

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA - FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Pictorial Art in *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy

vedoucí bakalářské práce (supervisor):

PhDr. Zdeněk Beran

Praha, srpen 2010

Zpracovala (author):

Jitka Fantová

studijní obor (subject):

Anglistika a amerikanistika

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a pouze na základě uvedených pramenů a literatury.

V Praze dne 23.8.2010

I declare that the following B.A. thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned.

Prague, 23 August 2010

Poděkování

Děkuji vedoucímu bakalářské práce PhDr. Zdeňku Beranovi za cenné rady, připomínky a metodické vedení práce.

Thesis abstract

Thomas Hardy psal své romány v období významných změn na poli výtvarného umění. Jako vyučený architekt měl tedy výborné předpoklady k hlubšímu studiu v oblasti umělecké tvorby, které se stalo jeho celoživotním koníčkem. Není proto divu, že se předmět tak intenzivního zájmu stal i jedním z tvůrčích prvků jeho vyprávění. Román *Rodákův návrat* z roku 1878 nepřímou odráží vývoj výtvarného umění 19. století, přičemž vychází již z barokní estetiky a předznamenává i vývoj umění na přelomu 19. a 20. tisíciletí.

Vzájemná provázanost výtvarného umění a literatury se v tomto románu projevuje hned na několika rovinách. Zaprvé jsou to časté odkazy na malíře či jejich obrazy, jež pomáhají čtenáři lépe si představit a pochopit právě popisovanou scénu. Podmínkou je samozřejmě čtenářova znalost daných subjektů; tuto manýru chápali někteří kritici jako nabubřelé předvádění autorových znalostí, jiní jako důmyslné obohacení obrazotvornosti vyprávění.

Dále Hardy využívá jednotlivé výtvarné styly k specifickému popisu postav a scén; nezapomenutelné jsou jeho noční scény ve stylu Rembrandta, osvětlené jen září plamenů, či jeho vykreslení Eustacie jako záhadné, mytické ženy zrovna povstale ze štětky Prerafaelitů, a zároveň evokující slavný portrét Mony Lisy. Výrazným rysem románu je i osvětlení, jež ve formě slunečního či měsíčního svitu nebo záře ohně podbarvuje mnoho scén, a zároveň vytváří dojem ucelenosti románové formy. Osvícení scény může zároveň ovlivnit i její chápání, proto je motiv světla použit k zdůraznění hlavního tématu románu, a to je vztah iluze a reality. Vztahem světla k zobrazovanému objektu se zabýval hlavně impressionismus, který si kladl za cíl zobrazit jediný prchlivý okamžik dne. Světlo v jejich pojetí mělo schopnost proměnit zobrazovaný objekt, stejně jako v Hardym popisovaných scénách světlo určuje ladění a také předjímá nálady a pocity postav. S tím se pojí i barevné ladění scén, jehož hlavním impulzem je právě osvětlení. Hra se světlem a barvami pak podbarvuje vlastnosti

jednotlivých postav a zároveň definuje jejich vzájemné konfrontace.

Rodákův návrat je zároveň Hardyho nepřímým komentářem na vývoj výtvarného umění a estetiky. Jeho pojetí krásna, patrné zejména z popisu Clyma nebo samotného dějiště celého románu, vřesoviště Egdon Heath, je velmi moderního charakteru. Scény ponurého ladění s minimem objektů zajímavých pro oko tehdejšího turisty jsou pro Hardyho pravými klenoty. Stejně tak lidská krása pro něj musí obsahovat i stopy zkušeností, které formovaly charakter postavy.

Čtení samotného románu je velmi barvitě, plně nezapomenutelných scén jež přesně vystihují aktuální ladění děje. Scény zůstávají čtenáři díky své mimořádné působivosti zaklíněny v paměti i poté, co již dávno zapomněl detaily děje či jména postav. V tak konkurenčním prostředí jako je psaní románů to svědčí o nesporných kvalitách autora.

Table of contents:

Thesis abstract	4
1. Introduction - Thomas Hardy and art	6
1.1 <i>The Return of the Native</i>	7
2. Thomas Hardy's aesthetic influences	
2.1 Ut pictura poesis	10
2.2 The sublime	10
2.3 The picturesque	14
2.4 The new kind of beauty	14
2.5 Academism	17
2.6 Impressionism	19
3. Pictorial art in <i>The Return of the Native</i>	21
3.1 Introduction to the heath	24
3.2 The bonfires are lit	27
3.3 Eustacia is introduced	31
3.4 Clym is on the scene	34
3.5 Wildeve reappears	37
3.6 The journey to the end	38
4. References to art	41
5. Attention to colours	42
6. Conclusion	46
Bibliography	48

References:

RN – The Return of the Native

1. Introduction – Thomas Hardy and Art

Thomas Hardy lived and worked in the time of very significant changes in the field of art. Having been educated as an architect, Hardy had a natural eye for detail and shape. Moreover, his interest in pictorial art developed into a life-long pursuit: at one time, Hardy was seriously considering working as an art critic for which purpose he self-educated himself in the development of European art from the Renaissance onwards, and also frequently visited galleries, museums and exhibitions, be it in England or France. It was noted that “as young man Hardy devoted 'for many months' twenty minutes after lunch each day studying the paintings in the National Gallery.”¹ In his works, he often refers to “Greek sculpture, Etruscan friezes, Dutch Masters and French Impressionists, and exhibits an easy knowledge of painting techniques.”² He was also on friendly terms with several painters, sculptors and illustrators of his time and it can be said that his interest in the sphere of art was no smaller than that in the literary scene. Besides his theoretical interest in pictorial arts, Hardy also dabbled into landscape painting and rural scene sketches. Alistair Smart describes Hardy in relation to painting as follows:

Hardy, indeed, had the eye of a painter; drawing the outlines of his forms as consciously as he filled them with substance and with colour; giving them their proper texture and lighting; fixing them firmly in a definite space; and relating them in scale to their surroundings.³

He approached the novel from a point of view that was uniquely his own. The form of his novels is regarded by many critics as very inconsistent, as everything is subjected to the development of the plot. However, Hardy's conception of form consisted in the idea of 'beauty

1 Penelope Vigar, *The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality* (University of London: The Athlone Press, 1974)16.

2 Vigar 16.

3 Alistair Smart, “Pictorial Imagery in the Novels of Thomas Hardy,” *The Review of English Studies* Aug. 1961: 262.

in shape', which could be achieved by 'interdependence of parts' and by staying true to the nature of things. Hardy refused mere imitations of reality and therefore appreciated painters, who could add that extra quality to their picture that distinguished them from lifeless photography. According to Vigar, Hardy “sees the plot as a thread on which to display his pictures of life, his 'seemings' or glimpses into 'the heart of the matter'”⁴. She calls Hardy's method “narrative pictures”⁵, a term that best delineates the way of describing the characters and environment as still pictures, as opposed to description through action.

Apart from expressing his ideas on art and reality, Vigar mentions another type of use of pictorial art in Hardy's fiction, and that is the inclination “for depicting thematically meaningful incidents and his frequent reliance on stock emotional effects [which] are more closely akin to the static, 'photographic' art popular in the mid-nineteenth century and later.”⁶ This tendency shows for example in melodramatically described scenes and will be tackled later on in the text.

1.1 The Return of the Native

The Return of the Native was written during the year 1878 in 12 monthly installments. Serial publication of the novel caused Hardy to adjust his vision of the plot as well as of the style of writing to the demands of his predominantly middle class audience. This is also the case of the descriptions, which are made accessible to the common reader. Nevertheless, *The Return of the Native* is one of the fictions which, among other Hardy's novels, employs pictorial art to the highest degree and different effects, as well as conveys Hardy's notions on art in general.

According to F. E. Halliday, *The Return of the Native* is a “remarkable anticipation of

4 Vigar 6.
5 Vigar 15.
6 Vigar 45.

postimpressionist painting”⁷ in its new approach to aesthetics, especially the realization that beauty and ugliness are in no way absolute categories, but are, in fact, mingled. Apart from being before his time, Hardy also employed older aesthetical concepts like the baroque, the sublime, the picturesque, or symbolism.

