

# Thomas Hardy's the return of the native: literary review



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## **Return of the Native – Thomasin as a Symbol of Renewal**

At a high school reunion, chances are good that there will be one or two members of the class that are still well liked because they had generously helped their classmates solve problems with both intuition and common sense during high school. On the other hand, the members of the class may be feeling sorrow over the suicide of a classmate who had to have everything her way and could not tolerate a loss of control. In *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy, Thomasin corresponded to the well-liked class member and Eustacia Vye corresponded to the suicidal class member. Thomasin may be seen as a symbol of renewal in contrast with Eustacia Vye and other characters.

In general, Thomasin was generally very pleasant to be around. Her gentle nature attracted many suitors. Although one of Diggory Venn's marriage proposals had just been rejected by Thomasin, it was the one ewe-lamb of pleasure left to him to be in Thomasin's hand (Hardy 503; bk. 1, ch. 9). Despite Thomasin's marriage to Damon Wildeve, Diggory Venn's love for Thomasin never died in the entire novel.

Early in the novel, Thomasin was to be married to Damon Wildeve but legal circumstances arose just before the ceremony. Thomasin ran from the altar because she was frightened (475; bk. 1, ch. 5) and was picked up by Diggory Venn and taken to her aunt's home. Soon after, Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright, her aunt, visited Wildeve at his inn, the Quiet Woman, to discuss what had happened at the church. Although the circumstances were not all her fault, Thomasin regretted her actions so much that she looked at

Wildeve with sorrowful eyes (476) and hid her face in her handkerchief (475) to preserve their love in hopes of another wedding.

During a meeting with her aunt, Thomasin was acting very blithe and blushing (598; bk. 3, ch 6). Her aunt was somewhat displeased with the wedding incident and Thomasin tried to renew her spirits. Sunlight illuminated her as her presence illuminated the heath (598).

Towards the middle of the novel, Clym and his mother were not speaking because of her disapproval of his marriage to Eustacia. Thomasin and Venn encouraged Mrs. Yeobright to speak with her son. Mrs. Yeobright finally went to see her son but external circumstances, including Eustacia's greedy actions, prevented a meeting. Soon after, Mrs. Yeobright was bitten by an adder and died (bk. 4, ch. 7-8). Clym Yeobright felt a great deal of responsibility for her death. Thomasin came over to her cousin's house at Alderworth to comfort him (666-671; bk. 5, ch. 1). She told her cousin that he should not shrink from her (668) and that he could never shock or drive away her (669). At the same time Thomasin was using much effort to brighten her cousin's spirit, Eustacia was aloof writhing in her chair (669).

When her marriage to Wildeve was experiencing problems, Thomasin tried to renew her marriage through a discussion. She spoke of her loneliness and Wildeve's unwillingness to walk through the heath with her. Unfortunately, the tone became totally negative when Thomasin's inquisitiveness was brought up and she accused Wildeve of continuing an old relationship with Eustacia (696-697; bk. 5, ch. 6).

Soon after, Wildeve died in vain trying to save Eustacia's suicide in the river (bk. 5, ch. 9). Thomasin descended into a period of mourning for over a year (720-721, bk. 6, ch. 1). One day in May, Diggory Venn came to Thomasin's door as a regular human, not as a riddler. He gave up the riddle trade and obtained his father's herd of dairy cows. Thomasin was very surprised and was smiling from one to the other (722). The following morning, Thomasin noticed a Maypole adorned with garlands and posies with sweet perfume. She noticed all stages of the Maypole and her emotional state suddenly changed (723). In a dramatic act of self-renewal, Thomasin dressed more gaily than Yeobright had ever seen her dress since the time of Wildeve's death, eighteen months before (723; bk. 6, ch. 1).

Finally, Thomasin and Clym discuss the possibility of a marriage to Diggory Venn. Clym does not particularly like the idea because Venn may not have been gentleman enough for her (730; bk. 6, ch. 3). Thomasin replied that she had countrified ways and couldn't be happy anywhere else at all besides Egdon Heath (730) in direct contrast to Eustacia's dislike of the heath and desire to move to America (507; bk. 1, ch. 9). Thomasin and Diggory Venn were eventually married (bk. 6, ch. 4) and lived happily in Egdon Heath, unlike the dead Eustacia.

In conclusion, Thomasin may be seen as a symbol of renewal with her gentle nature and common sense. Her amicability attracted suitors and her common sense allowed her to survive, in contrast to Eustacia, whose exotic nature attracted suitors but led to her death. Thomasin's gentle nature allowed her to help others out with their problems and to deal with those she interacted with. If Thomasin were real, I would definitely like to be her friend.

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