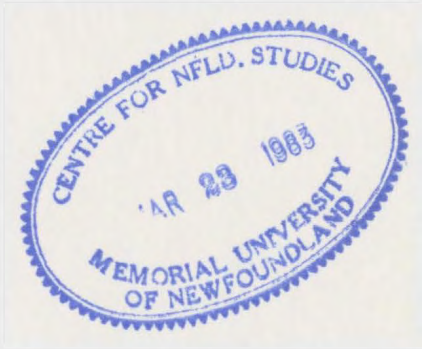
MARRIAGE IN THE NOVELS OF THOMAS HARDY

ROSEMARY DAWSON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MARRIAGE IN THE NOVELS OF THOMAS HARDY

by

Rosemary Dawson, B.A., B.A.(Ed.)

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ABSTRACT

The institution of marriage and the relations between the sexes figure largely in the novels of Thomas Hardy. In most of his novels, the action centres around a marriage or a potential marriage that does not take place. The preoccupation with this theme focuses attention on the aspirations and attitudes of characters in nineteenth century England. Hardy's treatment of the subject shows the contrast between marriage as an ideal--a freely accepted and mutually rewarding relationship--and the distortion of that ideal in the context of social and psychological reality.

Essentially, Hardy was concerned about "man's inhumanity to man." In the Victorian era, in which Hardy lived, man's inhumanity to his fellow creatures was manifested particularly strongly in his attitude towards marriage, sexuality and towards women. Because of the false notions about respectability, there grew up a rigid social code which stressed adherence to the status quo and which condemned individuals who wandered in any way.

Basically, Hardy felt that the institution of marriage, and the attitudes towards this institution in the Victorian era, formed part of a larger social manifestation that frustrated and sometimes even destroyed

individuals. He emphasizes unhappy marriages and human disillusionment; and he stresses that marriage, as seen in nineteenth century England, only serves to alienate the individual. In contrast, he shows the spontaneity of true, free, natural relationships. In contrasting man with nature, Hardy shows that institutional morality imposes harsh penalties upon man, who, after all, does possess natural instincts.

Hardy's view of the universe is akin to that of Schopenhauer. Both agree that most of man's suffering is caused by his sexual nature. However, Hardy felt that since sexuality was part of life, it ought to be recognized, and not repressed as it had been in the popular novels. He stressed that society's attempt to regulate the instinctual, nonrational element of man's nature was the cause of much of the tragedy of man's life; and his novels can be seen as pleas for relaxation of the rigid moral code and the inflexible, outdated marriage laws.

Hardy emphasizes a spiritual communion, rather than a physical union; and he preaches a religion of loving kindness and compassion for one's fellow creatures. His belief that much of the tragedy of man's existence will eventually be ameliorated establishes him as a "meliorist" rather than a pessimist.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Down through the ages, marriage has been a popular subject with nearly all writers of fictional tales. In the earliest dramas, fertility ceremonies required marriages to commemorate the reincarnation of resurrection of the slain god. These marriages were probably the prototypes of the sacred marriage myth--the primal union between the earth mother and heaven father. This myth forms the archetype of comedy, for in comic drama marriage has performed the symbolic function of reintegration. The happy ending of comedy was generally a marriage, and in this way, the audience was assured that society moved on, the social process continued and life continued to renew itself.

From a mere celebration of a rite, gradually grew a great emotional element which helped to perpetuate the notion of "they lived happily ever after" which has persisted to some extent into even the twentieth century. This idea of romantic love can be described as almost totally belonging to the tradition of fiction, rather than to any socially observed reality. For the most part, romance of this nature described an idealized state of mind in which two people (of opposite sexes) displayed an illusory partiality for each other. They struggled

against almost insurmountable obstacles to their attachment, and, as the novel ended, they triumphed over all odds, and won each other. The popularity of novels which used this pattern has helped to advance both the notion of marriage as a goal to be sought after, particularly by women, as well as the notion of marriage's being regarded as a reward bestowed upon those who are worthy of such an esteemed state in life.

The Victorians were no less interested in the subject of marriage than any of their predecessors; indeed, the subject occupied a prominent place in the Victorian novel. Before looking at the portrayal of marriage in the Victorian novel, it is first necessary to look at the Victorian era, particularly the position occupied by women in this era.

The Victorian era, particularly the first half of the century, was a time of great upheaval. During this period striking changes in economic structure were produced by transition from a stable agricultural and commercial society to modern industrialism. Modern industrialism meant the growth of many factories, and therefore expansion of towns and town life. In addition to this, there was the growth of the railways, which brought people and towns closer together. As well, great advances were made in science and in philosophy, which challenged the traditional

religious beliefs. Consequently, there were many conflicts between science and religion. Socially, there were many adjustments which had to be made; and yet, in a lot of ways, the Victorians were rooted in the past.

They lived in an age strongly influenced by Puritanism and Calvinism; hence, the Evangelical Movement in the Established Church (Church of England) with its "moral earnestness" had a tremendous effect on the lives of many people. Altick says:

> Evangelicalism is chiefly important in the history of English culture for the moral tone it lent society down to the last quarter of the century.[1]

This moral tone stressed piety, serious-mindedness, acceptance of the status quo. There was a strait-laced morality which placed great emphasis on such concepts as "duty", "propriety", "decency", "modesty", "conformity." With typical Victorian methodicality, women were organized into two distinct categories: they were seen either as "angels", or as "fallen women." Legally, a woman was inferior to a man. She had no vote, and she was not permitted to enter university or to enter most professions. Consequently, marriage was looked upon as the only worthwhile life style for the female sex. The ideal Victorian lady had no sense of fulfillment until she became someone's wife. Both before and after marriage, women were largely dependent

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[1]Richard D. Altick, Victorian People and Ideas (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973), pp. 167-168.

upon men; emotionally, financially, and socially. The "angel", or proper Victorian female was obedient, sedate and reticent; she obeyed her father's wishes before her marriage, and her husband's wishes after her marriage. In all her actions, she was guided by a sense of duty. Although she was considered to be inferior to men in all other respects, in matters of morality the Victorian female was considered far superior.

In keeping with the notion of propriety, sex was considered to be evil; the subject was not to be spoken of in polite company. For the most part, the subject was clothed in a blanket of silence; the general consensus held that ladies (both married as well as unmarried) were uninterested in the subject. There was a great deal of hypocrisy in general, and in particular, about sex. Many people professed one belief, but practiced another. The double standard flourished in this atmosphere; although the sexual instinct was considered to be evil, it was associated with male weakness and animal passion. Prostitutes and mistresses were "fallen women", and thus social outcasts. Because the female was considered to be morally superior, a far stricter code of sexual morality was imposed upon her. In this atmosphere of prudery, it is not surprising that chastity was glorified as the ideal and was considered to be de rigueur for a woman; for a man chastity was considered desirable but not really necessary. A lapse in this rigid moral code was looked upon as excusable in a

man, but unforgivable in a woman. The double standard existed in marriage also; a husband's infidelity was for the most part looked upon with a blind eye, while a wife's adultery was considered to be the unpardonable sin. Women who openly showed interest in sex were ostracized. The ideal for a woman was to lead a good life, and this was to be accomplished through marriage. Divorce was practically impossible.

Marriage, then, was considered to be sacrosanct, and the ideal of a dutiful wife submitting to her husband was repeatedly depicted in the literature of the time. The popular Victorian literature was largely sentimental melodrama, with the happy ending--the marriage--taking place in the last chapter of the novel. The Victorians exhibited a strong preference for this happy ending, for in the midst of all the conflicting ideas which made up their life, they were in search of a stable society. This they found in most of the popular novels. The concept of marriage as a "crowning" point in a female's life, with nothing but sunshine and roses is expressed by Tennyson in his short poem "Vastness":

> Love for the maiden, crown'd with marriage, no
> regrets for aught that has been,
> Household happiness, gracious children, debtless
> competence, golden mean.[2]

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[2]Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Vastness," in Jerome H. Buckley, ed., Poems of Tennyson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958), p. 507.

The idea implicit in these lines, and indeed in most of the popular fiction of the period, was that marriages were, for the most part, successful; also, marriages were usually the offshoots of great romantic longings. If a marriage was not the result of a great romantic love, then it was a mutual agreement, undertaken for the convenience of both parties. Both females and males (particularly those who had fallen on "hard times") sought to improve their lot by marrying into higher social spheres. This type of marriage was seen to be quite correct, and the partners did not protest against being manipulated by ambitious parents.

The sexual impulse was not considered to be a factor in the selection of one's marital partner. Sex was directly related to procreation, and was seen as a factor to be tolerated by the female as part of her duty as a loving wife. For the most part, sexual feelings or sexual intimacy were not mentioned; attraction was portrayed as being based on romantic love, which became nothing more than a series of clichés repeated from novel to novel. Houghton says of this:

> . . . the Victorian emphasis on romantic and wedded love was as much a protest against marriage as it was a means of protecting it from extramarital temptations. In this respect, it was a revolt of the heart against a system which denied its impulses, and which, in the absence of love, was a source of personal distress and social evil.[3]

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[3]Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 381.

Love, particularly romantic love, was glorified and was ". . . partly an apologia for sex in a period when sex was evil. . . ."[4] The fictionalized ideal sought to perpetuate a false notion, one which was very far removed from the actual reality of marriage. With characteristic complacency, the Victorians accepted this ideal, as the constant element of stability in an unstable world.

Like most of his contemporaries, Thomas Hardy, too, is preoccupied with the subject of marriage. In all his novels, a large part of the action revolves around a marriage, or even a potential marriage that does not come off. In some cases, Hardy is concerned with several marriages. However, in Hardy's fictionalized accounts, there is a current of skepticism that runs counter to the Victorian ideal. In the aspirations and attitudes expressed by his characters, Hardy attempted to show the contrast between marriage as an ideal (the popular literary view) and the distortion of that ideal in the context of social and psychological reality.

Essentially, Hardy is concerned with the suffering which men and women undergo, as a result of their dual nature. Man is a part of nature, and yet he lives in society. The problem which Hardy repeatedly points out is the conflict between the natural moral law and the man-made laws imposed by the establishment. Part of this conflict is caused by a series of chance happenings in an

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[4] Ibid., p. 391.

indifferent universe which pays no attention to the particular needs, desires and aspirations of individuals. In his notebook, in April 1865, Hardy wrote: "The world does not despise us; it only neglects us."[5] His novels continually illustrate this belief. In addition, he challenges the Victorian optimism and complacency, and presents a realistic picture of the unhappiness caused by the adherence to strict social conventions. Continually, he shows inconsistencies and injustices in the accepted social norms, and he stresses the need for improvement in these laws. He shows modern man becoming increasingly alienated from the easy communal living which accepted regulations and institutions as readily as it accepted the changing of the seasons. In the breakup of the old communal way of living, there is a loss of faith in society's institutions. Man is losing his former acquiescence in a certain life style, and all old beliefs are being challenged. The church becomes just another institution which attempts to stifle man's complete development. Life styles are changing, patterns of behaviour are changing; and yet society wishes to operate within the same narrow codes which prevailed in a less sophisticated age. As life styles become more sophisticated, Hardy feels that man must become more sophisticated in his thinking, and less stringent in his codes of behaviour. To convey the idea of new life styles being imposed on older

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[5] In The Early Life of Thomas Hardy (New York: Macmillan, 1928), p. 63.

ways, Hardy often introduces a stranger into a community. In some way, this stranger or outsider challenges the accepted behaviour of the community, and this symbolizes the new life style which is emerging. Hardy's sympathy is not always with the intruders; in fact, as will be shown later, Hardy sometimes shows the intruders to be the elements of instability in an otherwise stable environment. He does suggest, however, that the old, stable rural community is disintegrating, and along with this is a disintegration of old ideas. Although the outsider is sometimes the "villain", he is used by Hardy to show that change is inevitable. Man must adopt a new set of beliefs, for old beliefs cannot sustain new life styles. Societal conventions must advance with the advancing machine age.

Rutland has suggested that Hardy was most profoundly influenced by Darwin's Origin of Species, and Essays and Reviews, which Hardy appears to have read in the early 1860's.[6] The idea of the universal "struggle for existence" can be seen throughout Hardy's writings. Although Rutland's comments were written in 1938, they are, I believe, equally relevant today:

> This, then, was the intellectual atmosphere into which Hardy entered as he entered manhood; the two dominant ideas were, firstly that the Primal Cause was Immanent in the Universe, not transcendent to it; and, secondly, that the individual human being was of very small significance in the scheme of

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[6]William R. Rutland, Thomas Hardy: A Study of His Writings and Their Background (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1938), p. 50.

> things. All the critics are agreed that these two conceptions are those which dominate all of Hardy's work.[7]

Walter Allen has stated that: "What Hardy found in the science and philosophy of his day reinforced the findings of his temperament and of his observations of a largely traditional way of life; . . ."[8] This appears to be true of Hardy's reading of Darwin, and particularly true of Hardy's reading of Schopenhauer. Although Schopenhauer's work was not translated into English until 1883-1886,[9] there is much evidence to suggest that Hardy was familiar with Schopenhauer's ideas before this time. Webster records that the first English review of Schopenhauer was published in the Westminster Review in April, 1853.[10] Other reviews of Schopenhauer were published in the Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art in 1868 (Volume XIII), in 1869 (Volume XIV) and in 1871 (Volume XVI).[11] Also in 1871, there was an article entitled "Schopenhauer and Darwinism" published in the Journal of Anthropology.[12] Within the next six years, Webster notes at least seven

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[7] Ibid., p. 56.

[8] Walter Allen, The English Novel: A Short Critical History (London: Penguin Books, 1958), p. 246.

[9] Harvey Curtis Webster, On a Darkling Plain (Chicago: Archon Books, 1964), p. 159.

[10] Ibid., footnote 7, p. 220.

[11] Ibid., footnote 71, p. 222.

[12] Ibid., p. 89.

other publications dealing with Schopenhauer, including Helen Zimmern's biography, published in 1877.[13] Since these magazines enjoyed a fairly wide circulation, I think it is quite reasonable to assume that Hardy, an avid reader, was familiar with them, and thus familiar with the general ideas of Schopenhauer before the 1880's. I believe that Hardy's reading of Schopenhauer reinforced the general direction of his own thinking, at whatever time he read Schopenhauer. There appear to be many similarities between both; these are more clearly enunciated in the later novels (around 1886), at which time Hardy would have read the complete works of Schopenhauer.[14] However, there is sufficient material in the early novels to suggest that Hardy was to some degree, familiar with Schopenhauer's ideas.

Essentially, Schopenhauer is a monist: he believes that "will" is the ultimate reality of which all things (including human beings) are manifestations. This will, which is the essence of all things is seen as immutable and unchangeable; it is a blind, striving insatiable force without conscious purpose or direction. Because mankind is the objectification of a blindly striving universal will, man then is predisposed to struggle. For Schopenhauer, suffering is a fundamental part of life; to live is to suffer. Man's life is a predetermined pattern. Man may deceive himself into thinking that his reasoning powers dictate his

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[13] Ibid., p. 90.

[14] Ibid., p. 159.

actions; however, according to Schopenhauer, the intellect merely assists the will which is a fixed identity. Free will, therefore, is an illusion, a ploy used by the "Immanent Will" to delude the individual into thinking that he is initiating his own actions. One of the most powerful motives compelling man to act is the sexual impulse, which is the manifestation in the individual of the will to live. Schopenhauer sees all love as self-centred, and as being rooted in the sexual impulse which he sees as being second only to the impulse for self-preservation. Schopenhauer stressed the inevitability of struggle and conflict in both life and sexuality. Of the sexual instinct, he says:

> . . . [it is] the ultimate goal of almost all human effort, [which] exerts an adverse influence on the most important events . . . destroys the most valuable relationships . . . demands the sacrifice of life or health, sometimes wealth, rank, and happiness, nay robs those who are otherwise honest of all conscience. . . .[15]

From this, it is obvious that Schopenhauer believed that most of man's suffering was caused by his sexual nature. He saw love as sex, and marriage as the attrition of love. To avoid some of life's suffering, he advocated suppression of the ego and the development of altruism. To achieve this he advocated a life of celibacy and asceticism. Otherwise, man is fated to be disillusioned by the false attraction of the sexual impulse: ". . . the deception

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[15] Arthur Schopenhauer, "The Metaphysics of Love of the Sexes," 1841, in Irwin Edman (ed.) The Philosophy of Schopenhauer (New York: The Modern Library, 1928), p. 340.

must vanish after the attainment of the end. . . . The individual discovers that he has been the dupe of the species."[16] These attractions are false, because they are temporary. Hardy's later novels illustrate many of Schopenhauer's beliefs, but as I will endeavour to illustrate in the following chapters, they illustrate as well the need for change in the social system.

Like Schopenhauer, Hardy too is a monist; his earliest writing acknowledges a single ultimate cause behind the reality which comprises the universe. In the poem "Hap", written in 1866, he refers to this ultimate cause as "crass casualty"; and he pictures this operating in the universe as an inherent indifference. In 1906, in The Dynasts, he refers to the ultimate cause as the "Immanent Will", a phrase which he borrowed from Schopenhauer. This "Immanent Will" is described as being autonomous, unconscious, aimless and indestructible. Hardy's will, or crass casualty, or fate also operates as a blind force in the universe, often perverting man's best wishes for himself. Hence, Hardy can be called a determinist, as indeed can Schopenhauer. Because Hardy was a firm believer in this "Immanent Will", he often used chance happenings and circumstances (all manifestations of the "Immanent Will") as the powers that influence and shape man's life, and rule his destiny. These chance happenings, over which man has no control, contribute in part to man's suffering and unhappiness. This is so particularly

[16] Ibid., p. 370.

when man does not accept them, and wishes to change his fate in some way.

Hardy felt, as did Schopenhauer, that the sexual impulse was one of the strongest forces of life. Since sexuality was part of life, Hardy felt that it should be recognized, and not repressed as it had been in the popular novels. Consequently, he presented, in his novels, men and women with strong sexual natures; he presented, also, the tragedy which man's sexual nature brought upon him. Hardy does not say that the sexual instinct is the cause of tragedy; rather, he stresses that society's attempt to regulate this instinctual, nonrational element, leads to much of man's suffering and tragedy. Some of the tragedy, also, is portrayed as being the result of the temporary quality of sexual attraction--because of a temporary physical interlude, people were often linked together in permanent tragic alliances.