The structure of the novel is based on the contrast of light and dark, illusion and reality and between impressionism and realism. The inability to see what is real is the central theme of the novel, be it in the form of illusion or literal blindness. Vigar points out the importance of the dichotomy of reality and its representation in art in Hardy's novels:

The form of pictorial art is basic to Hardy's view of life as he expresses it in his works, and essential to his pervasive theme, which is the contrast between appearance and reality, what life is *like* and what life *is*. As such it is inextricably bound up with his entire thought and expression.⁸

Michael Millgate supports this statement as follows: “it was characteristic of Hardy's visualizing imagination that he should so often use analogies from painting to help define the essentially literary problems he was trying to confront.”⁹ Apart from the problematic relationship of illusion and reality, this statement could also allude to Hardy's use of references to actual paintings or painters's styles in the description of a scene.

The following text will attempt to support this statement with regard first to the aesthetic influences on Hardy, including the concept of *ut pictura poesis*, the sublime, the picturesque and several art movements, and second, to the actual manifestation of pictorial arts' technique in selected scenes from *The Return of the Native*.

7 F. E. Halliday, *Thomas Hardy: His Life and Work* (Somerset: Adams & Dart, 1972) 76.

8 Vigar 18.

9 Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy, A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) 285.

2. Hardy's aesthetic influences

2.1 Ut pictura poesis

This statement comes from Horace's *Ars Poetica*, meaning that art of painting is like poetry, or all imaginative texts. Aristotle developed this concept - he said that painting and poetry are both arts of imitation and therefore should be composed along a similar principle, the structure. While in painting it was called design, poetry used plot. In the 19th century, the romantics used this notion in their conception of art based on expression, not imitation. The border between art and poetry became less distinct as the painters strived to load their pictures with meaning, while the poets and writers of fiction created more picturesque novels and poems.

F. B. Pinion supports this concept when he comments on the use of art in fiction as follows: “Artistically constructed stories can develop the aesthetic sense as much as masterpieces in other forms of art.”¹⁰ Hardy's *The Return of the Native* is an example of such an impressive invasion of pictorial arts into literature; they help to enhance the effect of the scene on the reader as well as to bring together the structure. In likening the mode of narration to the act of creating an art image, Vigar remarks that “both artist and novelist are giving form to an experience or a theme or an impression of the world”¹¹ and while art is there to be perceived, Hardy's narrative creates an image in the reader's mind that consists of both the author's and the reader's imagination.

2.2 The sublime

The novel opens with the famous description of Egdon Heath: “Twilight combined with the scenery of Egdon Heath to evolve a thing majestic without severity, impressive without

¹⁰ F. B. Pinion, *A Hardy Companion* (London: Macmillan, 1968) 148.

¹¹ Vigar 15.

showiness, emphatic in its admonitions, grand in its simplicity.”¹² The reader is in awe with the grandeur, feels afraid of the ominous presence the heath evokes, and is still clueless at grasping the essence of the place. In short, the reader has encountered the sublime, an aesthetic concept found in a 3rd century book called *On the Sublime*, ascribed to the philosopher and rhetor Longinus. According to Procházka and Hrbata, the sublime can be achieved in two ways, the first way is the true genius, which can both create great and intense ideas as well as excite feelings; the second is stylistics, which influences figurative speech, high style and complex syntax¹³. The emphasis lies on the ability to excite even the most lethargic reader with the pathos, as opposed to Aristotle's emphasis on logos and the rationality of the audience.

The 18th century concept of the sublime as described by Edmund Burke in his book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) quite differs from the concept as described by Longinus. His sublime consists of feelings of “fear of external forces that endanger the very existence”¹⁴, which can cause feelings of submissiveness or the awareness of the subconscious. The main focus was on the intensity, be it emotions, terror or cruelty.

In literature, the sublime is connected with a range of expressions: astonishing, transcendental, grand, fear of death, darkness, terror, solitude and silence, all of which fit precisely the description of the heath. The fact that it plays a central role in the novel yet strengthens the effects of the sublime on the reader.

Richard Bevis in his book *The Road to Egdon Heath* comments on the causes Hardy could possibly have for using the sublime:

Though Hardy's mood in *The Return of the Native* had proximate causes in

12 Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* (London: Penguin Books, 1994) 4.

13 Procházka a Hrbata, *Romantismus a Romantismy* (Praha: Karolinum, 2005) 120-121.

14 Procházka a Hrbata 121-122.

his own life, his reflections on Egdon Heath also form part of the Victorian reaction to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century treatments of 'the sublime' as a quality of art and nature capable of evoking a level of response superior to that elicited by 'the beautiful'[...]. The description of Egdon Heath [...] has this quality of meta-statement about nature [...]. It is also one of the first great dark passages in modern literature, gravely announcing a major shift in western aesthetics.¹⁵

Hardy's conception of 'the beautiful' is indeed different from the classical conception of beauty, and will be discussed in the following subchapter.

The sublime is also term used by the Gothic literature. According to Procházka and Hrbata, the term 'gothic' in a non-architectural context came into use in the first half of the 18th century. The meaning was connected with the impact of majestic gothic cathedrals on people – awe, fear, anxiety, mysterious sound effects, and play of light and shadow – feelings and characteristics connected with the sublime. Vigar states that “this idiosyncratic tendency towards mysterious or supernatural decorative effects must inevitably have derived from Hardy's early interest in the tales of Gothic romanticists.”¹⁶ He even used Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* as a help to achieve “a powerful and elevated prose style.”¹⁷

There are several scene descriptions in *The Return of the Native* that definitely fall into the category of the sublime; for example the description of Egdon Heath, which is at its strongest in times of solemnity, such as winter, darkness, tempests or mists. Then, Egdon is

aroused to reciprocity; for the storm was its lover, and the wind its friend.

Then it became the home of strange phantoms; and it was found to be the hitherto unrecognised original of those wild regions of obscurity which are

15 Richard Bevis, *Road to Egdon Heath : The Aesthetics of the Great in Nature* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999) 28 - 30.

16 Vigar 56.

17 Vigar 56.

vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster, and are never thought of after the dream till revived by scenes like this.¹⁸

Although the dream-like and macabre quality of the place at a certain time suggests a romantic interpretation along the lines of a Gothic novel, it also hints that all such mysterious impressions originate in pure, unembellished nature, optionally in the minds of its inhabitants.

According to Vigar,

Hardy's use of the fantastic and the grotesque is not uniform in its aesthetic worth. It is a method of presentation [...] which even in his last and best novels manifests itself sometimes in a clear, profound or ironic symbolism and sometimes in a trivial appeal to 'the thrilling' and 'romantic'¹⁹.

She also observes that “the method of intensification through contrasts of light and shadow is used melodramatically rather than with impressionistic subtlety”²⁰. For example the gambling scene on the heath at night, or the following descriptions: “The evening films began to make nebulous pictures of the valleys, but the high lands still were raked by the declining rays of the winter sun, which glanced on Clym as he walked forward, eyed by every rabbit and field-fare around, a long shadow advancing in front of him”²¹ and a picture of Eustacia and Clym as “they formed a very comely picture of love at full flush, as they walked along the valley that late afternoon, the sun sloping down on their right, and throwing their thin spectral shadows, tall as poplar trees, far out across the furze and fern.”²²

18 Hardy, RN 5.

19 Vigar 54-55.

20 Vigar 55.

21 Hardy, RN 214.

22 Hardy, RN 243.

2.3 The picturesque

Hardy also uses the art of picturesque, a late 18th century aesthetic ideal which came with the onset of Romanticism as a middle ground between the ideals of the beautiful and the sublime. The term was coined by William Gilpin in his *Essay on Print* and literally meant 'that kind of beauty that was agreeable in a picture.' This meant that the texture of the composition should be 'varied, rough, intricate, and broken with obvious straight lines,' while the composition should follow rules as to what was supposed to lie in the foreground, background, middle and further distance, optionally in the side screens. Further, Gilpin allowed for a certain degree of embellishment of the composition in case Nature lacked the needed finish. Thematically, the picturesque had a predilection for the countryside, rustic images, ruins and torn people.

Gilpin in his book *Remarks on Forest Scenery, and other woodland Views* introduces descriptions of the English landscape which also concentrate on the best way to portray a forest in a picturesque way in various weather conditions and seasons. He speaks about the effects of mist, smoke, dark clouds, storms and sunrays in different times of day on the qualities it brings out in the scene portrayed. For example the meridian sun is the most flattering way for portrayal of forests. In regard to seasons, Autumn has the most picturesque potential as it brings out the harmony of colours, and especially sunsets are very impressive. Many of Hardy's scenes describing in detail the setting and the lighting are reminiscent of Gilpin's observations.

