” who could have “done well with a little preparation” on Olympus. While portraying her physical features Hardy notes: “She was in person full-limbed and somewhat heavy; without ruddiness, as without pallor; and soft to the touch as a cloud. To see her hair was to fancy that a whole winter did not contain darkness enough to form its shadow- it closed over her forehead like nightfall extinguishing the western glow. She had pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries, and their light, as it came and went, and came again, was partially hampered by their oppressive lids and lashes. The mouth seemed formed less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss. Some might have added, less to kiss than to curl.” Eustacia’s ravishing beauty is coupled with her unconventional thought process – “reckless unconventionality” and “smouldering rebelliousness” as Hardy terms it. Her inherent propensity or natural “instinct towards social nonconformity” makes her a social alien in the realms of Egdon where “she felt like one banished; but (w)here she was forced to abide.” Her alienation was voluntary to some extent too, for she thought herself to be superior to the “mere mortals” surrounding

her and maintained a disposition which can rightly be called as an embodiment of the phrase “a populous solitude”. The only panacea of her deep rooted melancholia arising out of this claustrophobic ambience was some sort of intense all-encompassing love for “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 passionate love more than for any particular lover’. Her powerful romantic yearnings – “To be loved to madness- such was her great desire” would leave her deeply unsatisfied throughout the entire course of the novel.

Eustacia is not without her ‘faults’. She is proud, egotistical and extremely fickle. Damon Wildeve quite aptly summarizes her inconsistent nature – “One moment you are too tall, another moment you are too do-nothing, another too melancholy, another too dark, another I don’t know what”. She also often appears to be quite selfish in matters of love. Her prime priority is to seek a route of escape from this humdrum life and she even is willing to sacrifice her love if it is so required. The moment she is presented with the possibility of a superior match in the form of Clym Yeobright, her feelings for Damon Wildeve appear to fade. She is infatuated with Clym, even before she actually has met him, for Clym embodies a promise of an escape to a bigger city like Paris. Once she learns about Clym’s plans of settling down in Egdon, she is disillusioned and frustration creeps in again. She plans a final escape along with her former lover Wildeve, but eventually dies while executing the plan.

The relationship between Eustacia and the heath is quite telling for it throws ample light on her character. Notes a critic: “Eustacia is established as a genuine antithesis to the Heath in all its related meanings. Where it is stoic she is tragic; where it survives, she aspires to burn out with a great passion; where it ignores time, she likes to stare at the sand running out in her small

hourglass; where its botany and geology all seem tuned to avoid great conflicts, she courts them perversely. The heath accommodates, Eustacia violates. The heath has pre-eminently adjusted its place in nature, Eustacia refuses hers in society and delights in flaunting its conventions." Eustacia detests the heath, and her words later ring eerily true when she says of the heath that "'tis my cross, my shame, and will be my death!" She never could accept the heath as her own and indeed the heath finally would turn out to be the cause of her "ruin".

DAMON WILDEVE

Damon Wildeve, a former engineer and a present inn keeper serves as the love interest of both Eustacia Vye and Thomasin Yeobright but is emotionally attached to neither of them. He marries Thomasin and they have a daughter together, but his attraction towards Eustacia never fades away. Wildeve is thoroughly impulsive as contrasted to the more intellectual but less passionate Clym. He acts at the spur of the moment which renders him both in negative as well as positive lights. On the one hand while he trifles with the emotion of the women in his life, gambles with his fortune, on the other he never thinks twice about jumping into the turbulent waters to save Eustacia. He is truly a "man of sentiment" as Hardy calls him in the novel

THOMASIN YEOBRIGHT

Thomasin Yeobright is the docile cousin sister of Clym and the soft natured niece of Mrs Yeobright. She is religiously in love with Damon Wildeve and is whole-heartedly dedicated to the cause of marrying him. She appears to be a sort of a foil to Eustacia. Her timid nature is in direct contrast to the inherent rebelliousness of Eustacia. She has a pragmatic approach towards marriage whereas Eustacia isn't too concerned about the sanctity of the institution of marriage. She has no big dreams as such and

wants to settle down in Egdon as opposed to Eustacia who desires to fly high. She is a passive character with an agreeable nature who gets along with almost all the characters. Thomasin marries Wildeve against the wishes of Mrs. Yeobright but her conjugal life gradually turns sour with Wildeve pining for Eustacia. With the death of Wildeve she is rendered a widow with a daughter. Hardy however added an "Aftercourses" to his novel on public demand which depicts the marriage of Thomasin and Diggory Venn, promising a better future for the guileless young woman.

