FOUR NOVELS OF THOMAS HARDY:

A STUDY IN HIS CONCEPT OF TRAGEDY

by

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CHAPTER ONE - THE THEORY OF TRAGEDY

When Thomas Hardy undertook to write tragedy he invoked an old tradition. A review of the traditional theory and practice of this genre clarifies Hardy's tragic philosophy and techniques. This definition in the Poetics is the usual starting place.

> A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.[1]

For Aristotle tragedy is a serious, complete work of art, which uses poetic and prose techniques to enhance the audience's enjoyment. It should be in the form of a drama rather than a narrative, and should stimulate the emotions of pity and fear in the onlooker. Aristotle gives some indication of what he means by "pity and fear."

> . . . pity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune, and fear by that [misfortune] of one like ourselves . . . . There remains, then, the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement. . . ."[2]

The emotions of pity and fear are aroused by the misfortune of a representative human being with whom we can identify ourselves. Furthermore, Aristotle says that the misfortune must be out of proportion to the error of the protagonist. Aristotle did not clarify the meaning of "catharsis"; it is sufficient, however, to realize that a purging and a pleasure can result from the spectacle of tragedy.

[1]Aristotle, "De Poetica," The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York, 1941), p. 1460.

[2]p. 1467.

The theme of death gives a clue to the tragic effect. In many definitions of tragedy, death is the touchstone. It appears as a source of tragic emotion and as a means of rounding off and giving unity to the artistic whole. But death of itself is meaningless, even the death of a tragic hero. Its universal symbolism gives death its greatest significance. The death of the tragic protagonist at the end of his suffering is the symbol of man's mortality and of his predicament in a world which is not simply benevolent; it symbolizes man's relation to the universe.

Aristotle considered the plot or "imitation of an action" the most important of the formative elements of the tragedy because, properly constructed, it has the power to arouse pity and fear in the mind. Such a plot is necessarily unified; it shows in its action a pattern of cause and effect throughout: " . . . the story, as an imitation of action, must represent one action, a complete whole, with its several incidents so closely connected that the transposal or withdrawal of any one of them will disjoin and dislocate the whole . . . ."[3] This pattern should show especially the causal connection between the protagonist's errors and their tragic results. "The action, proceeding in the way defined, as one continuous whole . . . the [changes] in the hero's fortunes . . . arise out of the structure of the plot itself, so as to be the consequence, necessary or probable, of the antecedents."[4]

[3] p. 1463.

[4] p. 1465.

There have been many successful tragedies since Aristotle which do not follow his rules. Muller comments on the source tragedy, "In a historical view, the clue to its essence is not form but content and purpose. Ultimately, it is the tragic spirit, the tragic sense of life."[5] Aristotle's theory presupposes a universe which is not necessarily benevolent. Great tragedy, in defining man's condition in the universe, makes the reader sensitive to his relationship with his God. Within this framework, the metaphysical definition has taken many forms. The gods have been considered inscrutable in purpose, representing a conscious supernatural order, neither benign nor malignant, which works according to a rule not understood by man. There is an opposing belief that Chance causes a complete chaos of events with no significance for man. In some tragedies a Supreme Power rules Who is positively and consciously malignant by human standards; our fate is thus more predictable, but we are denied the hope of even inscrutable justice. Another theory describes a god who is blind to his actions and their effects. The modern equivalent is the post-Darwin scientific theory which assumes that there is some deterministic pattern of cause and effect by which we live. We may not understand our destinies, but there is a possibility of direction and purpose in the universe.

The masters of tragedy have exhibited one or another of the theories mentioned above. Common to all, and necessary to tragedy, is the awareness that man's position in the universe is not understood, that there is no simple answer to man's suffering, and that the benevolence of the Supreme Being is not simply an article of faith. Such an awareness is the tragic sense of life, and effective tragedy must demonstrate it.

[5]Herbert J. Muller, The Spirit of Tragedy (New York, 1956), p. 14.

The sense of tragedy in the hero, the awareness of human misery not necessarily deserved, is explained by an inherent contradiction in the universe: man's very position in it. He seems an anomaly in the divine order. Man is the combination of god-animal which the juxtaposition of his mind and senses has made him; he will always struggle between these two opposing tendencies. Then, the Gods do not exhibit the same conscience that man possesses. It seems that man's intellect has developed a superior morality to that of the Gods. Yet he must suffer whatever fate they measure out to him.

There remains a problem which cannot be explained away, even by a Christian belief in heavenly rewards. An incongruity exists between man's capacities and aspirations on the one hand, and his accomplishments on the other. His achievements do not measure up to his capabilities. This is the central mystery of man's existence. Whether man is considered an alien to the natural world (by those who exalt his mind) or the best product of the evolutionary process of Nature, the mystery remains. On this mystery is built tragedy.

Inevitable human suffering, however, no matter how universal this truth may be, is merely pathetic without one indispensable element, the reconciliation of man with his fate. This makes catastrophe and life itself endurable. The best tragedy demonstrates the dignity and worth of man, and a reverence for his spirit in suffering. It depicts the quality of man's behavior in his most extreme trials. It portrays the integrity of man coming to terms with his destiny, and thus freeing himself from despair and the betrayal of his mind.

Thus the specific incongruity between aspiration and action, between action and consequence,is only of secondary importance. It does not matter how the author defines the human condition; as long as the human

mind and spirit do not deteriorate. It is only through his integrity that man emerges greater than his fate. Several features of the tragedy follow from this necessary view of the relation of man to the universe. The author must appraise the human condition honestly and realistically. This may lead to a charge of pessimism, which tragedy should never exhibit. Pessimism is a denial of all that tragedy tries to uphold, rendering the vision sterile. Apparent pessimism is really a clear-visioned, thorough evaluation of the human position without the appeal to unfounded hope or faith.

There may not be optimism, but there must be idealism. If there were no illumination of the darkness of man's fate, no compensating principle (even if limited to man), there would be no reason for the writing of tragedy. The tragic protagonist must strive towards some ideal shared by the author. The nature of the ideal cannot be simply stated. It may not even seem an ideal in the ordinary sense of the word. It results from the attempt to find human values to compensate for the disappointment of other-world values. Its final resting place is a belief in the dignity of the human spirit. The pleasure in tragedy and the tragic lesson result in part from the demonstration of the ideal. As Muller says,"..tragedy enriches our experience by deepening, widening, refining, and intensifying our consciousness of the possibilites of life."[6] The tragic hero exemplifies these possibilities.

The divergence of modern tragedy from the Aristotelian definition is first noticeable in the choice of tragic hero. The protagonist

[6]Tragedy, p. 20.

is no longer ". . . of the number of those in the enjoyment of great reputation and prosperity; e.g. Oedipus, Thyestes, and the men of note of similar families."[7] The protagonists of classical and mediaeval tragedy were chosen arbitrarily from these ranks because they could best portray a fall from good fortune, and show those heroic qualities of insight and dignity necessary to tragedy. In modern tragedy, the definition of the tragic hero and the tragic circumstances has changed. The luxury of good fortune and its loss has become the privilege of any man, in a democratic society.

As early as the eighteenth century, bourgeois tragedy attempted to demonstrate that the protagonist, "one like ourselves," might come from the ranks of the common man. The drawbacks to such a choice were also demonstrated; the protagonist acted out the manners and sentiments of aristocrats. The greatest fault of the domestic tragedy was its emphasis on Reason and the Unities, and also on sentiment. There was no real concern for the human condition and man's spirit in travail. In effect, domestic tragedy failed to portray the tragic sense of life.

Modern tragedy has tried to avoid these faults by its greater realism and honesty, its freedom from the neo-classical rules, and its faithfulness to the emotional and psychological truths of personality. Thus it more successfully captures the true spirit of tragedy in heroes representative of the common man, and it portrays convincingly the value of man in the face of suffering.

[7]Aristotle, p. 1467.

The political and philosophical disintegration of the nineteenth century was a good source of material for tragedy, which is always an expression of the breakdown of the conventional order. This is not the first time that the world has experienced such upheaval, nor the first attempt at imitating it. The Greeks did so, most successfully; Shakespeare also caught the spirit of his age through a tragic concept of greater complexity and freedom. Whether or not the modern tragedians will have succeeded depends on the emotional truth of their recreation of the tragic in modern terms. They must re-evaluate man's situation in a newly-defined universe. Tragedy will never rise again to the classical description of heroic struggles on the grand scale, on the result of which rested the fate of societies. We are limited to the tragedy of the average man, on a realistic plane; we would not believe in a hero if we came face-to-face with him. The complexity of modern society, however, has created potentialities of tragedy not before possible. Tragic insights go deeper into human character; the new complexity of these psychological insights indicates new possibilities of human misery. The relationships of man to his surroundings have become at once more numerous and more intricate; society has emerged as an entity in its own right more concrete than before, and the emphasis on individualism creates a new tragic protagonist, a rebel struggling against society. A problem exists, however, with regard to the tragedy of social injustice; the causes of suffering are no mystery. They are explained away as effects of the malfunction of human institutions. Catastrophe on this level cannot be effective unless the author shows that the misery caused by social mores is really one of the many forms of the universal mystery of suffering.

The greater complexity of modern life has necessitated another change in the tragic form. The dramatic medium has given way to the narrative.

Only in the novel is there room for the new amplitude and intensity of the tragic analysis of life. "You cannot dramatize Proust," says F.L. Lucas.[8] This invalidates much that has been said about the content and form of tragedy. It consequently brings forth new problems for the artist as to what is now proper to the delineation of tragedy. Many answers have been put forth, none definitive.

Modern criticism has three new insights into tragedy. Two of them are restatements of more traditional views, the religious and humanistic definitions. Religion and tragedy both deal with the subject of man's relation to the universe. Says Henn, "Tragic evil becomes recognizable as the assertion of the will beyond the limits proper to the individual's relationship to his fellows and to his God."[9] He continues, ". . . it affords a more adequate solution of the tragic problems than can be found elsewhere. A return to the doctrine of Original Sin . . . affords both an explanation of the tragic flaw, and . . . the emergence of evil upon the tragic world. . . ."[10] This is a clear, if extreme, statement of the religious interpretation. It is at odds with any definition of tragedy that centres on human suffering without explaining its mystery. Not only is the problem solved in the religious interpretation, but it is solved at the expense of the dignity of man, the validity of his freedom, and the value of his individual spirit. The fact that man suffers proves his guilt, because God is just. There is no room in such a tragedy for a lesson in the integrity and capacities of the human spirit. It is a theory inconsistent both with the psychological interpretation of personality, upon which many modern tragedies are based, and with the intent of classical tragedy. Aristotle defined tragedy as an imitation of an action to arouse pity and fear; ". . . pity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune . . . ."

[8]F.L. Lucas, Tragedy in Relation to Aristotle's Poetics (London, 1928), p. 156.

[9]T.R. Henn, The Harvest of Tragedy (London, 1956), pp. 289-290.

[10]p. 289.

Henn asserts that tragedy ". . . moves on a lower plane but parallel to, the religious experience. . . ."[11] Muller, on the contrary, says:

> . . . tragedy begins as a challenge to the universe and goes deeper than the conventional religious spirit. Its characteristic irony itself implies that the ways of Providence are paradoxical, mysterious, possibly inept . . . . While they show how men bring about their own downfall, they often show too that their suffering is not wholly deserved, that it is disproportionate to the wrongdoing, that it can result from good as well as bad intentions, that the innocent may suffer too - in short, that man's fate is really tragic.[12]

For Muller, as well as many others such as Lucas, religion and tragedy are incompatible, because faith and original sin seem to deny the spirit of tragedy, which in turn denies a belief in divine justice.[13] To a humanist this has special implications. The humanist sees the protagonist as the tragic hero, the personification of the most glorious capabilities of man. For the humanist, the emphasis in tragedy is on the freedom and expression of man's mind. Muller insists that ". . . the tragic spirit is essentially humanistic. Although again it need not deny the interests and claims of God, it is centred on the interests and claims of man. It would not arise if men were convinced that their whole duty was to love and serve God."[14]

[11] p. 290.

[12] *Tragedy*, p. 18.

[13] "It is in the nature of tragedy that it should raise, directly or indirectly, the problem of divine justice. The answer may not be a denial, but it will not be a confident affirmation. Hence the question has been raised, and variously answered, whether tragedy is possible, in the full sense of the word, within a system of Christian belief. The hypothesis of this book is that it is not, since to the Christian, as to Plato, success and disaster are things not very momentous, and a drama that reaches its conclusion in this world cannot be complete." (D.W. Lucas, *The Greek Tragic Poets*, 2nd ed. (London, 1959), pp. 50-51.)

[14] *Tragedy*, p. 18.

Many humanists, even Renaissance humanists, oppose the idea that man is evil and lacks freedom of will. But the implications of the humanist position go even further. For the modern humanist God is beside the point. The question of obligation to a Supreme Power is secondary to the main interest, the development of man's human potentialities. The humanist may be essentially correct in his interpretation of the nature of the tragic hero, but he believes in the possibility of solving human problems by the power of human reason alone. This approach to tragedy is as limited as the religious interpretation. Tragedy has the power to make us aware of some force outside of our ken which is involved in human will and human fate. Henn says man needs an ". . . 'ultimate principle of meaning' . . . . It does not seem likely that such a principle is to be recovered through classical or scientific humanism. However strongly man may assert his faith in these naive approaches . . . he is confronted [with] . . . the residual fact of evil . . . ."[15] This criticism may be applied to social tragedy, which is humanistic in the extent to which it defines the problems of man and their solution in terms purely social and human. Social progress can, undoubtedly, be made and problems solved by human ingenuity. But with all the effort towards social amelioration, the "residual fact of evil" may be forgotten, and the message of tragedies which do not admit this mystery is not complete.

The third approach to tragedy is scientific or anthropological. It tries to give insight into the meaning of tragedy through a definition of its roots. Classical tragedy, according to this theory, is a development of prehistoric ritual and myth. It had its inception in the seasonal sacrifice to the fertility god Dionysus. The ritual scapegoat suffered

[15] p. 251.

and died as a sacrifice for his people to the gods. The perennial cycle of vegetative death and rebirth was a sign of the efficacy of the ritual, and the favour of the gods; it was also a sign of the accomplishment of the goal of the fertility ritual, the well-being of individual and community. The scapegoat symbol of this cycle was refined to the mythical fisher-king, who was killed, and reborn in the spring. The passion of Christ is said to be the supreme example of this ritual pattern.

According to this theory, classical tragedy (in attempting to define the human relation to the universe) shows man's ritual of appeasement of the gods, and his purification through suffering and the expiation of sin. The tragic protagonist is the king-scapegoat, who is sacrificed for the well-being of mankind. Tragedy in this sense is not merely a symbolic description of the human condition, but also a formula, a means whereby to change that condition. The anthropological theory does not suggest that Greek tragedy was merely a refined ritual. It does suggest that tragedy appeals to a basic stimulus in the human consciousness, a central myth of man in relation to the gods; and that it has developed from a universal ritual celebrating this myth. Tragedy is defined as an important focus of the Jungian world-consciousness. As a result it is a central explanation of the rhythm of life and of the connection between man and his destiny.

The objections against the religious interpretation of tragedy apply equally to the anthropologocal theory. Man's free-will is limited. His relation to the gods is defined, and so the mystery of human suffering is solved. Man may gain relief from pain merely by propitiating the gods who cause him to suffer. If tragedy is considered a valid statement of the human condition, then the theory of ritual and myth simplifies rather

than explains human misery. In the final analysis, ritual proves ineffective to solve man's problems, and the "fact of residual evil" remains. The mythic theory is not an adequate explanation of tragedy or the human condition. The thesis, however, that man shares in a universal search for well-being is a distinct contribution to the theory of tragedy, for it supplies a motive to oppose to human suffering.

CHAPTER TWO - THOMAS HARDY AND THE THEORY OF TRAGEDY

Thomas Hardy attempted a modern equivalent of tragedy in the novel form. Muller considers him to be ". . .[the] first great tragic novelist in England . . . ."[1] De Sola Pinto points out that "The novel in its beginnings in the eighteenth century was generally comic and realistic. Scott widened its range so that it could deal with poetic, historical, and even with tragic themes. But Hardy was the first great English novelist who constructed tragic works in the form of the novel comparable to the poetic dramas of the Greeks and the Elizabethans . . . ."[2] Hardy himself reveals his motivations.

> What are the prevalent views of life just now . . . the most natural method of presenting them, the method most in accordance with the views themselves, seems to be by a procedure mainly impassive in its tone and tragic in its developments . . . . There is a revival of the artistic instincts towards great dramatic motives — setting forth that 'collision between the individual and the general' — formerly worked out with such force by the Periclean and Elizabethan dramatists, to name no other.[3]

Hardy believes that philosophy has again reached that impasse where the human condition may honestly be described in tragic terms. He understands that the tragedy can interpret the contemporary relationship of the individual to the universe. From his writings it is possible to discover his definition of this relationship: his vision of life.

[1]Herber J. Muller, Modern Fiction: A Study of Values (New York, 1937), p. 140.

[2]Vivian De Sola Pinto, "The Wessex Novels," The Mayor of Casterbridge (New York, 1958), pp. xi-xii.

[3]Life and Art, ed. Ernest Brennecke, Jr. (New York, 1925), p. 76.

Hardy was "brought up in High Church principles." His early experience was bound up with the religious revival in England of the mid-nineteenth century. The Early Life reports lively if serious theological debates at the architect's office in which Hardy worked in his formative years. Later, he was one of the first to be affected by Darwinism and the new scientific philosophy which it stimulated. The new vision affected Hardy to such an extent that he says in 1890, "I have been looking for God 50 years, and I think that if he had existed I should have discovered him."[4] This passage indicates both the persistence of his vain search for faith, and his critical skeptical attitude towards it when he wrote his novels.

Hardy did feel that some belief about the universe was possible:

> The old theologies may or may not have worked for good in their time. But they will not bear stretching further in epic or dramatic art. The Greeks used up theirs: the Christians have used up theirs. So that one must make an independent plunge, embodying the real, if only temporary, thought of the age. But I expect that I shall catch it hot and strong for attempting it![5]

Though this belief might be transient, it was valid (in Hardy's opinion) for the time and circumstances creating it, and it was necessary as a basis for literary composition.

The first principle of this belief was a new conception of the Prime Mover. Hardy's idea of this Being developed and changed with time, but it retained one characteristic, the absence of His conscious benevolence. Hardy rejected the assumption that the justice of the

[4]F.E. Hardy, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy: 1840-1891 (London, 1928), p. 293.

[5]F.E. Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy: 1892-1928 (London, 1930), p. 104.

Supreme Being's morality is merely incomprehensible to man, and thus unquestionable:

> Pain has been, and pain is: no new sort of morals in Nature can remove pain from the past and make it pleasure for those who are its infallible estimators, the bearers thereof. And no injustice, however slight, can be atoned for by her future generosity, however ample, so long as we consider Nature to be, or to stand for, unlimited power. The exoneration of an omnipotent Mother by her retrospective justice becomes an absurdity when we ask, What made the foregone injustice necessary to Her Omnipotence?[6]

If an all-potent and at the same time beneficent God existed, unjust human suffering (a fact for Hardy) would be impossible. He concludes, "So you cannot, I fear, save her good name except by assuming one of two things: that she is blind, and not a judge of her actions, or that she is an automaton, and unable to control them; in either of which assumptions. . . you only throw responsibility a stage further back."[7] It is the former concept of a Prime Mover that Hardy usually envisions, a Being unable to act for the good of humanity because It is unconscious of man. In the poem "Hap," Hardy said that if this Being had been consciously malignant, he could hate Him. Knowing the cause of his fate and the odds against him he could respond with heightened dignity. In the present case he felt there was no appeal, no response to the Supreme Being possible. But there is hope, as Hardy points out, in the possibility that the Prime Mover is growing gradually more conscious of His powers and responsibilities, and that the lot of Mankind may change:

[6] Life and Art, pp. 131-132.

[7] Life and Art, p. 132.

> That the Unconscious Will of the Universe is growing aware of Itself I believe I may claim as my own idea solely—at which I arrived by reflecting that what has already taken place in a fraction of the whole . . . is likely to take place in the mass; and there being no Will outside the mass—that is, the Universe—the whole Will becomes conscious thereby: and ultimately, it is to be hoped, sympathetic.[8]

As for people, though under the illusion of having free-will, they really fulfill the Prime Will. Hardy explains: "We are continually associating our ideas of a modern humanity with bustling movement, struggle, and progress. But a more imposing feature of the human mass is its passivity."[9] He adds, in another place, "Is not the quasi-scientific system of writing history mere charlatanism? Events and tendencies are traced as if they were rivers of voluntary activity. . . . But are they not in the main the outcome of passivity acted upon by unconscious propensity?"[10] By "unconscious propensity" he means the unconscious Will of the Prime Being. Man is carried along by this Will, Hardy believes, and his own will is 'free' only when it moves in the same direction as the Prime Will, or when the Prime Will is not initiating any action at all. "When swayed by the Universal Will (which he mostly must be as a subservient part of it) he [man] 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. . . ."[11]

[8] Later Years, pp. 124-125.

[9] Thomas Hardy's Notebooks, ed. Evelyn Hardy (London, 1955), p. 30.

[10] Early Life, pp. 219-220.

[11] Later Years, p. 125.

Only certain actions, on this level, are initiated by human will. In each of us, Hardy believes, is a simple will towards personal happiness (such as the anthropomorphic theory postulates). Hardy says that ". . . whenever a mode of supporting life is neither noxious nor absolutely inadequate, there springs up happiness, and will spring up happiness of some sort or other."[12] Hardy feels that happiness is the one goal which mankind seeks automatically and impetuously.

This instinct towards joy collides with the tragic facts of the universe: man's will is not really (or only temporarily) free, and the Power which rules men's wills is itself blind to or unconscious of Its actions and their effects; both these things doom the human will to well-being. The final link in the tragic chain is man's own consciousness of his condition: he is aware that his will is enslaved by blind Necessity. Hardy noted in his diary,

> "A woeful fact—that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions, the nerves being evolved to an activity abnormal in such an environment . . . . It may be questioned if Nature, or what we call Nature, so far back as when she crossed the line from invertebrates to vertebrates, did not exceed her mission. This planet does not supply the materials for happiness to higher existences."[13]

This awareness in man most directly causes human misery. At the same time, man's consciousness is the only means to his reconciliation with the universe. Man faces up to the inconsistencies of his life by means of his conscious mind, and learns to bear his fate. Hardy believes his new philosophy is the only one consistent with the facts of the universe which have been newly discovered in the nineteenth century.

[12]Life and Art, p. 21.

[13]Early Life, pp. 285-286.

Hardy defended himself against the charge of pessimism:

> It must be obvious that there is a higher characteristic of philosophy than pessimism, or than meliorism, or even than the optimism of these critics—which is truth. Existence is either ordered in a certain way, or it is not so ordered, and conjectures which harmonize best with experience are removed above all comparison with other conjectures which do not so harmonize.[14]

Like all tragic authors, Hardy attempts to convey the truth of man's existence. If it happens that this truth is depressing, that it denies the possibility of traditional hope, it must not be labeled pessimism. Truth is above all value-labels, being simply what it is. All literature worthy of the name, including the Bible, reveals man's frailty and mortality. ("Man dieth and wasteth away"). Hardy says of faith, "the remedy tarrieth long." The remedy of religion is outdated, and the new vision of life is dark in comparison. Tragedy itself is always "pessimistic" in this sense, for man opposes destiny only with the force of his human spirit.

Hardy always insisted that his vision of life was not a logical philosophical construct but rather an impression of life as it seemed to him. As he says, "Positive views on the Whence and Wherefore of things have never been advanced by this pen as a consistent philosophy . . . of that universe concerning which Spencer owns to the 'paralyzing thought' that possibly there exists no comprehension of it anywhere."[15] Hardy's views are provisional because the true nature of the universe is unknown to man. Though it seems to be the best apprehension of the facts, Hardy's theory is no more than hypothesis; the tragedy of the human condition can only be suggested. It is well that Hardy thinks in this way, for he does not attempt to explain away the mystery of life, upon which tragedy is based.

[14]"General Preface," The Works of Thomas Hardy (London, 1912-14), I [Tess], xii-xiii.

[15]Works, p. xii.

Hardy's general definition of tragedy developed from his tragic sense of life. But his earliest conceptions of this genre indicate other, more traditional influences. In 1878, when he was completing The Return of the Native, Hardy wrote,

> A Plot, or Tragedy, should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions, by reason of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said passions, prejudices, and ambitions.[16]

This is a definition in the Aristotelian tradition; tragedy comes from the misfortune of "one like ourselves," the springs of action of the ordinary man; adversity is brought on "not by vice and depravity, but by some error of judgement." The tragic events develop as effects of the characters' personalities. There should be a causal relationship between their internal motivations and their fates. These motivations are, however, the ordinary emotions of mankind, and minor provocation for the "disastrous events" that result; herein is the mystery of human suffering.

Hardy speaks here about men as if they had some control over their destinies: "taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events . . . ." Hardy postulates some human power over his own life, but it is not a positive power over events. We can only use our consciousness to avoid unhappy events, and this is possible only when our awareness of the human condition is complete. Hardy thus suggests by his definition that tragedy comes through blindness of the universal situation, when the protagonist cannot avoid his fate.

At the time when he was writing The Mayor of Casterbridge, Hardy restated the definition: ". . . a tragedy exhibits a state of things

[16]Early Life, p. 157.

in the life of an individual which unavoidably causes some natural aim or desire of his to end in a catastrophe when carried out."[17] The main alteration of the definition is in the description of the 'tragic error.' What had been "passions, prejudices, and ambitions," however ordinary and human, become "some natural aim or desire," which somewhat de-emphasizes human responsibility.

In the next few years Hardy's concept of tragedy changed considerably. In an essay of 1890 he writes,

> . . . in perceiving that taste is arriving anew at the point of high tragedy, writers are conscious that its revived presentation demands enrichment by further truths—in other words, original treatment: treatment which seeks to show Nature's unconsciousness not of essential laws, but of those laws framed merely as social expedients by humanity, without a basis in the heart of things; treatment which expresses the triumph of the crowd over the hero, of the commonplace majority over the exceptional few.[18]

The whole emphasis of the tragedy shifts from the universal to the social. Society defeats the protagonist, not the First Cause. The exceptional individual must learn that the laws of the "commonplace majority" are invalid. For Hardy, laws and institutions which have previously had religious validation, become merely "social expedients" with the degeneration of faith in the old belief. Hardy contends that the social laws are created by man in society for the convenience of the majority, and crush the uncommon individual.

Hardy was not satisfied with this definition of social tragedy. He re-evaluated the social laws in a remark of 1895, after reading some reviews of the recently-issued Jude the Obscure:

[17] Early Life, p. 230.

[18] Life and Art, p. 77.

> Tragedy may be created by an opposing environment either of things inherent in the universe, or of human institutions. If the former be the means exhibited and deplored, the writer is regarded as impious; if the latter, as subversive and dangerous; when all the while he may never have questioned the necessity or urged the non-necessity of either . . . .[19]

The change in his definition is obvious: Hardy no longer debates the necessity of social regulations any more than the necessity of universal laws. He must now consider human institutions to be more direct expressions of the Universal Will. Exactness of definition is important for Hardy. Only through awareness of the human condition can man escape the worst effects of tragedy. Hardy's new insight into the effects of the society on human suffering makes it imperative for him to define the relationship of the social mores to the universe as clearly as possible.

Hardy avoids the danger of social tragedy by defining the social mores as equally expressions of the Divine Will, though one removed from direct influence. Some critics consider this position as impossible for tragedy, since there is no distinction between society and individuals; both seem to be mechanical expressions of the Prime Will, and the struggle between them seems to have no real significance. Hardy must show in his tragedy that the suffering inflicted by society is meaningful to man. He must convince his audience that the struggle between the individual and institutions is a part of the traditional struggle of man in the universe, and that man's freedom and dignity of spirit are at stake. He must show that social tragedy can also teach a traditional tragic lesson, and a universal one.

The discussion of Thomas Hardy's tragedies will be limited to four of his novels which conform most closely to the concept of tragedy, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess of the

[19]Later Years, p. 44.

d'Urbervilles, and Jude the Obscure. Other Wessex novels contain tragic themes and characters, which was inevitable, given Hardy's vision of the human condition. But the novels chosen are the ones most clearly intended as formal tragedies, in which the interest is centred on the illustration of the tragic lesson. A comprehensive critical analysis of the literary value of each novel will not be attempted. Its tragic content will be investigated and evaluated.

CHAPTER III THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE, A TRAGEDY OF PASSION AND REASON

Hardy's first published attempt at formal tragedy was The Return of the Native (1878). He was escaping from the limitations of topicality which characterize his earlier novels. The Early Life reports Hardy's reaction to adverse reviews of The Hand of Ethelberta, published just previously.

> It was, in fact, thirty years too soon for a Comedy of Society of that kind—just as The Poor Man and the Lady had been too soon for a socialist story, and as other of his writings—in prose and verse—were too soon for their date.[1]

The alternate was a more universal theme, which would not be dated, and he turned to tragedy. His first definition of tragedy in 1878 reveals the new direction his writing was to take.

> A Plot, or Tragedy, should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions, by reason of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said passions, prejudices, and ambitions.[2]

This definition was considered in the second chapter as Aristotelian. Believable characters, notwithstanding a consciousness of their tragic situation, fail to avoid the consequences of the situation; a causal sequence of events leads from the failings of the protagonists to their tragic ends.

In The Return of the Native, Hardy demonstrates this conception. It is a tragedy of ordinary human motivations and impulses; the events move inevitably from these causes to the tragic climax. The

[1] Early Life, p. 143.

[2] Early Life, p. 157.

plot is tightly organized, and avoiding enticing side-paths, Hardy concentrates on the development of necessary themes and tensions. In this novel, as the definition suggests, Hardy focuses on the tragedy of character. He attempts a modern analysis of universal personality characteristics, and illustrates how these emotions, temperaments, and ambitions can culminate in disaster. Tragedy results directly from actual flaws of personality; or follows from emotions and ambitions not intrinsically censurable, but incapable of satisfaction; or it comes about through the clash of dissimilar personalities. This treatment of the tragic theme seems to demonstrate successfully its lesson—the dignity and value of suffering man.

