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Nature in the Work of Thomas Hardy

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

V této práci se bude autorka věnovat dílu Thomase Hardyho. Jejím cílem bude prozkoumat postoj tohoto romanopisce k zobrazení krajiny a přírody. V úvodu autorka nastíní hlavní rysy nahlížení na přírodu romantickými umělci během 18. a 19. století. Srovná ho s vnímáním tohoto druhu prostředí stoupenci tzv. "naturalismu", se kterými je T. Hardy často srovnáván. Na tomto základě se v analytické části své práce zaměří na vybrané dílo T. Hardyho (Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native a Tess of the d'Urbervilles) s cílem zjistit, zda zobrazený postoj k přírodě zapadá spíše do romantického či naturalistického úzu. Práci završí kapitola, která z dílčích úsudků vyvodí obecnější závěr.

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ANNOTATION

The work focuses on the portrayal of nature in three novels by Thomas Hardy - *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *The Return of the Native*. The first part of this paper focuses on the historical and literary background of the 19th century Britain as well as on the features of two movements important for this thesis – naturalism, and romanticism. The aim of the paper is to analyze these novels, in the second part of this paper, and decide whether or not the author was influenced by naturalistic ideas of the 19th century, but also by the still remaining influence of the Romantic period.

KEY WORDS

Hardy, naturalism, romanticism, nature, landscape

NÁZEV

Příroda v díle Thomase Hardyho

ANOTACE

Tato práce se zabývá zobrazováním přírody ve vybraných třech románech Thomase Hardyho - *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* a *The Return of the Native*. První část se zabývá historickým a literárním pozadím devatenáctého století v Británii. Dále se soustředí na znaky dvou literárních směrů, které jsou důležité pro tuto práci, a to naturalismu a romantismu. Cílem této práce je ve druhé části analyzovat výše zmíněné romány a rozhodnout, zda byl autor ovlivněn jen naturalistickým myšlením devatenáctého století, nebo také stále trvajícím vlivem období romantismu.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Hardy, naturalismus, romantismus, příroda, krajina

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INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy was one of the most influential and inspiring authors of the late Victorian period. Although he aspired to be known for his poetry, the readers of the era enjoyed his novels much more, therefore today, Hardy is perceived mainly as a novelist. He is also considered a representative of naturalism and critical realism, as in some of his novels he focused on depicting the problems of the Victorian society. As the vast majority of his novels are situated in the semi-fictional region of Wessex, which covers a territory of southwest England, Hardy is also presented as a regional author. He repeatedly depicted this area with all its characteristic features, including the local dialect of its inhabitants, history, and traditions.

Hardy spent most of his life in Dorset situated in the region of South West England. Due to the enormous exposure of nature during his youth, he was able to understand the natural world and it enabled him to include his passion for nature in his poems and novels. Hardy's first literary inclination to nature can be observed in his very first poem "Domicilium" written in his teenage years, in which he describes his house in Higher Bockhampton, stressing its charming natural surroundings.¹ The natural background plays an important role in his writing, as in many of his novels it dramatically affects the development of the plot. Therefore his novels are predominantly rich in detailed, but picturesque descriptions of the natural world.

During the Victorian Era, there were many literary styles but as mentioned, Thomas Hardy is considered a representative of naturalism. While the Victorian Era was dominated by scientific theories and inventions, the first decades of the 19th century were marked by romantic writers and their sentiment based on feelings and imagination, depicting nature as a beautiful and caring force. As Hardy was born early after the beginning of the Victorian Era, the influence of the Romantic period was still very vivid throughout his life. Therefore it is possible that his perception of natural forces was influenced not only by naturalism but also romanticism.

The aim of this paper is to provide an analysis of three of his selected novels - *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *The Return of the Native*, and show the presence of romantic and naturalistic elements in depictions of natural sceneries. Another

¹ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928*, 1962, 4.

focus will be placed on the influence of natural forces on the development of the plot and will also examine the connection between nature and individual main characters.

This paper is divided into two main parts. The opening chapter concerns with the historical and literary background of the 19th century with the focus on the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the transformations that followed, especially in rural areas. The following chapter introduces the two significant aesthetic movements that are crucial for this paper – romanticism and naturalism, focusing on their typical features and perception of nature. This chapter will serve as a base for the second part of this thesis that concerns with the analysis of three novels by Thomas Hardy – *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *The Return of the Native*. This part will be divided into three chapters that will deal individually with each of these books. The focus will be placed on Hardy's portraying of the landscape and nature, but the characters' relationship to their environment will also be discussed, especially to show the presence of both romantic and naturalistic elements. The analysis will be supported by various excerpts from the novels.

1 19th CENTURY BRITAIN

The 19th century was an exceptional period marked by several important events, which contributed in many ways to the development of the world as it is known today. This period can be loosely divided into the Romantic period, which started during the last decades of the 18th century and was still visible during the first decades of the 19th century until the arrival of the Victorian Era, which started with the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837 and dominated till her death in 1901.

One of the crucial events of the period was the Industrial Revolution, which started in the late 1700s and early 1800s. This term refers to a period of time during which especially the British Empire underwent a significant “process of change from an agrarian and handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacturing.”² Several key inventions were presented, which changed and accelerated the process of production and led to the complete transformation of the British Empire. The invention of James Watt’s steam engine, for instance, blasted off the mechanical progress in innovations of other industries, especially in textile, steel, iron and coal mining.

It was indeed a period of a great boom of inventions and technological advancements, which resulted in new job opportunities in cities and began the process of urbanization. Before the revolution most of the population was situated in small villages dependent on agriculture, however, many farmers became bankrupt and had no other choice than to move to the city. To show the massiveness of this process, in 1770, for instance, only a fifth of the population lived in the cities, however, this number grew rapidly and by 1840s it was more than a half. The quick rise in population continued and by the end of the century, almost two-thirds of the whole population occupied the large towns and cities.³

The consequences of the revolution were most visible in rural areas. The landscape changed dramatically with the expansion of the railroad system, but also with the growing coal mining, steel, and wood industry. Since most of the population was situated in the cities now, the living conditions there were horrific resulting in the rise of criminality and high mortality of children.⁴ These changes in society and the negative backlash to the impacts of the Industrial Revolution not only on the countryside but also on the daily life of people led to

² “Industrial Revolution.” Britannica. Accessed February 3, 2017. www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution

³ Paul Poplawski, *English Literature in Context*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 311.

⁴ Chris Williams, *A Companion to Nineteenth Century Britain*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004, 297.

the assumptions that the city was a place of mischief and corrupted morals, thus, on the contrary, life in the countryside began to be seen as a more appreciated and pure, though highly idealised, place to live. Moreover, the longing for the beautiful unspoiled nature and nostalgic feelings for the past resulted in the increase of interest in mystery, imagination, and passion, which gave rise to the Romantic period. As the crucial topic of the Romantic writing was the relationship between mind and nature, nature was portrayed as the main theme of the writings for its unique function of a place where one could experience a deep connection to God.⁵ Romantic ideals were expressed mainly in poetry, especially ballads, and reflected the contemporary situation with rising interest in regional folklore and medieval literature. Romantics considered medieval times a period of great imagination through which one can reach better morals.⁶ Denis Diderot, for instance, stated that “nature has not made us evil; it is bad education, bad model, bad legislations that corrupt us”.⁷ Therefore it is necessary to get rid of these rules that spoil human minds and the most effective place to do so is in nature. The idealisation of the country life can be observed, for instance, in Wordsworth’s pastoral poem “Michael” (1800), in which the author describes the life of a struggling farmer who sends his son to the city, but when he returns he is corrupted and does not fit in the country life anymore.

It is impossible to define the exact borderline of when one aesthetic orientation or movement in literature and art started and when it ended, as they are intermingled and only rise and fall in their intensity. Thus, when Queen Victoria began her rule and the Victorian Era started, the romantic elements still prevailed and influenced the vast majority of writers as well as philosophers.

The Victorian Era was a period of great expansion in many areas. The British Empire grew in power as well as in population while enlarging their territory all over the world, especially in their colonies in Africa, India, and Asia.⁸ The colossal success and achievements of the Empire, however, affected the way the British perceived themselves and their position in the world. Murfin claims that today the Victorians are perceived as “prudish, hypocritical, stuffy, narrow-minded”⁹ people. Although this description is strongly generalized, it may be applied to some fragments of the society. Considering the public image of the period, it was believed that the British Empire was a country with very stable economy and was presented

⁵ Harry Blamires, *A Short History of English Literature*, Methuen&Co. Ltd, 1974, 232.

⁶ Blamires, *A Short History of English Literature*, 231.

⁷ Bert N Adams, R. A. Sydie, *Classical Sociological Theory*. Pine Forge Press, 2002, 11.

⁸ Poplawski, *English Literature in Context*, 424.

⁹ Murfin Ross, Ray Supryia M, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003, 533.

as the most evolved society, which is destined to rule the world and spread wisdom worldwide. On the other hand, the Victorian Era was a crucial period of progress and diversity, which enriched the human history, therefore their slightly egoistic attitude can be partially excused.

