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The Influence of Darwinism on the Novels of  
Thomas Hardy

Josephine Elizabeth Shannon

A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
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## ABSTRACT

## Darwinism in the Novels of Thomas Hardy

Josephine Elizabeth Shannon

In the following thesis I will examine the effects that Darwinism had upon the works of Thomas Hardy over a twenty-five year period. Three novels will be dealt with: The Return of the Native, The Woodlanders, and Tess of the d'Urbervilles.

This study does not attempt to define or synthesize Hardy's philosophy, which was often confused and contradictory. Rather its aim is to familiarize the reader with the sometimes obscure allusions to evolution which abound in Hardy's work and to account for certain features in his fiction.

The theory of evolution as propounded by Darwin and his followers profoundly shaped Hardy's work and formed his attitude both to life and human relationships. For the most part his novels point unremittingly to the strife and pain inherent in existence. He sees that maladaptation, hereditarian determinism, humanity's heightened sensitivity and the forces of natural and sexual selection combine to confound happiness. His poetry points to a pain which was heightened by a loss of belief in God. For Hardy, there is no conscious Deity who might help the human race to withstand its plight. Men and women are effectively adrift in time and space, their lives played out as fleeting moments in eternity, their dramas repetitions of the same dramas which recur endlessly throughout history.

While Hardy had no belief in a Judeo-Christian Deity, he valued religion in its simple traditional aspect as a means of bringing people together. However, he rejects those societal precepts which are based on outworn religious conventionalities. Indeed, his later novels are scathing attacks upon Victorian sexual hypocrisy.

In spite of Hardy's sombre view of life, he was not without hope in society's capacity for change. He believed that altruism was the one hope of humanity in its struggle with nature. He held that when wars and self-interest cease people might hope truly to evolve. Happiness, was not, however, a by-product of kindness nor was it necessarily a product of evolution. Indeed, as Hardy made clear, the opposite was often the case. Rather, altruism was a noble ideal which must be cultivated for its own sake. It was the 'golden rule' espoused by Huxley and Darwin as a moral law in an amoral universe.

Will you put out mine eyes?  
These eyes that never did nor never shall  
So much as frown on you ?

King John. IV. I. 56.

I must make a confession,  
even if it be humiliating. I  
have never been able to form  
the slightest conception of those  
"forces" which the materialists  
talk about...

Thomas H. Huxley  
1888.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1859, when Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace startled the world with their conception of natural selection, most scientists and laymen still believed in the 'immutability' of species of plants and animals. According to this belief, specific types of living things are independently and specially created by God: and although they either exist from age to age or become extinct, they never undergo any significant physical change. They are immutable--unchanged and unchangeable. The theory Darwin inaugurated has been called "The Darwinian Revolution"--a disturbance, and for many, a destruction of previously unquestioned and cherished beliefs.

The Victorian affirmation of the evolutionary principle, together with the formulation of a seemingly indisputable explanation of its operation, conflicted with the written account of creation as set down in Genesis. Not surprisingly, religious orthodoxy was shaken. For many of those whose religion rested on a literal fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, a secure body of faith had been irrevocably undermined. What many considered to be crass scientific materialism or even atheism was apparently threatening to supplant idealism and devotion to an omniscient and benign deity. The traditional belief in the divine government of human activity seemed menaced by a new faith in physical natural laws--such as those of the "struggle for existence" and "the survival of the fittest"--which nowhere seemed to allow for supernatural intervention.<sup>1</sup>

Like many writers and intellectuals of his generation, Thomas Hardy was deeply preoccupied with the questions raised by Darwinism. With scarcely an exception, his novels touch on various aspects of the new and fundamental dilemmas which had come to light through the theories of Darwin and his followers. Many of the Darwinists' and neo-Darwinists' convictions are manifested in Hardy's novels, not only in their intellectual content, but also in features of plot and patterning. For the most part Hardy's characters move through what might be called a Darwinian world. It is a landscape filled with nature's vast indifferent forces in which his protagonists attempt in vain to clutch at happiness; to find an emotional niche in which to shelter against the vicissitudes of existence. In his greatest novels they fail--or settle into a kind of bleak compromise which is in itself failure. Nevertheless, many are heroic in their struggle.

This study will deal with three novels, The Return of the Native; The Woodlanders, and Tess of the d'Urbervilles. These novels span the years from 1877 to 1892. Each novel deals with obsessive love and the protagonists' reaction to the diminution of this love. In each work, change in some form, whether philosophical, as in The Return of the Native, or sociological as in the latter two novels invades the sheltered world that Hardy almost invariably creates. Although the author's dark vision of the human plight may be seen to deepen with each work, in all three books, his gloomy view of existence is tempered by the deeply-held and unswerving conviction that altruism is the means by which the human race may evolve into

something better.

Hardy has been almost universally labelled as a pessimist. He, however, preferred to think of himself as a realist. If we examine the intellectual tenor of those thinkers and theorists who most influenced him, it appears that in a relative sense his own description of himself is entirely justified.

For Hardy, a chief source of humankind's misery is its possession of consciousness in a world which is governed by an unknown and dispassionate force. If humanity has evolved, it has evolved too far; it is out of harmony with its own instinctual drives and with the external order. Hardy feels that the individual's drives are unrealizable; men and women are doomed at birth to a life of meaningless misery. Their hopes, their dreams and even their reasonable expectations are mocked by reality. They are the prey of time and chance, of disease, age, death and all other calamities. When they turn for relief to others they find little solace. Even the love relationship is usually unhappy as a result of disillusionment and natural law.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the cosmic and phenomenological perspectives of Darwinism produced, by reaction, one of the most powerful qualities of Hardy's fiction, his near-universal empathy and compassion for the individual. Hardy sees fate and society from the individual's point of view and finds both to be flawed, pernicious and cruel. He tends to excuse or to empathize with his characters, even the more defective ones. The painfulness of his work arises from the combination of his sympathetic treatment of the individual with his dark view of the human condition.

It is, perhaps, because of this profound compassion for the human dilemma that a central character in Hardy's universe is both great and small. He or she is the plaything of Fate, but the judge of Creation. Without contradiction, Hardy might be termed a meliorist of the race, but a pessimist of the individual.