The philosophical questions of human guilt and value are not at stake with the secondary characters as they are with the main protagonists, Wildeve, Eustacia Vye, and Clym Yeobright. The subsidiary characters are foils against which each protagonist plays out his fate, and also instruments of destiny's intentions on the protagonists.

The most consistent driving force of Damon Wildeve's character is desire, as he admits at the start:

'. . . the curse of inflammability is upon me, and I must live under it, and take any snub from a woman. It has brought me down from engineering to innkeeping: what lower stage it has in store for me I have yet to learn.'[3]

Wildeve will learn that this flaw leads inevitably to his downfall. The extraordinary physical attractiveness of Eustacia Vye leads him on. His desire for her never leaves him, whatever the circumstances, and thus he repeats the same tragic mistake of returning to her with monotonous regularity.

[3]Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native (London, 1912), p. 71. This is Vol. IV of the British Wessex edition, The Works of Thomas Hardy in Prose and Verse. Subsequent references to the novel appear in the text, in this chapter.

Though they have not met for a year, and Wildeve is engaged to Thomasin, he comes to Eustacia in answer to her signal fire, offering to take her away. When he encounters Eustacia at the dance, he cannot resist her (though they are both married) and he begins to follow her once more. Thus he is with her when Mrs. Yeobright calls on her son for a reconciliation. Eustacia hesitates to open the door because of his presence, and calamity falls first on Mrs. Yeobright, then on Clym's marriage. Wildeve's last error parallels the first. He comes in answer to what he believes to be Eustacia's fire, and entices her once again to come away with him. As a result Eustacia's conciliation with Clym is prevented, and she dies. Wildeve's impulse of love in trying to save her proves his own undoing.

Wildeve's character is more complex than appears at first sight. His sensual nature might in itself have prevented rather than precipitated the tragedy, by satisfying Eustacia's sensual urges. His personality, however, is curiously incomplete. He acts on impulse and in response to external stimuli, never through logical motivation or foresight. He does not initiate the first reunions with Eustacia; he comes against his will summoned by her fire. In spite of his professed love, he makes no effort to renew relations with her. The next significant meeting (at the picnic-dance) is brought about by mere chance. A newly-awakened attraction for her causes his subsequent attempts to see her. Yet another Guy-Fawkes fire attracts him to their last meeting. Wildeve's character lacks consistent inner motivation.

Even his sensual impulses are inconsistent. He has no sooner made sure of Eustacia's love than he leaves her for Thomasin. Much later he explains the reason. "'It was a mere interlude. Men are given to the trick of having a passing fancy for somebody else in the midst of a permanent love, which reasserts itself afterwards just as before. . . .'" (p. 335) But his 'permanent love' for Eustacia is no more than this:

I have my times and my seasons. One moment you are too tall, another too . . . melancholy, another too dark, another I don't know what, except—that you are not the whole world to me that you used to be, my dear. (p. 97)

Eustacia is aware of these facets of his nature, his intermittent love, his incompleteness, and she never gives herself wholly to him. His persistence in persuing his hopeless love brings tragedy to both of them.

Wildeve's fluctuating emotions are partly explained by the fact that he rarely has an inner motivation. He is actuated by external impulses and by the course of events. Eustacia calls him "a cloud of common fog . . . . a chameleon." (p. 72) D.H. Lawrence describes him as ". . . shifty and unhappy, attracted always from the outside and never from within . . . . He is an eternal assumption."[4] When Mrs. Yeobright refuses to give him his wife's money, his obstinate impulse is to get it away from Christian. This leads to the estrangement between Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright that hinders Clym's mother from seeing him. Diggory Venn's shotgun attempt to stop Wildeve's meetings with Eustacia brings a similiarly characteristic reaction from Wildeve:

. . . the tendency of his action would be to divert Wildeve's movement rather than to stop it. The gambling with the guineas had not conduced to make him a welcome guest to Clym; but to call upon his wife's relative was natural, and he was determined to see Eustacia. (p. 322)

This determination in opposition leads to Wildeve's presence in Clym's house when Clym's mother wishes to call, preventing the reconciliation.

This mechanism enters into Wildeve's interest in Eustacia, which is aroused similarly by opposition. Witness the effect on Wildeve of Eustacia's betrothal to Clym: "The old longing for Eustacia had reappeared in his soul; and it was mainly because he had discovered that it

[4]"Six Novels of Thomas Hardy and the Real Tragedy," The Book-Collector's Quarterly, II, No. 5 (1932), 52.

was another man's intention to possess her." (p. 253) Wildeve's desire for Eustacia increases in proportion to the difficulty of its accomplishment. This attraction from the outside influences Wildeve while he is dancing with Eustacia at the picnic.

> Obstacles were a ripening sun to his love. . . . He had long since begun to sigh again for Eustacia; indeed, it may be asserted that signing the marriage register with Thomasin was the natural signal to his heart to return to its first quarters, and that the extra complication of Eustacia's marriage was the one addition required to make that return compulsory. (pp. 310-311)

Hardy makes it clear that Wildeve is not only a victim of an impulsive desire in reaction to opposition, but that he cannot escape it.

Hardy suggests a feature of Wildeve's character which helps to explain this behavior towards Eustacia. Wildeve is a romantic: ". . . he was at this moment in a delirium of exquisite misery. To clasp as his for five minutes what was another man's through all the rest of the year was a thing he of all men could appreciate." (p. 310) Wildeve prefers a perverse form of happiness in pain to any healthy love. The momentary interlude of dancing with Eustacia satisfies a sentimental taste in his character beyond the mere sensual enjoyment of Eustacia. This taste is again shown by Wildeve's ". . . romantic habit. . . of going out after dark and strolling towards Alderworth, there looking at the moon and stars, looking at Eustacia's house, and walking back at leisure." (pp. 317-318) His romantic sensibility is stimulated also by the manner in which he plans to see Eustacia after her marriage. "He merely calculated on meeting her and her husband in an ordinary manner, chatting a little while, and leaving again. Every outward sign was to be conventional; but the one great fact would be there to satisfy him: he would see her." (p. 332) Hardy editorializes frankly concerning his conception of the type.

To be yearning for the difficult, to be weary of that offered; to care for the remote, to dislike the near; it was Wildeve's nature always. This is the true mark of the man of sentiment. Though Wildeve's fevered feeling had not been elaborated to real poetical compass, it was of the standard sort. He might have been called the Rousseau of Egdon. (pp. 253-254)

Hardy certainly shows no sympathy with this romantic 'of the standard sort,' Wildeve's mind teems with sentimental tendencies towards Eustacia. She understands the nature of his love, and her awareness hinders his case with her.

Their love is doomed for yet another reason. In many ways Wildeve does not measure up to Eustacia. His blunders constantly reveal this fact to her. For example, at their first reunion Eustacia admits she lit the signal fire because she thought Wildeve refused Thomasin on her account.

'You do not think I would have lit it if I had imagined you to have become the husband of this woman. It is insulting my pride to suppose that.'
Wildeve was silent: it was evident that he had supposed as much.
'Did you indeed think I believed you were married . . . . Damon, you are not worthy of me. . . .' (pp. 70-71)

Near the end, when they discuss telling Clym about their involvement in his mother's death, Wildeve advises,

'Well, wait till he is better, and trust to chance. And when you tell, you must only tell part—for his own sake.'
'Which part should I keep back?'
Wildeve paused. 'That I was in the house at the time,' he said in a low tone. (p. 373)

Eustacia is aware of the motive behind his apparent solicitude for Clym: he is trying to protect himself.

Wildeve's tragedy results from his incomplete nature, his lack of a consistent personality. His character is a mixture of immature romanticism, fear, selfishness, and an impulsive reaction against opposition.

His incompleteness, his unworthiness, and his impulsive betrayals hinder his attempts to win Eustacia, which is his central motive through the book. He is doomed from the very beginning by his character flaws, which help to drag down all around him.

Two qualities of Eustacia Vye lead her to tragedy. The first is her romantic nature, which is a result of her ancestry and early expe-riences; the second is her great capacity for life and love. Neither of these qualities is in itself an imperfection, but in the circumstances of the novel they lead her to inexorable destruction.

Eustacia's romantic character is explained partly by her ori-gins. Her father was a Corfiote bandmaster and her mother the self-willed daughter of a ship-captain. Early memories of a gay childhood at the sea-side resort of Budmouth and her sudden banishment to lonely Egdon Heath also affect her.

> Thus it happened that in Eustacia's brain were juxtaposed the strangest assortment of ideas, from old time and from new. There was no middle distance in her perspective: romantic recollections of sunny afternoons on an esplanade, with military bands, officers and gallants around, stood like gilded letters upon the dark tablet of surrounding Egdon. Every bizarre effect that could result from the random intertwining of watering-place glitter with the grand solemnity of a heath, was to be found in her. (p. 78)

Hardy's conception of the romantic temperament flatters Eustacia no more than Wildeve. It is the judgement of the realist on the excesses of late romanticism. Irony and pointed reference mark this description, "Her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies, and tropical midnights; her moods recalled lotus eaters." (p. 76)

Hardy shows Eustacia's romantic attitude more clearly. When she discovers she has an unexpected solitary rendezvous with Clym, she pouts.

'I wish I had known that you would be here alone,' she said seriously, 'and that we were going to have such an idle pleasant time as this. Pleasure not known beforehand is half wasted; to anticipate it is to double it. I have not thought once today of having you all to myself this afternoon, and the actual moment of a thing is so soon gone.' (p. 242)

She desires a romantic enjoyment in anticipation to be added to the pleasure of an actual encounter.

Eustacia's sentimental temperament also helps to explain her "sudden fits of gloom," which Hardy refers to as "one of the phases of the night-side of sentiment which she knew too well for her years." (p. 76) Her sadness is in part a sentimental self-induced melancholy rivaling that of Wildeve; (see above p. 26). When her lover explains his desertions are through impulse, not desire, she replies, "'Indeed, I think I like you to desert me a little once now and then. Love is the dismallest thing where the lover is quite honest.'" (p. 96) Eustacia and Wildeve are drawn to one another by a common sentimentalism of temperament. She does have an insight into Wildeve's flaws of character, but her romantic passion counteracts this. "Whenever a flash of reason darted like an electric light upon her lover—as it sometimes would—and showed his imperfections, she shivered thus. But it was over in a second and she loved on." (pp. 73-74)

The romantic colouring of Eustacia's love is revealed when she shares with Wildeve the same sentimental impulses of attraction and repulsion. When she first realizes she may lose him to Thomasin, Eustacia's feelings for him return. "The man who had begun by being merely her amusement, and would never have been more than her hobby but for his skill in deserting her at the right moments, was now again her desire. Cessation in his love-making had revivified her love." (p. 109) Yet at the very next meeting, when Thomasin seems to have given him up, Eustacia reacts against him.

> Her lover was no longer to her an exciting man whom many women strove for, and herself could only retain by striving with them. He was a superfluity. She went indoors in that peculiar state of misery which is not exactly grief, and which especially attends the dawnings of reason in the latter days of an ill-judged, transient love. (p. 118)

Eustacia does not give up her romantic vision of love when she puts aside Wildeve. She simply replaces it with a dream of Clym Yeobright. Her appraisal of Clym is much less realistic than her evaluation of Wildeve. Even before Clym arrives, she conjures up a vision of him. She creates it out of her romantic needs and the tags of conversation concerning the wonderful young man who has made his fortune in Paris: . . ."That five minutes of overhearing furnished Eustacia with visions enough to fill the whole blank afternoon." (p. 127) The mere sound of Clym's voice supplies her with material for an extravagant dream. Hardy says, "The prefervid woman was by this time half in love with a vision." (p. 139) By the time she sees him at the mumming, she has worked herself into a flutter of sentiment.

> She had loved him partly because he was exceptional in this scene, partly because she had determined to love him, chiefly because she was in desperate need of loving somebody after wearying of Wildeve . . . . Once let a maiden admit the possibility of her being stricken with love for some one at a certain hour and place, and the thing is as good as done. (pp. 166-167)

Eustacia's vision of Clym bears little relation to the real man. She sees him as a romantic hero, her match in physical beauty and attainments, one who has experienced Paris, the city which symbolizes for her the exciting life she desires. Until their final separation, she retains the belief that Clym will take her to Paris. Clym is Eustacia's final hope in the fight against depression and complete disillusion. Her disappointment in him is the more extreme because she understands too late that he is opposite to all she thought him. For Hardy the antiromantic, the mere fact of Eustacia's sentimental nature makes her more vulnerable

to destiny: her romantic vision of life blinds her to the real human condition. Her unrealistic desires are bound to be frustrated, and lead to inevitable despair and death.

Eustacia's romantic nature is counter-balanced by her great capacity for life. Her energetic personality is conceived heroically, compared to the other characters. Hardy calls her 'the raw material of a divinity,' likening her to Artemis, Athena, Hera, Heloise,or Cleopatra. She has inherited the dignity of a King Alcinous from her father, or of a noble De Vere from her mother. In short, she has the grandeur appropriate to a tragic heroine; (Book First, Ch. 7). Hardy conceives of her as a ruler of men. She shows many masterly, almost masculine traits. "Her high gods were William the Conqueror, Strafford, and Napoleon Buonaparte . . . ." (p. 80); and further, "She seldom schemed, but when she did scheme, her plans showed rather the comprehensive strategy of a general than the small arts called womanish." (p. 82) In her relations with Wildeve and Clym she exhibits this superiority and masculinity. When Wildeve asks her for advice concerning Thomasin, she replies, "'But you must not sacrifice yourself to her from any sense of justice. . . . If you do not love her it is the most merciful thing in the long run to leave her as she is. That's always the best way. There, now I have been unwomanly, I suppose. . . .'" (p. 96) Her advice is realistic, and Wildeve is the worse for not following it.

Hardy compares the two again when they are discussing Clym's possible reaction to their guilt in his mother's death.

'If he were only to die—' Wildeve murmured.
'Do not think of it! I would not buy hope of immunity by so cowardly a desire even if I hated him. . . .' (p. 373)

Eustacia must take into account her superiority when she makes her final

decision concerning Wildeve, and even in the extremity of suffering she refuses him. "He's not great enough for me to give myself to—he does not suffice for my desire! . . . If he had been a Saul or a Bonaparte—ah! But to break my marriage vow for him--it is too poor a luxury!'" (p. 422)

Clym must also be measured against her. While he becomes resigned to his blindness and the furze-cutting, she rebels. "'God! if I were a man in such a position I would curse rather than sing.'"(p. 302) Neither man has any chance of satisfying her capacity for life or her desire for self-expression and experience.

'But do I desire unreasonably much in wanting what is called life—music, poetry, passion, war, and all the beating and pulsing that is going on in the great arteries of the world? That was the shape of my youthful dream; but I did not get it.' (p. 335)

Her original vision is a wide one, embracing the whole range of social, physical, and intellectual experience. The aridness of her surroundings defeats her; and these men do not measure up to her; they cannot help her escape. Her gloom and melancholy are far from exclusively romantic sentiments. The deadening influence of Egdon plunges her into loneliness and despair. The heath represents destiny in her mind, the Supreme Will ruling humanity, Which detains her in the wilderness wasting her life. Egdon plays both Zeus and Rock to her Prometheus. "'Tis my cross, my shame, and will be my death!'" she says prophetically. (p. 98) Her hatred of the heath symbolizes her rebellion against the destiny that chains her.

But celestial imperiousness, love, wrath, and fervour had proved to be somewhat thrown away on netherward Egdon. Her power was limited, and the consciousness of this limitation had biassed her development. Egdon was her Hades. . . . A true Tartarean dignity sat upon her brow, and not factitiously or with marks of constraint, for it had grown in her with years. (p. 77)

Eustacia is the true Promethean, as Clym calls her: earth-bound, aware both of her capacities and her limitations. But she revolts against her

limitations and always tries to express her personality and desires. The suffering that destiny inflicts merely stamps her with increased dignity.

Eustacia is thus the tragic heroine of the novel, fighting her own romantic tendencies with logic, and her awareness of man's condition by her refusal to accept life on the terms offered. As all tragic heroes must, she loses in the end; her final answer is suicide. She attempts through love to counteract the melancholy effects of the heath, and thus delay her fate.

> To be loved to madness—such was her great desire. Love was to her the one cordial which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than for any particular lover. (p. 79)

Passion is merely a feint to gain time, not a permanent emotion, because she believes that love is fleeting. A permanent love might resolve the uncertainty of fortune; a suitable lover might complete her life, but Fate seems to deny her completion.

> She could show a most reproachful look at times, but it was directed less against human beings than against. . . Destiny, through whose interference she dimly fancied it arose that love alighted on gliding youth—that any love she might win would sink simultaneously with the sand in the glass. She thought of it with an ever-growing consciousness of cruelty, which tended to breed actions of reckless unconventionality, framed to snatch a year's, a week's, even an hour's passion from anywhere while it could be won. . . and where was a mouth matching hers to be found? (p. 79)

Her love of Clym overturns all her notions about the evil fate of love. "Her past was a blank, her life had begun" with Clym.(p. 220). She believes she has finally found a match for herself, an escape from her fate.

> Eustacia went with her head thrown back fancifully, a certain glad and voluptuous air of triumph pervading her eyes at having won by her own unaided self a man who was her perfect compliment in attainments, appearance, and age." (p. 243)

She instinctively fears that this passion may end like the rest. Because of these reservations, she even puts him off when he first proposes.

"'I see your face in every scene of my dreams, and hear your voice in every sound. I wish I did not. It is too much what I feel. They say such love never lasts. . . .'" (p. 236) She also fears their incompatibility, and considers rightly that he does not understand her. "'Ah! but you don't know what you have got in me,' she said. 'Sometimes I think there is not that in Eustacia Vye which will make a good homespun wife.'" (p. 234) In the end she forgets her weak misgivings, because she herself misunderstands Clym. She gives herself completely to this new love, on which her fate hinges. But her first instincts are right, the passion fades. Destiny works through the personalities of the protagonists, and Clym shows he is no match for her. He becomes the very opposite of her dream of him.

> 'I suppose when you first saw me and heard about me I was wrapped in a sort of golden halo to your eyes—a man who knew glorious things, and had mixed in brilliant scenes—in short, an adorable, delightful, distracting hero?'
> 'Yes,' she said, sobbing.
> 'And now I am a poor fellow in brown leather.' (pp. 303-304)

Her doom is sealed from the start. Her capacities cannot be realized on Egdon.

The final irony is that she owes her character to the very Power who denies its fulfilment. "Where did her dignity come from. . . . Perhaps it was the gift of heaven--a happy convergence of natural laws." (p. 78) Another indication is, "Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled thereto." (p. 77) Nature, in the guise of Egdon, also reinforces in her the dignity with which it had created her. "Among other things opportunity had of late years been denied her of learning to be undignified, for she lived lonely. . . . A narrow life in Budmouth might have completely demeaned her." (pp. 78-79) Hardy suggests that the Supreme Power has a deeper influence on man than merely the rule of their destinies. It controls the very modes of their creation. The Power has

haphazardly endowed Eustacia with the very capacities with which she carries out her revolt; at the same time It prevents the fulfilment of these capacities by placing her in Egdon.

Eustacia must ultimately admit to herself the hopelessness of the situation in which she has been trapped from the beginning. She reverts to the belief in a malignant Power she had discarded when Clym came. Her education teaches her the impossibility of joy, but not the unconsciousness of the Power's opposition to her.

> 'I must drag on next year, as I have dragged on this year, and the year after that as before. How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! . . . I do not deserve my lot!' she cried in a frenzy of bitter revolt. 'O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!' (p. 422)

Her final act of rebellion is to commit suicide, refusing life on these terms. She captures forever her dignity in defeat.

> They stood silently looking upon Eustacia, who, as she lay there still in death, eclipsed all her living phases. . . . The expression of her finely carved mouth was pleasant, as if a sense of dignity had just compelled her to leave off speaking. (p. 448)

Eustacia embodies the essence of tragedy. Hardy through her shows his awareness of the injustice of the relationship of man to the Supreme Power, and the heights to which man at his best can rise in this situation. The tragic climax is consistent with the heroine's character, reinforcing her dignity and revolt against her fate.

Clym Yeobright's influence tends to precipitate tragedy in the lives of the other characters. The Native returns only after the tragic problems have been set up. The situation among Eustacia, Wildeve,

and Thomasin has reached an impasse; the lives of Diggory and Mrs. Yeobright are also suspended without conclusion. Eustacia says, "'If you had never returned to your native place, Clym, what a blessing it would have been for you! . . . It has altered the destinies of . . . Five . . . . '" (p. 325)

In Clym, Hardy also embodied the tragic lesson of the novel. Clym illustrates in his own way the struggle of mankind with its destiny. "He had reached the stage in a young man's life when the grimness of the human situation first becomes clear. . . ." (p. 222) Clym has become aware of the condition of man in the universe. He wishes to give up his career and teach the natives this lesson. Trying to interest Eustacia in his teaching plans, he defends mankind.

'There is no use in hating people—if you hate anything, you should hate what produced them.'
'Do you mean Nature? I hate her already.' (p. 219)

Eustacia also understands man's situation in the world. Hardy shows parallel characteristics in these two. He equates them in education and position as well, and Clym's handsome features compare favorably with Eustacia's sultry beauty. The chorus (in the persons of the natives) suggests their mating:

'. . . she and Clym Yeobright would make a very pretty pigeon-pair—hey? If they wouldn't I'll be dazed! Both of one mind about niceties for certain, and learned in print, and always thinking about high doctrine—there couldn't be a better couple if they were made o'purpose.' (p. 125)

Clym's love is the means of Eustacia's last attempt to escape her fate. His equality and appropriateness are essential to this role. He himself does not stand to gain as much from the relationship. It distracts him from his teaching ambition and separates him from his mother. What then attracts Clym? Hardy suggests that it is disinterested love. After the first meeting he is enchanted by her. "During his walk home his most

intelligible sensation was that his scheme had somehow become glorified. A beautiful woman had been intertwined with it." (p. 220) The power of Eustacia's personality and beauty awakes in Clym an emotion he has never yet experienced. "'I love you to oppresiveness—I, who have never before felt more than a pleasant passing fancy for any woman I have ever seen. . . . One touch on that mouth again!'" (pp. 231-232) The man of reason is strongly affected by the elementary appeal of the woman. His love continues throughout the relationship. He admits it despite his hatred of Eustacia for her part in his mother's death. "For once at least in her life she was totally oblivious of the charm of her attitude. But he was not, and he turned his eyes aside, that he might not be tempted to softness." (pp. 392-393) Very soon after their separation due to his accusations, his feelings overcome him again; "Echoes from those past times when they had exchanged tender words all the day long came like the diffused murmur of a sea-shore left miles behind." (p. 409) He makes the first overtures for her return, too late.

The same tenacious emotion is operative in Eustacia, though the other influences mentioned contribute to her feelings. In the midst of her suffering she still maintains, "'I married him because I loved him, but I won't say that I did not love him partly because I thought I saw a promise of that life in him.'" (p. 336) And at the end, waiting for flight or death, she admits her emotion as well as his importance to her.

> The only event that could really change her position was the appearance of Clym. The glory which had encircled him as her lover was departed now; yet some good simple quality of his would occasionaly return to her memory and stir a momentary throb of hope. . . . (p. 416)

Hardy presents a picture of two people joined by love and matched outwardly in attainments, philosophy, and appearance. Yet Clym and Eustacia are two of the most unlikely mates Hardy has ever created. Their love may be genuine, but it has no basis in sympathy of ambition,

temperament, experience, or central beliefs. The stronger their love grows, the worse effects it has on their lives. They are opposites, as Hardy emphasizes from the beginning. At the very first meeting they argue about resignation to life, and at the next encounter they are at odds over love of fellow-men, and the respective merits of the heath and Paris. They both understand the human condition, but Eustacia nevertheless embraces life, in the passionate instinctive tradition of the past; while Clym is motivated by his reason to a passive resignation to destiny.

> In Clym Yeobright's face could be dimly seen the typical countenance of the future. Should there be a classic period to art hereafter, its Pheidias may produce such faces. The view of life as a thing to be put up with, replacing that zest for existence which was so intense in early civilizations, must ultimately enter so thoroughly into the constitution of the advanced races that its facial expression will become accepted as a new artistic departure. (p. 197)

This difference is central to their tragedies.

Clym is handsome, but his personality contrasts with his physical beauty. His life-energy is limited, and his rational persuit of knowledge monopolizes it.

> He already showed evidence that thought is a disease of the flesh, and indirectly bore evidence that ideal physical beauty is incompatible with emotional development and a full recognition of the coil of things. Mental luminousness must be fed with the oil of life, even though there is already a physical need for it. . . . (p. 162)

Evidently Hardy did not mean these characteristics to be censurable in themselves. Clym foreshadows the human of the future, where Hardy's only hope for mankind lies.[5] He embodies many of Hardy's philosophical truths, and demonstrates the tragic dignity of man which emanates from the mind. "As is usual with bright natures, the deity that lies ignominously chained within an ephemeral carcass shone out of him like a ray." (p. 162)

[5]As Hardy says, ". . . the Unconscious Will of the Universe is growing aware of Itself. . . and ultimately, it is to be hoped, sympathetic." (Later Years, pp. 124-125.)

The clash of his thought-oriented mind with his external handsomeness causes his tragedy. Eustacia is charmed by his appearance, which promises a match to her own character. She is also described as a goddess, but of the senses and emotions, not the mind. Her handsome mate proves to be an ascetic. He has loved no one before Eustacia: "' I have never before felt more than a pleasant fancy for any woman I have ever seen.'" (p. 231) His love turns eventually from the physical to the ideal, his small portion of sensual energy exhausted. He shows a similar lack of love at the end, when he fears Thomasin's love.

> Every pulse of loverlike feeling which had not been stilled during Eustacia's lifetime had gone into the grave with her. . . . Even supposing him capable of loving again, that love would be a plant of slow and laboured growth, and in the end only small and sickly, like an autumn-hatched bird. (p. 460)

Even in Hardy's alternate ending, in which Diggory is not a successful suitor, Clym was not to marry Thomasin. In the famous note on page 473 Hardy envisions ". . . Thomasin remaining a widow."

Clym's ascetic personality reveals itself further. He lacks a sense of enjoyment of what money can provide. "'For one thing, my body does not require much of me. I cannot enjoy delicacies; good things are wasted upon me.'" (p. 207) Compare this with Eustacia's desire for"'. . . life—music, poetry, passion, war, and all the beating and pulsing that is going on in all the great arteries of the world. . . . '" (p. 335) The tragedy results because "'I thought I saw the way to it in my Clym.'" (p. 335)

Hardy compares Clym to a religious ascetic, a Christian disciple. "He was a John the Baptist who took ennoblement rather than repentance for his text." (p. 203) Clym himself says, "'I get up every morning and see the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain, as St.Paul says, and yet there am I. . . . '" (p. 207) Eustacia reveals the true significance of these references to her relationship with Clym.

'He's an enthusiast about ideas, and careless about outward things. He often reminds me of the Apostle Paul. . . . but the worst of it is that though Paul was excellent as a man in the Bible he would hardly have done in real life.' (p. 334)

Clym will hardly do for Eustacia, in any case. His good qualities turn out to be theoretical and unselfish. His rational ascetic approach to life prevents his fulfilment of the sensual Eustacia.

Even Clym's awareness of their differences cannot save him. He understands their incongruity even before their marriage.

'You are ambitious, Eustacia—no, not exactly ambitious, luxurious. I ought to be of the same vein, to make you happy, I suppose. And yet, far from that, I could live and die in a hermitage here, with proper work to do.' There was that in his tone which implied distrust of his position as a solicitous lover, a doubt if he were acting fairly towards one whose tastes touched his own only at rare and infrequent points. (p. 235)

Clym misjudges the capacity of their love to overcome these differences, and pain and tragedy result for both of them.

Clym's resignation to life also hinders the affair. When Eustacia expresses her rebellion against the Supreme will at her first meeting with Clym, explaining she seeks excitement to shake off the depression of life, Clym answers, "'That's a cause of depression a good many have to put up with.'" (p. 170) This seemingly innocent dialogue, which discloses his rationally-inspired resignation, appears again at the turning-point of their relationship, when Eustacia actually sees Clym practicing his philosophy. Confronted with a real furze-cutter rather than a make-believe prince, she reacts strongly:

'Even had you felt careless about your own affliction, you might have refrained from singing out of sheer pity for mine. God! if I were a man in such a position I would curse rather than sing.' Yeobright placed his hand upon her arm. 'Now don't you suppose, my inexperienced girl, that I cannot rebel, in high Promethean fashion, against the gods and fate as well as you. . . . But the more I see of life the more do I perceive that there is nothing particularly great in its greatest walks, and therefore nothing particularly small in mine of furze-cutting.' (pp. 301-302)

The debasing occupation symbolizes Clym's whole attitude to life. It is not worth striving for; it means little to him. He can resign himself easily to his condition because he lacks ambition, sensual energy, and capacity to enjoy life. He has little to lose, and bows reasonably to the inevitable. Eustacia's whole personality opposes resignation, and her husband's attitude betrays her position.

Eustacia's experience confirms her understanding of the human condition. "A true Tartarean dignity sat upon her brow, and not factitiously or with marks of constraint, for it had grown in her with years." (p. 77) Clym's philosophy is built on reason and reflection rather than personal experience, and its practice leads him into error. His attitude towards the heath symbolzes this tragic error. Hardy describes this relationship when he introduces Clym.

> If anyone knew the heath well it was Clym. He was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, and with its odours. He might be said to be its product. His eyes had first opened thereon; with its appearance all the first images of his memory were mingled....Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath, and translate them into loves, and you have the heart of Clym. He gazed upon the wide prospect as he walked, and was glad. (p. 205)

The heath moulds Clym as it has influenced Eustacia. Eustacia, however, understands it because she has had something to compare with it in early youth. Without such early experience, his feelings towards it are unmixed. The heath represents a loved mentor, his whole world. His critical attitude during his year in Paris prevented any new knowledge from disturbing his love. He has not yet suffered at the hand of Egdon; so he is unaware of its darker aspect. His suffering is theoretical and for the whole human race, because his ego has not been disturbed.

