

## EMOTIONAL SILENCE AND FATAL MISCOMMUNICATION IN THE FICTION OF THOMAS HARDY

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### Abstract

The paper explores how widely the concept of emotional silence and miscommunication has played out in Thomas Hardy fiction, and how communicative failure is not just a plot device but a structuring principle used in the tragic inevitability. It can be argued based on affect theory, discourse studies, and narrative ethics that silence in Hardy is not the lack of meaning but coded emotional language influenced by Victorian moral conventions, hierarchy of classes, and gender expectations. The paper shows through close textual examination of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and *The Return of the Native*, how suppressed emotions, withheld revelations, and suppressed intentions are all used in a systematic way to corrupt human understanding and deny any chance of reconciliation. The characters of Hardy are recurrently presented as living in emotional states that cannot be expressed in words, creating a communicational difference in which personal misery cannot be socialized and is unknown to others. The article also claims that they are not isolated failure of expression but inherent in larger cultural systems that value restraint, moral judgment, and patriarchal power, especially the suppression of female subjectivity. The paper addresses deterministic readings of Hardy through foregrounding silence as a force of silence by posing tragedy as the culmination of interpretive collapse the breakdown of meaning not only through fate but also through the ongoing failure to express emotional truth. Finally, this study makes contributions to the Hardy research through the sensemaking of emotional reticence and miscommunication in the central cause of narrative meaning and tapping into modern scholarship arguments in affect research and literary ethics. According to the findings, Hardy fiction provides a very deep account of a fictional critique of Victorian communicative conventions and discloses that socially imposed silence alters the internal emotion to a social disaster.

### Keywords:

Thomas Hardy; emotional silence; miscommunication; affect theory; narrative ethics; Victorian fiction; gender and silence; tragic determinism; discourse and power; interpretive failure.

### 1. Introduction

Thomas Hardy is constantly influenced in his fiction by the moments of unspoken desire, emotional reticence and miscommunication. In all his multifarious novels, characters more often

than not are unable (or unwilling) to express inner chaos, morality, or emotional reality. Instead of operating as narrative coincidence, such incidences of silence and miscommunication continuously produce confusion, stalling and unstoppable effects.

Although the tragic vision of Hardy has long been viewed in the frames of determinism, social constraint, and pessimistic naturalism (Beer, 1996; Boumelha, 2013), the comparatively lower degree of sustained attention has been given to the communicative frameworks on which the emotional experience is mediated and distorted. Recent trends in the fields of affect theory and discourse analysis indicate that the state of silence is not merely the lack of speech but an active form of expression that is regulated by cultural, ethical and power relations (Ahmed, 2014; Jaworski, 1993). Feelings, especially feelings that violate prevailing social conventions, sexual trauma, moral shame, unfulfilled desire, etc. are often unsayable in inflexible social structures.

The Victorian culture considered restraint, propriety and moral respectability as ideals that were applied in shaping the behavioral patterns, as well as possibilities of emotional expression, themselves (Stearns and Stearns, 1985). These norms are reflected and criticized into Hardy fiction with repeated dramatization of the emotional truths of the characters who are contained in a closed consciousness, unreachable to other people and are lethally misunderstood. Silence in the novels of Hardy is, therefore, an ethical and narrative issue. Hardy has used the elaborate narrative techniques of withholding and delayed revelation and these have been noted by scholars like Miller (1982) and Lodge (2002), but they have continued to be considered as a technical device of storytelling instead of an emotional ideology.

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* the silence that follows the sexual violation in Tess does not only indicate the shame that Tess had but also indicates the moral system, which refuses to provide linguistic validity to female suffering. Likewise in *Jude the Obscure*, the emotional idealism in Jude is constantly sabotaged by the intent to be misread, the unspoken expectations and the reticence imposed upon him in a social context and denying him the liberty to have an honest conversation. These trends indicate that communication breakdown in Hardy is not incidental. An emerging literature has focused on politics of silence with specific reference to gender and power. Critics of feminism also note that silence can be a way to control other people and make marginalized experiences of emotion invisible or illegible in dominant discourse (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000; Smith, 2016).