The second wave of Industrial Revolution helped the period to experience a huge expansion in the science field. The great interest in science was presented during the “Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations” in 1851, which introduced the greatest discoveries and innovations, mainly from Britain and its colonies.¹⁰ As mentioned, the Industrial Revolution still rose in power and contributed to the development of technologies that were later improved and are still used today. Sanders defines this period as “an age of conflicting explanations and theories, of scientific and economic confidence and of social and spiritual pessimism, of a sharpened awareness of the inevitability of progress and of deep disquiet as to the nature of the present.”¹¹ New theories, concerning, for instance, the principle of human race sure contributed to the development of the society, from which one of the crucial ones was proposed by Charles Darwin. With his publication of “On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection” in 1859 he shocked the society and changed their view on the world as they knew it, presenting his theory of the evolution by natural selection and “survival of the fittest”. He introduced the idea that progress in evolution is dependent on the process of natural selection and only the strongest individuals are able to survive due to their ability to adapt to the changing and developing environment.¹² Fleischmann mentions that these theories influenced the thinking of the higher social classes of the period, which used them to defend the idea that the poor and less fortunate in the society should not be helped as it would be against this natural law.¹³

Apart from easier and quicker transportation provided by the expansion of the railroad system, it also caused a rapid spread of literary texts throughout the country. Due to the technological progress and rise of population, the society became more educated and the increase of literacy created perfect conditions for the birth of mass reading public.¹⁴ New technologies in print helped to accelerate the production of books and newspapers, which led

¹⁰ Poplawski, *English Literature in Context*, 419.

¹¹ Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, Clarendon Press, 1994, 399.

¹² Ruth Fleischmann, *Survey of English Literature in its Historical Context*, University of Koblenz – Landau, 2013, 54.

¹³ Fleischmann, *Survey of English Literature in its Historical Context*, 54.

¹⁴ William Vaughn Moody, and Robert Morss Lovett, *A History of English Literature*. Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906, 309. Accessed March 25, 2017. <https://archive.org/stream/ahistoryenglish04lovegoog#page/n4/mode/2up>

to affordable literature.¹⁵ Costing only a penny the *Penny Magazine*, which was first distributed in 1832, provided the first affordable text alternative aimed at the working class.¹⁶ This phenomenon was later supported by the service of free libraries for members of the middle and working classes, however, the press still remained the most popular source of literature, especially with the first outbreak of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*. This concept of publishing a story in parts attracted a huge audience for several reasons. Firstly, the reading was affordable as the readers only paid a small amount of money at a time, instead of spending a fortune on a whole book and secondly, they could participate in the development of the story. The popularity of reading became so significant that the print industry was soon the major industry of the period.¹⁷

1.1 Victorian Literature

According to Poplawski, the writers of the Victorian Era were still influenced by the works of the precedent period, as the Romantics dealing with the issues of individuality, freedom and “the function of the past and the relationship between man and the natural world, provided ideas and inspiration a-plenty for the generations that succeed them.”¹⁸ The Victorian literature was therefore very diverse as it was romantic in its “emotional and imaginative intensity”,¹⁹ but also educative, striking for the change in society.

While scientific optimism and progress were one of the most appreciated and distinguishable features of the early Victorian Era, these aspects and Victorian values increased to be criticized during the second half of the century. Victorian writers began to focus on either using literature as an escape from the problems, as Romantics would do, or used it to address the issues directly, hoping that literature could change the current unsatisfactory situation, concerning especially the bad living conditions in cities, poverty, child labour or the position of women in the society.²⁰ This particular style was called critical realism and emerged from the new literary style of the mid-19th century – realism, which was seen as the opposite of romanticism and focused on being objective and describing things,

¹⁵ Poplawski, *English Literature in Context*, 424.

¹⁶ Poplawski, *English Literature in Context*, 409.

¹⁷ Poplawski, *English Literature in Context*, 425-429.

¹⁸ Poplawski, *English Literature in Context*, 430.

¹⁹ Moody and Lovett, *A History of English Literature*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906, 310, Accessed March 25, 2017.

²⁰ Poplawski, *English Literature in Context*, 439.

characters or settings without using figurative language or imagination. Realistic writing was a major part of the Victorian literature and later contributed to the birth of other literary styles, which influenced the 19th-century writing.

During the Victorian Era, there was a huge increase in popularity of the novel, especially among middle-class women audience. The Victorian novel was represented by many significant authors such as Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, but also by Thomas Hardy, George Elliot, or Charlotte Brontë, who typically used critical realism as the novel was meant to serve “as an instrument of instruction as well as entertainment”,²¹ especially to point out the current social issues, often using humour or satire. Rather than on action, the focus was on the characters, which developed throughout the story.

As the early authors of the 19th century focused on the impact of the first phase of Industrial Revolution on nature, authors during the late Victorian Era did as well. The authors were concerned with the vanishing of traditional rural landscape and countryside. The most significant writer of nature and such writing during this period was definitely Thomas Hardy who, in his novels, deals with the conflict of the “old times” that cannot compete with the rushed and changing industrial world.²² However, the literature started to examine not only the beauty of the natural world but considering Darwin’s theories of biological determinism, also its undeniable power. The Victorian writers had little faith in nature’s ability to uplift the moral decay of the contemporary society, however, they started to focus on the relationship between the environment and the causes of one’s actions and fate. Darwin started to question the degree of control people have over their own decisions and lives, as nature and its fixed laws of heredity seem to determine the development of events that precede them. These ideas and the concept of free will were a base for a new literary movement of the 19th century – naturalism, which will be further discussed in the following chapter.

In conclusion, the 19th century Britain underwent numerous changes crucial to the development not only of the British Empire but considering the new inventions and technologies also the population of the whole world. Moreover, the literature of the 19th century was one the most diverse and influential in history.

²¹ Francis O’Gorman, ed., *A Concise Companion to the Victorian Novel*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005, 5.

²² Poplawski, *English Literature in Context*, 444.

2 ROMANTICISM AND NATURALISM

2.1 Romanticism

Romanticism is usually referred to as an intellectual orientation in arts and literature which originated in the late 18th and continued almost to the mid-19th century as a radical reaction to Enlightenment, which emphasized scientific progress, human reason, and rationality.²³ Romantic authors were dissatisfied with the direction in which the rushed and modern world was running to, therefore their writing focused mainly on the past, passion, feeling and the beauty of the natural world. The main and key topic of romantic writings is, therefore, nature, which is presented in a new unprecedented way. Unlike the Classicists who perceive nature as an explainable mechanical system, which is made of unchanging universal laws, the Romantics search for the exact opposite. Romantic perception of nature lies on the bases of the wild, free and mysterious embodiment of God who is standing for the “moral truth”.²⁴ For romantics, nature is a bridge between God and man, because it is where the presence of God is most obvious and where one can best experience contact and identification with divinity.

It needs to be said that romanticism underwent changes and developed during the late 18th and 19th century. Poplawski divides the Romantic period into two generations of writers. The first generation was represented mainly by William Blake, William Wordsworth and Samuel T. Coleridge, also known as the Lake Poets who can be considered as the founding fathers of Romanticism as the preface of their *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) now stands as a manifest of romanticism.²⁵

The philosophies of both of these generations are very similar, however, they differ in one crucial aspect - their perception of nature. From the point of the first generation writers, nature was seen as a reassuring and calm presence providing unconditional love to humans. In their works they made nature seem a place with infinite, unlimited potential, which is portrayed very visibly in many of their works. William Wordsworth’s poem titled “Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey” (1798) is a great proof of that.

My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,

²³ Fleischmann, *Survey of English Literature in its Historical Context*, 47.

²⁴ Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, 342.

²⁵ Poplawski, *English Literature in Context*, 336.

Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings...²⁶

Wordsworth clearly highlights the caring and loving side of nature. He is convinced that if one loves nature, respects her and behaves in perfect concord with it, nature will always be kind to him and protect him as it is a loving force representing Providence.

On the other hand, the second generation represented by P. B. Shelley, John Keats, and G. G. Byron, had quite a different opinion. They saw nature as an entity with great force which humans should admire and respect. In addition, they felt nature is a superior force to humans and their destiny, because it is so great and powerful and what is more, eternal. They were convinced that through nature man can become immortal.²⁷

Romantic authors searched for countryside unspoiled by the effects of the early phase of Industrial Revolution. They focus on the past and the way their lives used to be before the technological expansion. In the attempt to escape the unpleasant reality, the romantics often look for isolated or exotic places far from the towns, which evoke feelings of mystery. Most of the Romantics, thus, deal with the conflict of the inner self and the outer world. They place an enormous importance on feeling, imagination, and supernatural and deal with intuition and symbols. Rather than presenting things simply according to their appearance, they describe them based on how these things, events, and people make them feel.²⁸ They have not only a huge respect for nature but also for freedom, which they believe nature gives them. It is in nature where they can stop respecting the rules given by society and be who they truly are.²⁹

Moreover, the Romantics believe that the more people are affected by the social rules and morals, the more spoiled and corrupted they are. On the contrary, uneducated people living in the countryside isolated from the atrocious influence of the city are the freest as they are not bounded and affected by the city life. During the Romantic period, therefore, re-

²⁶ William Wordsworth, "Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey". Accessed May 2, 2017. <http://www.rc.umd.edu/sites/default/RCOldSite/www/rchs/reader/tabbey.html>

²⁷ Stephanie Forward, "The Romantics." Accessed June 1, 2017. <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-romantics>

²⁸ Glen Levin Swiggett, "What is Romanticism?" *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 11. No. 2 (Apr., 1903):160.

²⁹ Fleischmann, *Survey of English Literature in its Historical Context*, 47.

appears a term for such individuals and the society seem to celebrate the so-called “cult of noble savage” as a contrasting word to the “enlightened European”³⁰ Noble savage as a natural man with uncorrupted morals then became a typical character of romantic writings.

Nature is also seen a natural set from which the society developed and should learn. According to Poplawski romantic writers “tend to explain human society and its development in terms of an organic model, or a model borrowed from nature.”³¹ Natural phenomena in Romantic literature is therefore often personified as they perceive nature as an anthropomorphic creature that communicates with those who show their affection and is in perfect harmony with one’s feelings and emotions. A natural man is, thus, not only connected to nature, he is a part of it. Romantic writing stresses the relationship between these two subjects, therefore nature often reflects the emotional state of the character and very often individual seasons in the plot are bounded with the development of the characters’ lives.