> Yeobright loved his kind. . . . He wished to raise the class at the expense of individuals rather than individuals at the expense of the class. What was more, he was ready to be the first unit sacrificed. (p. 203)

In one sense Clym's attitude is admirable. He has not come to grips with his personal destiny, however. D.H. Lawrence harshly censures Clym. "What is Clym's altruism but a deep, very subtle cowardice, that makes him shirk his own being whilst apparently acting nobly. . . ."[6] There is no question in Hardy's mind about the nobility of Clym's ambition; Lawrence does point out, however, Clym's neglect of necessary personal development. Before the end, Clym goes through his Odyssey of suffering and discovery, through experience learning of the universal aspects of the heath. He discovers the unconscious and careless influence of the Supreme will on human affairs. His first lesson comes when he arranges to marry Eustacia and then realizes the implications of the hasty affair. It is the first time that he cannot exercise his own will over his destiny, his first experience of an Influence not necessarily benign.

> As he watched, the dead flat of the scenery overpowered him. . . . There was something in its oppresive horizontality which too much reminded him of the arena of life; it gave him a sense of bare equality with, and no superiority to, a single living thing under the sun. (p. 245)

Clym begins to understand the relationship between Egdon and the Supreme Power. He feels suddenly strange in the heath he has known so well, because he realizes that the Power is unconscious of any of Its creations, which all share the same chances under Its influence. Never again in the novel does he express his naive love for the heath. Even during his rural idyll with Eustacia, ". . . the heath and changes of weather were quite blotted out from their eyes for the present" (p. 283).

[6]"Six Novels," p. 51.

The climax of Clym's suffering comes at his discovery of his wife's complicity in his mother's death. His first response is natural, "'may all murderesses get the torment they deserve!'" (p. 384) Eustacia fears just this response. "'If he finds it out he must surely kill me, for nothing else will be in proportion to his feelings now.'" (pp. 372-373) But the Supreme Will again overpowers Clym's volition, through his realization of Its immensity and unconsciousness of good and evil.

> The strangest deeds were possible to his mood. But they were not possible to his situation. Instead of there being before him the pale face of Eustacia, and a masculine shape unknown, there was only the imperturbable countenance of the heath, which having defied the cataclysmal onsets of centuries, reduced to insignificance by its seamed and antique features the wildest turmoil of a single man. (p. 384)

Clym goes through a purgatory of personal discovery before he can understand the true nature and cause of man's condition. He pays a high price for his knowledge—the destruction of his ambition and of both the women he loves. When he has passed through, however, he reacts against his theoretically-held belief in the unfairness of human suffering. He reverts to a faith in Divine justice and in his own guilt. In his first agony he cries, "'If there is any justice in God let Him kill me now. He has nearly blinded me, but that is not enough. If He would only strike me with more pain I would believe in him forever!'" (p. 369) Later, when Eustacia dies, he considers more calmly.

> 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. But that he and his had been sarcastically and pitilessly handled in having such irons thrust into their souls he did not maintain long. It is usually so, except with the sternest of men. Human beings, in their generous endeavour to construct a hypothesis that shall not degrade a First Cause, have always hesitated to conceive a dominant power of lower moral quality than their own; and, even while they sit down and weep by the waters of Babylon, invent excuses for the oppression which prompts their tears. (p. 455)

Hardy reveals here Clym's position in relation to Eustacia, the tragic heroine who dares to question not only the authority but the morality of the First Cause. In contrast, Clym neither apprehends the real nature of divine intervention nor keeps faith with his beliefs under stress. He has become like the majority of mankind. If Eustacia's stature increases in opposition to the Supreme Will, she also grows in comparison with this representative of average man.

What Clym considers the judgement of a just God, and Eustacia thinks of as the non-benevolent will of 'some indistinct colossal Prince of the World,' is really the action of the Supreme Power producing tragedy inevitably out of character and situation. Clym's character makes him completely unsuited to Eustacia. Furthermore, his repudiation of ambition for a career, and assumption of the call to teach, lead him to financial and physical disaster. Thus his love and marriage are doomed. He also wishes to cherish his mother's affection, but the strong bond between mother and son is bound to be cut by his ambition and desire. Clym realizes at the start the incongruity of his ambitions.

> Three antagonistic growths had to be kept alive: his mother's trust in him, his plan for becoming a teacher, and Eustacia's happiness. His fervid nature could not afford to relinquish one of these, though two were as many as he could hope to preserve. (p. 237)

But despite his awareness, Clym can in no way dictate or change his fate, or avoid his tragedy. This is implicit in Hardy's conception of the Unconscious Prime Mover, which apportions life, genetic inheritance, character, and experience, then pulls the strings directing men's interaction. Each person's measure of happiness or misery depends on what he has been made, and what other puppets of Destiny have been placed in proximity. Man's consciousness is free, but his will is chained.

Man's only remaining course is to value and defend his consciousness of his own worth. Clym cannot find the strength to do this in the stress of suffering. He abandons his earlier beliefs, blaming himself for what Hardy insists is the whim of Destiny. Even Wildeve, lacking any central belief, remains true to his desire, and gains the reward of dignity in death. Clym, unlike Eustacia and Wildeve, denies his philosophy, which is the central motivation of his life. Thus he survives illness and drowning to see all his ambitions fail, tastes bitterness and defeat, and concludes by preaching the defence of the Power which effected his tragedy.

Hardy has made a convincing case in this novel for the validity of his vision of life. In spite of man's consciousness and understanding, his will is helpless in a universe ruled by an unconscious Supreme Will. Man is part of the great creation of nature, and he experiences happiness or suffering at random with the rest of creation. Hardy considers the Prime Mover in Its unpersonified form when he states, ". . . we uncover the defects of natural laws, and see the quandary that man is in by their operation." (p. 197) He amplifies this point, implying that the suffering of any individual thing is caused merely by idiosyncrasies which make it stand out like a lightning rod to attract destiny. Hardy's definition describes such idiosyncrasies: 'human passions, prejudices, and ambitions.' This lesson Hardy illustrates from nature.

> At length Clym reached the margin of a fir and beech plantation that had been enclosed from heath land in the year of his birth. . . . The wet young beeches were undergoing amputations, bruises, cripplings, and harsh lacerations, from which the wasting sap would bleed for many a day to come, and which would leave scars visible till the day of their burning. Each stem was wrenched at the root, where it moved like a bone in its socket, and at every onset of the gale convulsive sounds came from the branches, as if pain were felt. . . . Yet a few yards to Yeobright's left, on the open heath, how ineffectively gnashed the storm! (pp. 246-247)

Clym and the trees are born at the same time and suffer from the same Hand. A characteristic frailty renders any object in nature liable to the onslaught of destiny. Each character in the novel whose personality is off-centre suffers in this way: Eustacia, Clym, Wildeve, Mrs. Yeobright. The very same scene is repeated when Mrs. Yeobright endures her last agony because of her too-tender heart for Clym and Thomasin.

> At one side of Clym's house was a knoll, and on the top of the knoll a clump of fir trees so highly thrust up into the sky that their foliage from a distance appeared as a black spot in the air above the crown of the hill. . . . The trees beneath which she sat were singularly battered, rude, and wild, and for a few moments Mrs. Yeobright dismissed thoughts of her own storm-broken and exhausted state to contemplate theirs. Not a bough in the nine trees which composed the group but was splintered, lopped, and distorted by the fierce weather that there held them at its mercy whenever it prevailed. . . .[The] trees kept up a perpetual moan which one could hardly believe to be caused by the air. (p. 329)

The almost human suffering of the trees parallels Mrs. Yeobright's own undeserved agony, because both are exposed to destiny's blows. The Prime mover is unaware both of its actions and the merits of their objects.

Egdon is the symbol of this Supreme Power, in the form of the forces of Nature. Hardy reinforces this common identity by universalizing the heath. It is not limited to Wessex, but embraces and harbours visitants from around the world, from ". . . A cream-coloured courser. . . the African truant", (p. 100), to ". . . a wild mallard—just arrived from the home of the north wind. The creature brought with him an amplitude of Northern knowledge. Glacial catastrophes, snowstorm episodes, glittering auroral effects, Polaris in the zenith, Franklin underfoot. . . ." (pp. 100-101) Egdon symbolizes the whole world, from the equator to the pole. It comprehends not only all space but all time: ". . . everything around and underneath had been from prehistoric times as unaltered as the stars overhead. . . . The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim." (p. 7)

Hardy identifies Egdon Heath with the permanence and universality of the laws of Nature, which for him means the Prime Mover. Egdon illustrates this changelessness which comments ironically on man's vain attempts at change.

> To many persons this Egdon was a place which had slipped out of its century generations ago, to intrude as an uncouth object into this. It was an obsolete thing, and few cared to study it. How could this be otherwise in the days of square fields, plashed hedges, and meadows watered on a plan so rectangular that on a fine day they look like silver gridirons? The farmer, in his ride, who could smile at artificial grasses, look with solicitude at the coming corn, and sigh with sadness at the fly-eaten turnips, bestowed upon the distant upland of heath nothing better than a frown. But. . . in some of the attempts at reclamation from the waste, tillage, after holding on for a year or two, had receded again in despair, the ferns and furze-tufts stubbornly reasserting themselves. (p. 205)

Egdon is an object lesson of the vanity of man's will in competition with destiny. Despite man's illusion of achievement and self-expression, he is doomed to failure.

The unconsciousness of Nature is explained by its permanence, ubiquity, and above all unceasing fertility which, as D.H. Lawrence notes, renders it lavish of its offspring, and careless of their fates.

> Out of the body of this crude earth are born Eustacia, Wildeve, Mistress Yeobright, Clym, and all the others. They are one year's accidental crop. What matters if some are drowned or dead, and others preaching or married; what matter, any more than the withering heather, the reddening berries, the seedy furze and the dead fern of one autumn of Egdon. The Heath persists. Its body is strong and fecund, and it will bear many more crops beside this. Here is the sombre, latent power that will go on producing, no matter what happen to the product.[7]

And so at the climactic moment when Eustacia leaves Clym, introducing their final tragedy, news comes that little Eustacia Clementine is born. Whatever happens to her namesakes or her parents, she lives, the continuity of life is guaranteed. The overwhelming unheeding progress of the Supreme Power is thus emphasized.

[7]Six Novels, p. 53.

The influence of the Supreme Will on human destiny is more pervasive than man suspects. It moulds our very natures, sometimes of incongruous elements, and our ambitions may be incompatible with our characters, leading to inevitable suffering. Hardy has performed a valuable service in demonstrating the new possibilities of tragedy inherent in the modern definition of personality. He is one of the first to bring tragedy up to date, to discuss newly-understood sources of human misery. He shows in Clym the common reaction of man to suffering. Furthermore, he successfully portrays in Eustacia Vye the tragic lesson of man's dignity in travail. She sufficiently understands her hopeless position in the universe, the odds against her, yet she maintains her individual rebellion. Eventually she carries her revolt to its logical conclusion in death. Luckily, Hardy did not insist on the human power of will implicit in his definition; 'by reason of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events'. Eustacia's very hopelessness adds stature to her position. Hardy stimulates pity, fear, awe and admiration, not by her suicide in itself, but by the example of her life, her rebellion and dignity in the face of unavoidable misery.

> Moreover to light a fire is the instinctive and resistant act of man when, at the winter ingress, the curfew is sounded throughout Nature. It indicates a spontaneous, Promethean rebelliousness against the fiat that this recurrent season shall bring foul times, cold darkness, misery, and death. Black chaos comes, and the fettered gods of the earth say, Let there be light. (pp. 17-18)

CHAPTER FOUR - THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE, A TRAGEDY 'OF DEEDS AND CHARACTER'

When Hardy returned to tragedy in 1884 with The Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge, he set himself a more complex problem than he had in The Return of the Native. In the earlier novel, a tragedy of modern psychology, Hardy attempted to illustrate his vision of life and the power of the human spirit to bear its inevitable misery. Hardy's philosophy of the imprisoned human will is a central thesis of The Return. Though Clym Yeobright lives with a sense of God's justice and his own guilt, Hardy makes it clear that Clym lacks the strength and dignity to retain his faith in man's innocence. Through Clym, however, Hardy tacitly admits a problem of human responsibility, though he is not yet ready to deal with it.

In The Mayor of Casterbridge Hardy attempts to treat this question, in the wider context of the traditional view of life. Thus The Mayor is a traditional tragedy in many aspects, both formal and thematic, as commentators have noted. Moynahan discusses the conscious biblical analogy of the story of Saul and David, to that of Henchard and Farfrae; and Hardy's adoption of a traditional theme from this story in Samuel I, that of ". . . the conflict between [the old and new] generations. This is a very ancient subject matter, one of the archetypal themes. . . in classical Greek drama and in Shakespeare's Hamlet and King Lear."[1] Dike points out specific

[1]Julian Moynahan, "The Mayor of Casterbridge and the Old Testament's First Book of Samuel: A Study of Some Literary Relationships," PMLA, LXXI, i (1956), 118.

parallels of The Mayor to Oedipus Rex.[2] Paterson refers to the typically Shakespearean view of the Natural Order which is a conscious overtone in The Mayor.[3] Involved in the tragic traditions mentioned above are the Hebraic and Elizabethan philosophies of moral order, divine justice, and human guilt, as well as the complex Greek attitudes to human responsibility illustrated by the Oedipus legends.[4] The varying possible analogies seem to cancel out any one consistent traditional thesis by Hardy. They all seem to play a part in his plans.

Hardy seldom editorializes in The Mayor concerning Henchard's relative innocence, whereas he has made it very clear by this method that Clym is innocent, that Clym's apprehension of his guilt is faulty. Furthermore, Henchard's error is objectively censurable, much more easily judged than those of the three protagonists in The Return. By this means Hardy clarifies Henchard's responsibility in traditional terms, though it detracts from the illustration of Hardy's view of the human condition. Why then does Hardy turn back to the traditional problems?

[2]D.O. Dike, "A Modern Oedipus: The Mayor of Casterbridge," Essays in Criticism, II (1952), 69-179.

[3]John Paterson, "The Mayor of Casterbridge as Tragedy," Victorian Studies, II (1959), 151-172.

[4]In an introduction to the Oedipus plays, David Grene suggests, "Sophocles is declaring that the sin of Oedipus is real; that the consequences in the form of the loneliness, neglect, and suffering of the years of wandering are inevitable; but that the will and the consciousness are also some measure of man's sin—and when the sinner sinned necessarily and unwittingly, his suffering can be compensation enough for his guilt. He may at the end be blessed and a blessing" as occurs in Oedipus at Colonus. (Sophocles, Oedipus the King/ Oedipus at Colonus / Antigone, eds. D. Grene and R. Lattimore (Chicago, 1954), p. 5.)

In this connection, Hardy wrote in his diary just before finishing The Mayor,

> . . . in these Bible lives and adventures there is the spherical completeness of perfect art. And our first, and second, feeling that they must be true because they are so impressive, becomes, as a third feeling, modified to,'Are they so very true after all? Is not the fact of their being so convincing an argument, not for their actuality, but for the actuality of a consummate artist who was no more content with what Nature offered than Sophocles and Pheidias were content?'[5]

This calls in doubt the validity of the traditional theologies, and shows that Hardy was interested in using his sources as artistic rather than moral models.

Some commentators feel that Hardy deserts his philosophy, to delineate in The Mayor a traditional tragedy of human guilt.[6] In reality, Hardy retains the view of man's condition he has always held.[7] He does demonstrate his knowledge of a mass of tragic literature of which his tragedies are the step-children. He portrays their philosophies convincingly, in order finally to point up their inconsistency with the contemporary situation.

[5]Early Life, p. 223.

[6]Paterson (see note 3 above) says, "Temporarily freed from the disabling humanistic biases of his age, exploiting a level of the mind to which his romantic sympathies and naturalistic assumptions could not penetrate, Hardy here assumes. . . the existence of a moral order . . ." (p. 152). He calls the novel" . . . one of the truly remarkable anachronisms in the history of English literature. Rejecting the disabling doctrine of the nineteenth century and exploiting the enabling doctrine of a time still capable of vibrating to the vision of a just and ordered universe . . ." (p. 172). This takes The Mayor out of the context not only of Hardy's other works, but even of its century. Paterson's article is valuable, however, for the delineation of many obvious traditional overtones in the novel.

[7]H.C. Webster says, ". . . we never feel that [Henchard] deserves his fate, the relentless process of natural selection obviously dictates his defeat." (On a Darkling Plain (Chicago, 1947), p. 148.)

> The old theologies may or may not have worked for good in their time. But they will not bear stretching further in epic or dramatic art. The Greeks used up theirs: the Jews used up theirs: the Christians have used up theirs. So that one must make an independent plunge, embodying the real, if only temporary, thought of the age.[8]

Just as he demonstrates through Eustacia and Wildeve the impossibility of the Romantic position in the contemporary world, Hardy attempts in his portrayal of Henchard to show the incompatibility of the old moralities of action with the modern apprehension of the human situation. In The Return, Hardy does not burlesque Wildeve or Eustacia; he gives these romantics consistent, believable personalities. As a result, their inevitable downfall is a more convincing comment on the anachronism of Romanticism. Likewise, Hardy presents in The Mayor an illusion of a world conforming to the old order, personified by Henchard's position, and reinforced by the traditional framework. Thus when the reader becomes aware of the new world (personified by Farfrae) intruding on the old and inevitably bringing about the downfall of Henchard, Hardy's lesson, that the traditional concept of man and Order is invalid, has a greater force. In The Return the illusion is limited to the lives of the protagonists involved; Hardy has further goals for this novel as a whole. He limits The Mayor of Casterbridge to 'the life and death' of Henchard. As he says in the introduction to the novel, "The story is more particularly a study of one man's deeds and character than, perhaps, any other included in my Exhibition of Wessex life."[9] Hardy focuses on one man's life and tragedy; the tragic thesis is only at stake in Henchard. Hardy thus permeates the novel with the traditional philosophy, using it as a background and frame for the action, as an almost poetic correspondence with Henchard's mind.

[8]Later Years, p. 104.

[9]Thomas Hardy, The Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge (London, 1912), p. viii. This is Vol. V of the British Wessex edition. Subsequent references to the novel appear in the text, in this chapter.

Hardy gives independent evidence of his real view of the human situation. He redefined tragedy in the year he was finishing The Mayor, ". . . a tragedy exhibits a state of things in the life of an individual which unavoidably causes some natural aim or desire of his to end in a catastrophe when carried out."[10] Hardy underscores circumstance and ordinary ambitions as causes of tragedy; he does not admit human guilt in this definition. In a remark concerning London dated the same year he shows why man is not guilty. "The people in this tragedy laugh, sing, smoke, toss off wines, etc., make love to girls in drawing rooms and areas; and yet are playing their parts in the tragedy just the same. . . . All are caged birds. . . ."[11] Man, despite the illusion of action and free-will, inhabits the cage of the world, impotent in the rule of the Supreme Power. What then is left to man? The sub-title of the novel suggests "the story of a man of character," which hints at both a consistency and a positive adjective to describe Henchard (as Hardy describes Tess: "a pure woman"). Hardy retained his usual formula of the human condition as the underlying basis of The Mayor of Casterbridge.

Two artistic and logical problems faced Hardy when he chose his ambitious scheme for this novel. First he had to juxtapose the two philosophies: to emphasize the old while ultimately showing the validity only of the new. Second he had to create a single tragic hero showing human worth in the face of suffering; yet in the end the hero's apprehension of the human condition is faulty. The success of the novel as tragedy will rest on Hardy's ability to solve these two problems.

[10]Early Life, p. 230.

[11]Early Life, p. 224.

Hardy's thesis in The Mayor of Casterbridge reflects his belief that, "When swayed by the Universal Will (which he mostly must be as a subservient part of it) he [man] is not individually free. . . ."[12] Michael Henchard is under the sway of the Prime Mover; thus he is not responsible for his actions. In this novel, however, the hand of the Mover is gloved. Henchard may be free of guilt in the sense that his will is not free, but his action of selling his wife is censurable, and he consciously feels responsible.

Hardy carefully illucidates this event. He reveals that the wife-auction is not the result of an unpremeditated impulse carried out in a moment of drunken stupor.[13] It is rather an introduction to Henchard's character, the result of many influences, and only the first of a number of errors following from Henchard's character. Hardy makes it clear that Henchard does not have a happy relationship with his wife. In their walk down the highway he pretends to read in order to avoid her company; ". . . his taciturnity was unbroken, and the woman enjoyed no society whatever from his presence." (p. 2) Hardy suggests various reasons for this.

[12]Later Years, p. 125.

[13]Paterson says, "The traditional basis of The Mayor of Casterbridge as tragedy emerges at once in the plainly fabulous or hyperbolical quality of its first episode. . . . Henchard's act of violence bears the same relation to the novel as the betrayal of Cordelia and the murder of Laius to Lear and Oedipus. Arousing such forces of retribution as will not be satisfied with less than the total humiliation of the offender and the ultimate restoration of the order offended, it will come to represent . . . the violation of a moral scheme more than human in its implications." (p. 153) Paterson apprehends the intention of Hardy to suggest these classical models, and also to introduce the question of Henchard's guilt. But Hardy does not indicate that the 'moral scheme' is operative in the novel.

Susan lacks sensual attractiveness. "The chief—almost the only—attraction of the young woman's face was its mobility." (p. 2) Henchard's unsensual character contributes to their incompatibility. Concerning his twenty years of separation from his wife, this ostensibly energetic man comments, "'. . . being something of a woman-hater, I have found it no hardship to keep mostly at a distance from the sex.'" (p. 89)

The same conditions exist when the couple remarry. Henchard asks Susan, "'. . . to name the happy day, Susan.' The poor woman smiled faintly; she did not enjoy pleasantries on a situation into which she had entered solely for the sake of her girl's reputation." (p. 94) Henchard shows the same lack of feeling: ". . . there was no amatory fire or pulse of romance acting as stimulant to the bustle going on in his great gaunt house; nothing but. . . resolves—one, to make amends to his neglected Susan. . . ." (p. 95) Thus Hardy emphasizes the lack of a sensual basis for the marriage of these two. The union has been, in fact, unsuccessful from the beginning. "'Mike, 'she said, 'I've lived with thee a couple of years, and had nothing but temper! Now I'm no more to 'ee. . . .'" (pp. 12-13) Their opposite temperaments prevent the success of their marriage. Hardy illustrates this. "'Seize her, why didn't she know better than bring me into this disgrace! 'he roared out. 'She wasn't queer if I was. 'Tis like Susan to show such idiotic simplicity. Meek—that meekness has done me more harm than the bitterest temper!'" (p. 17) During their marriage Henchard has tried to stimulate an emotion in response to his own passionate temper, but unsuccessfully. She is his temperamental opposite, unresisting and unresponsive.

Another reason for the "atmosphere of stale familiarity" surrounding the marriage is Henchard's thwarted ambition. (p. 3) The union has interfered with his social and commercial aspirations, central to his character.

'I married at eighteen, like the fool that I was; and this is the consequence o't.' He pointed at himself and family with a wave of the hand intended to bring out the penuriousness of the exhibition. . . .'I haven't more than fifteen shillings in the world, and yet I am a good experienced hand in my line. I'd challenge England to beat me in the fodder business; and if I were a free man again I'd be worth a thousand pound before I'd done o't. But a fellow never knows these little things till all chance of acting upon 'em is past.' (p. 7)

Henchard has considered separation from his wife before. Hearing him offer to sell her, Susan ". . . seemed accustomed to such remarks. . . ." (p. 7) She says, "'Michael, you have talked this nonsense in public places before.....' 'I know I've said it before; I meant it.'" (pp. 8-9) Furthermore, Henchard is not always drunk when they discuss separation. He tells Newson, "'But she is willing, provided she can have the child. She said so only the other day when I talked o't. '" (p. 12)

Henchard's action results from his unhappiness in marriage due to a cumulation of causes: the lack of a mutual sensual interest, differences of personality, his frustrated ambition. Yet he feels guilty of an isolated act. He also ignores the part played by Susan in the scene. When Henchard first shows his genuine intention to sell her, she shows her own interest in leaving him.

'Will anybody buy her?' said the man.
'I wish somebody would,' said she firmly. 'Her present owner is not at all to her liking!' (p. 9)

She agrees to part. "'Now, then—five guineas—and she's yours. Susan, you agree?' She bowed her head with absolute indifference . . . ." (p. 11)

Susan even threatens him. "'If you touch that money, I and the girl go with the man. Mind, it is a joke no longer.'" (p. 12) Newson also gets her assent. "' 'Tis quite on the understanding that the young woman is willing,' said the sailor blandly. 'I wouldn't hurt her feelings for the world. . . . That you swear?' said the sailor to her. 'I do,' said she. . . ." (p. 12)

Susan's action as she leaves is symbolic of her wish to separate, as the transfer of the five guineas denotes the agreement of the men: ". . . she turned, and pulling off her wedding-ring, flung it across the booth in the hay-trusser's face." (p. 12) Her last words and actions underline her active part in the separation. "'I'll try my luck elsewhere. 'Twill be better, for me and Elizabeth-Jane, both. So good-bye!' Seizing the sailor's arm with her right hand, and mounting the little girl on her left, she went out of the tent sobbing bitterly." (p. 13)

Hardy stresses that the woman acts under duress. Her decision, however, is based on previous evidence of their incompatibility. Furthermore, according to the formal logic by which Henchard judges, it seems shw has the choice, carries out the act, and should be as guilty as he.

Henchard, however, feels that he alone is guilty: when she returns to him, he asks her, "'Do you forgive me, Susan?'" (p. 85) He evaluates his actions according to a traditional morality which takes into account acts rather than the influences affecting them. "When he was calmer he turned to his original conviction that he must. . . put up with the shame as best he could. It was of his own making, and he ought to bear it." (p. 17) The traditional nature of his self-judgement is reflected in the form of his attempted expiation; ". . . he resolved to register an oath,

a greater oath than he had ever sworn before: and to do it properly he required a fit place and imagery. . . [a church and Bible]." (pp. 17-18) Yet Hardy considers his oath in this light: ". . . there was something fetichistic in this man's beliefs." (p. 18) Instead of trying to understand the real situation and how his own character affects it, in order to correct his error realistically, Henchard turns to superstition and abstention. Thus his errors are repeated, leading to his doom.

Following the classical tragic manner introduced by the opening scene, Hardy brings Susan back after twenty years, to confront the successful man. The furmity-woman also accuses Henchard about his past. Richard Newson returns as well, the third witness to Henchard's deed. Henchard's downfall stems directly from none of these events, however. Henchard quietly remarries his wife and gives Elizabeth a home. The furmity-woman's revelation of Henchard's past error only accentuates the downward trend of Henchard's reputation. His commercial failure has already been guaranteed by his imprudent business methods. "Socially he had received a startling fillip downwards [by the revelation]; and, having already lost commercial buoyancy from rash transactions, the velocity of his descent in both aspects became accelerated. . . ." (p. 251) The furmity-woman is only an accessory instrument of justice; in commercial Casterbridge, among his merchant peers, Henchard's business failure is the more disastrous to his career. If Henchard had not concealed his mistake concerning her parentage from Elizabeth, and if he had not impulsively lied to Newson, estranging his step-daughter, even Newson's influence on Henchard's life would not have been harmful at the end. Elizabeth says, "'I could have loved you always. . . . But how can I when I know you have deceived me. . . .'" (p. 376)

Hardy indicates clearly the meaning he himself puts on the wife-selling incident. By means of this first scene he emphasizes the traditional moral order and Henchard's guilt, so as to make his character understandable at the very beginning. Hardy notes the ostensible contrast between man and nature, as apprehended by the traditionalists and Romantics.

> The difference between the peacefulness of inferior nature and the wilful hostilities of mankind was very apparent at this place. In contrast with the harshness of the act just ended within the tent was the sight of several horses crossing their necks and rubbing each other lovingly as they waited in patience to be harnessed for their homeward journey. Outside the fair, in the valleys and woods, all was quiet. . . . In presence of this scene after the other there was a natural instinct to abjure man as the blot on an otherwise kindly universe. . . . (p. 13)

Hardy immediately points out that this natural and moral order is only apparent, only operative in Henchard, while the Supreme Power in its natural guise unconsciously initiates all events:

> . . . it was remembered that all terrestrial conditions were intermittent, and that mankind might some night be innocently sleeping when these quiet objects were raging loud. (p. 13)

Nature is as usual for Hardy a part of the Supreme Power, as all creation is a part of Him. Man is no more nor less than any other natural object; all are moved equally unconsciously. Man's apprehension of guilt or innocence connected with will is an illusion. In 1884, while writing The Mayor, Hardy said this in his diary:

> Events and tendencies are traced as if they were rivers of voluntary activity, and courses reasoned out from the circumstances in which natures, religions, or what-not, have found themselves. But are they not in the main the outcome of passivity—acted upon by unconscious propensity?[14]

Henchard persists through the novel in his erroneous apprehension of a moral order, according to which he judges himself and others.

[14] Early Life, pp. 219-220.

He wishes to remarry Susan and provide for Elizabeth in penance for his original error; as Hardy puts it, ". . . to castigate himself with the thorns which these restitutory acts brought in their train. . . ." (p. 95) His motives in marrying Lucetta include the expiation of his sin with her; "'. . . I felt I owed her something, and thought that. . . I would make this other one the only return I could make and ask her if she would. . . marry me.'" (p. 91)

Henchard's fairness indicates once again his application of the traditional morality. The most spectacular exhibition of this trait in him occurs at the meeting of his creditors after his bankruptcy. Here he is scrupulously honest in handing everything over, so scrupulous that ". . . he took his gold watch from his pocket, and laid it on the table; then his purse. . . . 'There, now you have all I've got in the world, 'he said." (p. 253) This shows Henchard's excessive striving for justice. He exaggerates it beyond even the wishes of his creditors: "We don't want that. 'Tis honorable in ye; but keep it.'. . . he took the watch to the maker's just opposite, sold it there and then for what the tradesman offered, and went with the proceeds to one among the smaller of his creditors. . . ." (pp. 253-254) Henchard alone judges harshly; only he clings to the rigid old morality. In the end his excessive judgment on himself and his friends leads him to his final destruction.