2.4 The new kind of beauty

In comparison to the new kind of beauty, the classical concept of 'the beautiful' is to be found in smaller things and details, and is bound to elicit only superficial feelings of pleasure without evoking a deeper cognitive response. Hardy, on the other hand, was fully aware of the

new aesthetics and *The Return of the Native* became almost a manifest of his persuasion.

Hardy himself thought that

The Return of the Native 'embodied' his views on 'the art of the future', and it is clear both that he thought of the novel form as a potential vehicle for the expression of ideas, and that those ideas were as often formulated in aesthetic as in social or moral terms.²³

In the first chapter of the novel, Hardy states that “the exclusive reign of this orthodox beauty” may be “approaching its last quarter” and that a new era “when the chastened sublimity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain will be all of nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking among mankind” has possibly arrived. The classical beauty represented by Vale of Tempe, a Greek gorge frequented by Apollo and the Muses and later by admiring poets, is superseded by the “gaunt waste of Thule”²⁴, an island which is in the ancient literature located far north, even beyond the borders of the known world. This new aesthetic was, according to Hardy, a natural result of the development of aesthetics in general, which can lead in a new way of perceiving the world:

ultimately, to the commonest tourist, spots like Iceland may become what the vineyards and myrtle-gardens of South Europe are to him now; and Heidelberg and Baden be passed unheeded as he hastens from the Alps to the sand-dunes of Scheveningen.²⁵

The spots which had up to then been visited as shrines of cultured fashion lack the sublime quality that a heath or a prison offer in excess. Similarly as the Impressionist painters, Hardy saw beauty elsewhere than in the conventional places; even though the wastes of Egdon Heath are gloomy and inhospitable to any existence, he still manages to stress the hidden beauty in

23 Millgate 203.

24 Hardy, RN 5.

25 Hardy, RN 5.

the wilderness.

This development of aesthetics was obviously mirrored by the art movements. In the 19th century, the Neo-Classical and Romantic art movements were merging under the roof of the Academies of art, creating an approved style of painting. In opposition to the Academics were the Realists and the Impressionists, who disapproved of both the themes and the technique used to portray them, reproaching the inattention to the pressing social concerns of the day as well as the untruthfulness of the picture conveyed. They propagated a new way of looking at the world as it is, capturing its true essence and thus discovering its beauty, as well as introducing heretofore unusual landscapes as one of the main genres of painting.

Hardy was even aware of the probable future development of art and aesthetics. The following passage describing Clym introduces the notion of impossibility of beauty and knowledge residing in one body with the awareness of life's complexity. Clym's face is "overlaid with legible meanings" just as a painter adds layers to his canvas, and the marks on his face demonstrate "that thought is a disease of flesh, [and] that ideal physical beauty is incompatible with emotional development and a full recognition of the coil of things."²⁶ Further example follows:

The observer's eye was arrested, not by his face as a picture, but by his face as a page; not by what it was, but by what it recorded. His features were attractive in the light of symbols, [...] and as shapes intrinsically simple become interesting in writing.²⁷

According to Wike, the writing on the blank page of a person's face is "a metaphor for the accumulation not just of perceptions, but also of suffering.[...] In both the man and the race, consciousness has become a burden."²⁸ By being aware of modern age and its issues, Clym is

26 Hardy, RN 162.

27 Hardy, RN 198.

28 Jonathan Wike, "The World as Text in Hardy's Fiction." *Nineteenth-Century Literature*. Mar. 1993: 462.

an example of a man affected by modern anxiety which is indelibly written into his face. He is the new prototype of human beauty, which is not only physical, but includes also psychological harmony with its age:

In Clym Yeobright's face could be dimly seen the typical countenance of the future. Should there be a classic period to art hereafter, its Pheidias may produce such faces. The view of life as a thing to be put up with, [...] must ultimately enter so thoroughly into the constitution of the advanced races that its facial expression will become accepted as a new artistic departure. People already feel that a man who lives without disturbing a curve of feature, or setting a mark of mental concern anywhere upon himself, is too far removed from modern perceptiveness to be a modern type.²⁹

According to Hardy, it is only a matter of time before physical beauty will be considered an anachronism; it is interesting that he sees the age of modern male beauty almost come, but acceptance of modern female beauty will take some more time.

2.5 Academism

According to Richard Ash, the Academic painters always idealized their subject matter, stylized it into mythological or biblical themes and depicted only conventional subjects. This attitude naturally prevented them from depicting subjects that could be found outside of their studios, and whose beauty was truer than any of their artificially conceived paintings. Work in plein air served the artist only to sketch random subjects that accorded with his theme. The whole composition was subordinated to the allegorical theme and therefore the subjects presented were highly idealized, as they were also put together according to the painter's liking. The Academics also regarded line, adopted as the most important feature from the

²⁹ Hardy, RN 197-8.

Neoclassical tradition, and colour, assumed from the Romantic tradition, as being in an indivisible unity. The colour could stand out only thanks to the line, or the form, and vice versa.

The academism of the 19th century adopts the genre of historic painting, including classical, religious, mythological, literary, and allegorical subjects, as the highest genre, then followed by genre painting, whose aim is to portray scenes from everyday life that can have a certain degree of idealization. Next in value was portraiture, followed by still life and on the last place was landscape. If we look at *The Return of the Native*, Hardy most often employs the genre of landscape in the description of Egdon Heath, but also portraiture in the detailed presentment of Eustacia, Clym and other characters, and genre painting focusing on some daily activities of the heath dwellers.

Description of landscape is one of Hardy's most significant and impressive literary devices; Smart uses in this relation a term 'Hardyesque landscape', which he describes as

ominous, desolate, and essentially inimical to man. Dwarfed by the vast wastes surrounding him, man is presented as an insignificant creature pathetically uncertain of his existence and of his fate; again and again the frailty of his estate is likened to the helplessness of birds, a comparison which emphasizes the littleness of man, placed in the limitless spaces of the grim landscape of which Egdon is the epitome, and which Hardy describes in *The Return of the Native* as 'a place which had slipped out of its century generations ago to intrude as an uncouth object into this.'³⁰

Hardy's landscape is set in the imaginary Wessex County, which heavily draws on the place of Hardy's childhood, Dorset. Firm setting in place and time is one of the most important vehicles for making the narrative sound real and plausible.

30 Smart 262.

2.6 Impressionism

Impressionism, the revolutionary movement in the second half of the 19th century painting, was certainly one of the most important influences on Hardy. In an 1876 text *La Nouvelle Peinture* by Edmond Duranty appears a passage dedicated to a summary of John Constable's essay on Impressionism written in the same year at the occasion of the second exhibition of Impressionist paintings. Some of the principal observations from Constable's text are the revolt against conventions and Academism, the necessity to express one's individuality, and the absolute focus on nature without any kind of unnecessary embellishment. Duranty also emphasizes the novelty of Impressionism, which brought:

a new method of color and drawing and a gamut of original points of view that succeed in altering the conventions of perspective-based composition: color-based on science and close observation and a recourse to nonconventional models [...]; drawing-based on the observation of nature, of the familiar, through which human beings would be captured expressively in their actions and integrated with their settings; new modes of composition deriving from new angles of vision, a mobile reinterpretation of the perspective window on the world and of the role of the frame, resulting in fortuitous croppings, groupings, imbalances. By such means, the new art, based in nature and observation, is seen to have been realized.³¹

The Impressionists' emphasis on work in plein air follows the effort to capture nature in its original irregularity and may resemble Hardy's attachment and close observation of the area of Dorset that appears as the fictional Wessex in his novels. Moreover, having nature as the subject of the paintings, the theme often veered towards rustic motives that were so close to

31 Joel Isaacson, "Constable, Duranty, Mallarmé, Impressionism, Plein Air, and Forgetting." *The Art Bulletin*. Sep. 1994: 429.

Hardy.