The female characters Tess, Bathsheba and Eustacia Vye, occur often in Hardy during her fiction when they are placed in communicative limitations, limiting their expression of emotions yet at the same time, they are subjected to moral judgement. Their tragedies occur not just in the way of external circumstance but in an interpretive environment where silence is interpreted as guilt, indifference or moral failure. Meanwhile, miscommunication in Hardy is not only a gender politics but includes wider social orders of classes, religion, and authority morality. Late letters, unspoken feelings, intentions that are constantly misconstrued are a pattern throughout his novels.

According to Beer (1996), the world inhabited by Hardy is the world where meaning is always put off, creating a tragic disjuncture between the emotions and what the characters can do in society. This figural failure addresses deterministic interpretations of Hardy by re-orienting on the concept

of fate as an abstract power to view communication as a precarious social action. As this paper suggests, emotional silence and miscommunication in Hardy fiction plays an important role as a central narrative causality. Based on the theories of affect, discourse, and narrative aspects of ethics, the paper will argue that Hardy is not the manifestation of emptiness but a semantic domain conditioned by the moral principles of Victorians, patriarchal dominance, and the cultural norms of self-control.

By studying *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and *The Return of the Native* in detail, this study will show how emotional reticence and interpretive disintegration turn personal misery into social disaster. The paper introduces a fresh moral and emotional lens to Hardy studies and to the greater discussion of silence, emotion, and meaning in nineteenth-century fiction by reformulating tragedy as a result of communication breakdown as opposed to predetermination.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: Silence, Affect, and Narrative Ethics

The present work is based on three overlapping critical frameworks: (i) silence as discourse, (ii) affect theory and emotional regulation and, (iii) narrative ethics and interpretive failure. Combined, these strategies facilitate one to read Hardy fiction where emotive restraint, miscommunication are not aesthetic figurative elements but mechanisms of meaning production, power, and tragedy.

### 2.1 Silence as Discourse

The ancient definitions of silence tend to equate silence with either lack or inaction. This assumption has however been contested over time by discourse theory which views silence as a form of communication that is active and meaningful. Foucault (1978) claims that power is not a matter of what is said but what is not said and creates regimes of knowledge, which are in control of visibility, speech, and emotionalization. In this scheme of things, silence is incorporated as part of discourse and not its rejection. Bruneau (2008) in literary terms visualizes silence as a communicative action which can either act as resistance, repression or moral repression based on the socio-cultural placement.

Silence in narrative studies is a place of ambiguity where the meaning is not revealed, postponed, or distorted. Leech and Short (2007) insist that omissions, ellipses, and narrative gaps do so as much to interpret as to describe. The fiction of Hardy is repeatedly more or less used to create misunderstanding and irreparable narrative consequences through such gaps: confessions of silence, letters left out, innerized pain. Silence then turns into a discursive arrangement that coordinates the relational processes and specifies what one can or cannot know.

### 2.2 Affect Theory and Emotional Regulation

The Affect theory is an important perspective to analyze how emotions are felt, controlled, and communicated within a particular cultural background. According to Massumi (2002) and Gregg and Seigworth (2010), affect is prior to words of articulation, and it is a power that surpasses expressive means that can be expressed. According to this perspective, emotions are not exclusively internal psychological conditions, but are forces that are mediated socially by norms, institutions and power dynamics.

The Victorian emotional culture was dominated by principles of restraint, moral decency, and self-control, which had a great influence on the expression of feeling (Reddy, 2001). These emotional regimes stipulated what affect could be outwardly manifested and which were assigned to the silence. In the fiction of Hardy, characters are often overwhelmed by feelings: sexual trauma, guilt, desire, spiritual doubt, which do not comply with the norms of morality and are linguistically inaccessible to them. The fact that they are unable to express such feelings does not mean that they are emotionless, but this is the result of emotional anguish, which is created by restrictive emotional norms as described by Reddy (2001).

This paradigm is especially fruitful when Hardy is reading his female characters, all of whom tend to be suppressed in their emotional manifestations. Affective silence turns into a symptom of structural inequality: feelings that confront the morale of patriarchy are banned, misunderstood or even morally criticized. When emotional reticence is placed on the affect theory, this study views silence as a cultural good but not as a weakness or failure of an individual.