MRS YEOBRIGHT

Clym's mother and Thomasin's aunt, Mrs. Yeobright is a middle aged woman with strong class superiority and an authoritative personality. A curate's daughter, Mrs. Yeobright is extremely practical in her approach towards life and considers material success as the parameter of social standing. Her love and care for her son are genuine and it is out of this concern that she urges Clym not to give up his respectable job in Paris and pursue the romantic but illusory dream of opening up a school in Egdon. She is also dead against Clym's desire to marry Eustacia whom she calls a "voluptuous, idle woman" and is sure would be the cause of her son's tragedy. Mrs. Yeobright also meddles with the marriage of her niece, Thomasin, and tries to match her with Diggory Venn even after well knowing that Thomasin is in love with Wildeve. Her zealous over-protectiveness of her wards coupled with a misplaced sense of class consciousness gradually alienates her from her close ones who in turn defy her and marry with their respective partners against her will. Mrs. Yeobright however, coaxed by Venn, attempts a reconciliation with her son but fate intervenes in the process in such a way that she has to die. Mrs. Yeobright's death turns out to be a significant milestone in the novel for it proves to be a catalyst in the separation of Clym and Eustacia. Mrs Yeobright, thus, plays quite an important role in the

novel by causing breaches between the characters. Rosemarie Morgan notes: “Representing the stereotypical matriarch of the Victorian over world of the novel—maternally possessive, efficient in her household management, ambitious for her son, manipulative in her protectiveness, and actively class conscious—she functions as the primary agency of class division in *The Return of the Native*.”

DIGGORY VENN

Diggory Venn, a “reddleman” by profession appears to be the most enigmatic of all the characters in the novel. “Isolated and (a) weird character” as Hardy calls him in the novel, his entire countenance and appearance has turned red owing to his profession in which he supplies red dye to the farmers for marking their sheep. Venn’s machinations in the entire novel are so mysterious that he has been interpreted in both positive and negative lights. Geoffrey Harvey comments that Hardy created the character of Diggory Venn in such a mould that he may be “regarded either as an alienated, meddling malcontent, a destructive figure, censoring female independence and blighting two marriages, or as a patient lover, whose stoical endurance is rewarded”. He might come across as a terrible schemer who toys with the lives of the other characters. Rosemarie Morgan considers him a malicious plotter who “spies on other people’s activities and plays havoc with fortune (notably Mrs Yeobright’s legacy), succeeds in steering others off course while he remains on track. He is never far off when someone is losing his or her way. Venn ultimately plays a central part in the tragic destruction of lives, but, as the archetypal schemer, he escapes calumny altogether. In common with the very best of devils, he appears benign and harmless while juggling with everyone’s fate at will.” Again he also seems as the most unselfish of all characters when he tries to save other people from their misfortunes. Merryn Williams considers Venn to be “essentially kind and unselfish, devoted to the woman he loves even when

there seems no hope of getting her.” Venn is at home with the natural world of Egdon. While Geoffrey Harvey sees him as “an extension of the heath”, Merryn Williams states that nature “seems to work on his side, because he understands and knows how to relate to it, and [...] he has his reward at the end of the novel, when most of the other characters are broken or die”