Hardy disliked literal translation of his subject to paper and considered this 'photographic writing as an inartistic species of literary produce.'³² In one of his notebook entries Hardy comments on the Impressionists' ability to capture the extra quality present in a scene:

I don't want to see landscapes, i.e., scenic paintings of them, because I don't want to see the original realities – as optical effects, that is. I want to see the deeper reality underlying the scenic, the expression of what are sometimes called abstract imaginings. [...] The 'simply natural' is interesting no longer.³³

These qualities were present in the works of J. M. W. Turner, a Romantic painter from the turn of the 18th and 19th century, whose water-colours were thanks to the revolutionary portrayal of light considered a predecessor to Impressionist painting. Turner's water-colours indeed helped Hardy to grasp the concept of capturing the essence of scenes in a specific moment in time, and transform it into prose. He once said on their address that they are 'a landscape plus a man's soul.' Art for Hardy meant a process of looking at a scene, noticing that which appeals to his personal aesthetics and then expressing it in an original manner own to his artistic creed; in his own words “what you carry away from a scene is the true feature to grasp.”³⁴ Vigar comments on the similarity between the way a scene is presented by Hardy and by the Impressionists:

The picture itself is contained in a very few words, but the important thing is that we do see it and we do feel it. In the same way, an Impressionistic painting can convey a whole moving landscape, breeze blowing, water

32 Pinion 143.

33 Millgate 285.

34 Smart 278.

rippling, sunlight flickering; and when one looks closely there are only crude brush-strokes and strange combination of colour.³⁵

The statement that a writer creates a picture in the reader's head is not exclusive to Hardy, but his mental pictures do have an added significance that contributes to the meaning the novel conveys.

It was Hardy's belief that in depicting reality, the emphasis should not lie so much in realism and detailing as in characterizing the scene by the means of several carefully highlighted details that capture the atmosphere of the scene as a whole. Vigar remarks that for Hardy, the plot should be neither "a succession of ordinary credible events"³⁶ nor a construction that ultimately carries a didactic message, but "a thread on which to display his pictures of life, his 'seemings' or glimpses into 'the heart of the matter'."³⁷ The effect of such a theory applied to a text results in the fact that "one 'sees' what one is reading; the words paint some kind of corresponding image in the mind. Yet with Hardy, often, the 'picture' of the whole novel is strangely intense and at the same time strangely incomplete."³⁸

The Impressionists also employed a different angle on the subject portrayed; it is interrelated with their opinion that the artist should express himself through his pictures and not listen to rules dictated to him from outside. The scene is captured as closely to nature as possible, allowing the frame to 'cut through flesh'; this innovative practice originates also in the fact that the painters were threatened by the spreading popularity of photography, which they had to compete with in the categories of time spent on creating an image and its truthfulness to life. The practice of cutting through flesh' is exemplified by the scene in Mrs. Yeobright's attic containing Thomasin's aunt, whose face is indistinctly hovering above the floor of the loft, while her body is out of the picture.

35 Vigar 24.

36 Vigar 8.

37 Vigar 8.

38 Vigar 13.

3. Pictorial Techniques in *The Return of the Native*

Apart from using some principles of pictorial art in a theoretical sense, Hardy also applied actual painting techniques to his narrative; Vigar says that he “not only employs techniques comparable with those of the painter - chiaroscuro, perspective, effects of distancing and balance, for example - but also relies largely on artistic form in that he seems to present not simply a picture of life, but a picture of a picture of life.”³⁹ This leads to one of the drawbacks of Hardy's style, and that is the passivity of characterization. It is natural for Hardy to characterize by stopping the action and describing the presented characters “as they are seen, not as they exist,”⁴⁰ as opposed to characterization through action.

According to Mallet, “Hardy's mode of seeing generated characteristic techniques and emphases,”⁴¹ like the frequent use of certain details, light being among them. He often uses words that have something to do with lighting, like 'bright, shine, glitter, glow, glimmer, glisten, rays, beams, blaze, luminous, radiant, dazzling...!', which are not meant to be just an embellishment, but a means of conveying a meaning.

As Smart notes, Hardy's particular attention to light stemmed from his study of baroque painting, particularly Rembrandt. From this influence, Hardy appropriated the baroque lighting “on account of its inherent poetry, but also because it suggests the littleness of human experience in the midst of vast outer spaces of darkness,”⁴² a notion in total accordance with Hardy's description of characters in the context of Egdon Heath.

Light or its absence are often the chief influences on the psychology and emotions of the characters. For example “darkness leads us to dramatise our feeling, daylight restores

39 Vigar 15.

40 Vigar 38.

41 Michael Irwin, “Seen in a New Light: Illumination and Irradiation on Thomas Hardy” ed. Phillip Mallet (Macmillan, 2003) 2.

42 Smart 273.

perspective.”⁴³ The effect usually represents the psychological state, rather than being its cause. An example of the tricks nighttime plays on the minds of the characters is in the following scene:

The door was ajar, and a riband of bright firelight fell over the ground without. As Eustacia crossed the firebeams she appeared for an instant as distinct as a figure in a phantasmagoria—a creature of light surrounded by an area of darkness; the moment passed, and she was absorbed in night again.⁴⁴

The victim of such a vision is Susan Nunsuch, who is influenced by a number of superstitions besides this completely natural phenomenon. Sometimes the light can illumine objects or creatures that are the solution to the character's problem.

Chiaroscuro, or the contrast between light and dark, is indeed one of the essential methods used by Hardy, which enables him to highlight important details and also changes our perception of persons and objects in the context of their environment. The details often gain a symbolic significance with the progress of the text, lending it a distinct feel of the method of the Pre-Raphaelites. Moreover, frequent references to sunlight, moonlight and firelight induce higher cohesion in the novel.

Another of Hardy's favourite techniques is “a continual progression from the vague and obscure and general into the increasingly particular and identifiable. [...] He creates an impression of continually telescoping vision, moving swiftly in a series of illuminated glances while the unimportant fades away into the background.”⁴⁵ The effects of distancing can be illustrated by the frequent portrayal of the characters in the context of a wide, all-encompassing landscape, while an uncommon perspective often results from “a different

43 Irwin 4.

44 Hardy, RN 415.

45 Vigar 28.

angle on actuality' achieved by 'effects of disproportioning and apparent exaggeration.'⁴⁶ In this way, Hardy can play with the scene according to his desired effect on the reader.

3.1 The introduction to the heath

An example of this technique would be the introduction to Egdon Heath, which starts in the following description of the vast landscape and musings on its beauty. These are followed by focusing on the two travellers on the road, through whose eyes we see the scene of the main plot - Mistover Knap and the valley beneath it. We are introduced to the heath as a background to the novel. It is clear that it will play an important role in both the plot as well as the actual shaping of the characters' minds and thus influencing their actions. A November afternoon offers us a sombre atmosphere of the slowly coming night. The heath with its meagre vegetation grows dark first, and stands in vivid contrast to the pale sky. It seems like the heath is already immersed in night while the air appears to be in full daylight. This situation poses a dilemma for a character placed on the scene – the earth suggests night, while the sky says daylight. The scene creates illusions, while the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

This opposition sets the theme for the whole novel: the contrast between illusion and reality, and how visual arts help Hardy to convey this message. As Vigar points out, “the heath, in its essence, embodies the aesthetic principle which binds structure and theme together in the novel.”⁴⁷ Moreover, this scene shows us the darkness emanated by the heath naturally merging with that of the evening, creating a unity:

The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as heavens precipitated it. And so the obscurity in the air and the obscurity in

46 Vigar 44-45.

47 Vigar 126.

the land closed together in a black fraternization towards which each advanced half-way.⁴⁸

The merging of land and sky without a distinguishable horizon is a frequent feature on later paintings by Turner as well as on landscapes by Whistler, whose mysterious quality is achieved exactly by using slightly different hues of predominantly earthly colours for land and sky that create a chromatic spectrum.

The culprit of the illusive play is the heath, which assumes quite active role in the plot:

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.⁴⁹

It has the power to play tricks on people's minds and its nature is very elusive. However, it can be understood; it can be felt best when it is seen only indistinctly and observed in a certain period of time. The heath is described from this obscure vantage point, which allows only for a vague description of what it actually looks like: its slopes are neither too steep nor too flat, and except for the road and the barrow completely barren of the influence of a man. Instead, we get a strong sense of the atmosphere, as from an Impressionistic painting.

The name of the first chapter of the novel 'A Face Upon Which Time Makes But Little Impression' is suggestive of Hardy thinking about the heath in an anthropomorphic way. Jonathan Wike mentions that "seeing a face in a landscape was instinctive for Hardy [who] felt strongly that it was the human figure that gave the landscape definition and made it meaningful."⁵⁰ For example in the second chapter, the arriving Captain Vye sees the white road in front of him as it "bisected that vast dark surface like the parting-line on a head of

48 Hardy, RN 4.

49 Hardy, RN 3.

50 Wike 460.

black hair”⁵¹ Richard Bevis adds on the address of anthropomorphic imagery that “the idea that aspects of Great landscape are parts of Earth's body has struck many travellers, sometimes as a revelation. [...] In English literature, the idea is as old as Donne's 'An Anatomy of the World'.”⁵² Egdon Heath is often considered a character in the novel, as it has a profound influence on the happenings; it is even compared to a man:

like man, [it is] slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony. As with some persons who have long lived apart, solitude seemed to look out of its countenance. It had a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities.⁵³

A more detailed description of the landscape follows with the introduction of the solitary walker, the elderly Captain Vye, through whose eyes we are getting to know the landscape. F. E. Halliday notices that this type of introduction is common to many of Hardy's novels. He found out that Hardy was inspired by a painting of 17th century landscape painter of the Dutch school, Meindert Hobbema, in which he noticed how “the presence of a human figure infuses emotion onto quite commonplace objects,”⁵⁴ including a landscape.