His guilt does not destroy him, but his apprehension of it. Henchard's reactionary blindness to the truth of the human condition is a subjective character trait. Hardy intended The Mayor of Casterbridge to be as much a modern tragedy of character as The Return, in which Wildeve,

Clym, and Eustacia all suffer to varying degrees because of their misapprehension of the real nature of things, as well as their other flaws. In The Mayor, Hardy insists, ". . . most probably luck had little to do with it. Character is Fate. . . ." (p. 131).

Henchard exhibits a greatness of stature and energy worthy of a hero; his uncommon qualities are recognized by the townspeople, ". . . they had voted him to the chief magistracy on account of his amazing energy. . . ." (p. 129) His character, however, is marred by an emotional instability, a lack of reason or understanding, and an ambition disproportionate to the other facets of his personality.

In 1885 Hardy suggested that tragedy is brought about by "some natural aim or desire," an ordinary ambition, "which unavoidably causes . . . a catastrophe when carried out."[15] The Mayor delineates the working out of Henchard's ambition to its inevitable frustration and resultant catastrophe. At the beginning Henchard wishes to be a financial success. Hampered by family responsibilities, he lacks the emotional stability and business acumen to achieve it. He proceeds to sacrifice his family to his ambition.

Henchard's ambition grows excessive. At first, he desires to succeed only in the fodder business, in which he is experienced. In the intervening years he covets a monopoly of the whole grain trade in his district and a high position in politics and society. When Susan returns.

> '. . . he is the powerfullest member of the Town council, and quite a principal man in the country round besides. Never a big dealing in wheat, barley, oats hay, roots, and such-like but Henchard's got a hand in it. Ay, and he'll go into other things too; and that's where he makes his mistake.' (p. 39)

Henchard has already made his mistakes when his wife arrives. "'Not but what he's been shaken a little to-year about this bad corn he has supplied in his contracts.'" (p. 39)

[15] Early Life, p. 230.

Paterson holds that the bad weather which impairs the grain (as well as the stormy weather that later ruins Henchard) is a symbol in nature of the Mayor's unnatural evil, and an agent to balance the natural order once more in punishing Henchard.[16] Hardy meant to refer to this old order, but only as background, to explain Henchard's own belief in his guilt. Hardy points out in the introduction that he uses "the uncertain harvests which immediately preceded the repeal of the Corn Laws. . ." as one of the realistic bases of the story. (p. vii) In those days, reports Hardy, ". . . the home Corn Trade, on which so much of the action turns, had an importance that can hardly be realized by those accustomed to. . . the present indifference of the public to harvest weather." (p. vii) Such uncertain weather (on which crops and profits depended) was bound sooner or later to cause conditions with which Henchard could not cope, despite his great energy. His unenlightened character makes failure inevitable. Hardy does use the storm as an instrument of Nature, but Nature as Hardy sees it—a manifestation of the unconscious will of the Prime Mover. Before its impartial fury fall those who fail to take shelter; the storms here repeat in essence their function in The Return of the Native.[17] Henchard becomes a "lightning rod" attracting trouble because he does not understand the real situation. The other important storm, which ruins Henchard's picnic, illustrates this point. Both men experience the same bad weather,

[16]"The specifically moral agency of this nature becomes most obvious, however, in the catastrophic weather that eventually insures the defeat and humiliation of the hero. . . .[The storms] enforce, as the agents of the superhuman, the powerful claims which Henchard's guilty humanity has flouted and abrogated." (p. 161) Paterson quotes in illustration the calm scene outside the tent where Henchard sells his wife, omitting here the sentence in which Hardy says natural order is an illusion, and man and nature share in pain and strife.

[17]See above, p. 45, ff.

but Farfrae prudently prepares a tent beforehand, while the impulsive Henchard takes no precautions, and suffers defeat of his plans. The small part played by chance in comparison with foresight in this incident shows Hardy's idea of the real forces operative in this tragedy: those of character. Henchard's idiosyncrasies of personality lead him through financial and social failure to final loneliness and death.

Henchard's impulsive temper also contributes to his ruin. First it helps to estrange his family. Susan reports that she has suffered from it since the beginning of their marriage. (pp. 12-13) Henchard's rumming at the fair brings on yet another tantrum, inherent in his personality, which precipitates the separation.

> . . . at the fourth [drink] the qualities signified by the shape of his face, the occasional clench of his mouth, and the fiery spark of his dark eye, began to tell in his conduct; he was overbearing—even brilliantly quarrelsome. (p. 7)

By controlling his volatile emotions for many years he fulfils his ambition for social and financial success. His temper still lurks under his calm exterior; under pressure of his difficulties it will eventually destroy the position he has achieved. For example, when Farfrae sets up in competition,

> . . . his voice might have been heard as far as the town-pump expressing his feelings to his fellow councilmen. Those tones showed that, though under a long reign of self-control he had become Mayor and churchwarden and what not, there was still the same unruly volcanic stuff beneath the rind of Michael Henchard as when he had sold his wife at Weydon Fair. (p. 129)

The Mayor's temper has begun to alienate the town-councillors, prefiguring his downfall, even before the appearance of his wife and Farfrae.

> Henchard was less popular now than he had been when, nearly two years before, they had voted him to the chief magistracy on account of his amazing energy. While they had collectively profited by this quality of the corn-factor's they had been made to wince individually on more than one occasion. (p. 129)

Henchard's growing unpopularity in the town and his business difficulties force him to seek help.

'Since I have found my business too large to be well looked after by myself alone, I have advertised for a thorough good man as manager of the corn department. When I've got him you will find these mistakes will no longer occur—matters will be better looked into.' (p. 41)

Henchard underestimates his problems, but he realizes his lack. He undertakes to employ Jopp, who could have helped him and yet not posed a threat to his position. The impulsive Mayor changes his mind and hires Farfrae. Even Farfrae can render valuable service, as he shows by giving Henchard the grain-purifying process. Henchard at first shows some understanding of both his own need and Farfrae's particular value:

'In my business, 'tis true that strength and bustle build up a firm. But judgement and knowledge are what keep it established. Unluckily, I am bad at science, Farfrae; bad at figures—a rule o'thumb sort of man. You are just the reverse—I can see that.' (p. 55)

Henchard's impulsive temper and pride prevent Farfrae from long helping his master, and without him Henchard is lost. The Mayor's decisions, based on emotion, force Farfrae to argue with him. When Henchard becomes angry at the tardy Whittle and insists that he come to work without his breeches, Farfrae interferes.

'Come,' said Donald quietly, 'a man o'your position should ken better, sir! It is tyrannical and no worthy of you.'
' 'Tis not tyrannical! ' murmured Henchard, like a sullen boy. 'It is to make him remember! 'He presently added, in a tone of one bitterly hurt: 'Why did you speak to me before them like that, Farfrae?. . . I've told ye the secret o' my life—fool that I was to do't—and you take advantage of me! (p. 114)

Farfrae's constructive criticism, far from helping Henchard, makes him angry at and suspicious of his assistant, and he forgets his dependence on Farfrae.

Henchard impulsively releases Farfrae for using exactly those abilities that the Mayor admired when he hired Farfrae:

'He used to reckon his sacks by chalk-strokes all in a row like garden-palings, measure his ricks by stretching his arms. . . . But now this accomplished young man does it all by ciphering and mensuration. Then the wheat—that sometimes used to taste so strong o' mice when made into bread that people could fairly tell the breed—Farfrae has a plan for purifying. . . .' (p. 122)

Hearing this truth, Henchard fires his assistant in a characteristic "jealous temper." (pp. 123-124) The rest is inevitable. Farfrae sets up a competitive business and capitalizes on Henchard's mistakes to climb past him, while Henchard sinks to failure. After buying grain at a high price in an attempt to force Farfrae out, Henchard sees the price fall drastically. He quickly sells at a great loss, owing to his impulsive misjudgement. "If Henchard had only waited long enough he might at least have avoided loss though he had not made a profit. But the momentum of his character knew no patience." (pp. 218-219) Henchard's impatient temperament thus contributes to his social and commercial failure, which lead to his doom.

Another source of Henchard's tragedy is his loneliness. Hardy explains, "He was the kind of man to whom some human object for pouring out his heat upon—were it emotive or were it choleric—was almost a necessity." (p. 142) Henchard has a compulsively gregarious nature; his impulsive act of selling his wife leaves him a prey to the solitude he finds unendurable. He refers to ". . . those gloomy fits I sometimes suffer from, on account o' the loneliness of my domestic life, when the world seems to have the blackness of hell. . . ." (p. 90) His search for companionship throughout his life is unsuccessful, and his final separation from his friends leaves him no alternative but death.

One of Henchard's 'gloomy fits' first involves him with Lucetta. "'While in this state I was taken pity on by a woman. . . the daughter of some harum-scarum military officer. . . . He was dead now, and her mother

too, and she was as lonely as I.'" (p. 90) The effects of this meeting are far-reaching; Lucetta becomes one of the instruments of Henchard's defeat by Farfrae.

Obeying his loneliness, Henchard next impulsively hires Farfrae. Hardy makes it clear that Farfrae attracts Henchard through something beyond merely his knowledge and capacities.

'You can see that it isn't all selfishness that makes me press 'ee; for my business is not quite so scientific as to require an intellect entirely out of the common. Others would do for the place without doubt. Some selfishness perhaps there is, but there is more; it isn't for me to repeat what.' (p. 72)

What it is seems certainly to be Henchard's loneliness and lack of family ties. "'Your forehead, Farfrae, is something like my poor brother's—now dead and gone; and the nose, too, isn't unlike his.'" (p. 54) When Farfrae first refuses his offer of employment, Henchard admits this to himself. "'To be sure, to be sure, how that fellow does draw me! 'he had said to himself. 'I suppose 'tis because I'm so lonely. I'd have given him a third share in the business to have stayed!'" (p. 64) When Farfrae accepts his offer, Henchard responds characteristically, becoming over-friendly as a reaction to his previous solitude.

. . . Henchard's tigerish affection for the young man, his constant liking to have Farfrae near him, now and then resulted in a tendency to domineer. . . . their habit of walking and driving about together rather neutralized Farfrae's value as a second pair of eyes [says Farfrae] . . . . ' 'Od damn it,' cried Henchard, 'what's all the world! I like a fellow to talk to.' (p. 104)

Henchard's abnormal affection endangers not only the business, but the relationship between the men; because it makes Henchard too sensitive to the necessary business criticism Farfrae gives him, and personally jealous of his assistant's achievements. Eventually, Henchard quarrels with Farfrae and fires him. Susan dying, the Mayor's lonely misery makes him reveal to Elizabeth Jane part of the story of their past.

Henchard's wife was dissevered from him by death; his friend and helper Farfrae by estrangement; Elizabeth-Jane by ignorance. It seemed to him that only one of them could possibly be recalled, and that was the girl. His mind began vibrating between the wish to reveal himself to her and the policy of leaving well alone, till he could no longer sit still . . . . 'Elizabeth, it is I who am your father, and not Richard Newson.' (pp. 139-140)

By so doing, Henchard hopes to draw from her a filial affection, to ease his empty heart. While searching for proof of his paternity, Henchard comes across his wife's letter, which ruins his momentary triumph by revealing that Elizabeth is not really his daughter.

Once again Henchard misunderstands the true cause of his suffering.

Henchard, like all his kind, was superstitious, and he could not help thinking that the concatenation of events this evening had produced was the scheme of some sinister intelligence bent on punishing him. Yet they had developed naturally. If he had not revealed his past history to Elizabeth he would not have searched the drawer for papers, and so on. (p. 144)

Hardy laboriously explains these details in order to make it clear that not Divine Justice but rather Henchard's own nature coupled with Unconscious Circumstance causes his suffering.

His attempt to overcome loneliness with Elizabeth-Jane frustrated, Henchard turns back to Lucetta; ". . . by an almost mechanical transfer the sentiments which had run to waste since his estrangement from Elizabeth-Jane and Donald Farfrae gathered around Lucetta before they had grown dry." (p. 171) Unfortunately, Lucetta becomes enamoured of young Farfrae. Henchard is foiled, however, as much by his own actions as by his rival's. Led on by loneliness, he tries to force marriage on Lucetta. "'You cannot in honour refuse me,' he said. 'And unless you give me your promise this very night to be my wife, before a witness, I'll reveal our intimacy—in common fairness to other men!'" (p. 226) Lucetta promises, but she is frightened off by the rumour of Henchard's sale of his wife. Afraid also that he will reveal their intimacy, she breaks her promise and secretly marries Farfrae.

'And then, when I had promised you, I learnt of the rumour that you had —sold your first wife at a fair like a horse or a cow! . . . I could not risk myself in your hands. . . . But I knew I should lose Donald if I did not secure him at once—for you would carry out your threat of telling him of our former acquaintance. . . .' (p. 243)

Thus Henchard's error that first brought about his loneliness now perpetuates it.

Henchard's actions drive away all those who might distract him from his suffering in isolation. When his business and political failures are added to his burden, he can no longer stand his solitary condition. In humility he turns back to Elizabeth, putting aside his earlier objections to her. She realizes his isolation, and befriends him despite his previous treatment of her.

'You have left me; everbody has left me. . .'
'You are very lonely, are you not?'
'Ay, child — to a degree that you know nothing of. . . And you will come no more.'
'Why do you say that? Indeed I will, if you would like to see me.' (p. 340)

Elizabeth-Jane does not judge him as harshly as he judges himself. With her help Henchard temporarily avoids his catastrophe.

His earlier errors catch up to him on Newson's return. Led on impulsively by the fear of losing Elizabeth through the delayed revelation of her real father, Henchard lies to Newson. "'But my Elizabeth-Jane — where is she?'" asks Newson. "'Dead likewise,' said Henchard doggedly." (p. 337) Hardy explains the action in terms of Henchard's character:

It had been the impulse of a moment. The regard he had lately acquired for Elizabeth, the new-sprung hope of his loneliness that she would be to him a daughter of whom he could feel as proud as of the actual daughter she still believed herself to be, had been stimulated by the unexpected coming of Newson to a greedy exclusiveness in relation to her; so that the sudden prospect of her loss had caused him to speak mad lies like a child, in pure mockery of consequences. (p. 338)

Henchard realizes too late that Newson's return has only been delayed, and that he has perhaps estranged Elizabeth completely by his foolish action.

In the classical tragic manner Henchard, all hope lost, tries to drown himself. He is prevented by the shock of seeing his own body floating in the stream. He discovers it to be his effigy, discarded after the skimmity-ride, yet he explains the incident according to his traditional belief.

> Despite this natural solution of the mystery Henchard no less regarded it as an intervention that the figure should have been floating there. Elizabeth-Jane heard him say, 'Who is such a reprobate as I! And yet it seems that even I be in Somebody's hand!' (p. 345)

Hardy means to show, by the comparison of Henchard's solution with the 'natural solution' to events, that Henchard entertains a mistaken idea of the Supreme Power's consciousness and benevolence. This has further significance to the tragedy as a whole. Henchard's attempted suicide follows the pattern of Eustacia's in The Return of the Native. Both have experienced complete denial of their goals, impulses, desires, hopes. Eustacia succeeds owing to her vision of life; Henchard fails because of his stubborn perpetuation of an outdated philosophy. His misjudgement of the Supreme Power's motives prevent him from rebelling against Him.

When Henchard discovers that Farfrae now wants to marry Elizabeth, he resists the instinct to keep them apart. "Henchard vowed that he would leave them to their own devices, put nothing in the way of their courses, whatever they might mean. If he were doomed to be bereft of her, so it must be . . . ." (p. 353) He controls himself for fear of losing her altogether. "He dreaded lest an antagonistic word should lose for him such regard as he had regained from her by his devotion, feeling that to retain this under separation was better than to incur her dislike. . . ." (p. 351) So Henchard shows the final unmanning effects of his mistakes

and of circumstance; ". . . the dependance upon Elizabeth's regard into which he had declined. . . denaturalized him." (p. 351) He reacts with a resignation that marks the beginning of his catastrophe.

When Henchard hears of Newson's return, he takes the only alternative to confrontation and shame by leaving Elizabeth. This is Henchard's renunciation of life, the final act of the tragic hero in the extreme of suffering and rebellion. Hardy's hero, however, is doomed by his nature to enjoy not even this consolation for his misery. Despite his resolve to remain away, he begins to hope in his isolation that Elizabeth will not reject him.

> Yet before he left her she had said that for him to be absent from her wedding was not as she wished it to be. The remembrance would continually revive in him now that it was not Elizabeth and Farfrae who had driven him away from them, but his own haughty sense that his presence was no longer desired. (p. 370)

In a moment of reason, Henchard understands the involvement of his own self-judgment in his fate, rather than the punishment of a just universe. He decides to go back to Elizabeth. "To make one more attempt to be near her. . . to ask forgiveness for his fraud, to endeavour strenuously to hold his own in her love; it was worth the risk of repulse, ay, of life itself." (pp. 370-371) Henchard (and Hardy)knows the stakes involved in his return: 'life itself,' that is, the sacrifice of the meaning of his life, his individual dignity. Elizabeth is his last hope to avoid the suffering of isolation; all other ambitions are dead.

What he feared inevitably comes to pass. Newson reveals Henchard's deception, turning Elizabeth against her step-father. When Henchard returns she accuses him.

'I could have loved you always—I would have gladly,' said she. 'But how can I when I know you have deceived me so—so bitterly deceived me! . . . O how can I love as I once did a man who has served us like this!' (p. 376)

Denied by Elizabeth, his last excuse for living gone, Henchard departs to die on Egdon Heath.

Hardy uses Farfrae, "the second character" (p. viii), as an instrument of Henchard's tragedy; he also contrasts Farfrae with Henchard to illuminate the latter's character and destiny. "Character is fate, said Novalis, and Farfrae's character was just the reverse of Henchard's. . . ." (p. 131) Their commercial war illustrates Farfrae's modern use of reason in comparison with Henchard's passionate impulses. "It was, in some degree . . . the dirk against the cudgel—and Henchard's weapon was one which, if it did not deal ruin at the first or second stroke, left him afterwards well-nigh at his antagonist's mercy." (p. 132)

Farfrae represents the blasphemous new world, the modern scientific definition of life, which has replaced Henchard's traditional order. Hardy reinforces this contrast most clearly by the incident with the new seed-drill that Farfrae has caused to be brought into town. This machine symbolizes modern man's attempt to rule nature. Says Elizabeth, "Then the romance of the sower is gone for good. . . . How things change!' 'Ay, ay. . . .It must be so!' Donald admitted." (p. 194) Science must triumph with Farfrae over the romance of tradition. Farfrae investigates the new in a dispassionate, objective manner; he ". . . was pushing his head into the internal works to master their simple secrets." (p. 193) By contrast, Henchard reacts violently against the machine and the upstart who is its co-symbol. "'The thing—why 'tis impossible it should act. 'Twas brought here by one of our machinists on the recommendation of a jumped-up jackanapes of a fellow who thinks—'" (p. 193) This reflects Henchard's belief in the old natural order and his resistance to the new ideas, which finally defeat him.

When Henchard vows to beat Farfrae commercially, he uses his traditional belief as a weapon against his opponent. He decides to consult a weather prophet.

> Henchard. . . read a disastrous garnering, and resolved to base his strategy against Farfrae upon that reading. But before acting he wished—. . . he could know for certain what was at present only strong probability. He was superstitious—as such headstrong natures often are. . . . (p. 212)

Mr. Fall trades upon Henchard's outdated beliefs. He impresses the Mayor of the county seat and the "principal man in the country round" by knowing his name! He also has the weather report prepared when Henchard asks for it; Hardy reveals "(The fact was that five farmers had already been there on the same errand from different parts of the country.)" (p. 214) In the classical prophetic fashion Fall tells only part of the future;

> '. . . the last fortnight in August will be — rain and tempest.'
> 'You are not certain, of course?'
> 'As one can be in a world where all's unsure,' (p. 215)

says Fall cynically, underlining Hardy's ironic treatment of the whole scene. This brings out Hardy's view of the uncertainty of the human condition under control of the Blind Will. To reinforce this philosophy, Fall's forecast proves essentially wrong. The weather turns sunny after Henchard, relying on Fall's forecast as a true apprehension within the natural order, has bought a disastrous amount of grain. The necessity of selling at a great loss ruins Henchard. Yet he clings to his traditional explanation of the events. "'I wonder,' he asked himself with eerie misgiving, 'I wonder if it can be that somebody has been roasting a waxen image of me, or stirring an unholy brew to confound me!'" (p. 219) Henchard does not realize that his mistaken ideas contribute to his tragedy by leading him to misjudgement.

Farfrae's course in this commercial battle is dictated by logic as much in advance of his fellow-tradesmen as Henchard's methods are behind.

> "Prices being low Farfrae was buying. As was usual, after reckoning too surely on famine weather the local farmers had flown to the other extreme, and (in Farfrae's opinion) were selling off too recklessly. . . So he went on buying old corn at its comparatively ridiculous price . . . ." (p. 218)

When the weather turns bad again, Farfrae's solitary course is proven right. "He had purchased in so depressed a market that the present moderate stiffness of prices was sufficient to pile for him a large heap of gold where a little one had been." (p. 219) Farfrae succeeds because of his reasonable modern approach, the opposite of Henchard's impulsive and outdated ways.

Hardy emphasizes his belief that the Supreme Will is really unconscious of good and evil (as apprehended by Henchard), by ascribing to Farfrae some characteristics paralleling Henchard's, and by showing that these do not inevitably lead to tragedy. Farfrae falls under the same heady spell of ambition, as he shows early in the story. "'It's better to stay at home, and that's true; but a man must live where his money is made. It is a great pity, but it's always so! Yet I've done very well this year.'" (p. 182) Indeed, Farfrae retraces Henchard's victorious upward climb; he enters the scene with nothing but his bag, and culminates his career in the Mayor's chair. He becomes a victim of pride in the flush of his success. His refusal to let Henchard join the council at the reception of the Royal Prince reflects Henchard's haughty attitude to the people when they complain about the spoiled bread. His tyrannical treatment of Henchard before the Prince repeats Henchard's treatment of Whittle which Farfrae himself had criticised. Farfrae defends his action in the same way Henchard would have, "'You insulted Royalty, Henchard; and 'twas my duty, as the chief magistrate, to stop you.'" (p. 313) The people come to dislike Farfrae as much as they had disliked Henchard, and for similar reasons:

> . . . it must be owned that, as the Mayor and man of money, engrossed with affairs and ambitions, he had lost in the eyes of the poorer inhabitants something of that wondrous charm which he had for them as a light-hearted penniless young man. . . . (p. 309)

They revenge themselves by the skimmity-ride. "'As a wind-up to the Royal visit the hit will be all the more pat by reason of their great elevation today.'" (p. 309)

Farfrae also follows Henchard's example by courting Lucetta. His reason should have told him that Elizabeth was the better woman for a secure and happy life. The chorus of townsfolk reports, "'. . . she's a sensible piece for a partner, and there's no faithful woman in high life now. . . .'" (p. 356) The same sensuous recklessness characteristic of Henchard's relations with Lucetta takes hold of Farfrae. "She had enkindled the young man's enthusiasm till he was quite brimming with sentiment . . . ." (p. 187)

Farfrae, however, does not suffer the effects of his mistakes as Henchard does. This invalidates the old moral order, and reinforces Hardy's idea of a Prime Mover unaware of the relative merits of men, or of their fates. Farfrae owes his escape from tragedy partly to his capacities which, unlike Henchard's, match his ambitions. Farfrae also works in sympathy with the modern scientific age, while Henchard cannot. Furthermore, Farfrae seems to be aware of the true nature of the human condition and able to act in conformity with his understanding. "He seemed to feel. . . about life and its surroundings—that they were a tragical rather than a comical thing; that though one could be gay on occasion, moments of gaiety were interludes, and no part of the actual drama." (p. 63) Hardy in an article published about this time said,

[Concerning] the prevalent views of life just now. . . the most natural method of presenting them, the method most in accordance with the views themselves, seems to be by a procedure mainly impassive in its tone and tragic in its developments. . . .[18]

In effect, Farfrae protects himself from Destiny while he persues his ambitions. Henchard's mistaken belief in the traditional order leaves him open to suffering when he strives for success.

. . . Farfrae's character was just the reverse of Henchard's, who might not inaptly be described as Faust has been described—as a vehement gloomy being who had quitted the ways of vulgar men without light to guide him on a better way. (p. 131)

Henchard quits his fellow-men by selling his wife and by his efforts for success. His traditional beliefs give him no light in his descent to death.

Just as important to Farfrae's escape from harm is the quirk of Destiny that comes close to bringing tragedy without striking. Despite his pride of position and the townsfolk's dislike, Farfrae continues his business successes. By Lucetta's death, he escapes the inevitable harm she would have caused him, and that she has caused Henchard. "He could not but perceive that by the death of Lucetta he had exchanged a looming misery for a simple sorrow. After the revelation of her history. . . it was hard to believe that life with her would have been productive of further happiness." (p. 348) After denying his love for Elizabeth (as Henchard did with disastrous results) he conveniently wins her at the end.

The contrasting fates of the two men emphasize Hardy's idea that Henchard's suffering is a result, not of his actual guilt within a moral order, but of his misapprehension of guilt, of his character failings, and of circumstance.

[18]Life and Art, p. 76.

In The Mayor of Casterbridge, Hardy again convincingly portrays his vision of the Force controlling the universe. He makes the town of Casterbridge correspond to a natural rural scene, in order to show the same impersonal natural laws at work in the town as on Egdon Heath.

> Casterbridge was the complement of the rural life around; not its urban opposite. Bees and butterflies in the cornfields at the top of the town, who desired to get to the meads at the bottom, took no circuitous course, but flew straight down High Street, without any apparent consciousness that they were traversing strange latitudes. And in autumn airy spheres of thistledown floated into the same street. . . and innumerable tawny and yellow leaves skimmed along the pavement, and stole into people's doorways. . . . (p. 65; see also p. 105)

Nature, of course, is a guise of the Supreme Will, which remains for Hardy an unconscious power. Hardy uses as background the traditional view of natural order and disorder, and he suggests a corresponding picture of the suffering of an evil city for harbouring a criminal.[19] The poor bread in Casterbridge corresponds with Thebes' bad crops; and Henchard's position in the town causes the trouble: "'. . . though Mr. Henchard has never cussed me unfairly. . . I must say that I have never before tasted such rough bread as has been made from Henchard's wheat lately.'" (p. 40)

But Hardy shows that the traditional characteristics are just overtones, and the suffering in the city does not derive from the people's guilt.

[19]Paterson believes that, ". . . in receiving and rewarding a man whose ancient crime has gone unacknowledged and uncorrected, Hardy's city has invited, like the Thebes of Sophocles and the Denmark of Shakespeare, the disapprobation of the gods. . . ." (p. 163) The resulta suffered by the townspeople because they have made Henchard their mayor are the very practical ones stemming directly from his bad judgement.

'. . . we be bruckle folk here——the best o' us hardly honest sometimes, what with hard winters, and so many mouths to fill, and God-a'mighty sending his little taties so terrible small to fill 'em with. We don't think about flowers and fair faces, not we——except in the shape o' cauliflowers and pigs' chaps.' (p. 60)

'God-a'mighty' is an anthropomorphism for the Unconscious Natural Force which affects all creation equally. This reveals Hardy's belief that, whatever their errors, people are really the victims of nature rather than sinners against natural order. Likewise, Henchard is a victim of the impersonal storms which bring about his defeat, and which symbolize the Supreme Power that deals him final destruction.

Henchard is one of the characters Hardy sacrifices in his novels in order to indict the old morality. Clym Yeobright was another, and Sue Bridehead will be yet another. Hardy destroyed more, however, than the traditional Order. He destroyed the character of Michael Henchard as hero; Hardy hints at the means at the beginning of the novel. When Henchard sobers from his night of drink during which he has sold his wife, he decides he must find her; he must ". . . put up with the shame as best he could. It was of his own making, and he ought to bear it." (p. 17) But it is soon evident that Henchard's methods to find his wife will be unsuccessful, because he cannot bear the shame.

The truth was that a certain shyness of revealing his conduct prevented Michael Henchard from following up the investigation with the loud hue-and-cry such a persuit demanded to render it effectual; and it was probably for this reason that he obtained no clue, though everything was done by him that did not involve an explanation of the circumstances under which he had lost her. (p. 19)

Thus Henchard loses the chance of righting his error because of his inadequacy to assume his responsibility.

When Henchard leaves Elizabeth after Newson's return, he repeats his faith in the ability to bear up. "'If I had only got her with me. . . . But that was not to be. I—Cain—go alone as I deserve—an outcast and a vagabond. But my punishment is not greater than I can bear! '" (p. 361) Yet in the end Henchard argues himself into returning to Elizabeth, denying his dignity and heroic stature. Hardy realizes the implications of such an action. He makes Henchard think: "But how to initiate this reversal of all his former resolves without causing husband and wife to despise him for his inconsistency was a question which made him tremble and brood." (p. 371) Henchard is a broken man from this moment.

This is the culmination of the frustrations and disappointments of Henchard's life. He feels that the marriage of his victorious opponent Farfrae to Elizabeth "quite unmanned him." (p. 373) He can only "sadly satirize himself for his emotions thereon, as a Sampson shorn." (p. 373) Hardy goes even further; "Solitude and sadness had so emolliated Henchard that he now feared circumstances he would formerly have scorned. . . ." (p. 374) Hardy emphasizes Henchard's loss of the dignity of manhood which characterized him earlier.