### **2.3 Miscommunication and Narrative Ethics**

Narrative ethics analyses moral relations among characters, narrators, and readers through the way of telling the stories. According to Phelan (2007), it is impossible to separate narrative meaning and ethical judgment: the readers are always called upon to read between the lines and ascribe motives, responsibility, and judgment. Lapse of communication in a narrative leads to lack of ethical clarity, whose outcome is misrecognition and moral error.

Ethical crises are a reoccurring occurrence in Hardy through communicative breakdown. Too late letters, too late confessions, too late misunderstood feelings have a tragic effect not due to ill intent, but due to a failure in interpretation. Nünning (2010) stresses that wrong meaning in the context of narrative fiction reveals the instability of the concept of meaning underlining the fact that the social norms, ideology, and emotional codes corrupt meaning.

This moral aspect is essential to reconsider the tragic vision of Hardy. Instead of endowing the disaster to its deterministic destiny, narrative ethics enables us to interpret tragedy as a result of erroneous relational interpretation moments when the characters are misreading silence or emotional restraint as moral guilt or absence of speech as absence of feeling. Like mute, silence therefore becomes a morally charged story element that balances accountability and retribution.

### **2.4 Integrative Model**

This paper, which synthesizes discourse theory, affect studies and narrative ethics, conceptualizes emotional silence on Hardy as a semiotic and ethical structure. Silence is not an empty device but a culturally coded emotion expression influenced by Victorian moral and gender hierarchy along with social power. Miscommunication is not the fault of people but of a set of rules within the system which dictate what can be said, felt, and cognized. Such a combined structure allows reading Hardy fiction whereby tragedy is created as a result of interpretive collapse- the loss of connection between emotional experience and communicative possibility.

## **3. Emotional Silence in Hardy's Major Novels**

Emotional silence in Hardy fiction is never an emptiness of narrative, but a pattern of expressing affection that forms relationships between the characters and defines tragic consequences. In all of

his large novels, instances of speechlessness, inarticulate distress, and delayed confession create misinterpretation and moral misjudgment many times. This part explores the role of such silences in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native* where it is shown that emotional reticence is a key process of narrative causality.

### **3.1 Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Trauma, Shame, and the Silence of Female Suffering**

Silence in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* comes out as the most dominant medium through which Tess bargains with sexual trauma, moral shame and societal condemnation. The fact that Tess cannot express what happened to her after she was violated by Alec d'Urberville is not only psychologically instilled but also culturally imposed. Victorian moral discourse provides no justifiable language of female sexual victimhood without necessarily adding guilt and stigma. This causes Tess to internalize suffering that is not socially clarifiable and makes the trauma a silent affective burden.

This affective reticence organizes the relationship of Tess with Angel Clare. Her several efforts to confess are put off, broken, or left out which creates a fatal communicative gap. When Tess eventually reveals her history, the response of Angel reveals the ethical imbalance according to which emotional interpretation can be conducted: her own sexual offence can be narratively justified, whereas her imposed silence can be retrospectively interpreted as a form of moral deception.

As it has been pointed out by critics, Hardy positions Tess not as ethically guilty but as emotionally bound by a culture that makes her experience unspeakable (Boumelha, 2013; Smith, 2016). Emotional silence is therefore a symptom and a criticism of a patriarchal ethical order where the suffering of women is not discursively legitimate. In addition, this silence is enhanced by Hardy in his narrative technique by the limited focalization. The reader can experience the inner world of emotions of Tess whereas other characters are epistemologically closed to it, and it results in an ethical gap between knowledge and judgment. The tragedy of Tess is not thus the tragedy of personal moral want but the tragedy of a communicative form which transforms unspoken sentiment into social non-recognition.

### **3.2 Jude the Obscure: Emotional Idealism and Interpretive Breakdown**

In *Jude the Obscure* emotional silence becomes more a question of psychological and ideological inappropriateness than a question of social shame. Jude and Sue have very strong emotional and intellectual relations that always surpass the models of communication they can use. Their interaction is characterized by what can be called affective incommensurability: the feelings are rich and poorly expressed, creating a continuous misconception.