Moreover, in describing the local highway, which nearly coincides with the old Roman Via Inceniana, Hardy symbolically illuminates its surface against the darkened heath and thus lends it significance into the future development of the novel. The road is the chief means of change in Egdon Heath; it brings the reddleman Venn, who plays a rather significant role in relation to the main characters, and also Clym, who causes a quick change of the balance in the relationships between Eustacia, Wildeve and Thomasin.

After the old man meets the reddleman and his van with its mysterious load, the function of the observer of the landscape passes to the reddleman. He shows us a landscape

51 Hardy, RN 8.

52 Bevis 355.

53 Hardy, RN 6.

54 Halliday 81.

that could be found on any academic painting: “hillocks, pits, ridges, acclivities, one behind the other, till all was finished by a high hill cutting against the still light sky.”⁵⁵ Such an aesthetically pleasing arrangement of articles catches the traveller's eye, but ultimately it stays on the most important focal point of the scene, the barrow.

At first it is compared to a 'wart on an Atlantean brow', then an additional shape on top of it is discerned as a spike on a helmet, or an imaginary Celt who might have built the barrow. In other words, the way we look at the figure influences what we actually see. In a similar way, the main characters of the novel see in others only what they want to see, which leads them to misunderstanding and an inevitable tragic end. This scene has further significance in the field of aesthetics; its subject and the way it is portrayed is distinctly academic. Only with the figure standing on the barrow is the scene aesthetically pleasing, as it gives it the necessary finish: “The scene was strangely homogeneous, in that the vale, the upland, the barrow, and the figure above it amounted only to unity. Looking at this or that member of the group was not observing a complete thing, but a fraction of a thing.”⁵⁶ Hardy also stresses the immobility of the scene and thus even further emphasizes its picture-like quality, which is immediately lost as soon as its participants move.

3.2 The bonfires are lit

Jonathan Wike comments on the way Hardy employs light in a description of a scene:

Clearly light and dark are as important symbolically to him as to other writers, but the more telling opposition in his natural images is that between haziness and clear definition. A description commonly begins out of focus and 'monochromatic' or 'neutral', and then resolves into sharp chiaroscuro.⁵⁷

55 Hardy, RN 13.

56 Hardy, RN 13.

57 Wike 460.

This method can be exemplified by the passage when Egdon Heath is gradually awakened from darkness by the bonfires:

[...] a change took place in the mass of shade which denoted the distant landscape. Red suns and tufts of fire one by one began to arise, flecking the whole country round [...]. Some were distant, and stood in a dense atmosphere, so that bundles of pale straw-like beams radiated around them in the shape of a fan. Some were large and near, glowing scarlet-red from the shade, like wounds in a black hide. Some were Maenadas, with winy faces and blown hair. These tintured the silent bosom of the clouds above them and lit up their ephemeral caves, which seemed thenceforth to become scalding caldrons.⁵⁸

The use of contrasting colours, the dots of red flashing through the dark shades of grey, also resembles Turner's frequent theme of fire, or Whistler's Nocturnes, in which solitary specs of light dot the foggy night. The fire becomes an important device in describing the barrow and its visitors

The bonfires are already prepared and set on fire; this is the time when Egdon Heath is in an indirect way connected with the outside world. The celebration of Guy Fawkes' Night dots the darkened landscape with large or smallish fires, making the people aware of other communities in the near parishes, bringing them out of their isolation. The fires are burning on the hills, illuminating just the immediate surroundings of the people present, while leaving the heath below in absolute darkness. The people above are in terms of their standing likened to gods, but at the same time their inevitable blindness to everything that is happening beyond the reach of the firelight is hinted at.

The firelight gives opportunity to the baroque play of light and shade, and evokes

⁵⁸ Hardy, RN 16.

especially Rembrandt's nighttime scenes, although the actual painting technique is described as Dürer's: "The brilliant lights and sooty shades which struggled upon the skin and clothes of the persons standing round caused their lineaments and general contours to be drawn with Düreresque vigour and dash."⁵⁹ The people seem to be living in similar illusions as the firelight creates for the whole time of the novel - it prevents an observer from discovering "the permanent moral expression of each face" due to everything being unstable, "quivering as leaves, evanescent as lightning."⁶⁰

The following description shows how light has an immense power in exaggerating and distorting features into grotesque shapes:

Shadowy eye-sockets, deep as those of a death's head, suddenly turned into pits of lustre; a lantern jaw was cavernous, then it was shining; wrinkles were emphasized to ravines, or obliterated entirely by a changed ray. [...] Those whom Nature had depicted as merely quaint became grotesque, the grotesque became preternatural; for all was in extremity.⁶¹

Firelight plays tricks on the minds and causes the characters to behave irrationally; e.g. Christian Cantle cannot at first recognize Mrs Yeobright in the light of the bonfire and hides before her, and the appearance of the reddleman by the light of a lantern lends his scary reputation more than a grain of truth in the eyes of young Johnny Nunsuch.

As was already established, showing constitutes the principal mode of narration. Hardy often uses phrases which draw attention to the watching or perceiving of a scene, for example "Had a looker-on been posted in the immediate vicinity of the barrow"⁶² or "Attentive observation of their brightness, colour, and length of existence would have revealed the quality of the material burnt"⁶³ or "Had the reddleman been watching he might have

59 Hardy, RN 18.

60 Hardy, RN 18.

61 Hardy, RN 18.

62 Hardy, RN 15.

63 Hardy, RN 30.

recognized.”⁶⁴ Such phrases help the readers feel involved in the happening by identifying themselves with the lookers-on or travellers, and also draw attention to the actual act of perceiving the scene, similar to looking at a picture.

Furthermore, Hardy also employs windows as frames for scenes which are important for the further development of the plot. For example when the village men visit Wildeve's inn to congratulate him on the supposed wedding, someone draws attention to the large bonfire visible through the window:

All glances went through the window, and nobody noticed that Wildeve disguised a brief, tell-tale look. Far away up the sombre valley of heath, and to the right of Rainbarrow, could indeed be seen the light, small, but steady and persistent as before.⁶⁵

The choice of the scene seen through the window accentuates not just any fire in the neighbourhood village, but a fire that functions as a signal for secret meetings between Wildeve and Eustacia, whose relationship creates one of the central themes in the plot. The group of villagers around Grandfather Cattle and Timothy Fairway notices the fire that is burning at Mistover Knap in front of Captain's Vye's cottage; in the spirit of the misunderstanding that the firelight is creating, they think that Captain Vye lit the fire purely for his own pleasure to show the other villagers that he is better than them. They are not aware that its true purpose is to bring together two secret lovers, one of which was supposed to be married to another woman the very same day. Similarly, when Mrs Yeobright visits her son's and Eustacia's house for the first time, the lasting image she takes away from her unsuccessful attempt to contact her son is the face of a woman in a window, refusing her entry.

64 Hardy, RN 59.

65 Hardy, RN 55.

3.3 Eustacia is introduced

The description of Eustacia waiting at Mistover Knap by her fire is laden with symbolist meaning: she is holding a telescope and an hourglass, which are symbols of space and time. In the spirit of the painters from the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, she is described as a very mysterious woman:

The handkerchief which had hooded her head was now a little thrown back, her face being somewhat elevated. A profile was visible against the dull monochrome of cloud around her; and it was as though side shadows from the features of Sappho and Mrs. Siddons had converged upwards from the tomb to form an image like neither but suggesting both. [...] The light raised by her breath had been very fitful, and a momentary irradiation of flesh was all that it had disclosed of her face.⁶⁶

A Gothic influence is visible in the description of Eustacia in the fusion of the images of Sappho, who, according to a legend, jumped off a cliff from unhappy love, and Mrs Siddons, a famous British actress specially skilful in tragedies, both emerging as from a tomb.

