IMPRISONED ASPIRATIONS:
A COMPARISON OF THE HEROINES OF
THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE AND MADAME BOVARY

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Previous studies of Thomas Hardy’s *The Return of the Native* and Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* have made but brief mention of the striking similarities of the two works and their heroines. It is generally accepted that Hardy was not influenced by Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* in writing his novel; *The Return of the Native*, published in 1878, two years before the death of Flaubert, certainly never reached Flaubert’s hands. Their resemblances are therefore purely fortuitous. The subject of both books — women of intelligence, sensibility and expectations drawn from their dreams of inner reality, facing, amid flat, dull surroundings, the disillusionment of the real world — is not a new one. Since her appearance in 1857, Emma Bovary has become the representative of her type. Flaubert commented on the number of her semblables in a letter to his mistress, Louise Colet, written from Trouville in July of 1853: “... ma pauvre Bovary sans doute souffre et pleure dans vingt villes de France à la fois, à cette heure même.” American readers have often noted the resemblance between Emma Bovary and Carol Kennicott, the dissatisfied heroine of Sinclair Lewis’ *Main Street*, whose efforts to reform the town of Gopher Prairie and her doctor husband call to mind, despite the distance of miles and years, Emma’s struggles in Yonville-l’Abbaye. Hardy’s Eustacia Vye also belongs essentially to this class and has close ties with Emma because both novels are set in rural provinces during the same period of time. Eustacia’s story takes place over a year and a day sometime between the years 1840 and 1850 and Emma’s marriage lasts from 1837 until 1846. Both women draw from parts of their schooling and reading dreams of a life beyond reality and cling desperately to these dreams, longing for life in Paris. Both are sensual, materialistic, unwisely married women whose despair and inability to compromise their dreams leads them to suicide.

Because the heroines of *The Return of the Native* and *Madame Bovary* bear striking resemblances of character, their treatment by two authors of differ-
ent nationalities and temperaments invites comparison. A setting of one work beside the other brings to light a number of similar problems encountered both by the heroines and by the authors who created them. The style of the novels in which Hardy and Flaubert have chosen to place their heroines, their choice of secondary characters, their use of landscape description, and the ways in which they deal with the problems of illusion and reality, irony and fate, indicate in a deeper and often tacit way their feelings about their heroines, human nature and the world. The outstanding comparison lies less in the details of the plots than in the overall impression of the works and their characters. The outstanding interest lies less in the similarities of Eustacia Vye and Emma Bovary than in the differences and similarities in the feelings and impressions evoked by the novels in which they figure.

The Victorian period in Great Britain, especially the years from 1837 to 1877, was a time of great social upheaval; a time when certain values were pushed awry by the growth of science and industry and when that part of the human soul which had once given itself wholly to the dictates of religion vacillated between the old spiritualism and the new materialism. From this matrix grew a writer and a poet whose sensibilities responded deeply to its spas tic growth. It is not difficult to recognize the rapid and increasing industrialization as the great economic influence of the period. The contrasts of wealth and poverty were brought about in part by the large-scale unemployment which occurred when machinery displaced many workers. Long work hours for men, women and children and bad urban conditions prevailed despite the prosperity the more wealthy were experiencing. One man could earn enormous amounts of money without the restriction of law and another man could become increasingly destitute without its support.

The new idea of an emerging world in a state of constant flux was documented by such works as Sir Charles Lyell's *The Principles of Geology* (1833),
Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844), and Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Not only were the new ideas in conflict with the old -- they were also in conflict with themselves.

This constant vacillation during the Victorian period between Darwin's world of evolution and science and Arnold's world of sweetness and light is reflected in the works of Thomas Hardy through what M. A. Goldberg calls "a kind of dialectical tension." This tension is present in the constant juxtaposition of the poetic and the scientific, the old and the new. On one side Hardy is influenced by *The Bible*, Shakespeare, and Greek drama. He writes poetically and movingly of the timelessness of Egdon Heath and the ancient superstitions and beliefs of its inhabitants. But he is also pulled to the other side by the knowledge of new scientific discoveries as witnessed by his use of heavily Latinized vocabulary. In his work he reflects the disillusionment of a people in a world without certitude, peace, or help from pain. *The Return of the Native* reflects this disillusionment through Eustacia's longings as posed against the ancient heath, the unchanging, untamable symbol of past, present, and future endurance.

*The Return of the Native* was written during 1877 at Sturminster Newton in a small house overlooking the Stour and the picturesque rolling hills surrounding it. From June to December, 1878 it appeared serially in *Belgravia* and was published in three volumes in the fall of that year.

The French public's appreciation of Hardy's works has been greater than that of any other non-English speaking country. He was first brought to their attention by a review of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Far from the Madding Crowd* written by Léon Boucher which appeared in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* on December 15, 1875. Boucher wrote, in part:

M. Hardy a voulu rajeunir le genre antique et souvent ennuyeux de la pastorale, et il y a mis une telle vérité d'observation, une passion si profonde, une poésie si fraîche, un style si puissant, tant d'idéal et
When Hardy died in 1928, the Académie Française voted an address of sympathy to the people of England. Of his burial in Westminster Abbey, Le Revue des Deux Mondes wrote: "Il n'y a aucune doute que l'Angleterre vient de placer là un de ses immortels. ... La Revue se devait de saluer sa grande ombre."\(^4\)

Just as Thomas Hardy moves from the old to the new, from classicism and spiritualism to science and materialism, Gustave Flaubert also vacillates between two worlds, or, more accurately, between the two controlling aspects of his aesthetic. These two poles are romanticism and classicism. To Flaubert, romanticism was pure emotion without the controlling influence of art. Classicism, on the other hand, was that discipline which imposes limits on emotionalism and through its preciseness makes Art possible. Flaubert admired and sought to be the type of author who controls these emotions and then expresses them through precise, classical means.\(^6\) His ideal, to be reached by these means, was the "fusion of illusion and reality." Flaubert's only use for science was as a balance against uncontrolled emotionalism through objective observation.

It is interesting to note that while many critics label him a realist, Flaubert never mentions this label except to repudiate it. When Madame Bovary appeared in 1857, he wrote, "On me croit épris du réel, tandis que je l'exècre; car c'est en haine du réalisme que j'ai entrepris ce roman." And later, "J'exècre tout ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler le réalisme, bien qu'on m'en fasse un des pontifes. ..."\(^7\)

After Madame Bovary was published serially in the Revue de Paris, Flaubert was summoned to court for "offenses against morality and religion." The defence won its case and Flaubert was acquitted. The novel appeared in book form a few months after the trial. The later editions carry a report of the proceedings in an appendix. Madame Bovary became extremely popular after the trial. Whether
this popularity was due to the scandal attached to it is not important; happily, critics have agreed with the people.

Almost uninterrupted acclaim followed the publication of *Madame Bovary* until, just after World War I, a controversy arose concerning Flaubert's style. The debate actually began with Louis de Robert's article, "Flaubert écrivait mal," which appeared in the *Rose Rouge* in 1919. Robert accused Flaubert of using incorrect French. Paul Souday of *Le Temps* took up Flaubert's defence and the two argued by letter. At this time Albert Thibaudet entered the controversy by agreeing that Flaubert was not inherently a master of the language, that his famous style had evolved slowly, by means of much polishing, and that he did at times make mistakes. Perhaps the most famous of Flaubert's critics was Marcel Proust who, also in 1919, objected especially to the novelist's use of static, wooden metaphors. It is obvious, however, that despite such erudite criticism Flaubert and *Madame Bovary* -- like Hardy and *The Return of the Native* -- have retained their popularity and artistic importance.

Before passing to a detailed look at the heroines of *The Return of the Native* and *Madame Bovary* it may prove useful to review the plots and the roles of Eustacia and Emma in their movement.

Egdon Heath, the vast, dark, brooding scene of Hardy's novel, may almost be regarded as a major character of his work. Every incident seems in some way to be influenced or overseen by it. The heath is one of the wildest spots of all England and separates its inhabitants from the modern world while closing them in on the old world of superstition and religious rites. The novel which takes place here is composed of six books. In the first, entitled "The Three Women," the desires and hopes of four people -- Eustacia Vye, granddaughter of old Captain Vye; Damon Wildeve, the owner of the Quiet Woman Inn; Mrs. Yeobright, a moderately well-to-do widow and Eustacia's future mother-in-law; and Thomasin, Mrs. Yeobright's niece -- are set forth. From the first it is hard to believe
that the desires of each of these characters will be fulfilled. At the begin-
ing of the novel, Eustacia, at eighteen, finds her formerly passionate love for Wildeve lessening. Wildeve himself has promised to marry Thomasin, Mrs. Yeobright's quietly pretty young niece, but fails to appear for the wedding.