In his preoccupation with the unkind fate which constantly pursued mankind, Hardy sought to show the contrast between appearance and reality, between illusion and fact. He was aware that, on the subject of matrimony, mankind had been duped by sentimentality, illusion and falsehood, rather than drawn to reality. In all his novels, among other themes, he uses the marriage theme to comment on the nature of man as a creature of destiny rather than as a free agent wholly responsible for his actions or the consequences of his actions on other people. He portrays

the sexual impulse as a manifestation of the basic will in its pessimistic aspect. Essentially, Hardy felt that the institution of marriage, as regulated in nineteenth century society, was another one of the forces that frustrated and sometimes even destroyed individuals. Throughout his novels, he emphasized unhappy marriages, and he concluded that marriage was largely responsible for alienating individuals, rather than for bringing them closer together. This was as much the fault of social conventions, as it was of the instinctual part of man's nature. Hardy offered no positive alternate solution; merely as he said in the preface to The Woodlanders examined:

> . . . the immortal puzzle - given to men and women, how to find a basis for their sexual relation . . . .[17]

He was acutely aware that man had a sexual nature, and that his sexual nature was (or should be) a basic part of man's existence which need not in any way be related to the institution of marriage. Ten years after The Woodlanders he wrote to Florence Henniker:

> . . . I don't see any possible scheme for the union of the sexes that would be satisfactory.[18]

He does seem to suggest, however, particularly in his major novels, the need for quietism. This is not necessarily the Christian spiritualism but rather a stoic acceptance of life with all its inexplicable elements. In most of the

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[17] The Woodlanders (London: Macmillan, 1955), p. v.

[18] Letter to Forence Henniker, June 1, 1896, in Evelyn Hardy and F.B. Pinion, eds. One Rare Fair Woman (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 52.

major novels, Hardy has a character or characters, who seem resigned to their fate, and who recognize a community of life in the same way as the country folk of the early novels. He does not advocate renunciation of the sexual impulse, as does Schopenhauer; however, he does show that the less sexually oriented characters seem to live happier lives, as indeed do those who accept fate, rather than try to change it.

Hardy questions both the motives for people's marital choices, and the pressures which cause people to choose as they do. He portrayed unhappy marriages, for he wished to show truth and reality, rather than ". . . puerile inventions . . ."[19] which had characterized popular Victorian fiction for so long. He states his case for this very clearly:

> . . . in representations of the world, the passions ought to be proportioned as in the world itself. This is the interest which was excited in the minds of the Athenians by their immortal tragedies, and in the minds of Londoners at the first performance of the finer plays of three hundred years ago. They reflected life, revealed life, criticised life. Life being a physiological fact, its honest portrayal must be largely concerned with, for one thing, the relations of the sexes, and the substitution for such catastrophes as favor the false colouring best expressed by the regulation finish that, "they married and were happy ever after" of catastrophes based upon sexual relations as it is. To this expansion English society opposes a well-nigh insuperable bar.[20]

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[19]"Candour in English Fiction," in Harold Orel, ed., Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1966), pp. 127-28.

[20]Ibid.

In all this, it can be seen that Hardy shows a great concern for his fellow man. He sees man as a victim of blind forces, and, at the same time he sees man as a victim of society's outdated customs, particularly society's ignorance of man's sexuality. For, as Anne Mickelson points out, "Hardy's novels, ... can be seen as the struggle between nature and culture--with culture winning."[21] This is the main fault in the social system which Hardy wishes to point out:

> . . . for Hardy, nature is not only the outward reality but a great, unconscious force in which the natural instincts of men and women share. Culture, on the other hand, is a conscious force which frequently enforces the denial of self and joy. Above all, sexual love is the great drive which makes us part of the vast rhythms of the universe, and failure of the sexual relationship points to the ills of modern life.[22]

Hardy's statements about man's sexual nature are all part of his concern for man as a sexual animal, who is restricted by unfair, often cruel conventions. In a letter to Sir George Douglas, written in 1895, Hardy expressed the view: "I feel that a bad marriage is one of the direst things on earth and one of the cruellest."[23] On the other hand, in an article in Hearst's Magazine, June 1912, he stated:

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[21] Ann Z. Mickelson, Thomas Hardy's Women and Men: The Defeat of Nature (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1976), p. 31.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Letter to Sir George Douglas, November 20, 1895, in F.R. Southerington, Hardy's Vision of Man (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), p. 25.

> . . . I regard marriage as a union whose terms should be regulated entirely for the happiness of the community, including that of the parties themselves.[24]

As well as questioning the freedom of choice involved in most marital contracts, Hardy also stresses the unfairness of the indissolubility of the tie. At different times he refers to the English marriage laws as "barbaric", and he blames these laws for a lot of man's misery. In the same article from which I have quoted above, Hardy expresses his views on the subject of divorce:

> . . . marriage should be dissolvable at the wish of either party, if that party prove it to be a cruelty to him or her.[25]

In all his novels, one can find examples of wasted ambitions, wasted talents and even of wasted lives; all result from people's being bound by narrow conventions. There are many examples of marriages in which there is no feeling between the marital partners. On the other hand, in many of his novels, Hardy stresses a cameraderie, a mutual respect and understanding based on shared interests. In fact, he seems to advocate a type of spiritual communion which transcends mere physical attraction. Hardy suggests that such relationships rarely occur because of the pressures to which people are subjected.

In contrast with the restrictions placed on people by false contracts and barbaric laws, Hardy shows the

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[24] In Life and Art (New York: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1925), p. 120.

[25] Ibid.

spontaneity of true, free, natural relationships. It is as if he is saying that man is most nearly free, the closer he is to nature. By "nature" he means the nonhuman physical world, where instinct rather than conceptual morality is the norm. Alcorn suggests:

> Hardy's use of pastoral settings and themes expresses his sense of opposition between man in nature and man in society. Increasingly, Hardy tended to see an opposition between the spontaneity of nature and the legal rigidities of social institutions and conventions.[26]

Morality, as laid down by society, becomes oppressive. Most people's lives are tragic, then, because of social injustices. In a note to himself, Hardy had suggested a possible solution:

> I consider a social system based on individual spontaneity to promise better for happiness than a curbed and uniform one under which all temperaments are bound to shape themselves to a single pattern of living. To this end I would have society divided into groups of temperament, with a different code of observances for each group.[27]

With all this concern for his suffering fellow man, can Hardy truly be classified as being a pessimist? Certainly, he stresses the apparent helplessness of man in the face of a predetermined pattern. However, he does suggest that a change in the laws of society will make for an easier and a happier life, with much less suffering. He preferred to refer to himself as a "meliorist." His way of trying

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[26]John Alcorn, The Nature Novel From Lawrence to Hardy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 16.

[27]The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, p. 23.

to make the world a better place in which to live was to portray, realistically and sincerely, the injustices inherent in the social system. He believed that one must show "the worst" in order to prepare the way for "the best." In 1904, he stated:

> . . . my practical philosophy is distinctly melioristic. What are my books but one plea against 'man's inhumanity to man', woman, and to the lower animals? . . . Whatever may be the inherent good or evil of life, it is certain that men make it much worse than it need be. When we have got rid of a thousand remediable ills, it will be time enough to determine whether the ill that is irremediable outweighs the good.[28]

This paper, then, will trace the treatment in Hardy's novels of the marriage question. It will show that in all the novels, the subject of marriage occupies a prominent place. It will show, also, that Hardy uses marital situations to convey his philosophical position, which is in many ways similar to that of Schopenhauer. A look at Hardy's comments about marriage will demonstrate his deep concern for man's plight in an indifferent universe, and will also demonstrate his appeal for a more relaxed social code in a more complicated society. His concern for man in the changing society grows more pronounced as he progresses from the simple life of Under the Greenwood Tree with its: "marrying a woman is a thing you can do at any moment . . . ,"[29] to the complicated world of

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[28] William Archer, Real Conversations (London: Heinemann, 1904), pp. 46-47.

[29] Under the Greenwood Tree (London: Macmillan, 1955), p. 201.

Jude the Obscure with its: "matrimony have growed to be that serious in these days that one really do feel afeared to move in it at all."[30] A look at these will involve an examination of such points as the nature of freedom; the nature of private versus public morality; and the social consequences of man's dual nature as a creature possessing natural instincts and as a member of society. The conclusions will have something to say about Hardy's views of the nature of dependence, the idea of personal freedom, and the possibilities for and the limitations upon personal growth imposed on the individual by his choice of a marital partner, particularly in nineteenth-century England. Mickelson says:

> In his concern with the problem of living, Hardy probes into areas barely scratched by writers before him: the falseness of the double standard; the necessity of sexual education for men and women--particularly women; the need to give women the means for economic independence so that marriage will not be viewed as women's finite role; the recognition that work for both men and women must be self-fulfilling. Viewing the inadequacies of Victorian marriage, he is convinced that the whole institution of marriage needs revision.[31]

The social injustices and the need for revision in the institution of marriage will be looked at briefly in the early novels, and in greater depth in the major novels, in which Hardy becomes increasingly bitter towards society's inflexible rules. The novels A Laodicean, Two on a Tower, The Trumpet Major, The Hand of Ethelberta and The Well

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[30] Jude the Obscure (London: Macmillan, 1951), p. 444.

[31] Mickelson, op. cit., p. 152.

Beloved will not be looked at, for it was felt that although the theme was covered in these novels, a more intense study could be prepared by concentrating on those of his works which are generally acknowledged to be his major novels.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY NOVELS

In 1871, Hardy's first published novel, Desperate Remedies, was released. Basically, this is a typically Victorian melodrama with a sensational plot--a "good girl" struggles against a series of family misfortunes, and eventually marries her true love. It is by no means a great novel. However, it does contain certain ideas which Hardy was later to expound at length. The situation or complication which gives this novel its title is a marriage of convenience. To secure her own financial future, and to help pay the debts incurred by her ailing brother, Cytherea Graye, the heroine, chooses the desperate remedy of a marriage to a man whom she clearly does not love, and whom, secretly, she hates. By calling this marriage a desperate remedy and an escape, Hardy implies that there is something essentially wrong in the social thinking which encourages such remedies. Cytherea makes an interesting comment:

> Scheme to marry? I'd rather scheme to die! I know I am not pleasing my heart; I know that if I only were concerned I should like risking a single future. But why should I please my useless self overmuch, when by doing otherwise I please those who are more valuable than I?[1]

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[1] Desperate Remedies (London: Macmillan, 1951), p. 267.

This points up the Victorian conception of woman's being inferior. Cytherea is not free to follow her own impulses; she is a pawn in the hands of a power that dictates that she ". . . sink to the lowest point . . ."[2] in order to remedy her brother's unfortunate situation. To have no other choice than to marry a person whom one dreads is, to Hardy, one of the more regrettable features of nineteenth-century society. His comments in this novel are fairly mild; however, he does use the word "mockery" to describe such a situation, for he finds such manipulation of women to be unnatural in that there is no consideration shown for people's instincts, emotions, wishes or sentiments. He feels that the Victorian idea of marriage as a force or agency of social improvement is essentially a bastardization of the natural instinct in man which seeks union with the opposite sex. It is only after this unfortunate marriage is proven to be bigamous that Hardy makes a concession to the expectations of the novel-reading public, and gives the happy ending of Cytherea and Springrove in marriage.

An interesting point about this early novel is the richly poetic overtone in descriptive passages, particularly in the description of nature, the nonhuman physical world. Manstan tells Cytherea that he loves her and that he will do anything to please her. This takes place in the early evening:

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[2] Ibid., p. 269.

> On the right hand the sun, resting on the horizon line, streamed across the ground from below copper-coloured and lilac clouds, stretched out in flats beneath a sky of pale soft green. All dark objects on the earth that lay towards the sun were overspread by a purple haze, against which a swarm of wailing gnats shone forth luminously, rising upward and floating away like sparks of fire.[3]

Hardy uses the description of the external surroundings as a background for Cytherea's emotional state. The flatness and barrenness of the landscape find a parallel in the emptiness of Cytherea's emotional state:

> The stillness oppressed and reduced her to mere passivity. The only wish the humidity of the place left in her was to stand motionless. The helpless flatness of the landscape gave her, as it gives all such temperaments, a sense of equality with, and no superiority to, a single entity under the sky.[4]

Cytherea feels nothing for Manstan, yet she feels she ought to marry him, for her brother's sake. She feels as isolated as the fragment of a hedge ". . . standing in the middle of the mead, without a definite beginning or ending, purposeless and valueless."[5] To convey the exact sense of Cytherea's isolation, Hardy uses the image of: ". . . one in a boat without oars, drifting with closed eyes down a river - she knew not whither."[6]

In this novel, Hardy does little more than criticize, superficially, the practice of manipulating women into marriages which are contrary to their own wishes. He does,

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[3] Ibid., p. 254.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 255.

[6] Ibid.

however, suggest the reason for such practices--the inferior position of women in nineteenth-century society. Women's status largely derived from their husband's success; this had been unquestioningly accepted for years. In dramatizing the reality of a marriage of convenience, Hardy points out the tragedy which such an event can create. His purpose is probably to shake the attitude of complacency, currently popular. Cytherea's brief marriage to Manstan brought her neither dignity nor fulfillment, indicating that there was a basic flaw in a system which encouraged such matings. Towards the end of this novel, Hardy has Farmer Springrove, one of his wise country folk, make a sapient comment on life in general:

> There's a back'ard current in the world, and we must do our utmost to advance in order just to bide where we be.[7]

This illustrates his awareness that change is inevitable, and that since man is affected by change, he must endeavour to cope with it by forever advancing. The "backward current" in the nineteenth century can certainly be the unrelenting social code which was out of touch with man's changing life style. The impact of this statement is probably Hardy's mildest reference to the false morality which he was to castigate in the later novels.

Desperate Remedies is overly sensational, and relies on too much coincidence to be considered as a serious work of art. Its main interest is in its presenting some themes

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[7] Ibid., p. 431.

with which Hardy was to deal at greater length in the more serious novels; as well, it provides a preliminary challenge to Victorian complacency.

In 1872, Hardy's next novel, Under the Greenwood Tree, was published. Essentially this is, as the title indicates, a tale of rural adventures, and a high frolic amongst a charming group of simple country folk. The common folk in Under the Greenwood Tree live very close to nature and they represent a way of life that is gradually dying out. Hardy tells this tale in four parts, each part representing a season of the year. In this way, he conveys the sense of the cyclical pattern of their lives. The harmonious blending of work, play, life and death is characteristic of an unsophisticated way of life with its easy acceptance of day to day occurrences. Andrew Enstice says:

> . . . life is a matter of practicality, day to day survival and simple pleasure in an existence that is relatively predictable from cradle to grave. In this situation the society itself is the justification for life, as well as its ordering. Marriage confers, through a predictable future for the unborn generations, a kind of immortality and a sense of purpose in life.[8]

There are no great pressures upon these simple people. Their most important concerns are with basic survival, and marriage is a natural everyday part of the pattern of survival. There is a fatalistic attitude expressed in their passive acceptance of life's pattern. Dick Dewy's idea is: "If we

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[8] Andrew Enstice, "The Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge" in Anne Smith (ed.) The Novels of Thomas Hardy (London: Vision Press, 1979), p. 11.

be doomed to marry, we marry; if we be doomed to remain single, we do."[9] Grandfather James's idea is: "Marrying a woman is a thing you can do at any moment; but a swarm of bees won't come for the asking."[10]

Interwoven into the love story of Fancy Day and Dick Dewy, is the story of the dismissal of the small orchestra which performs in the church on Sundays. Both stories provide sombre undercurrents to the seemingly idyllic existence. Fancy and Dick's marriage almost does not take place; Fancy hesitates in marrying Dick, for she has been educated outside the rural community and she is fascinated by the young Vicar Mr. Maybold, who represents a more sophisticated life than that of Dick Dewy. Her hesitation indicates a gradual break with accepted patterns of living. Mr. Maybold is the outsider who comes into the community and challenges the old ordered existence. Meisel says:

> Fancy, in her receptiveness to the tempter (himself inherently innocent but dangerous within the web of circumstance), has become an agent of disturbing forces. But, at the same time, she is bound to the community through her engagement to Dick. For all practical purposes, the novel ends happily. But Under the Greenwood Tree is deceptively unified: the doubt left by Fancy's secret causes the novel to remain, in a sense, openended; the community is now susceptible to infection from the outside. The breach of contract and trust, while healed in deed, remains an open

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[9] Under the Greenwood Tree, p. 103.

[10] Ibid., p. 201.

> wound in moral terms, a violation of the integrity of the old order.[11]

Similarly, the introduction of the organ to replace the small orchestra symbolizes the breakup in the old order. The outside world is gradually intruding, and the easy rural existence is declining. The industrial revolution is forcing a new lifestyle upon the whole countryside and its inhabitants.

This novel demonstrates, too, Hardy's sensitivity to nature, and his ability to use words with precise meaning. An excellent example can be found in the opening paragraph in which he describes, in very poetic terms, the voices of the different trees:

> To dwellers in a wood almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature. At the passing of the breeze the fir-trees sob and moan no less distinctly than they rock; the holly whistles as it battles with itself; the ash hisses amid its quiverings; the beech rustles while its flat boughs rise and fall. And winter, which modifies the note of such trees as shed their leaves, does not destroy its individuality.[12]

Although it is not stressed, the darker side of the natural environment is present as well: ". . . quaint tufts of fungi . . ."[13] grow in the cavities of the forks of the "Greenwood Tree." So one can agree with Butler's assessment: "In this work we can find in rudimentary form most of the

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[11] Perry Meisel, Thomas Hardy: The Return of the Repressed (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 42.

[12] Under the Greenwood Tree, p. 3.

[13] Ibid., p. 50.

elements of Hardy's major fiction. . . ."[14]

Hardy's third novel, A Pair of Blue Eyes, is another melodrama which relies on a sensationally contrived plot to tell its story. The novel provides some interesting criticism of nineteenth-century thinking; as well, it focuses on the hypocrisy--the act of pretending to be what one was not--inherent in the Christian Church. Once again, this novel gives a realistic picture of what Hardy considered to be remediable ills.

A custom, long sanctioned by society and perpetuated in the literature of the age, was that of marrying at one's own social level. Hardy sees this as similar to the marriage of convenience--it takes no account of people's true feelings. In A Pair of Blue Eyes, there are several references to people's not being good enough for Elfride to marry. After her father has refused to allow the engagement with Stephen Smith because he comes from a lower social stratum, Stephen too, admits that "she's too far above me . . . ."[15] This comes immediately after he has said: ". . . to marry her would be the great blessing of my life - socially and practically. . . ."[16] Hardy repeats this, I feel, to focus on the sheer absurdity of such a notion.