Another of Hardy's beliefs, one which has a strong influence on his later work, is the idea that since a conscious being has evolved out of blind force, there is a possibility that the force will itself realize consciousness and be rendered cognizant of the harm that it has inflicted on its creations. As we shall see later, this philosophy is derived from Neo-Darwinist philosophies, rather than from Darwin himself.

## I THE BACKGROUND TO DARWINISM

Although Darwin was the chief proponent and the bulwark of the theory of the origin of species, it becomes clear that most of the elements he later synthetized in his theory were present in the scientific world by 1818 when Thomas Robert Malthus' controversial Essay on the Principle of Population became freely available. In its historical context, the conviction of the permanence and wise design of the fundamental structures of nature had already been gradually undermined in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the evidence of natural mutability accumulated and the implications of the "mechanical" view of nature had slowly become apparent. In astronomy, the speculative temptation to derive the earth and solar system from a previous state of matter in motion by the operation of mechanical laws produced the nebular hypothesis. This was outlined by Immanuel Kant in 1755, and elaborated by William Herschel in the early nineteenth century. As the nineteenth century progressed it became clear that the static view of nature was tottering. In spite of this, the implications of universal mutability were evaded for a long time by a compromise theory. This postulated successive creations separated by geological upheavals. Although the elements of the theory lay at hand, they were not embraced by one powerful and encompassing mind until Darwin's The Origin.

When in 1859 The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life was published, Darwin remarked that he would be satisfied if the book

convinced three men; Lyell; the leading geologist; Hooker; the leading botanist, and Thomas Huxley, then acquiring a reputation as a zoologist. Huxley was called upon to write the Times article on the book. As it happened, he wrote a wholly favourable review, but the widespread controversy emitted by Huxley's article was to prove the first salvo in a debate which raged bitterly for about twenty years. With characteristic caution, Darwin, himself, in The Origin of Species did not attempt to apply the theory of natural selection to people. Nevertheless, it was evident to any thoughtful reader, than any law which affected the whole organic world must necessarily include the human race.

In January, 1863, Huxley, a friend and avid admirer of Darwin, published his first book Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature. Here, Huxley applied the Darwinian theory of natural selection to human life. He proved beyond contention that people could not, by virtue of any physiological peculiarities, claim a special position outside of or above all other peculiarities.

At the same time that Huxley's book appeared before the public, Sir Charles Lyell's Antiquity of Man was published. Sir Charles had originally opposed the evolution theory and declared his adherence to the idea of successive creations, but in The Antiquity of Man he showed himself a complete though unwilling convert to the basic ideas of Darwin. Lyell's work was both a consummation and a beginning. Paleontology and the mounting evidence of geology and archaeology pointed to the irrefutable fact that humankind dated back, not six thousand years,

but to the extinct quaternary animals.

The great significance of these new ideas lay in the fact that it now became possible to apply to human life a theory involving variations in species whose development would require aeons. If human beings had evolved from lower forms of life it followed that their origin dated back to an infinitely remote time. Lyell's Antiquity of Man established this.<sup>2</sup>

At this point it is necessary to consider those theories of Darwin which appeared to evoke either the anger or allegiance of an entire generation. His genius, whether for science or myth, has been seen as providing the world with eight great principles which for the sake of clarity I will list here.

The first principle is the idea of the web of life -- the idea of linkages, interdependencies and correlations in the living world, which will, as we shall see, have important ramifications upon the works of Hardy. The second is the famous concept of the struggle for existence. This is the inevitable consequence of the Malthusian idea of overpopulation. The struggle is both inter and intraspecific; it may be a mere struggle against fate or against hard conditions of environment. The third is the variability of living creatures; an idea derived from the study of changes of animals and plants under domestication and of diversity among wild individuals belonging to the same species. The fourth is the idea of natural selection. The fifth is the vindication of the idea of evolution, in that Darwin was the first to marshal the evidences in such force as to compel acceptance of this

idea. The sixth principle is the descent and ascent of humankind, a recognition of men and women's solidarity with the rest of creation. The seventh principle is, the Darwinian liberation of freely-speculating intelligence in that The Origin of Species, as no single document before or, since, released the current ideas from the trammels of conservatism and dogmatism. The eighth precept might be called the ideal of scientific mood and method. Darwin was the first great evolutionist to use the inductive method, that of securing an abundance of facts and then formulating theories to explain the facts.<sup>3</sup>

The most famous of these ideas is, of course, that of natural selection or "the survival of the fittest" as Herbert Spencer defined the idea. This, said Darwin, is the simple method of endowing every creature with a necessity to provide food and living space. Thus, by a process of selection, those entities are chosen who happen to have some slight advantage in the ensuing struggle for existence. Darwin observed: "It is the doctrine of Malthus applied in most cases with ten-fold force....Yearly more are bred than can survive; the smallest grain in the balance, in the long run, must tell on which death shall fall, and which shall survive."<sup>4</sup> It is hardly surprising that natural selection with its emphasis on unknown laws shattered every conviction and belief through which women and men saw themselves, the universe and God. Darwin wrote in his autobiography: "There seems to be no more design in the variability of organic beings and in the action of natural selection, than in the course which the wind blows. Everything in nature is the result of fixed laws."<sup>5</sup> According to Huxley and Darwin, those animals or organisms who survive do so not be-



cause of any ethical plan of nature, but because they are best adapted to their environment. While Darwin had little trouble in coming to terms with this precept, both Huxley and Hardy were troubled by its implications and the writings of both reflect their increasing concern.