As nature and feeling are such a key topics to Romanticism, new concept appeared which combined both of these aspects – the sublime. This term is described as a pleasurable terrifying experience evoked through strong negative emotions. Edmund Burke in his “A Philosophical Inquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful”(1757) says “When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are, delightful, as we every day experience.”³² Burke also believed that nature is the most sublime object, capable of creating the strongest sensations in human mind.³³ The natural sceneries in literary works very often reflect the emotional state of people. Such sublime nature can be represented, for instance, by cold mountain complexes, dark woods, lonely dead trees or lakes preferably during a storm, which evokes feelings of admiration as well as strong feelings of danger and tension. Swiggett in his article “What is Romanticism?” describes typical romantic scenery.

When we speak of romantic scenery, at once there is brought before our inner eye a vision of some spot apart, far from the glare of the market place; the inner recesses of some sylvan retreat, the grotesque shapes of oak- or pine-clad hills ; the dark caverns

³⁰ Martin Plax, Jerry Combee, “Rousseau's Noble Savage and European Self-Consciousness.” *Modern Age*, Vol. 17, No.2 (1973):173.

³¹ Poplawski, *English Literature in Context*, 328.

³² Edmund Burke, Adam Phillips, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. Oxford University Press, 1998. Accessed May 2, 2017, 58.
https://books.google.cz/books/about/A_Philosophical_Enquiry_Into_the_Origin.html?id=V4fpAAAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y

³³ Burke and Phillips, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, 40-41.

caught in the sea's wild embrace, the whispering, wind-swept plains; the lonely, sea-girt isles,..³⁴

Romantic sceneries were therefore often described as lonely sublime places, filled with beauty and Providence.

The great passion for nature during the Romantic period caused its further and closer examination also during the later decades. As mentioned, the 19th-century writers, discontent with the impact of the Industrial Revolution, turned to Romantic writings but at the same time with Darwin's theory of the natural selection, the literature started to present features of new literary movement, which combined the features of realistic writing and scientific discoveries – Naturalism. Although the topic of both of these movements was often nature, its perception differed in several crucial aspects.

2.2 Naturalism

The term Naturalism has its origins in the Latin word “natura” which means nature, therefore the logical connection to environment and nature is undeniable. Naturalism as a literary movement emerged as a form of realism in the second half of the 19th century in France and later spread to other parts of Europe, however, philosophical origins of naturalism in literature can also be seen in positivism, which started during the 19th century but was mainly dominant later in the 20th century.³⁵ This movement was based on sense perception of natural phenomena and verified facts. Naturalism, therefore, opposes previously discussed romanticism that stands for the idea of escapism to nature and imagination. Naturalist writers tried to depict the world realistically as it is, and therefore it was often associated with capturing the raw reality, without any adjustments or involvement of feeling or imagination. Nature and its depiction play a key role in naturalistic writing, as it is the main force influencing the lives of ordinary people. It is often presented as an indifferent and cruel force, which opposes the romantic depiction of Nature as a caring and loving embodiment of God. Naturalism is based on the idea of biological determinism, therefore the heart of all events was determined by natural laws, and man became only a product of heredity, instincts, and environment and was limited to his biological self. According to determinists, everything in

³⁴ Glen Levin Swiggett, “What is Romanticism?” *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 11. No. 2 (Apr.,1903):152.

³⁵ Martin Schütze, “The Services of Naturalism to Life and Literature.” *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Oct. 1903):426.

life is dependent on the laws of cause and effect. They claim that every situation or human behavior is determined by other factors than man's actions. These factors are encoded in his genetics and in the laws of the universe. Schütze says that the character is denied "the possibility of free will, of choice in his actions, rejecting his moral responsibility, and therefore the possibility of guilt".³⁶ Determinism acknowledges man's struggle against natural forces and the effort to control their own lives, but such attempts are always doomed because try as they may, everything is already predetermined for them. Moreover, it makes them who they are and how they act.

Thus, the literature of this period often focuses on the outcasts of society, describing their tragic life in their attempts to succeed. These situations are usually described objectively, the authors are detached from the suffering of their characters and try to report their lives unbiasedly without involving personal emotions. Schütze describes typical naturalistic characters "as gradually crumbling, piece by piece, under the insistent, rarely violent, usually slow, never heroic, but ceaseless, irresistible impact of material circumstances."³⁷ Their fate is explained by social Darwinism, which is a term that developed from Darwin's theory of natural selection applied to human society. This theory is based on the idea that humans, just like plants or animals have to compete in order to survive. The weak individuals are determined to fail in the cycle of social circles while the strong ones succeed. Schütze, on the other hand, also argues that the fate of our lives is the "inevitable result of our past life; and no effort of the will, no struggle, however determined, can change it. Every moment of your life, every thought and action impresses its indelible mark upon your character; you are the victim of the powers that you have invoked in the past."³⁸

Philosophy of naturalism is aimed more toward science. According to naturalists, every aspect of the world is explainable by science and they simply do not believe in supernatural, as it is something not documented by evidence. Therefore what cannot be proved does not exist.³⁹ Naturalists reject the beliefs of supernatural entities as creators of the universe and human race and the idea that human beings possess souls. This idea opposes the Romantics who explored the capacity and potential of the human mind through imagination and metaphysical experiences.⁴⁰

³⁶ Schütze, "The Services of Naturalism to Life and Literature."426.

³⁷ Schütze, "The Services of Naturalism to Life and Literature."428.

³⁸ Schütze, "The Services of Naturalism to Life and Literature."428.

³⁹ Kelly James Clark, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Naturalism*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2016, 2.

⁴⁰ Jaegwon Kim, *Mind in a Physical World*. MIT Press, 1998, 85.

As most aspects of naturalism are connected to science, the perception of nature is no different. Naturalists believe that nature is a system that can be “explained” by physics and mathematics because it is what determines our view of reality. The article in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy mentions one branch of naturalism which is concerned with these perceptions of reality and supernatural and uses mathematics as one of the instruments to portray the naturalistic approach.⁴¹ Mathematics serves as a scientific explanation of certain situations that may otherwise, by romantics, for example, be arrogated to supernatural or divine forces. Therefore the description of nature in some works may be accompanied with adjectives relating to mathematics or physics. However, most importantly, nature in naturalistic writings is typically described as a cruel force indifferent to the fate of human beings.

Both of these aesthetic movements deal with the perception of nature and foreshadow a topic of free will. Romantics generally search for freedom in nature, because they feel free of social rules and conventions there. According to Naturalists, however, one’s destiny is predetermined by his environment and biological factors, and no matter how an individual fights against it, he is not able to affect the final outcome. Moreover, the Romantics saw nature as a symbol of Providence, however, the naturalistic perception was based on the idea of an indifferent force, which does not take human lives into consideration. As Thomas Hardy lived and wrote most of his works throughout the Victorian Era, I believe he was influenced by both of these aesthetic movements and therefore their elements can be found in his novels. These differences will be discussed in the following chapters and shown in detail in three of his novels.

⁴¹ “Naturalism.” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Accessed May 25, 2017.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/naturalism/>

3 NATURE IN *FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD*

As mentioned, Hardy uses very detailed and picturesque descriptions of the landscape, which can help readers imagine quite precisely the environment and atmosphere, in which a particular narrative is set. *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *The Return of the Native* are novels written in a sequence of only several years apart. Hardy's simultaneous inclination to naturalism and romanticism in terms of describing nature can be observed in all these novels.

Far From the Madding Crowd is Hardy's fourth novel and the first one ever to be set in the semi-fictional land of Wessex. The story is set in the second half of the 19th century. As it was previously mentioned, Hardy is usually classified as a representative of naturalism. This novel was written early in Hardy's career, and therefore his inclination to naturalism is not as obvious as in his later works. However, generally speaking, the author's relationship to nature is still changing and it demands closer examination. The nature Hardy had known and loved as a young boy changed visibly. Hardy started to admire the magnitude of nature and its power. He gradually came to realize that nature can serve as a humankind's partner, but also, a heartless monster. Such realization affected the way he describes nature and also the way it is delivered to the readers in countless situations in the story.

In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Hardy begins with a facile, gentle description of nature. The opening chapter establishes an image of a beautiful, serene and colorful day with Bathsheba's wagon wandering through the fields and Gabriel silently watching this scenery suffused with the sunshine. The warm summer breeze is gently blowing through the valley, which evokes a pleasant feeling of safety and beauty. However, shortly after, when describing a scene set in Norcombe Hill Hardy shows the pessimistic and cruel side of nature.

The hill was covered on its northern side by an ancient and decaying plantation of beeches, whose upper verge formed a line over the crest, fringing its arched curve against the sky, like a mane. To-night these trees sheltered the southern slope from the keenest blasts, which smote the wood and floundered through it with a sound as of grumbling, or gushed over its crowning boughs in a weakened moan. The dry leaves in the ditch simmered and boiled in the same breezes, a tongue of air occasionally ferreting out a few, and sending them spinning across the grass. A group or two of the latest in date amongst the dead multitude had remained till this very mid-winter time on the twigs which bore them and in falling rattled against the trunks with smart taps.⁴²

⁴² Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, [1874], 10. Accessed December 28, 2016. <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/107>

It is evident that Hardy does not describe a place of joy and happiness but rather a very cold location full of loneliness, sadness, and isolation. Dizzy precipices and decaying plantations of beaches evoke very hostile conditions full of misery and danger. The trees ‘grumble and moan’ and the leaves are ‘dry’ and ‘boiled in breezes’. It is visible that the scene is set in late autumn or winter, which underscores the cold and sublime atmosphere. However, Hardy’s stance to nature remains diverse.