THE RUSTICS/ HEATHPEOPLE

The Rustics, though don't get involved in the principal course of action of the novel, nevertheless have interesting functions to perform in the story. They with their jolly trivialities and cheerful customs provide the much needed comic relief in the general atmosphere of gloom and tragedy of the novel. Their simple ways of life are devoid of the intricate complexities that haunt the central characters and thus they, representatives of the older primitive worlds with all their superstitions and beliefs are more stable than their angst-ridden modern counterparts. They are as if byproducts of the natural world of Egdon and are at one with its geography. The rustics play the role of Chorus too, by providing background information about the leading characters and analyzing their actions in the backdrop of the general scheme of things. The rustics' constant presence does not only lend the novel a regional touch; it also provides the reader with an insight into the mind of (nineteenth-century) rural man. It shows how, during the period of industrialisation, rural communities coped with various challenges to their established worldview, suggesting that the rustics' down-to-earth view of life represents, in the final instance, a valid alternative to the morally and emotionally stunted world of modern man.

14.5 IMAGES AND SYMBOLS

In *The Return of the Native*, Hardy incorporates several multifaceted symbols and images in his poetic descriptions to add

richer dimension to the narrative. The most prominent of all is the setting of the novel, Egdon Heath. The heath, a timeless, ageless, colossal entity with its aura of impenetrable permanence and cruel indifference towards the human race symbolizes Hardy's notion of fate or destiny which is a leitmotif in most of Hardy's novels. Egdon Heath, as if has had its invisible snares spread around the inhabitants from the very moment of their births controlling their actions throughout their lives. It has such hypnotic powers that it can even bring back original inhabitants to its vicinity as in the case of Clym. There is no escape from its supreme control and those who try to defy its omnipotence are led to their deaths as in the cases of Eustacia and Wildeve. Yet again, it also provides sustenance to so many other inhabitants and life forms who have made the heath their home.

Hardy uses the symbol of fire to multiple effects. The bonfire that the heath-dwellers light up commemorating so many other fertility rituals indicate man's instinctual attempt at fighting back the darkness of life. In a similar vein Hardy's allusion to the myth of Prometheus hints at the inherent streak of rebelliousness in Eustacia who, trapped in the Egdon locality wants to revolt against her predicament and change her lot. Her soul which is described as "flame-like" reinstates the same point. Eustacia's bonfires serve as beacons for her partner Wildeve and also serve as metaphors for her passions and emotions.

The gradual loss of sight of another central character of the novel, Clym, is also symbolic. It suggests Clym's failure to foresee that his idealistic vision of opening up a school would be rendered utterly useless in the harsh terrains of Egdon. Moreover, Clym, weak of insight also fails to properly look through the surface beauty of Eustacia and analyse her temperament which ultimately leads to a broken marriage.

The image of the moon recurrently features in the novel. While the rising full moon suggests a sense of positivity, the eclipsed moon or a moonless night bear sinister connotations. Eustacia consents to marry Clym under an eclipsed moon and their marriage is doomed. The absence of moon on the night Eustacia plans to escape suggests forthcoming tragedy and it proves to be true for Eustacia dies being drowned in the weir. Eustacia is referred to as the “queen of the night” at the very initial stages of the novel suggesting her affinity with the moon. Again when Eustacia dies, she is equated with a moon which has been eclipsed – “They stood silently looking upon Eustacia, who, as she lay there still in death, eclipsed all her living phases.” Towards the end of the novel reference to the moon which will be rising shortly in the conversation of Diggory Venn and Thomasin suggests the positive future between both of them.

Gambling is another prominent metaphor used in the novel which is closely associated with the concepts of chance and destiny. There is a direct instance of gambling taking place in the course of the novel where Wildeve who has won a sum of money from Cantle finally loses to Venn. Similarly in the greater gamble called life, Wildeve who has been gambling with his career as well as partner choices courts an untimely death ending up as a loser whereas Venn who has been consistent with his love wins Thomasin at the end.

Elemental symbols like storms. Rain, water and other symbols and images frequenting the novel make the story richer in texture and more open to interpretations.