In 1871 Darwin published again. His decision to do so was hastened by the English publication of Huxley's Man's Place in Nature and Ernest Haeckel's History of Creation, published on the continent. In the Descent of Man, Darwin dealt not only with the origin of the human race, but with the process of selection in relation to sex. Darwin taught that the minds of men and women in their lowest stages were essentially animal minds. The upward progress of the mind was effected by natural causes. Just as the bodily organism shows the capability to vary in an indefinite number of ways, so may the mental faculties vary indefinitely with certain physical changes. More important for our purposes, Darwin theorized that variability occurs in the human race to a high degree and those individuals who by chance variation depart "profitably" in one way or another from their parents may be best fitted to succeed.<sup>6</sup>

In conjunction with the theory of natural selection, Darwin also advanced a theory to account for those often marked differences between the two sexes of a species which became known as secondary sexual characteristics. These include special organs of attack and defence used by rival males in fighting for possession of the female. Darwin's explanation of the above-mentioned phenomena--known as the theory of sexual selection, postulated that these characters are of advantage in

the rivalry of mating. He gave numerous examples to prove that in many cases their function was to attract and stimulate creatures of the opposite sex.<sup>7</sup>

There can be little doubt that the establishment of the theory of evolution was the great intellectual event of the century; indeed, one must go back to the substitution of the Copernican for the Ptolemaic system to find an apt parallel. It is, however, indisputable that there are clear paradoxes in the theories of Darwin. The law of evolution concerns living things and by analogy implies that the universe itself is an organism. Insofar as this goes, a "living" universe suggests warmth, response, kinship--in short--Deity-- rather than a sort of automaton. Moreover, it is undeniable that any machine requires a mechanic; whereas an organism does not obviously require anything except nourishment. Darwin's explanation of evolution is "mechanistic," but without any of the favourable implications of mechanical design. Natural selection represents not a harmony, but a conflict, and is effectuated not by the precise mathematical idealism of invisible force but apparently by an indiscriminate sorting out of variations by random environment. Darwin had portrayed the organistic universe of Schelling, and, as many felt, had documented it atheistically, in terms of blind chance and purposeless mechanism. Schelling, himself had pointed out that an imperfect universe might be the work, if not of a perfect and self-sufficient deity, then of an immanent and evolving intelligence. Many Victorians could believe in an evolving deity but not in one who dealt in random variations. They could accept an evolving universe but not a universe shaken out of a dice box. Consequent-

ly, as the century wore on, Darwinism fared poorly in metaphysics. People were impressed less with the achievements of biological progress and more with the irrationality of a Darwinistic universe, with the expense in waste, conflict and suffering. Advanced thinkers either became agnostics or acknowledged an evolving deity.<sup>8</sup> As will be shown, Hardy leaned towards each of the above views at various periods in his life.

Nonetheless, at the time of The Origin's publication in the mid-nineteenth century, the subject of natural theology was still in vogue. Indeed, Darwin acknowledged its influence upon his own thinking. It should be remembered that the natural theology which Darwin knew was only a remnant of the rich tradition that took its origins from ancient Greek philosophy and found expression in St. Thomas Aquinas' five proofs of existence. St. Thomas distinguished between theological truths accessible to human reason (such as God's existence and attributes) and those accessible only by revelation, (the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Trinity). In Aquinas' view there were five mutually supporting ways by which humankind could arrive at a knowledge of God and His attributes by natural reason. His proofs were influenced by a conception of God based on Aristotelean and Biblical influences. The first proof was based on the Aristotelean necessity of a Prime Mover to account for the movement evident in the universe; the second, on the need for a First Efficient Cause of the existence of things; the third, on the need to postulate a Necessary Being in a world of contingent beings; the fourth, on the need to suppose a Supremely Perfect Being as the cause of the degrees of perfection observable in things, and the fifth on the necessity of a Supreme Intelligence.<sup>9</sup>

By contrast, Darwin explained adaptations in nature, not as an end

foreseen by an intelligent mind, but as the result of an unintelligent process. Moreover, he virtually abandoned the teleological explanation which looks to the Future, and substituted a genetic explanation which looks to the Past. He appealed not to the formal and final causes of Aristotle, but to the material and efficient causes instead. For Aristotle, as God is the sum and source of all nature, so He is the sum and goal of all purposes in nature. He is the Final as well as the First Cause. He is not the Creator of the physical world but its energizing form. He moves it not from behind but as an inner direction or goal.

The concepts set down by Darwin were imaginatively powerful because all their indications did not point one way. Darwin's writings took up elements from older orders and particularly from recurrent mythic themes such as transformation and metamorphosis. It is clear that Darwin, to some extent, personified nature in order to distinguish it from God. Yet in strict fact, says Darwinian critic, Gillian Beer, his theory had no place either for an initiating or an intervening Creator. Yet terms like "selection" or "preservation" raise the question (at least linguistically), by whom or what "selected" or "preserved"? Natural history was still imbued with presumptions of Godhead and of preemptive patterning. Darwin was, therefore, obliged to dramatise his struggle with natural theological assumptions within a language weighted towards natural theology.<sup>10</sup>

Darwin's personification of nature as female was, of course, part of a long tradition and his writing retains the idea of natura naturans and the Great Mother. Beer feels that in the mythological order of

Darwin's language, natural selection appears as an aspect or avatar of the more general "Nature," whose maternal ordering is contrasted with the egocentric one of man.<sup>11</sup>

In the first edition of The Origin both nature and natural selection are grammatically endowed with the function of agents--and, despite Darwin's later exasperation with the issue, it cannot be denied that he endowed them in his language with conscious activity. Gillian Beer, while noting this, feels that to some extent Darwin is suffering from the recalcitrance of human language which is permeated with intention. It is, however, undeniable, that the sense of a brooding Presence is reinforced by the way in which he distinguishes the gender of nature and natural selection:

It may be said that natural selection is daily, and hourly scrutinizing throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest, rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up that which is good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life.<sup>12</sup>

The peculiar, almost sinister imagery which is conveyed in this passage imparts not only the suggestion of a conscious entity but the idea that Darwin's discourses were rich in contradictory elements which could serve as a metaphorical basis for more than one reading of reality. For example, an optimistic "progressive" reading of development could never

quite expunge that other insistence that extinction is more probable than progress, that the individual life span is never a sufficient register for change and for the accomplishment of desire; an insistence which led one recent critic to characterize the Darwinian theory as a myth of death.<sup>13</sup>

In spite of his professed agnosticism, Hardy, like Darwin, could not suppress a tendency to portray a theistic conception of the governance of the world. Paradoxically, however, he inconsistently assented to the scientific ideas of his time which stated that the universe was a system of unconscious, blind and unpurposive force. Ernest A. Baker comments in The History of the English Novel that Hardy's inveterate habits of mind compelled him to hypostatize his forces of nature, to deify his later concept of the Immanent Will. He notes that Hardy perceived a predominance of evil and he personified the inimical thing by a sort of pathetic fallacy or an inversion of his theological convictions.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps Hardy's tendency to hypostasy may be understood in the context of Darwin's own tendency to anthropopathy in the latter's ascription of human passions or feelings to a being or beings which are not human.