Book Two, "The Arrival," centers on the return of "the native," Clym Yeobright, on whom Eustacia has fixed her hopes for love and excitement. Upon meeting him she recognizes him as Wildeve's better and as she is drawn toward him, Wildeve is pushed closer to Thomasin.

Book Three, "The Fascination," deals with the irresistible attraction between Eustacia and Clym and its immediate results. As the book begins, Clym tells his friends that he plans to give up his diamond trade in Paris and return permanently to the heath to teach school where he feels he could be "a trifle less useless." Eustacia disagrees, but is sure she will be able to persuade him to return to Paris after their marriage. Clym breaks with his mother in an argument over Eustacia and, despite Mrs. Yeobright's disapproval, they marry. Wildeve, urged by Eustacia, marries Thomasin.

In the fourth book, "The Closed Door," there is a growing misunderstanding between husband and wife as Clym's will prevails and they go to live in a small, secluded cottage on the heath. Clym's eyes give out from too much study and he is forced to earn a living as a common furze-cutter. At this point Wildeve comes to visit Eustacia at the cottage. He has come into a fortune and now represents the world of wealth and freedom which Clym had symbolized when they married. While Wildeve is with Eustacia and Clym is napping in another room, Mrs. Yeobright comes to the door. Eustacia, who hears Clym stirring, assumes that he is going to welcome his mother and leads Wildeve to the back door of the cottage. Clym, however, was only talking in his sleep, and Mrs. Yeobright leaves, thinking she has been turned away by her son. Completely exhausted,
she sits down to rest on the heath, is bitten by an adder and dies.

The fifth book, "The Discovery," deals with the consequences of the misunderstanding and all that has gone before. Clym is very ill after his mother's death and never completely recovers. He blames Eustacia for what happened and sends her back to live with her grandfather. Wildeve meets her and they decide to go to Paris together. On the night she is to meet him, however, she drowns herself in the weir and Wildeve drowns in an attempt to save her.

Book Six, "Aftercourses," shows Clym basically content and kindly received in his job as a traveling open-air preacher and lecturer.

There are few similarities in the plots of The Return of the Native and Madame Bovary. Whereas Hardy's novel takes place on an empty, wild heath, Flaubert's characters, during most of the story, live in a small, rather sordid town surrounded by countryside, several miles from a large city. Both sets of characters are, however, isolated from the mainstream of society, its modern inventions and crowded streets.

Critics have argued for years over the possible sources of Madame Bovary. Probably the best-known theory states that Flaubert took his story from a faits-divers reporting the death of a Delphine Couturier. Another cites the law case of an Esther de Bovery in Rouen in 1845 and another Les Memoires de Marie Cappelle by Veuve Laforge, published in 1842, which Flaubert had read and mentioned in his letters to Louise Colet. The great number of theories and the impossibility of coming to agreement on any one of them as the source of Flaubert's work show that none of them alone has any outstanding significance. It is just as possible that the combination of some or all of these theories does not equal the influence of Flaubert's own self on the choice of his heroine and his plot -- that the feminine and nervous side of his nature and the women he had known blended and became Emma Bovary. As Flaubert said, "Madame
Bovary, c'est moi . . ."

Flaubert's novel is divided into three parts, unevenly balanced. The first section sets the main characters before the reader in detail without a large amount of important action. It begins with Charles Bovary in a ridiculous scene at his new school. He is a kind but stupid boy, constantly humiliated by his classmates. His mother, who has an unrealistic belief in her child's intelligence, sends him to medical school where he fails his examinations miserably, but eventually passes those allowing him to become an officier de santé. He sets up practice in Tostes and marries an older woman, a widow, who is said to have money. One night he rides to Les Bertaux to set a broken leg where he meets Emma Rouault, the injured man's daughter. He falls in love with Emma and his wife's timely death allows them to marry. A few months after their marriage Charles receives an invitation to the family ball at La Vaubyessard. Until this time Emma has been only vaguely dissatisfied with married life. Now her desires take root in the atmosphere of luxury and leisure and continue to torment her from this point until her death. At the end of Part One Emma persuades Charles to take a position in a larger village called Yonville-l'Abbaye.

The second part of the novel opens with a description of Yonville and its most outstanding citizens. When the Bovarys arrive they meet Homais, the local pharmacist and Léon Dupuis, a young law clerk. During a conversation that night Léon and Emma find that they share many interests and, during the next several months, spend much time together. However, Léon, tiring of loving Emma with nothing to show for it, decides to move to Rouen. Emma, by this time deeply in love with him, tries to console herself by purchasing all manner of exotic objects from Lheureux, the local dry goods dealer, and signing notes for them. At this point another man appears. Monsieur Rodolphe Boulanger de la Huchette, a wealthy landowner and woman collector, is immediately attracted
by Emma's fresh beauty and, because her health has not been good, suggests to Charles that she go horseback riding with him. Charles, willing to do anything to make Emma happy, agrees to his suggestion and Rodolphe becomes her lover.

As Emma becomes more attached to Rodolphe she becomes more unhappy with Charles. She persuades him to undertake an operation on a clubfoot which she thinks would make him famous. He fails and ends in amputating the boy's leg. Emma now hates Charles more than ever and begs Rodolphe to take her out of the country with him. They set a date to leave but Rodolphe, true to character, says he cannot go. Emma becomes very ill and remains in bed all winter. Because of her indiscretions Charles finds himself deep in debt with Lheureux especially harasing him for payment. Charles hopes to pull Emma out of her listlessness by taking her to an opera in Rouen. By chance they meet Léon at the opera house.

The third and final part of Madame Bovary begins as Emma decides to stay in Rouen one more day while Charles returns to Yonville. Léon, now bolder and more mature, seduces Emma. By telling Charles that she is taking piano lessons she manages to meet Léon in Rouen once a week. As time passes Emma becomes more and more dominant and Léon tires of the relationship. Lheureux constantly hounds her for payment, but she merely signs more notes. At last he has her property seized and makes preparations for a sale. During the twenty-four hours he allows her she turns to Léon and then to Rodolphe with no results. In desperation she poisons herself and dies hideously. Charles, still attempting to pay the hopelessly large pile of debts, dies shortly after her death.

These plot summaries do not reveal any outstanding likenesses aside from their very most basic situation of two women, dissatisfied in similar ways, who proceed from convent school to suicide for similar reasons. An analysis of these women whose profound dissatisfaction leads them to self-destruction and a glance at some of the techniques used by the authors in describing them will
emphasize their resemblances and their differences.

"Eustacia" is not the name of a practical housewife. Like the names of other of Hardy's more ethereal heroines, Cytherea, Viviette, Marcia, Elfride, it seems to call to mind exotic, mysterious nights in an ideal world. In Hardy's description Eustacia does not fall short of her name. In the chapter devoted entirely to her and appropriately entitled "Queen of Night" he writes:

Her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies and tropical midnights; her moods recalled lotus-eaters and the march in 'Athalie'; her motions, the ebb and flow of the sea; her voice, the viola. 8

The only child of a regimental bandmaster from the Greek island of Corfu, Eustacia is cared for by her maternal grandfather, a retired sea captain. Although he disapproves, Captain Vye allows the nineteen-year-old girl to wander as she pleases. Her childhood memories are largely ones of romantic surroundings, "sunny afternoons on an esplanade, with military bands, officers, and gallants around" (p. 80). Now trapped in the isolation of the heath she thinks more and more of past glamour and embellishes it with all the fervor of her youth. She wanders about Egdon Heath at all hours and her strange habits become suspect in the eyes of the natives. One of them describes her as "... the lonesome dark-eyed creature up there that some say is a witch -- ever I should call a fine young woman such a name -- is always up to some odd conceit or other; and so perhaps 'tis she" (p. 58).

The influence of the classics on Thomas Hardy's writings shows immediately in the portraits of his favorite characters. His description of Eustacia Vye is a particularly well-wrought, almost regal example of this style. Hardy builds her image by the accretion of allusions to classical history, legend and literature. She is first "the raw material of a divinity" (p. 77) and is variously described as a goddess in her beauty and power, as a Titaness in her rebellion against her surroundings, as a Cleopatra in her passion and capri-
sciousness and as a witch in her mysterious ways. Hardy writes that "on Olympus she would have done well with a little preparation" (p. 77). He compares her profile with Sappho's (p. 64) and notes that in moments of pleasure she "would instantly sink into stillness and look like the Sphinx" (p. 77). According to Hardy she could easily have posed for a painting of Artemis, Athena or Hera; and this Grecian beauty, he supposes, is a descendant of a line of kings: "Where did her dignity come from? By a latent vein from Alcinous' line, her father hailing from Phaeacia's isle?" (p. 80). Her "Pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries," are heavily lidded and enable her "to indulge in reverie without seeming to do so" (p. 78). In avoiding direct answers she can "utter oracles of Delphian ambiguity" (p. 84).