Eustacia is hurrying towards the fire, and as she approaches it, she sees “A white mast, fitted up with spars and other nautical tackle, [which] could be seen rising against the dark clouds whenever the flames played brightly enough to reach it. Altogether the scene had much the appearance of a fortification upon which had been kindled a beacon fire.”⁶⁷ This vision created by the play of firelight on objects is significant for Eustacia's condition: she is the prisoner of the heath, but the light of the fire (which may be the symbol of her love for Wildeve) is drawing her towards it and preventing her escape. F. E. Halliday says that passion is the major theme in *The Return of the Native*; this fact is emphasized by the use of clever lighting to illuminate the needed detail. In this case it is the fire, which draws near the moths

⁶⁶ Hardy, RN 62-3.

⁶⁷ Hardy, RN 64.

and consumes them, similarly as love destroys the lives of three people. For Eustacia, passionate love was the only distraction from boredom: “A blaze of love, and extinction, was better than a lantern glimmer of the same which should last long years.”⁶⁸ The words 'blaze' and 'lantern glimmer' again evoke the metaphor of the moths attracted by light.

An unforgettable description of Eustacia presents the chapter 'Queen of Night'. She is presented as “the raw material of a divinity” with “passions and instincts which make a model goddess, “who wouldn't get lost even on Olympus,” with “pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries”⁶⁹ and whose lip-curves “one had fancied [...] were mostly lurking underground in the South as fragments of forgotten marbles,” and whose mouth “formed with almost geometric precision the curve so well known in the arts of design as the cima-recta, or ogee,”⁷⁰ a shape used in architecture that was very well known to Hardy. Her head was framed by the moon,

an old helmet upon it, a diadem of accidental dewdrops round her brow, would have been adjuncts sufficient to strike the note of Artemis, Athena, or Hera respectively, with as close an approximation to the antique as that which passes muster on many respected canvases.⁷¹

Ian Gregor deems Hardy's portrait as

overdone [and] out of all proportion to the young woman of the novel. Had these qualities been more related to her actions – and they are often such that this seems impossible – or to Clym's impressions of her, she might have been more the goddess Hardy imagined her.⁷²

Moreover, this description evokes Walter Pater's famous description of the picture of La

Gioconda by Leonardo Da Vinci:

68 Hardy, RN 79.

69 Hardy, RN 75.

70 Hardy, RN 75.

71 Hardy, RN 77.

72 Pinion 33.

Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias.⁷³

The painting of Mona Lisa was rediscovered in the 19th century by the Symbolists, for whom it became a symbol of the mysterious woman, just like Eustacia is for the reader. According to Pater, the painting is very suggestive, although the symbolism is of a refined nature. He further emphasizes the character of the mythic woman as follows: “She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave.”⁷⁴

It was suggested that the colourful language used to describe Eustacia is full of similes, hyperboles and rich images of wide scope resembling the baroque prose. Ian Gregor brings this argument one step further:

At one level the baroque frame which Hardy put round his picture is a wry comment on the aspirations of his Queen of Night, but at the same time it is expressive of a consciousness trying to wrest a meaning out of a world where the 'clothing of the earth is primitive' and where 'swarthy monotony' predominates.⁷⁵

Eustacia herself is extreme:

73 Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (University of California, 1980) 99.

74 Pater 126.

75 Ian Gregor, *The Great Web, The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974) 88.

Thus it happened that in Eustacia's brain were juxtaposed the strangest assortment of ideas, from old time and from new. There was no middle distance in her perspective—romantic recollections of sunny afternoons on an esplanade, with military bands, officers, and gallants around, stood like gilded letters upon the dark tablet of surrounding Egdon. Every bizarre effect that could result from the random intertwining of watering-place glitter with the grand solemnity of a heath, was to be found in her. Seeing nothing of human life now, she imagined all the more of what she had seen.¹⁷⁶

She sees a mansion in her cottage, and resorts to idealizing Wildeve out of mere lack of a better subject or activity.

3.4 Clym is on the scene

The mummers' journey to Mrs Yeobright counts among one of the most striking scenes in the book. There is an emphasis on stark contrast between black and white:

the moon, though not more than half full, threw a spirited and enticing brightness upon the fantastic figures of the mumming band. [...] The masses of furze and heath to the right and left were dark as ever; a mere half-moon was powerless to silver such sable features as theirs.¹⁷⁷

The mummers took on different identities from the play about St. George, but Eustacia takes it one step further. She assumes three new identities; the first to conceal her womanhood in the identity of Charley's cousin, the second in the play's character of the Turkish knight, and the third, in the role of a male who in traditional relationships is the one to first find and approach his prospective bride. The lighting and colour contrast underline the importance of

76 Hardy, RN 78.

77 Hardy, RN 153.

the scene in terms of Eustacia's quest for the newly returned Clym. He is described in the manner of a painting by Rembrandt, which draws attention to the illumined parts of the picture, in this case Clym's face, while leaving the rest in dark obscurity. Eustacia, who has been thinking and dreaming about Clym the whole evening, has reached "such an extraordinary pitch of excitement [that] caused her to be influenced by the most commonplace man."⁷⁸ She has created an illusory image of Clym in her mind and is ready to act upon it and basically build her future on the dream. For her, appearance is reality.

According to Julie Grossman, "seeing represents the power to understand and to create fruitful love relationships. Each character does his or her share of hidden observation, and the manner in which it is done enables us to understand the psychology behind their destinies."⁷⁹ The scene when Eustacia sees the newly arriving Clym through the telescope gives her enough distance to start indulging in a reverie right in the middle of the brambles, imagining a romantic affair.

In terms of character, Eustacia and Clym are described as exact opposites: "Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath, and translate them into loves, and you have the heart of Clym."⁸⁰ They are like black and white, the colours that accompanied the scene of their first meeting. However, they are alike in some aspects: Clym with his idealistic plan to set up a school on Egdon Heath, and Eustacia with her dreams of life in Paris. One of their rendezvous takes place during the eclipse of the moon; Clym is observing the dark shadow moving across the whitely glowing moon while he is waiting for Eustacia. When she asks him whether he missed her, she reproaches him for having another occupation which makes him blind to her during their separation. This is an omen of the future development of the plot in which Clym turns blind, as well as of the inability of to see the true selves of each

78 Hardy, RN 162.

79 Julie Grossman, "Thomas Hardy and the Role of Observer." *ELH*. Autumn 1989: 631.

80 Hardy, RN 205.

other. Moreover, Eustacia keeps asking Clym about Paris while he is waiting for an answer to his marriage proposal. The strange thing is that on his walk back home, he realizes for a moment that she is in love with a different Clym that is not real: “[Clym] could not but perceive at moments that she loved him rather as a visitant from a gay world to which she rightly belonged than as a man with a purpose opposed to that recent past of his which so interested her.”⁸¹

Their love is often illumined by different kinds of light – be it either moonlight, as mentioned above, or sunlight, as in the following example:

They formed a very comely picture of love at full flush, as they walked along the valley that late afternoon, the sun sloping down on their right, and throwing their thin spectral shadows, tall as poplar trees, far out across the furze and fern.⁸²

In this scene, their shadows reach far beyond their actual outlines, like their dreams exceed the bounds of the life on the heath. As Eustacia leaves, the “luminous rays wrapped her up in increasing distance”, and as the sun is also setting, Clym is left overpowered in “the dead flat of the scenery”⁸³. He sees the scene as a mirror of his life which becomes equal to even the smallest being under the sun, and realizes that his marriage to Eustacia is perhaps too hasty. This doubt, symbolised by the gradual disappearance of light, springs from his uncertainty about Eustacia being the right choice of a wife for him, as he will bear responsibility for the both of them.

It is symptomatic that after Eustacia's strife with Mrs Yeobright and her begging Clym to move away to Paris, Clym loses his sight. He is forced to earn his money by hard work. Disguised by leather clothing and goggles, he toils among insects: “His familiars were

81 Hardy, RN 236.

82 Hardy, RN 243.

83 Hardy, RN 245.

creeping and winged things, and they seemed to enroll him in their band.”⁸⁴ Eustacia feels ashamed by Clym's descent on the social ladder, which widens the distance between the newly married pair. Clym's worsened appearance is in sharp contrast to her dreams which include a genteel, handsome man, not unlike Wildeve.