In The Origin, Darwin writes in detail of the infinite richness of relationships in nature, which he describes as progressing "onwards in ever-increasing circles of complexity." Life is disordered, democratic and subtly interdependent, as well as competitive; essentially a modern vision.<sup>15</sup> Stanley Hyman writes:

In the Origin's testament, God the Father

may exist, and may even have created the world, but if so he has long been remote from it, like the otiose high gods of mythology who have tired of the misbehaviour of their creatures and deserted them.

The Origin's first statement on the subject is that the idea of the separate creation of each species "makes the works of God a mere mockery and deception." This God is, moreover, unknowable: "Have we any right to assume that the Creator works by intellectual powers like those of man?"<sup>16</sup>

Nature has succeeded the gods for Darwin, but it is still the earth goddess or Great Mother, worshipped everywhere under a variety of names; Gaia, Cybele, Isis, and Ishtar.<sup>17</sup>

In relation to Hardy's work, Darwin's "circles of complexity," his "web of life" or system of interdependencies was translated into a fictive pattern. This pattern depended heavily upon recurrent coincidences in the life of one or more individuals. Coincidence in Hardy's plots may at times be seen as his response to the element of interconnections which Darwin perceived in nature. An example of this may be seen in his dramatic poem "The Convergence of the Twain" which deals with the Titanic disaster of 1914. The poem makes it clear that coincidence is not necessarily a matter of chance, nor of arbitrarily determined fate. The Titanic, for Hardy, is an example of society's hubris, a hubris which must be paid for. In effect, the poem deals with the

essential moral relationship between cause and consequence. Each synchronism is often part of a chain of circumstance which affects the lives of every character in Hardy's world. B.G. Hornback writes in The Metaphor of Chance that coincidence is Hardy's fictional convention. Indeed, it has been seen as the central problem for almost every critic who has had reservations about Hardy's art and this is because coincidence is at the centre of his vision and technique. Because of his philosophic acceptance of the interdependence and interaction of all vital phenomena, Hardy develops the idea of necessary co-incidents. "Experience," he writes, "is as to intensity." It is significantly dramatic by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives" so intensified.<sup>18</sup> W.J. Harvey summarizes the question of interdependencies in this way:

When we examine our own personal history and experience we can trace the actual line we have taken, can isolate what I may call the real trajectory of our lives. But because we live in a world where multiplicity is ever at our elbow we are aware that had we made different decisions at any given point different consequences would have followed. . . . our lives follow a narrow line of light (our knowledge of the actual) through a shadowy penumbra of possibilities, of might-have-beens.<sup>19</sup>

Hardy views coincidence in two ways. There are two distinct threads of fate, interdependencies or chance which are pulled in order to bring a



thematically dominated conclusion to his ordering of existence. The first strand might be called a simple chain of cause and effect. This acts upon the lives of his protagonists in exact accordance with the decisions that they make. As his characters' responses to love are invariably flawed, their judgements invariably have further and usually negative ramifications upon their own and others' lives.

The second strand of coincidence running through the lives of Hardy's characters might be termed fate, or more aptly, blind force acting upon the world without any discernible purpose. People fall victim to this force in which, as Darwin says, there is "no more design" than in "the course which the wind blows."<sup>20</sup>

In later life, Hardy appears to have believed in a First Cause, but the real issue for him was not God's existence, but the nature of the force which moves all things. He was preoccupied with the problem of evil in the world and fascinated by the refusal of others to see what the writer often felt to be obvious, that the Prime Mover is not necessarily concerned with the sufferings of the world. In The Return of the Native Hardy writes of the human race that "even while they sit down and weep by the waters of Babylon, [they] invent excuses for the oppression which prompts their tears."<sup>21</sup> He felt that humanity's oppression does not necessarily come about through the malign intentions of a First Cause but through the absolute indifference of the Cause to the suffering or well-being of its creation. For Hardy, the primal force is "loveless and hateless... which neither good nor evil knows."<sup>22</sup>

The problem of design has implications for Hardy's fiction. Ernest

A. Baker states that Thomas Hardy's philosophy consisted of the general conclusions to which he had been driven by his reading of scientists, their expositors and annotators. It was unfortunate, comments Baker, that he kept changing his ground and that the metaphysics underlying one novel may not tally with those of another. Hardy was a confused thinker; his greatness is in his ability to draw a profundity of meaning from his characters and their histories. He creates a drama in which they play their own parts, a symbol of humanity at war with the universe.<sup>23</sup>

Hardy's self-confessed and singularly indeterminate form of agnosticism can be traced back to the 1860's. Those years when Hardy began his novelistic career were a decisive turning-point in the intellectual life of the last century. His earlier poems were written about six years after The Origin and his first novel was published in 1871, the year in which Darwin's Descent of Man was published. It is immediately apparent, even in Hardy's early poems and novels, that his reading of evolution gives little hope of humankind being able to control its destiny. This view changed little with the course of time. In 1914, Hardy wrote of Nietzsche:

He assumes throughout the great worth intrinsically of human masterfulness. The universe is to him a perfect machine which only requires thorough handling to work wonders. He forgets that the universe is an imperfect machine, and that to do good with an ill-working instrument requires endless adjustments and compromises.<sup>24</sup>