Eustacia's beauty and sensuality is not only described by classical allusion. Hardy's first complete description of her begins: "To see her hair was to fancy that a whole winter did not contain darkness enough to form its shadow: it closed over her forehead like nightfall extinguishing the western glow" (p. 77). Her mouth is exotically described as one formed "less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss." It is added that "one had fancied that such lip-curves were mostly lurking underground in the South as fragments of forgotten marbles" (p. 78). Eustacia wears no jewelry as would seem to become such a woman, or at least appeal to her, but simply a thin fillet of black velvet, "restraining the luxuriance of her shady hair, in a way which added much to this class of majesty by irregularly clouding her forehead" (p. 79).

Hardy's use of fire imagery is another interesting means of indirectly describing his heroine. She is constantly associated with flames, coals, heat, blazes and other connected images. The color of her soul, for example, is fancied as "flame-like" (p. 78). She prefers "a blaze of love and then extinction" to "a lantern glimmer of the same which should last long years" (p. 82). At the beginning of the novel (and later) she beckons her lover by means of a signal
fire. He angers her and "indignation spread through her like a subterranean heat" (p. 74). Once she laughed "so that the sun shone into her mouth as into a tulip, and lent it a similar scarlet fire" (p. 108). Hardy compares her, in her winter dress, to "the tiger-beetle, which, when observed in dull situations, seems to be of the quietest neutral colour, but under a full illumination blazes with dazzling splendour" (p. 109). After first meeting Clym, Eustacia is "warmed with an inner fire" (p. 177) and their relationship is soon called "inflammable." After Mrs. Yeobright's death, she is "seared inwardly" by her feelings of guilt (p. 383). So intense and frequent are these images, that Hardy creates, at last, somewhat of a Promethean heroine.

Eustacia's dreams and desires compose the driving force in her life on the heath. These dreams are composed from heredity, from her childhood memories, from pleasing pictures she has recalled from her reading and schooling, and from a strange sort of animalistic intuition.

In school Eustacia's tastes were already ambitious. "Her high gods were William the Conqueror, Strafford, and Napoleon Buonaparte, as they had appeared in the Lady's History used at the establishment in which she was educated" (p. 82). Instead of memorizing names and dates she put suppositions to history: "At school she had used to side with the Philistines in several battles, and had wondered if Pontius Pilate were as handsome as he was frank and fair" (p. 82). John Paterson, in "The Return of the Native as Anti-Christian Document," adds to this picture: "In the text of the manuscript . . . the implications of her perverse and impious loyalties were fully articulated: 'Her chief priest was Byron; her anti-christ a well-meaning preacher at Budmouth, of the name of Slatters.'"

Eustacia has two great desires. The first is to be loved "to madness." To her, love is "the one cordial which [can] drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seems to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than for any particular lover" (p. 81). Her second overpowering desire is
to leave Egdon Heath and live in Paris, to her the center of elegance, luxury and life itself.

The power that these two passions wield even over Eustacia's unconscious mind shows itself in her dreams and reveries. Shortly after she meets Clym, she has a dream which, to her, prophesies the ideal love she has been waiting for:

Such an elaborately developed, perplexing, exciting dream was certainly never dreamed by a girl in Eustacia's situation before. It had as many ramifications as the Cretan labyrinth, as many fluctuations as the Northern Lights, as much colour as a parterre in June, and was as crowded with figures as a coronation. To Queen Scheherazade the dream might have seemed not far removed from commonplace; and to a girl just returned from all the courts of Europe it might have seemed not more than interesting. But amid the circumstances of Eustacia's life it was as wonderful as a dream could be. There was, however, gradually evolved from its transformation scenes a less extravagant episode, in which the heath dimly appeared behind the general brilliancy of the action. She was dancing to wondrous music, and her partner was the man in silver armour, who had accompanied her through the previous fantastic changes, the visor of his helmet being closed. The mazes of the dance were ecstatic. Soft whispering came into her ear from under the radiant helmet, and she felt like a woman in Paradise. Suddenly these two wheeled out from the mass of dancers, dived into one of the pools of the heath, and came out somewhere beneath into an iridescent hollow, arched with rainbows. 'It must be here,' said the voice by her side, and blushingly looking up she saw him removing his casque to kiss her. At that moment there was a cracking noise, and his figure fell into fragments like a pack of cards. She cried aloud, 'Oh that I had seen his face!' (p. 142).

Eustacia's picture of a soft-voiced knight in silver armor is obviously one from a school book. The entire dream, in fact, its rainbow arches, its iridescence, its ecstatic mazes, is story book material. The curiosity, however, lies in the deep-seated belief in this world by a very bright woman who has had a lover and has apparently experienced quite a lot of life in her nineteen years. This dream may also be interpreted as a prevision of her drowning. The explanation is upheld by the constant and somewhat foreboding presence of the heath in the background which, in part, causes her death. The dream is also premonitory in that Eustacia's "real" dream world and her view of Clym are destroyed when she sees him without the mask of a deceptive passion. It is ironic that the dream which she thinks foretells the achievement of her two
great desires, in fact, foretells her downfall and death.

Eustacia's attempts to find the key to this dream world on the heath lead her from moods of intense depression to ones of hope; from hours spent contriving ruses, as in the Christmas mumming episode, to hours of lethargy. Her sensuality which has overtones of innocence, leads her to a complicated affair with Damon Wildeve and to a disdain of public opinion. In terms of social ethics "Eustacia approached the wild state, though in emotion she was all the while an epicure" (p. 114). She is a woman highly motivated by physical sensation as a rather extended passage from Chapter Seven, "Queen of Night," indicates:

Her nerves extended into those tresses, and her temper could always be softened by stroking them down. When her hair was brushed she would instantly sink into stillness and look like the Sphinx. If, in passing under one of the Egdon banks, any of its thick skeins were caught, as they sometimes were, by a prickly tuft of the large Ulex Europoeus -- which will act as a sort of hairbrush -- she would go back a few steps, and pass against it a second time (pp. 77-78).

As the novel opens Eustacia has come more or less to the end of a passionate relationship with Damon Wildeve whom she picks up and throws down rather whimsically throughout the story according to jealousy, boredom and despair. On the evening of November fifth a bored and jealous Eustacia lights a fire as a signal to Wildeve. He comes immediately even though they have been apart for some time and despite his approaching marriage with Thomasin. The two lovers are clearly similar in their sense-seeking, capricious natures. They fully realize their likenesses and their attraction. When Eustacia refuses to give herself to him or to see him again, Wildeve says, "You have said as much before, sweet; but such natures as yours don't so easily adhere to their words. Neither, for the matter of that, do such natures as mine" (p. 74). It has been shown that the natives of Egdon Heath consider Eustacia a witch. By using the name "Damon Wildeve" with its evocation of "daemons," goblins and wild, mysterious orgies, Hardy suggests a further similarity between the lovers.
Wildeve, like Eustacia, is intelligent, quick-witted and sharp-tongued. He is adept at manipulating her jealousy and her feelings for him. But for this she would not have thought him worth her time. When her jealousy over his marriage with Thomasin erases his faults, Hardy writes:

The man who had begun by being merely her amusement, and would never have been more than her hobby but for his skill in deserting her at the right moments, was now again her desire. Cessation in his love-making had revivified her love. Such feeling as Eustacia had idly given to Wildeve was damned into a flood by Thomasin. She had used to tease Wildeve, but that was before another had favoured him (p. 113).

However, her high, even disdainful sense of self-worth and her pride lead her to conclude that she "should have cared nothing for him had there been a better man" (p. 111).

One evening Eustacia learns from her grandfather that Mrs. Yeobright's son Clym is coming home to the heath for Christmas. She asks where he has been living and Captain Vye answers, "In that rookery of pomp and vanity, Paris, I believe" (p. 124). The possibility of finding a wealthy, sophisticated man from Paris on the heath has been Eustacia's dream for years. The necessity of finding a way to meet him is urgent. Her feelings for Wildeve pale against the chance of loving a "better man" and she sets about arranging the Christmas mumming disguise immediately.

The "native" who returns to Egdon Heath is not the man Eustacia already thinks he is. She has, however, endowed him with all the qualities she wants him to have and when she at last succeeds in seeing him even his voice takes on a dream-like tone. His every word is like a gift to her:

During the greater part of the afternoon she had been entrancing herself by imagining the fascination which must attend a man come direct from beautiful Paris -- laden with its atmosphere, familiar with its charms. And this man had greeted her. . . . All emotional things were possible to the speaker of that 'good night' (pp. 140-41).

At this point Eustacia is in love with a man she doesn't even know. She is in love with a vision of which Clym is the only handy form.