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[14]Lance St. John Butler, Thomas Hardy (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 12.

[15]A Pair of Blue Eyes (London: Macmillan, 1952), p. 98.

[16]Ibid.

Class consciousness sought to dictate selection of one's marital partner, in order to preserve the "purity" of the class. Hardy's dramatization criticizes both the convention and its reason for existing. He feels that natural attractions ought to play some part in the marital choice, and this novel shows the hardships imposed upon individuals by adhering to outdated notions of class. Both Elfride and Stephen feel that he is not good enough for her because of his having been born into a family whose social position is inferior to hers. No account is taken of his worth as an individual, a fact which Hardy considers ought to be more significant than the social class of the father. False notions of worthiness, and outdated snobbery regarding position in society provide important themes in this novel. This serves to emphasize the dichotomy between societal conventions, and the personal needs of men and women.

Another theme which this novel presents is hypocrisy, as evidenced by the Reverend Mr. Swancourt, Elfride's father. His lack of charity is evidenced in his dismissing Stephen as a possible suitor for Elfride, simply because of Stephen's social background. To enhance Elfride's chances of marrying into what he considers to be her proper social sphere, the Reverend Mr. Swancourt marries a wealthy widow who, he considers, will introduce Elfride to the proper class of people. It is ironic that after he has told his daughter of his marriage, the Reverend Mr. Swancourt says:

". . . if you play your cards well, you may marry anybody."[17] He means, of course, anyone whose social status is acceptable. Such attitudes as those exhibited by the Reverend Mr. Swancourt are responsible for maintaining rigid class barriers which in turn retard progressive thinking, and promote narrow-minded ideas which stifle individuals.

The Victorian notion of perfection in its women is criticized, as well, in this novel. After Stephen leaves the country, Elfride becomes friendly with Knight, Stephen's former teacher. Eventually, they decide to marry. However, upon Knight's discovery that Elfride is not in a state of pristine innocence, and has even kissed a man before his meeting her, Knight's illusions are shattered, and so he deserts Elfride. This rather absurd episode is clearly a representation of the Victorian emphasis on complete chastity in the female. In exposing Knight as the prig that he is, Hardy is at the same time exposing the current attitude which insisted on holding the female sex on a pedestal. Hardy's dramatization seems to indicate that such high standards are sanctimonious falsehoods, such as the popular novels sought to portray in their "unsullied maidens." He felt that unrealistic standards of "purity" such as this were responsible for much of man's suffering and unhappiness. Dramatization of such might probably bring about improvement in the attitudes. As has been pointed out in the introduction, "man's inhumanity to man" troubled Hardy. Much of this

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[17] Ibid., p. 135.

inhumanity he saw as being a consequence of the rigid sexual code, which he attempted to criticize in his novels. After the altercation between Elfride and Knight, Hardy injects a cynical observation:

> It is a melancholy thought that men who at first will not allow the verdict of perfection they pronounce upon their sweethearts or wives to be disturbed by God's own testimony to the contrary, will, once suspecting their purity, morally hang them upon evidence they would be ashamed to admit in judging a dog.[18]

This statement bears out Hardy's conviction that men make their lives worse than need be; man the social animal is at fault. As a social being, man worries unduly about the purity of woman, for this idea was held sacrosanct by the Victorians. Such comments as the above, explore the faults in the social system and underline the necessity for more sympathy in personal relationships.

Meisel suggests that the central perspective in A Pair of Blue Eyes is Knight's vision as he hangs onto the Cliff without a Name. He says: ". . . it is the broadest, most comprehensive view of life attempted in any of the early works."[19] This view of life, at times, seems to echo the "Crass Casualty" of Hardy's "Hap", for example:

> To those musing weather-beaten west-country folk who pass the greater part of their days and nights out of doors, Nature seems to have moods in other than a poetical sense: predilections for certain deeds at certain times, without any apparent law to govern or season to account for them. She is read as a person with a curious temper; as one

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[18] Ibid., p. 382.

[19] Meisel, op. cit., p. 60.

> who does not scatter kindnesses and cruelties alternately, impartially, and in order, but heartless severities or overwhelming generosities in lawless caprice. Man's case is always that of the prodigal's favourite or the miser's pensioner. In her unfriendly moments there seems a feline fun in her tricks, begotten by a foretaste of her pleasure in swallowing the victim.[20]

In this same passage, there is also an idea which recurs in many of Hardy's later novels. As Knight gazes down, he realizes:

> We colour according to our moods the objects we survey. The sea would have been a deep neutral blue had happier auspices attended the gazer: it was now no otherwise than distinctly black to his vision. That narrow white border was foam, he knew well; but its boisterous tosses were so distant as to appear a pulsation only, and its slashing was barely audible. A white border to a black sea - his funeral pall and its edging.[21]

Much later on, when Knight breaks his engagement to Elfride, the death of their engagement is symbolized in the vegetation which Knight looks upon:

> . . . the dead and brown stubble, the weeds among it, the distant belt of beeches shutting out the view of the house, the leaves of which were now red and sick to death.[22]

In a preface written in 1912, Hardy referred to A Pair of Blue Eyes as ". . . the romantic stage of an idea which was further developed in a later book."[23] In some ways, this book can be seen as the early attempt to discuss

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[20] A Pair of Blue Eyes, p. 243.

[21] Ibid., p. 244.

[22] Ibid., p. 383.

[23] Ibid., p. vi.

the problems which Hardy outlines in Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Like Tess, Elfride confesses to a previous involvement with a man; like Angel, Knight becomes indignant when he discovers that his "perfect woman" is not perfect after all. His selfish intolerance is comparable to Angel's. Elfride has not had the experience of being an unwed mother, and she comes from an entirely different social class; yet, her reaction to Knight's self-righteousness is comparable to Tess's: "If I had only known you had been coming, what a nunnery I would have lived in to have been good enough for you."[24]

Although the novel is marred by too many coincidences, it provides an exploration of the Victorian notions of class prejudice and false standards of morality exacted of its women. As well, A Pair of Blue Eyes ". . . sustains perhaps best of all Hardy's early work the deep and complex array of cross-purposes and disturbed dreams that exist within an apparently consistent world."[25]

Hardy's fame as a novelist can be said to have become secure with the publication in 1874 of Far From the Madding Crowd. Immediately upon publication in serial form in Cornhill Magazine, this novel met with great success. Far From the Madding Crowd has a more serious tone than the earlier novels, a more skillfully created plot and a more

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[24] Ibid., p. 366.

[25] Meisel, op. cit., p. 33.

definitely stated philosophy. The use of marital situations in this novel, and the statements concerning the institution of marriage, indicate more clearly than the earlier novels, Hardy's philosophy of life. As well, Hardy presents a very clear explanation of his idea of a true marriage. This explanation, which is to recur in many of the later novels, will be examined further on in this chapter.

In presenting the fortunes of Bathsheba Everdene, Hardy is commenting on the ". . . inter-relationship between environmental stability, economic stability, and moral stability. . . ."[26] He is, also, indicating the importance that sexual attraction plays in the selection of marital partners; and the irrational aspect of man's sexuality.

Bathsheba is presented as a well-educated, fairly level-headed girl whose conceit makes her very susceptible to flattery. Because of this preoccupation with herself, she is blind to the true worth of Gabriel Oak, the loyal, industrious shepherd who pursues her. Marriage, to Bathsheba, means attention focused upon her--thus, she considers only the superficialities of the rite. After she has inherited a sizeable estate from her uncle, she dismisses all thought of Oak, for she believes he is not

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[26] F.R. Southerington, Hardy's Vision of Man (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), p. 63.

". . . good enough for me."[27]

This is one of Hardy's favourite themes repeating itself: man does not realize the nature of marriage; rather he is blinded by a combination of the romanticized superficialities attending the state, as well as the current notion that one marries to better oneself. There is no recognition of the fact that people must have some common ground of feeling, if they are to achieve any sort of happiness in the marital state. Hardy does not suggest that such happiness is lasting; however, he does repeat that people are destined to be unhappy if they marry for perfunctory reasons.

As has been pointed out in Chapter I, Hardy sees man as primarily a sexual animal led, often blindly, by passion. In this novel, Bathsheba becomes fascinated by Sergeant Troy's blatant sexuality, symbolized in this novel by his dazzling sword. Troy is the outsider, with no sense of communion with the environment, and no sense of moral stability. A mere accident of fate--such as Hardy sees life made up of--prevents his marrying Fanny Robin, who is carrying his child. Fanny mistakenly waits at the wrong church, so Troy deserts her. A mere chance brings Bathsheba and Troy together--they happen to be walking in the same area one evening. She is overcome by the sheer physical attraction of Troy, and he, in his turn, is attracted by her

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[27] Far From the Madding Crowd (London: Macmillan, 1952), p. 85.

physical endowments as well as by her financial status. On an impulse of jealousy--Troy admitted that he had an eye for another woman--Bathsheba married him. This marriage, based merely on a temporary physical attraction, was doomed from the start. Troy resumed his old life of gambling, sporting and drinking; and he had the unhappy Bathsheba pay his debts.

When Fanny Robin dies in childbirth as a result of a combination of malnutrition, exposure and lack of spirit, Troy mourns her as his true wife. His words to Bathsheba underline one of the harsh realities of life which Hardy wishes to point out--the basic conflict between the natural moral law and the system of law imposed on many by society. Troy says:

> A ceremony before a priest doesn't make a marriage. I am not morally yours.[28]

This points out the belief that society therefore cannot control man's destiny. Hardy's insistence on this point indicates his sympathy with man who often acts on impulse, and thus frustrates and often destroys himself and others. The marriage of Bathsheba and Troy was totally destructive: it was indirectly responsible for Troy's forsaking Fanny and thus causing her death and that of her child; it was responsible for the loss of most of Bathsheba's wealth because of Troy's wastefulness; it was responsible for Troy's complete downfall, because of his lack of harmony

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[28] Ibid., p. 345.

with the rural surroundings, and complete disregard for the worth of work; it was responsible for Troy's coming to despise himself so much that he could not face himself soberly, therefore he whiled away his time in drunken exploits; eventually this marriage was responsible for Troy's death at the hands of the jealous farmer Boldwood, with whom Bathsheba has heartlessly trifled. Hardy's dramatization of the disastrous effect of this hasty marriage emphasizes his deep-seated philosophical beliefs about the nature of such ill-fated unions. The chance mating of unsuited people is a lamentable, but too frequent occurrence, which Hardy suggests can only lead to disastrous results:

> Hardy's objection to marriage of the usual kind was based on the fact that a temporary infatuation for the moment, accompanied by no affinities or compatibles of any kind, was all that was necessary to constitute a marriage contract.[29]

This is Hardy's assessment of the destructive nature of the sexual impulse.

Mere chance, and an awakening of a violently passionate nature, also cause the downfall of Farmer Boldwood. In a capricious moment, Bathsheba sends him a valentine card. As a result, this awakens in the formerly controlled Boldwood, a great sexual longing for Bathsheba. He is drawn into a situation which is not initiated by his own impulses, and he pursues her with a fanatical persistence.

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[29]Albert Pettigrew Elliott, Fatalism in the Works of Thomas Hardy (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), p. 100.

From a disinterested spectator, he turns into a fiercely intense performer in the struggle for survival. This can be seen as an illustration of the theory that all life is struggle, especially sexual life.

When Bathsheba consults Oak, the constant element of stability in this drama, he replies:

> The real sin ma'am, in my mind lies in thinking of ever wedding wi' a man you don't love honest and true.[30]

This is an idea which Hardy repeats thirty-three years later in a letter to Florence Henniker. The fact that he uses the word sin is most significant. As I see it, he uses it as the strongest word to convey the sense of an action which is totally wrong. This is what the novel dramatizes--the terrible consequences of either a marriage or a contemplated marriage with someone for whom one does not have an honest and true feeling.

As I have stated before, Oak symbolizes stability, harmony and moral order. He is the constant restorer of order in the physical environment, and in the chaos which surrounds Bathsheba's personal life. He has an understanding of the physical universe, which is manifested in his concern for the harvest, for the sheep, and for the people around him. He stoically accepts the adversities which beset him, both in his personal life and in his career. In his resignation to his fate, there is a dignity which

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[30] Far From the Madding Crowd, p. 409.

respects a force over which he has no control. After suffering many setbacks, he marries Bathsheba. Of this union, Hardy says:

> Theirs was that substantial affection which arises (if any arises at all) when the two who are thrown together begin first by knowing the rougher sides of each other's character, and not the best till further on, the romance growing up in the interstices of a mass of hard prosaic reality. This good fellowship - CAMERADERIE - usually occurring through similarity of pursuits, is unfortunately seldom superadded to love between the sexes, because men and women associate not in their labours, but in their pleasures merely. Where, however, happy circumstance permits its development, the compounded feeling proves itself to be the only love which is strong as death - that love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown, beside which the passion usually called by the name is evanescent as steam.[31]

The strong metaphor, and the biblical diction reinforce this view which Hardy is to echo time and again and which establishes his belief that there is a hope for mankind. It expresses his conception of shared interests--an almost spiritual communion with one's surroundings--providing the background against which two people can share a life together. It stresses the need for paying attention to the reality of life, rather than to idealism, or fantasy or romance; as well, it suggests the fleeting nature of sexual passion. This philosophical position suggests that all is not hopeless; man is not totally doomed to suffer. Suppression of the ego leads to an altruism such as that shown by Oak.

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[31] Ibid., pp. 456-457.

This novel demonstrates Hardy's mature craftsmanship as a writer, particularly his ability to express his ideas in language which is intensely descriptive. His feeling for nature is captured in the personification of the wind at the beginning of the novel:

> Between this half-wooded half-naked hill, and the vague still horizon that its summit indistinctly commanded, was a mysterious sheet of fathomless shade - the sounds from which suggested that what it concealed bore some reduced resemblance to — features here. The thin grasses, more or less coating the hill, were touched by the wind in breezes of differing powers, and almost of differing natures - one rubbing the blades heavily, another raking them piercingly, another brushing them like a soft broom. The instinctive act of humankind was to stand and listen, and learn how the trees on the right and the trees on the left wailed or chaunted to each other in the regular antiphonies of a cathedral choir; how hedges and other shapes to leeward then caught the note, lowering it to the tenderest sob; and how the hurrying gust then plunged into the south, to be heard no more.[32]

The overall effect of this passage is one of serenity which is reflected in Farmer Oak who is at peace with his surroundings. Much later in the novel, the darker side of the natural surroundings is used to reflect the mood of Bathsheba. After Troy has told Bathsheba that he is not morally hers, Bathsheba runs from the house and hides in the thicket. As she awakes in the morning, in a mood of despair, her eyes are drawn to a swamp. The imagery of the external world mirrors the inner world of Bathsheba's torment:

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[32] Ibid., p. 9.

> But the general aspect of the swamp was malignant. From its moist and poisonous coat seemed to be exhaled the essences of evil things in the earth, and in the waters under the earth. The fungi grew in all manner of positions from rotting leaves and tree stumps, some exhibiting to her listless gaze their clammy tops, others their oozing gills. Some were marked with great splotches, red as arterial blood, others were saffron yellow, and others tall and attenuated, with stems like macaroni. Some were leathery and of richest browns.[33]

Shortly after, the swamp comes alive as Liddy crosses, looking for Bathsheba:

> Iridescent bubbles of dank subterranean breath rose from the sweating sod beside the waiting-maid's feet as she trod, hissing as they burst and expanded away to join the vapoury firmament above.[34]

In this novel, Hardy has explored the effect of both character and fate upon man's destiny, and has shown that both play significant parts in determining man's life style. Bathsheba's marriage to Troy has disrupted the community; her marriage to Oak restores order. Butler says:

> The destructive forces that are ranged against [Weatherbury Farm] parallel those of As You Like It: foul weather and man's ingratitude. The first is beyond man's moral competence but it can be dealt with by care, patience and faith. The second, in Hardy, is not a matter of courts and kings but, in the cool, sequested vales of Wessex, a matter of love. Love, faithful love, keeps Gabriel by Bathsheba's side and thus on the farm. Misplaced love (Bathsheba's for Troy) almost destroys the farm, just as excessive and irrational love destroys Boldwood (and his farming). Oak remains to save the day, and the end of the novel is precisely a compromise between

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[33] Ibid., p. 348.

[34] Ibid., p. 349.

the forces of agriculture and the forces of love - only where nature's will (the Immanent Will) and man's will (Bathsheba's desires, Oak's desires) coincide can man even begin to consider the possibility of happiness.[35]

[35] Butler, op. cit., p. 29.

CHAPTER III

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

The Return of the Native, published in 1878, evinces a more mature development of Hardy's philosophical view of the nature of the universe, and of man's place in this scheme. The universe, or nature, is portrayed in all its impassivity and insouciance as the heath. This is the symbol for the unconscious force behind the universe against which man's trivial drama is played. The heath ". . . neither ghostly, hateful, nor ugly; neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame . . ."[1] becomes an imposing presence in this novel; in fact, some critics have seen it as the main character. It is '". . . singularly colossal and mysterious . . ." and yet ". . . slighted and enduring . . . ."[2] Against this personification of the timeless aspect of life, the short cycle of man's existence is of insignificant stature. The tragedy of human lives is shown to be of no great consequence in proportion to the heath which survives with the same physical aspect, throughout the centuries. Once again, Hardy takes up the theme of

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[1] The Return of the Native (London: Macmillan, 1960), p. 6.

[2] Ibid.

the necessity of man's being in tune with his environment, which he has discussed in Far From the Madding Crowd. As well, he illustrates the contrast between appearance and reality, and the unpredictability of man's destiny in a world which he is unable to understand.

The discrepancy between what man desires for himself, and what he ultimately achieves is skillfully depicted in the representation of the fortunes of Eustacia Vye, and those people with whom she interacts. Part of the action of The Return of the Native is concerned with people's discovering the truth (reality) that lies behind the various illusions surrounding them. Hardy uses the institution of marriage as the agency which enlightens his characters. The marital choices, and the effects of these choices, are used to demonstrate Hardy's theory of the disparity between man's aspirations, and his destiny.