Sue Bridehead is an emotionally conflicting figure, who wants to be intimate, whereas at the same time she fears the social and moral consequences. The emotional detachment that she has habitually engaged in, denial of the physical gesture, her dependence on abstraction turns affect into an experience which cannot be said. Jude, in its turn, perceives the silence of Sue, as the sign of the rejection on an emotional, rather than ethical, level.

This dynamic has been interpreted by scholars as the criticism by Hardy of the contemporary emotional atomism where intellectual ideals take the place of embodied affect, which cannot offer

relational stability (Millgate, 2004; Williams, 2011). The miscommunication in *Jude the Obscure* is therefore at the ethical interpretation level. Characters fail to talk, they fail to interpret silence. The emotional restraint develops as a semiotic ambiguity that disrupts the meaning in order to alienate affection. This dire result is not gifted by fate only but is the result of recurrent interpretative mistakes caused by emotional reticence.

### **3.3 Far from the Madding Crowd: Withheld Emotion and Social Performance**

In *Far from the Madding Crowd* Hardy examines emotional silence in a social context, in which propriety, reputation and performative restraint are the order of the day. The relationships that Bathsheba Everdene has with Gabriel Oak, William Boldwood, and Sergeant Troy are organized based on the emotional expression that she carefully manipulates.

The fact that she never identifies vulnerability at least at an early stage of her relationships with Gabriel is not about emotional inexistence but about social self-invention. It is interpretive misreading that prompts Boldwood in his tragic obsession, especially. The emotionally ambiguous valentine that Bathsheba offers, an act of thoughtless provocation, with his interpretive framework it turns out to be a promise of emotional dedication. This misinterpretation is not remedied by her further silence and emotional withdrawal and is turned into deadly obsession.

Critics have noted that here Hardy dramatizes the moral risk in emotional lack and emotional imprecision: the inability or inadequacy to express oneself emotionally invites projection, distortion and moral disaster (Ingham, 2003). The novel, therefore, demonstrates the role of emotional silence in social performance. The affect is also handled by characters in harmony with the rules of decorum, but it is these very rules that create miscommunication that misleading relational clarity. Silence is a way of emotional false direction, organizing not only relationships in people, but also the author structure of the narrative itself.

### **3.4 The Return of the Native: Passion, Suppression, and the Tragedy of Misreading**

In *The Return of the Native*, heart-stillness is overlapping with landscape, temperament and social constraint. Eustacia Vye is deficient of expression of her powerful emotional desires, in a social setting that is restraining in Egdon Heath. The strife of her love towards escape and romantic fulfillment has no sufficient discursive release, creating a communicative way blockage between desire and social reality. The silence is further added to through the moral idealism of Clym Yeobright. His internal emotional existence is one of reserve, moral gravity and emotional cloudiness which Eustacia constantly interprets as indifference.

Their marriage is therefore a place of interpretive failure between them: neither is the emotion expressed nor correctly read. Hardy does not build tragedy through the open confrontation but rather through an emotional imbalance, with dialogue giving way to silence and misinterpretation. According to the critics, the tragic force of the novel can be seen on the basis of the inner emotional intensity and the outer limitation of communication (Morgan, 2007). The resulting isolation and death of Eustacia is not only a form of despair that belongs to him but a disastrous based event of a world where feeling cannot be effectively encoded.

### 3.5 Comparative Synthesis

In each of these novels, emotional silence has acted as a uniformity of narrative and moral framework. Silence stands intermediate in the association between feeling and understanding (whether based on trauma, *Tess*; ideological conflict, *Jude*; social performance, *Far from the Madding Crowd*; and existential dissatisfaction, *The Return of the Native*). Miscommunication is not accidental but is created according to both the cultural norms, which inhibit the expression of emotions, and interpretive frames, which interpret what is not said. The tragic vision of Hardy, thus, cannot be narrowed down to deterministic pessimism. Rather, it arises out of what can be described as affective misrecognition: the inability of the characters to make sense of emotional silence correlative to its ethical and cultural setting. Hardy makes the personal suffering incomprehensible by the society, revealing the ethical repercussions of a society that controls not just conduct, but even language of feeling.