In her costume as the Turkish Knight Eustacia is able to enter the
Christmas party at the Yeobright's and study Clym for some time. His face shows that he is a mature, experienced and handsome young man, but Hardy remarks that his beauty will "in no long time be ruthlessly overrun by its parasite, 'thought" (p. 167). Hardy continues to hint at the coming incompatibility of Clym and Eustacia by describing the power of thought over him as he described the power of physical sensation over her. His face is "overlaid with legible meanings" (p. 168) which lead people to "peruse" him instead of "behold" him. He is proof that "thought is a disease of the flesh" (p. 168) and bears evidence that ideal physical beauty cannot be coupled with "emotional development and a full recognition of the coil of things" (p. 168). Clym impresses one as an isolated being and yet he bravely and cheerfully "strives against depression" without quite succeeding (p. 168).

After the play Eustacia sits in the pantry and eats with the mummers, regretting her masculine dress and the fact that she is unable to use her beauty to attract Clym. "The power of her face all lost, the charm of her emotions all disguised, the fascinations of her coquetry denied existence, nothing but a voice left to her," she is completely disgusted with her plan (p. 175). She is also wildly jealous of Thomasin who lives in the house with Clym and his mother and who, she fears, may fall in love with Clym. Having overlooked the fact that, coming disguised as a boy, she would be treated as one, she has "a sense of the doom of Echo" (p. 175). Eustacia has not, however, given enough credit to Clym's power of observation. As soon as she leaves the table and slips outside to wait for the mummers he joins her and immediately asks if she is a woman. It is probable that to a man like Clym her masquerade and brief, unusual answers to his questions are more intriguing than her charm and coquetry would have been had she come in her finest gown. When he asks why she pretended to be a mummer she answers in low tones, "To get excitement and shake off depression." He asks what has depressed her and she answers, "Life" (p. 176).
From this meeting Clym knows that Eustacia is "a cultivated woman" and a captivating one. Their fascination, which plays a great part in Eustacia's downfall, has already begun.

What Eustacia and Clym in their growing fascination forget to account for are their great differences in character. Clym knows perhaps better than Eustacia that they are indeed very different kinds of people, for until several months after their marriage she goes on believing that he is the knight from her dream. Clym is a self-effacing man whose ambition is to be of some use to humanity. He has returned to the heath to teach the natives and plans to spend the rest of his life in near poverty. Eustacia's feeling for her fellow man also differs radically from that of Clym. When he asks her to help him try to better the status of humanity by "high class teaching" she replies, "I don't quite feel anxious to. I have not much love for my fellow-creatures. Sometimes I quite hate them" (p. 229). The following passage compares the lovers' feelings about the heath where Clym has chosen to carry out his duty to the world:

(Eustacia): 'I cannot endure the heath, except in its purple season. The heath is a cruel taskmaster to me.'

'Can you say so?' he asked. 'To my mind it is most exhilarating, and strengthening, and soothing. I would rather live on these hills than anywhere else in the world.'

'It is well enough for artists; but I never would learn to draw.'

'And there is a very curious Druidical stone just out there.' He threw a pebble in the direction signified. 'Do you often go to see it?'

'I was not even aware that there existed any such curious Druidical stone. I am aware that there are Boulevards in Paris' (p. 229).

In summarizing their completely opposed sentiments toward the heath Hardy writes: "Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath, and translate them into loves, and you have the heart of Clym" (p. 213).

Just as Eustacia despises the dark solitude of the heath, Clym does not wish to return to live in Paris. Eustacia begs him for descriptions of Parisian sights and he even avoids talking of them at length. After one such scene
Hardy ironically emphasizes their self-deception when Clym says, "Sometimes I think there is not that in Eustacia Vye which will make a good homespun wife. . . . You are ambitious, Eustacia -- no, not exactly ambitious, luxurious. I ought to be of the same vein, to make you happy, I suppose" (p. 245). Eustacia, for the moment surfeited with the excitement, romance and worldliness Clym has brought from Paris, but which will soon wear away, responds, "I love you for yourself alone. To be your wife and live in Paris would be heaven to me; but I would rather live with you in a hermitage here than not be yours at all. It is gain to me either way, and very great gain" (pp. 245-46). Although they are vaguely aware of their differences, neither Clym nor Eustacia, intelligent as they are, sees the tragic web in which they are caught.

Despite these grave differences in their tastes and in their characters and despite Mrs. Yeobright's dislike of Eustacia and her subsequent rupture with her son, Eustacia and Clym are irresistibly drawn into marriage. Their life together is not unbearable for either of them until Clym's eyes give out from too much study and he is forced to become a furze-cutter. Eustacia is, naturally, upset that her fine husband, once a wealthy diamond merchant, must now work at so menial a chore to stay alive. She does not fully realize the depth of the situation, however, until she watches him at work one day:

On one of these warm afternoons Eustacia walked out alone in the direction of Yeobright's place of work. He was busily chopping away at the furze, a long row of faggots which stretched downward from his position representing the labour of the day. He did not observe her approach, and she stood close to him, and heard his undercurrent of song. It shocked her. To see him there, a poor afflicted man, earning money by the sweat of his brow, had at first moved her to tears; but to hear him sing and not at all rebel against an occupation which, however satisfactory to himself, was degrading to her, as an educated lady-wife, wounded her through. . . . It was bitterly plain to Eustacia that he did not care much about social failure; and the proud fair woman bowed her head and wept in sick despair at the thought of the blasting effect upon her own life of that mood and condition in him (pp. 312-13).

She now realizes that Clym will never be persuaded to leave the heath for Paris, that he is content to be even a mean laborer. The mask of the knight in silver
armor is at last lifted and he falls to pieces like a pack of cards. Her
first thought, in keeping with her sensual, instinctive, animalistic character,
is of herself. When she tries to argue with him, Clym reveals a part of his
nature she has never seen and what is also, perhaps their greatest difference.
He explains that he, too, has been rebellious and passionate in his life, but
that after seeing the world he has come to realize that no part of it is more
desirable than any other and that its most valuable blessings are often the
smallest. He says to her:

'Now, don't you suppose, my inexperienced girl, that I cannot rebel, in
high Prometheus fashion, against the gods and fate as well as you. I
have felt more steam and smoke of that sort than you have ever heard of.
But the more I see of life the more do I perceive that there is nothing
particularly great in its greatest walks, and therefore nothing particu-
larly small in mine of furze-cutting. If I feel that the greatest bless-
ings vouchsafed to us are not very valuable, how can I feel it to be any
great hardship when they are taken away? So I sing to pass the time
(pp. 315-16).

This passage is one which sets Clym forth as a rather admirable philosopher
against Eustacia's pettiness, but, just the same, does not absolve him from
his mistake of marrying her. As Grimsditch, one of Hardy's greatest critics,
observes:

The semi-blindness of Clym is the last blow to all Eustacia's hopes of
escape from Egdon. She has known that Clym intends to keep a school,
but has trusted to her womanly persuasion to divert him from the project;
and his misfortune adds one more burden to those she already bears.
Clym's cheerfulness under privation, which would have been heroic had he
only had himself to consider, amounts almost to callousness where Eustacia
is concerned. It is small wonder that she is grieved and angry when he
takes his fall (which involves hers) complacently.10

From the time of this incident until her death, Eustacia's manner is
apathetic with only brief intervals of liveliness. "There was a forlorn look
about her beautiful eyes which, whether she deserved it or not, would have
excited pity in the breast of any one who had known her during the full flush
of her love for Clym" (p. 317). When Clym misunderstands Eustacia's role in
his mother's death and blames her for killing his mother he sends her back to
her grandfather's cottage. He does not for a moment stop to inquire into the
cause of Eustacia's actions, but punishes her verbally until she breaks down. Later he blames her again and not himself by writing: "Why have you not come before? Do you think I will not listen to you? Surely not, when you remember the kisses and vows we exchanged under the summer moon" (p. 433).

Driven away by her husband, she again turns to the now married Wildeve and finds, ironically, that his inheritance would enable him to give her the life of her dreams, the life she thought Clym would give her. To Wildeve she realistically admits, "I married him because I loved him, but I won't say that I didn't love him partly because I thought I saw a promise of that life in him" (p. 351). And so, the proud, haughty goddess of Egdon Heath is reduced to a "crying animal." Charley, her devout, youthful admirer sees her "leaning like a helpless, despairing creature against a wild wet bank" (p. 414). Eustacia herself suggests the reason for her miserable state: "How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! . . . O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control!" (p. 442). Death is of course the only escape from this "ill-conceived world." She decides to shoot herself with her grandfather's pistols but Charley, understanding her thoughts, hides them from her. This incident and the speech following it should remove any doubt that her drowning was not accidental as has sometimes been argued. She says to Charley: "Why should I not die if I wish? I have made a bad bargain with life, and I am weary of it -- weary. And now you have hindered my escape . . . What makes death painful except the thought of others' grief? -- and that is absent in my case, for not a sigh would follow me!" (p. 418).