When Elizabeth denies him, Henchard wanders away to die like a lonely animal, negating his value as a human being. "He did not sufficiently value himself to lessen his suffering by strenuous appeal or elaborate argument." (p. 377) Henchard's last testament is another indictment of himself, and another attempt at expiation. By "that I be not bury'd in consecrated ground" Henchard means to show God's judgment of his guilt; by "that no man remember me" he means to indicate men's condemnation. (p. 384) The testament is really Henchard's own mistaken judgment on himself, which overcomes his will to live.

Hardy insists that man is the victim of the universe. Henchard's error was far less than his suffering. "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." (p. 385) As victim, man can reach tragic stature by his resistance to the all-powerful yet unconscious Force that brings misery and tragedy. On the other hand, Henchard's belief in his guilty position with regard to the universe must culminate in the surrender of his dignity and the denial of his humanity. Human value is ultimately incongruous with human guilt; and human resistance and dignity are incompatible with the justice of the divine infliction of pain.

Hardy admits in the introduction that Michael Henchard is the major tragic protagonist in The Mayor of Casterbridge. Through Henchard, therefore, Hardy must present his case for tragic human stature; Henchard must act out Hardy's tragic lesson. In this novel Hardy's portrayal of the human condition is convincing, his idea of the universe is valid, but he fails to give an example of true tragic dignity in the face of such facts. The Mayor is marred by Hardy's treatment of Henchard, because Hardy tried to do something with him beyond tragedy. He attempted to destroy a traditional image. He succeeds in this annihilation of the old moral system, but his protagonist and his tragedy suffer in the process.

CHAPTER FIVE - TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES, A TRAGEDY OF CHARACTER AND SOCIETY

In Tess of the d'Urbervilles, written in 1889-91, Hardy amplifies the ideas presented in his earlier tragedies.[1] Hardy fashioned The Mayor of Casterbridge on the analogy of a traditional tragedy in order to deal with the problem of human guilt. He demonstrated that guilt, although an effective cause of catastrophe in society, is a subjective feeling in the protagonist's mind. In Tess, Hardy adds this theme to the tragic theme of The Return of the Native: the human will to happiness in opposition to the fact of the universal condition. He adds a new hope for escape from the worst effects of the human tragedy.

Hardy defines the theme of the search for happiness more explicitly in Tess than ever before. "The 'appetite for joy' which pervades all creation, that tremendous force which sways humanity to its purpose, as the tide sways the helpless weed, was not to be controlled by vague lucubrations over the social rubric." (p. 244) Since this will emanates from the Prime Mover, it cannot be judged by any human standard. The tragedy of society in Tess results from the attempt to judge and control the will to joy. In an article first published in 1890, Hardy defined social tragedy as a result of ". . . Nature's unconsciousness not of essential laws, but of those laws framed merely as social expedients by humanity, without a basis in the heart of things. . . ."[2] Social tragedy lies in the un-naturalness of the social laws.

[1]Tess of the d'Urbervilles, a Pure Woman (London, 1912). This is Vol. I of the British Wessex edition of Hardy's works. Subsequent references will be found in the text, in this chapter.

[2]Life and Art, p. 77.

The inevitable cause of catastrophe (unabetted by the social mores) is the presence in nature of an influence opposing the human will to happiness. "So the two forces were at work here as everywhere, the inherent will to enjoy, and the circumstantial will against enjoyment." (p. 365) By "circumstantial will" Hardy means the Prime Will, which prevents the very joy towards which It stimulates humanity. The human desire for enjoyment, however, appears to proceed from the individual personality, while the opposing Will works externally. Thus the impossibility of happiness is more difficult to understand and to bear than the universal lack of benevolence of the First Cause. Understanding the Will against joy is an important part of the protagonists' education.

Hardy noted these ideas on the search for happiness in 1888:

> Thought of the determination to enjoy. We see it in all nature, from the leaf on the tree to the titled lady at the ball. . . . It is achieved, of a sort, under superhuman difficulties. Like pent-up water it will find a chink of possibility somewhere. Even the most oppressed of men and animals find it, so that out of a thousand there is hardly one who has not a sun of some sort for his soul.[3]

This general will to joy is demonstrated at the start of Tess by the May-day walking-club girls. These girls symbolize the primitive celebration by mankind of the optimism of spring. (p. 10)

> And as each and all of them were warmed without by the sun, so each had a private little sun for her soul to bask in; some dream, some affection, some hobby, at least some remote and distant hope which, though perhaps starving to nothing, still lived on, as hopes will. (p. 12)

Hardy reminds us that their hopes are false through the example of the elderly women in the club.

[3]Early Life, p. 279.

> In a true view, perhaps, there was more to be gathered and told of each anxious and experienced one, to whom the years were drawing nigh when she should say, 'I have no pleasure in them,' than of her juvenile comrades. But let the elder be passed over here for those under whose bodices the life throbbed quick and warm. (p. 11)

Hardy concentrates on those who must suffer to learn the lesson of the human condition.

Joan Durbeyfield also manifests the desire for happiness. Her situation all but precludes joy, so her search is typical of humanity.

> This going to hunt up her shiftless husband at the inn was one of Mrs. Durbeyfield's still extant enjoyments in the muck and muddle of rearing children. To discover him at Rolliver's, to sit there for an hour or two by his side and dismiss all thought and care of the children during the interval, made her happy. . . . Troubles and other realities took on themselves a metaphysical impalpability. . . . (p. 23)

Joan plays out in miniature the tragedy of the human will to joy. Only by disregarding reality can one attain happiness. Joan experiences this force towards joy in a specific form: "She felt a little as she had used to feel when she sat by her now wedded husband in the same spot during his wooing, shutting her eyes to his defects of character, and regarding him only in his ideal presentation as lover." (p. 23) This form of the will to happiness consists of a complex of desire, beauty (desire's object and stimulant), and love (its possible completion). Against the instincts to joy, the Prime Mover opposes character and experience prejudicial to happiness.

The three dairymaids' hopeless desire for Angel illustrates further the unhappy effects of this specific 'appetite for joy' in mankind. "They writhed feverishly under the oppressiveness of an emotion thrust on them by cruel Nature's law—an emotion which they had neither expected nor desired. . . . there was no hope." (p. 187) Tragedy results inevitably for those who do not understand that "there is no hope."

Alec's life illustrates the working of the forces for and against happiness in a relatively simple form. His catastrophe of the vain search for love parallels Tess's more complex tragedy. Alec, more accurately than Wildeve, may say, "'. . . the curse of inflammability is upon me, and I must live under it. . . .'"[4] Alec is unhampered by romantic distortions of reality (which destroyed Wildeve) in his attempts to satisfy his physical desires. He admits to Tess after the seduction, "'I suppose I am a bad fellow. . . I have lived bad, and I shall die bad in all probability.'" (p. 98) He is conscious of the results of his actions and nevertheless carries them out, while Wildeve acts more like an automaton, activated from without and unaware of consequences. But even conscious intention cannot change "the tremendous force which sways humanity," which moulds men's characters and leads both Wildeve and Alec to destruction.

Hardy reveals Alec's sensual motivation. Even before Tess comes, he has been the lover of both Car Darch and her sister. (pp. 82-83) At her first meeting with Alec, Tess's physical beauty attracts him; ". . . it was this that caused Alec d'Urberville's eyes to rivet themselves upon her. It was a luxuriance of aspect, a fulness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was." (p. 48) Under her spell, he feeds her strawberries and fills her bosom and basket with flowers, in a garden idyll suggesting a ritual to the goddess of love. Alec's desire leads him to arrange a job for Tess at Trantridge. He plays upon their intimacy to seduce her.

[4]The Return of the Native, p. 71.

Out of a sense of responsibility, Alec tries to help Tess. When she refuses because she does not love him, a new emotion is added to Alec's desire. ". . . I never despised you; if I had, I should not love you now. . . you did not remain at my pleasure. . . .'" (p. 411) Alec has considered Tess in the same light as the rest of his lovers: a member of a lower class, fair game for his sensual desires. Her heroic resistance demonstrates her difference; he begins to love her. His desire and love doom him, because he persists in persuing Tess although she does not reciprocate his feelings.

When Tess leaves him, Alec's passionate nature takes new force; ". . . after the death of the senior so-called d'Urberville the young man developed the most culpable passions. . . ." (p. 213) Eventually, through the influence of old Mr. Clare, Alec tries to change. Yet in his guise as preacher he still manifests his old nature.

> It was less a reform than a transfiguration. The former curves of sensuousness were now modulated to lines of devotional passion. The lip-shapes that had meant seductiveness were now made to express supplication; the glow on the cheek that yesterday could be translated as riotousness was evangelized to-day into the splendour of pious rhetoric; animalism had become fanaticism . . . . Strange that their very elevation was a misapplication, that to raise seemed to falsify. (pp. 389-390)

Alec cannot change his basic nature. This is part of the tragedy of the human condition. His doom follows inevitably.

Alec's sensuous love for Tess threatens his reform. He tries to bypass his doom by avoiding its beautiful instrument; "'. . . to lessen my fear, put your hand upon that stone hand, and swear that you will never tempt me—by your charms or ways.'" (p. 397) He even offers to marry Tess, to right the wrong he has done her. Her refusal elicits ". . . a disappointment which was not entirely the disappointment of thwarted duty. . . .

It was unmistakably a symptom that something of his old passion for her had been revived; duty and desire ran hand-in-hand."(pp.402-403) In spite of his illusion of selflessness and his new religious mores, he is seduced once again by Tess's charms.

Tess cannot reinforce his religious reasons for not harming her. She does not believe in the Christian religious sanctions herself, as a result of Angel's teachings. She convinces Alec of the invalidity of his new beliefs. When Tess removes the supernatural sanctions against wrong, however, she frees Angel also from his former feelings of guilt and responsibility for her troubles.

'If there's nobody to say, "Do this, and it will be a good thing for you after you are dead; do that, and it will be a bad thing for you," I can't warm up. Hang it, I am not going to feel responsible for my deeds and passions if there's nobody to be responsible to.' (p. 421)

Alec gives up his preaching, and with it any hope of escaping his fate through the protection of faith and abstention. Hardy makes Alec define religion as a social instrument. "'I was on the way to, at least, social salvation till I saw you again!'" (p. 411) He reverts to his old sensual self, hopelessly attracted to Tess. "'And why then have you tempted me? I was firm as a man could be till I saw those eyes and that mouth again. . . . you dear damned witch of Babylon—I could not resist you as soon as I met you again!'" (p. 411)

Alec's loss of faith and his renewed passion make him return again and again to persuade Tess to live with him. His ostensible reason is to help her and her family as they descend to destitution. The price he puts on his mercy is too high for Tess, who despises him as much as before. To gain her love, Alec convinces Tess that Angel will never come back to her. When Angel returns, after she has given herself to Alec, she kills Alec. Thus in simple form Alec suffers the tragedy of sex and love which Tess also

experiences.

The slavery of Alec to the will towards joy takes another form as well. His love depends in part on the pleasure of mastery. In fact, Alec has a neurotic need to impose his will on Tess, which is accentuated by her resistance. His desire is doomed by its opposition to the facts of the human condition: man's lack of free-will. Alec's will to rule appears in an innocent form at his first meeting with Tess. He forces her to eat fruit from his hand. "'No-no! 'she said quickly, putting her fingers between his hand and her lips. . . . 'Nonsense!' he insisted; and in a slight distress she parted her lips and took it in." (p. 47)

On his trip with Tess to his farm, Alec insists on a less innocent amusement. He races the cart downhill recklessly, forcing her to kiss him. "'But I don't want anybody to kiss me, sir! 'she implored, a big tear beginning to roll down her face. . . . He was inexorable, and she sat still, and d'Urberville gave her the kiss of mastery." (p. 65) When Alec attempts to repeat the performance, Tess jumps from the cart; Alec's reaction reveals the neurotic extent of his need to rule. "Then d'Urberville cursed and swore at her, and called her everything he could think of for the trick. Turning the horse suddenly he tried to drive back upon her, and so hem her in between the gig and the hedge." (p. 66)

Alec carefully controls his instinct for a time, until he gets Tess into The Chase, when it re-asserts itself.

> 'Good God! 'he burst out, 'what am I, to be repulsed so by a mere chit like you? For near three mortal months have you trifled with my feelings, eluded me, and snubbed me; and I won't stand it! '. . . He settled the matter by clasping his arm around her as he desired. . . . (pp. 86-87)

Alec has his way with her, and Hardy suggests that the seduction was no more

gentle than his previous treatment. "'A little more than persuading had to do with the coming [of the child] I reckon. There were they that heard a sobbing one night last year in The Chase; and it mid ha' gone hard wi' a certain party if folks had come along." (p. 114) Even after Tess refuses his help and leaves, he repeats his demand for a kiss. "'If you wish, 'she answered indifferently. 'See how you've mastered me! '" (p. 99) The seduction, which his desire for mastery forced, causes both Alec's and Tess's ruin.

When Alec becomes a preacher, his will to mastery also becomes transformed, yet essentially unchanged.

> . . . the bold rolling eyes that had flashed upon her form in the old time with such mastery now beamed with the rude energy of a theolatry that was almost ferocious. Those black angularities which his face had used to put on when his wishes were thwarted now did duty in picturing the incorrigible backslider. . . the lineaments, as such, seemed to complain. They had been diverted from their hereditary connotation to signify impressions for which nature did not intend them. (p. 390)

According to Hardy, Angel's attempt to change his character and fate is doomed, for the human will is powerless against Nature's formation of personality. Alec inevitably reverts to his former self under Tess's influence.

Tess's repeated refusal to submit to Alec's persuasion merely stimulates his will to rule; ". . . he stepped across to her side and held her by the shoulders, so that she shook under his grasp. 'Remember, my lady, I was your master once! I will be your master again.'" (p. 423) He continues to persuade her, until she must succumb. Alec gains his desire by mastery. When Angel does come back despite Alec's insistence to the contrary, Tess realizes the harm Alec's persuasion has wrought.

> '. . . you had used your cruel persuasion upon me. . . you did not stop using it. . . . and you said my husband would never come back. . . And at last I believed you and gave way! . . . And then he came back! Now he is gone. Gone a second time, and I have lost him now for ever. . . . O yes, I have lost him-now—again because of—you! ' (pp. 486-487)

Tess kills him as the instrument of her tragedy.

Alec is a victim of his own character, his uncontrollable instincts towards love and mastery, which are inevitably thwarted by the Prime Will. Tess's beauty stimulates his sexual instincts and love, and he tries vainly all through the novel to conquer her. His attempt to escape his fate through religion wrenches him too greatly out of character, so it does not succeed.

As Tess is the instrument of his tragedy, so is Alec the instrument of hers:

> He watched her pretty and unconscious munching through the skeins of smoke that pervaded the tent, and Tess Durbeyfield did not divine, as she innocently looked down at the roses in her bosom, that there behind the blue narcotic haze was potentially the 'tragic mischief' of her drama—one who stood fair to be the blood-red ray in the spectrum of her young life. (p. 47)

They are both tools of the "circumstantial will against enjoyment," and Alec's tragedy parallels Tess's on a lower plane.

Although Tess and Eustacia are dissimilar in some ways, there are certain parallels between the two heroines. Eustacia always believes herself a victim of some "Dark Prince," while Tess fluctuates between guilt and a clearer picture of the human situation than Eustacia ever achieves. Eustacia uses the love-sex complex as an escape from the misery of her existence, or a means to the attainment of her other desires; but never an end in itself as Tess does. Eustacia's tragedy results from developed capacities incompatible with the surrounding environment; Tess suffers from the spoiling of potentials (similar to Eustacia's)—beauty, sensual vitality, pride and dignity—before they develop. Both women nevertheless discover the impossibility of happiness in the realization of human potentials, and both refuse life on the terms offered by the Prime Mover.

Tess experiences the tragedy of the will to happiness, expressed through the love-desire complex, as seen in Alec, Joan, and the walking-club girls. Hardy stresses Tess's beauty from the beginning; she is among the loveliest of the walking-club maids. (p. 12) Like Eustacia, she inherits her characteristics from her ancestors, and her beauty comes from her mother.

> There still faintly beamed from [Joan's] features something of the freshness, and even the prettiness, of her youth; rendering it probable that the personal charms which Tess could boast of were in main part of her mother's gift, and therefore unknightly, unhistorical. (p. 20)

Angel is attracted to Tess's beauty, innocence, and vivacity when they first meet at the dance. By chance they do not express their mutual interest before he leaves.

> This white shape stood apart by the hedge alone. From her position he knew it to be the pretty maiden with whom he had not danced. Trifling as the matter was, he yet instinctively felt that she was hurt by his oversight. He wished that he had asked her. . . . She was so modest, so expressive, she had looked so soft in her thin white gown. . . . However, it could not be helped. . . . (pp. 16-17)

Destiny prevents their meeting, and delays their reunion until too late. As Tess cries later, "'Why didn't you stay and love me when I—was sixteen; living with my little sisters and brothers, and you danced on the green?'" (p. 250)

When Tess first visits Alec her beauty stimulates him to pursuit.

> She had an attribute which amounted to a disadvantage just now; and it was this that caused Alec d'Urberville's eyes to rivet themselves upon her. It was a luxuriance of aspect, a fulness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was. She had inherited the feature from her mother without the quality it denoted. (pp. 47-48)

Tess herself shows evidence of a sensual response; Hardy suggests that she was partly compliant with Alec's desires, as a release for her sexual energies which lacked the proper outlet. "Nature does not often say 'See! ' to her poor creature at a time when seeing can lead to happy doing; or reply 'Here!'

to a body's cry of 'Where?' till the hide-and-seek has become an irksome, outworn game" (p. 49) Tess shows her compliance at the picnic;". . . Tess eating in a half-pleased, half-reluctant state whatever d'Urberville offered her." (p. 47)

Tess admits her sensual involvement with Alec: ". . . temporarily blinded by his ardent manners, [she] had been stirred to confused surrender awhile. . . ." (p. 104) She distingushes, however, between sex and love. After her seduction she says,"'. . . if I had ever sincerely loved you, if I loved you still, I should not so loathe and hate myself. . . . My eyes were dazed by you for a little, and that was all.'" (p. 97) Tess suffers because her innocent charm and sensual energies have been channelled into the wrong stream, towards Alec rather than Angel. She does not return Alec's love, though he always hopes she will. She is pursued until the end, and her happiness with Angel prevented. ". . . she might have asked 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. . . ." (p. 48) Hardy replies: because of the will against happiness; "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." (pp. 48-49) This illustrates how the will of the Prime Mover influences the human impulse towards joy.

When her child dies and Tess goes to Talbothays to begin a new life, her healthy sensual feelings are again stimulated, this time by the right object, Angel. His will to happiness is also excited, by the charms of ". . . the dazzlingly fair dairymaid." They begin to love one another, but too late. When Tess was seduced, to ". . . the right and desired one in all respects. . . she was but a transient impression, half forgotten." (p. 48)

Their interrupted love can lead only to tragedy. Hardy shows the universal source of this doomed passion. " Tess and Clare unconsciously studied each other, ever balanced on the edge of a passion. . . . All the while they were converging, under an irresistible law, as surely as two streams in one vale." (p. 165)

Angel has a less sensual nature than Tess. Hardy describes his love as "imaginative and ethereal (p. 247) It changes temporarily under the physical influences of lush Talbothays and of Tess's sensual beauty; ". . . there was nothing ethereal about it; all was real vitality, real warmth, real incarnation." (p. 192) He finally comes to her, overwhelmed by love, and Tess responds just as passionately.

> He jumped up from his seat. . . went quickly towards the desire of his eyes, and, kneeling down beside her, clasped her in his arms. Tess was taken completely by surprise, and she yielded to his embrace with unreflecting inevitableness. Having seen that it was really her lover who had advanced, and no one else, her lips parted, and she sank upon him in her momentary joy, with something very like an ecstatic cry. (p. 193)

Tess feels unworthy of Angel because of her troubles, and though she admits her love, she hesitates to marry him. The physical forces towards joy are, however, too strong for her. Hardy shows these passionate forces unchanged by abstractions or romanticism.

> Her sleeves were rolled far above the elbow, and bending lower he kissed the inside vein of her soft arm. . . . But she was such a sheaf of susceptibilities that her pulse was accelerated by the touch, her blood driven to her fingerends, and the cool arms flushed hot. Then, as though her heart had said 'Is coyness longer necessary? Truth is truth between man and woman, as between man and man,' she lifted her eyes, and they beamed devotedly into his, as her lip rose in a tender half-smile. (pp. 226-227)

Against such overwhelming natural influences, Tess must submit:

> . . . every wave of her blood, every pulse singing in her ears, was a voice that joined with nature in revolt against her scrupulousness. . . and in almost a terror of ecstacy Tess divined that, despite her many months of lonely self-chastisement. . . love's counsel would prevail. (p. 228)

Tess's love is simpler and more natural than Eustacia's, because for Tess love is an object in itself, not a means to completion or escape. Her love is a more direct expression of the primitive will to happiness. As such, however, it is liable to swifter disappointment through the contrary Will of Destiny. Hardy shows how the idyllic passion shared by Tess and Angel contains the seeds of its own destruction. Tess's love partakes of her character, uncomplicated and frankly physical. She loves Angel". . . with all her heart and soul." (p. 244) Angel's personality is basically too abstract and ethereal to match her own, despite the effects of Nature and her beauty on him. Tess notices his ". . . disinterested, chivalrous, protective" love, but she fails to understand its real meaning. (p. 246) Her early experience with Alec has prejudiced her against masculine sensuality, and she overvalues Angel's physical restraint. Hardy describes her reaction to Angel's love, which is ". . . a fastidious emotion which could jealously guard the loved one against his very self. This amazed and enraptured Tess, whose slight experiences had been so infelicitous till now; and in her reaction from indignation against the male sex she swerved to excess of honour for Clare." (p. 247) Eventually outside pressure will test Angel's ethereal passion and find it wanting. Furthermore, Angel misconceives Tess; to him she is ". . . a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature. . . ." (p. 155) The tragic results of this misconception are partly Tess's fault. She fears to reveal her secret to him before they are married, but she feels certain that his love is so strong he will forgive her afterwards, as her affection would brush aside his indiscretions. "His manner was—what man's is not?—so much that of one who would love and cherish and defend her under any conditions, changes, charges, or revelations, that her gloom lessened. . . ." (p. 233)

Tess has been overconfident. When they marry, and she reveals her trouble, she surprises Angel back into his abstract nature. His intellectually-based love is not strong enough; he cannot forgive her. Thus the tragedy of their delayed love and their unlike characters falls on them. The indifference of the Prime Mover to her search for happiness causes this and her subsequent suffering.

From this point Tess's situation deteriorates until she finally comes to Flintcomb-Ash. Here she meets Alec again in his role as preacher, and her tragedy closes around her. Alec cannot avoid the effects of her beauty on his sensuous nature. "'And why then have you tempted me? I was firm as a man could be till I saw those eyes and that mouth again. . . .'" (p. 411) Her charms, described in the first scene, ". . . her mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes. . ." bring tragedy to Tess and Alec. (p. 12) After Alec has convinced her to abandon her hopes for happiness with Angel, her lover returns, desire reborn in his new-found wisdom. Tess is confronted by Alec's double betrayal of her union with Angel. She momentarily reverts to her search for happiness, killing Alec in an illogical hope to regain Angel. "'I thought. . . you would be sure to forgive me now I have done that. It came to me as a shining light that I should get you back that way. . . . You don't know how entirely I was unable to bear your not loving me. . . . say you do, now I have killed him! '" (p. 492) Tess recovers from her temporary madness, to understand that happiness is impossible in this world, "'This love could not have lasted.'" (p. 505) Tess chooses death rather than face life without the possibility of happiness. The tragedy of the will to love in Tess's life takes the form of the misdirection of desire and its ultimate destruction.

The second theme in Tess is the tragedy of society. In The Mayor of Casterbridge Hardy invalidated the old morality influencing the hero; but the social order implicit in it was traditional. In Tess, Hardy discusses the tragic problems of his own society and age for the first time in his tragedies since The Hand of Ethelberta. The tragedy of society rests in the social mores. In individuals it takes the form of conventional evaluations of guilt in accordance with these mores. Hardy feels that many of society's regulations come from a misapprehension of the nature of the universe, and that understanding the relative validity of these laws is a step in the direction of awareness of the human condition. In this way the tragedy of society is linked with the tragedy of the human impulse towards happiness; both depend on ignorance of the real human position in the universe.

Tess is in the position of Clym Yeobright at the beginning; she has a theoretical understanding of the human condition, as she explains to her brother.

'Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess?'
'Yes. . . . They sometimes seem to be like the apples on our stubbard-tree. Most of them splendid and sound—a few blighted.'
'Which do we live on. . .?'
'A blighted one.' (pp. 33-34)

Tess's theoretical concepts are inconsistent with the conventional beliefs she has inherited. When the family horse is accidentally killed she assumes guilt for the occurrence, though Hardy indicts the Prime Mover. "' 'Tis all my doing—all mine!' the girl cried, gazing at the spectacle. 'No excuse for me—none. What will mother and father live on now?'" cries Tess, but her brother replies, "' 'Tis because we be on a blighted star, and not a sound one, isn't it, Tess?'" (p. 36)

Since Tess believes she is responsible for the family distress, she agrees to her parents' request that she get help from the d'Urbervilles. "The oppressive sense of the harm she had done led Tess to be more deferential than she might otherwise have been to the maternal wish." (p. 39) Hardy stresses this motivation in Tess which counteracts her fear of Alec d'Urberville. "How could could she. . . disconcert the whole scheme for the rehabilitation of her family on such sentimental grounds?" (p. 67) Her worst fears are realized, for Alec seduces her.

Tess gains knowledge from her unhappy experience. Though she finds herself pregnant, she rebels against the social convention applicable in such cases, as enunciated by her mother; "'And if he don't marry her afore he will after.'" (p. 61) Tess disdains a ". . . convulsive snatching at social salvation. . . ." (p. 103) This decision leaves her a prey to more serious guilt, because though she is free of social conventions, she still believes in the religious definitions of sin. ". . . if she should have to burn for what she had done, burn she must, and there was an end of it. Like all village girls she was well grounded in the Holy Scriptures. . . and knew the inferences to be drawn therefrom." (p. 117)

As a result of her guilt, Tess feels alienated from nature. She commits the typical human error of ascribing natural validity to the ethics created by man. "The midnight airs and gusts. . . were formulae of bitter reproach. A wet day was the expression of irremediable grief at her weakness in the mind of some vague ethical being. . . ." (p. 108) Hardy contends that such an interpretation is wrong; her sin is social.

> But this encompassment of her own characterization, based on shreds of convention, peopled by phantoms and voices antipathetic to her, was a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy—a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason. It was they that were out of harmony with the actual world, not she. . . . But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism she was quite in accord. She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly. (p. 108)

Joan Durbeyfield reinforces Hardy's passionate enunciation of the distinction between natural and social laws. Joan recognizes nothing more in Tess's actions than the natural urge to joy. "' 'Tis nater, after all, and what do please God!" (p. 104) For Hardy the tragedy of society lies in the ascribing of natural validity to purely social regulations. He says that the only effect on her character of Tess's seduction and subsequent trouble is to broaden her experience.

> Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice. . . . her soul [was] that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize. But for the world's opinion those experiences would have been simply a liberal education. (p. 125)

Only society condemns her. Furthermore, Hardy redefines the true cause of her suffering: not her guilt, but the Prime Will. "As Tess's own people down in those retreats are never tired of saying among each other in their fatalistic way: 'It was to be.' There lay the pity of it." (p. 91)

Despite her feelings, Tess is unable to control her urge to joy. "It was unexpended youth, surging up anew after its temporary check, and bringing with it hope, and the invincible instinct towards self-delight." (p. 127) Under the will to happiness, Tess feels it is possible to escape her past. ". . . Tess felt the pulse of hopeful life still warm within her; she might be happy in some nook which had no memories. To escape the past and all that appertained thereto was to annihilate it. . . she could veil bygones." (pp. 125-126) She does not yet know that "Bygones would never be complete bygones till she was a bygone herself." (p. 391)

Under the influence of the will to happiness, Tess goes to Talbothays to find anonymity and forgetfulness; she finds Angel and love: "Tess was trying to lead a repressed life, but she little divined the strength of her own vitality." (p. 161) The inevitability of her destiny teaches Tess a lesson which she had understood before only theoretically. She regains a sense of the true human condition under the implacable First Cause, as she explains to Angel. "'. . . you seem to see numbers of tomorrows just all in a line. . . but they all seem very fierce and cruel and as if they said, 'I'm coming! Beware of me! '. . . She was expressing in her native phrases. . . the ache of modernism." (pp. 159-160) Tess's experience advances her education in the universal condition; her ". . . passing corporeal blight had been her mental harvest." (p. 160) For Hardy, only suffering brings knowledge, and only to the lucky. This insight is only momentary, before her passion becomes uncontrollable. Even at the moment of truth, Tess feels the effect of the Will to Happiness: "'But <u>you</u>, sir, can raise up dreams with your music, and drive all such horrid fancies away! '" (p. 160)

When Angel asks Tess to marry him, her inconsistent religious self-evaluation forces her to refuse him. ". . . why should she, who could never conscientiously allow any man to marry her now, and who had religiously determined that she would never be tempted to do so, draw off Mr. Clare's attention from other women. . . ." (p. 176) Tess's will to joy is nevertheless indifferent to her position. Her passion for Angel overcomes her conventional scruples. "The 'appetite for joy' which pervades all creation. . . was not to be controlled by vague lucubrations over the social rubric." (p. 244) Prevented by her fears for his love and by Circumstance from revealing her past to Angel, she marries him in the mistaken belief that he will forgive her afterwards. Angel's understanding of the human situation is

also clouded. Tess's new suffering results from Angel's conventional evaluation of her guilt. He cannot forgive her past, and he leaves her. His emotional reaction, reinforced by social censure, destroys the love of its two unfortunate victims.