#### 4. Miscommunication as Narrative Engine

Although emotional silence determines the affective conditions of the fictional worlds of Hardy, the transformations of these conditions into irreversible narrative action are carried out by miscommunication. Miscommunication at Hardy is not an incidental plot device but a structural rule according to which the relationships fail, moral judgments are perverted, and tragedy occurs. Letters arriving late, withdrawn or misinterpreted confessions, and meanings that are continually misinterpreted all play as catalyst to the change of emotional repression into disastrous outcome. This part contends that Hardy mentioning what is not said is the same tool that initiates storyline development.

#### 4.1 Delayed, Lost, and Unread Messages

Delayed or interrupted communication is also one of the most frequent narrative techniques of Hardy. Letters, always a symbolic embodiment of rational exposition and emotional revelation, time and again carry no messages to their proper addresses or arrive too late when it is already too late to understand anything. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, written confession that Tess made to Angel Clare, and slipped under his door is not seen.

This story omission is not just a continuance of confusion; it is a moralization. Angel perceives the past of Tess as a hidden lying instead of the trauma which is repressed by social disgrace. It is a tragedy then not of what Tess has done but of what Angel never gets to know. On the same note, in *The Return of the Native*, relationships are destabilized numerous times as a result of misdirected and delayed messages. Eustacia and her efforts to get out of Egdon Heath rely on poor communicative networks which constantly fail.

Hardy uses the interdependence on mediated communication, as opposed to a direct emotional conversation, in the creation of fatal effects. As has been observed by scholars these instances give the foreground of the fragility of meaning in a world where meaning relies on precarious conduits of transmission (Lodge, 2002; Miller, 1982). These literary breaks change nothingness into something. The failure of communication does not leave the characters in a state of emotional isolation but rather they take action because of misunderstanding and these actions are what make

up the plot. The problem of miscommunication is, then, not an impediment to narrative, but to narrative its creative power.

#### **4.2 Misreading Silence: Ethical Error and Interpretive Failure**

Miscommunication in Hardy is not simply the technical failure of transmission but also, the moral misinterpretation of itself. Emotional reticence is interpreted over and over again as moral indifference, deception, or rejection by characters. This trend shows what narrative theorists refer to as interpretive breakdown the inability to appropriately ascribe meaning to absence, hesitation or emotional restraint (Phelan, 2007).

In *Jude the Obscure*, Jude misunderstands the emotional reserve of Sue as emotional coldness and Sue understands the longing of Jude to be social transgression more than doting relationships. It is their misunderstanding each other that makes intimacy estranged. Instead of a conversation, both of them are based on presumed meanings, and silence is a possibility that replaces communication. Hardy introduces emotional modernity as a state of heightened experience of feelings but poorly revealed, according to the argument of Williams (2011), which creates relationships of inference as opposed to understanding. This is an ethical aspect that is vital. Miscommunication is not just a confusion maker but it is an error that has moral implications. The characters evaluate each other on the basis of partial or distorted emotional information. In the fictional world that Hardy created, the ethical responsibility is re-allocated again and again due to the non-accessibility or wrong interpretation of emotional truth.

#### **4.3 Social Codes and Communicative Constraint**

Hardy puts miscommunication in the context of strict social structures that inhibit the expression of emotions. The rules of propriety, gender hierarchy and moral respectability imposed by the Victorians dictate what one can say, when one can say it and who can say.

Communication is not only between individuals but it is a social construction. Moral transgression of emotional truths such as sexual trauma, illicit desire, spiritual doubt is usually translated into the unspeakable. In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the emotional ambiguity of Bathsheba is an emotional ambiguity and not an emotional inconsistency, a calculated self-control in a society where female expression is subject to examination.

The failure or unwillingness to express vulnerability causes interpretive excess: It is not what Bathsheba utters that causes the obsessive interest of Boldwood but the lack of what she does not explain. In this case, silence is socially productive and creates meanings that the speaker had no intention of creating. Hardy unveils the moral hazard of emotional vagueness in the hard and fast cultures of morality, as Ingham (2003) observes: silence is the call to project, and project is fate. Therefore, miscommunication within Hardy is both a failure of personality, yet constraint of structure. Class, gender and moral ideology mediate expression of emotions, turning silence into a socially controlled kind of speech.