On the night she dies Hardy again substantiates her reason for suicide: "She had used to think of the heath alone as an uncongenial spot to be in; she felt it now of the whole world" (p. 436).

Although Wildeve has persuaded her to leave for Europe with him and the
arrangements have been made to meet on the heath at midnight, Eustacia's excitement comes and goes. Hardy's description of the heath and the threatening storm is effective in heightening the sense of impending disaster. He describes it as "a night which led the traveller's thoughts instinctively to dwell on nocturnal scenes of disaster in the chronicles of the world on all that is terrible and dark in history and legend -- the last plague of Egypt, the destruction of Sennacherib's host, the agony in Gethsemane" (p. 441). The storm and Eustacia's thoughts seem to climax at the same point and she cries, "He's not great enough for me to give myself to -- he does not suffice for my desire! . . . If he had been a Saul or a Bonaparte -- ah! But to break my marriage vow for him -- it is too poor a luxury!" (p. 442). Eustacia has learned her lesson through her disappointment with Clym. When she says Wildeve isn't great enough for her she recalls that Clym was not great enough either. It is this realization, the fact that she has nowhere to turn, not for shelter, but for the hope, however unrealistic, of her dream world, and also the realization that things are not likely to be any more promising anywhere else, that lead her to her death in Shadwater Weir. The picture of Eustacia after she is pulled from the water and laid on the bank provides a fitting conclusion to her life:

They stood silently looking upon Eustacia, who, as she lay there still in death, eclipsed all her living phases. Pallor did not include all the quality of her complexion, which seemed more than whiteness; it was almost light. The expression of her finely carved mouth was pleasant, as if a sense of dignity had just compelled her to leave off speaking. Eternal rigidity had seized upon it in a momentary transition between fervour and resignation. Her black hair was looser now than either of them had ever seen it before, and surrounded her brow like a forest. The stateliness of look which had been almost too marked for a dweller in a country domicile had at last found an artistically happy background (pp. 468-69).

Hardy's description of his heroine in The Return of the Native is, thus, a grand, an awe-inspiring and a complicated one. Critics have called her over-invented and grotesquely larger than life, but nearly all have agreed that
ordinary people, those who accept life as it is, are not subjects for great drama. Despite the pain she causes others in her struggle for happiness, Hardy does not condemn her. She does not wish to hurt others, but merely to reach the sort of life in which her nature can thrive. Eustacia is hardly a vulgar and vain socialite pining for a carefree, jewel-studded existence. Her dignity, her goddess-like beauty and her pride raise her above this. George Douglas Wing has given a fine view of Eustacia in the following passage:

... there is no doubt about the supreme success of the character of Eustacia. This queen of the night, this bundle of neuroses tingling in a body of great physical beauty, was too Shelleyan a thing for the didactic but earthbound Clym. ... She was ever in a spring of discontent, and one can never conjecture a phase or situation of anything like a permanent nature in which she would ever be contented. There was an insatiability about Eustacia, a restlessness, an unceasing demanding. She had to live at a hotter pace; she had to burn up quicker than anybody else.11

The rustic characters in The Return of the Native are often referred to as throwbacks to Shakespeare, as Elizabethan characters, especially in speech, set down in the Victorian period. Paterson refers to them as the peasant chorus whose purpose is to satirize Christianity.12 As in Shakespearean tragedy this chorus provides comic relief, notably in the scenes with Grandfer and Christian Cantle. They also, as Lord David Cecil observes, fulfill the important role of tying the reader to reality. He writes:

... Eustacia may love and suffer and die; but the rustics go on. It is they who bring the children to birth, dance at the wedding, mourn at the graveyard, and speak the epitaph over the tomb. They are eternal as the earth by which they live. And their very prosaicness anchors the story to reality. It gives the reader a standard of normality by which he can gauge the tremendous heights and depths to which the main characters rise and fall.13

Against an appropriate theatrical background -- the darkly brooding heath and its rustic inhabitants happily busy at their work -- Eustacia Vye, the doomed heroine, recites her lines.

The place of fate is an important one in any dramatic tragedy, and so it is in The Return of the Native. It appears to Eustacia in the form of "some
indistinct colossal Prince of the World, who had framed her situation and ruled her lot" (p. 369) and makes itself felt through the failure of love and also through the cruelty of chance, as when Eustacia did not go to the door to meet Mrs. Yeobright and indirectly caused her death. She seems to live in a universe abandoned by an indifferent yet seemingly malicious god. Lascelles Abercrombie comments:

The process of things is not for her a blind chance-medley of onward motions; the world is a huge deliberate conspiracy, consciously inventing devices for her ruin; nothing less than this will her pride believe in; for her nature is tragic, and she must be the centre of her universe. .... In no book of Hardy's is the ceaseless drifting power of material fate so impressively or so directly typified --- neither malignant nor benevolent, but simply indifferent, unconscious of its freightage of a humanity not so much struggling as vainly desiring against its relentless motion. And Eustacia, by so pitably mistaking the indifference of its motion for malignity, does actually turn it into malignity on herself and on the others: tragedy, the inevitable answer to personality's self-assertion against the impersonal power of the world — the fundamental tragedy of the human state, according to this metaphysic.14

Eustacia and Wildeve are the only two characters who rebel against the heath and against fate. They are also the two characters who die. In Hardy's world, to act is to bring disaster on oneself; in order to avoid disaster one must be submissive to a higher will. The rustic characters live happy, quiet lives by accepting their fate and living with the heath. Thomasin once said to Wildeve in complete innocence, "You go about so gloomily, and look at the heath as if it were somebody's gaol instead of a nice wild place to walk in" (p. 434). To these simple people the heath that Wildeve and Eustacia despise is a friend. Hardy remarks that "these shaggy recesses were at all seasons a familiar surrounding to Olly and Mrs. Yeobright; and the addition of darkness lends no frightfulness to the face of a friend" (p. 40). Eustacia and Wildeve, in rising against the forces of the heath which tend to absorb them, bring tragedy upon themselves. Like the oak tree of the fable they are broken by their resistance. A passage from Chapter I provides a symbol of Eustacia's position in relation to Egdon Heath:
There the form stood, motionless as the hill beneath. Above the plain rose the hill, above the hill rose the barrow, and above the barrow rose the figure. Above the figure was nothing that could be mapped elsewhere than on a celestial globe (p. 14).

Fate, the indistinct, colossal Prince of the World, reigns supreme in Hardy's universe. Eustacia's great tragedy lies in her struggle to defeat him.

Emma Bovary, the second figure under scrutiny here, although certainly not Eustacia's twin, may be considered a sympathetic sister or first cousin. The reader first sees her, an apparently happy young woman, on her father's prosperous farm in Normandy. This is also Charles' first sight of Emma as he arrives to see Monsieur Rouault's broken leg. Emma seems efficiently in charge of the farmhouse and not unhappy in her work. There are no signs of the discontented Madame Bovary and her coming tragedy in this pleasant scene. The pleasantness is sustained over the events of the next few months. Perhaps the first salient indication of Emma's romantic nature is her wish to be married at midnight by torchlight, an idea which her father rejected. The wedding of Charles and Emma was instead "une noce où vinrent quarante-trois personnes, où l'on resta seize heures à table, qui recommença le lendemain et quelque peu les jours suivants."\(^{15}\) Equally important, the first indication of a perpetual misunderstanding between Emma and Charles, due either to a lack of sensitivity or a lack of thought, takes place after the wedding when the couple arrives at their home in Tostes. Emma ascends the stairs to their bedroom and sees on the desk "dans une carafe, un bouquet de fleurs d'oranger, noué par des rubans de satin blanc. C'était un bouquet de mariée, le bouquet de l'autre!" (p. 44).

Soon Emma realizes that by marriage she has not gotten what she dreamed of. The happiness she thought would blossom was not there. Flaubert describes her thoughts before and after her wedding:

Avant qu'elle se mariait, elle avait cru avoir de l'amour; mais le bonheur qui aurait dû résulter de cet amour n'étant pas venu, il fallait qu'elle se fût trompée, songeait-elle. Et Emma cherchait à savoir ce que l'on
entendait au juste dans la vie par les mots de félicité, de passion et d’ivresse, qui lui avaient paru si beaux dans les livres (p. 47).

Emma’s schooling and its influences on her tastes and expectations are important. At the age of thirteen, her father sent her to a convent school where she showed her intelligence to great advantage. The sermons which dwelled on such terms as "fiancé," "époux," "amant céleste" and "mariage éternel" stirred deep and unexpected feelings in Emma. She loved to invent lists of sins which enabled her to kneel in the darkness of the confessional for long periods. The following passage shows her adjustment to life in the convent.