3.5 Wildeve reappears

The event of gypsying allows Eustacia to the full extent to shake off the depression from the fiasco of her marriage. Her dance with Wildeve gives her new vitality, while the atmosphere intoxicates all the people present:

The pale ray of evening lent a fascination to the experience. There is a certain degree and tone of light which tends to disturb the equilibrium of the senses, and to promote dangerously the tenderer moods; added to movement, it drives the emotions to rankness, the reason becoming sleepy and unperceiving in inverse proportion.⁸⁵

This emotional intoxication between Eustacia and Wildeve is emphasised by the strong contrast of the silvery moonshine and the dark heath:

The moon had now waxed bright and silvery, but the heath was proof against such illumination, and there was to be observed the striking scene of a dark, rayless tract of country under an atmosphere charged from its zenith to its extremities with whitest light. To an eye above them their two faces would have appeared amid the expanse like two pearls on a table of ebony.⁸⁶

The undillutable darkness of the heath indicates the smallness of human life and its impossibility to change the environment, like the white moonlight being unable to illumine

84 Hardy, RN 296.

85 Hardy, RN 307.

86 Hardy, RN 311.

the landscape. Similar to the two pearls on a table, both Eustacia and Wildeve have no firm roots on the heath – they go to and fro, and are likely to fall off the heath, which can mean both their moving away or dying. As is their love symbolised by the various forms of light, so are they likened to moths who are lured into the light. Wildeve uses an old signal of his coming to Eustacia – a moth caught in his palm which is subsequently released through the window towards Eustacia's burning candle. Like the moths, the lovers find death in their passion.

During Wildeve's visit to Alderworth, Eustacia has an opportunity to compare the sleeping Clym with Damon; she says to Wildeve:

Ah! you don't know how differently he appeared when I first met him, though it is such a little while ago. His hands were as white and soft as mine; and look at them now, how rough and brown they are! His complexion is by nature fair, and that rusty look he has now, all of a colour with his leather clothes, is caused by the burning of the sun.⁸⁷

She complains of being deceived by Yeobright, but in fact she only listened to what she wanted to hear.

3.6 The journey to the end

When Clym visits Eustacia after his finding out about the circumstances of his mother's death, he stands behind her, looking at her in the mirror. His face is described as “ashy, haggard and terrible.”⁸⁸ These qualities suddenly invade Eustacia's face rosy from recent sleep, and she ceases to play with her hair, which fall in dark tresses on her white nightgown while still framing her white face. They cannot ever understand each other – they are in some ways opposites of each other, like black and white. Eustacia with her hate of the heath and

⁸⁷ Hardy, RN 331-332.

⁸⁸ Hardy, RN 384.

dreams of a life in more spectacular environment, and Clym with his hearty, although idealistic, relationship to the heath, cannot have more different views on life. Her love is bright as a flame, but also fickle, while his love lasts forever and lacks loftiness. Their inability to communicate, symbolised by their looking at each other through the mirror, shows also in Eustacia at first refusing to justify herself of Clym's accusations, and in Clym interpreting the newly learned facts of his mother's death in a certain way. She says: "You deceived me—not by words, but by appearances, which are less seen through than words."⁸⁹ She sees in him a romantic hero who just arrived from a fairy town named France. This again exemplifies the way Eustacia perceives the world – she interprets signs along her own picture of a desirable life.

The relationship between Eustacia and Clym is to a certain degree mirrored by Wildeve's and Thomasin's relationship. For Thomasin, the heath is a "grim old place" which is "nice to walk on," while it is a jail for Wildeve. A nicely fitting example of the difference between Thomasin and Eustacia follows:

To her there were not, as to Eustacia, demons in the air, and malice in every bush and bough. The drops which lashed her face were not scorpions, but prosy rain; Egdon in the mass was no monster whatever, but impersonal open ground. Her fears of the place were rational, her dislikes of its worst moods reasonable. At this time it was in her view a windy, wet place, in which a person might experience much discomfort, lose the path without care, and possibly catch cold.⁹⁰

As Vigar points out, references to light are "often used by Hardy to describe a character's state of mind."⁹¹ The description of the fatal night of Eustacia's planned flight from

89 Hardy, RN 389.

90 Hardy, RN 431.

91 Vigar 32.

Egdon corresponds to Eustacia's feelings: she is disconsolate and sees her salvation in flight from the source of her unhappiness, but at the same time is to a certain point of time prepared to return to Clym in case he contacted her. The scene goes as follows: "The gloom of the night was funereal; all nature seemed clothed in crape. The spiky points of the fir trees behind the house rose into the sky like the turrets and pinnacles of an abbey."⁹² The word funereal alludes to the final outcome of the night, while the association of the forest with an abbey symbolizes the imprisonment of Eustacia on the heath. The absence of any moonlight inspires in the traveller's mind "nocturnal scenes of disaster in the chronicles of the world, on all that is terrible and dark in history and legend"⁹³ and reminds him of similar scenes from Gothic novels. Hardy predicts here the tragedy in the Shadwater Weir in referring to legends, whose subject becomes the love affair of Eustacia and Wildeve. Eustacia's chaos in mind perfectly reflects the chaos of the outside world, which is at the mercy of torrents of rain, strong winds and complete darkness.

The description of Eustacia's lifeless form employs several shades of whiteness, ranging from pallor to lightness itself. Her black hair are freer than ever before, which may also signify Eustacia's final break from her jail – the heath. The expression on her face supports this interpretation, as her mouth froze in a pleasant expression while her face emanated stateliness "which had been almost too marked for a dweller in a country domicile had at last found an artistically happy background."⁹⁴

92 Hardy, RN 418.

93 Hardy, RN 418.

94 Hardy, RN 446.

4. References to art

As Millgate says, “Hardy strove to make *The Return of the Native* an unmistakable work of art.”⁹⁵ Hardy pursued art

both for its own sake and as the source of materials and perhaps even of techniques relevant to his own work. Many of the references to art in *The Return of the Native* belong with that somewhat obtrusive classical apparatus by which he sought to elevate the novel above the common run of the contemporary fiction.⁹⁶

Some critics even thought Hardy's allusions to particular paintings are just a form of 'academic pretentiousness' which Hardy used to show off his knowledge of art, and thought little of its significance in the context of the narrative method. However, Vigar sees in Hardy's allusions an important stylistic tool: “Hardy's use of such references is so consistent that it should not be dismissed lightly. Most obviously, his basic intention is quite simply to clarify the image he is intending to convey.”⁹⁷ For example the description of the difference between Eustacia's and one of the mummers' rendition of a speech: “It was the same thing, yet how different. Like in form, it had the added softness and finish of a Raffaele after Perugino, which, while faithfully reproducing the original subject, entirely distances the original art.”⁹⁸

It is also important to distinguish between Hardy's earlier and later novels; the early novels contain the majority of the references and their “emphasis is on external technicalities of colour and feature,” relies on “clear visual memory,” but to some “may seem a little better than a pedantic hindrance to a reader unfamiliar with the paintings.”⁹⁹ The later works provide more creative art allusions which underline “the deeper emotions or inner realities of

95 Millgate 198.

96 Millgate 203.

97 Vigar 16.

98 Hardy, RN 147.

99 Pinion 195-196.

experience.”¹⁰⁰ F. B. Pinion also thinks that Hardy's knowledge of art helped him with the actual creation of scenes, both landscape and human. An example of such function may be the following passage describing Mrs Yeobright's view of the world:

Communities were seen by her as from a distance; she saw them as we see the throngs which cover the canvases of Sallaert, Van Alsloot, and others of that school—vast masses of beings, jostling, zigzagging, and processioning in definite directions, but whose features are indistinguishable by the very comprehensiveness of the view.¹⁰¹

Ian Gregor, who looks on the matter from the point of view of reader-response theory, is of the opinion that Hardy's references to art

are employed as a means of altering the reader's response, so that he is kept moving, in the way that the novel itself is constantly moving, from a dramatic to a contemplative mood, and then back again. The allusions are one of the means through which Hardy keeps us alert to the mediating consciousness of the author, which is always integral to his meaning.¹⁰²

Gregor regards the allusions to have more a “dramatic function rather than a descriptive one.”¹⁰³

Hardy himself thought that novels are read not only for their presentation, but for the accidents and appendages of narrative, and such are of more kinds than one: “excursions into various philosophies, [...] didactic reflection, [...] trifles of useful knowledge, statistics, queer historic fact, [...]or quotations from ancient and other authors [...]”¹⁰⁴

100 Pinion 196.

101 Hardy, RN 223.

102 Gregor 88.

103 Gregor 88.

104 Thomas Hardy, *The Profitable Reading of Fiction*. ed. Michael Millgate (Oxford, 2001)77.

5. Attention to Colours

Hardy was also unusually sensitive to colours as well as the way light fell on them, either brightening or darkening them. He was aware of a fairly contemporary colour theory by Eugene Chevreul, whose book *The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colours and Their Application to the Arts* (1839)¹⁰⁵ directly influenced the modern group of French painters in their understanding of colour. Chevreul's work focused on the painting of nature; a faithful reproduction was supposed to separate the effects of light and chiaroscuro from those of colour contrast.