The contrast of soft and gentle nature with its hostile and cruel potential is visible throughout the whole novel. Even when still describing Norcombe Hill, Hardy says:

The thin grasses, more or less coating the hill, were touched by the wind in breezes of differing powers, and almost of differing natures—one rubbing the blades heavily, another raking them piercingly, another brushing them like a soft broom.⁴³

The wind blows through the grass in various forms and with various volumes of strength. It shows the nature’s gentle and caring side that ‘brushes’ the grass ‘like a soft broom’. At the same time, however, its cruel twin blows with full strength, brutally and indifferently to anything comes in the way.

Nature also plays an important role in the plot of the novel, as well as in the fate of the characters. Therefore it is crucial to closely examine the relationship between these two subjects. *In Far From the Madding Crowd*, Hardy suggests that people should live at perfect peace with nature. When describing the scenery of Norcombe Hill, he says:

The instinctive act of human-kind was to stand, and listen, and learn how the trees on the right and the trees on the left wailed or chanted to each other in the regular antiphonies of a cathedral choir; how hedges and other shapes to leeward then caught the note, lowering it to the tenderest sob; and how the hurrying gust then plunged into the south, to be heard no more.⁴⁴

Hardy suggests that it is a part of human nature to have a deep connection to nature, although many people may have lost it while living far from it. Countryside is a place, where people come in touch with their faith and God himself. It is necessary to treat nature also as a source of knowledge. James Thomson, Scottish romantic poet, in his poem called “A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton” (1727) compares nature to an open book from which the human race can learn. Nature has been there millions of years prior to the human race, therefore people should treat it with great respect and use the wisdom that they are offered.⁴⁵

⁴³ Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 10.

⁴⁴ Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 10-11.

⁴⁵ James, Thomson, “A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton”, London : J.Millan, 1727

The human organic connection to nature is a crucial point for romantics. Those who are most in harmony with their environment are usually the most contented. The symbiosis between such man and nature is often represented in the characters behaviour to the natural environment, or in the character's name, which can be observed, for instance, in Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, in which the name of the main character, Heathcliff, represents his temper and connection to the scenery of the moors, cliffs, and rocks. A great example of a character that is deeply connected to nature in Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* is Gabriel Oak. His name is again a proof itself. This man is an uneducated young farmer, quite a simple man, but most importantly he is a man of manners. He is a typical romantic model of the 'noble savage'. It could be said that Gabriel Oak is the human embodiment of the romantic connection between God and nature. Gabriel treats nature and other living creatures with great respect and he is aware of signs that God and nature provide to him in order to survive and live in peace.

Gabriel proceeded towards his home. In approaching the door, his toe kicked something which felt and sounded soft, leathery, and distended, like a boxing-glove. It was a large toad humbly travelling across the path. Oak took it up, thinking it might be better to kill the creature to save it from pain; but finding it uninjured, he placed it again among the grass. He knew what this direct message from the Great Mother meant.⁴⁶

When Gabriel finds out the toad he has unintentionally kicked is not injured, he leaves his thoughts of killing it and puts it on the grass very carefully. He knows he has to respect other living creatures and not kill them without any obvious reason. Hardy personifies nature and describes it as an anthropomorphic creature, whose intentions are only to protect those who show love and respect toward the natural world.

Gabriel shows a great understanding of the natural environment, which is a great convenience in his profession. He is able to tell time by observing the position of the stars and even predict storms. For instance, shortly after Sergeant Troy marries Bathsheba and pronounces himself the farm master, he and the staff get drunk without securing the harvest outside. Then, a huge storm arises but luckily, Gabriel, who has predicted it by observing the odd behavior of animals, prevents the loss of the whole harvest by securing it himself.

It can be said that Hardy describes nature as a living creature resembling God that can be upset and acts as a greater force that defines the fate of individual characters. The storm, in this case, is described as a merciless creature with certain human characteristics. When speaking of a lightning of the storm, the author says:

⁴⁶ Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 228-229.

It sprang from east, west, north, south, and was a perfect dance of death. The forms of skeletons appeared in the air, shaped with blue fire for bones—dancing, leaping, striding, racing around, and mingling altogether in unparalleled confusion.⁴⁷

By using personification Hardy shows the evident relationship between nature and God. In connection to Troy's reckless behavior, the storm seems to represent a punishment that only a man with great respect and connection to nature, and therefore God, can prevent. Gabriel understands nature, therefore he is able to read its signs, however, Bathsheba's neighbor Mr. Bolwood chooses to ignore the natural signs of the upcoming storm and as a result, he loses his crops.

Signs of Hardy's attention to the ever presence of God can be observed even in other places in the novel. Despite the fact that the story was written during a period of great, post-Darwinian emancipation of science, the characters that live in the countryside are still very sceptical about new discoveries and evolutionary theories and maintain their belief in God as an almighty creator of everything around them. Gabriel's friend, Jan Coggan, for instance, says he is "as sure as God made little apples."⁴⁸

Throughout the novel, the reader can observe certain pattern concerning individual seasons and the way they affect the characters, which is a perfect example of the symbiosis between man and nature. Natural forces control and influence the characters' lives on daily basis. However, people rely on the typical cycle of the year, not taking into account any external factors that could come into way. Isabelle Gadoin in her article "Multiple Time in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*" claims that such behavior is in complete contradiction to the Darwinian worldview.⁴⁹ It is important to mention that the plot of the story is also very closely connected to particular seasons of the year. They usually echo the background of situations and twists in the plot as well as in the characters' minds. Throughout the book, the readers can observe numerous such situations. For example, Gabriel Oak loses his whole flock of sheep during a very cold and cruel winter, which makes him very poor and without any property. His economic situation continues to be very unstable, until the beginning of fresh spring, which leads him to work at Bathsheba's farm. Another moment when there is an analogy between the plot and the seasons is Sergeant Troy meeting Bathsheba. Typically of romantic love stories, they start to have feelings for each other amidst the blossoms of the spring and their love approaches its climax during the summer harvest. They come across summer storms in their relationship, but when it starts to get cold outside,

⁴⁷ Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 236.

⁴⁸ Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 199.

⁴⁹ Isabelle Gadoin, "Multiple Time in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*", 2.

the connection between them and their mutual feelings also get colder. It is a time of foggy, freezing, dark days at the end of October when Troy's former love and pregnant mistress dies, which encourages Troy to try to end his own life.

The relation between the natural environment, seasons and individual twists in the plot is remarkably accurate. The reader can almost predict how the story will evolve according to this repeated pattern. Again, Gaidon compares this to a "cyclical rhythm of life in the countryside, and man's perfect adhesion to natural rules".⁵⁰ This shows a perfect harmony between the characters and nature, and the wisdom of God as well and his constant presence as a guiding force.

The sky was clear—remarkably clear—and the twinkling of all the stars seemed to be but throbs of one body, timed by a common pulse. The North Star was directly in the wind's eye, and since evening the Bear had swung round it outwardly to the east, till he was now at a right angle with the meridian.⁵¹

When describing a night sky, Hardy refers to it as a 'body timed by a common pulse' and again gives inanimate object human features and characteristics, which the readers can perceive as a constant and unchanging presence of Providence. However, Hardy describes the sky from two points of view. Right after he speaks about 'a body timed by a common pulse', in the next sentence, he starts to talk about right angles and meridian, which refer to specific astronomical scientific terms. Therefore the reader can observe not only the clear relation to God but also the influence on Hardy of the materialistic scientific context of the 19th century, in which the story is set.

Moreover, in descriptions, Hardy sometimes uses mathematical terms such as "angularity"⁵² or says that something is approached "as a hyperbolic curve approaches a straight line,"⁵³ which shows the evident influence of the development of science. However, most of the time the evident presence of naturalism is shown in describing the natural environment as it really is.

Winter, in coming to the country hereabout, advanced in well-marked stages, wherein might have been successively observed the retreat of the snakes, the transformation of the ferns, the filling of the pools, a rising of fogs, the embrowning by frost, the collapse of the fungi, and an obliteration by snow.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Gaidon, "Multiple Time in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*", 2.

⁵¹ Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 11.

⁵² Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 136.

⁵³ Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 98.

⁵⁴ Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 80.

Here the narrator refers to nature in a disenchanting unromantic way deprived of references to God's presence or providence. He simply observes the landscape and trees that are covered in snow and affected by the frost, not referring to it as a "piece of land that God dressed to a winter coat".

Romantic nature is based on the fact that if a person acts in agreement with God and, as a good man with excellent morals, God will be merciful to them and let them live a happy life. In general, nature is then instructive to those who can understand it and it punishes those who ignore it and treat it with disrespect. However, naturalistic nature is very often presented as a cold, uncaring force that is completely indifferent to humans and their lives. It is based on the idea of chance, neither by the design of God nor on the behavior of man. In conclusion, it is not important whether a man is good or evil because everybody will reach the same end, regardless of their actions or morals.

This novel, however, combines these two points of view and the conflict between God and naturally determined fate is very visible throughout the whole novel. Hardy's writing was very much influenced by the ideas of Charles Darwin, who maintained the idea that the development of individual species is shaped by chance and predetermination, not by the design of God. One such situation based on chance can be observed in the initial part of the book when Gabriel's young shepherd dog leads the whole flock of sheep into a precipice. It is an unavoidable natural accident, which is caused by a series of coincidences. Gabriel usually takes his dogs home, but this time one of them did not return, as he was feeding on a dead lamb. This same dog is still inexperienced and while Gabriel is asleep, the sheep broke a weakened fence and the dog leads the whole flock over a precipice.

