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TOPIC – **FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD**

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TREATMENT OF NATURE IN THE NOVEL, “FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD”

The title of the novel, “Far From the Madding Crowd” is taken from a poem by Thomas Grey, “Elegy on a country Churchyard”, but it cuts off the rest of the line, which in its entirety reads, “Far From the Madding crowd’s ignoble strife”. While the idea of the bucolic countryside as being free to the “strife” of the crowd is one way to characterize country life, Hardy’s title is ironic, rather than depicting stereotypes of pastoral calm, his novel uses those images as a jumping-off point to portray a

landscape that's actually riddle with conflict. Its characters must battle against the dangerous and often overpowering laws of nature and its creatures, even while the characters themselves become subject to conflicts among each other that mirror the difficulties of the natural world .

The very atmosphere of the novel suggests that the action is to take place in the natural surroundings, far away from the din and smoke of cities. The characters very well play their assigned parts against the eternal background of Nature. "Indeed, the life of Nature moves Hardy only in so far as, by similarity or contrast, it illustrates the life of man. Neither he nor his characters ever leave human society to find peace in the contemplation of Nature as Cowper did. His shortest descriptive lyric about Nature relates its subject to the human beings."

Indeed Nature often seems to fly in the face of people's desires and plans. The disaster of Gabriel Oak's sheep is the novel's first dramatic instance in this regard. While Gabriel has

spent years all his resources developing the flock, one unlucky event kills them all and immediately transforms his circumstances. Later though Gabriel seems better equipped to handle the vicissitudes of natural disaster. He meets Bathsheba again and again after putting out a fire in Weatherbury. And saves a group of lambs from being poisoned by clover. These are two instances of Gabriel's new found ability to navigate the danger of the natural world. Troy's is the opposite case, he is used to managing his own affairs adeptly, but after Fanny's death and after the storm washes away the flowers he has planted at her grave, he rages against cold natural laws and uncontrollable circumstances rather than learning to work within them.

Bathsheba , meanwhile also learns to navigate as best she can in a hostile natural environment, for her, Troy eventually becomes yet another conflict-ridden aspect of this environment. After their wedding, for instance, he piles Bathsheba's workers with alcohol. As a result , no one except Gabriel is around to keep

hay safe from incoming storm, and Gabriel and Bathsheba have to compete with time and Nature to ensure that all is not lost. Human beings , then, can work to mitigate conflicts within Nature, can rebel unsuccessfully against it, or can become hostile forces of their own. Whatever the case may be, the novel makes clear that country life is not exempted from such conflicts. And while human beings manage natural forces as best they can, there is little they can do to halt forces outside their control. Fate, chance and circumstances, then, rule Hardy's rural world.