Tess's life as a deserted wife becomes more and more difficult until she must go to Emminster to get help from Angel's family. Before she can speak to old Mr. Clare, Angel's brothers and Mercy Chant unconsciously condemn her in the intolerant new spirit of religion: "Some impostor who wished to come into town barefoot, perhaps, and so excite our sympathies. . . .'" (p. 383) Thus Tess receives another symbolic token of "the world's opinion." When she meets Alec again for the first time since her seduction, she realizes that she cannot avoid her past errors. She is overcome by an

> . . . almost physical sense of an implacable past which still engirdled her. It intensified her consciousness of error to a practical despair; the break of continuity between her earlier and present existence, which she had hoped for, had not, after all, taken place. Bygones would never be complete bygones till she was a bygone herself. (p. 391)

Tess's new evaluation of guilt does not come from her old conventional beliefs. During her short affair with Angel she has learned from him to disbelieve the religious sanctions. Her standards are now the principles of absolute good and evil, ". . . an ethical system without any dogma. . . ." (p. 421) Tess, like Angel, learns from her suffering, but she has not yet apprehended the true blameless condition of man in the grip of the Unconscious Prime Will.

The discovery that her family is destitute reinforces Tess's original feeling of guilt and responsibility. Alec appeals to her through them, ". . . touching her in a weak place. He had divined her chief anxiety." (p. 446) Her characteristic reaction to his persuasion is, "'Don't mention my little brothers and sisters—don't make me break down quite! '" (p. 428)

When her father dies, she finally gives in to Alec on condition that he provide for the family. Upon his return, Angel finds the Durbeyfields in the former Trantridge henhouse, as Alec has promised. (p. 453, p. 478)

Faced with the necessity of providing for her family by living with Alec, Tess rebels against her guilt and her excessive suffering:

". . . rebellious sense of injustice caused the region of her eyes to swell with the rush of hot tears thither. Her husband, Angel Clare himself, had, like others, dealt out hard measure to her. . . . Never in her life—she could swear it from the bottom of her soul—had she ever intended to do wrong; yet these hard judgements had come. Whatever her sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should she have been punished so persistently? (pp. 454-455)

Her suffering has taught Tess more about the human condition. She finally realizes that man's chained will cannot be responsible for error; man can only be judged by the impulses and intentions of his free consciousness. Understanding the human situation, Tess feels only degredation; life holds no hope for her. "To her and her like, birth itself was an ordeal of degrading personal compulsion. . . ." (p. 456) When she finds herself outside the vaults of her forebears, she asks, "'Why am I on the wrong side of this door! '" (p. 465) She prefers death to life on the terms offered; only the necessity of providing for her family keeps her alive.

She discovers, however, that the will to happiness is not completely extinguished in her. When Angel comes back to her, she kills Alec in an attempt to regain Angel's love. This action, in contradiction to her new knowledge, comes from a momentary madness owing to sorrow and desire;". . . in the moment of mad grief. . . her mind had lost its balance. . . ." (p. 492) When she becomes calm again her insight returns; she realizes that the Universal Will has overcome all possibility of joy. She refuses life without the compensation of happiness; as she tells Angel, "'I fear that what you think of me now may not last. I do not wish to outlive your present

feeling for me. . . . I would rather be dead and buried. . . .'" (p. 498) Early in her history Tess expressed a desire to be free; "'. . . what's the use of learning that I am one of a long row only. . . . The best is not to remember that your nature and your past doings have been just like thousands'. . . .'" (p. 162) Tess's experience has only confirmed her lack of free-will and the impossibility of happiness. So despite Angel's attempts to escape in the hope of a new life, Tess acquiesces in her destiny.

> Whenever he suggested that they should leave their shelter, and go forwards towards Southampton or London, she showed a strange unwillingness to move. 'Why should we put an end to all that's sweet and lovely!' she deprecated. 'What must come will come. . . . All is trouble outside there. . . .' (p. 498)

Tess's final refusal of life differs from the frantic suicide of Eustacia. It demonstrates an important advance in Hardy's thinking. He reveals his latest belief in his notes: "A principle of conduct: acquiescence, but recognition."[5] Full recognition can only come through suffering, as Tess's life exemplifies. From knowledge she gains a sense of resignation to her fate, now that she has decided against life.

When she is captured, Tess reveals her full awareness and acceptance of her situation. "'It is as it should be,' she murmured. . . 'This happiness could not have lasted. It was too much. I have had enough. . . . I am ready,' she said quietly." (p. 505) Her calm acceptance of death, though not so dramatic as Eustacia's end, expresses more of man's dignity in the face of Destiny; and it indicates the heights which man can achieve in the ultimate struggle of life.

[5] Thomas Hardy's Notebooks, p. 68.

Hardy continues to demonstrate the tragedy possible to the social mores through Angel Clare. Angel seems to fill the function in Tess parallel to that of Clym Yeobright in The Return of The Native. Clare displays the same theoretical unsensuous nature, his abstract modern ideas disappearing at the approach of a real test, to be replaced by conventional morality. Owing to this, he misapprehends the character of the heroine, in ignorance of the human condition, and his love fails her. Angel's moral beliefs are more specifically defined as typical of the contemporary social mores than were those of Clym (or Michael Henchard).

Clym Yeobright suffers because he never learns the true human condition. The experience of suffering merely makes him revert to a traditional belief in guilt. As a result he loses his love and ambitions; then, having learned no compensation, he experiences the tragedy of a living death. The end of Michael Henchard repeats this theme, a death in ignorance and degradation. Both Clym and Henchard are unsatisfying protagonists, failing to demonstrate the tragic lesson. Angel, however, learns through suffering the invalidity of his beliefs, and at least an awareness of the human condition. He escapes his destiny, gaining his life and some hope of happiness in reconciling himself to its limitations.

Even at the beginning, Angel indicates his scepticism of the supernatural sanctions of religion. "'I love the church as one loves a parent. . . but I cannot honestly be ordained her minister, as my brothers are, while she refuses to liberate her mind from an untenable redemptive theolatry. . . ." (p. 149) He also has an abstract awareness of the universal condition, as

he admits to Tess. "'This hobble of being alive is rather serious, don't you think so?'" (p. 159) He understands and sympathises with Tess's "ache of modernism." (p. 160) He even justifies his abstention from Tess's charms on the grounds that "This consciousness upon which he had intruded was the single opportunity of existence ever vouchsafed to Tess by an unsympathetic First Cause. . . ." (p. 199) Unenforced, however, by experience, Angel's theories cannot withstand the buffeting of reality.

Angel's temperament corresponds to his ideas; "Angel Clare was. . . in truth, more spiritual than animal. . . ." (p. 246) At Talbothays the lush, fertile countryside and the beauty of "the dazzlingly fair dairymaid" stimulate him physically. ". . . it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate. . . . And as Clare was oppressed by the outward heats, so was he burdened inwardly by waxing fervour of passion for the soft and silent Tess." (p. 190) Yet his sensual feelings and the strength of the desire for joy in him cannot change his essential character (as Hardy has insisted so often). Angel's love for Tess reflects his abstract, ethereal qualities; ". . . he was rather bright than hot—less Byronic than Shelleyan; could love desperately, but with a love more especially inclined to the imaginative and ethereal. . . ." (pp. 246-247)

Angel's imaginative conception of Tess is false, because his abstract nature cannot understand the real woman. "'I know you to be the most honest, spotless creature that ever lived.'" (p. 227) He distorts her vision even more. "She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names. . . . 'Call me Tess,' she would say askance. . . ." (p. 167) Such a love is doomed to failure. When Tess finally reveals her real self, putting his love to the test, he cannot accept the new image of her: "'. . . the woman I have been loving is not you.'" (p. 293)

Hardy stresses the social forces causing this tragedy. Angel's abstract knowledge fails him under stress, and he reverts to conventional social mores in his evaluation of Tess. "'Different societies, different manners. You almost make me say you are an unapprehending peasant woman, who have never been initiated into the proportions of social things,'" he says blindly with self-assurance. (p. 297) Tess understands the social tragedy; she realizes that Angel's ". . . conventional standards of judgement had caused her all these later sorrows." (p. 384) Hardy reaffirms this.

> But over them both there hung a deeper shade. . . namely, the shade of his own limitations. With all his attempted independence of judgement this advanced and well-meaning young man. . . was yet the slave to custom and conventionality when surprised back into his early teachings. (p. 338)

This passage emphasizes the inconsistency between Angel's advanced religious and traditional moral ideas.

At this point Angel's position reflects that of Clym at the end of The Return. For Clym there was no escape from his destiny, even through suffering. Hardy's thought has advanced, however, and Angel exemplifies the new belief in survival through knowledge of the true human condition. Angel's suffering in Brazil teaches him the necessary awareness. From the stranger he learns to judge the relative value of the social norms that have destroyed his love; ". . . such deviations from the social norm, so immense to domesticity, were no more than are the irregularities of a vale and mountain-chain to the whole terrestrial curve." (p. 434) Angel finally realizes the inconsistency in his principles. He changes his standard of human judgement to intentions, which Hardy insists is the only possible measure of man in this world. "Having long discredited the old systems of mysticism, he now began to discredit the old appraisements of morality. . . . The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay, not in things done, but in things willed." (p. 433)

Experience thus leads Angel to draw to their ultimate conclusions his advanced theoretical ideas. Granted an indifferent Prime Being who does not give to man free-will, the old standards of guilt no longer apply. Angel changes his evaluation of Tess according to his new standards. Unfortunately, not even his new social awareness can save their love. Though Hardy points the way to amelioration of the human condition through awareness of the relativity of social laws, he never forgets that social improvement is limited under the Universal Unconscious Will. The greater tragedy of the human condition overshadows the tragedy of man in society. "Clare had been harsh towards her. . . . Men are often harsh with women they love. . . . And yet these harshnesses are tenderness itself when compared with the universal harshness out of which they grow." (p. 436) Hardy's point is illustrated by a note written in 1888. "He, she, had blundered; but not as the Prime cause had blundered. He, she, had sinned; but not as the Prime Cause had sinned. He, she, was ashamed and sorry; but not as the Prime Cause would be ashamed and sorry if it knew."[6]

It is typical of Hardy's tragedies that the events which cut short the final reunion of Angel and Tess are inevitably rooted in their past history, and emanate from the universal forces towards and against happiness. Once Angel believes Tess essentially innocent, ". . . by the will rather than by the deed," his love for her returns. (p. 473) "Despite her not inviolate past, what still abode in such a woman as Tess outvalued the freshness of her fellows. . . . So spoke love renascent. . . ." (p. 436) The will to joy makes him attempt to regain her, despite all obstacles. When he discovers she has already gone to Alec, the reality of life overcomes his illusion of happiness. "They stood fixed, their baffled hearts looking out of their eyes with a joylessness pitiful to see. Both seemed to implore

[6]Early Life, p. 282.

something to shelter them from reality." (p. 484) Like Joan Durbeyfield at the beginning, only by disregarding man's real condition can they hope for happiness.

When Tess kills Alec and follows Angel, he deludes himself again that their love may be saved; the will to joy is strong in him. "'I do love you, Tess—O, I do—it is all come back! 'he said, tightening his arms round her with fervid pressure." (p. 492) Once she regains her calm, Tess understands the hopelessness of their love. She resigns herself to the inevitable end, but Angel insists on planning an escape and a new life for them. (p. 494, p. 498) Even at the moment of capture, Angel's impulse to love prevents his surrender. "Springing to his feet, he looked around for a weapon, loose stone, means of escape, anything." (p. 504) Only the final realization of the hopelessness of their union and the example of Tess's dignified surrender to Destiny gives Angel full awareness of and submission to the Prime Will.

Angel's history is not as tragic as was that of Clym Yeobright. Angel's complete awareness leads him, like Tess, to resignation to life. He must first submit to the loss of his love. "The two speechless gazers bent themselves down to the earth, as if in prayer. . . . As soon as they had strength they arose, joined hands again, and went on." (p. 508) Hardy suggests that life (helped by Tess's selfless kindness) will be kind to Angel, compensating him for his loss through 'Liza-Lu. He also partakes of the calm dignity of Tess in awareness. Hardy suggests a happier future for Angel, which may not be Promethean or tragic, but which gives some hope in life.

Commentators believe that Hardy is inconsistent in distinguishing between the influences of Nature and those of society on tragedy. Hardy maintains that social mores do not proceed from natural law, but are rather

". . . laws framed merely as social expedients by humanity, without a basis in the heart of things. . ." as if this were sufficient evidence of their malignancy.[7] Tess suffers from the conventions because they are not in accord with nature. "She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly." (p. 108) Hardy considers the relative validity of the social mores part of the tragic lesson in Tess. As "social expedients" they may be changed, ameliorating man's condition in society, if not in Nature.

The seeming inconsistency lies in the separation of the social and natural influences on man. Since individual action is under the Prime Will, then by definition individuals can no more will a change in social conditions than they can change their own destinies. Webster, for example, comments, "How is it possible to alter and ameliorate social conditions that conditioned man has conditioned? In a certain sense, these contradictions cannot be resolved."[8] Lack of human free-will, a fact for Hardy, seems to prevent the improving of man's social milieu. Furthermore, any tragic theory which explains the mystery of human suffering endangers the validity of the tragic vision. The lesson of reconciliation to the tragic human condition is meaningless while means exist to change that condition. This objection is more crucial in the light of Hardy's lesson of resignation in Tess.

Hardy's theory escapes inconsistency through his belief in the freedom of man's consciousness. He makes Angel describe this faculty; "This consciousness. . . was the single opportunity of existence ever vouchsafed. . .

[7]Life and Art, p. 77.

[8]On a Darkling Plain, p. 154.

by an unsympathetic First Cause. . . ." (p. 199) Hardy frequently refers to this idea in his notes. In 1883 he says, "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 satisfactions."[9] In 1888, just before commencing Tess, he repeats,

> A woeful fact—that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions. . . . It may be questioned if Nature, or what we call Nature, so far back as when she crossed the line from invertebrates to vertebrates, did not exceed her mission. This planet does not supply the materials for happiness to higher existences.[10]

For Hardy consciousness is both the immediate cause of man's suffering and the means to escape it. Without consciousness there would be no tragic suffering, but no possibility of learning the tragic lesson. Since human consciousness is not operative in the supernatural sphere, the morality of the First Cause is ultimately unexplainable and unavoidable. Man's consciousness, however, extends to the human milieu, and Hardy defines social laws as creations of man in this milieu: ". . . laws framed merely as social expedients by humanity, without a basis in the heart of things. . . ." Social conventions, creatures of the freedom of man's consciousness, may be changed, may in fact be improved.

Hardy contends that the human consciousness can be a weapon in the fight with Destiny if properly used. That is, man must become as fully aware as possible of the human condition in the universe before he may adjust to life. Hardy shows that the weapon may be misused. This is, of course, implicit in all tragedy. Of what use is the tragic hero's itinerary in search of experience, what use the tragic lesson, the portrayal of human dignity,

[9] Early Life, p. 213.

[10] Early Life, pp. 285-286.

if not to show the proper function of this single human freedom? Hardy shows us examples of the misuse of consciousness: the romanticism of Eustacia and Wildeve, the conventional beliefs of Clym and Henchard. Tess and Angel illustrate the (temporary) misapprehension of nature through specifically contemporary social conventions. Hardy shows that their socially-defined beliefs are as mistaken as those of the earlier protagonists.

From this definition of social mores follows the universality of Hardy's treatment of social tragedy. The limitation to topical problems would reduce the universality of the lesson. Hardy concludes that the mores of any society, based on the needs of that milieu, must be considered to have only relative validity. The eternal laws must be found in Nature, and they are omnipresent. He says, of Tess's error, ". . . such deviations from the social norm, so immense to domesticity, were no more than are the irregularities of vale and mountain-chain to the whole terrestrial curve." (p. 434) This approach to social mores is a universal lesson.

No matter what the importance of the social tragedy in Tess, it is overshadowed by the universal tragedy of Nature's Unconsciousness. The unnaturalness of the social laws producing man's inhumanity to his fellow-man is exceeded by ". . . the defects of natural laws, and. . . the quandary that man is in by their operation."[11] Hardy's belief is important to a tragic vision of life: that there remains a residual mystery of human suffering unexplainable and unavoidable, by social means or otherwise. Hardy admits this at the very beginning of Tess.

[11] The Return, p. 197.

> We may wonder whether 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; but such completeness is not to be prophesied, or even conceived as possible. (p. 49)

He hopes for social improvement, never for perfection. When he shows the pitiful condition of the Durbeyfield family to criticise the conventional conception of "Nature's holy plan," Hardy does not mean to replace it by the idea of "society's unholy plan" so much as by "Nature's holy lack of plan." (p. 24) The Durbeyfield destitution results from the laziness, lack of ambition, and naive pride of John and Joan, ". . . the shiftless house of Durbeyfield." (p. 24) More important, Tess's beauty, her character, and her will to happiness are the ultimate causes of her tragedy, all under the influence of the First Cause. Up to the last moment, society does not prevent the reconciliation of Tess and Angel. Only when Tess commits murder under the mad urge to joy is her fate sealed, and she dies because she refuses to live with the universal human condition. Her disappointment with life, like Eustacia Vye's, comes from the inadequacy of the two men with whom she is involved to satisfy her desire for love and individuality; and Hardy maintains that this is in the nature of the Universe.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles, like The Return of the Native and The Mayor of Casterbridge, is a modern tragedy of psychology, depicting the catastrophe of human personality. To this Hardy adds a more complete definition of the contemporary human situation by illustrating the part which society plays in the suffering of man. Hardy drew the many parallels of Tess to The Return because he had something to add to the ideas discussed in the earlier tragedy. Tess, the tragic protagonist, illustrates more clearly than ever before the human condition. She has no romantic illusions as do Wildeve

and Eustacia. The tragedy does not hinge on her belief in her own guilt like that of Clym (and Michael Henchard). Yet she suffers at least as severely as these others at the hand of Destiny. Her only mistake is to desire happiness; indeed she is the most admirably suited to give and receive natural love: beautiful, sensual, vivacious, and capable of complete, unselfish admiration "with all her heart and soul." So the destruction of her love and her subsequent suffering and death illustrate in a purer form the stubborn Will against happiness, the effect of the Unconscious Prime Mover which prevents human joy. The clearer vision of the human condition makes the tragic lesson more valuable.

From the definition of the human condition proceeds the new morality that Hardy maintains should replace the old conventions. Since the human will is not free except in the area of tendencies and impulses, Hardy believes the only valid evaluation of man should be according to his intentions, not his actions.

Through the protagonists in Tess, Hardy also illustrates the means by which man may escape the worst effects of the human condition: by knowledge and resignation. He believes that only through comprehension of his universal plight can man reconcile himself to his existence. The poem, "In Tenebris II," written in 1895-96, repeats this dictum: ". . . if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst. . . ."[12] Hardy has introduced this theory before. Clym Yeobright understands the human condition in abstract; he knows that ". . . old-fashioned revelling in the general situation grows less and less possible as we uncover the defects of natural laws. . . ."[13] He is unsuccessful, however, in his attempt to order his life according to his vision. Elizabeth-Jane complies with this maxim successfully, ". . . making limited opportunities endurable. . . the minute forms of

[12]The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy (London, 1952), p. 154. See also p. 526.

[13]The Return, p. 197.

satisfaction that offer themselves to everybody not in positive pain. . . ."[14] The lesson is not effective because Elizabeth-Jane's life shows no contrast to resignation. She does not go through the process of learning, the exhibition of which is so important in Tess. Tess herself learns awareness of the human condition through suffering. Though her knowledge cannot save her from her fate, it seems that through knowledge she can better resign herself to it. The inevitable, agonizing end of love with Angel teaches Tess a dignity and resignation not before demonstrated by Hardy's protagonists.

Hardy has never discussed this final step in knowledge so explicitly. Tess becomes reconciled because she understands that the influence of the Prime Will is not malignant (as Eustacia believes), but merely unconscious. At the end she says, "'It is as it should be. . . . I am ready.'" (p. 505) Hardy's quotation from Marcus Aurelius illustrates the idea: "'This is the chief thing: Be not perturbed; for all things are according to the nature of the universal.'"[15] Hardy suggests that the lack of plan in Nature is the only Universal plan. He defines Nature dispassionately as ". . . flux and reflux—the rhythm of change. . . ." (p. 448) He also describes ". . . the honesty, directness, and impartiality of elemental enmity. . . ." (p. 357) Man must resign himself to the uncaring "nature of the universal" before any improvement in the human condition is possible. This is the final link in the chain of knowledge on which reconciliation to life is based.

Hardy repeats this ultimate lesson through Angel's life. Angel avoids tragedy through learning of the universal condition and resignation to it. This new hope is not only in social amelioration, although Hardy maintains that this is also possible. Angel is the first of Hardy's protagonists to change his character, learn to live with the human condition, and escape the inevitable tragedy that stalks him.

[14] The Mayor, p. 385.

[15] Early Life, p. 231.

CHAPTER SIX - *JUDE THE OBSCURE*, A TRAGEDY OF IDEALS AND AMBITIONS

In *Jude the Obscure*, written 1892-94, Hardy combines themes treated in his earlier tragedies. It is above all a tragedy of character, as influenced by the inevitable Prime Will. The protagonists suffer specifically through love, ambition, sensitivity, and blindness to the human condition. They go through a process of education by pain, leading to an awareness of the universal situation, although at the end Sue's courage fails. Hardy refines these themes, giving them new clarity. Furthermore, he returns to the social theme, which he undertook earnestly in *Tess* after muting it in the earlier tragedies. In 1895 he wrote in his notes, "Tragedy may be created by an opposing environment either of things inherent in the universe, or of human institutions. . . ."[1] Hardy distinguishes between universal and social tragedy, reaffirming his supposition that social mores can cause catastrophe. The addition of this theme clarifies his tragic vision, making it more complete. Hardy admitted in 1918, "My opinion is that a poet should express the emotion of all the ages and the thought of his own."[2] By this he suggests that a universal tragic lesson may be found in his contemporary report of life. Hardy achieves a clearer definition of the relationship between social and Natural tragedy in *Jude*. He gives some justification for the theory of social organization, but shows the flaws in the contemporary social system.

[1]*Later Years*, p. 44.

[2]*Later Years*, p. 188.

Hardy defines the tragic motivations in Jude at length in the Preface. He discusses the ". . . disaster, that may press in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity. . . a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit [and] the tragedy of unfulfilled aims. . . ."[3] To the familiar human impulses of ambition and the will to happiness, Hardy adds the spiritual will or ideal. Clym Yeobright exemplifies the influence of the ideal which is overcome by the flesh, but for him the motive is not very strong, and he finally reverts to a traditional belief. He never learns from his suffering the tragic lesson that his ideal is an illusion, and he is one of the pathetic characters in Hardy whose misery is not relieved or dignified by an awareness of the human condition. The theme of the breakdown of ideals is central in Jude; for Hardy ". . . the greater part of the story—that which presented the shattered ideals of the two chief characters. . . had been more especially, and indeed almost exclusively, the part of interest to myself. . . ." (pp. viii-ix)

Sue's is a classical, almost primitive, ideal, which unites man and a benevolent Nature. Hardy himself believes that man is an element in natural creation, and that the social definition of man does not comprehend this; he defines the social tragedy in Jude as follows: ". . . tragedies in the forced adaptation of human instincts to rusty and irksome moulds that do not fit them." (p. xi) Sue's ideal is crushed by society. Her ideal is further doomed because it defines Nature as benevolent, in ignorance of the true human condition. Jude's own ideal of an intellectual, spiritual, medieval life, defines for him his ambition. Jude fails first because the achievement of any ambition is not "in the nature of things." Second, his

[3]Jude the Obscure (London, 1912), p. viii. This is Vol. III of the British Wessex edition of Hardy's works. Subsequent references to this novel appear in the text, in this chapter.

ideal, the object of his ambitions, is no longer valid. Like Sue, he is blinded to the real human condition. His knowledge at the end does not save him from tragedy.

Richard Phillotson inspires Jude's first ambition by example. The teacher's failures to achieve his own goals prefigure the tragedy of Jude's frustrated ambitions. The novel begins with the departure of Phillotson for Christminster. Hardy strikes the first note of frustration in the opening paragraph.

> . . . the only cumbersome article possessed by the master, in addition to the packing-case of books, was a cottage piano that he had bought at an auction during the year in which he thought of learning instrumental music. But the enthusiasm having waned he had never acquired any skill in playing, and the purchased article had been a perpetual trouble to him ever since in moving house. (p. 3)

The unwieldy piano represents all unrealized ambitions, which haunt their originators long after they have become impossible. This symbol suggests the fates of the protagonists' ambitions in Jude. Phillotson explains his first goal as

> '. . . a university degree. . . . It is the necessary hall-mark of a man who wants to do anything in teaching. My scheme, or dream, is to be a university graduate, and then to be ordained. By going to live at Christminster, or near it, I shall be at headquarters, so to speak, and if my scheme is practicable at all, I consider that being on the spot will afford me a better chance of carrying it out than I should have elsewhere." (pp. 4-5)

Phillotson labours under the same illusion as Jude, that his physical presence at the scene of his goal will aid the success of his ambition. Phillotson has discovered his error by the time his pupil follows him to Christminster. Hardy suggests that nothing more than time and lack of progress caused Phillotson to surrender his first goal in favour of a more easily attainable ambition. "He told them that he still thought of the church sometimes, and that though he could not enter it as he had intended to do in former years he might enter it as a licentiate." (pp. 119-120)

Phillotson's second ambition is contradicted by the will to joy in him, his love for Sue. "A new emanation, which had nothing to do with her skill as a teacher, seemed to surround her. . . . Phillotson was not really thinking of the arithmetic at all, but of her, in a novel way. . . ." (pp. 123-124) Phillotson responds to his physical urges, which interfere with his intellectual pursuits. ". . . Phillotson placed [d] his arm round the girl's waist; whereupon she gently removed it; but he replaced it; and she let it remain. . . ." (p. 128) Sue does not discourage him, because of her "love of being loved."

Phillotson has a healthy sexual instinct, which he has sacrificed until now to his scholarly ambitions. "It was almost certainly a renunciation forced upon him by his academic purpose, rather than a distaste for women, which had hitherto kept him from closing with one of the sex in matrimony." (p. 194) He can no longer control his sensuality; Sue disturbs in him ". . . all the passionateness, and more than all the devotion, of a young man of eighteen." (p. 193) He translates his desire into a socially-acceptable offer to marry Sue. In this way he sacrifices his intellectual and spiritual ambitions to her, as Jude will soon sacrifice his:

> . . . a middle-aged man was dreaming a dream of great beauty concerning [Sue; he] had recently removed from the mixed village school at Lumsden near Christminster, to undertake a large boys' school. . . the schoolmaster's plans and dreams so long indulged in had been abandoned for some new dream with which neither the Church nor literature had much in common. Essentially an impractical man, he was now bent on making and saving money for a practical purpose—that of keeping a wife. . . . (p. 191)

Phillotson's age and unattractiveness doom his new desire, his third ambition; "'. . . there be certain men here and there that no woman of any niceness can stomach. I should have said he was one,'" says Sue's aunt. (p. 229) The worst tragedy results when Sue marries him, despite her agreement with her aunt, ". . . that what she says is—is true!'" (p. 229)

When Sue admits her feelings to her husband, his first reaction is conventional: "'Just think if either of the parsons in this town was to see us now! I hate such eccentricities, Sue. There's no order or regularity in your sentiments! '" (p. 266) He begins later to instinctively apply natural morality to the case, and lets her go to Jude. "'I know I can't logically, or religiously, defend my concession to such a wish of hers; or harmonize it with the doctrines I was brought up in. Only I know one thing, something within me tells me I am doing wrong in refusing her;'" (p. 277); and further, "His mild serenity at the sense that he was doing his duty by a woman who was at his mercy almost overpowered his grief at relinquishing her." (p. 280)

Phillotson's marriage, fated to fail from the start, and his unconventional action in freeing his wife, destroy his career and his reputation just as his desire has previously destroyed his intellectual ambitions. He must come back to Marygreen, the town from which he started. "'It was a last resource—a small thing to return to after my move upwards, and my long indulged hopes—a returning to zero, with all its humiliations.'" (pp. 382-383)

From his suffering Phillotson learns the limited lesson of the social tragedy. "To indulge one's instinctive and uncontrolled sense of justice and right, was not, he had found, permitted with impunity in an old civilization like ours. It was necessary to act under an acquired and cultivated sense of the same, if you wished to enjoy an average share of comfort and honour. . . ." (p. 434) This unheroic position makes him amenable to Sue's return. Furthermore, his will to joy re-awakens: ". . . his taking Sue to him again had at bottom nothing to do with repentance of letting her go, but was, primarily, a human instinct flying in the face of custom and profession." (p. 442) Phillotson's desire for Sue is uncontrollable.

The punishment for his reaction from the true principles is a living death, a mockery of conjugal love with a woman who despises him physically. (p. 480) Despite the vitriolic effect on his ego of the knowledge that Sue does not love him, he must continue the relationship in slavery to his desires. ". . . he led her through the doorway, and lifting her bodily, kissed her. A quick look of aversion passed over her face, but clenching her teeth she uttered no cry." (p. 480) Phillotson loses his human dignity in the clutches of the Prime Will.

The fate of Phillotson's ambitions under the tragic influence of society and the Will to Happiness parallels Jude's failure to achieve his three goals. Jude's heroic dignity at the end contrasts with Phillotson's degraded existence.

The tragedy of Jude Fawley depends on his sensitive, conventionally-idealistic, yet sensual character. His sensitivity makes him a lightning-rod, to bring down universal misery on his head:

> . . . he was a boy who could not himself bear to hurt anything. He had never brought home a nest of birds without lying awake in misery half the night after, and often reinstating them. . . . He could scarcely bear to see trees cut down or lopped, from a fancy that it hurt them. . . . This weakness of character, as it may be called, suggested that he was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again. (p. 13)

Hardy reveals the special form of Jude's sensibility by the incident with the rooks in Farmer Troutham's field; ". . . at length his heart grew sympathetic with the birds' thwarted desires. They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world which did not want them. . . ." (p. 11) Jude feels deeply that aspect of the universal condition which sets nature's creatures one against the other, ". . . the flaw in the terrestrial scheme, by which what was good for God's birds was bad for God's gardener. . . ." (p. 13) In human society this flaw becomes man's inhumanity to man, and the fault, Hardy believes, lies in the inevitable natural laws of the Prime Will.