Like Huxley, Hardy believed that the human species' high degree of consciousness is the greatest curse which evolution had bestowed. For Hardy, humankind's "unnatural" sensitivity could not reconcile itself with a universe which preyed upon its most weak and defenceless organisms. Consequently, his plots are filled with those accidents of fate which constantly occur to thwart his characters, who are, in any event, vulnerable to disappointment by their insatiable proclivity towards happiness. Their obsessive search for gratification usually takes the form of a strong physical attraction for the object of the beloved. His men and women will go to almost any lengths to satisfy their impulses, driven as they are, by a compulsive sexual attraction. Darwin wrote in The Descent of Man that happiness is an essential part of the general good.<sup>25</sup> Later, in a passage redolent of utilitarianism he remarks:

As a struggle may sometimes be seen going on between the various instincts of the lower animals, it is not surprising that there should be a struggle in man between his social instincts, with their derived virtues, and his lower, though momentarily stronger impulses or desires.<sup>26</sup>

In a tone of admonition he warns:

At the moment of action, man will no doubt be apt to follow the stronger impulse: and though this may occasionally prompt him to the noblest deeds, it will more commonly lead him to gratify his own desires at the expense of other men. But after their gratification when

past and weaker impressions are judged by the ever-enduring social instinct, and by his deep regard for the good opinion of his fellows, retribution will surely come. He will then feel remorse, repentance, regret, or shame.<sup>27</sup>

The instinctive emotions of "remorse" and "shame" which Darwin delineates became an enduring theme in Hardy's fictive universe. His lovers yearn, the union is consummated and torpor descends. Darwin argues that any instinct which is permanently stronger or more enduring than another, gives rise to a feeling which we express by obedience to its demands. Humankind's moral sense follows first from the enduring and ever-present nature of its social instincts; from its appreciation of the approbation and disapprobation of others and from the high activity of its mental faculties which render past impressions extremely vivid. Because of this innate contradiction, men and women cannot avoid looking both backwards and forwards and comparing past impressions; their now weakened past impulses, with their ever-present social instincts. This is conscience.<sup>28</sup> Implicit in this concept is the idea of a man or woman as a creature who is at the mercy of two masters. In a literary sense it justifies the theme of a schism between a repressive society and humankind's innately sensual nature, which, in spite of a high degree of sensitivity, is subject to the laws of sexual selection. This theme dominates Tess of the d'Urbervilles.

Hardy wrote upon this subject that he was "convinced that persons are successively various persons, according as each special strand in

their characters is brought upwards by circumstances.<sup>29</sup> In The Return of the Native and The Woodlanders, the freshness of passion and optimism give way to cynicism and despair with the passing of time and the consummation of desire. Hardy's idea is partially echoed in Tess of the d'Urbervilles when Tess's passive nature vies with her uncontrollable rages which manifest at times; a theme which will be examined in my last chapter.

## II THE BACKGROUND TO HARDY'S THOUGHT

Who, then, were the thinkers who most affected Hardy in this period?

It becomes clear that there were numerous sources of inspiration from those writers and theorists whose own work was directly influenced by Darwin's view of the world. Each, in some way, contributed to Hardy's own peculiarly eclectic and sometimes self-contradictory form of Darwinism. Among their ranks were John Stuart Mill; Herbert Spencer; Thomas Huxley; the German philosopher, Eduard Karl Von Hartmann, and Leslie Stephen. If Hardy's views have sometimes been seen as inconsistent, this might be because of his widely-divergent philosophical readings. Hardy subscribed to numerous monthly reviews and periodicals which contained the current philosophies and ideas of the time. Much of his information on current issues was gleaned from the articles and essays contained therein.

Although many of the views of the writers and philosophers of the nineteenth century are diverse, there are certain speculations which converge to a noticeable degree. For example, Spencer and Von Hartmann's view of a First Cause share certain similarities, while Huxley and Darwin adhere to many of the same beliefs which differ at times only in minutiae.

It is clear that shortly after Hardy's adherence to the writings of Darwin, his growing antitheistic convictions were strengthened by his readings of the poet, Algernon Charles Swinburne. Later, the two men formed a friendship which spanned most of their mutual lives. One of Hardy's favourite poems was the poem Anactoria which reviles the deity:

Is not this incense bitterness, his meat  
 Murder? his hidden face and iron feet  
 Hath not man known, and felt them on their way  
 Threaten and trample all things and every day?<sup>1</sup>

Swinburne distinguishes himself from his contemporaries in that he was extremely hostile to the idea of the Christian deity. In the poem Atalanta he exposes the malignancy and non-viability of the theistic rationale, thereby attempting a form of iconoclasm. Swinburne's dramatization of what he deemed to be a mental construct was geared towards the annihilation of this construct. He had been inspired in the adoption of this tactic by Sade, Blake, and Shelley, who had analogously embodied the traditional concept of God in order to negate His existence.<sup>2</sup> Hardy uses a quotation from Swinburne "save his own soul he hath no star" as a motto to the second part of Jude the Obscure.<sup>3</sup> Swinburne's influence is also evident in Hardy's early poem "Hap" written in 1866. This poem laments nature's indifference to the human race in language which is redolent of Swinburne:

If but some vengeful god would call to me  
 From up the sky, and laugh: 'Thou suffering thing,  
 Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,  
 That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting.'

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,  
 Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;  
 Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I  
 Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,  
 And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?  
 --Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,  
 And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .  
 These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown  
 Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.<sup>4</sup>

The poem rejects a spiteful anthropomorphic god who delights in human suffering. Instead, it substitutes a hopeless vision of what the poet believes to be the reality behind things, a universe ruled not by a god, but by the unknown forces of nature. In his pain, the poet longs for any god, even a tyrannical one as an alternative to an empty cosmos. His suffering is further enhanced by the knowledge that but for chance, joy and hope might be possible. The philosophy here calls to mind that Tennyson had been similarly obsessed by visions of a meaningless cosmos where the stars run blindly and "brand his nothingness into man."<sup>5</sup> The language summons up Swinburne's evocation of a Deity in which neither Hardy nor Swinburne believed. Nevertheless, Hardy cannot react with defiance to a universe in which "Crass Casualty" and "Dicing Time" are the masters of the human pilgrimage. The sensation of emptiness is more unbearable to Hardy than the projected cognizance of some Urizen-like deity who wills pain. In his earlier days as a writer Hardy was not consistently disposed to belief in a vengeful God, who wished for the unhappiness of the world. For the young Hardy, there was no power which controlled or cared for human happiness or suffering. He felt, at least at this early period, that it was chance or more precisely, unknown laws which make humankind what it is. Perhaps Hardy's thinking was more in



line with that of the German Zoologist, Ernest Haeckel, whose works were well-known to him:

