



Analysis of the Inevitability of Eustacia's Tragedy from Ecocritical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

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

KEYWORDS : tragedy fighting dream

Introduction

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

Now, there is a growing number of scholars begin to know Hardy's importance and the academic value of his novels and poems. As a result, his works won a huge popularity in the research field. Comments about Hardy are mostly focused on the natural environment and women's tragic destiny. For instance, Wu Jun puts special emphasis on the landscape in *The Return of the Native*, and draws a conclusion that this work is somewhat like a novel of nature. Rong Fang analyzes Eustacia's tragedy from the perspective of her personality and incompatibility with social environment. In general, there still exists room for the exploration of this subject.

Embodiments of Eustacia's tragic life

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

As a woman, Eustacia has suffered a lot from that change. Confronted with the old rules and traditions, she indeed shows her dissatisfaction and fights against the outside world. At the same time she also feels the trend of innovation. So many fresh invention and new stuff appear. Consequently, she develops a rebellious personality. However, in the Victorian Age, women are not allowed to have that opportunity to change their life on their own. She tries to live a wealthy life through marriage, but it turns out things aren't that easy for her.

Eustacia's disharmony with herself

It can be deduced that everything develops has its inner reasons. For Eustacia's tragedy, there are some inner elements which make her life become a doomed journey. To Eustacia, knowledge and endeavor are not important to change her poor life. She doesn't care about her spiritual enjoyment. She just holds that to marry a rich man is the key to change her life. Eustacia cannot get a good understanding about the natural environment, let alone the idea of finding a way to enjoy the life there. To Eustacia, the Heath is like a prison. She always prays "O deliver my heart from this fearful gloom and loneliness; send me great love from somewhere, else I shall die" (Hardy, 1995). Wotton thinks that individuals are captured by their environment, by ideas, tastes, models, ways of being, the images that are constantly injected into them, and even by the refrains that go round and round in their heads. Having lived in the emerging capitalist industrial society- Budmouth in her childhood, Eustacia is deeply influenced by the atmos-

phere of that era. Her mind is severely occupied by the outside material life outside Heath while she never calms down and appreciates the natural beauty here.

Eustacia's disharmony with the Society

Eustacia lives in the Victorian Age which is full of patriarchal traditional rules. At that time, women are just chattels of their husbands. Their status is obviously low and for them there are so many rigid constraints. Rights are out of their hands, for they don't even have the chance to change their life on their own. They must be submissive to their fathers and husbands.

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

Eustacia's disharmony with the people

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

Conclusion

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

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