Eustacia Vye, the heroine of The Return of the Native, dominates all the action of this novel. She is portrayed as the romantic unsatisfied personality who yearns for far away places, and whose fate it is to live out her life in the confined atmosphere of Egdon Heath. She is the outsider who does not belong to the environment of the heath; she does not understand it; she is not in harmony with the life style demanded of a resident here; and she refuses to compromise. She is beautiful, she is well educated, and she is used to the busier life of a seaport town; therefore, she is stifled in the atmosphere

of the lonely heath which offers no outlet for her romantic fantasies. As a woman living in the nineteenth century, she has very few opportunities. In an age when women are not expected to work, Eustacia must look to a man for some form of economic security. Throughout this novel, Hardy shows the folly of the Victorian notion that woman's only hope for security is marriage. Conditioned by the thinking of the age, women fell into the "trap" of ". . . . accept[ing] marriage either as an escape or as compromise."[3] There are few opportunities, then, for Eustacia. Mickelson says:

> For Hardy, society is the villain--a society which denies the beautiful, the educated, the courageous and the individual woman like Eustacia the power to determine her positive potential and then realize it.[4]

Eustacia, who is the daughter of a Corfiote bandmaster, has an aura of mystery about her which sets her apart from the natives of Egdon. The sense of apartness of Eustacia is conveyed in Hardy's description of her as ". . . . the raw material of a divinity."[5] Perhaps he wishes to convey the idea that because she is different, society ought not to condemn her to filling a stereotyped role, i.e., marriage. However, she is limited and isolated on the heath which she hates. To convey the sense of mystery

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[3] Mickelson, op. cit., p. 74.

[4] Ibid., p. 70.

[5] The Return of the Native, p. 75.

about Eustacia, Hardy says: ". . . she had imbibed much of what was dark in [the heath's] tone. . . . ."[6] This gives a sense of the passionate depths of her character. Her intensely passionate nature is symbolized throughout the novel by her association with fire. Fire is used as the signal by which she summons her lover to her side, symbolizing the sheer intensity of her physical attraction. Hardy speaks of her strong sexual urges:

> She had advanced to the secret recess of sensuousness, yet had hardly crossed the threshold of conventionality.[7]

Her strong sexual urges lead her into an affair with Damon Wildeve, also an alien to the heath. He, too, is a strongly sexual character, whose face reflects his inner temperament. When he comes to meet Eustacia on the heath, in response to her signal, his person takes on an added aspect which is symbolically represented: "The revived embers of an old passion glowed clearly in Wildeve. . . ."[8] Theirs is a sexual attraction, and theirs is a physical relationship, made all the more volatile by their jealous natures. In the tragedy which surrounds their relationship, Hardy shows his belief that man's wants are constantly unsatisfied, and that his perverse nature inclines man to desire persons or things

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[6] Ibid., p.77.

[7] Ibid., p.70.

[8] Ibid., p.73.

which are out of his reach. This irrationality is translated into the irrational nature of Eustacia's and Wildeve's relationship. It is purely physical, yet it becomes more desirable when it seems threatened by other people. Both become involved with other people, and then each becomes more alluring, as each seems to elude the other. Eustacia ". . . long[s] for the abstraction called passionate love more than for any particular lover."[9] This indicates the egotistical nature of her physical relationship with Wildeve.

Hardy emphasizes her physical appearance, and her physical attributes; and he shows her to be an individual apart from her contemporaries. He shows, too, an admiration for her, while depicting the tragedy that such strongly individualistic tendencies lead her into:

> Eustacia had got beyond the vision of some marriage of inexpressible glory; yet though her emotions were in full vigour, she cared for no meaner union. Thus we see her in a strange state of isolation. To have lost the god-like conceit that we may do what we will; and not to have acquired a homely zest for doing what we can, shows a grandeur of temper which cannot be objected to in the abstract, for it denotes a mind that, though disappointed, forswears compromise.[10]

This suggests, also, the necessity of adopting the ". . . homely zest for doing what we can . . ."[11] as an antidote for some of the disappointment that attends such isolated uncompromising temperaments. Yet, Hardy shows that

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[9] Ibid., p. 79.

[10] Ibid., p. 81.

[11] Ibid.

Eustacia is not free; her sexuality leads her to do that which she rebels against:

> At moments her pride rebelled against her passion for him, and she even had longed to be free. But there was only one circumstance which could dislodge him, and that was the advent of a greater man.[12]

In contrast with the purely physical relationship between Eustacia and Wildeve, there is the curious relationship between Thomasin and Diggory Venn. Both these characters are of the heath; both have a stoic acceptance of life's adversities; neither is described as sexually motivated. Venn is the spirit of the heath who lives in such close communion with his natural surroundings that he is able to blend in with the shrubbery. He seems to appear from nowhere, to protect the innocent, and to accost the guilty. He accepts Thomasin's rejection of him with a calmness and stolidity which enables him to live at peace with himself. His feeling for her is the selfless altruistic motive which prompts him to secure her happiness with another man. This selfless altruism is the goal recognized by Hardy as the only enduring quality in the relations between the sexes. The reddleman's disinterested concern for Thomasin's happiness prompts Eustacia's awe:

> What a strange sort of love, to be entirely free from that quality of selfishness which is frequently the chief constituent of the passion and sometimes its only one![13]

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., p. 178.

It was Hardy's original intention to have Diggory Venn disappear into the heath, at the end of this novel; the marriage of Venn and Thomasin was merely added to placate the Victorian audience. His original ending would have demonstrated more fully his notion of quiescent resignation to whatever fate life dealt one. Thomasin was to have remained a widow whose loss of her husband was accepted as calmly as she had accepted her husband's philandering. These two characters were to have provided the example of sublime well being which comes as a result of a life lived in harmony with one's surroundings, and in harmony with the inexplicable elements in the universe. The marriage was not to have taken place; yet neither would have been dejected, for both are shown as possessing quiet dignity which neither rails against nor stoops to life's vicissitudes. The passive compliance was to have demonstrated Hardy's concept of survival despite harsh circumstances. It is important to recognize the original ending; for, I feel, this illustrates the impact of Hardy's philosophical belief.

Clym Yeobright is the native who returns to the heath, after a brief stay in Paris. Although he is an incurable idealist who is often blind to actualities, he is nevertheless in tune with his natural surrounding, the heath. "He was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, with its odours. He might be said to be its

product."[14] Because of this, he will survive. Temporarily, he is blinded by the sexual attractiveness of Eustacia, yet he is at all times aware of "the grimness of the human situation."[15] His temporary blindness to the truth about Eustacia is symbolized by an actual physical blindness which results in his temporarily assuming the occupation of furze cutter. This is Hardy's establishing Clym's productive relationship with nature, which enables him to accept the physical fact of his blindness. His love for his surroundings leads Clym to live in harmony, despite his cessation of his studies.

The crux of the tragedy of The Return of the Native is the disastrous marriage of Eustacia Vye and Clym Yeobright. The mistake, which leads to this is shown to be the result of internal, rather than external forces. Although the sexual attraction plays some part in their selection, Eustacia's and Clym's personalities are largely to blame for their tragic marriage. Clym is an idealist who transforms Eustacia into what he wants her to be--the teacher who assists him with his plan to elevate his fellow man. He sees what he wishes to see and ignores her protestations that she hates the heath, and does not care much for her fellow man. Eustacia is a romantic who realizes that for her, a woman, ". . . doing means

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[14] Ibid., p. 205.

[15] Ibid., p. 222.

marrying. . . ."[16] Because Clym is a stranger to her, newly arrived from the glamorous world of Paris, she fills her head with romantic notions of the life waiting for her in Paris. Despite his protests that he will never return, she selfishly believes that ". . . once married, she would have the power of inducing him to return to Paris."[17] Their delusions are based on their selfish desires, and are indicative of Hardy's philosophical belief that most love is selfish. Marriage is seen by both as a stepping stone. Eustacia's selfishness is added to the restricted nature of nineteenth century society which necessitates a woman's marrying in order to ensure her future. Clym's selfishness is compounded with his Victorian notion that once married, a woman is her husband's property. Therefore, he believed that she would naturally acquiesce in his plans for their future together. Hardy demonstrates that not everyone can fit the stereotype; and thus, the social thinking of the age is partially responsible for ruining people's lives. The tragic marriage of Eustacia and Clym is responsible for the other tragedies which make up this novel. Because of this marriage, Wildeve marries Thomasin; Mrs. Yeobright becomes estranged from her son Clym; and eventually this tragic marriage is the direct cause of three deaths--Mrs. Yeobright's, Eustacia's and

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[16] Ibid., p. 81.

[17] Ibid., p. 282.

Wildeve's.

Throughout this novel, Hardy uses words such as "victim" and "prisoner" to describe his characters: this usage describes their being dependent upon a series of unpredictable and irrational elements which cause them to be trapped in tragic situations. The irrationalities of life are described by Hardy as ". . . defects of natural laws . . ."[18] which cause man to suffer, the more aware he is of them. Man's awareness of his insignificance is expressed by Christian Cantle as he handles the dice: "What curious creatures these dice be - powerful rulers of us all. . . ."[19] The dice then symbolize the unexplainable in the universe, and man is presented as a mere pawn in the clutches of either the blind chance which appears to rule the universe; or the irrational elements within him which he is powerless to control.

The symbol of life's being a game of chance is continued throughout this novel. Clym has used the image of cards to rationalize his last-minute doubts about his marriage to Eustacia:

> Eustacia was now no longer the goddess but the woman to him, a being to fight for, support, help, be maligned for. Now that he had reached a cooler moment, he would have preferred a less hasty marriage; but the card was laid, and he determined to abide by the game.[20]

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[18] Ibid., p. 198.

[19] Ibid., p. 263.

[20] Ibid., p. 245.

Marriage, then, in Hardy's terms is very often a trap into which people are led because of the lack of opportunity for any other type of future. Throughout this novel, Hardy emphasizes appearances vs. reality, to show that nineteenth century society emphasized appearances, at the expense of actuality. He shows too, the psychological implications of this dilemma. Both Eustacia and Clym see each other unrealistically. Eustacia, in speaking of the ". . . mire of marriage . . ."[21] into which she has sunk, upbraids Clym: "You deceived me - not by words, but by appearances, which are less seen through than words."[22] In this case, his appearance was coloured by what she wished to see; her very nature deceives her. In bemoaning her fate, she blames ". . . some . . . colossal Prince of the World . . ."[23] and says that she has not deserved the destiny with which she has met.

> I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O how hard it is of Heavy to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to heaven at all.[24]

While he has shown that some of Eustacia's misfortune was of her own doing, Hardy stresses too the inconsistencies in her makeup which lead her to act as she does. Not the

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[21] Ibid., p. 389.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 352.

[24] Ibid., p. 420.

least of these is her strong sexual drive which causes some of her tragedy. She is presented in such a way that the reader cannot help but feel compassion for her. Society has made no provision for the "new woman"; her environment stifles her; her natural urges seem to trap her into relationships which she fights against.

After Eustacia's death, Clym becomes an itinerant preacher. He survives because he is at peace with his environment, and with himself. His reflections on the course of his life indicate an acceptance of the inexplicable:

> He did sometimes think he had been ill-used by fortune, so far as to say that to be born is a palpable dilemma, and that instead of men aiming to advance in life with glory they should calculate how to retreat out of it without shame.[25]

Throughout this novel, the inexplicable elements in life have been personified in the magnificent picture of the heath. Against this great force, which is neither benevolent nor malevolent, man's life seems trivial. Man is powerless to understand the indifference of the universe; he must, then, seek out the only reality he can know, himself. In so doing, man may prevent some of the tragedy of his own life and of the lives of others. Southerington says:

> This book marks a major stage in Hardy's thought: a stage which may very well be wholly pessimistic, but it is none the less Hardy's first attempt to take 'a full look at the Worst' in the hope that amelioration might come that way. . . .[26]

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[25] Ibid., p. 453.

[26] Southerington, op. cit., p. 91.

CHAPTER IV

". . . HAPPINESS WAS BUT THE OCCASIONAL EPISODE IN A GENERAL DRAMA OF PAIN"

The Mayor of Casterbridge, published in 1886, describes the life and death of Michael Henchard, ". . . the most original as well as the most forcible character Hardy ever drew. . . ."[1] This novel challenges the widespread notion of the sanctity and contentment of family life; and shows the influence of character on events, and the importance of the ". . . slowly strengthening hold of Consequence over character."[2]

This novel can be taken as the forerunner of The Woodlanders, for in the novel Hardy suggests that all life is the working of the Immanent Will, which he illustrates fully in The Woodlanders. As he has done before, Hardy uses a series of chance happenings to illustrate his idea of cosmic inevitability. However, in The Mayor of Casterbridge, these chance happenings are combined with character to portray the tragedy of man's existence. In The World as Will and Idea, Schopenhauer has stated that

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[1] Arthur McDowell, Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1976), p. 72.

[2] Southerington, op. cit., p. 97.

tragedy consisted of one's consciousness of one's own limitations. The Mayor of Casterbridge demonstrates Henchard's eventual realization that he is powerless to change his own fate. His fate is primarily the result of a great inner defect, his character.

Although the novel is not primarily concerned with marriage, there are observations on the subject, which relate to Hardy's basic philosophical beliefs. The beginning of Michael Henchard's troubles is related to his early marriage. This marriage is considered to be a mistake, and Hardy's first mention of it immediately dispels the myth of the happy family:

> That the man and woman were husband and wife, and the parents of the girl in arms, there could be little doubt. No other than such relationship would have accounted for the atmosphere of stale familiarity which the two carried along with them like a nimbus as they moved down the road.[3]

The important phrase here is, of course, "stale familiarity", a phrase which quite aptly describes Hardy's view of the state of most marital unions. This idea is a direct reiteration of Schopenhauer's view, quoted in the first chapter, that marriage is the attrition of love, and therefore by its very nature disillusioning. Hardy has made definite statements of this before. In Far From the Madding Crowd he says: "Some people look upon marriage as a

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[3]The Mayor of Casterbridge (London: Macmillan 1971), pp. 2-3.

short cut . . ."[4] for falling out of love. And, in The Return of the Native, he has Eustacia say that marriage ". . . cures the anxiety by curing the love."[5] Rather than showing an artificial air of contentment, Hardy shows a marriage which has settled into an indifferent acceptance of a life style which seems barely tolerable to either party.

The Mayor of Casterbridge is, in part, a castigation of the nineteenth century practice which held that, once married, a woman was a man's property, and thus she could be disposed of at his discretion. At the beginning of the story, Henchard bemoans his fate as a man of no fortune, and he attributes his ill-luck to his hasty, early marriage. To drown his sorrows, he drinks, and eventually, in a state of complete intoxication, he auctions off his wife for five guineas. Although the occurrence of wife selling was not totally uncommon in Hardy's day, the use of the incident in this novel is, I feel, symbolic. Henchard is deliberately attempting to reverse one of society's rituals. He desires to become unmarried, and so he rids himself of his wife in the same way as he would rid himself of any other of his belongings. In so doing, he transgresses society's law, and this hasty decision determines the future course of his life. For the rest of

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[4] Far From the Madding Crowd, p. 37.

[5] The Return of the Native, p. 233.

his life, Henchard is plagued by a great sense of guilt, which is almost a social guilt, that torments him because of his having broken one of society's rules. His future course seems to be motivated by an attempt on his part to make up to society for his transgression. He becomes a respected citizen, he swears off alcohol and he is eventually made mayor of the town; however, the knowledge of what he has done stays with him, and prevents his achieving any real happiness. His need to punish himself, together with the chance recurrence of incidents from his past life, seem to conspire against Henchard, and to cause his downfall.

What Hardy seems to be doing, in this bizarre incident, is criticizing the social pressures that force people to stay together, once married. One of the observers at the fair at which Henchard sells his wife observes: "Bed and board is dear at some figures, 'pon my 'vation tis."[6] This, I feel, underlines the purely economic base of marriage. Henchard lives in an age which emphasizes the material things of life, rather than friendship and emotional ties; so he blames his unhappiness on his lack of material goods. His dilemma has been unmistakably assessed:

> He becomes the tragic apotheosis of a man whose fundamentally decent and honest instincts are suppressed and twisted by a society held together

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[6] The Mayor of Casterbridge, p. 10.

> not by love and a sense of mutual responsibility, but by the narrow and utilitarian bond of money and property.[7]

Thinking that material success will bring him happiness, Henchard pushes himself to achieve great status in the community in which he settles. Once settled, he achieves a certain measure of success, but he is always a loner. He is a rootless, alienated individual whose business methods are rule of thumb rather than progressive. It is little wonder then that he is eventually supplanted in all his endeavours by another "come-from-away" character, Farfrae. Farfrae has the ambition, but not the self-destructive urges of Henchard. His understanding of the necessity for new techniques in farming underlines the idea of a new way of life displacing the old rural economy. The combination of Farfrae's progressive techniques with Henchard's stubbornly refusing to accept any but his own opinion, destroys Henchard's business; he destroys himself by his failure to realize that what he is lacking is an emotional commitment. His guilt over his selling of Susan, coupled with his intense need to prove himself, blinds him. He becomes socially, morally and spiritually isolated, and he refuses to learn from experience. His life becomes a series of frustrations as he tries to buy people's affection without even giving of himself. He feels an ". . .

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[7] Mickelson, op. cit., p. 87.

emotional void . . . ,"[8] yet he does not know how to satisfy it.

His wife returns; he marries her again, merely from a sense of duty. The remarriage is another business transaction--he buys Susan back for five guineas. He hopes that this will assuage his guilty conscience. With Elizabeth Jane, who he thinks to be his daughter, his striving for an emotional tie merely takes the form of his showering her with material objects. When he discovers that Elizabeth Jane is really Newson's daughter, he attempts to "sell" her, for he decides to give her a small allowance; and he sends her on her way out of his house, and (as he thinks) out of his life. Similarly, in his dealings with Lucetta, the woman whom he has compromised, Henchard is still the business man. Lucetta only becomes desirable to him as a prospective wife when he discovers that she has come into an inheritance.

All this seems to point to a criticism of the emphasis upon material possessions. Hardy suggests that this emphasis is responsible for some of the alienation of modern man. People like Henchard let their pride and ambition lead them, for the age emphasized action and success rather than feelings and commitments. Hardy points out that the tragedy of Henchard's life has been that he has never realized what was lacking in his life--love. He

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[8] The Mayor of Casterbridge, p. 169.

has loved material things, and has learned only too late that the most important thing in life is not wealth, but relationships with other people. His attempts at friendship have all been frustrated because he saw people as objects to be possessed or disposed of at will. The incidents of the selling of Susan and the buying back reveal that marriage was purely a business transaction. Hardy's portrayal of Henchard's sad life showed the faulty thinking behind such attitudes. The saddest thing in Michael Henchard's life is not his lonely death, but rather his lonely life.