The gist of Darwin's theory, [wrote Haeckel]  
is this simple idea: that the Struggle for  
Existence in Nature evolves new Species  
without design just as the Will of Man  
produces new Varieties in Cultivation with design.<sup>6</sup>

According to Haeckel, with the rise of natural selection and the philosophy of actual physical descent, the human being becomes, along with all other forms of life "the child of chance." The fixed taxonomy of life is an illusion born of our limited experience. According to this system, every living thing is writhing from one shape into another. Our long-assumed stability is only an illusion, produced by the tempo at which we live.<sup>7</sup>

During the years 1870-1873, Hardy had read the works of the founder of the system of positive philosophy, and precursor of Darwin, Auguste Comte. Comte, the founder of modern sociology undertook to show "by what necessary chain of successive transformations the human race started from." Comte concluded that humanity passed through religion in its early history, to arrive via metaphysics at scientific or positivist philosophy which would be the belief of the future. To the early British positivists Darwin's theory did not come in the nature of a momentous revelation, and to begin with, left no deep traces in their thoughts about the future. For them, the idea upheld their concept of life as a universal process of advance towards harmony and perfection.<sup>8</sup>

The philosophy of Comte was made fashionable in the 1870's by J.S. Mill bringing it to the attention of the British intellectual world. In 1875, Hardy discussed Positive Philosophy, encouraged by the man who became his guiding intellectual influence, Leslie Stephen. In 1876, he made a close study of one particular section of Comte's philosophical writings, Social Dynamics, or the General Theory of Human Progress, from Comte's System of Positive Polity. In the Summer and Autumn of 1876, Hardy copied over one hundred and thirty comments and remarks from Comte's Social Dynamics which he used in nearly all his novels over the next twenty years. In the 1890's his novel, Tess of the d'Urbervilles was hailed by English positivists as reading "like a positivist allegory or sermon." This is not to say that Hardy was ever a positivist. Even in his early manhood, he seems to have had doubts about Comte's assumption of inevitable rational progress for all of human society.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, nearly all the main themes which critics have discovered in The Return of the Native have their origins in these notebook entries. Hardy's biographer Robert Gittings says that within a year of the volume publication of the novel, Hardy was recognized by one reviewer as "in fact a humanitarian, touched with the asceticism of a certain positivistic school."<sup>10</sup> Gittings notes that Hardy shows, much as Leslie Stephen had done in his philosophical essays, how Comte's positivist optimism is defeated by the nature of actual life. Nonetheless, it is clear that the battle between paganism and Christianity which some have seen in the story of Clym and Eustacia repeats many of the ideas from Comte which Hardy had noticed: "Fetichism"--defined in Note 641 from

Comte as "universal adoration of matter" --is found by many on Egdon; these are the precise words used by Hardy to describe the mood of the listener to the sound of dried heath bells.

The work of Comte may have been introduced to Hardy by John Stuart Mill, whose famous essay "On Liberty" was published in the same year as The Origin. As Darwin sums up the realism of Victorian conflict, so Mill sums up the moral idealism. For British society, he lays down, in effect, a principle of rational selection based on discussion and public opinion. To put matters in evolutionary terms, Mill advocates freedom of action insofar as it does not injure others, so that new types of moral character may develop, and then, in competition with other types, either perish or survive to enrich English life. Darwin's spontaneous variations are thus analogized here by a romantic individualistic emphasis on the value of diversified moral character.<sup>11</sup>

In his old age, Hardy referred to Mill as "one of the profoundest thinkers of the Nineteenth Century."<sup>12</sup> Like Darwin, Mill judged nature to be irrational and immoral, because, for him, the course of natural phenomena was replete with everything, which, if it occurred in human life, would be deemed as wicked.<sup>13</sup> Mill writes:

[However] offensive the proposition may appear to many religious persons, they should be willing to look in the face the undeniable fact, that the order of nature, in so far as unmodified by man, is such as no being, whose attributes are justice and benevolence, would have made, with the intention

that his rational creatures should follow it as  
an example.<sup>14</sup>

Mill concludes that "if the maker of the world can all that he will, he wills misery. . . ."<sup>15</sup> By the time of his essay "Theism," (1868-70), Mill had read Darwin. He finds that the "adaptations" in nature "afford a large balance of probability in favour of creation by intelligence."<sup>16</sup> But even though he finds signs everywhere of wisdom and contrivance, for him the evidence points only to a Being of great but limited power. In his essay "The Utility of Religion" (1858) Mill shows some sympathy for Manicheanism, the doctrine that nature and life are the product, not of omnipotent goodness, but of "a struggle between contriving goodness and an intractable material. . . ."<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of the abominable state of the state of the universe, Mill believed in the inevitable progress of humanity. In the preface to his essay "On Liberty" he quotes Wilhelm Von Humboldt's words: "The grand, leading principle, toward which every argument in these pages directly converges, is the absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest variety."<sup>18</sup> Mill concludes that "it cannot be religious or moral to guide our actions by the analogy of the course of nature." He continues:

Not even on the most distorted and contracted theory of good which ever was framed by religious or philosophical fanaticism, can the government of Nature be made to resemble the work of a being at once good and omnipotent.<sup>19</sup>

The theological implications of this are evident. Either God wills misery or He is not omnipotent. Mill, as Huxley would do later, asserts that

nearly everything which might be considered laudable in humanity is the result, not of instinct, but of humankind's victory over instinct. In the last section of the logic which deals with the conduct of life, Mill states definitively that "conduciveness to happiness" is the "ultimate principle of teleology."<sup>20</sup> Mill's meliorism is evident when he considers the ideal of nobility in human life:

The character itself should be, to the individual, a paramount end, simply because the existence of this ideal nobleness of character, or of a near approach to it, in any abundance, would go further than all things else towards making human life happy; both in the comparatively humble sense, of pleasure and freedom from pain, and in the higher meaning, of rendering life, not what it now is almost universally, puerile and insignificant--but such as human beings with highly developed faculties can care to have.<sup>21</sup>

It is clear that Mill feels that the human race must confront nature in order to overcome its "tyranny." Critic Basil Willey comments upon the innate fallacy of Mill's argument, saying that Mill fails to take into account that human beings cannot judge nature as they themselves are a product of nature, and any picture which denigrates it by abstracting the human and presenting it as an antithesis to nature is necessarily a falsification.<sup>22</sup> To some extent, Hardy also fails to perceive humankind's integration with creation when he writes in The Return of the Native:

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.<sup>23</sup>

At about the same time that Hardy became acquainted with the works of Mill, he began to read the works of two great Victorians, Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley.