Oak looked over the precipice. The ewes lay dead and dying at its foot—a heap of two hundred mangled carcasses, representing in their condition just now at least two hundred more. Oak was an intensely humane man: indeed, his humanity often tore in pieces any politic intentions of his which bordered on strategy, and carried him on as by gravitation. A shadow in his life had always been that his flock ended in mutton—that a day came and found every shepherd an arrant traitor to his defenseless sheep. His first feeling now was one of pity for the untimely fate of these gentle ewes and their unborn lambs. It was a second to remember another phase of the matter. The sheep were not insured. All the savings of a frugal life had been dispersed at a blow; his hopes of being an independent farmer were laid low—possibly for ever.⁵⁵

This forces Gabriel to sell all his property in order to pay back the money he borrowed and he ends up homeless. These individual facts and situations, accompanied with coincidental

⁵⁵ Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 36-36.

factors predetermined the horrible fate of Gabriel's flock. It wasn't God's punishment but just a series of actions that led to a certain result.

Another moment can be seen shortly after the previous situation, when Gabriel wonders for weeks through the country, looking for work. He suddenly sees a barn on fire and helps to put it down.

The flames immediately ceased to go under the bottom of the corn-stack, and stood up vertical. 'Stand here with a bucket of water and keep the cloth wet.' said Gabriel again. The flames, now driven upwards, began to attack the angles of the huge roof covering the wheat-stack.⁵⁶

The barn is located on the farm Bathsheba inherited from her uncle and after such bravery and help she employs Gabriel as her shepherd, which again is a great chain of coincidences that lead to a certain result and development of the story.

Both of these views on nature are very complex and difficult topics. The conception of natural forces and their role in the life of people is defined by the conflict of naturalism and supernaturalism. Each interprets people and their free will and ability to control their lives differently. As mentioned in the theoretical part, naturalism is based on the idea of biological determinism. According to naturalists, the behavior of people is formed by the environment they live in and the individual is not capable of changing it, therefore naturalists often examined the relationship between man and his environment. These characters usually try to act in their free will but their attempts are set back by force beyond their control.

Supernaturalism, on the other hand, is a theological belief that accepts the existence of supernatural force -God- that controls both nature and man, making them subordinate to it. The way human beings react and behave is a matter of God's will, which is in accordance with romantic ideas.

A combination of both of these approaches is evident in the novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* and has been shown on individual situations.

⁵⁶ Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 44.

4 NATURE IN *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

Tess of the d'Urbervilles was published in 1891 and is often considered to be one of Hardy's finest novels. As many other of his books, it is set in Wessex during the late 19th century. The Industrial Revolution and its impact especially on the agricultural rural areas evoked nostalgic feelings within the contemporary writers, hence many of them started to appreciate the beauties of the countryside. It has been shown that Thomas Hardy is one of such authors with the focus on rural areas, and therefore this novel, again, contains numerous descriptions of the landscape and natural world, which very often relate to the development of the plot and characters, and deserve closer examination.

The descriptions of the natural sceneries in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* generally contain more naturalistic elements as they are described in a very objective way by the use of more scientific and factual language.

The season developed and matured. Another year's instalment of flowers, leaves, nightingales, thrushes, finches, and such ephemeral creatures, took up their positions where only a year ago others had stood in their place when these were nothing more than germs and inorganic particles.⁵⁷

While describing a changing season, Hardy uses very realistic images of the scenery, describing it with plain and emotionally unmarked words. He simply talks about the natural cycle and describes it as a system, explainable by science when he mentions 'germs and inorganic particles.' Hardy no longer uses metaphors to depict the scene as a romantic place, suffused with the presence of God, but rather uses a simple list of plants and animals that happen to appear in the scene.

On the other hand, romantic sceneries still appear and the present providence of the higher force can be observed quite frequently. While describing the sun Hardy says: "The luminary was a golden-haired, beaming, mild-eyed, God-like creature, gazing down in the vigour and intentness of youth upon an earth that was brimming with interest for him."⁵⁸ Similarly to the previously discussed novel *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the author uses personification to symbolize the presence of an anthropomorphic creature watching over the world. The sun is not portrayed realistically, but literally as a 'God-like' creature with human features, such as sun rays described as 'golden-hair' with 'mild eyes', providing the necessary heat to the world beneath 'him'.

⁵⁷ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, [1891] David Campbell Ltd., 1991, 152.

⁵⁸ Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 102.

Nature again plays a key role in the development of the plot. As in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the individual seasons in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* reflect certain phases of the characters' lives. As life in nature is born and woken up in spring, Tess's story also begins during this season of the year. Her life, however, starts to be miserable with the beginning of autumn, as she is raped by Alec during a chilli night of September. Later, her life calms down again and her and Angel's passion for each other starts to grow with the advent of summer, however, their marriage is symbolically doomed from the very beginning as it takes place during a cold New Year's Eve. Hardy again seems to be using a certain pattern of the correlation of the plot and the individual seasons.

Apart from the influence of individual seasons, the reader can observe the way natural settings usually reflect the mood or emotional state of the main characters. When Tess is at the peak of her happiness, she and Nature seem to be one.

Her hopes mingled with the sunshine in an ideal photosphere which surrounded her as she bounded along against the soft south wind. She heard a pleasant voice in every breeze, and in every bird's note seemed to lurk a joy.⁵⁹

Tess listens to the sounds of nature and feels as if it communicates with her. The weather is in perfect symbiosis with her mood and mirrors the joyful atmosphere of the scene. However, when she contemplates on whether to accept Angel's marriage proposal, the world around her reflects her remorse and indecisions. Right after Angel leaves the scene, the sun goes down and on the other side of the sky "a monstrous pumpkin-like moon arises", and willows become "spiny-haired monsters as they stood up against it."⁶⁰ Tess feels guilty that she hides her past from Angel and it is again mirrored in the ominous dark landscape surrounding her.

Throughout the novel, however, Hardy continues to portray nature as a beautiful and stunning creature. During summer when Tess and Angel are beginning to develop feelings for each other, Hardy presents the natural setting in a very serene and astonishing way.

Or perhaps the summer fog was more general, and the meadows lay like a white sea, out of which the scattered trees rose like dangerous rocks. Birds would soar through it into the upper radiance, and hang on the wing sunning themselves, or alight on the wet rails subdividing the mead, which now shone like glass rods. Minute diamonds of moisture from the mist hung, too, upon Tess's eyelashes, and drops upon her hair, like seed pearls.⁶¹

The tenderness of the natural scenery seem to encourage their love as Tess's beauty is enhanced through natural elements such as the mist moist on her eyelashes and hair compared

⁵⁹ Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 123.

⁶⁰ Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 209-210.

⁶¹ Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 155.

to diamonds and pearls. Nature seems to care about them being together, as a mother helping her children to find love.

Nevertheless, Hardy's perception of nature in this novel is predominantly of naturalistic character. When Tess is escorted by Alec through The Chase their surroundings are firstly described in a very romantic way. The calm, sleeping nature evokes feelings of peace and safety and welcomes Tess to rest in its arms.

There was no answer. The obscurity was now so great that he could see absolutely nothing but a pale nebulosity at his feet, which represented the white muslin figure he had left upon the dead leaves. Everything else was blackness alike. Darkness and silence ruled everywhere around. Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks of The Chase, in which there poised gentle roosting birds in their last nap; and about them stole the hopping rabbits and hares.⁶²

Considering the fact that Tess is about to be seduced and raped, the quiet and calm depiction seems almost ironic. The napping birds and 'hopping rabbits and hares' do not care about what is happening to Tess, there is absolute silence in the scene just as it would be in the woods right before the breaking dawn. However, this stillness of natural elements may as well be representing "the lull before the storm", thus, a suspicious sign of the upcoming chilling situation. Furthermore, the fact that the two characters wander through the woods named 'The Chase' could also imply Alec's ominous intentions. The only other natural element that could possibly warn Tess that something unfortunate is to happen, would be the fog surrounding the place, crawling silently around them, coating the scene in mystery.

Thus Tess walks on; a figure which is part of the landscape; a fieldwoman pure and simple, in winter guise; a gray serge cape, a red woollen cravat, a stuff skirt covered by a white-brown rough wrapper, and buff-leather gloves.⁶³

Although Tess is a pure countrywoman worshipping God and respecting natural laws, neither nature nor the Providence is trying to help her escape such terrible destiny. Hardy, therefore, presents the indifferent and cruel face of nature, which has no mercy upon any living creatures. As mentioned, Tess has been presented as a woman in perfect harmony with nature, being even 'a part of the landscape', nevertheless, she is violated and changed forever. Unlike Gabriel Oak, whose knowledge of nature helped him protect the crops and prevent other natural catastrophes, Tess is left helpless. She eventually gives birth to a boy who dies shortly after, but her life is already marked and she is judged by the society, as it is an unacceptable crime for a woman to have children out of marriage.

⁶² Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 87.

⁶³ Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 329.

But, might some say, where was Tess's guardian angel? Where was the providence of her simple faith? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked.⁶⁴

The Providence failed to protect her, unable or perhaps reluctant to her destiny. The author suggests that whether there is such thing as God or not, people should not rely on his actions, as he obviously does not interfere in their lives, not even when they need him the most. The world is driven by nature and its laws rather than supernatural divine forces. Tess did not deserve to be ruined like this, nevertheless, the natural world on which she relied has failed her and sealed her fate.