#### **4.4 Narrative Causality Through Communicative Breakdown**

The narrative structure of Hardy is always aimed at substituting the conflict of drama with the communicative lack. Climactic events are not often caused by open hostility; they develop because of a series of misunderstandings. Such a tendency is indicative of a unique paradigm of narrative

causality: action is not caused but interpreted, interpretation causes action. Characters do not act according to the truth of emotions but what they think silence means.

Narrative theorists have stated that these structures preempt the ethics of interpretation itself (Nunning, 2010). Hardy encourages the readers to take a privileged epistemological stance, knowing about the emotional truths that the characters are not allowed to know, thus revealing the tragic effects of misinterpretation. This sets up a dual ethical frame: we are not judging the actions of the characters only but also the conditions of communication that make the actions of the characters possible

. Thus, the tragedies of Hardy do not occur at all to his characters. They are built narratively by a series of communicative failures, the letters not sent, the unspoken confessions, the misunderstood emotions, which gradually decrease the horizon of possibility. In this use, Fate is not metaphysical, but communicative: it is the fate made where what cannot be said and that which is fatally misunderstood are the factors.

#### **4.5 Reframing Tragedy: From Determinism to Communicative Ethics**

Hardy makes it difficult to have traditional deterministic interpretations of his tragic vision by foregrounding miscommunication as a narrative engine. Instead of creating a picture of people lost and oppressed by the cold powers in isolation, Hardy gives tragedy as a moral consequence of interpretation failure in socially bound emotional structures. Silence is not only a result of repression but a dynamic discourse that organizes relationships, allocates morality and brings disaster.

This re-conceptualization places Hardy in closer touch with current ethical critique which sees narrative as a place of meaning-negotiation--and in most cases, of disastrous misnegotiation. In Hardy's fiction, tragedy is not unavoidable in principle, but is unavoidable in practice as a consequence of the impossibility of sufficient communication of emotional truth and ethical interpretation of it.

#### 5. Gender, Power, and Emotional Withholding

The lack of emotion in Hardy fiction cannot be discussed outside of gender and power hierarchy. As much as everyone is communicatively constrained, women are unfairly the ones who face the ethical and social impact of silence. Female emotionality is several times portrayed by Hardy as something that is under moral scrutiny, whereas the emotional stinginess of men can be viewed as a kind of dignity or self-control or rational power. Such an imbalance shows that silence is not just an individual affective condition but a socially controlled procedure of power.

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Tess does not choose to be silent because of her sexual violation, but it is forced by her culture. The fact that there is no socially accepted language of female sexual trauma makes the silence be a protection and, a reproach. Tess will not say to keep up appearance and this same unresponsiveness later turns out to be a testament to moral hypocrisy when Angel Clare will judge her in retrospect.

The feminist critics have claimed that Hardy reveals a patriarchal moral economy where there is no discursive agency of women in their emotional experience (Boumelha, 2013; Gilbert and Gubar, 2000). Emotional withholding is, in this way, gendered: silence is a way to protect women

against social penalty in the short run and at the same time allow misrecognition over a long period of time. This relationship is repeated in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, in which the skill with which Bathsheba Everdene also handles emotive expression is indicative of the skill with which she handles social power.

Being a woman in a role of economic self-sufficiency, Bathsheba needs to control the manifestation of emotion not to lose her respect. Male characters interpret her emotional ambiguity differently: Gabriel views it as reserved affection, Boldwood as implicit promise and Troy as emotional challenge. This silence generates numerous and contradictory meanings that expose the way in which the emotional restraint of women is transformed into a location in which male desire and moral anticipation is displaced onto this restraint (Ingham, 2003).

Hardy therefore proves that silence is never neutral, but it is predetermined by gendered power relations. Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* is also defenseless in her emotions which only demonstrates the moral weakness of female silence. Other people often interpret the emotional lack or moral instability in Sue since she does not want to be emotionally or sexually devoted. But her silence is an anti-social script that associates the expression of female emotions with submission to institutionalization of marriage, sexuality, and respectability. Hardy makes the silence of Sue ethically ambiguous- agency of some sort and a cause of tragic misunderstanding. According to Smith (2016), the emotional lives of women in the nineteenth-century fiction are frequently produced illegible specifically when they do not conform to the socially approved modes of emotions. By making these representations, Hardy challenges a moral culture which constitutively misunderstands female silence and elevates the emotional inscrutability of men to a state of normality. Instances of emotional withholding can therefore be politicized: it allocates interpretative power unevenly, creating discourses of women who are not evaluated by their own feelings but by that which society assumes their silence represents.