Herbert Spencer's works formed the basis of what became known as "Social Darwinism." In effect, Spencer applied the idea of natural selection to the evolution of the human race several years before Darwin was to publish his own views. In Social Statics, published in 1862 Spencer attempted to prove that a laissez-faire policy in political and social matters was in keeping with nature's "stern discipline" for accomplishing progress in the biological realm. Just as nature insured the survival of the fittest races by subjecting all to a harsh struggle for existence, so should society compel its members to develop self-reliance by exposing them to the rigours of economic competition. Spencer posited that by this policy, human life would evolve from its original savage condition in which it could be governed only by force and fear, to a perfect society.

In 1862 there appeared the first instalment of the great system of philosophy, First Principles, which was to be Spencer's life's work. This is almost certainly the first work of Spencer with which Hardy became acquainted. The metaphysical part of this work is interesting to a study of Hardy. The first part is called "The Unknowable" and at the end of

the second chapter Spencer writes:

If Religion and Science are to be reconciled,  
the basis of reconciliation must be this  
deepest, widest and most certain of all  
facts--that the Power which the Universe  
manifests to us is utterly inscrutable.<sup>24</sup>

According to Spencer, this power is in no way benevolent. He writes:

"Instead of a Power which we can regard as having some sympathy with us, you would have us contemplate a Power to which no emotion whatever can be ascribed."<sup>25</sup> For Spencer, the task of philosophy is to formulate the transition from the "Unknowable" to the "Knowable," from the imperceptible to the perceptible and then back to the imperceptible. The human intellect can only move within these cognitive limits and the curtain falls at either end.

Spencer's ethics rest on two main assumptions; that humankind's ultimate moral object is a state of life that might be defined as gratification or happiness, and that human nature is subject to the Universal Law of Evolution and will inevitably progress toward such moral conduct as will eventually make for general and individual happiness. Thus, the more highly developed a society becomes, the more highly civilized would be its moral code and behaviour. Spencer believed that men and women unconsciously inherit certain fundamental moral intuitions by the same process which transmits variations in species. These intuitions become more highly developed as each generation bequeaths to the next the accumulated experience of what is most useful in producing good. The foundations of modern genetics were not laid until 1885, by the monk

Grigor Mendel, who disproved the Lamarkian theory of chance variations. Therefore Spencer's ethics rest largely on the eighteenth century theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics.<sup>26</sup> That Hardy somewhat grudgingly took a melioristic view up until World War I is evidenced by the latter's assessment of himself "as a meliorist (not a pessimist as they say)."<sup>27</sup>

It is true that Hardy's meliorism was not highly defined or fully organized, but it was his one, perhaps grudging concession to the overall fate of humanity in the face of a Darwinian universe. In Hardy's plots, his characters move through their individual lives, searching with inexhaustible vigour for the type of gratification or fulfillment which Spencer defines. Mental anguish in Hardy frequently ends in death, which in an evolutionary context accords with the Darwinian view that "failure in the sense of death is universal."<sup>28</sup> According to Spencer, the essence of human nature is change. It follows the universal pattern of Evolution in its progress toward a complete adjustment between internal and external relations. Spencer writes that all things are inter-related:

The play of forces is essentially the same in principle throughout the whole region explored by our intelligence; and though, varying infinitely in their proportions and combinations, they work out results everywhere more or less different, and often seeming to have no kinship, yet there cannot but be among these results a



fundamental community . . . . Absolute rest and permanence do not exist. Every object, no less than the aggregate of all objects, undergoes from instant to instant some alteration of state. Gradually or quickly it is receiving motion or losing motion, while some or all of its parts are simultaneously changing their relations to one another.<sup>29</sup>

For Spencer, nothing is, everything becomes, and consequently he sees the phenomenal world as history, change and evolution. Within the Spencerian orb of the "Knowable" we merely perceive one original persistent force working through matter and splitting into a vast number of forces, each producing a multiplicity of effects. To some extent this idea is echoed by Hardy's own statement on the history of mankind:

Is not the present quasi-scientific system of writing history mere charlatanism? 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?<sup>30</sup>

and again:

Assume a thousand unconscious causes--

Tumped together in poetry as one Cause,  
 or God--and bear in mind that a coloured  
 liquid can be produced by the mixture of  
 colourless ones, a noise by the juxtaposition  
 of silences, etc., etc., and you see that  
 the assumption that intelligent beings arise from  
 the combined action of unintelligent forces is  
 sufficiently probable for imaginative writing.<sup>31</sup>

In a letter to his friend, Edward Clodd in 1907, Hardy wrote on his attitude to the cosmos:

It is Feurbach who says that God is the  
 product of man . . . On the other hand I  
 quite enter into Spencer's feeling--that  
 it is paralysing to think what if, of all  
 that is so incomprehensible to us (the  
 Universe) there exists no comprehension  
 anywhere.<sup>32</sup>

In one important aspect Hardy's view on evolution differed radically from Spencer and this was on the latter's ultra-conservative repudiation of State interference with the "natural unimpeded growth of society." Spencer opposed all State aid to the poor. They were unfit, he said, and should be eliminated, as the whole effort of nature was to get rid of them and make room for better. The fallacies of this philosophy are obvious and have often been objected to. Thomas Huxley, the eminent biologist, and possibly the most brilliant speaker of his time,

insisted that the biologically "fittest" were by no means the highest. For Darwin and the neo-Darwinians, "fittest" means simply having the most descendents over a number of generations. According to Gillian Beer, Hardy's depiction of Tess d'Urberville's innate purity and natural fitness, runs in direct opposition to the Spencerian notion which exalts the survivors as those who are necessarily fit to survive. Contrary to Spencer's premise, Hardy suggests that it may be, at least among women and the poor, that those who survive may be less "fit" than those who go under. It follows that sexual selection according to the Spencerian model will set humankind on the road to extinction.<sup>33</sup> In his famous "Romanes Lecture" in 1893, Huxley denounced "the fanatical individualism" of those who prated about the "ethics of evolution." Huxley made the distinction that the ethical progress of society depends not in imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combatting it.<sup>34</sup> As I have stated earlier, this view had much in common with that set down by Mill earlier in the century.