Another moment concerning nature's lack of interest in human fate can be observed after Angel abandons Tess. Tess arrives at Flintcomb-Ash farm during winter hoping for work. She is emotionally wrecked from Angel's departure and her despair and sadness are reflected in her current setting of the farm, which is described as a "starve-acre place."⁶⁵ Tess has to work in terrible conditions and the natural forces keep pushing her even further to the ground.

In the afternoon the rain came on again, and Marian said that they need not work any more. But if they did not work they would not be paid; so they worked on. It was so high a situation, this field, that the rain had no occasion to fall, but raced along horizontally upon the yelling wind, sticking into them like glass splinters till they were wet through.⁶⁶

Hardy again shows the cruel face of nature, which terrorizes Tess and others while working on the field. In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy described wind as a mild force treating the grass and people gently as a 'soft broom'. On the contrary, here he refers to it as if the wind was 'yelling' and compares the rain to 'glass splinters' stabbing the workers repeatedly until they are soaking wet. Nature does not stop the rain to make them comfortable because it is no longer presented as a mother, but as a natural force driven by its own rules. However, Hardy's stance towards the perception of nature remains disunited.

The Romantics often used nature as a perfect place where to escape from real life problems. In *Tess*, Hardy uses such escapist approach after Angel's revelation of Tess's disturbing past. Angel, being a pure gentleman with a great relationship to nature, idealises Tess and perceives her as a goddess, hence when he finds out she was once raped and even gave birth to an infant, his image of the pure and perfect Tess quickly deteriorates, and unable

⁶⁴ Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 88.

⁶⁵ Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 334.

⁶⁶ Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 335.

to cope with the truth, he leaves for Brazil. Similarly to his distorted picture of Tess, Angel idealizes Brazil to be a romantic land unspoiled by the modern age and corrupted morals of the society, however, when he gets there, he only gets sick and nearly dies.

Concerning Hardy's previous choice of names, Angel's name is symbolic in a way as well. Not only it represents Angel's pure character contrasting with the devil represented by Alec, but it also stands for his innocence and connection to God.

It might be said that Tess is a tragic victim of consequences, which resulted in her terrible end. When Angel leaves her, she tries to take care of herself, but after her father dies her family needs to be taken care of as well, which Tess cannot handle. These unfortunate events leave her no other choice than to come back to her rapist Alec, whom she eventually murders after Angel's final arrival from Brazil. Tess is portrayed as a victim without any choice of free will, as everything she did and went through could not happen any other way and led to a miserable, already predetermined fate. Furthermore, Hardy's selection of Stonehenge as a place of Tess's final capture, after she kills Alec, appears very symbolic. Just as ancient civilizations brought human sacrifices to worship the unlimited power of nature, Tess has to do one final sacrifice to free herself from her past.

The band of silver paleness along the east horizon made even the distant parts of the Great Plain appear dark and near; and the whole enormous landscape bore that impress of reserve, taciturnity, and hesitation which is usual just before day. The eastward pillars and their architraves stood up blackly against the light, and the great flame-shaped Sun-stone beyond them; and the Stone of Sacrifice midway. Presently the night wind died out, and the quivering little pools in the cup-like hollows of the stones lay still.⁶⁷

But Tess, really tired by this time, flung herself upon an oblong slab that lay close at hand, and was sheltered from the wind by a pillar. Owing to the action of the sun during the preceding day, the stone was warm and dry, in comforting contrast to the rough and chill grass around, which had damped her skirts and shoes.⁶⁸

The setting is presented as a beautiful majestic and restful place, with only a gentle wind blowing around through the scene. Nature seems to be hesitant about Tess, it is serene and very still, evoking the image of stability and peace. It invites Tess to lie on the warm and dry altar and accept her destiny. Nature again, in the final moment of the novel seems to be a comforting force, caring for her child. The monumentality of Stonehenge and its individual

⁶⁷ Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 460.

⁶⁸ Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 458.

pillars are presented as if they support Tess not only physically, but also emotionally in her final moments.

In comparison to *Far from the Madding Crowd*, this novel shows more distinctively the presence of Hardy's influence of the Darwinian theories and his inclination to naturalism, in the sense of objective descriptions and the indifference of Nature. Unlike Gabriel Oak, who could partially influence his fate by reading Nature's signs, the characters of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* seem to be left without the possibility of choice or free will. Being from poor and decrepit family, Tess is predetermined to have a miserable life. Although she experiences pleasant moments during her life, which may give her hope for happiness, her tragic end is inevitable.

5 NATURE IN *THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE*

As both previously discussed novels, *The Return of the Native* is set in Wessex, specifically in Egdon Heath during 1840 and 1850. It needs to be said, however, that Nature in this novel is presented in quite a different way than in the previous two. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Far from the Madding Crowd* the natural forces were important to the development of the story, however, nature was still a force influencing the story from a distance. Nevertheless, in *The Return of the Native*, the natural setting directly drives the plot of the novel, as Nature is represented as one of the main characters. The opening chapter is dedicated to the description of Egdon Heath and it provides the readers with a personified view of the village in which the story is set.

It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man's nature – neither ghastly hateful, nor ugly: neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularity 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.⁶⁹

Hardy refers to the heath it as if it was an ancient creature with human features, with its own face and characteristics. Egdon Heath is presented as a tempered place with basic human-like relations. While storm is presented as “its lover” and wind its “friend”, civilization is seen as an “enemy” with which the heath has to constantly compete.⁷⁰ Hardy suggests that Egdon Heath is a place similar to ordinary people, as it is patient and has its moods, nevertheless, it is not evil at its core and treats the characters depending on the way they treat the heath. It seems to be very isolated and lonely place in a very ominous sense, as Hardy mentions that the face of the heath suggests ‘tragical possibilities’.

Nature in *The Return of the Native* is almost exclusively of naturalistic character. Throughout the story, the reader can observe the cruel behavior of natural forces in a way, which has not been presented in any of the two previous novels. Nature feels not only indifferent to humans but at times it is literally brutal, however, its behavior towards the characters differs depending on the relationship they share. It can be said that nature in *The Return of the Native* has two faces. The first one is of a kind and loving character, allowing the characters to live a decently satisfying life. This face, however, is only approachable to those who can adapt to its changing temper and respect its rules. On the other hand, the

⁶⁹ Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*. [1878] David Campbell Publishers Ltd., 1992, 6.

⁷⁰ Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 5.

second face is of completely different nature. Those who despise the heath and are in conflict with it are challenged by its hostile and brutal conducts which push them to their emotional and physical limits, often resulting in their tragic end. Eustacia and Wildeve, for instance, share their strong aversion to Egdon Heath. They both long for excitement and adventure, despise the heath and try to free themselves from its powers. Eustacia admits: "I cannot endure the heath, except in its purple season. The heath is a cruel, taskmaster to me."⁷¹ The clearly tense relationship between her and the heath is the base for their conflicts. Eustacia hates the Egdon Heath, therefore, the heath hates her, tries to control her life and is remorseless towards her and Wildeve's destiny.

Another important aspect of nature in *The Return of the Native* is the current seasons, which Hardy continues to bond with specific events in the characters' lives.

Colours and beauties so far subdued were, at least, the birthright of all. Only in summer days of highest feather did its mood touch the level of gaiety. Intensity was more usually reached by way of the solemn than by way of the brilliant, and such a sort of intensity was often arrived at during winter darkness, tempests, and mists.⁷²

Hardy suggests that Egdon Heath is a place of joy and glory during fresh spring months. The characters enjoy life, as nature provides them with a loving and serene environment. As in both previously discussed novels, the love between Eustacia and Clym starts to spring during the warm months and culminates in July when they celebrate their love on honeymoon. However, the intense and dark moments of the book appear with the arrival of autumn and winter months. Eustacia and Wildeve's death, for instance, occur amidst a stormy night of November.

When she got into the outer air she found that it had begun to rain, and as she stood pausing at the door it increased, threatening to come on heavily. The gloom of the night was funereal: all nature seemed clothed in crape.⁷³

Skirting the pool she followed the path towards Rainbarrow, occasionally stumbling over twisted furze-roots, tufts of rushes, or oozing lumps of fleshy fungi, which at this season lay scattered about the heath like the rotten liver and lungs of some colossal animal. The moon and stars were closed up by cloud and rain to the degree of extinction. It was a night which led the traveller's thoughts instinctively to dwell on nocturnal scenes of disaster in the chronicles of the world...⁷⁴

With this description, Hardy confirms that Nature hates Eustacia and is determined to crush her with its enormous power. The heath throws roots and mushrooms as obstacles in her way

⁷¹ Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 224.

⁷² Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 5.

⁷³ Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 424.

⁷⁴ Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 424-425.

in order to thwart her attempt to leave. Hardy speaks about the night in a very sinister manner as he describes it as 'funereal' and compares it to 'nocturnal scenes of disaster in the chronicles of the world. His choice of vocabulary evokes threatening atmosphere and foreshadow the development of the oncoming moments.

Nevertheless, Nature does not always act as a hostile entity and it can show empathy and support. It is, just as humans, moody and feels sympathetic to people who learned to accept it and who adapt to its changing temper. Such characters may experience difficulties and hardships, but generally speaking, they are on good terms with nature. An example of such character in this novel is Clym Yeobright as he is one of the characters who perceive Egdon Heath their home. He adores the heath and even admits that he "would rather live on these hills than anywhere else in the world".⁷⁵ When speaking about Clym, Hardy says: "If anyone knew the heath well it was Clym. He was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, and with its odours. He might be said to be its product."⁷⁶

Tribes of emeraldgreen grasshoppers leaped over his feet, falling awkwardly on their backs, heads, or hips, like unskilful acrobats, as chance might rule; or engaged themselves in noisy flirtations under the fern-fronds with silent ones of homely hue. Huge flies, ignorant of ladders and wire-netting, and quite in a savage state, buzzed about him without knowing that he was a man.⁷⁷

Similarly to Tess, Clym is a direct part of the natural scenery. The insects and other animals pass him and do not fear him because he is a part of their natural surroundings. He is a man in perfect symbiosis with nature represented by the village of Egdon Heath. Although Clym spent some time in Paris, he returned to his homeland uncorrupted, pure and humble gentleman as he was. He shows understanding of his surroundings and respects the heath, therefore the heath respects him. He is able to live quite a happy life and when he, Eustacia and Wildeve are drowning, he is the only one who manages to survive. Nature is not exactly loving, nor caring towards him, but it allows him to live without greater difficulties.

