



University: University of Anbar
College: College of Arts
Department: Translation
Stage: Two
Subject: Novel
Lecturer : Dheyaa W. Ghafeer
Scientific Degree: Assistant Lecturer
Scientific Qualification: MA Holder
Specialty: English Language – Literature

الجامعة : جامعة الأنبار
الكلية: كلية الآداب
القسم: قسم الترجمة
المرحلة: الثانية
اسم المادة: الرواية
استاذ المادة: ضياء وحيد غفير
اللقب العلمي: مدرس مساعد
المؤهل العلمي (الشهادة): الماجستير
التخصص: اللغة الإنجليزية - الأدب

محاضرات مادة الرواية للمرحلة الثانية - قسم الترجمة

STUDY GUIDE
TO
THOMAS HARDY'S *THE RETURN OF*
THE NATIVE

BY
DHEYAA W. GHAFEEER

This work is totally based on:
BRIGHT NOTES: The Return of the Native
www.BrightNotes.com



LECTURE 5: CHAPTER 2: HUMANITY APPEARS UPON THE SCENE, HAND IN HAND WITH TROUBLE

Along the road walks an old man. He seems from his ancient and faded garb to have been a naval officer of some sort. He stabs into the ground with a silver-headed walking stick at equal intervals with the stomping of his sturdy legs. Before him stretches “the long, laborious road” bisecting the dark surface of the heath “like the parting line on a head of black hair.” Stretching his eyes ahead of him, the old man sees, far beyond, a moving spot. Although it is advancing away from him, its pace is slower than his own. As the traveler draws near, he discovers the spot to be a “spring van of a lurid red color.” The driver walking beside it is also completely red. “One dye of that tincture” covers “his clothes, the cap upon his head, his boots, his face, his hands.” He is not just “temporarily overlaid with the color”; he is permeated with it. The old man knows him for a reddleman, “a person whose vocation” it is to “supply farmers with redding for their sheep.” As the ancient navy man comes alongside, he calls out a greeting to which the reddleman replies “in sad and occupied tones.”

He is a young man whose smooth-shaven face is probably handsome in its natural color. His blue eyes are keen as a hawk’s. His suit of corduroy is of excellent quality and well chosen for his work. He carries himself with a well-to-do air. One would wonder: “Why should such a promising being as this have hidden his prepossessing exterior by adopting that singular occupation?” The two travelers walk side by side without speaking further, hearing only the sounds of the heath. At short intervals the reddleman leaves his companion and, stepping behind, peers into a small window of the van. Each time he returns the older man ventures a remark or two to which the younger man replies absent-mindedly. They lapse into silence and plod on for miles without talking.

After the fifth of the reddleman's visits to the van, his walking companion begins to question him. He learns that there is a young woman sleeping uneasily inside the wagon. She has been riding thus from Anglebury and is being taken home. The old man grows bolder in his questioning, but the reddleman refuses to divulge anything more. He explains that his ponies are tired. "I am going to rest them under this bank for an hour." So the old traveler proceeds on his way.

The reddleman watches the advancing figure gradually become absorbed "in the thickening films of night." He then takes down some hay for the ponies and, settling himself on a pad, musingly surveys the scene around him. This scene is "a gradual series of ascents from the level of the road backward into the heart of the heath." It embraces "hillocks, pits, ridges, acclivities one behind the other. . . finished by a high hill cutting against the still light sky." As the young man's eyes scan the heights along the skyline, they settle "upon one noteworthy object. . . a barrow. This bossy projection of earth above its natural level" occupies the "loftiest ground of the loneliest height" that the heath contains. From the vale it appears "as a wart on an Atlantean brow," but "its actual bulk is great." It forms the "pole and axis of this heathery world." As the reddleman watches, he sees the barrow "surmounted by something higher," rising "like a spike from a helmet." To the young man in the valley, the scene is viewed in waves: "Above the plain . . . the hill, above the hill . . . the barrow, and above the barrow . . . the figure." Above and around the figure is the sky. Suddenly the figure shifts, turns around and, descending "with the glide of a water-drop down a bud," vanishes from sight. The movements are sufficient to reveal the disappearing form to be that of a woman. The reason for her departure soon becomes evident; one form after another appears, each bearing a burden to be deposited on top, until finally "the whole barrow is peopled with burdened figures."

Comment

The road immediately brings us into contact with our first human being. The old man on the road leads us to the mysterious van (a little house on wheels drawn by two ponies) and the mysterious reddleman (one who deals in redde, which is red ocher or red chalk for marking sheep). In the wagon is the mysterious sleeping woman. By the reddleman's

concern for her, we believe her to be an important character. Hardy is very slowly unraveling the thread of his tale. The reddleman is an odd creature to us, but we find him likable. We feel he will be one of the likable characters. When the traveler goes on alone, the reddleman settles down to survey the darkening scene around him. We get a stronger, higher impression of the heath. We look up to the top of a large barrow (a mound of earth or stones built over graves by the Celts, early settlers of England) and see a solitary figure outlined against the sky. The figure disappears. The barrow now swarms with people; but we are given the impression that the one person who preceded them," the lonely person who . . . had been queen of the solitude," is to be an important character in the story-possibly a mysterious one. Hardy is showing himself a master artist in building suspense. We know no names but Egdon Heath; we feel a mood of "calm before a storm," an ominous foreboding; we now know of four individuals, two men and two women, but we have no names for them.