Nothing seems to work out for Henchard because of his failure to learn the value of experience. Invariably he does the wrong thing, and is pursued by a series of chance occurrences which all build up to cause his final downfall. The furmity woman reappears and recognizes him, Jopp takes Lucette's letters, Henchard misguesses the harvest: all these are the workings of chance which is always irrational, and indifferent to man's wishes. Henchard believes that he is a free agent, yet he is not. His fate results from all the irrational acts of which he has been part. His impulse for self-preservation takes the form of an overpowering ambition which guides all he does. This predetermines the life he will live, and even the death he will meet. His belief that he can change things is part of the illusion that he is free. Hardy uses Henchard to demonstrate the Schopenhauerean idea

that the will is blind, not free, and that man is not the master of his fate.

As Henchard walks out of town, on the same road by which he entered twenty years ago, he ponders the lessons he has learned: ". . . what he has sacrificed in sentiment was worth as much as what he has gained in substance" and ". . . his attempts to replace ambition by love had been as fully foiled as his ambition itself."[9] Hardy is showing that an awareness of nature's ". . . contrarious inconsistencies . . ."[10] is necessary if one is to achieve some measure of contentment. Henchard has always tried to fight against these inconsistencies and has looked at the world in terms of himself only. His failure to communicate stems from this selfish desire, and his final realization comes too late.

In contrast with Henchard's alienation, is Farfrae's sense of community. He comes in from far away, yet he adapts to the community life. He learns from experience that man is ". . . ruled by powers above. . . . We plan this, but we do that."[11] His easy acceptance communicates itself to others, and he soon earns the trust of the community. He succeeds where Henchard fails because he is neither led by an overpowering ambition, nor retarded

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[9] Ibid., p. 367.

[10] Ibid., p. 368.

[11] Ibid., p. 280.

by a stubborn refusal to learn from experience. He retains an easy balance of ambition and sentiment, which Henchard learns of too late.

Elizabeth-Jane comes closest to realizing the fact that one must accept one's fate stoically. She typifies the ideas of acceptance of one's fate, renunciation of one's desires and recognition of one's finiteness. She has a generosity which enables her to achieve some sense of belonging in the community in which she finds herself, and she is able to compromise. Since she does not aspire too high, she is seldom disappointed:

> She had learnt the lesson of renunciation, and was as familiar with the wreck of each day's wishes as with the diurnal setting of the sun . . . her experience had consisted less in a series of pure disappointments than in a series of substitutions.[12]

This, Hardy implies, is the compromise that one must make. Elizabeth-Jane's ". . . what she had desired had not been granted her, and that what had been granted her she had not desired"[13] is Hardy's concurrence with Schopenhauer that man is impotent in the face of the Immanent Will and that the ". . . will to enjoy" and the "will against enjoyment" are always in conflict. Elizabeth-Jane is portrayed as a selfless girl who ". . . had appraised life at a moderate value and . . . knew . . . that marriage was as a rule no dancing matter. . . ."[14] Consequently, she does not grieve

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[12] Ibid., p. 205.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., p. 375.

unduly over the fact that, although she loves Farfrae, he marries Lucetta. Elizabeth-Jane's view of the world is not optimistic; she accepts disappointments stoically. Neither is she elated. After Lucetta's untimely death, Farfrae marries Elizabeth-Jane. Her final meditation is, I feel, the central theme of the novel:

> Her experience had been of a kind to teach her, rightly or wrongly, that the doubtful honour of a brief transit through a sorry world hardly called for effusiveness, even when the path was suddenly irradiated at some half-way point by daydreams rich as hers. But her strong sense that neither she nor any human being deserved less than was given, did not blind her to the fact that there were others receiving less who had deserved much more. And in being forced to class herself among the fortunate, she did not cease to wonder at the persistence of the unforeseen, when the one to whom such unbroken tranquility had been accorded in the adult stage was she whose youth had seemed to teach that happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain.[15]

Henchard's life demonstrates all the ideas which Elizabeth-Jane illuminates in her final words. So, the effect created by this novel is that of awakening in the reader the awareness of a cosmic inevitability, a realization that ". . . all terrestrial conditions were intermittent. . . ."[16] The ideas which are summarized in this statement are communicated directly to the reader in the drama that describes Henchard's progress from ". . . moral chaos to moral understanding. . . ."[17] Elizabeth-Jane's final words indicate

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[15] Ibid., pp. 385-386.

[16] Ibid., p. 13.

[17] Southerington, op. cit., p. 104.

Hardy's acknowledgement that man is limited, just as Henchard has learned that he is limited. These words clearly illustrate, also, the community of beliefs shared by Hardy and Schopenhauer. Although these are Schopenhauer's general ideas, rather than his concepts concerning love and marriage, the words are spoken after Elizabeth-Jane has married Farfrae. Perhaps it can be inferred that his general beliefs can be applied to any of life's situations--existence is irrational in any of its aspects. Although man's will forms part of the scheme within which he is entrapped, Hardy does not indicate that life is in vain. By achieving a stoicism, such as that expressed by Elizabeth-Jane, one can achieve a sense of tranquility.

CHAPTER V

THE UNFULFILLED INTENTION

Hardy returns to the countryside for The Woodlanders, which he considered to be his best novel. This is indeed a highly underrated work of art, for in it Hardy achieves a high point in the portrayal of the interaction of human emotions with the environment. With precise phrases that often rise to a lyrical intensity, Hardy explores the pattern of struggle for survival which exists in the natural physical world as well as in the human world. By using a series of interconnected love affairs, he shows man's struggle in its most intense moments. In portraying the effects of social pressures upon human relationships, he points out, as indeed he has done before, the failure of social institutions to work for the good of mankind. It is in this novel that Hardy most closely approximates Schopenhauer's views; and although he shows the importance of chance happenings, he is not as concerned with this notion as he has been in The Return of the Native or The Mayor of Casterbridge. The theme of marriage is used, as it has been before, to comment on the presence of suffering in human life, and the possibility of achieving happiness in a rigidly structured social system which holds

on to the false notions of man's sexuality. In The Woodlanders, he is much more forceful in his statements, and more adamant in his views of the deterministic nature of the universe.

In the preface to the 1895 edition of The Woodlanders, Hardy refers to this novel as a study of ". . . the question of matrimonial divergence . . ." and he refers to ". . . the immortal puzzle - given to man and woman, how to find a basis for their sexual relation. . . ."[1] He claims that he does not possess the answer to this puzzle; but he does indeed portray, more clearly than he has done up to the writing of this novel, the irrationality of man's sexual nature, and the problems caused by man's attempting to legislate rational controls upon irrational instincts. In portraying this, he shows that ". . . social patterns of marriage and divorce virtually ignore the sexual drive as an instinctive, a-social force, imposing penalties where no penalty can be due."[2]

In the same preface from which I have quoted above, Hardy echoes the Schopenhauerean concept of ". . . a brief transit through this sorry world . . ."[3] which he has stated at the ending of The Mayor of Casterbridge, and to which he has alluded in The Return of the Native. Certainly, the lives of the characters in The Woodlanders can be described

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[1]The Woodlanders, p. v.

[2]Southerington, op. cit., p. 123.

[3]The Woodlanders, p. v.

as "brief transits through . . . sorry worlds." The suffering which these characters undergo is shown to be the direct and immediate object of life. Hardy conveys a sense of organic unity between man and nature by relating the struggles of mankind to the overall struggle for survival which is seen as well in the nonhuman physical world. This is very skillfully done by using the moods and passions of humans to describe trees, in order to convey the interrelationship of all living things. The precise imagery which is used to describe the fungi which grows on the trees focuses on the sense of unfulfillment in nature, and relates it very effectively to the unfulfillment in the human situation:

> On older trees still than these huge lobes of fungi grew like lungs. Here as everywhere, the Unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is, was as obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling.[4]

The remarkably accurate simile "like lungs" captures exactly the sense of correspondence between man and nature. This affinity is further exemplified in the precise adjectives "crippled" and "deformed" used to describe the leaves. These images of decay and disfiguration in the physical world symbolize the strife in the social world of men and women. The concept of strife, as expressed through the trees, is used throughout the novel, with the most vivid

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[4] Ibid., p. 59.

passages occurring in Chapter Forty-two. The destruction evident in nature is used to symbolize the destruction of Giles, a character who seems to be the personification of nature:

> Above stretched an old beech, with vast arm-pits, and great pocket-holes in its sides where branches had been removed in past times. . . . Dead boughs were scattered about like ichthyosauri in a museum, and beyond them were perishing woodbine stems resembling old ropes. . . . Next were more trees close together, wrestling for existence, their branches disfigured with wounds resulting from their mutual rubbings and blows. . . . Between them were the rotting stumps of those of the group that had been vanquished long ago, rising from their mossy setting like black teeth from green gums.[5]

Giles's death is described in the context of all these images of struggle and decay, and it becomes one more example of the Unfulfilled Intention.

The interconnected love affairs described in The Woodlanders are tragic examples of the Unfulfilled Intention in that they follow the same pattern evident throughout the physical world. Just as nature remains unfulfilled, so too does man. His desires seem to be thwarted by both natural laws and societal conventions. The natural laws which thwart man seem to dictate that man constantly wants what he does not have, and does not want what he gets. This can be tied in with Schopenhauer's concept of desire dying upon fulfillment.

The heroine of The Woodlanders is Grace Melbury, daughter of the local timber merchant. She returns to her

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[5] Ibid., p. 376.

native village having spent several years in a boarding school. She has been promised to Giles Winterborne, who works for Mr. Melbury, her father. However, Mr. Melbury is a gentleman who has great ambitions for his daughter, and thus he regrets that he has promised that Grace may marry Giles. He feels that, in order to advance herself in society, Grace should marry well. It is entirely for this reason that he has educated her outside the village. When Melbury's wife chides his misgivings about Giles's acceptability as a husband for Grace, Melbury refuses to be consoled by the fact that Giles loves Grace. He says that ". . . it is wasting her to give her to a man of no higher standing than he."[6] Melbury represents the Victorian attitude that stressed a person's material wealth, rather than his worth. He is so blinded by his ambitions for Grace that he does not consider feelings. Melbury's plans for his daughter's social advancement form part of the unfulfilled intention which deprives Grace of the happy marriage which she might have had with Giles. Melbury loses no opportunity to emphasize the investment that he has made in her future; and to stress the idea that a woman's worth proceeds entirely and directly from her husband's social status:

> . . . I've noticed it many times that a woman takes her colour from the man she's walking with. The

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[6] Ibid., p. 17.

> woman who looks an unquestionable lady when she's with a polished-up fellow, looks like a tawdry imitation article when she's hobbing and nobbing with a homely blade.[7]

In statements such as this, Hardy shows that society is also to be blamed for continuing to hold on to the notion of class distinctions.

The "homely blade", to whom Melbury alludes is of course Giles Winterborne who is the personification of the natural landscape. He is a simple, guileless fellow who is ". . . Nature unadorned. . . ."[8]

> He looked and smelt like Autumn's very brother, his face being sunburnt to wheat-colour, his eyes blue as cornflowers, his sleeves and leggings dyed with fruit stains, his hands clammy with the sweet juice of apples, his hat sprinkled with pips. . . .[9]

This sympathetic bond with nature exhibited by Giles Winterborne is reminiscent of the relationship of Gabriel Oak and Diggory Venn with their natural surroundings. However, this precise description is evidence of Hardy's more mature style, which more effectively conveys an exact impression. Giles also exhibits a stoicism which enables him to accept misfortunes as part of life. When his party for Grace turns out to be a dismal failure, he exclaims that ". . . the fates were against him."[10] Hardy shows the

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[7] Ibid., p. 101.

[8] Ibid., p. 247.

[9] Ibid., pp. 246-247.

[10] Ibid., p. 85.

irony of the fates which were against Giles. Because of his conflict with Grace, he is uncharacteristically out of temper, and annoys Mrs. Charmond who holds the lease on his house. He must forfeit this on Mr. South's death because he has forgotten to renew it; and, because she has been annoyed, Mrs. Charmond refuses to renew it. A series of accidents seems to conspire against Giles, yet the irony lies in the fact that the sexual instinct (his attraction towards Grace) which is driving him into the financial rat-race is also the fate that impoverishes him. This fate is variously described as ". . . part of the pattern in the web of human doings then weaving in both hemispheres from the White Sea to Cape Horn."[11] And ". . . the intangible cause which has shaped the situation. . . ."[12] There is something Sophoclean about some of these ironies, as well as something Schopenhauerean. When Grace is told not to see Giles again, she too reacts passively. She sighs, yet feels instinctively the ". . . intractability of circumstances."[13] The reactions of Grace and Giles to this fate show that the irrationality of life lies in the fact that life follows laws different from those we generally use to cope with problems.

In contrast with Grace, who has all the material things of life, there is the selfless Marty South. She

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[11] Ibid., p. 21.

[12] Ibid., p. 95.

[13] Ibid., p. 105.

truly loves Giles, and is symbolized as being his spiritual counterpart or soul-mate. However, she accepts quite stoically, the fact that Giles is betrothed to Grace. Her only reaction is to cut off and sell her hair, thus withdrawing sexually by withdrawing her one sexual attraction. Like Giles, she is surrounded by woodland symbols. In the scene where they work together planting trees, their relationship with the natural surrounding and with each other shows the sense of community between the sexes which Hardy has advocated in Far From the Madding Crowd. The imagery, rich in sexual symbolism, seems to imply that Giles and Marty should have married. This whole scene can be described as a prose poem:

> Winterborne's fingers were endowed with a gentle conjurer's touch in spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress under which the delicate fibres all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth. . . .
>
> She erected one of the young pines into its hole, and held up her finger; the soft musical breathing instantly set in which was not to cease night or day till the grown tree should be felled - probably long after the two planters had been felled themselves.[14]

The relationship which is suggested in this rich poetic passage, does not come to anything, demonstrating again the working of the unfulfilled intention. Marty is a character similar to Elizabeth-Jane and Thomasin Yeobright who is neither happy nor unhappy for she expects nothing, and therefore cannot be disillusioned. She comments on

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[14] Ibid., p. 73.

the sighing of the trees as a sign that they are ". . . very sorry to begin life in earnest - just as we be."[15] This idea is part of Schopenhauer's philosophy[16] and indeed an echo of Socrates: that man would have been better off had he never been born. As Marty lies in her bed, near her father's coffin, she is described as ". . . a guileless soul that had nothing more left on earth to lose, except a life which she did not over-value."[17] An interesting comment about Marty is placed in the mind of Grace, as both Grace and Marty mourn Giles's death:

> Marty South alone, of all the women in Hintock and the world, had approximated to Winterborne's level of intelligent intercourse with Nature. In this respect she had formed his true complement in the other sex, had lived as his counterpart, had subjoined her thoughts to his as a corollary.[18]

This statement reiterates Hardy's notion of the spiritual communion which exists between withdrawn characters. This is the mutual understanding and comradeship which he has advocated in Far From the Madding Crowd. It would seem that Hardy is advocating that relationships based on sexual attraction are doomed to failure, while those based on the true affinity of shared interests can live on, even after the death of one of the partners. Marty and Giles are like Thomasin and Diggory; they suffer in silence, and they accept their fate.

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Schopenhauer, op. cit.

[17] The Woodlanders, p. 125.

[18] Ibid., p. 399.

In 1885, Hardy had written in his diary:

> The business of the poet and novelist is to show the sorriness underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things.[19]

He has this in mind when he describes Marty's visiting Giles's grave and placing flowers upon it:

> . . . clothed in a plaitless gown, the contours of womanhood so undeveloped as to be scarcely perceptible in her, the marks of poverty and toil effaced by the misty hour, she touched sublimity at points, and looked almost like a being who had rejected with indifference the attribute of sex for the loftier quality of humanism.[20]

This picture, I believe, truly portrays the grandeur of the life of Marty South. There is a true Schopenhauerean nobility in this humble peasant girl whose love transcends mere physical attraction. Her eulogy of Giles is perhaps one of Hardy's greatest achievements, for in this passage, which again is a prose poem, he has captured the true grandeur of a seemingly sorry existence. The sublimity of Marty's tribute to Giles is one of Hardy's most profound statements on the nature of true love:

> . . . whenever I get up I'll think of 'ee, and whenever I lie down I'll think of 'ee again. Whenever I plant the young larches I'll think that none can plant as you planted; and whenever I split a gad, and whenever I turn the cider wring, I'll say none could do it like you. If ever I forget your name let me forget home and heaven! . . . I can never forget 'ee, for you was a good man, and did good things.[21]

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[19] Early Life, p. 223.

[20] The Woodlanders p. 443.

[21] Ibid., p. 444.

This passage alone provides ample evidence that Hardy is not totally the pessimist that critics have claimed. To show that life can be as simple as Marty South's and yet can be beautiful, is to believe that the world is not totally a sorry place. Perhaps he and Schopenhauer agreed that the world is more sorry than it is happy. When Hardy shows the happiness that there can be, he makes his most moving statements about the grandeur that lies at the core of life. It would appear that he believes such a state is more readily attainable when one is free from ambition, prejudice and class consciousness; these conditions seem to be prevalent in more sophisticated social systems. These tend to regiment individuals, and to impose harsh penalties upon them.

As he has done so many times before, Hardy sets up contrasting relationships in The Woodlanders. The relationship of Fitzpiers, the young doctor, and Grace Melbury is based on mere physical attraction; and the relationship between Fitzpiers and Felice Charmond is portrayed as being a sexual one. Both these relationships contrast with that of Marty and Giles, which is more of a spiritual affinity.