On the other hand, some characters show a very neutral relationship to the heath, however, they end up defeated by its powerful forces. Clym's mother, Mrs. Yeobright is one such character, as she has never been in conflict with the heath and lived there all her life. When she is on her way from her son's house, the heath is hard on her and causes her death. Although the heath is a very serene and loving place during the spring, it turns into a monster during the extremely hot summer days. Mrs. Yeobright is a woman of age and just as the heath around her, she is physically and emotionally exhausted as she thinks her son hates her,

⁷⁵ Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 224.

⁷⁶ Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 209.

⁷⁷ Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 302.

suddenly starts wishing to die. As the sun is so brutally shining, she has to sit down and rest and eventually she is bitten by a poisonous snake. The heath is undeniably hostile to Mrs. Yeobright's, however, fulfilling her wish to die may signify its empathic character.

In this novel, nature once again reflects the current moods of the characters. When Eustacia is fleeing from the heath, the storm and rain around her reflect the despair and frustration with her life in Egdon Heath. Hardy says: "Never was harmony more perfect than that between the chaos of her mind and the chaos of the world without." This quote shows the connection between Eustacia and the heath and whatever conflicts were between them, it can be said that they were very similar to each other in a way. They are both passionate, strong characters, trying to control lives of other people.

Another moment of direct reflection of the emotional states between the heath and its inhabitant occurs after Clym argues with his mother. Nature seems to show empathy to him and feel his pain, which can be observed in the changed landscape of the next day.

At length Clym reached the margin of a fir and beech plantation that had been enclosed from heath land in the year of his birth. Here the trees... were now suffering more damage... The wet young beeches were undergoing amputations, bruises, crippling, and harsh lacerations, from which the wasting sap would bleed for many a day to come, and which would leave scars visible till the day of their burning. Each stem was wrenched at the root, where it moved like a bone in its socket, and at every onset of the gale convulsive sounds came from the branches, as if pain were felt.⁷⁸

Hardy highlights the deep connection between Clym and his environment by pointing out that the trees were planted the same year Clym was born. The trees, therefore, feel his agony while suffering their own pain caused by the rain and wind. The heath is again personified and its wounds are similar to those people have. Hardy describes the trees as if they are 'undergoing amputations' and 'bruises', gaining 'scars' and losing 'blood', which reflects Clym's current emotional state.

In *The Return of the Native*, the readers can observe the crucial change in Hardy's perception of nature. In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Gabriel Oak who was in perfect accord with nature could experience happiness as the natural forces cared for him and helped him to success, however, Tess, as pure as she was, went through rape and nature only silently observed her. The pure characters of *The Return of the Native* are neither led to success nor experience the lack of Nature's interest in them. The heath dominates their lives and it is the driving force behind their actions. It sets the rules within its territory and

⁷⁸Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 250-251.

plays with the characters as if they were puppets. The characters have absolutely no free will and their only choice in life is the way they decide to behave to Nature, which basically determines their fate. As shown, nature in *The Return of the Native* prevails of naturalistic character, hence the romantic elements in this novel are very hard to spot as the serene and loving side of nature is only present while controlling the lives of those who respect its powers.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to provide an analysis of three selected novels by Thomas Hardy - *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *The Return of the Native*, and show the presence of romantic and naturalistic elements in depictions of natural sceneries. The thesis also focused on the influence of natural sceneries on the development of the plot and examined the connection between nature and individual main characters.

It has been shown that Hardy had an extraordinary relationship to nature, as it took a huge part in all three analyzed novels. The individual seasons were connected to the twists of the story and the descriptions of natural sceneries often mirrored the mood of the characters.

In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, nature was predominantly of romantic character. The analysis has shown that the descriptions of natural sceneries lacked the brutality and carelessness that were presented in the other novels. The presence of God or Providence was visible throughout the novel, and the success of the characters depended on their relationship to nature. Gabriel Oak is a character directly connected to nature, not only with his name but also with his essential ability to predict storms and other catastrophes by reading nature's signs. Due to his respect for the natural environment, he is helped throughout the novel and is eventually given the opportunity to earn happiness. Hardy's perception of the environment varied in different situations. Nature was presented as a serene and caring creature, but in some passages, it suddenly acted with hard and cruel strength. Hardy used metaphors to enhance the picturesque atmosphere of the settings, therefore the descriptions were very often emotionally marked and involved Hardy's feelings and passion for nature.

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, nature started to be presented in a different way. In comparison to *Far from the Madding Crowd*, this novel showed more distinctively the presence of Hardy's influence of the 19th-century scientific positivism and his inclination to naturalism. Unlike Gabriel Oak, who could partially influence his fate by reading Nature's signs, the characters of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* seem to be left without the possibility of choice or free will. Even though Tess is a pure character interconnected to nature, she suffers a terrible destiny and the natural forces finally show their careless side. In most situations, nature only bluntly observed what was happening in its territory, but hardly ever helped or warned the characters. Hardy kept presenting nature as both caring and cruel in his descriptions, however, its role was very often passive.

As shown, the settings usually reflected the characters' mood or their emotional state. Although Hardy depicted beautiful natural sceneries while Tess and Angel started to develop feelings for each other, he hinted the upcoming unfortunate events by coating them into mist and gloomy, sinister atmosphere. This novel also involved numerous symbolic situations and settings, as well as the image of exotic lands.

In *The Return of the Native*, Hardy even introduced nature as one of the main characters. Egdon Heath dominated the story and was not presented as a God-like creature, but as a human being. The fate of the characters was predetermined by the way they treat the heath. They did not have to be able to read its signs in order to lead a content happy life, as in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. If they were able to adapt to its moods and rules, the heath treated them with respect and the characters were able to spend their lives without greater difficulties. However, if their relationship to the heath was negative, and they tried to fight against its forces, the heath treated them harshly and punished them, which very often resulted in their tragic end or even death. Eustacia and Wildeve experience the hardship of their natural environment, and when they try to escape from its powers, the angry and stormy heat causes that they drown. The serene face of nature was therefore presented only to characters that were in accordance with the heath. Throughout the novel, however, nature appeared mostly as a cruel and indifferent powerful creature, which an individual cannot fight. If the characters of the previous novels had only a slight chance to influence their destiny, nature of *The Return of the Native* provides absolutely none.

Hardy's stance to nature changed throughout his life, and the progress of his perception varied from novel to novel. Although in all three novels, the role of nature was crucial for the development of the plot, Hardy presented it in a different way every time. However, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *The Return of the Native* show the presence of romantic and naturalistic elements in descriptions of nature at some level. The crucial factor was the characters' relationship to their natural environment as it determined their future actions.

RESUMÉ

Tato práce se zabývá britským básníkem a romanopiscem Thomasem Hardym a způsobem, jakým ve svých dílech zobrazuje přírodu a krajinu.

Thomas Hardy byl jedním z nejvýznamnějších autorů Viktoriánské doby. Ačkoliv se nejdříve věnoval poezii, dnes je proslulý hlavně svými romány, ve kterých se často soustředí na prostředí britského venkova. Většina jeho děl velmi detailně popisuje přírodní prostředí a zachycuje osudy lidí, kteří se snaží bojovat proti silám mimo jejich kontrolu, a také proto je v dnešní době Hardy vnímán jako stoupenec naturalismu. Většina jeho románů je zasazena do napůl fiktivního regionu, který Hardy nazýval Wessex. Pro tuto oblast dokonce vytvořil detailní mapu, která je součástí novel v něm se odehrávajících.

Thomas Hardy strávil většinu svého života v Dorsetu, v jihozápadní části Anglie. Jelikož příroda a krajina byly všude kolem něj, Hardy měl ke svému okolí určitý vztah, který se projevoval v mnoha jeho románech. Přírodní motivy často hrají důležitou roli při vývoji děje, ale i osudu jednotlivých postav. Také proto se tato práce zabývá zobrazováním krajiny a přírodních vlivů ve třech vybraných románech a zkoumá způsob, jakým Hardy přírodu vnímá.

Jak už bylo zmíněno, Thomas Hardy je považován za stoupence naturalismu. V průběhu 19. století ovšem proudilo Británií několik literárních směrů, které měly zásadní vliv na tehdejší společnost. Ačkoliv Thomas Hardy žil v období vlády královny Viktorie, vliv předcházejícího období romantismu byl stále patrný nejen v literatuře, ale i v cítění společnosti. Tato práce zkoumá, zda Hardy vnímal ve svých dílech přírodu jako milující a ochrannou sílu, tedy po způsobu romantických autorů nebo jako nemilosrdnou a krutou bestii, která nemá slitování s obyčejnými lidskými životy, což by spadalo spíše do naturalistického úzu. Jelikož zásadní částí této práce je hledání a zkoumání romantických a naturalistických prvků, je nutné zmínit kontext doby, ve které se vyvíjely.