6. Tragedy Through Failed Expression: From Fate to Communicative Ethics  
Determinism, chance, and cosmic indifference have always been linked to the tragic vision Hardy has. Nonetheless, in the perspective of the emotional silence, miscommunication, tragedy in his fiction is not so metaphysical as it is ethical. And catastrophe is not the simple necessities of fate but the accumulation of failures in expression and interpretation, the infrequent instances of emotional truth either repressed or mortally misunderstood.

In Hardy, dramatic confrontation does not lead to the central inciting events, but rather communicative lack: Tess unread confession, unspoken emotional battle between Jude and Sue, unexplained intentions of Bathsheba, and unexpressed desperation of Eustacia. These scenes do not merely postpone cognition, but preclude the possibility of other possibilities.

The narrative movement is therefore regulated by what could be called communicative ethics a morality of communication of how feelings are spoken, withheld or read. According to narrative ethics theorists, the meaning of ethics in fiction works is due to the way the stories formulate interactions of recognition and misrecognition among the characters (Phelan, 2007). Silence creates an ethical failure to spot mistakes in judgments in Hardy fiction: characters are falsely

accused of what they have not said, feelings are moralized by the lack of them, and the intentions are inferred, not known.

This is the transformation of the emotional opaqueness into the moral judgment, the personal suffering to the social condemnation. Notably, Hardy does not make miscommunication an issue of individual deficiency. Rather, he places it in social institutions that govern the display of emotion, patriarchal authority, religious morality, classes, and Victorian ideals of restraint. Tragedy is thus a socially constructed one. People take action out of misunderstanding since the truth of emotions is not culturally translatable.

These narratives revel in the instability of meaning as is suggested by Nünning (2010) exposing the manner in which meaning is instilled through ideology, and not empathy. This refreezing asserts against deterministic understandings of Hardy. The fate in his fiction is not an impersonal cosmic force, but an outcome of the degradation of communication. A series of misread silences is generated to create destiny, each of which has an ethical and narrowing effect on the horizon of possibility. Tragedy is not necessary in principle but necessary in practice since emotional significance cannot be circulated freely within restrictive social structures.

#### 7. Conclusion: Silence, Ethics, and Narrative Causality in Hardy

This paper has stated that emotional silence and miscommunication in fiction by Thomas Hardy are a part of narrative causality, but not an accidental style. Based on discourse theory, affect studies, and narrative ethics, the paper has shown that silence in Hardy is not emotional emptiness but an encoded expression at a culturally coded level, formed through the moral ideology of the Victorian era, gender hierarchy, and social power. The analysis of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and *The Return of the Native* has demonstrated how an unspoken trauma, emotional stifling, and interpretive failure combined systematically to create misunderstanding, moral misjudgment, and irreversible consequence.

This study reinvents the tragic vision of Hardy by accounting for the possibility of miscommunication through foregrounding. Instead of seeking tragedy in fate, in chance, in determinism, pessimistic, it brings out catastrophe as an ethical consequence of communicative breakdown. The emotional veracity of fiction by Hardy gets reproduced socially unintelligible on numerous occasions, and it alters the silence into a loci of moral fallacy in which meaning fails, not due to lack, but due to being misread. The emotional withholding processes which are gendered also reveal how silence imposes unequal interpretive authority, which makes female subjectivity vulnerable to misrecognition and natural covers the male emotional obscurity.

By revising silence as an active semiotic and ethical power, this paper adds to Hardy scholarship by providing them with a communicative model of tragedy one that makes his fiction relevant to modern discussions of affect, narrative ethics, and the politics of emotion. In a wider sense, it indicates that the novels written by Hardy express a radical condemnation of the Victorian culture of emotion, and show that the imposition of social restraint on the manifestation of personal misery into a social tragedy. Tragedy in Hardy, however, is not that which befalls his characters, but that which is made possible when there is no way to express emotional meaning, to listen to it, or to moralize about it.

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