Vivant donc sans jamais sortir de la tiède atmosphère des classes et parmi ces femmes au teint blanc, portant des chapelets à croix de cuivre, elle s'assoupit doucement à la langue mystique qui s'exhale des parfums de l'autel, de la fraîcheur des bénitiers et du rayonnement des cierges. Au lieu de suivre la messe, elle regardait dans son livre les vignettes pieuses bordées d'azur, et elle aimait la brebis malade, le sacre coeur percé de flèches aiguës, ou le pauvre Jésus, qui tombe en marchant sur sa croix. Elle cherchait dans sa tête quelque voeu à accomplir (p. 49).

She listened to passages from Le Génie du christianisme and "la lamentation sonore des mélancolies romantiques se répétant à tous les échos de la terre et de l'éternité!" (p. 49). She listened to the stories and love songs of an old woman who came for a week every month to look after the linen and she read the novels the woman brought in her apron pocket.

Ce n'était qu'amours, amants, amantes, dames persecutées s'évanouissant dans des pavillons solitaires, postillons qu'on tue à tous les relais, chevaux qu'on crève à toutes les pages, forêts sombres, troubles du coeur, serments, sanglots, larmes et baisers, nacelles au clair de lune, rossignols dans les bosquets, messieurs braves comme des lions, doux comme des agneaux, vertueux comme on ne l'est pas, toujours bien mis, et qui pleurent comme des urnes (pp. 50-51).

Emma read Walter Scott constantly and worshipped Mary Queen of Scots, Joan of Arc, Héloïse, Agnès Sorel, La Belle Ferronnière and Clémence Isaure. To emphasize the influence and extent of Emma's dream world Flaubert inundates the reader with descriptions of her schoolmates' satin bound keepsake albums and the lyrics of the songs she sang.
When her mother died Emma acted out the languorous, Lamartinian sorrow she had read so much about, until she became bored with it:

Elle se fit faire un tableau funèbre avec les cheveux de la défunte, et, dans une lettre qu'elle envoyait aux Bertaux, toute pleine de réflexions tristes sur la vie, elle demandait qu'on l'ensevelit plus tard dans le même tombeau. . . . Emma fut intérieurement satisfaite de se sentir arrivée du premier coup à ce rare idéal des existences pâles, où ne parviennent jamais les cœurs médiocres (p. 53).

Years later, after her marriage to Charles, Emma still dreams of the rich, embroidered world of her schoolgirl dreams. The damage has been done; she now believes that "certains lieux sur la terre devaient produire du bonheur, comme une plante particulière au sol et qui pousse mal tout autre part" (p. 56). And again, "Ne fallait-il pas à l'amour, comme aux plantes indiennes, des terrains préparés, une température particulière?" (p. 82). Thus begins Emma Bovary's tragically unhappy married life.

It is at this inauspicious moment in her life, when she is already suspecting a void in her life, that the invitation to the La Vaubyessard ball arrives to reinforce her yearnings. Emma observes and savors every minute detail of the ball and adapts easily, unlike Charles, of course, to the aristocratic atmosphere in which her dreams take on reality. This atmosphere remains with her until her death and reappears in an especially ironic way when, in Rouen begging Leon for money on the day of her death she thinks she sees the viscount passing in his carriage. Flaubert describes her memories of the ball as an occupation:

Toutes les fois que revenait le mercredi, elle se disait en s'éveillant: "Ah! il y a huit jours . . . il y a quinze jours . . . il y a trois semaines, j'y étais!" Et peu à peu, les physionomies se confondirent dans sa mémoire, elle oublia l'air des contredanses, elle ne vit plus si nettement les livrées et les appartements; quelques détails s'en allèrent, mais le regret lui resta (p. 76).

Charles Bovary is perhaps the man least suited to be Emma's husband, but he is, nevertheless, a good man. His unselfish love for Emma and his admiration of her pretty clothes, fine manners and musical and artistic talents raise him
above the ordinary. She is his dream beyond attainment just as life in Paris is Emma's.

Although he is first described in the schoolroom scene as a dull, clumsy, bumbling fellow, Charles is nearly always seen from Emma's point of view. This percolation of his habits, attitudes and appearance through her eyes changes him somewhat from reality. There are no physical descriptions of Charles through Emma's eyes at the beginning of the book where her impressions would have been flattering ones. Sherrington explains in his study on Flaubert's technique that

"... this is partly because at this stage the point of view is Charles's; partly because Emma at first sees him more as a means of escape from her environment than as a man, so that his appearance is unimportant to her; and partly because he has no striking distinguishing features anyway -- the earlier statement that his face had become 'presque intéressant' (p. 11), and père Rouault's opinion that he was 'un peu gringalet' (p. 32), have sufficiently characterized him. Thus Charles is never really described until after Emma's disillusionment begins, so that he is automatically the victim of an emotional chain reaction."16

The following passage describing Charles from Flaubert's preparatory notes on Madame Bovary provides an interesting list of some of the habits which aggravate Emma:

'Vulgarité intime jusque dans la manière dont il plie précautionneusement sa serviette, -- et dont il mange sa soupe. -- Animalité de ses fonctions organiques. -- Il porte l'hiver des gilets de tricot et des chaussettes de laine grise à bordure blanche. -- Bonnes bottes. Habitude de se curer les dents avec la pointe de son couteau et de couper le bouchon des bouteilles pour le faire rentrer.'17

The extent of Emma's pettiness is well illustrated when she complains that her bourgeois husband carries a pocketknife and later says nothing when Rodolphe pulls one from his pocket to fix her horse's bridle.

Emma's expectations, enhanced by the books she read in the convent and the stories she heard there, destroyed beforehand any admiration she might have had for Charles. Her dreams dictated:

Il ne savait ni nager, ni faire des armes, ni tirer le pistolet, et il ne put, un jour, lui expliquer un terme d'équitation qu'elle avait ren-
contre dans un roman. Un homme, au contraire, ne devait-il pas tout connaître, exceller en des activités multiples, vous initier aux énergies de la passion, aux raffinements de la vie, à tous les mystères? Mais il n'enseignait rien, celui-là, ne savait rien, ne souhaitait rien (p. 57).

The only time Emma and Charles have "rêves en commun" is the evening before he operates on Hippolyte. The evening was

... charmant, pleine de causeries, de rêves en commun. Ils parlerent de leur fortune future, d'améliorations à introduire dans leur ménage; il voyait sa considération s'étendant, son bien-être s'augmentant, sa femme l'aimant toujours; et elle se trouvait heureuse de se rafraîchir dans un sentiment nouveau, plus sain, meilleur, enfin d'éprouver quelque tendresse pour ce pauvre garçon qui la chérissait (p. 245).

She also, for the first and only time, notices with surprise "qu'il n'avait point les dents vilaines." This episode is Charles' last chance to win Emma's respect and affection; when he fails he loses her forever.

Charles' and Emma's relationship is underlaid with a great amount of irony. A close examination of the text yields as much pity for Charles as a victim of this irony as it does for Emma. It is evident even early in the novel that Emma is disappointed in marriage. However, Charles too "avait entrevu dans le mariage l'avènement d'une condition meilleure" (p. 13).

Emma's ironic perception of Charles is obscured because Flaubert deemphasizes Charles' unselfishness and devotion. When Emma becomes ill at Tostes, although he does not realize what is wrong with her, Charles is willing to give up his home and his practice for her. After Rodolphe leaves Emma and she is ill for forty-three days, little mention is made of the fact that Charles completely neglects his patients and stays with her even though he needs the money to pay her debts. The irony here is especially important: the undying love and affection she wants so badly and searches for unsuccessfully in Rodolphe and Leon, is to be had all the while in her own husband.

It is also ironic that after Emma's death Charles should take on so many of the romantic characteristics she wanted him to adopt when she was alive. His instructions for her burial:

She also, for the first and only time, notices with surprise "qu'il n'avait point les dents vilaines." This episode is Charles' last chance to win Emma's respect and affection; when he fails he loses her forever.
"Je veux qu'on l'enterre dans sa robe de noces, avec des souliers blancs, une couronne. On lui étalera ses cheveux sur les épaules; trois cercueils, un de chêne, un d' acajou, un de plomb. Qu'on ne me dise rien, j'aurai de la force. On lui mettra par-dessus tout une grande pièce de velours vert. Je le veux. Faites-le" (p. 452).

his sudden attention to clothing, his memories of their first days together, all give force to the irony. And finally, dying of a broken heart, he gives the novel its one unretouched romantic scene.