Fitzpiers is an egocentric dilettante who comes from another environment, and who intrudes upon a settled rural community which he does not even try to understand. He provides living proof of the Schopenhauerean belief that man's life swings between two poles--need and boredom. He is physically attracted to Grace's comely appearance, yet

he feels that she is not good enough for him. His intention was to have a mild flirtation with her; his matrimonial aspirations called for a more pedigreed lady. However, since he is used to getting what he wants, he ". . . limits[s] the aspirations . . ."[22] and gets Grace in the only way he can, by marriage. His protestations about Grace's wishing to be married in church verbalize one of Hardy's chief concerns: the unrealistic nature of marriage laws, and man-made laws in general. He protests:

> Marriage is a civil contract, and the shorter and simpler it is made the better. People don't go to church when they take a house or even when they make a will.[23]

Fitzpiers's hesitation to sanction his and Grace's marriage in a church can be seen as an appeal, on Hardy's part, to make the marriage laws more realistic. This is the beginning of Hardy's serious statements that man's laws are just as responsible for his unhappiness as are the chance happenings in the universe. This is a theme which Hardy was to explore in greater depth in Jude the Obscure. At the same time, Hardy is implying that another law is working upon Fitzpiers, and indeed upon Grace as well--that of sexual selection. Both are sexually attracted to the other; Grace more innocently succumbs to this physical attraction and the pressures of her father to "marry well." Fitzpiers marries because he cannot resist the impulse to have Grace.

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[22] Ibid., p. 160.

[23] Ibid., p. 108.

No sooner are they married, than Fitzpiers is bored again, verifying the Schopenhauerean idea that desire dies upon possession of the desired object.

Shortly after his marriage to Grace, Fitzpiers meets an old friend, Felice Charmond, who like him, has come into this community from outside. There is a sexual attraction which leads to a sexual relationship between them. Both are portrayed as sensual, self-centred persons. The irrationality of man's sexual nature is indicated in Felice's exclamation:

> Why were we given hungry hearts and wild desires if we have to live in a world like this?[24]

This is the "immortal puzzle" Hardy has spoken of in the preface--man is born with sexual impulses, yet society seems to stifle his satisfying them. Felice points to the incongruous elements in man-made social laws:

> The terrible insistencies of society - how severe they are, and cold and inexorable - ghastly towards those who are made of wax and not of stone . . . correctives and regulations pretendedly framed that society may tend to perfection.[25]

So, there is another force just as strong as chance which works against man's achieving happiness. This force is, of course, social law which attempts to legislate sexuality. Life does not follow this law, and the dichotomy causes unhappiness. In dramatizing Felice's and Fitzpiers's natural sexuality, and their affair, Hardy is showing that

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[24] Ibid., p. 237.

[25] Ibid.

the law of sexual selection is indeed a powerful force which cannot be ignored. He neither approves of nor condemns their behavior. Rather he is asserting man's sexuality as an instinctive, a-social element which operates outside the realm of man's moral values. Both Felice and Fitzpiers follow their instincts; they assert their sexuality. Their dilemma offers a valuable insight into the conflict between natural conduct and social restraint. This conflict can also be seen as part of the Unfulfilled Intention. Webster expresses this very clearly:

> Felice and Fitzpiers' [sic] impulses are to be deplored but they cannot be blamed for following the laws of their own natures. . . . It is the situation and the shaper of the situation that are to be blamed.[26]

Hardy's social protest illustrates "man's inhumanity to man." His solution, as I have indicated in Chapter I, is to divide people into groups separated according to temperament and to judge them according to the group in which they fall.

Grace's disillusionment with marriage is another example of desire dying upon attainment. Her attraction towards Fitzpiers is ". . . demolished by the intimacy of common life: . . ."[27] To replace the initial idealized attraction, Hardy advocates ". . . a sympathetic interdependence, wherein mutual weaknesses are made the grounds

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[26] Webster, op. cit., p. 168.

[27] Ibid., p. 244.

of a defensive alliance."[28] Such an interdependence is that of Marty and Giles, who ought to have been married but for the curious tricks of fate which has no sympathy for human beings. Grace wonders ". . . if there were one world in the universe where the fruit had no worm and marriage no sorrow."[29] This again is a very good example of Hardy's using precise imagery to show the interrelationship between decay in nature and strife in the human situation. It is Hardy's intention also, to show that marriage is partly unhappy because of societal pressures which force people into that state.

Too late, Melbury realizes the wrong he has done his daughter. He has been overly ambitious, and he has ignored the fact of man's sexuality. In his simplicity ". . . it had scarcely occurred to him that after marriage a man might be faithless."[30] For the first time in his life, he questions marriage laws:

> He knew that a woman once given to a man for life took, as a rule, her lot as it came . . . he asked himself why this so generally should be so.[31]

The possibility of divorce, suggested in the above statement, is pondered in Fitzpiers's questioning his being ". . . tied

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., p. 245.

[30] Ibid., p. 257.

[31] Ibid., p. 260.

and bound . . ."[32]; and in Giles musing that although dissolving a marriage ". . . did violence to custom . . . a new law might do anything."[33] These statements all point to the fact that man-made laws can and probably should be changed.

It is perhaps Grace's statements that suggest the most daring thoughts about the oppressive nature of the marriage laws. She says that she is ". . . not . . . morally bound . . ."[34]; ". . . not bound . . . by any divine law . . ."[35]; and she rereads the marriage service and wonders ". . . how far a person's conscience might be bound by vows made without at the time a full recognition of their force."[36] Then a new thought is suggested: "She wondered whether God really did join them together."[37] Or was it merely custom which perhaps needed changing? All these statements attempt to get at the heart of the problem of "matrimonial divergence." In his suggestions about the error in Grace's marriage, Hardy is attempting to show the necessity of changing the marriage laws. In focusing on the marriage laws, Hardy is exploring the problem of ". . . how to afford the greatest happiness to the units of human society . . ."[38] to which he

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[32] Ibid., p. 307.

[33] Ibid., p. 333.

[34] Ibid., p. 340.

[35] Ibid., p. 370.

[36] Ibid., p. 428.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., p. v.

has referred in the preface. In his positive statements about the marriages based on mutual interdependence, Hardy is suggesting that man's life can be happier if he is more considerate of his fellow man. Over and again Hardy demonstrates that although there is much in life that is irrational, man truly makes his life ". . . much worse than it need be."[39]

False Victorian propriety causes the death of Giles Winterborne, for although Grace realizes that she and Giles belong together, and that she owes no allegiance to Fitzpiers, she is nevertheless hampered by her upbringing. She realizes her feeling towards Giles, yet she feels that she must not let him in the house for mere appearances might compromise her. Grace is the victim of all the social pressures of the age. In ending the story with her return to Fitzpiers and an unhappy marriage, Hardy is again pointing to life's ironies. This return to Fitzpiers destroys the effect of the tragedy and renders the sacrifice of Giles as futile. Ending the tale on this note of sardonic pessimism demonstrates finally that man-made laws fail to "afford the greatest good to the greatest number."

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[39] Archer, op. cit., p. 47.

CHAPTER VI

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES: A PURE WOMAN

In Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Hardy becomes more embittered against society and its inflexible moral code. He is much more outspoken than he has been in the previous novels; and, he is far more severe in his denunciation of the social code which has one law for all circumstances, and which accepts no deviation from its morally righteous ideals. Hardy subtitled this book, "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented," and he was steadfast in his assertion that Tess, the main character, was indeed a pure woman. In a preface written in 1912, Hardy reaffirmed that his subtitle was added after he had read his final proofs, and that this subtitle manifested ". . . the estimate left in a candid mind of the heroine's character. . . ."[1] His intention, then, in writing Tess of the d'Urbervilles was to show up the falseness and sterility of the social code which condemned an essentially good woman, who, under extenuating circumstances, had wandered briefly away from the straight and narrow.

"Man's inhumanity to man," as portrayed in the drama of Tess Durbeyfield is set into a background of

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[1] Tess of the d'Urbervilles (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 29-30.

nature, which allows Hardy to comment on the differences between natural values and social values:

> In this novel Hardy succeeds in integrating the personal emotions of an obscure girl with an intense study of nature and an overall view of the cosmos and the meaning of man's existence. All this is set within a realistic historical framework, so that while Tess is about love, nature and the cosmos, it is also, without any disruption of its unity, about nineteenth-century beliefs concerning religion and morality.[2]

Tess of the d'Urbervilles can be regarded as an allegory, for Tess can be taken to be any woman pursued by a series of misfortunes and eventually cruelly punished for her questionable "crime." Hardy stresses particularly the lack of any kind of charity in an outwardly intensely religious society. He questions the motivation of all society's institutions, including the established church, and he lays bare the speciousness which lies behind the most seeming free-thinkers of the age. By exposing the insensitivity of the unrelenting attitudes held by the majority of Victorians, Hardy seems to be suggesting that this society has completely reversed all true values, and has espoused instead, a complete set of negative values.

Tess is described as an intelligent girl whose misfortune it is to have been born into a shiftless family. Her many brothers and sisters are shown to be:

> . . . six helpless creatures who had never been asked if they wished for life on any terms, much

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[2]Butler, op. cit., p. 96.

> less if they wished for it on such hard conditions as were involved in being of the shiftless house of Durbeyfield.[3]

This concern of Hardy's for the six innocent children indicates, not so much pessimism, but rather distress that such conditions exist. As well, this can be seen as an appeal to the more fortunate sector of the population to be more tolerant of such families as the Durbeyfields. Echoes of Schopenhauer's philosophy can be noted in Tess's assuring her little brothers and sisters that their misfortunes--a father who drinks too much; a mother who works too hard and who seems to condone her husband's drinking; the untimely death of their horse, the family's main means of livelihood--are the result of their living ". . . on a blighted star, and not on a sound one. . . ."[4] As I see it, this is Schopenhauer's idea, as outlined in "The World as Will," from which I have already quoted, that the world is a continuous round of strife and misery; and that most men will be unhappy most of the time.

Tess feels responsible for the death of the horse, and so, against her better judgement, she consents to her mother's wish and presents herself at the house of the spurious d'Urbervilles. The false notion of respectability surrounding old established families is parodied in the presentation of Alec d'Urberville. He is a false

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[3] Tess of the d'Urbervilles, p. 49.

[4] Ibid., p. 58.

aristocrat whose father has annexed the name d'Urberville to his own name, Stoke, in order to give it more distinction. It is ironic that Alec, whose real name Stoke symbolizes fire and fiendishness, typifies the coarseness and commonalty that his father wished to escape. He is another example of an alien character, completely dissociated from the natural surrounding, whose false name is symbolic of his uprootedness. He is presented as a sensual creature with a ". . . swarthy complexion . . . full lips, badly moulded . . . and a bold rolling eye . . ."[5] whose sexual attraction to Tess's luxuriant figure is conveyed in the descriptions of his holding a ripe red strawberry to her mouth, and his gathering roses for her to place in her bosom. As Tess's physical attractiveness catches Alec's salacious eye, Hardy muses, in Schopenhauerean terms, about the irrational element in the universe. He ponders the fate of Tess:

> . . . why she was doomed to be seen and coveted that day by the wrong man, and not by some other man, the right and desired one in all respects - as nearly as humanity can supply the right and desired. . . . In the ill-judged execution of the well-judged plan of things the call seldom produces the comer, the man to love rarely coincides with the hour for loving.[6]

This is again part of the "Unfulfilled Intention" which dictates that Tess's voluptuousness, which should be a

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[5] Ibid., p. 64.

[6] Ibid., p. 67.

natural attraction, becomes a negative factor. When such a person as Alec d'Urberville lusts after an innocent such as Tess, her natural attraction seems to become a handicap. Hardy laments that most often the wrong man desires the wrong woman, and wonders if:

> . . . at the acme and summit of the human progress these anachronisms will be corrected by a finer intuition, a closer interaction of the social machinery than that which now jolts us round and along. . . .[7]

The idea of an ideal union (ideal marriage) is conveyed metaphorically as ". . . two halves of a perfect whole that confronted each other at the perfect moment. . . ."[8]

Hardy's concern for his suffering fellow man is never shown quite so profoundly as in his sympathetic portrayal of Tess, particularly after she has been seduced by Alec. Images from the physical landscape are used to symbolize Tess's fate: it is a dark night in late September; she lies on a bed of dead leaves in the open country fittingly named "The Chase"; she is surrounded by silence. With a poetic intensity, he ponders again the incongruities of life:

> Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, many

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

> thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order.[9]

He shows that the fate which Tess meets is inexplicable; he toys with the idea of its being an act of retribution for the misdeeds of some of Tess's ancestors. He rejects this idea, however, as being perhaps ". . . good [morality] enough for divinities, [yet] . . . scorned by average human nature. . . ."[10] Neither can he shrug it off with the fatalistic "It was to be"[11] of Tess's fellow countrymen. Their submission to their fate is poor consolation, for they do not realize that in a more sophisticated setting, Tess will be a social outcast.

Tess's fundamentalist religious training causes her to condemn herself for having submitted to Alec d'Urberville's advances. The burden of guilt which she carries around with her is presented symbolically as she trudges towards her parent's home: "The basket was heavy and the bundle was large, but she lugged them along like a person who did not find her especial burden in material things."[12] The beauty of the countryside is half veiled in mist to symbolize the confusion that exists in Tess's mind, for she has learned a hard lesson of life. This lesson is described metaphorically as ". . . the serpent hisses where the sweet

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[9] Ibid., p. 101.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 102.

[12] Ibid., p. 104.

birds sing. . . ."[13] Her head is bowed in shame, and she wishes, as has many a Hardy heroine before her, that she had never been born. Everything around her reminds her of her mistake; a man writing scriptural messages upon the stiles seems to follow her like the Old Testament God of retribution.

Tess's mother's reaction to Tess's pregnancy shows up another attitude. She feels that Tess should have insisted that Alec marry her. The fact that Tess cannot abide Alec has no relevance for her. She regards the seduction and subsequent pregnancy as inevitable and dismisses both with "Tis nater after all. . . ."[14] Hardy could equally as well have written here, as he did immediately after the seduction scene: "There lay the pity of it."[15] For this is what Hardy shows to be worthy of pity--the fact that man is given irrational instincts, and yet is expected by society to follow rational codes of behaviour. Tess's voluptuousness has victimized her. She has followed her sexual instincts, yet she cannot accept her mother's idea that marriage should follow this. Hardy's sympathy is all with Tess--that she has been given a sexual nature; that she has acted in accord with this sexual nature. His

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., p. 111.

[15] Ibid., p. 102.

portrayal of Tess's brief sexual adventure with Alec d'Urberville echoes Schopenhauer's statement that the sexual impulse ". . . demands the sacrifice of life . . . and happiness . . ."[16] from which I have quoted in the first chapter. He accepts that this is so, while at the same time he laments that it should happen to such a one as Tess. To marry Alec, whom she does not love, nor ever loved, Tess sees as ". . . a convulsive snatching at social salvation. . . ."[17] Throughout, Hardy is condemning society, for it is society which requires an element of change; it is society which condemns innocent girls, such as Tess who ". . . had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly."[18]

Tess returns home to her people, pregnant and unmarried, and filled with guilt. In her fancy then, she felt the natural processes to be intensified to such an extent that they became part of her--the wind moaning amongst the tree trunks symbolized nature's reproaching of her for her "sin"; the rain symbolized nature's (or God's) grief at her weakness. This haunted Tess, for, as Hardy says, ". . . the world is only a psychological phenomenon . . . ,"[19]

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[16] Schopenhauer, op. cit., p. 340.

[17] Tess of the d'Urbervilles, p. 110.

[18] Ibid., p. 114.

[19] Ibid.

and the mind created the problems. However, he shows the destructive nature of conventional notions, for Tess condemned herself. Hardy refers to the conventional notions as ". . . a cloud of moral hobgoblins . . ."[20] and shows that in the nonhuman physical world, sexual instincts are accepted as natural. Man, in his civilized social world imposes a false set of values, which force a sensitive person like Tess to condemn herself when she has broken one of society's self-imposed rules. Tess feels out of place, yet Hardy points out that it is these regimented codes of behaviour which are out of place and out of touch. Tess's guilt is the inner reflection of a social verdict which would not have existed had she lived on a desert island. She calls her child Sorrow, to reflect its inglorious birth; Hardy refers to the child as a "". . . gift of shameless Nature who respects not the social law . . ."[21] to show that in nature, Tess has committed no sin.

Tess's adventures are integrated into the background of the cyclical pattern of the seasons. Her beauty was in full bloom in the summer; her seduction occurred in the autumn. As spring approaches, Tess, like all creatures of nature, feels the pulse of life stir within her. This causes her to question the social law which has seemingly

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 124.

removed her from the main stream of vital living things: "Was once lost always lost really true of chastity?"[22] Hardy shows the inherent falsehood in the notion of "the fallen woman": "The recuperative power which pervaded organic nature was surely not denied to maidenhood alone."[23]

The social law, then, is shown to be out of touch with the natural law. Societal conventions contradict the rejuvenescence evident in the natural environment and impose harsh penalties upon any who transgress. These conventions, which are shown to be irrelevant, are evident in systematized religion, as well as in other societal institutions. When Tess's child dies, the Vicar refuses to give it a Christian burial because it has not been properly baptized. He cannot offer any reasonable explanation for this, and so he dismisses Tess with a slight concern. Tess's Old Testament training bothers her, so she goes to the churchyard at night and buries Sorrow in an obscure overgrown corner which is reserved for ". . . unbaptized infants, notorious drunkards, suicides, and others of the conjecturally damned. . . ."[24] The irony in Hardy's portrait of the lack of charity within the church is conveyed also in his description of the corner of the churchyard about which he says God lets the nettles grow.

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[22] Ibid., p. 127.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., p. 125.

In subsequent chapters, Hardy continues to attack systematized religion. Hardy sees the insidious influence which organized religions have had on people's minds. In portraying Angel Clare, the man whom Tess meets after her affair with Alec, Hardy shows a young man who professes to be somewhat of a rebel. Angel is the youngest son of a minister, who refuses to take Orders himself, for he proclaims that the Church needs to reorganize its thinking on many matters. He declares that he is ". . . indifferent to social forms and observances,"[25] and totally appreciative of people's individual differences. His initial reaction, upon seeing Tess, is to proclaim her a ". . . fresh and virginal daughter of Nature. . . ."[26] Society's opinions about worthy and unworthy people he puts down to mere "rote sentiments."[27] Angel considers himself to be superior to his two clerical brothers, for he feels that they do not differentiate between ". . . local and universal truth; that what the inner world said in their clerical and academic hearing was quite a different thing from what the outer world was thinking."[28] Little does he realize how much this assessment applies to himself!

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[25] Ibid., p. 144.

[26] Ibid., p. 148.

[27] Ibid., p. 154.

[28] Ibid., p. 188.