Koncem 18. století došlo v Británii k průmyslové revoluci, která zásadně změnila způsob života milionů lidí. Díky novým vynálezům a vědeckým objevům došlo k přeměně britské společnosti ze zemědělské na průmyslovou velmoc. Britské impérium posílilo svou moc ve svých koloniích a bylo vnímáno jako nejvyspělejší země své doby. Nicméně tyto změny měly velký vliv i na krajinu a přírodu. Zemědělství začalo být více mechanizované a ovládané většími průmyslovými firmami. Obyčejní lidé, kteří se živili farmařením, brzy zkrachovali a byli nuceni přestěhovat se do velkých měst. Tímto také začal proces urbanizace,

který způsobil, že během období sta let se naprostá většina obyvatelstva soustředila ve městech.

Anglický venkov se změnil k nepoznání, což vyvolalo značné reakce také mezi tehdejšími spisovateli, kteří odmítali novou moderní a uspěchanou společnost. Město bylo vnímáno jako místo neřestí a zkažených morálních hodnot, a proto autoři idealizovali přírodu ve své čiré nevinnosti. Počátkem 19. století dominovalo nové literární cítění zvané romantismus, který vznikl jako reakce na klasicismus a osvícenství.

S příchodem Viktoriánské doby vlna inovací a vynálezů ještě zesílila. Objevovaly se nové teorie o vzniku života a evoluci, z nichž nejvýznamnější byla Darwinova teorie přirozeného výběru, která mimo jiné pojednává o tom, že pouze jedinci, kteří se nejlépe přizpůsobí měnícímu se okolí, mají šanci přežít a uspět. Úroveň vzdělanosti se zvyšovala, a díky stavbě železničních tratí se literatura a tisk šířily zemí mnohem rychleji, což dalo za vznik cenově dostupné literatury i pro pracující třídu. Velmi oblíbené byly romány vydávané po částech v přílohách novin, jelikož umožnily čtenářům podílet se na vývoji děje a zároveň nemuseli platit za celý román najednou, což by bylo mnohem finančně náročnější. V druhé polovině 19. století vznikl nový literární směr, realismus, který opět kladl důraz na rozum a racionalitu, z něhož se později odvíjelo několik dalších směrů, jako je kritický realismus nebo naturalismus. Autoři Viktoriánské doby, včetně Thomase Hardyho, prostřednictvím románů využívali kritický realismus k upozorňování na problémy ve společnosti. Thomas Hardy nebyl tedy jen regionálním a naturalistickým autorem, ale také kritickým realistou.

Druhá kapitola se podrobně zabývá romantismem a naturalismem, jejich hlavními znaky a vnímáním přírody. Romantici byli nespokojeni s vývojem společnosti v moderní velmoc ovládanou stroji, a proto se často obraceli k přírodě, jako k nezkažené síle plné boží síly. Zdůrazňovali vášeň, představivost a celkově citová stránka převažovala nad rozumovou. Romantici věřili, že lidé jsou kaženi vlivem společnosti, protože musí dodržovat společenská pravidla a jediným místem, kde může být člověk opravdu volný je příroda. Hledali proto často odlehlé či exotické lokace nedotčené lidskou silou a daleko od měst. Příroda pro ně byla matka, která pečuje o své děti s bezmeznou láskou. Hrdinové romantických děl byli často nevzdělaní lidé, žijící na venkově, jejichž morálka nebyla zkažena vlivem života ve městě a pravidly společnosti. Takoví lidé byli nazýváni „vznešení divoši“.

Oproti tomu naturalismus byl založen na myšlence biologického determinismu, který určuje osud lidí na základě jejich genetické výbavy. Jedná se o kombinaci realismu a vědy, přičemž lidé jsou vnímáni jako bezmocné schránky s nulovou možností volby nebo svobodné

vůle. Příroda je podle nich systém vysvětlitelný vědou neobsahující žádné nadpřirozené síly. Většinou vystupuje jako nemilosrdná, někdy až krutá síla, která nebere v potaz osudy lidí a doslova řídí jejich životy. Jakýkoli pokus osob zlepšit svou situaci je zmařen silami, které přesahují jejich fyzické schopnosti. Není tedy možné s přírodními silami bojovat a osoby, které se i přesto snaží, velmi často potká tragický konec.

Třetí kapitola se zaměřila již na konkrétní analýzu přírody v románu *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Toto dílo je čtvrtým Hardyho románem a zároveň prvním zasazeným do malebného prostředí Wessexu. Jelikož Hardy napsal tento román relativně brzy ve své kariéře, jeho pozdější inklinace k naturalismu není tak patrná a zároveň se v něm místy objevují romantické prvky. Ačkoliv byla příroda místy krutá, Hardy ji většinou zobrazoval jako sílu nasycenou božskou přítomností, která vládla krajině ochrannou rukou. Popisy postrádaly brutalitu a bezohlednost, která je viditelná v jeho pozdějších dílech. Úspěch postav záležel na jejich porozumění přírodním jevům a schopnosti přizpůsobit se jim. Čím lépe se člověk dokázal orientovat ve svém okolí, tím lépe se mu v životě dařilo. Roli vznešeného divocha v tomto románu zastupoval Gabriel Oak, který díky svým znalostem přírody dokázal předpovídat různé přírodní katastrofy, jako například bouřku, která málem zničila všechnu úrodu. Příroda mu tedy přímo posílala „znamení“, která mu pomáhala žít lepší a šťastnější život. Hardy užíval značné množství metafor, které zdůrazňují malebnost a krásu přírody, která je často personifikovaná jako jakési ztělesnění Boha.

Oproti tomu v *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* se Hardyho vnímání přírodních jevů značně změnilo. Tento román mnohem více poukazuje na problémy spjaté s průmyslovou revolucí a jejími důsledky na zemědělskou krajinu. Hardy často zmiňuje chudobu, která postihla farmáře, což byl také jeden z důvodů, proč byla hlavní hrdinka Tess později nucena hledat práci mimo rodnou vesnici. Zároveň se také začíná více projevovat Hardyho inklinace k naturalismu. Zatímco postavy *Far from the Madding Crowd* mohli svou situaci zlepšit v souvislosti s tím, zda byli v souladu s přírodou, postavy *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* jsou ponechány svému osudu bez možnosti volby nebo svobodné vůle. I když je Tess, stejně jako Gabriel Oak propojena s krajinou a ctí její pravidla, pod rouškou noci je znásilněna a celý její život je předem odsouzen k neúspěchu. Příroda pouze přihlíží osudu postav a nesnaží se jim pomoci. Hardy ovšem stále místy zobrazuje krajinu jako krásnou, ovšem často bezohlednou sílu, jejíž role je velmi pasivní.

V posledním analyzovaném románu, *The Return of the Native*, Hardy představil přírodu dokonce jako jednu z hlavních postav. Vesnice, ve které je děj zasazen, Egdon Heath, je zobrazena ne jako ztělesnění Boha, jako ve *Far from the Madding Crowd*, ale jako stvoření

podobné člověku. Jako obyčejní lidé má i toto místo své nálady a základní vztahy s ostatními lidmi. Osud postav je také předurčen způsobem, jakým se k Egdonu chovají. Jestliže jsou schopné přizpůsobit se jeho pravidlům a náladám a chovají k němu lásku, nechá je žít bez větších obtíží a překážek v životě. Naopak lidé, kteří Egdon nesnášejí a chtějí se vymanit z jeho vlivu, jsou často potrestáni a jejich snažení končí tragédií. Konkrétním příkladem může být Eustacia a Wildeve, které při pokusu uniknout postihla strašlivá bouřka, která zavinila jejich utopení.

Klidnou a laskavou tvář přírody Hardy zobrazuje pouze v případě, jedná-li se o osoby, které Egdon respektují. Clym Yeobright strávil sice určitý čas v Paříži, ale poté se ihned vrátil zpět do svého rodného Egdon Heath, kde chtěl strávit zbytek svého života, protože ho považoval za svůj domov. Stejně jako Gabriel Oak byl Clym silně spjat s přírodou a rozuměl jí. Často tedy krajina reflektovala jeho emocionální rozpoložení. Když byl smutný z hádky se svou matkou, Hardy popsal okolní krajinu jako smutné prostředí plné stromů, které trpěly a cítily jeho bolest.

Příroda je tedy po větší část románu popisována jako velmi mocné, ale kruté a bezohledné stvoření, proti kterému nelze bojovat. Hardyho vliv naturalismu je v této knize nejvíce patrný. Jestliže postavy v předchozích románech měly místy lehkou šanci změnit svůj osud, prostředí tohoto románu tuto možnost absolutně zavrhuje.

Ve všech třech románech zastupovala příroda velmi důležitou roli jak v ději příběhu, tak i v životě hlavních postav a čtenář může pozorovat jakousi provázanost mezi dějem, ročním obdobím a momentálním citovým rozpoložení jednotlivých postav. Láska v příbězích obvykle vzkvétala během letních měsíců, které typicky značily období štěstí. Naopak během podzimních a zimních dnů atmosféra událostí houstla, a hlavní postavy potkala jistá tragédie či neštěstí. V *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* byla například hlavní hrdinka románu znásilněna během podzimní noci zahalené do mlhy. Eustacie a Wildeve z *The Return of the Native* příroda potrestala za jejich pokus o útěk během bouřlivé listopadové noci dokonce smrtí. S příchodem jara se dramatické situace obvykle uklidnily a poté opět vyvíjely v tomto cyklu.

Tato práce ukázala, že Hardyho postoj k přírodě a krajině není jednotný a způsob, kterým ji zobrazoval, se měnil i v rámci jednotlivých románů. Důležitým faktorem ovšem byl vztah postav k okolnímu přírodnímu prostředí, který pak určoval jejich další vývoj a osud.

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