Blind to her husband's good qualities, suffering from periods of ennui and deep depression, Emma is easily pulled into a love affair with Rodolphe. Flaubert paints him as a cold seducer:

M. Rodolphe Boulanger avait trente-quatre ans; il était de tempérament brutal et d'intelligence perspicace, ayant d'ailleurs beaucoup fréquenté les femmes, et s'y connaissant bien. Celle-là lui avait paru jolie; il y revait donc, et a son mari.
-- Je le crois très bête. Elle en est fatiguée sans doute. Il porte des ongles sales et une barbe de trois jours. Tandis qu'il trottine à ses malades, elle reste à ravauder des chaussettes. Et on s'ennuie! on voudrait habiter la ville, danser la polka tous les soirs! Pauvre petite femme! Ça batille après l'amour, comme une carpe après l'eau sur une table de cuisine. Avec trois mots de galanterie, cela vous adorerait, j'en suis sûr! ce serait tendre! charmant! ...

(p. 181).

Rodolphe understands Emma well enough, but he certainly does not have it in mind to help her. His greatest worry is "comment s'en débarrasser ensuite?" (p. 181). Albert Thibaudet makes an interesting observation on this passage:

Toute la pente de la réflexion de Rodolphe est dessinée par la succession des pronoms; il passe de elle à on, puis à ça, à cela et à ce. Trois phases: d'abord un sujet qui vit pour lui-même, puis un objet qu'on caresse pour son plaisir, enfin une chose qu'on jette quand on en a eu ce qu'on voulait. Rodolphe est le lheureux de la vie amoureuse d'Emma.

The absurdity and cruelty of his conquest is masterfully pointed out in the scene at the Comicè agricoles. He uses the same platitudes he has used many times before, perhaps adding a word here, a sigh there, to improve his performance. Trying to soften her feelings toward him Rodolphe says: "... que de fois, à la vue d'un cimetière, au clair de lune, je me suis demandé si je ne ferais pas mieux d'aller rejoindre ceux qui sont à dormir ..." (p. 192). He attempts to invoke the same pity when, in writing his "parting" letter to her, he drops water on the page for tears.
The opera Charles and Emma see in Rouen is an appropriate setting for the beginning of her second affair. *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti was taken from Walter Scott's novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which Emma had probably read at school. Although she has not completely recovered from the loss of Rodolphe, thoughts of him vanish when Léon appears. She had been totally involved in the opera during the first act: "Emma se penchait pour le voir, égratignant avec ses ongles le velours de sa loge. Elle s'emplissait le coeur de ces lamentations mélodieuses qui se traînaient à l'accompagnement • • • Elle reconnaissait tous les environs et les angoisses dont elle avait manqué mourir" (pp. 310-11), but when Léon enters and asks her if she is enjoying herself, she answers, "Oh! mon Dieu, non! pas beaucoup" (p. 316). She hears no more of the opera, feeling Léon close to her, and her thoughts pass to their friendship in Yonville:

... elle se rappelait les parties de cartes chez le pharmacien, et la promenade chez la nourrice, les lectures sous la tonnelle, les tête-à-tête au coin du feu, tout ce pauvre amour si calme et si long, si discret, si tendre, et qu'elle avait oublié cependant. Pourquoi donc revenait-il? quelle combinaison d'aventures le remplaçait dans sa vie? (p. 315).

The affair with Léon passes through three distinct stages. At first their happiness is sweet, innocent and perfect for Emma. The second stage takes on violence and sensuality as Emma despairs of holding Léon forever. The third and final stage sees the death of their love in boredom and indifference. Léon himself is a rather colorless young man, at first eager for passion and the love of an older woman and then cautious and very much aware of his social duty. He has been compared to Charles on a more refined, more intellectual level. His greatest failure in loving Emma was his weakness. She still wanted a strong man like Rodolphe and tried to make Léon over in his image.

Flaubert, like Thomas Hardy, rejected the use of landscape description for its own sake. He uses the landscape to bring out character and to influence the action. Although he does not allow himself the long description that
Hardy uses in the beginning chapter of *The Return of the Native*, his picture of Yonville and the nearby countryside provides enough background for his readers. Such a deliberately prosaic landscape perhaps needs no long description:

On quitte la grande route à la Boissière et l'on continue à plat jusqu'au haut de la côte des Leux, d'où l'on découvre la vallée. La rivière qui la traverse en fait comme deux régions de physionomie distincte: tout ce qui est à gauche est en herbage, tout ce qui est à droite est en labour (p. 94).

The monotonous countryside clearly enough holds no charm for Emma:

Habituée aux aspects calmes, elle se tournait, au contraire, vers les accidentés. Elle n'aimait la mer qu'à cause de ses tempêtes, et la verdure seulement lorsqu'elle était clair-semée parmi les ruines (p. 50).

Her selfish nature, Flaubert says, forces her to take some personal profit from everything, leaving no part of herself behind. Because hers is a sentimental, not an artistic nature, she seeks emotions and not landscapes.

Certain scenes of nature, however, do have a mystic power over Emma, not because of their beauty to the eye, but because of their appeal to the senses. Emma, like Eustacia, is a sensualist, and the following scene, although not properly a landscape description, holds her in a trance.

La lune, toute ronde et couleur de pourpre, se levait à ras de terre, au fond de la prairie. Elle montait vite entre les branches des peupliers, qui la cachaient de place en place, comme un rideau noir, troué. Puis elle parut, éclatante de blancheur, dans le ciel vide qu'elle éclairait; et alors, se ralentissant, elle laissa tomber sur la rivière une grande tache, qui faisait une infinité d'étoiles; et cette lueur d'argent semblait s'y tordre jusqu'au fond, à la manière d'un serpent sans tête couvert d'écaillles lumineuses. Cela ressemblait aussi à quelque monstrueux cadavre, d'où ruisselaient, tout du long, des gouttes de diamant en fusion. La nuit douce s'étalait autour d'eux; des nappes d'ombre emolissaient les feuillages. Emma, les yeux à demi clos, aspirait avec de grands soupirs le vent frais qui soufflait. [Emma et Rodolphe], ne se parlaient pas, trop perdus qu'ils étaient dans l'envahissement de leur reverie. La tendresse des anciens jours leur revenait au cœur, abondante et silencieuse comme la rivière qui coulait, avec autant de mollesse qu'en apportait le parfum des seringas, et projetait dans leurs souvenirs des ombres plus démesurées et plus mélancoliques que celles des saules immobiles qui s'allongeaient sur l'herbe. Souvent quelque bête nocturne, hérisson ou belette, se mettant en chasse, dérangeait les feuilles, ou bien on entendait par moment une pêche mûre qui tombait toute seule de l'espalier (pp. 274-75).

Imprisoned by the landscape, by the failure of her marriage and her affairs,
and by Lheureux and his bankers and bailiffs, Emma resorts to suicide. Her choice of this course has given rise to much debate. Some critics, notably Professor F. C. Green, believe that her choice is entirely out of character; that she would not have committed suicide as long as there was one available man left in the world and that the money situation was not a sufficient reason. Enid Starkie, however, takes a more sensitive view of Emma's situation and concludes:

She would not take her life for lack of money -- she was not a woman who thought much about the future and she lived in the present -- but she had certain ideals and a fixed view of herself; if these were damaged, then, in momentary despair, she might do violence to herself . . . What Professor Green has not understood is the romantic quality which was still there, in Emma, in spite of her failings, and her pride in herself.

The horror of Emma's death scene is heightened by its contrast with the mock death scene which takes place during her illness after Rodolphe leaves her. In the mock scene Emma imagines that she is dying and has her maid surround her with flowers and candles so that she can recline on her couch like the romantic heroines of her beloved novels:

Un jour qu'au plus fort de sa maladie elle s'était crue agonisante, elle avait demandé la communion; et, à mesure que l'on faisait dans sa chambre les préparatifs pour le sacrement, que l'on disposait en autel la commode encombrée de sirops et que Félicité semait par terre des fleurs de dahlia, Emma sentait quelque chose de fort passant sur elle, qui la débarrassait de ses douleurs, de toute perception, de tout sentiment. Sa chair allégée ne pensait plus, une autre vie commençait; il lui semblait que son être, montant vers Dieu, allait s'anéantir dans cet amour comme un encens allumé qui se dissipe en vapeur. On aspergea d'eau bénite les draps du lit; le prêtre retira du saint ciboire la blanche hostie; et ce fut en défaillant d'une joie céleste qu'elle avança les lèvres pour accepter le corps du Sauveur qui se présentait (p. 295).

The softly swelling curtains around her, the soft candle light, her vision of God and the saints, and the angels descending to earth to bring her to heaven are sharply contrasted with the real agony of death:

Elle ne tarda pas à vomir du sang. Ses lèvres se serrèrent davantage. Elle avait les membres crispés, le corps couvert de taches brunes, et son pouls glissait sous les doigts comme un fil tendu, comme une corde de harpe près de se rompre (p. 440).
At one point she awakens as if from a dream and asks for her mirror: "... elle resta penchée dessus quelque temps, jusqu’au moment où de grosses larmes lui découlerent des yeux. Alors elle se renversa la tête en poussant un soupir et retomba sur l’oreiller" (pp. 447-48). There is no romance to be found in this death scene. It is ironic that even in taking her life Emma fails to achieve the drama she ruined her life for.