Jude's sensitivity to the pain of this natural flaw extends into his adulthood. The incident of the pig-killing brings it out even more forcefully. "'Upon my soul I would sooner have gone without the pig than have had this to do!' said Jude. 'A creature I have fed with my own hands.' . . . [Arabella comments,] 'Don't be such a tender-hearted fool! '. . ." (p. 74) Hardy reminds us of the human condition, and its necessity, and emphasizes Jude's over-sensitivity to it: "[It was] a dismal, sordid, ugly spectacle—to those who saw it as other than an ordinary obtaining of meat." (p. 75) Jude himself admits the inescapability of pain in nature, but he cannot change his sensitive reaction to this fact: ". . . he did not see how the matter was to be mended. No doubt he was, as his wife had called him, a tender-hearted fool." (p. 76) Jude's ideal, against which he contrasts the human situation, is impossible to achieve in this world. Inevitably it leads him to destruction. The standard by which Eustacia and Tess measured the world, and found it wanting, is also used by Jude.

Jude's first ambition develops from his ideal. He believes he can find escape from life's misery through scholarship and orthodox theology. The symbol of these goals for Jude is Christminster. Like Eustacia, who requiring a romantically-ideal love, falls in love with her vision of Clym Yeobright before she meets him, Jude needs an ideal, and his vision of Christminster satisfies his need.

> It had been the yearning of his heart to find something. . . which he could call admirable. Should he find that place in this city if he could get there? Would it be a spot in which. . . he could watch and wait, and set himself to some mighty undertaking like the men of old of whom he had heard? As the halo had been to his eyes when gazing at it a quarter of an hour earlier, so was the spot mentally to him as he pursued his dark way. . . . 'It is what you may call a castle, manned by scholarship and religion. . . . It would just suit me.' (pp. 24-25)

Jude's idealistic ambition differs from the mundane goal of Phillotson, who wants to "do something in teaching"; as for Jude, "He was a species of Dick

Whittington whose spirit was touched to finer issues than a mere material gain." (p. 91) One reason is Jude's youth. Hardy attempts a new universal theme, the destruction of the ideals of youth; ideals in general fail, but the ideals of the young are especially liable to disappointment. Hardy makes his intention clear in describing Jude: ". . . he ran about and smiled outwardly at his inner thoughts, as if they were people meeting and nodding to him—smiled with that singularly beautiful irradiation which is seen to spread on young faces at the inception of some glorious idea. . . ." (p. 28)

Behind Jude's ideal and ambition lies the generalized human will to happiness (as his generalized yearning for a goal suggests). This is one form of that universal urge which, Hardy believed, resides in all mankind, and whose disappointment contributes to human catastrophe. "Suddenly there came along this wind something towards him—a message from [Christminster]. . . . Surely it was the sound of bells, the voice of the city, faint and musical, calling to him, 'We are happy here!'" (p. 22)

The will to happiness in Jude, the expression of his youthful, primitive energy, takes another form—that of sensuousness. In the midst of his intellectual pursuits comes the conflicting desire for physical pleasure, which disrupts Jude's ambitions.

> 'Yes, Christminster shall be my Alma Mater; and I'll be her beloved son, in whom she shall be well-pleased.' In his deep concentration on these transactions of the future Jude's walk had slackened. . . . On a sudden something smacked him sharply in the ear. . . . A glance told him what it was—a piece of flesh, the characteristic part of a barrow-pig. . . . (p. 41)

Hardy explains the significance of this happening in a letter: "The 'grimy' features of the story go to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, and the squalid real life he was fated to lead. The throwing of the pizzle, at the supreme moment of his young dream, is to sharply initiate this contrast."[4] Furthermore, the pizzle suggests a specifically

[4] Later Years, p. 41.

sexual attraction. Arabella's sensual charm confirms this: "She was a complete and substantial female animal—no more, no less. . . ." (p. 42); Hardy illustrates further: "The unvoiced call of woman to man, which was uttered very distinctly by Arabella's personality, held Jude to the spot against his intention—almost against his will. . . . He gazed from her eyes to her mouth, thence to her bosom, and to her full round naked arms, wet, mottled with the chill of water, and firm as marble. 'What a nice-looking girl you are!'" (p. 44)

Hardy emphasizes the effect of Jude's sensual urge on his intellectual ambition. "He had just inhaled a single breath from a new atmosphere. . . . The intentions as to reading, working, and learning, which he had so precisely formulated only a few minutes earlier, were suffering a curious collapse into a corner, he knew not how." (p. 45) Jude is finally caught by Arabella, who tricks him into marriage. Hardy notes the social tragedy implicit in this marriage.

> There seemed to him, vaguely and dimly, something wrong in a social ritual which made necessary a cancelling of well-formed schemes involving years of thought and labour, of foregoing a man's one opportunity of showing himself superior to the lower animals. . . because of a momentary surprise by a new and transitory instinct. . . . (p. 70)

Jude discovers too late Arabella's unsuitability. "He knew well, too well, in the secret centre of his brain, that Arabella was not worth a great deal as a specimen of womankind." (p. 65) In rapid order Arabella reveals her small vanities, her false hair-tail and her affectation of dimples; Jude also finds she has been a bar-maid.

Her worst characteristic is her completely materialistic motivation; ". . . she had gained a husband; that was the thing—a husband with a lot of earning power in him for buying her frocks and hats when he should begin to get frightened a bit, and stick to his trade, and throw aside those stupid books for practical undertakings." (p. 66) Her attitude makes his

studies impossible. The pig's pizzle that she throws symbolizes materialistic anti-intellectualism. This symbolism is reinforced by the "smell of piggeries" around her house, (p. 49), and by the pig-killing incident. (pp. 72, ff.) It is repeated when Arabella dirties Jude's books: "'Leave my books alone!' he said. 'You might have thrown them aside if you had liked, but as to soiling them like that, it is disgusting!' In the operation of making lard Arabella's hands had become smeared with the hot grease, and her fingers consequently left very perceptible imprints on the book-covers." (p. 79) Arabella thus figuratively defiles Jude's intellectual ideals.

Jude finally sees that life with Arabella is impossible; he understands his mistake in marrying her, ". . . the fundamental error 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." (p. 80) Hardy does not condemn all marriage on principle; he does believe in the "affinities" upon which a permanent marriage may be based, and he later demonstrates those conditions in the union of Jude and Sue.

When Jude realizes the effects of his marriage on his ambitions and ideals, his sensitivity leads him to attempt suicide as an escape from his intolerable pain. "When just about the middle he looked around him and gave a jump. The cracking repeated itself; but he did not go down. . . . He supposed he was not a sufficiently dignified person for suicide. . . . What could he do of a lower kind than self-extermination; what was there less noble, more in keeping with his present degraded position? He could get drunk." (p. 82) The Prime Mover has not yet willed Jude's death, although Jude has declined life and its pain. In the course of events Jude escapes from his impossible marriage in a less extreme way; Arabella is dissatisfied with the lack of fulfilment of Jude's promised materialistic

success; she leaves her husband. Jude escapes suffering only temporarily by her departure. His marriage is a fact which will interfere with his second spiritual ambition and his union with Sue. Furthermore, Jude's sensual urges are fated to clash again with his intellectual ideal.

Jude learns from his suffering; his vision of the true human condition becomes clearer. He is stimulated to further intellectual efforts. "Surely his plan should be to move onward through good and ill. . . even though he did see ugliness in the world. . . . he might battle with his evil star, and follow out his original intention." (p. 86) Jude goes to Christminster, his education in the human situation obviously incomplete.

At Christminster Jude discovers that his marriage has hindered his ambition in yet another way. The savings that might have bought him into a college are gone. "Having been deeply encumbered by marrying, getting a cottage, and buying the furniture which had disappeared in the wake of his wife, he had never been able to save any money since the time of those disastrous ventures." (p. 101) Even his straitened circumstances do not discourage his ambition; ". . . till his wages began to come in he was obliged to live in the narrowest way. After buying a book or two he could not even afford himself a fire; and when the nights reeked with the raw and cold air from the Meadows he sat over his lamp in a great-coat, hat, and woollen gloves." (p. 101) Jude's intellectual and spiritual ideal, symbolized by Christminster, keeps him going. "From his window he could perceive the spire of the Cathedral. . . the tall tower, tall belfry windows, and tall pinnacles of the college. . . . These objects he used as stimulants when his faith in the future was dim." (p. 101)

Jude's ambition changes. He first reveals that he has added materialistic goals to his ideal even before he meets Arabella. "'I'll be D.D. before I have done! '. . . he might become even a bishop by leading a pure, energetic, wise, Christian life. . . . If his income were £5000 a year, he would give away £4500. . . . Well, on second thoughts, a bishop was absurd. . . . Yet he thought of the bishop again." (p. 40) The glory and the money begin to influence Jude's ideal. When he first comes to Christminster and looks for work, he realizes momentarily the deterioration of his ambition.

> For a moment there fell on Jude a true illumination; that here in the stone yard was a centre of effort as worthy as that dignified by the name of scholarly study within the noblest of colleges. But he lost it under stress of his old idea. . . . This was his form of the modern vice of unrest. (p. 98)

Hardy adds social materialistic competition to Jude's ideal, blaming the society in part for the tragedy of ambition.

Jude eventually realizes the impossibility of achieving his ambition; ". . . it was next to impossible that a man reading on his own system. . . should be able to compete [for a scholarship] with those who had passed their lives under trained teachers and had worked to ordained lines." (p. 136) The only alternative would be to pay his way, but Jude has wasted his savings on Arabella; ". . . at the rate which, with the best of fortune, he would be able to save money, fifteen years must elapse before he could be in a position to. . . advance to a matriculation examination. The undertaking was hopeless." (p. 136)

When Jude realizes that his goal is unachievable, he becomes aware of its materialism.

> The old fancy which had led on to the culminating vision of the bishopric had not been an ethical or theological enthusiasm at all, but a mundane ambition masquerading in a surplice. He feared that his whole scheme had degenerated to, even though it might not have originated in, a social unrest which had no foundation in the nobler instincts; which was purely an artificial product of civilization. (p. 153)

Hardy underlines the social aspect of Jude's ambition, which makes it a prey to defeat. Society debases man's nobler aspirations, bringing the exceptional and the idealistic down to the lowest common denominator of materialistic success.

Hardy also indicates the universal cause of the destruction of ambition; Jude's ideal has been an outmoded vision of life: ". . . mediævalism was as dead as a fern-leaf in a lump of coal. . . other developments were shaping in the world around him, in which Gothic. . . had no place. The deadly animosity of contemporary logic and vision towards so much of what he held in reverence was not yet revealed to him." (p. 99) Jude may begin to understand the social tragedy of ambition, but he does not yet realize completely the true human situation, which must for Hardy be the contemporary situation. Hardy has shown both the incongruity and invalidity of old traditions in Tess (Christian morality), in The Mayor (the Elizabethan vision of ordered Nature), and in The Return (traditional guilt), and the suffering of men who cling to these outmoded beliefs. Jude's medieval intellectual and spiritual ideal is another of these beliefs, and even though he has failed in his ambition, he has merely separated out and sloughed off the materialistic content of his goal, still retaining his mistaken vision of the world. He turns back to the spiritual portion of his ambition.

'. . . I don't regret the collapse of my University hopes one jot. I wouldn't begin again if I were sure to succeed. I don't care for social success anymore at all. But I do feel I should like to do some good thing;' . . . 'enter the church as a licentiate." (pp. 148-149)

Like Phillotson, Jude gives up his mundane ambitions for a life of religious dedication. "It was a new idea,—the ecclesiastical and altruistic life as distinct from the intellectual and emulative life." (p. 153) Again like Phillotson, Jude is inevitably seduced from his second goal by Sue Bridehead: ". . . his interest in her had shown itself to be unmistakably

of a sexual kind. . . he found himself, to his moral consternation, to be thinking more of her instead of thinking less of her, and experiencing a fearful bliss in doing what was erratic, informal, and unexpected. . . . [He] was obliged to own to himself that his conscience was likely to be the loser in this battle." (p. 114) This repeats the conflict between his first goal and his sexual attraction to Arabella. Jude's sensual nature condemns him to fail in his ascetic spiritual ambition; ". . . he was a man of too many passions to make a good clergyman. . ." as he admits to himself. (p. 231)

Sue entices Clym away from his spiritual ideal in another way. Her unorthodox ideas clash with his conventional beliefs; when she pokes fun at him, his love for her gives greater effect to her criticism. She realizes her effect on him, and admits it is conscious on her part. "'I won't disturb your convictions. . . . But I did want and long to ennoble some man to high aims; and when I saw you, and knew you wanted to be my comrade, I thought that man might be you.'" (p. 183) Sue's philosophy will be one of the most important elements in Jude's education.

Both of Sue's influences lead Jude away from his spiritual ambition. Eventually he admits to himself that even though he is married he is a rival to Phillotson for her love. The tragedy of Jude's marriage to Arabella becomes more evident, as Sue turns from him and marries Phillotson when she discovers Jude's marriage; ". . . his announcement of his own marriage had pricked her on to this, just as his visit to her when in liquor may have pricked her on to her engagement. . . ." (p. 204) When Jude cannot control his love for her even after her marriage, he sees the inconsistency between his aspiration to preach orthodox religious beliefs, and his lack of self-control to follow them: ". . . as long as he nourished this unlicenced

tenderness it was glaringly inconsistent for him to pursue the idea of becoming the soldier and servant of a religion in which sexual love was regarded as at its best a frailty, and at its worst damnation. . . he had made himself quite an impostor as a religious teacher." (p. 261)

Hardy again emphasizes the double aspect of the tragic failure of Jude's ambitions.

> Strange that his first aspiration—towards academical proficiency—had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration—towards apostleship—had also been checked by a woman. 'Is it,' he said, 'that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?' (p. 261)

Both his natural impulses and the social system lead Jude to tragedy, in the defeat of his aspirations. Jude becomes increasingly aware of the forces opposing his happiness, but he has not yet lost his traditional beliefs.

An aspect of the love of Sue and Jude which makes their suffering more extreme is their matched personalities. Phillotson takes this into consideration when he lets Sue go to Jude. "'I have been struck with. . . the extraordinary sympathy, or similarity, between the pair. He is her cousin, which perhaps accounts for some of it. They seem to be one person split in two!'" (p. 276) He adds, "'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 is to be together—to share each other's emotions, and fancies, and dreams.'" (p. 278) For Hardy these are the "affinities that alone render a life-long comradeship tolerable." The coming tragedy depends on the fact that this union, like that of Tess and Angel, comes too late, after the tragic mistakes—their marriages—have been committed. The tragedy is more extreme because Hardy has made them the most perfectly matched couple in all the tragedies

discussed. In the other tragedies the protagonists suffer just because they are mis-matched. Hardy shows that affinity and sympathy between lovers is no guarantee of happiness; the destruction of their union desolates Jude in proportion to his previous joy.

Jude's third and last ambition is merely to love his family and make them happy, to "'. . . give pleasure to those I love best.'" (p. 394) In accordance with this desire, Jude and Sue enjoy a short-lived idyll as illusory as that which Clym and Eustacia experience. Their matched temperaments add poignancy to their association, Hardy suggests. "Jude was really proud of her companionship, not more for her external attractiveness than for her sympathetic words and ways. That complete mutual understanding, in which every glance and movement was as effectual as speech ... made them almost the two parts of a single whole." (p. 352) Jude's physical desire for Sue has developed to a complex sympathetic love.

Their new happiness is soon destroyed, by society and the First Cause. They become nomad outcasts of society for their unorthodox relationship. Their prospects become so grim that Little Father Time kills the children and himself. Jude's final ambition is doomed. From his suffering, Jude finally comes to understand the human condition. His orthodox religious and social mores drop away, as he sees the flaws in society.

'I am. . . acting by instinct and not after example. Eight or more years ago. . . I had a neat stock of fixed opinions, but they dropped away one by one. . . . I doubt if I have anything more for my present rule of life than following inclinations which do me and nobody else any harm. . . . I perceive there is something wrong somewhere in our social formulas. . . . (p. 394)

He also apprehends the overshadowing effect of the Prime Will on ideals, ambitions, and love; Sue sums it up for him;

'There is something external to us which says, "You shan't!" First it said, "You shan't learn!" Then it said, "You shan't labour!" Now it says, "You shan't love! "' (p. 407)

Jude understands completely at the end, as Tess has understood, the inevitability of destiny. He says, "'Things are as they are, and will be brought to their destined issue.'" (p. 409)

Sue, who also has learned from suffering, is not strong enough to enforce her theories in practice. The death of her children breaks her down, and she trades her true belief for a feeling of orthodox guilt and faith, and a fear of the conventional avenging God. Jude tries to explain that the opposing force"'. . . is only man and senseless circumstance.'" (p. 413) His fight to keep her is unavailing, and Sue returns to Phillotson, in her orthodox belief that he is her husband in the sight of Heaven. According to Jude's new standards, which ironically enough he has learned from her, Sue is unknowingly selling her body and her human dignity for conventional salvation.

The tragedy of Jude's loss of Sue is in one sense social, as he realizes: "'You make me hate Christianity, or mysticism. . . if it's that which has caused this deterioration in you. . . . I am glad I had nothing to do with Divinity—damn glad—if it's going to ruin you in this way!'" (p. 423) The conventional social institutions and religious mores he has sloughed off return to tear his love from him. Ultimately, however, his tragedy does not depend on society, but on the natural tragedy of character.

Jude's sensitivity to inevitable human pain leads him to drink at the failure of his last ambition. Arabella catches him while he is drunk and enacts as farcical and unnatural a marriage with him as (Hardy suggests by analogy) Sue's second marriage with Phillotson:

> 'And yet she did it for conscience' sake, poor little Sue! '[says Jude.] 'Hang her!—I mean, I think she was right,' hiccupped Arabella. 'I've my feelings too, like her; and I feel I belong to you in Heaven's eye, and to nobody else, till death do us part! It is—hic—never too late to mend!' (p. 455)

Jude deteriorates physically, but not mentally. "His physical weakness was such that he shed tears. . . . A silent, undiscerned resolve grew up in him, which gave him, if not strength, stability and calm." (p. 468) He understands the human condition and its inevitability. His great sensitivity, which Hardy warned would make him ". . . ache a good deal before the fall of the final curtain on his life," makes it impossible for him to continue on these terms: he has failed in all his ambitions, lost his love, and is in danger of losing his human dignity in Arabella's clutches. He resolves for the last time to refuse the degradation and pain of life, as compared to his ideal.[5] This lends him serenity and calm, like Tess and unlike Henchard or Eustacia. His last act is a gesture of defiance of the destiny that tried to degrade his soul, and a symbol of his continuing love.

'I made up my mind that a man confined to his room by inflammation of the lungs, a fellow who had only two wishes left in the world, to see a particular woman, and then to die, could neatly accomplish those two wishes at one stroke by taking this journey in the rain.' (p. 473)

[5]Arthur Mizener attacks Jude as a tragedy because the ideal by which the world is judged is in Jude's mind. "Hardy's feeling that the evil of this world was incurable is tragic. But because he was unable to place the source of the idealism. . . outside of time. . . there is no basic, unresolvable tragic tension between the real and the ideal in his attitude. . . ." ("Jude the Obscure as a Tragedy", Southern Review, VI (1940), 201.) Mizener limits tragedy to the conflict between the squalid real world and the "special providence" which alone may overcome its evil. (Mizener, p. 207) Mizener in fact falls into the error of the Christian interpretation of tragedy. For Hardy there is no ideal outside of time, no benevolent providence to explain away the tragic mystery and reduce man to the status of a guilty sinner. Hardy fought this battle himself in all four of the tragedies under discussion, and showed most clearly in Sue's end the degrading effects of unfounded guilt. Yet Mizener can speak of how Sue ". . . might, not in weakness but in strength, deny the validity of Jude's humanitarian idealism," presumably because she affirms the heavenly validity of her first marriage. (Mizener, p. 203)

Jude chooses death of his own volition. At the end he dies alone at Christminster (symbol of his first ideal), repeating the words of Job.[6] Outside, the cheers of the Remembrance day crowds ring out, symbolizing society's uninterest in and Nature's unconsciousness of Jude's death. Over the social tragedy, over man's nobility in opposition, shadows the inevitable unconscious Prime Will.

Sue Bridehead is Hardy's most complex and realistic feminine protagonist. She best exemplifies the tragedy of character. She holds her ideals in theory and suffers the inevitable results of putting those theories to the test (like Clym and Angel). She enjoys stimulating emotions without a basis in her real feelings; and her ethereal unsensual character cannot respond to the passions she stirs in the two men who love her. Her sensitive nature is not proof against the effects on others of her ideas, her beauty, and her unconventional actions. In the end she reverts to feelings of conventional guilt which have always affected her, though she has been able to withstand them for a time by means of her unorthodox rational ideas.

Hardy establishes Sue's motivating ideals when she first appears. She buys plaster statues of Venus and Apollo, "my patron saints," as she calls them. (p. 121) He emphasizes the contrast between her pagan, classical

[6]H.J. Muller contends that "Michael Henchard and Jude Fawley die in an appalling bitterness of spirit. . . ." ("The Novels of Hardy Today," Southern Review, VI (1940), 222.) Webster agrees that Jude submits at the end, though he does not equate Jude's death with Henchard's. (Darkling Plain, p. 188.) Hardy's intention seems to be altogether different from these suggestions, by the evidence in the book itself. Jude accepts the inevitability of fate (p. 409); he calmly refuses life (p. 473); his last words indicate Promethean condemnation of the First Cause rather than passive acquiescence. Jude's death guarantees human nobility of spirit.

sympathies and the conventional Christian beliefs of Jude; ". . . her cousin deeply interested her, as one might be interested in a man puzzling out his way along a labyrinth from which one had one's self excaped." (p. 163) Hardy shows symbolically the discomfort which Sue suffers in putting her ideals into practice:

> . . . she began to be concerned as to what she should do with [her statues.] They seemed so very large now that they were in her possession, and so very naked. Being of a nervous temperament, she trembled at her enterprise. When she handled them the white pipeclay came off on her gloves and jacket . . . . [Pulling] some huge burdock leaves, parsley, and other rank growths from the hedge, she wrapped up her burden. . . . 'Well, anything is better than those everlasting church fal-lals!' she said. But she was still in a trembling state, and seemed almost to wish she had not bought the figures. (pp. 109-110)

Like the Biblical Eve, she covers with leaves the classical reality which has become too blatant for her sensitive nature; Hebraic guilt feelings always lie near the surface, to doom her at the end.

Hardy emphasizes the ancient, the outdated aspect of Sue's ideal. Jude evaluates her: "'Sue, you seem. . . to be one of the women of some grand old civilization, whom I used to read about in my bygone, wasted, classical days, rather than a denizen of a mere Christian country.'" (p. 327) However admirable, Sue is an anachronism in modern life, a throwback to an older culture. She herself admits this, when she and Jude find temporary happiness together. "'I feel that we have returned to Greek joyousness, and have blinded ourselves to sickness and sorrow, and have forgotten what twenty-five centuries have taught the race since their time. . . .'" (p. 358) Hardy has invalidated Christianity, Romanticism, the Elizabethan world-picture; nowhere else does he so clearly reveal what he believes to be the inconsistency in an outdated belief. The Greek classical vision of life which Sue embraces is no longer a valid ideal; Hardy said of the truth of

the old theologies, "The Greeks used up theirs. . . ."[7] In The Return of the Native, Hardy explained further his belief concerning "Greek joyousness":

". . . a long line of disillusive centuries has permanently displaced the Hellenic idea of life. . . that zest for existence which was so intense in early civilizations. . . . What the Greeks only suspected we know well; what their Aeschylus imagined our nursery children feel. That old-fashioned revelling in the general situation grows less and less possible as we uncover the defects of natural laws. . . .[8]

At the moment when Sue states her belief in "Greek joyousness," one of the "nursery children" gives it the lie. Sue says, "'There is one immediate shadow, however—only one.' And she looked at the aged child. . . . [Little Father Time] knew what they were saying and thinking. 'I am very, very sorry, father and mother,' he said. 'But please don't mind!—I can't help it. I should like the flowers very, very much, if I didn't keep on thinking they'd all be withered in a few days!'" (p. 358)

Sue gives the reason for her revolt from society; "'. . . 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 had taken upon itself to thwart. . . .'" (pp. 408-409) She feels that to escape society is to escape life's pain, because the social definition oversimplifies and cramps the natural man; "'. . . the social moulds civilization fits us into have no. . . relation to our actual shapes. . . . '" (pp. 246-247) Hardy agrees with this. (It is part of his definition of social catastrophe.) Not only are the social mores flawed, but so is the Nature which Sue substitutes as an ideal. For Hardy a belief in the joyous classical tradition blinds man to his inevitable Natural "sickness and sorrow."

[7]Later Years, p. 104.

[8]p. 197.

When the tragedy of her mistaken apprehension of the human condition closes in, Sue realizes her lack of insight in believing that the Will to Happiness can be fulfilled. "'We went about loving each other too much. . . . We said—do you remember?—that we would make a virtue of joy. I said it was Nature's intention. . . that we should be joyful. . . . And now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word! '" (pp. 408-409)

Ultimately, Sue loses her awareness of the human condition. Hardy carefully delineates her character so that this denouement is consistent. When Jude accuses her of being "'. . . as enslaved to the social code as any woman I know!'" she replies, "'Not mentally. But I haven't the courage of my views. . . . '" (p. 290) Sue showed this weakness in the scene with the plaster gods. Another reason for her difficulty in practicing her convictions is an orthodox attitude underlying her unconventional ideas. Her seeming perversity hides this internal conflict. She admits that Phillotson "'. . . is the only man in the world for whom I have any respect or fear,'" yet she adds, "'He may think what he likes—I shall do just as I choose!'" (p. 185) When she becomes engaged to Phillotson, she tries to retain propriety in her relations with Jude. "'You mustn't love me. You are to like me—that's all!'" (p. 186) In the light of her unconventional ideas she believes, however, that she has been wrong; "'. . . when you were out of sight I felt what a cruel and ungrateful woman I was to say it, and it has reproached me ever since. <u>If you want to love me, Jude, you may</u>. . . .'" (p. 186) Characteristically, Sue reverts to her conventional belief that she has been guilty of indiscretion. "'Perhaps I ought not to have been so intimate with you. It is all my fault.'" (pp. 188-189) Again and again she reverses her position, under the stress of the inner conflict between her natural ideals and her conventional guilt-feelings. Hardy stresses the idea that her tendency towards self-condemnation is not only socially

dictated, but ultimately an integral part of her character (as in Clym and Henchard).

Sue marries Phillotson partly under the stress of conventional social criticism of her escapade with Jude.

'. . . I became rather reckless and careless about the conventions. Then you know what scandals were spread, and how I was turned out of the Training School. . . . it seemed then that the only thing I could do would be to let the engagement stand. Of course I, of all people, ought not to have cared what was said, for it was just what I fancied I never did care for. But I was a coward. . . and my theoretic unconventionality broke down.' (p. 267)

Sue's necessity to conform overcomes all her convictions and fears about marriage.

When Sue continues to love Jude after her marriage to Phillotson, her conviction of culpability deepens. Even after she admits her aversion to her husband, making it a torture to fulfil her sexual obligations to him, she tries to conform to the mores by keeping Jude away. (p. 229) She continues to alternate between natural impulses and conventional guilt. (p. 235, pp. 246-247, p. 249) Hardy explains Sue's "logic": ". . . before a thing was done it might be right to do, but. . . being done it became wrong. . . ." (p. 263) Despite the conventional side to her character, Sue's real love for Jude and their matched temperaments (as well as her natural ideals) force her to leave Phillotson for Jude. Her argument to her husband is that, "'For a man and woman to live on intimate terms when one feels as I do is adultery, in any circumstances, however legal.'" (p. 268) Her tragedy comes because she cannot maintain this belief.

For a time her happiness with Jude reinforces her unconventional, natural ideals, because it seems to prove correct her suspicions about the distressing effects of the social mores. Eventually the death of her children demonstrates that Nature is flawed, and the termination of her happiness makes her revert once again to conventional self-guilt. This time, moreover,

the guilt is more serious: she feels responsible for the children's deaths:

'Ah, but it was I who incited [Father Time] really. . . I talked to the child as one should only talk to people of mature age. I said the world was against us, that it was better to be out of life than in it at this price; and he took it literally. . . . Why didn't I tell him pleasant untruths, instead of half realities? It was my want of self-control, so that I could neither conceal things nor reveal them!' (p. 408)

Sue's own problem of half-understanding brings about her doom. Her unconventional ideals have stimulated the actions about which she now feels guilty, and she understandably reverts to orthodox religious mores. "'We must conform!' she said mournfully. 'All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. . . . It is no use fighting against God.'" (p. 413) Suffering does not reinforce Sue's tragic vision, as it does Jude's; ". . . affliction makes opposing forces loom anthropomorphous. . . ." (p. 413) She interprets the children's death as the judgement of God on her extra-marital relations with Jude. "'I see marriage differently now. My babies have been taken from me to show me this! Arabella's child killing mine was a judgement—the right slaying the wrong. . . . I am such a vile creature—too worthless to mix with ordinary human beings!'" (pp. 422-423) She has called her marriage with Phillotson "adultery." According to her new standards, this becomes the only sacred union. "'I belong to him--I sacramentally joined myself to him for life. Nothing can alter it!'" (p. 423)

Jude attempts to justify his relationship with Sue on the natural grounds that originally sanctioned it. "'. . . surely we are man and wife, if ever two people were in this world? Nature's own marriage it is, unquestionably.'" (p. 423) Sue in her blindness answers, "'But not Heaven's. Another was made for me there, and ratified eternally in the church at Melchester.'" (p. 423) Nature having lost its authority by its exhibition of non-benevolence, the authority of the Church replaces it in Sue's mind. Sue repeats

her error of blindness, replacing the worn-out Greek vision with the equally invalid Christian vision: as Hardy said, "The Greeks used up theirs. . . the Christians have used up theirs."[9] Sue returns to Phillotson, and Jude shows the reversal of their philosophical positions by echoing her earlier idea. "'Do you love him? You know you don't! It will be a fanatic prostitution. . . .'" (p. 436)

Two other aspects of Sue's character combine to precipitate her tragedy: her enjoyment in stimulating emotions and her weak sexual impulse. Hardy calls her ". . . an epicure in emotions. . . ." (p. 207)' Sue admits her ". . . curiosity to hunt up a new sensation. . . ." (p. 208) Specifically, she most enjoys stimulating love: "'. . . I feel I shouldn't have been provided with attractiveness unless it were meant to be exercised! Some women's love of being loved is insatiable; and so, often, is their love of loving. . . .'" (p. 245) Sue acts on this impulse towards both Jude and Phillotson. This is her second reason for consenting to marry Phillotson.