In describing Tess's and Angel's close relationship with their natural surroundings, Hardy shows the sense of community evident in all living organisms. Man is presented as a creature of nature in this lush environment with its oozing fertility. The sexual imagery suggests the close relationship between the natural regenerative powers of the earth and those of man evidenced in the luxuriant figure of Tess. The awakening sexual awareness in Tess is presented as part of the irresistible law of nature which draws her to Angel ". . . as surely as two streams in one vale."[29] The initial reactions of both Tess and Angel are sexual; the descriptions of the rich abundance in the natural environment mirror the development of the natural urge in Tess and Angel:

> Amid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of the Froom Vale, at a season when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization, it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate. The ready bosoms existing there were impregnated by their surroundings. . . . The air was stagnant and enervating. . . . Its heavy scents weighed upon them. . . .[30]

In this atmosphere, the general principles of sexual selection work unconscious of man's efforts. Angel's sexual tension is likened to the heaviness in the atmosphere: "And as Clare was oppressed by the outward heats, so was he burdened inwardly by waxing fervour of passion for the

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[29] Ibid., p. 156.

[30] Ibid., p. 176.

soft and silent Tess."[31]

In an ironic comment, made as an assurance that Angel accepts Tess's humble background, he says, ". . . the only pedigrees we ought to respect are those spiritual ones of the wise and virtuous, without regard to corporal paternity."[32] This is ironic in that it strikes back at the d'Urberville's attempt at buying respectability in the form of false pedigrees; it is also ironic in the sense that it shows Angel's philosophy to be superficial. Later, Angel demonstrates that he is bound by the social connotations of the word virtue, and is therefore just as much a snob, in his own way, as the d'Urbervilles.

Amid protestations of his indifference to society's attitudes towards class, Angel chooses to marry Tess. In wondering whether he is choosing correctly, he verbalizes Hardy's deep-seated conviction about the nature of true relationships:

> . . . whether the germs of staunch comradeship underlay the temporary emotion, or whether it was a sensuous joy in her form only, with no substratum of everlastingness.[33]

The staunch comradeship is there; it has been demonstrated in the ease with which they worked together at the dairy. As well, Angel adheres to a ". . . renunciative philosophy

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p. 216.

[33] Ibid., p. 185.

. . ."[34] which Hardy also advocates as a pattern for survival. However, the "Unfulfilled Intention", in the form of social convention, dictates that the happiness of Angel and Tess is not to endure. Angel, who has claimed to be such a free thinker, and who has quoted St. Paul on the subject of charity, proves to be just as much a victim of the prejudice of the nineteenth century as are his brothers and his parents. Perhaps, more so, for he has protested otherwise. Angel confesses to a former affair, and so Tess confesses her past. It is then that the notion of the double standard is presented in its stark reality. The fact that Angel has had an affair is of no consequence; he is a man. The fact that Tess has had an affair is unforgiveable; she is a woman. Angel's reaction shows up the Victorian attitude towards women and sex which popularizes the cult of the pure virginal woman. Angel typifies a romantic idealism. He has loved Tess because she was a ". . . fresh and virginal daughter of nature . . ."[35], he cannot forgive her when she confesses that, technically at least, she is not a virgin. His reaction to her confession shows that there is no forgiveness, no compassion, no charity and really no depth to Angel Clare. He is a product of the age, and a slave to all the false notions of propriety, chastity and innocence which had been perpetrated by both

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[34] Ibid., p. 186.

[35] Ibid., p. 148.

Church and State in the nineteenth century. The conventional nature of his thinking is summed up in his dismissal of Tess: "You were one person; now you are another."[36] Angel cannot forgive Tess; he judges her by the narrow rules of society: "It isn't a question of respectability, but one of principle!"[37] Thus it is that Hardy exposes the slave of custom and conventionality who leaves his wife because he feels she isn't "pure." He speaks with his own kind of platitudes, yet they are just as empty as the others which he rails against. He portrays the Victorian attitude which rigidly adheres to one set of beliefs and considers what a person is not, rather than admires a person for what she is. Hardy says that Angel knew in his own soul that Tess was a good woman ". . . her moral value having to be reckoned not by achievement but by tendency."[38] However, Victorian that he was, Angel was a slave to the superficialities that convention demanded; and so, he, like all his contemporaries, condemned Tess ". . . under an arbitrary law of society which had no foundation in Nature."[39] In emphasizing that these social codes had no foundation in Nature, Hardy is showing the great dichotomy between Nature--the nonhuman physical world--and people's idea of

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[36] Ibid., p. 255.

[37] Ibid., p. 267.

[38] Ibid., p. 290.

[39] Ibid., p. 303.

Nature. This has been demonstrated particularly in Angel's stressing Tess's innocence as part of Nature. Angel's idea of innocence, as well as his idea of Nature, is structured by his conventional thinking. Nature, to him, means the physical world of the countryside, but, a physical world which obeys man-made laws. Hardy is stressing the fact that man is as much a creature of nature, as he is a product of society; therefore society's rigid rules cannot be extended to all areas of man's life. Man's sexual nature is the instinctual natural part of him, and cannot be dictated by a set of narrow beliefs.

Hardy, it would seem, is almost advocating a system of renunciation of sex as set down by Schopenhauer. His novels, again and again, stress the misfortune which comes to man as a result of his sexual nature. The instinctual side of man is not in accord with the man-made laws. Man is punished by society for following his instincts.

The hostile social environment is symbolized in the description of nature after Tess has confessed to Angel: ". . . dawn . . . . was ashy and furtive, as though associated with crime. . . ."[40] Similarly, on their return visit to Talbothays, nature seems to mirror their unhappiness: "The gold of the summer picture was now gray, the colours mean, the rich soil mud, and the river cold."[41]

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[40] Ibid., p. 262.

[41] Ibid., p. 277.

Although society is partly responsibe for Tess's misfortunes, Hardy does not forget that there are, too, inexplicable forces inherent in the universe:

> Men are too often harsh with women they love or have loved; women with men. And yet these harshnesses are tenderness itself when compared with the universal harshness out of which they grow; the harshness of the position towards the temperament, of the means towards the aims, of to-day towards yesterday, of hereafter towards to-day.[42]

The tragic fate of Tess Durbeyfield is described within a setting that clearly exposes all the "universal harshness." "Heredity, economic forces, Time, Chance, and Consequence shape Tess's career and bring about her downfall.—Only social convention causes it."[43]

Although Tess enjoys a brief reunion with Angel, her happiness is short-lived. She must die on the gallows, for she has killed Alec d'Urberville for having preyed upon her helplessness a second time. She does not protest her death, but rather rejoices in the brief happiness which she has known with Angel. Her attitude reflects Schopenhauer's belief that happiness is not a positive but a negative state--merely a brief cessation of the general unhappiness and pain that characterizes man's life.

Hardy closes his tale with the sombre note ". . . . the President of the Immortals . . . had ended his sport

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[42] Ibid., p. 364.

[43] Southerington, op. cit., p. 133.

with Tess."[44] Certainly, he believed that man is largely a pawn in the hands of some unknown fate; however, as I have pointed out, Tess of the d'Urbervilles clearly indicates that Hardy attributes a lot of man's ills to a known entity, a false social code. It ranks with Jude the Obscure as an intelligently argued exposition of the social inequities of the nineteenth century. In exposing these, Hardy points out the remediable ills in the social system. In the sympathetic portrayal of an innocent girl, both self-condemned and condemned by others, Tess stands as a plea for better understanding. In the context of the natural environment, Hardy shows that "the world's concern at her situation was founded on an illusion."[45] He makes an impassioned plea for more sympathetic understanding among men, and preaches a religion of loving kindness as being a superior moral law to the accepted bourgeois morality with its double standards and its lack of charity. As Angel realizes, too late, that his and Tess's could have been a good marriage, he stresses the superior moral law:

> . . . he now began to discredit the old appraisements of morality. He thought they wanted readjusting. Who was the moral man? Still more pertinently, who was the moral woman? The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its impulses; its true history lay, not among things done, but among things willed.[46]

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[44] Tess of the d'Urbervilles, p. 420.

[45] Ibid., p. 119.

[46] Ibid., p. 363.

The theme of marriage is interwoven with the theme of morality in this novel, which relates the inferior position of women in Victorian society to the harsh treatment of one who has transgressed the social code. The sympathetic treatment of Tess by the author can be seen as a poignant criticism of a rigid social code. Hardy criticizes the society which exploits women such as she. He challenges the notion of the "fallen woman", and he exposes the hypocrisy of the double standard which permitted a man sexual freedom as long as he was discreet. As well, he condemns the thinking (represented by Alec d'Urberville) which sees woman merely as a sexual object; or as a submissive creature devoid of passion. The sensitive presentation of Tess's natural sexuality goes a long way towards liberating that thinking from its ". . . old appraisements of morality."[47]

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[47] Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

JUDE THE OBSCURE

In 1896, Havelock Ellis wrote:

> In Jude the Obscure we find for the first time in our literature the reality of marriage clearly recognized as something wholly apart from the mere ceremony with which our novelists have usually identified it.[1]

This was one of the relatively few positive assessments of the content of Hardy's last and most pessimistic novel. And, it is a valid assessment. In Jude the Obscure, Hardy deals most frankly with love, sex, marriage and divorce. In the previous novels, Hardy has been relatively conventional; however, in Jude he expresses very definite opinions which depart from the usual Victorian intimations. Sex and sexuality are treated more explicitly than in any of the earlier novels; and the rationale for marriage is most distinctly challenged. The question of personal freedom is clearly discussed as well.

In the preface to the first edition (1895), Hardy clearly outlined his intentions in writing Jude the Obscure:

> . . . .to tell, without a mincing of words, of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit; and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims. . . .[2]

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[1] Havelock Ellis, From Marlowe to Shaw (London: Williams and Norgate Ltd., 1950), pp. 283-284.

[2] Jude the Obscure (London: Macmillan, 1951), vi.

To accomplish this purpose, Hardy departs from the rural background and enters into the impersonal world of cities. Against the background of cold stone walls and dirty slum neighbourhoods, Hardy presents the harsh realities of a man who is doomed to remain obscure socially and psychologically. There is no harmonious life lived in happy accord with one's natural surroundings. Instead, there is the rootlessness and restlessness so characteristic of city life. Against this unstable background, Jude Fawley struggles throughout most of his brief life, which is a constant series of unfulfilled aims. Jude's illusions are shattered, one by one, till he dies, alone, murmuring lines from the Book of Job 2:3: "Let the day perish wherein I was born. . . ."[3]

Essentially, Jude the Obscure is an allegory with Jude beginning his life in an obscure village. Much is made of the highway leading out of town. For the first few years of his life, Jude looks to this highway as a means of escape from the obscure village where he lives, an orphan, with his old aunt. Jude dreams of becoming a scholar, and attending the university in Christminster. The highway, which leads to Christminster, symbolizes Jude's hopes and ambitions. At first, he lives for the ideal--a good education, and then a good life as a scholar.

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[3] Ibid., p. 488.

The irony in Jude's aspirations towards Christminster is portrayed in the contrast between what he envisions Christminster to be, and what he eventually discovers Christminster to be. As a young boy looking to the highway as a means to lead to his precious Christminster, Jude travels a short distance along this highway until he comes to a barn at the outskirts of his village. There, at this barn, he stands time after time, upon a ladder, and looks in the distance, at the outlines of Christminster's buildings. Each time he looks, it is just before nightfall, and the distantly outlined city is seen in the last light of the day. Always, it is suffused in a golden light, and it becomes for him a golden place. This is in direct contrast with the cold, barren, dirty, impersonal place which meets him when he eventually arrives there.

Jude the Obscure has a geometrically constructed plot with parallels existing in the different lives of the main characters, parallel statements on society's institutions, and parallel reversals of fortune. Throughout the novel, there are many symbols of victims, traps, bloodshed and slaughter. The killing of the pig, early on in the novel, symbolizes the eventual victimization of Jude by his wife Arabella. As well, it represents the coarseness of Arabella and perhaps the repressing of baser instincts. The blood which is repulsive to Jude becomes a symbol for all meaningless suffering, and Jude's pity for the animal illustrates man's reaction to the casual indifference of

nature. The traps which catch the rabbits, are symbolic of the trap (marriage) which catches Jude, and thus shatters his first ambitions.

When Jude is quite young, he has a job scaring birds away from a farmer's field. However, Jude has an affinity for all living things, and so he becomes sympathetic towards the birds which he is supposed to scare away. His reaction is to let the birds eat of the farmer's crops, for he feels there ought to be enough for all. The irony in this situation is quite clearly a foreshadowing of future events in Jude's life. Hardy says that Jude feels for the birds' "thwarted desires."[4] This is ironic in that Jude feels a "thread of fellow feeling" for the birds who seem, like him, "to be living in a world which did not want them."[5] For, as the novel progresses, it becomes a series of thwarted desires in Jude's own life. As all Jude's hopes become thwarted, there is no one who feels any thread of fellow feeling for him.

The "deadly war waged between flesh and spirit," to which Hardy alluded in his first preface, is played out between two contrasting females. Arabella, Jude's wife, symbolizes the flesh; and Sue, Jude's cousin and sometime "companion" symbolizes the spirit. Jude's conversations with both these females demonstrate some of Hardy's most

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[4] Ibid., p. 11.

[5] Ibid.

bitter statements about the institution of marriage. Sue's husband, Phillotson, and his friend, Gillingham, also make some very interesting statements about marriage.

Arabella, who is portrayed as a sensual, full-bosomed young girl, is shown against a background of mud, squalor and filth. When Jude first meets her, she is surrounded by pig sties and pigs' intestines. She attracts Jude's attention by throwing a pig's penis in his face. The whole atmosphere surrounding Arabella symbolizes her coarseness and her blatant sexuality. Jude reacts to her brazen sexual overture, and speaks to her as she is washing the pigs' intestines, in preparation for their being made into puddings. In spite of himself, Jude is drawn to ask her to see him, and yet at the same time he realizes that she is ". . . a woman for whom he has no respect, and whose life had nothing in common with his own except locality."[6] This is the first inkling of the power which Jude's sexual instinct has over his life. He doesn't really like Arabella, yet he yields to her advances. Arabella, on the other hand, is totally earthy, and declares: "I want him to have me . . . I must have him. I can't do without him."[7] She deceives Jude into thinking that she is pregnant and thus catches him, like a rabbit, in her trap. He is trapped into marrying her; both of them live to regret

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[6] Ibid., p. 48.

[7] Ibid., p. 55.

this. Arabella married Jude for two reasons: to satisfy her sexual craving for him, and also to give herself a sense of security. As she tells Sue, much later on in the story: "Life with a man is more businesslike after it, and money matters work better."[8]

After Jude consents to marry Arabella because he believes that this is the honourable thing to do in the circumstances, he realizes that his first desire is thwarted. He decides to abandon his dream of being a great scholar. As they stand before the parson, exchanging their vows, they feel nothing in particular. It is at this point in the novel that the reader is given the first wry comment on the institution of matrimony:

> And so standing before the aforesaid officiator, the two swore that at every other time of their lives till death took them, they would assuredly believe, feel, and desire precisely as they had believed and felt and desired during the few preceding weeks.[9]

The very prosaic nature of this comment suggests, by contrast, the solemnity of the occasion. The fact that no one fully realized the seriousness of the vows is appalling. Shortly after, Jude finds out that Arabella is not pregnant, and, for the first time, he questions the "social ritual" which has united them. He sees his marriage as a trap, and he realizes that this trap has

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[8] Ibid., p. 324.

[9] Ibid., p. 65.

been the means of cancelling all his plans for the future. Jude's views on sex are clearly enunciated as he ponders his being trapped ". . . because of a momentary surprise by a new and transitory instinct which had nothing in it of the nature of vice, and could be only at the most called weakness."[10] Jude looks upon sexual activity as weakness, and again he stresses that it would be excusable "if the weakness of the moment could end with the moment."[11] Hardy is challenging the notion that sex should lead to marriage, and is demonstrating the unfortunate events which can occur as a result of such marriages. Obviously, this marriage is based on nothing more than physical attraction, and this, to Hardy, is the wrong basis for a lifetime commitment. He repeatedly uses words such as "entrapped", "encumbered" and "enchained" to refer to the union of Arabella and Jude. As Jude comes to realize his great error, he reiterates Hardy's criteria for successful unions. He ponders the mistaken step which has ruined his life:

> . . . that of having based a permanent contract on a temporary feeling which had no necessary connection with affinities that alone render a life-long comradeship tolerable.[12]

The sex instinct is Schopenhauer's "will to live" exerting itself. It would appear from the last three statements that Hardy is in complete accord with Schopenhauer's idea

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[10] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[11] Ibid., p. 78.

[12] Ibid., p. 80.

that this impulse is the source of most of man's suffering, that it ". . . exerts an adverse influence on the most important events . . . demands the sacrifice . . . sometimes of happiness. . . ."[13] As has been demonstrated with Jude, the instinct has interfered with his ambitions, and has caused him nothing but unhappiness. Jude refers to it as ". . . the scorn of Nature for man's finer emotions, and her lack of interest in his aspirations."[14] In Schopenhauerean terms, the Will has defeated the Idea. Jude's attraction towards Arabella's sexuality represents the random operation of natural instincts. Hardy does not quarrel with the instincts. Rather, he quarrels with the social regulations which have been placed on sexuality. He sees these regulations as unrealistic and oppressive. Later, he has Jude reject religion because it regarded sexual love ". . . as at its best a frailty, and at its worst damnation."[15] This, I believe, stresses a view which Hardy has expressed in Tess of the d'Urbervilles: organized religion is partly responsible for repressing man's natural instincts.

After Arabella and Jude part, Jude goes on to Christminster, as he has always dreamed of doing. Here he

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[13] Arthur Schopenhauer, op. cit., p. 340.

[14] Ibid., p. 212.

[15] Ibid., p. 261.

encounters, not the city of light, but a dark, gloomy indifferent place. His efforts to gain admission to the college are frustrated, for, in this society, a humble workman cannot attend. All his years of study have been in vain. It is ironic that, in the great centre of learning, all that Jude learns is that class consciousness bars any but the upper classes from attaining a good education.

In Christminster, Jude meets his cousin Sue, who is Hardy's representation of the spiritual world. In Jude's encounters with Sue, Hardy completes his allegory of man caught between the two opposing forces of his nature, one of which is as unsatisfactory as the other, taken in isolation.