Emma Bovary is not a simple character. In her, Flaubert has combined contrary aspects of himself and of women he has known and read about. His vague, almost non-existent physical descriptions serve to show her in a universal light -- she is a complicated woman and she is many women. To her highly developed sense-seeking nature Flaubert adds vanity, an extraordinary and often vulgar imagination, cruelty, almost childish innocence, selfishness and laziness. A sympathetic understanding of Emma lies not in searching for excuses for these defects, but in recognizing her redeeming qualities as well. In Madame Bovary, Flaubert writes both of the grotesque and the beautiful.

Perhaps Emma's most outstanding quality is her sensuality. She seems to absorb all things physical -- odors, sights, sensations -- and keeps them close to her, cherishing them and remembering them again and again. After Rodolphe and Léon leave her, the happy thoughts of her affairs with them turn to sad memories and reminders of her failure in love. The ball at La Vaubyessard provides the best example of this sensual absorption because it is the one memory -- other than the memories of her books and her reveries -- that remains untainted until her death. She seems to inhale "cet air chaud, mélange du parfum des fleurs et du beau linge, du fumet des viandes et de l’odeur des truffes" (p. 67). Of this sensuality, Brunetièr writes:

Dans cette nature de femme, à tous autres égards moyenne, et même commune, il y a quelque chose d’extrême, et de rare par conséquent, qui est la finesse des sens. Elle est sotte, mal élevée, prétentieuse; n’a ni tête, ni cœur; fausse, avide par instants même froidement et bêtement cruelle; mais, comme ses sens, exacerbés par la privation de ce qu’elle n’a jamais connu, sont devenus fins et subtils; comme les moindres sensations retentissent longuement et profondément en elle; comme au plus léger contact de la plus légère impression, vous la sentez qui vibre tout entière.
Despite her sensuality, her beauty, her ability to adapt to aristocratic society and her great aspirations to do so, Emma remains a second-rate human being. She has no real definable character but takes on different roles -- devoted wife, adoring mother, passionate lover, religious mystic -- according to her mood. In this respect she is no better than Charles whom she condemns: "La conversation de Charles était plate comme un trottoir de rue, et les idées de tout le monde y défilaient ..." (p. 57). Although she is more refined than Charles, her ideas come unchanged from the books she reads and prevent her from living life as it is. She is just as incapable of discrimination as Charles which is shown in her gullibility concerning Rodolphe.

And indeed Emma does not possess many of Charles' good qualities. Her selfishness is complete and shows particularly in her unconcern for her daughter, Berthe. This self-dramatization developed from her readings in Romanticism -- the resemblance is clear.

One of Emma's good qualities, however, is her sincerity which is shown to great advantage near the close of the book when she goes to La Huchette to beg Rodolphe for his help. He, of course, refuses and Emma cries, quite sincerely: "Mais moi, je t'aurais tout donné, j'aurais tout vendu, j'aurais travaillé de mes mains, j'aurais mendié sur les routes, pour un sourire, pour un regard, pour t'entendre dire: Merci!" (pp. 430-31). Emma is, on the whole, redeemed by her dreams just as she is destroyed by them. They are, at least sincere.

Enid Starkie observes:

The extent of Emma's dreams was great even if their quality was shoddy. She had all the characteristics of a Romantic heroine, but in doubtful taste. That is one of the miracles of Flaubert's art, his portrayal of character, so that we can sympathize with Emma while realizing her vulgarity. She is a Woolworth's or bargain-basement Isolde, but her feelings are none the less genuine for all that.

Fate, in Flaubert's Madame Bovary is not "a colossal Prince of the World." Fate rests instead within each man's environment according to its limitations. If he goes beyond these limitations he may be destroyed. It is thus necessary,
in Flaubert's world, to be acutely aware of the length of one's chain and to adjust to the situation in reach. Although Emma's tragedy seems to be caused by her marriage to Charles, her failure with Rodolphe and Léon, and her financial destruction by Lheureux, it is, in reality, brought about by her sentimental disillusions. Anthony Thorlby explains that "where illusion is strongest, as with Emma and Charles, the force of fatality is most intense; where it is weakest, as with Rodolphe and Lheureux who have few illusions, it is merely playful." Emma's tragedy is the tragedy of a hope so far removed from possibility as to be almost meaningless.

The Return of the Native and Madame Bovary are similar in that they describe intelligent, highly sensitive women, dissatisfied with their imperceptive husbands and deeply disappointing surroundings, whose readings and dreams lead them to expect the impossible from their mundane lives and to commit suicide when they realize this impossibility. Some of the differences, however, are slightly more difficult to perceive and will be treated here.

Emma and Eustacia are both made more to love than to love any one man, more to yearn than to achieve any one of their desires. But they go about attempting to satisfy their needs in different ways. The most outstanding difference between them in this respect is that Emma lets herself be caught up in the action -- in Rodolphe's protestations of love, in Lheureux's encouraging words, "Pay later" -- without realizing what is happening. Then, when depression sets in and no one is there to suggest a course of action, she sits home alone and sinks even deeper. Eustacia, on the other hand, is generally aware of her plight and acts when her future is uncertain. One example of her readiness to act in order to achieve what she wants is found in her Christmas mumming trick. On another occasion, in the chapter entitled "She Goes out to Battle against Depression," instead of sitting home with Clym she decides to break out of her ennui: "Suddenly she aroused herself and exclaimed, 'But I'll shake it off. Yes, I will shake it off! No one shall know my suffering. I'll be bitterly
merry, and ironically gay, and I'll laugh in derision! And I'll begin by going to this dance on the green!" (p. 319). Eustacia differs from Emma in that she conquers and commands. Hardy, by his comparisons of Eustacia with tragic and heroic figures and various goddesses, idealizes her. In setting her against the grand and challenging background of the heath in her struggles, he raises her to the level of a deity. Eustacia realizes that Wildeve is not great enough for her and in her final act, a spirited display of free will and acceptance of reality, seems to justify Hardy's idealization. Emma, on the other hand, is limited by her mean, sordid surroundings and never rises above them. She is a second-rate character and never approaches Eustacia's stature. Her final act only shows the culmination of her life-long self-deception.

Hardy has been criticized for attempting to paint the story of an Emma Bovary in Victorian England. It is said that the reticence of this period detracted from the power and realism necessary to such a novel and forced him to mislead his readers. Others, however, such as James Gindin, the author of a critical edition of the book, disagree and support The Return of the Native as a full and accurate picture of such a woman. Gindin writes:

The character of Eustacia Vye is something of a puzzle because we expect Victorian reticence in a Victorian novel -- and Hardy is so unreticent that many readers are unable to believe what is written on the page. Eustacia is not presented in the very act of love, but she is described in quite unequivocal terms as a sophisticated, promiscuous sensualist who is willing to take almost any risk to attain new intensities of passion. Yet she is also beautiful, dignified, intelligent, and noble.23

Such disagreements have occurred, in part, because of a confusion of Hardy's and Flaubert's aims. Madame Bovary is deliberately anti-romantic and bitterly satirizes the small, common-place people and events of a materialistic society which make life sordid and disagreeable. The Return of the Native, although a tragic novel, does not satirize, even romanticizes, and never shows life as disgusting and entirely futile. It is especially in comparing the "rustic characters" of the two novels that this point is clear. In Flaubert's book
the destruction and fall of Emma and Charles brings the rise of Lheureux and Homais, the epitome of all the bourgeois traits Flaubert most despised, who goes on to receive la croix d'honneur. In Hardy's book, however, there are no winners. Life simply goes on.

It is in these entirely different settings, miles apart, that two similar women struggle against reality for the lives they think they deserve. These women are not entirely likeable, but as representatives of mankind they are to be understood and perhaps pitied. It is possible to classify the good and bad traits of any human being, to compile long lists, to weigh one quality against another and to callously pass judgment on them. It seems best, however, in the case of Emma and Eustacia as in the case of all men, to attempt to find a saving grace, perhaps only one good quality, which justifies their existence. This trait is not difficult to find in Eustacia Vye or in Emma Bovary. Flaubert once wrote it himself: "A soul is measured by the extent of its aspirations."
FOOTNOTES

1 Notably William R. Rutland in Thomas Hardy: A Study of His Writings and Their Background, Samuel Chew in Thomas Hardy and Margaret Tillett in Madame Bovary and the Critics.


5 Ibid., p. 172.


11 George Douglas Wing, Hardy (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd), p. 56.

12 Paterson, pp. 124-25.

13 Lord David Cecil, Hardy the Novelist (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943), p. 133.


15 Gustave Flaubert, Madame Bovary: Moeurs de Province (Paris: Conard, 1902), p. 34.


18 Ibid., p. 116.


21 Starkie, p. 309.


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