14.6 NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Hardy's *The Return of the Native* has a third person omniscient narrator depicting the entire course of the tale. The Return of the Native has been described at once as a “cultural

drama” and a “psychodrama” by Peter Casagrande. Penny Boumelha considers the descriptions as accurate for the “novel presents its reader with a fictional world in which what might be called the daylight plot of familiar social interaction – earning a living and borrowing money, courting and marrying, cutting hair and drinking ale – is shadowed by something altogether stranger, something more at ease in those “wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster” (p. 11) said at the opening of the novel to be associated with Egdon.” She adds that “alongside the familiar sequentiality of social plot runs a psychically motivated universe of repetitions and returns, of doubles and dualisms, of dream and vision, of compulsion and obsession.”

14.7 CHANCES AND COINCIDENCES IN THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

Hardy, who became sceptical of organized religion at a very early stage of life, nourished the belief that the world was governed by blind chances and coincidences which do more harm than good to mankind. Chances and coincidences thus operate as very important factors in the novels of Hardy. In *The Return of the Native* too, we see a multiple instances of chances and coincidences at play. At the very initial stage of the novel, one finds that little Johnny Nunsuch has overheard the conversation between Eustacia and Wildeve. Johnny then meets the reddleman Diggory Venn purely by chance. The reddleman learns from the boy the emotional attachment of Eustacia with Wildeve and decides to dissuade Eustacia from Wildeve. Eustacia turns a deaf ear to his pleas and he dejected goes to Mrs. Yeobright to renew his offer of marriage to Thomasin. Mrs. Yeobright uses this offer to threaten Wildeve to marry Thomasin. This whole series of event gets triggered off by chance by Johnny Nunsuch..Again, Christian

Cantle who is carrying Mrs. Yeobright's money which is to be equally divided among Thomasin and Clym randomly meets a group of village folk who take him to a raffle where, by a sheer stroke of luck, he wins a prize and encouraged by his good fortune plays a game of dice with Wildeve. Cantle first loses his own money and later stakes Mrs. Yeobright's and loses the entire amount. Diggory Venn appears and invites Wildeve for another game in which he wins all the money from Wildeve. He delivers the whole money to Thomasin, not aware of the fact, that half the money was to be handed to Clym. Mrs. Yeobright fails to receive any acknowledgement from Clym and becomes dejected. Similar instances of chances and coincidences playing their parts abound the novel which often turn out to play havoc in the lives of the characters. For example, when Mrs. Yeobright plans to reconcile with her son and goes to visit Clym, it is by sheer accident that Wildeve is also present at Clym's home with Eustacia. Eustacia in her confusion and fear at being discovered with Wildeve, does not allow Mrs. Yeobright to enter the house: heart-broken and feeling rejected by her son, she succumbs to heat and snakebite on the walk home, and dies. Again by a stroke of ill luck Clym's letter to Eustacia doesn't reach her and she leaves along with Wildeve. Fate also intervenes in a negative way on the night of Eustacia's escape for the weather turns foul with storm and rain. Eustacia gets drowned in a weir and Wildeve dies in the rescue attempt. Eustacia's words bear a ring of truth when she laments: "How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me. I do not deserve my lot...I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control." Hardy's use of chances and coincidences though somewhat affect the sense of causality in the novel nevertheless intensifies Hardy's tragic vision which reinstates what Shakespeare mentioned in King Lear: "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods./They kill us for their sport."



14.8 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Do you think Hardy's characters are alienated individuals whose destiny is predetermined by the forces beyond their control?
2. Comment on the factors which shape the Hardyan universe.
3. Discuss Clym Yeobright as the ideal tragic hero.
4. Would you consider Eustacia Vye to be the prime motivator of tragedy in the novel? Substantiate your views.
5. Do you think Egdon heath and by extension the representation of nature in Hardy serves an archetypal as well as mythical significance?
6. Write an essay on the role and function of the rustic characters in the novel.
7. Discuss the major themes in the novel.
8. What function do chances and coincidences play in the novel?
9. Write an essay on the major symbols in the novel.



14.9 REFERENCES AND REFERENCES READING

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