'I didn't marry him altogether because of the scandal. But sometimes a woman's love of being loved gets the better of her conscience, and though she is agonized at the thought of treating a man cruelly, she encourages him to love her while she doesn't love him at all. Then when she sees him suffering, her remorse sets in, and she does what she can to repair the wrong! ' (p. 290)

The same mechanism stimulates her relationship with Jude.

'At first I did not love you, Jude; that I own. When I first knew you I merely wanted you to love me. . . . When I found I had caught you, I was frightened. And then—I don't know how it was--I couldn't bear to let you go--possibly to Arabella again--and so I got to love you, Jude. But you see, however fondly it ended, it began in the selfish and cruel wish to make your heart ache for me without letting mine ache for you.' (p. 426)

[9]Later Years, p. 104.

Sue's weak sexual drive conflicts with her epicurian emotional impulses; once she has stirred a man's desire, she cannot fulfil the bargain. Hardy defines this characteristic of Sue's in a letter: ". . . 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. . . ."[10] Her first experience of this kind was with her university friend. "'He wanted me to be his mistress, in fact, but I wasn't in love with him—and on my saying I should go away if he didn't agree to my plan, he did so. . . till he was taken ill, and had to go abroad. He said I was breaking his heart by holding out against him. . . . He came home merely to die!'" (pp. 177-178) Sue tells both Phillotson and Jude about this aspect of her nature, and the incident with her friend. Their love for her, however, blinds them to her warning.

By stimulating his desire, Sue so involves herself with Phillotson that she must marry him. When she discovers the reality of continuing sexual relations with him, her unsensual nature suffers; ". . . the slim little wife of a husband whose person was disagreeable to her, the ethereal, fine-nerved, sensitive girl [was] quite unfitted by temperament and instinct to fulfil the conditions of the matrimonial relation with Phillotson, possibly with scarce any man. . . ." (p. 263) She admits to Jude her distaste for her husband. "'What tortures me so much is the necessity of being responsive to this man whenever he wishes, good as he is morally!'" (p. 255) Phillotson's unattractiveness accentuates her revulsion.

[10]Later Years, pp. 41-42.

In the interval, Sue's wiles have stimulated Jude's love for her, and she discovers that she loves him as well. Her unorthodox ideas lead her to leave her husband for Jude, while Phillotson, realizing her aversion, allows her to go. Her weak sexual urge prevents her from consumating her union with Jude. When he tells her he has rented a room for them, she explains, "'I thought you might do it; and that I was deceiving you. But I didn't mean that.'" (p. 287) This is the one flaw in their perfect match; says Sue: "My nature is not so passionate as yours!'" (p. 288) Jude finds himself in the same position as Phillotson and her university friend. Sue defines their relationship on her terms.

'My liking for you is not as some women's perhaps. But it is a delight in being with you, of a supremely delicate kind, and I don't want to go further and risk it by--an attempt to intensify it! I quite realized that, as woman with man, it was a risk to come. But as me with you, I resolved to trust you to set my wishes above your gratification." (p. 289)

Even after Sue and Jude's divorces from their lawful spouses Sue has no more interest in sexual relations with Jude. She only allows him to have her because of her fear and jealousy of Arabella. "'Mine was not the reciprocal wish [to possess you] till envy stimulated me to oust Arabella.'" (p. 426) In the above-mentioned letter, Hardy explains that Sue never becomes more sensual, even after their children are born:

". . . though she has children, her intimacies with Jude have never been more than occasional. . . 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. This has tended to keep his passion as hot at the end as at the beginning, and helps to break his heart."[11]

Sue submits to Jude only at his insistence, and against her instincts. This helps to stimulate her conventional feelings of guilt. Her

[11]Later Years, p. 42.

children are the symbols of her guilt, and when she remarries Phillotson, she sacrifices them symbolically for her own conventional expiation. "'My children—are dead—and it is right that they should be!. . . They were sacrificed to teach me how to live!--their death was the first stage of my purification.'" (p. 439)

Having established Sue's ethereal sexual nature and her reversion to orthodox guilt, Hardy prepares her final doom. When Jude comes to plead with her she admits she still loves him and kisses him passionately to prove it. (p. 471) But she cannot escape her new, socially-defined mores. "As he passed the end of the church she heard his coughs mingling with the rain on the windows, and in a last instinct of human affection, even now unsubdued by her fetters, she sprang up as if to go and succour him. But she knelt down again, and stopped her ears with her hands till all possible sound of him had passed away." (p. 472)

She feels she has sinned by her weakness in kissing Jude, and she punishes herself by renewing sexual relations with Phillotson, though her aversion to him is even more extreme. "'. . . I am going to make my conscience right on my duty to Richard--by doing a penance--the ultimate thing. . . . Yes—he agrees to my living as I choose. . . to reverse it will be terrible--but I must be more just to him.'" (p. 476) Jude understands the implications of this sacrifice. "'And now the ultimate horror has come—her giving herself like this to what she loathes, in her enslavement to forms!—she, so sensitive, so shrinking, that the very wind seemed to blow on her with a touch of deference. . . .'" (p. 484)

At the end, Sue denies her human dignity. She betrays her classical ideal of man's nobility by reverting to the social conventions; she submits unheroically to the orthodox Christian view of man as sinner. Hardy, through Jude, condemns her. "'You used to say that human nature was noble and long-suffering, not vile and corrupt, and at last I thought you spoke truly.

And now you seem to take such a much lower view!'" (p. 416) For Hardy as for Jude, the dignity of man as a victim of Nature is at stake. Sue, however, denounces her earlier heroic self. "'I wish my every fearless word and thought could be rooted out of my history. Self-renunciation--that's everything!'" she says, denying her earlier instinct that self-expression was everything. (p. 417) Sue reverts to the conventions despite the fact that she has shared with Jude the enlightening effects of suffering. Her hell, like Phillotson's (and Clym's) is a death-in-life; she is condemned to continue a life of suffering in surrender to a man whose touch she hates. Arabella understands her punishment; "'She's never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she's as he is now!'" that is, dead. (p. 494)

Hardy attempts in Jude the Obscure a more complex and accurate definition of the social tragedy than he gave in Tess. The tragedy of society in the earlier novel depends on conventional judgements of guilt according to the social mores. These judgements, coming near the beginning of the action, force Tess and Angel to act in such a manner that their happiness is destroyed. The universal tragedy of character and circumstance overshadows the social catastrophe. In Tess there is a more direct interaction between the protagonists and the forces of Nature. Hardy repudiates the validity of the social mores altogether in that tragedy.

In Jude, Hardy sets his characters squarely in the social milieu. This necessitates a redefinition of the function and validity of the social system. Hardy suggests a modern sociological definition: society exists to aid man in satisfying his natural needs for food, shelter, sex and racial

propagation.[12] The new definition is illustrated in the pig-killing scene. Hardy refers to man's materialistic strivings as the ". . . ordinary obtaining of meat," symbol of all the necessities. (p. 75) Arabella explains, "'Poor folks must live,'" (p. 75) echoing the townsfolk in The Mayor of Casterbridge: "'. . . so many mouths to fill, and God-a'mighty sending his little taties so terrible small to fill 'em with. We don't think about flowers and fair faces, not we—except in the shape o' cauliflowers and pigs' chaps.'"[13] Even Jude, sensitive as he is, admits the necessity of man's materialism. "The white snow, stained with the blood of his fellow-mortal, wore an illogical look to him. . . but he could not see how the matter was to be mended." (p. 76)

Hardy defines the goal of man as the search for happiness and avoidance of harm. Jude learns this at the end. "'I doubt if I have anything more for my present rule of life than following inclinations which do me and nobody else any harm, and actually give pleasure to those I love best.'" (p. 394) It is a utilitarian, earth-bound goal because Hardy does not believe in divine providence, and his interest centres on man. Sue says, "'We shall both be dead in a few years and then what will it matter. . . .'" (p. 268) The function of society, Hardy suggests, is to achieve this goal, and to avoid some of the unhappy effects on man of his situation in the flawed universe. This contradicts Hardy's complete repudiation of the social system in Tess, but seems a more adequate definition of society's role.

[12]Mizener considers that ". . . Hardy's attitude and the form it invoked excluded from his representation. . . the point of view of those men and women for whom 'the defence and salvation of the body by daily bread is still a study, a religion, and a desire.'" (p. 203) Mizener unfairly evaluates Hardy's attitude toward the necessities. Jude's subjective attitude (which Mizener wrongly equates with Hardy's objective view) comes out of his hypersensitivity to pain. (Even Jude says to Arabella, "I don't scold you.") Mizener does not admit how essential to Hardy's vision is the inescapable indignity and pain of mundane strivings; Hardy indicts the First Cause, not men.

[13]p. 60.

Yet Hardy has an argument against society. In trying to limit pain and maximize pleasure for the majority through regulation, society has a harmful an effect on the individual. Hardy believes that social mores cause suffering by oversimplifying and cramping men. Sue says, "'. . . the social moulds civilization fits us into have no more relation to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellations have to the real star-patterns.'" (pp. 246-247) This repeats Hardy's definition of the social tragedy of Jude (in the Preface) ". . . in the forced adaptation of human instincts to rusty and irksome moulds that do not fit them." (p. xi)

Ultimately, Hardy does not blame society, though he believes the social formulas governing men can be improved. Society is a response to the challenge of the human condition. Hardy condemns the First Cause for placing mankind in this position in the first place. He makes Sue ask the question that reveals the source of man's inhumanity to man: "'O why should Nature's law be mutual butchery!'" (p. 371) This new definition of the relationship between society and Nature explains why Hardy defended himself from attacks on his treatment of society in Jude, by these words:

> Tragedy may be created by an opposing environment either of things inherent in the universe, or of human institutions. . . .[I] may never have questioned the necessity or urged the non-necessity of either. . . .[14]

Hardy does not lump all social regulations together under the label of "social expedients. . . without a basis in the heart of things" as he did when he was writing Tess. Hardy understands the necessity for some social system, but he recognizes flaws in the contemporary mores.

Hardy demonstrates some of these flaws. He emphasizes Jude's tragedy of ambition. Jude admits that his first ambition was stimulated by

[14] Later Years, p. 44.

society, ". . . purely an artificial product of civilization. There were thousands of young men on the same self-seeking track. . . ." (p. 153) Hardy admits the necessary cruelty of the satisfaction of man's needs, but he differentiates this from ambition, and condemns this vice of greed, generated by the scientific and industrial advances of the nineteenth century. Not only Jude exhibits this vice. Hardy condemns Farmer Troutham, Physician Vilbert, the hymn-composer, and especially Arabella, who desires Jude because he has ". . . a lot of earning power in him for buying her frocks and hats. . . ." (p. 66) In contrast, Jude and Sue renounce ambition, and achieve temporary happiness. "'We gave up all ambition, and were never so happy in our lives till his illness came.'" (p. 377) Hardy always emphasizes the universal tragedy behind the social. Jude avoids the social tragedy of ambition, but cannot avoid the universal tragedy of character and circumstance.

Another specific social flaw is seen in the institution of marriage. Hardy criticises specifically the irrevocability of the marriage contract. He contends, like modern psychologists, that people may not retain perpetually the emotions which lead them to marriage, though they have promised to do so till death. Sue complains, "'It is none of the natural tragedies of love that's love's usual tragedy in civilized life, but a tragedy artificially manufactured for people who in a natural state would find relief in parting!'" (p. 258) Hardy says, ". . . a marriage should be dissolvable as soon as it becomes a cruelty to either of the parties—being then essentially and morally no marriage. . . ." (p. x) Sue repeats, "adultery"; Jude echoes, "prostitution."

Hardy shows how union with Arabella and Sue cramps Jude's ambitions; "'. . . is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and

hold back those who want to progress?'" (p. 261) Marriage suppresses Sue's natural instincts, making her suffer; through her it harms Phillotson. "'Domestic laws should be made according to temperaments, which should be classified. If people are at all peculiar in character they have to suffer from the very rules that produce comfort in others.'" (p. 268) Sue revolts from the conventions. Phillotson discovers also that to contradict the social laws is to invite suffering. Phillotson's answer is to return to conventions. But the ultimate tragedy of all three proves that despite a clinging to conventions or a revolt from them, the flaw in Nature dooms man to unhappiness. Their final tragedy is really outside society. Hardy admits, in fact, that he uses the marriage mores, like the tragedy of Jude's educational ambition, as a detail of tragic mischief only, like any natural tragic happening; in order to reveal the tragic response of the protagonists, "The marriage laws being used in great part as the tragic machinery of the tale. . . ." (p. x) Thus the social aspect of the tragedy of marriage is also secondary to its inevitable universal aspect.

Finally, Hardy indicts again conventional Christian morality, which he has condemned in Tess. Jude escapes the worst effects of this morality by his new awareness of the human condition. Sue eventually reverts to this convention and returns to Phillotson. Hardy has sufficiently proven the merely relative validity of these conventions; Sue's fate only underlines the evil effects of clinging to the old mores. Her tragedy, however, ultimately depends not so much on the conventions as on her character, which forces her to surrender her awareness of the human condition. The specific form of her new blindness, for the purposes of her tragic end, is merely another piece of "tragic machinery."

In Jude, Hardy distinguishes between two types of social regulation. Those conventional laws which develop as "social expedients. . . without a basis in the heart of things," stifling natural impulses and exaggerating human suffering, may be ameliorated. Hardy also visualizes another area of social definition. The natural impulses of self-protection, of the fulfilment of basic needs and natural urges are channelled into society's mores as social ambition, the inhumanity of man to man, and selfish competition. Hardy doubts whether this portion of the mores is alterable. It proceeds directly from the natural laws, and shares with them the mystery of universal tragedy.

To the objection that man's lack of free-will prevents him from changing his social laws at all, Hardy's answer is the same as in Tess. Those laws which are social expedients (including "social unrest," marriage laws, and religious mores) are creations of man's free mind, and are ameliorable. Those social motivations which Hardy now defines as outgrowths of Natural impulses (especially the satisfaction of natural needs) are unalterable to the extent that they share in the inevitable Natural law. Concerning social expedients Jude maintains, "'. . . there is something wrong somewhere in our social formulas,'" and he expresses the belief that "'. . . what it is can. . . be discovered. . . .'" (p. 394) Considering the natural urges, he admits, ". . . he could not see how the matter was to be mended." (p. 76)

Hardy describes the inevitable ultimate source of tragedy, as "'. . . in the chorus of the Agamemnon. . . . Nothing can be done. . . . Things are as they are, and will be brought to their destined issue.'" (p. 409)

Hardy tries to accomplish many things in Jude the Obscure, as his different definitions of the tragedy in the Preface reveal. He explains the social tragedy more specifically, showing both its ameliorable and its unchangeable aspects, and suggesting some basis for social mores in general. He re-emphasizes the inevitability of the universal tragedy of man's condition and its influence on society. There is no example of a protagonist who escapes altogether the tragedy of his character (like Angel in Tess), perhaps because Hardy's second thoughts on man's chances to improve his condition are not so optimistic. This does not harm the tragic vision; in fact it lessens the danger of diluting the tragic mystery.

In Jude, Hardy deals the final blow to contemporary Christanity, through the example of its effects on Sue and Jude. Furthermore, Hardy destroys the medieval Christian ideal. He says in the Apology to Late Lyrics and Earlier that his argument with Christianity is its refusal to remove "those things that are shaken."[15] Christminster, the symbol of Jude's ideal, contains those things, and Hardy shows their incongruity in the contemporary world. Hardy also shows the inconsistency with the present of the classical Greek ideal that Sue upheld. All of these conceptual complexes are merely blinkers on the eyes of man, Hardy feels, preventing a true apprehension of the contemporary human condition and bringing disaster to those who persist in clinging to them.

[15]Collected Poems, p. 531.

Jude's history, like Tess's and Angel's, is a voyage through suffering to discovery of the universal condition of man. He begins with traditional views and ideals; he ends with a knowledge of the invalidity of his earlier beliefs, of the Prime Will's unconscious inevitability, and of the resultant impossibility of success or happiness. Hardy introduces a new theme through Jude's ambition. His goal and his ideal are those of youth; Hardy suggests the universal tragedy in the destruction of the ideals of youth. Sue's ideal, a classical, natural one, is similar to Jude's and suffers a similar fate. A temperamental idiosyncrasy prevents her from retaining the knowledge of the human condition she gains through her suffering. Thus she ends in unheroic subjection to traditional guilt. Jude, by contrast, takes an exemplary, noble exit from the world, reaffirming the dignity of man: "'I would have died game!'"

CHAPTER SEVEN - RESUME AND CONCLUSION

The existence of the Prime Mover is the central thesis of Thomas Hardy's vision of life. Hardy feels that the new scientific knowledge of the world invalidates the conventional concepts. These concepts involve a belief in divine Providence, which guarantees ultimate happiness for humanity, even if only in the next world. God's justice grants happiness only to the innocent; man's suffering results from his own guilt. The facts of life which Hardy apprehends contradict these beliefs. He demonstrates their error in his four tragedies and advances his own theory of the human condition: the Prime Mover is a personification of Nature's flaws, an Omnipotent Will that is unconscious of its painful influence on man. No hope is possible after death because there is no afterlife; as Tess thinks, ". . . they would all in a few years be as if they had never been, and she herself grassed down and forgotten."[1] Sue Bridehead repeats this thought: "'We shall. . . be dead in a few years and then what will it matter. . . ?'"[2] Hardy's new ideal is man's noble mind functioning in this world.

Hardy reveals his theory of tragedy by classifying all four of the works discussed above as "Novels of Character and Environment."[3] These novels are modern tragedies based on the characters of the protagonists and the influence on their lives of the universal and social environment.

[1] *Tess*, p. 115.

[2] *Jude*, p. 268.

[3] *Works* (Wessex) I, vii .

In The Return of the Native Hardy says that character is ". . . the gift of heaven—a . . . convergence of natural laws."[4] He means by this that the Prime Mover creates human personality. Man is a part of Nature, which is the body and instrument of the Prime Mover. In this way the modern tragedy of psychology becomes universal. Furthermore, since man's character is not under control of his will, he is not ultimately responsible for the actions which proceed from his character. The only area of freedom is man's mind. In The Return Hardy suggests and in Tess he insists that man can only be judged by his intentions, objects of his conscious control.

Hardy gives specific examples in the novels of the ways in which character brings about tragedy. Idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies of personality head the list. Eustacia Vye's romantic nature cannot be satisfied. At the same time her sentimental cravings prevent the completion of her heroic potentialities. The abstract natures of Clym Yeobright and Angel Clare cannot function in the everyday world, and their theoretical idealism conflicts with their sexual desires. Henchard's excessive ambition brings about his doom; in addition it is inconsistent with his uncontrolled temper and his need for affection. Tess's unusual attractiveness and charm contribute to her catastrophe. Her error is in believing that her will to joy can be fulfilled. She shares this error with Sue Bridehead, who also attempts to satisfy her urge to happiness, believing that is what Nature intends. Both discover their happiness is impossible in imperfect Nature. Sue's ethereal personality makes her impulse to love and be loved a cause of pain and ultimate tragedy. Jude's idealism is too unrealistic, and he suffers from this folly; furthermore his sensitivity cannot bear the everyday cruelty of life. His natural sensuality, like Clym's and Angel's, prevents the accomplishment of his intellectal ambitions.

[4]p. 78.

The interaction of unlike characters also brings about tragedy. Eustacia needs a mate who matches her in stature, sensuality, and freedom of spirit. She is doomed to frustration in her relationships with ethereal Clym and the incomplete Wildeve. Both her lovers also suffer from their inability to gratify her. Tess needs both natural sensuality and the compliment to (what Hardy describes as) her complete love "with all her heart and soul." Like Eustacia's tragedy, Tess's depends on her disappointment by Angel and Alec, who cannot satisfy her. Alec dies (like Wildeve) in a vain attempt to capture a woman he is not suited to love.

Another source of catastrophe is mistaken conceptions of the universe. Eustacia and Wildeve have a romantic vision of life. Henchard conceives of a traditional Elizabethan world-order. Angel, Jude, and Sue at one time or another believe in conventional Christianity. Jude harbours a medieval intellectual ideal as well, and Sue reverts to a classical Greek view of the world. All of these visions of the human condition are false, Hardy insists, and by blinding the consciousness to the true universal situation, they bring suffering and death to the protagonists. This suffering, Hardy shows, is out of proportion to the flaws of the tragic characters. Hardy creates the mystery typical of tragedy: that man suffers more than he deserves at the hand of Destiny.

The overshadowing influence of the Prime mover has a more direct effect. Egdon Heath, a guise of Nature, crushes Eustacia's will to joy, forcing her to refuse life. The climax of Henchard's downfall results from the failure of Nature to provide the harvest he needs. In Tess and Jude, Hardy describes the unhappy effect of more immediate natural influences, the human urges for food, affection, sexual satisfaction, and generalized happiness. These impulses partake of the flaw of Nature, of which Hardy

says in Jude: "Nature's law is mutual butchery." Tess, destitute and starved for love, submits to Alec, thus precipitating both their deaths. Arabella symbolizes the effects of these natural impulses on Jude; and Phillotson, the effects on Sue. Jude and Sue share the degradation of poverty, which leads to the death of their children and their final tragedy.

To his list of the natural sources of tragedy Hardy adds social factors. His concept of social tragedy develops from novel to novel. In The Return of the Native, tragedy takes place completely outside society. The tragic action of The Mayor of Casterbridge occurs within society but not because of it; Hardy does not overtly question the validity of the institutions. In Tess (for the first time), Hardy opposes the protagonists to society. Here he defines social laws as creations of man's mind. They do not express natural urges but are artificial conveniences of man in the mass. These regulations hinder man's self-expression, causing tragedy. Hardy feels these mores can be improved. The tragedy in Tess retains its universality and mystery by its ultimate dependence on the natural tragedies of character and circumstance. In Jude, Hardy withdraws his complete condemnation of social mores. He must clarify his definition of the responsibility of the mores for tragedy. He divides social regulations into two classes. The first class comprises those laws defined (as above) as merely social expedients, which Hardy still feels are created by man, invalid, and improvable. The second class includes those natural urges which society has undertaken to control. The social rules controlling these impulses may be ameliorable, but Hardy says some social regulation is necessary. In the end, Hardy illustrates through Sue Bridehead's tragedy that rebellion from society in order to express the natural impulses brings catastrophe as well, because the laws of Nature are also flawed. This is Hardy's answer to the charge

that he wrote limited tragedies of his contemporary society only. Hardy wants to define exactly the human condition. Since man cannot escape his social milieu, Hardy attempts to define the interaction between the individual and the mass in order to show the role played by society in human tragedy. He always maintains, however, that natural tragedy inevitably overshadows the social, and that man's destiny in the universe is to suffer.

Hardy's vision of life has been attacked as pessimistic, and thus not universally valid. He adequately defended himself in his non-fiction, but these novels illustrate better than any theoretical self-justification that he was no pessimist, but a realist. His tragedies objectively demonstrate man's small chances for happiness in the world, because of the opposition of man's own character, his need for comforting and unmanning beliefs, the societal institutions with which he surrounds himself, and circumstance: man's physical and mental frailty and oversensitive nervous system leave him prey to the effects of "tragic mischief." Hardy shows the unhappy ends of those who would believe in Nature's benevolence (Eustacia, Tess, Sue). He demonstrates the incongruity with reality of the traditional concept of an avenging God and human guilt (Henchard, Clym, Sue). Hardy feels, like Housman, that ". . . if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst. . . ."[5] If man wishes to avoid the worst effects of the human condition, he must understand his Opposition. Hardy creates many protagonists with false ideas of the human condition, in order to show not only the ways in which his contemporaries may err, but also the misery which inevitably results from these misconceptions.

[5]"In Tenebris II," Collected Poems, p. 154.

Another facet of Hardy's didacticism is his portrayal of human dignity in the stress of suffering. This goal is implicit in all great tragedy, but it becomes crucial when it replaces all other ideals in the universe. Human dignity depends upon the awareness of the Universal Opponent. Hardy shows that this knowledge comes through suffering; but suffering does not always bring vision. Sometimes it effects the opposite, a reversion to the illusion of old traditions. Henchard dies denying his humanity because he believes in his own guilt. Sue and Clym also betray their human nobility by turning to traditional guilt; they are doomed to degraded lives of self-denial. By contrast, Eustacia gains knowledge of the non-benevolence of the world, and expresses a Promethean dignity in death. Because her understanding of the Prime Being is incomplete, she feels that her Opponent is consciously malignant. Thus she commits suicide in frantic rebellion, not in calm.

Tess is the first protagonist to understand completely the human condition. She learns that the Prime Will is unconscious and therefore that her destiny is inevitable. She resigns herself to death in the knowledge that at least she is not persecuted consciously. Her calm adds immeasurably to her dignity at the end. Jude also discovers the inevitability of his fate, and Hardy portrays his resultant calmness in the face of death. Jude's reaction to the facts of life differs from Tess's. Hardy adds to his calm the element of Promethean opposition, though this element is passive. Jude's indictment of the Prime Mover underlines man's innocent position of victim in the universe, and increases man's nobility. Hardy wants to illuminate the human condition, but he wants even more to reveal man's noble capacities in opposition. At rare intervals he may utilize "tragic mischief" particular to a protagonist or an age (Jude's educational difficulties, for example),

but his interest in these cases centres on the universal quality of man's heroic reaction to his tragedy, whatever the details.[6]

The effectiveness of fiction may be evaluated by the tensions it creates between the protagonists. In tragedy these tensions must reinforce universal themes; in one sense the working out of the tensions marks the progress of the tragedy. Hardy delineates two main tensions in his tragedies. The first operates between man and the Universe. It appears in various ways. The free intellect in man opposes the animal in himself, that portion of him enslaved to Nature. Man's ideals oppose flawed reality. Ultimately, conscious moral man opposes the unconscious and hence amoral Prime Mover that crushes man's noble potentialities. The other tension acts between two worlds, the old and the contemporary. Man owes allegiance to both worlds, sentimental and traditional respect for the old, but crucial obligation to the new. This tension is thus within man's intellect. Hardy recognizes that ultimately the vision of the new world must prevail, but he feels the power of the traditional conceptions: he tried all his life to escape their emotional pull. He said in 1890, "I have been looking for God 50 years. . . ."[7] Though he never found Him, the search was compelling. Since he feels the tension himself, between the traditions and modern scientific materialism, Hardy can successfully portray its action in his protagonists.

[6]Jude, pp. x-xi. This is Hardy's answer to Webster's criticism of the lack of universality of Jude: "The case of Jude and Sue is not representative of normal human characters in a normal human situation." (Darkling Plain, p. 186) There is only one Cleopatra, one Hamlet, but many women in love, many men wracked by indecision.

[7]Early Life, p. 293.

Hardy's tragedies are therefore both universal and contemporary. Hardy was trying to come to grips with his age. Like Yeats, he sincerely felt that the end of the Christian age was at hand, that it was being replaced by a new vision of life, just as twenty centuries earlier it had replaced the Greek world view. Hardy felt that he was portraying a crucial moment in the world's history, a time of the breakdown and the growth of civilizations, with their attendant philosophies.[8] In this sense, Hardy's topicality lends wider significance to his tragedies. Furthermore, the apotheosis of the heroes becomes crucial, for on them Hardy bases his new, earthly ideal.

Hardy's four tragic novels fulfil the conditions of the theory of valid tragedy. Through these works he denies the benevolence of the First Cause and stresses the mystery of human suffering. He shows that man's misery is dependent on his character and situation. He insists that man suffers more than he deserves. Hardy's protagonists demonstrate true tragic dignity and human stature in opposition to the First Cause. These are the stakes for which man struggles, in Hardy's view: the retention of his freedom of consciousness and of human nobility, which are the only things he controls in this world of chained wills. Man's mind is the ideal Hardy substitutes for the invalidated vision of God. Hardy dedicates his knowledge of the Universe to the same cause as Angel Clare, "the honour and glory of man."

[8] "The Greeks used up theirs...the Christians have used up theirs. So that one must make an independent plunge, embodying the real, if only temporary, thought of the age." (Later Years, p. 104)

Herbert Muller, in defining tragedy, says, "Tragedy ... is more directly concerned with the relatively timeless, universal problems of life and death—the tragic story of man, again, rather than the heroic story of certain great men."[9] David Cecil independently evaluates Hardy's tragedy as follows: "He sees human beings less as individuals than as representatives of a species, and in relation to the ultimate conditioning forces of their existence. His subject is not men, but man."[10] Muller continues to theorize about the tragic protagonist: "Above all, tragedy is centred on the problem of his "fate": not merely his failures in love, business, or war, nor his sufferings from political or social injustice, but his relations to his total environment, his position in the universe, the ultimate meaning of his life."[11] Cecil says of Hardy, "The subtleties of intellectual life, the complexities of public life, the sophistications of social life, these do not kindle Hardy's imagination. . . . The life he portrays is life reduced to its basic elements. . . facets of human nature. . . which appear in the conflict of Mankind with fate."[12] Catastrophe becomes pathos when it has no universal significance. Thomas Hardy's tragedies are ultimately valid because they deal with the essential problem of man's relationship to the Universe.

[9]Tragedy, p. 16.

[10]David Cecil, Hardy The Novelist (London, 1943), p. 19.

[11]Tragedy, p. 14.

[12]Cecil, pp. 34-35.

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