Sue is a curious creature. She is presented as somewhat of a liberated woman--she spurns the old ideas of organized religion; she claims that she does not regard marriage as a sacrament. Physically, she is the opposite of Arabella--she is a slight, etherial creature, who is often described in terms of bird imagery. At one point she refers to her bed as a "nest." She appears to have become sexless in her attempts to deny her natural instincts. The reader is not told exactly what Sue's problem is. However, one can infer that in her zealous devotion to her liberation she has become afraid of sex and the power that this instinct can perhaps exert over her. She is also self-centred and very outspoken. She wants more than she is willing to give and her actions never quite seem to

match her words. She wishes to be loved, rather than to love; yet she is morbidly afraid of her own urges. It appears that she looks upon sex as a trap which deprives a person of his individuality. She wants to believe that she is free to establish a new relationship, a different kind of relationship, with men. However, most of her ideas seem to be more fashionable than deep rooted. She is a flawed creature, as indeed is Arabella; however, she is the means by which Jude encounters a different view of life, one which he comes to adopt, even as she flees from it. She is also the means by which the last of Jude's hopes are frustrated and he is made to undergo suffering and defeat.

When Jude first meets Sue, he is still legally married to Arabella. He is, however, immediately attracted to Sue. Sue professes to be against marriage, yet she consents to marry Phillotson, a schoolteacher who is many years her senior. It would seem that she thinks that she can control Phillotson, so she chooses a marriage in which she sets the rules. Her refusal to sleep with Phillotson provides the setting for a contrast between a sexless marriage, and a marriage based only on physical relations. The fact that neither Sue's nor Jude's marriage works, indicates Hardy's belief that neither marriage is built on a solid foundation--Jude's is the result of physical urges, and Sue's is an attempt to deny physical urges.

There is an ironic twist to Sue's marriage. She asks Jude to "give her away," although she feels that this

practice is degrading. A few hours before the wedding, Sue and Jude visit the church, and Sue allows Jude to walk with her arm in arm down the aisle. This is clearly an ironic comment on the fact that Jude is not marrying Sue, as well as an interesting foreshadowing of the fact that although they make many attempts at marrying each other, they never actually do.

Sue is very soon repelled by Phillotson's sexual desires, and she leaves him to go live with Jude. The fact that she leaves one man to go to live with another reveals the confusion in her mind regarding her sexuality. She does not seem to understand her own motives, and she tries to cover her natural instincts or lack of them under an endless barrage of words. Her intellectualizing leads Jude to adopt her somewhat unorthodox views; therefore he abandons his plans to take Holy Orders. Although both eventually obtain divorces, they do not marry. The reluctance to legalize their union is perhaps the main cause of their subsequent unhappiness, for they seem to possess some of the companionship which Hardy says will make a union compatible. Phillotson remarks to Gillingham that Sue and Jude's relationship is not ". . . an ignoble, merely animal feeling . . . ,"[16] reiterating Hardy's belief in the mutual understanding which must exist in relationships. Phillotson states his case for an enduring relationship:

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[16] Ibid., p. 278.

> I found from their manner that an extraordinary affinity or sympathy, entered into their attachment, which somehow took away all flavour of grossness. Their supreme desire to be together - to share each other's emotions, and fancies, and dreams.[17]

It is also interesting that Hardy has his characters use the terms "gross" and "ignoble" to refer to the physical side of relationships. It would seem that he cannot quite overcome the Victorian concept of sex as offensive. In any case, he seems to endorse a relationship in which sex is not the primary concern.

At Sue's insistence, she and Jude live together in a nonphysical relationship. However, Sue becomes jealous of Arabella's claim on Jude, and they consummate the relationship. Her acceptance of sex, but not marriage, which is the reversal of her relationship with Phillotson, is another indication of her moral confusion. In her desire for freedom, she equates emancipation with sexual independence; and she fears that legalizing her union with Jude will force her to submit to him at all times, rather than at her pleasure. Hardy describes her neurotic attitude:

> . . . there is nothing perverted or depraved in Sue's nature. The abnormalism consists in disproportion, not in inversion, her sexual instinct being healthy as far as it goes, but unusually weak and fastidious. Her sensibilities remain painfully alert notwithstanding, as they do in nature with such women. One point illustrating this I could not dwell upon: that, though she has children, her intimacies with Jude have never been more than occasional, even when they were living together

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[17] Ibid.

> (I mention that they occupy separate rooms, except towards the end), and one of her reasons for fearing the marriage ceremony is that she fears it would be breaking faith with Jude to withhold herself at pleasure, or altogether, after it; though while uncontracted she feels at liberty to yield herself as seldom as she chooses.[18]

The institution of marriage, then, poses a threat to Sue and she tries to rationalize her feelings. At the outset of her relationship with Jude, she expresses the idea that legalized marriage is essentially foreign to man's nature, and that most women only marry for the social advantages of such unions. She and Jude make several attempts to marry, yet always it is Sue who recoils from the ceremony. Her fear of intimacy is at first dramatized as an aversion for regulations and rules which she feels coerce people. She feels that the vows which people exchange are essentially dishonest. As Sue and Jude make one last attempt at marriage, they notice the other couples in the registry office. These couples, some of whom are obviously unhappy, some pregnant, repel Sue even further.

However, because Sue and Jude do not legalize their living arrangements, they become social outcasts. People refuse to hire Jude, and Jude and Sue are forced to wander from place to place, seeking a spot where they will be unknown, and therefore permitted to live in peace. To add to their troubles, Arabella sends Jude her child (and Jude's)--Little Father Time. Little Father Time is purely

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[18] The Later Years of Thomas Hardy (London: Macmillan, 1930), p. 42.

symbolic--he is a grotesque child who was born an old man.

Sue and Jude are ostracized because of their not being married. Thus, societal conventions add to the personal problems which thwart their attempts at happiness. They wander rootlessly from town to town, and Jude is forced to take menial jobs. His ambitions are thwarted, and his health then begins to fail. In an off moment, Sue admits to Little Father Time that their lives were all suffering and adversity, and that perhaps it might have been better if the children had not been born. Taking this literally, Father Time kills the two small children, and he himself commits suicide. Hardy explains this is the beginning of ". . . the coming universal wish not to live."[19] This is a reiteration of Schopenhauer's idea that the world would end when humanity succeeded in renouncing the will-to-live. Hardy implies that social institutions which only work to stifle spontaneity and to thwart happiness encourage man to embrace this wish not to live. All chances of their happiness (Sue and Jude's) are over with the death of these children, and Sue's premature birth of a still-born child.

Sue suffers from a great guilt as a result of this final sequence of events. She realizes that fate has dealt harshly with both herself and Jude, yet her reaction is curious--she indicates that the unhappiness is the result

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[19] Ibid., p. 406.

of their having slept together. Her statements support the view that Nature, or Fate is indifferent to the individual; and, they demonstrate again the idea that society is partially to blame for man's sad misfortunes:

> I said it was Nature's intention, Nature's law and raison d'être that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us - instincts which civilization has taken upon itself to thwart . . . and now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word.[20]

Sue's remorse takes the form of an intense desire to punish herself. She sees all their misfortunes as punishment brought about by their flouting of man's laws, and decides that she must conform to the conventions of society. The girl who once told Phillotson that ". . . domestic laws should be made according to temperament . . ."[21] (one of Hardy's chief beliefs) decides that she must abide by the rules and go back to Phillotson. She becomes evangelical and fanatic in her decision. By dramatizing this, Hardy is pointing to the absurdity of such a decision. This is an extreme course of action, yet Hardy wishes to show that people are led to such extremes by the oppressiveness of man's laws. Because Sue has sought to live her own life in her own way, she has been punished by society, and then she punishes herself. Society's cruel treatment of her causes her to become even more distorted in her thinking. Her remarriage to Phillotson is shown by Hardy to be a mockery of everything which he believes marriage ought to be.

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[20] Ibid., pp. 408-409.

[21] Ibid., p. 268.

She submits body and soul to a situation which is abhorrent to her. An earlier comment of hers aptly describes her actions at this point. She has been lamenting the conventions which stipulate that all people, regardless of temperament must act in the same way:

> . . . Everybody . . . think[s] people wicked because they may have chosen to live their own way! It is really these opinions that make the best intentioned people reckless, and actually become immoral.[22]

Hardy has Jude tell Sue that her going back to Phillotson is indeed immoral and he begs her: "Do not do an immoral thing for moral reasons!"[23] In a letter to Florence Henniker (1907), Hardy has clearly stated that marriage without love was immoral.[24] Here, he dramatizes the situation and shows it to be a desperate act by a desperate woman who is driven as much by society's cruel ordinances as she is by her own peculiar sexual problems. Because of Sue's extreme reaction, Jude becomes ashamed of his sexuality:

> My God, how selfish I was! Perhaps - perhaps I spoilt one of the highest and purest loves that ever existed between man and woman![25]

Hardy shows that society has destroyed Sue, but it has also destroyed Jude. It has destroyed Jude because it has led him to look upon his sexual impulses as shameful, rather than regarding them as a fact of life.

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[22] Ibid., p. 365.

[23] Ibid., p. 427.

[24] One Rare Fair Woman, p. 134.

[25] Jude the Obscure, p. 427.

In a parody of Phillotson and Sue's remarriage, Jude and Arabella remarry, completely reversing the conventional fictional happy marriage, happy ending. Jude berates Sue's decision to redeem herself by mortifying herself: "I was gin drunk; you were creed drunk,"[26] and he repeats that both remarriages are ". . . degrading, immoral [and] unnatural."[27] His last desperate measure is to walk in the rain to visit Sue one last time. He agrees that he did this to ". . . put an end to a feverish life which ought never to have begun."[28] Again this is part of the "wish not to live" to which society has reduced man. As Jude lies delirious, with his last breaths he curses society's conventions.

Jude's whole life, then, is the tragedy of unfulfilled aims--scholastically, socially, materially and psychologically, Jude remains thwarted. None of his aspirations is fulfilled. He drops one, to embrace another, only to realize, finally, that he is trapped in every sense of the word. He is trapped between the physical and the intellectual; he is trapped between the socially acceptable and the unconventional; he is trapped between the working class and the upper classes; he is trapped between conventional religion and modern freethinking; he is

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[26] Ibid., p. 471.

[27] Ibid., p. 470.

[28] Ibid., p. 473.

trapped between the dying of one way of life--that of the rural life of close cameraderie--and the emerging of a new way of life--that of the cities, with no particularly close ties. Jude has not been free to live his life as he has wished. Part of this is the unknown destiny which pursues mankind, and part of this is the pressure placed on mankind by rigid social laws. Since this novel clearly exposes and denounces these social laws, it can be read as a denunciation of Victorian society with its false notions of propriety; its hypocritical double standard and its stifling class consciousness.

Jude the Obscure is also a novel about man's having lost touch with his physical environment. Jude is first seen in a field scaring crows; he is never much more than the scarecrow. No one is ever very sympathetic towards him. He was not at home in his village, and he is not at home in the many cities in which he lives. He typifies the rootless modern man who cannot identify with his surroundings. It is significant that Hardy casts Jude as an orphan; it is a foreshadowing of the deracination of modern man. Jude wanders from place to place, but does not meet with any of the neighbourly warmth characteristic of rural life. He becomes a symbol for modern man who has lost his essential joy in living, because he is so out of harmony with his surroundings. Undertakings which were once ordinary become increasingly more complicated. In speaking of marriage, Mrs. Edlin says:

> Matrimony have growed to be that serious in these days that one really do feel afeard to move in it at all. In my time we took it more careless; and I don't know that we was any the worse for it![29]

Mrs. Edlin means that times have changed since her youth and her marriage. In the days to which she refers, people were not under the same pressures; marriages were seen as everyday occurrences. As she sees Sue's aversion to Phillotson, she says: "Weddings be funerals 'a b'lieve nowadays"[30] indicating that marriage now marks the death of spontaneity and gaiety. These statements can be seen as indications that contemporary attitudes towards marriage, as well as divorce and sexuality, were out of touch with the reality of contemporary life. The laws governing marriage and divorce were inflexible and consequently imposed harsh penalties upon any who dissented. From all these failures it is possible to extract a positive concept of marriage. Hardy is not advocating abolition of the institution of marriage, for he realizes that a stable society needs certain basic structures. However, he is underlining the need for more social enlightenment. He realizes man's need for deep emotional commitments and he realizes that man's sexuality is part of his nature. What he is stating is that man's sexuality needs to be acknowledged as a vital part of his existence; that sexual relations need not lead to marriage, that the marriage bond need not be irrevocable;

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[29] Ibid., p. 444.

[30] Ibid., p. 481.

that people should be permitted to live together without being married; that marriage laws need to be examined critically. His positive concept of marriage is one based on mutual respect and understanding, essentially unselfish and always generous.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

There is, then, a consistent philosophical argument about the subject of marriage throughout Hardy's novels, and it can be regarded in the context of his Schopenhaurean view of the universe. This view of the universe, which has been demonstrated in the discussion of the novels, prompted Hardy to write in 1907:

> The will of man is, according to it [The Dynasts] neither wholly free nor wholly unfree. When swayed by the Universal Will (which he mostly must be as a subservient part of it) he is not individually free; but whenever it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is in equilibrium the minute portion called one person's will is free, just as the performer's fingers are free to go on playing the pianoforte of themselves, when he talks or thinks of something else and the hand does not rule them.[1]

From this, it can clearly be seen that Hardy considered freedom and opportunity to be dependent upon circumstance and chance, both manifestations of the Universal Will, or the Immanent Will as he chose to call it elsewhere. He shows that this will is completely indifferent to man's endeavours. Because of this, man ought to be able to create his own limited freedom, subject only to the chance happenings which the Immanent Will dictates. However, as

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[1] Later Years, p. 125.

the discussion of his novels shows, the nature of nineteenth-century society also militates against man's freedom. Over and again, in the novels, Hardy shows this society to be out of touch with the reality of man's existence. The rigid social code ignored sexuality and the idea of natural sexual selection; exploited women by forcing them into inferior roles; fostered false notions of respectability; and imposed harsh penalties on transgressors. All of this added to the tragedy which made up man's existence.

Part of the tragedy of man's existence comes from his dual nature, as a member of society and as a creature possessing natural instincts. Hardy's detailed description of nature, the physical environment, enabled him to illustrate man's sexuality as a natural instinctive element. Contrasting the natural physical world with the social world enabled him to focus on the dichotomy between the two, and therefore to show the parallel dichotomy inherent in man as a result of his dual nature. In 1885, Hardy wrote in his diary:

> We [human beings] have reached a degree of intelligence which Nature never contemplated when framing her laws, and for which she consequently has provided no adequate satisfaction.[2]

Because of this dichotomy, the great problem of private versus public morality in Victorian England added to man's tragic existence. As Hardy indicates in the statement

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[2] The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, p. 213.

quoted above, social regulations of natural laws, for example, sexuality, have become stifling. Sankey sees this as resulting from the fact that "society's institutions have lagged behind the development of human nature":

> "Modern" people exist, but there are no effectively "modern" regulations (for instance) on sex and marriage. The society Hardy describes is indifferent, obsolescent, the inheritor of varied customs for which it can give no justification; it is in fact a society in transition - but unconscious of direction and awkward in its movements.[3]

In focusing on the theme of marriage, Hardy is focusing on the very real problems facing the twentieth century. In his preoccupation with this theme, he showed that the contemporary attitudes toward marriage, sexuality and divorce imposed unfulfillable expectations upon man. In looking at the institution of marriage accurately Hardy sought to portray real life situations. Thus it is that he shows unhappily married couples, unwed mothers and common law alliances. For the most part, he shows that society is largely to blame for these ills, and he shows that man's capacity for personal growth was limited by outdated social codes. Portraying marriages which were, for the most part, unhappy, enabled Hardy to indicate by contrast, his concept of a happy marriage. As has been shown in the discussion of the novels, this concept emphasized a loving kindness and a universal compassion. He showed

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[3] Benjamin Sankey, The Major Novels of Thomas Hardy (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965), p. 37.

that attraction was initially sexual, but that this attraction was ephemeral and therefore not a valid criteria for his happy marriage. Rather, he recommended an integration with one's natural surroundings and a selfless devotion which became more of a spiritual communion than a physical union.

In his dramatization of the tragic results of ill-assorted unions, he has created a sympathy for the more unfortunate who are condemned by arbitrary social laws which ignore man's natural, instinctual side. His novels, particularly The Woodlanders, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, and Jude the Obscure, can be seen as pleas for revision in the outdated marriage laws.

Hardy's belief in a better future can be seen in a short lyric, written in 1867, and entitled "1967":

> A century which, if not sublime,
> Will show, I doubt not, at its prime,
> A scope above this blinkered time.[4]

In April, 1890, he wrote in his diary:

> Altruism, or The Golden Rule, or whatever 'Love Your Neighbour as Yourself' may be called, will ultimately be brought about I think by the pain we see in others reacting on ourselves, as if we and they were a part of one body. Mankind, in fact, may be and possibly will be viewed as members of one corporeal frame.[5]

This substantiates his view of himself as a meliorist. For, the general overview of Hardy's novels is that, although

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[4] The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy (London: Macmillan, 1976), p. 220.

[5] The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, p. 294.

they show the "pain" that there is in existence, they nevertheless indicate a hope that this pain will be ameliorated. In the preface to Late Lyrics and Earlier, written in 1922, Hardy reiterates this view:

> If I may be forgiven for quoting my own words, let me repeat what I printed in this relation more than twenty years ago, and wrote much earlier, in a poem entitled "In Tenebris":
>
> If a way to the Better
> there be, it exacts a
> full look at the Worst:
>
> that is to say, by the exploration of reality, and its frank recognition stage by stage along the survey, with an eye to the best consummation possible: briefly, evolutionary meliorism.[6]

Webster agrees with Hardy's assessment:

> In his interpretation of the significance to man of the action of the universe, Hardy approaches most nearly the position of the meliorist. Believing that there is much irremediable evil in the world, he nevertheless believes in the possibility of a slow progress that will ultimately do away with those evils, mostly social, that do not inhere in the nature of things.[7]

In an introduction to a collection of essays, Anne Smith makes a comment which, I feel, captures the essence of Hardy's art:

> The paradox of Hardy's work, in which a profound pessimism is given its biting edge by the relentless perception of what might have been, and the faithful celebration of eternal renewal in the natural world, is one that is universally true of human experience. Yet no other author has presented this paradox with such stoic honesty, or with such warmth of humanity: in showing us how sick we are, Hardy makes our sickness bearable.[8]

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[6] In Harold Orel, Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1966), p. 52.

[7] Webster, op. cit., p. 135.

[8] Smith, op. cit., p. 8.

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