Hardy's fascination with colour is visible already in the first paragraph of *The Return of the Native* – we see Egdon Heath in the time of twilight, as it “embrowned itself, moment by moment. Overhead the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky was as a tent which had the whole heath as a floor.”¹⁰⁶ The everywhere present colour brown is endlessly intensified in contrast to the white clouds. The heath changes its colour according to the time of the year; the spring is represented by “the green or young-fern period,” then follows the summer, when the sun 'fires' the crimson heather to scarlet, then comes the autumn, “the brown period, when the heathbells and ferns would wear the russet tinges of evening; to be in turn displaced by the dark hue of the winter period, representing night.”¹⁰⁷ The sun can awaken all sorts of colours on the heath as it streams

from between copper-coloured and lilac clouds, stretched out in flats beneath a sky of pale soft green. All dark objects on the earth that lay towards the sun were overspread by a purple haze, against which groups of wailing gnats shone out, rising upwards and dancing about like sparks of fire.¹⁰⁸

105 Richard Ash, *The Impressionists And Their Art* (London: Orbis Publishing, 1983) 10.

106 Hardy, RN 3.

107 Hardy, RN 281.

108 Hardy, RN 244.

It almost seems as if the heath caught fire from the sun. Such vivid colours imply a rich life on the heath and thus stand in contrast of Eustacia's and Wildeve's negative outlook on it. Their time of appearance on the heath is at night, when the gloominess corresponds with their inner feelings.

This detailed attention to colours gains more significance in relation to the impressionists' emphasis on light and especially on the way light changes both the colours and the objects seen by the painter. Working with slight changes of hues of colours was one of the main themes of Claude Monet, especially his cycles depicting the same objects in different light conditions, namely the Rouen cathedral, haystacks or waterlilies. Hardy's Egdon Heath, depicted in all times of the year, reminds one of such cycles.

Some characters are connected with a particular colour, for example the old man coming through the valley, whom we later identify as Captain Vye, is described as 'faded' in terms of colour, which yet emphasizes his age and experience. In sharp contrast to the colourlessness of the old man stands the flaming red spring van with the reddleman dressed in the same colour as well as being completely permeated with it. As he is constantly on the move, Diggory Venn has uprooted himself from the local community and his strange vocation is scorned even by the lowest of workers, mainly because his appearance distinguishes him so clearly from everyone else. His purpose in the plot is mainly to appear in times of imminent crises and act on the behalf of the good. In accordance with the significance of Venn's actions is the colour red, whose inherent meaning is importance and power.

Eustacia also describes Wildeve in terms of colours, or rather their spectrum: "You are a chameleon, and now you are at your worst colour."¹⁰⁹ Playing the virtuous lover on two women, then choosing the less loved one to have at least some wife, only to later return to the former mistress again is indeed spineless and cannot be left unpunished. Eustacia's soul is

109 Hardy, RN 72.

described to be 'flamelike', with the sparks going on and off in her eyes. This again indicates her inconstant character, which is ruled by passion, and which leads her from Wildeva to Clym and back to Wildeva.

Peter J. Casagrande notices a distinct current of imagery associated with colour:

There is a chromatic pattern which associates Eustacia and the Heath with a vital darkness, blackness or redness, and Clym, Mrs Yeobright, their factotum Christian Cantle and their white fenced house at Bloom's End with sterile, blighting whiteness and light.¹¹⁰

This distinction is a part of the many-layered dualism, including the antitheses Nature versus Civilization, Pagan versus Christian, Body versus Mind, on which *The Return of the Native* is built.

110 P. J. Casagrande, "The Shifted "Centre of Altruism" in The Woodlanders: Thomas Hardy's "Return of a Native"." *ELH*. Mar. 1978: 113-114.

6. Conclusion

The Return of the Native has proven to be a great example of the use of pictorial art in literature. Having been created in the middle of the second half of the 19th century, it became a mirror of the contemporary development of art. Not only does it use some principles from Academism, drawing heavily on the powerful impressions elicited by the sublime and the picturesque, but also it is inspired by Impressionism and a completely new point of view on the subject portrayed. Hardy is also influenced by the baroque play of light and shade, as well as by the symbolism of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Reading the novel is like going through a gallery where the subjects of all paintings of different styles are related to one plot.

Hardy has shown us several ways of incorporating a clear visual image carrying a meaning into a text. Firstly, it can be a direct reference to a picture or a painter, which helps Hardy to create a more detailed image of a scene in the reader's head, in case he or she knows the picture or the painter. Secondly, he uses methods of artistic styles in portrayal of characters and scenes to enhance particular qualities. Most striking is his obsession with lighting, which binds the structure of the novel together. It allows for a very original style of writing that leaves a long-lasting impression with the reader. Moreover, light and its absence emphasizes the central theme of the novel, the contrast between illusion and reality. The way a scene is lit influences the way characters perceive the world around them as well as the way they behave. Frequent references to light suggest a strong influence of impressionism, but sometimes verge on the point of being melodramatic, which is in accordance with the plot. Thirdly, the novel serves as a vehicle for conveying Hardy's notions on art and aesthetics, especially on the development of the category of the beautiful.

Studying Hardy's background in pictorial arts and aesthetics made me more aware of the development of artistic styles as well as their interconnectedness with literature. The appealing quality of *The Return of the Native* rests on the fact that the extent to which Hardy

employs pictorial arts in his novels is so large that it incites one to delve deeper into this aspect of his writing and find out the reason why art is employed in particular scenes. Moreover, working on this thesis helped me with imagining and seeing a picture worth capturing not only on the pages of a book, but also in everyday life.

Bibliography:

- Hardy, Thomas. *The Return of the Native*. London: Penguin Books, 1994.
- Hardy, Thomas. *The Profitable Reading of Fiction*. in Millgate, Michael. *Thomas Hardy's Public Voice*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Ash, Richard. *The Impressionists And Their Art*. London: Orbis Publishing, 1983.
- Bevis, Richard. *Road to Egdon Heath : The Aesthetics of the Great in Nature*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999.
- Drabble, Margaret, ed. *The Genius of Thomas Hardy*. London: Weidelfeld and Nicolson, 1976.
- Gregor, Ian. *The Great Web, The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction*. London: Faber and Faber, 1974.
- Halliday, F. E. *Thomas Hardy: His Life and Work*. Somerset: Adams & Dart, 1972.
- Irwin, Michael. 'Seen in a New Light: Illumination and Irradiation on Thomas Hardy' in Mallet, Phillip, ed. *Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Millgate, Michael. *Thomas Hardy, A Biography*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.
- Pater, Walter. *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. University of California, 1980.
- Pinion, F.B. *A Hardy Companion, A Guide to the works of Thomas Hardy and their background*. London: Macmillan, 1968.
- Procházka, Hrbata. *Romantismus a Romantismy*. Praha: Karolinum, 2005.
- Vigar, Penelope. *The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality*. University of London: The Athlone Press, 1974.
- Casagrande, Peter J. 'The Shifted "Centre of Altruism" in The Woodlanders: Thomas Hardy's Third "Return of a Native".' *ELH*. Mar. 1978. 14 Apr 2010
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2872365>>
- Gold, Hazel. 'Painting and Representation in Two Nineteenth-Century Novels: Galdós's and Alas's Skeptical Appraisal of Realism.' *Hispania*. Dec. 1998. 24 Feb. 2009
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/345767>>
- Grossman, Julie. 'Thomas Hardy and the Role of Observer.' *ELH*. Autumn 1989. 14 Apr 2010
< <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2873200> >
- Isaacson, Joel. 'Constable, Duranty, Mallarmé, Impressionism, Plein Air, and Forgetting.' *The Art Bulletin*. Sep. 1994. 24 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3046037>>
- Smart, A. 'Pictorial Imagery in the Novels of Thomas Hardy.' *The Review of English Studies*. Aug 1961. 9 Jan.2009 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/512932>>

Wike, Jonathan. 'The World as Text in Hardy's Fiction.' *Nineteenth-Century Literature*. Mar. 1993.14 Apr 2010 < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2933784> >