Huxley's influence on Hardy is both subtle and all-pervading. Hardy met him for the first time in the 1870's and developed a life-long admiration for him. It has even been suggested that the intensity of Huxley in his famous controversy with Bishop Wilberforce may have prejudiced the once-devout Hardy against religion. While Darwin remained in comparative seclusion, Huxley set out to gain a fair public hearing for his new theories. For Huxley and his followers the struggle for existence was unending. The struggle may have degeneration as its outcome as well as amelioration, or it might be regressive as well as progressive. "The future of evolution encourages no millennial anticipations," remarked

Huxley.<sup>35</sup>

With a characteristic Victorian vigour, Huxley strove to knock down the old creeds of creationism, uniformitarianism and catastrophism. When critics charged Darwin with eliminating purpose from nature and enthroning chance in its place, Huxley rushed to the defence with the argument that so-called chance variations were, in reality, the results of unknown natural laws. In fact, Huxley, Darwin and Spencer repeatedly asserted that they saw no evidence of chance in nature. In Man's Place in Nature published in 1863, Huxley wrote:

[I]n view of the intimate relations between man, and the rest of the living world, and between the forces exerted by the latter and all other forces, I can see no excuse for doubting that all are co-ordinated terms of Nature's great progression, from the formless to the formed . . . from blind force to conscious intellect and will.<sup>36</sup>

It is probable, that more than any other thinker, Huxley impressed upon Hardy the importance of choice, intellect, and will as humankind's bastions against the unknown forces which surround it.

It is clear that Huxley's attitude to morality had some effect on Hardy's attitude to human ethics and the institution of religion. In 1907 Hardy wrote that "the days of creeds are as dead and done with as the days of Pterodactyls,"<sup>37</sup> and like Huxley, he hoped for an alliance between religion and rationality. By "religion" Hardy does not mean theology or creeds expressing belief in an anthropomorphic God. Early in his writing career he had renounced any belief in a theology of the

supernatural. He considered that religion could retain its hold on human life only if the church "could be made to modulate by degrees. . . into an undogmatic, non-theological establishment for the promotion of that virtuous living on which all honest men agreed."<sup>38</sup> He wrote:

If the doctrines of the supernatural were quietly abandoned tomorrow by the Church, and "reverence and love for an ethical ideal" alone retained, not one in ten thousand would object to the readjustment. . . and our venerable old churches and cathedrals would become the centres of emotional life that they once were.<sup>39</sup>

In spite of his disdain for religion, Hardy was firmly convinced that going to church was beneficial as a moral drill and a centre for country life. This idea is reflected in several of his novels, particularly, the pastoral romance Under the Greenwood Tree and a later novel, Two on a Tower. At the same time Hardy often satirizes the clergy, depicting them as pompous, smug, or, at best vacuous and out of touch with the pragmatic peasant mind. His churches are invariably depicted as communal gathering places where country folk worship in order to come together as a social unit; where the music and traditions of their ancestors is more important and spiritually uplifting than the empty words of a long-dead liturgy. Hardy went to church intermittently until his death and would no doubt, have approved Huxley's ethical beliefs that love, mercy and humility were the highest expressions of duty.<sup>40</sup> Huxley declared that science is not antagonistic to religion but to the bad philosophy and heathen survivals which permeated the church.<sup>41</sup> Hardy's view is astonishingly similar. He writes:

[Religion] is to be used . . . as being expressive of nobler feelings towards humanity and emotional goodness and greatness, the old meaning of the word -- ceremony or ritual having perished, or nearly. 42

But it was not only upon the question of the institution of religion that Huxley's ideas permeated into Hardy's writing. Notions kindred to Huxley's concepts of time and timelessness in an evolutionary sense manifest themselves vividly in Hardy's work. The latter's use of Wessex and its atmosphere is almost mythic in its suggestiveness, especially with regard to time. His interest in "the pageant of the past" is seen by B. Hornback as a dramatic meditation upon the earth's antiquity. Wessex in its historic and pre-historic context serves to establish a pervading mood of bleakness, of an unchanging world much vaster than any human generation. For Hardy, the same dramas are enacted endlessly throughout time. This un-Spencerian notion of history as-recurrence makes Hardy's characters representative of humankind. At the same time it denies them freedom, for they cannot escape the past of history which we all share.<sup>43</sup> Alternately, their individual struggle may be seen in three ways: against a backdrop of time and place which renders their individual efforts minute. Secondly, in a context in which death has been the end of all previous struggle, no matter how vital and spirited the struggle; or thirdly, in a sense in which the characters, while individuals are also typical of something that is one more re-enactment of a prior event. Hardy so manipulates the idea of time that actions,

literally years apart. impose upon each other as though time had ceased to exist. In The Return of the Native the setting of the heath and Wessex, stands for an intensity which spans time but which is diminished in some strange way with each re-enactment of the human drama.<sup>44</sup>

Where then does Hardy's vision of time originate? To a certain extent we can trace its origin, in part, to Huxley, who, like Lyell, with his "testament of the rocks" and Darwin after, speculated upon the vast aeons of time which have enveloped the origins of life on earth. In the "Romanes Lecture" of 1894 contained in Evolution and Ethics Huxley is uncompromisingly evolutionistic and naturalistic in his approach to cosmic processes. In support of his thesis that all life is struggle and turmoil, he quotes Seneca and Heracleitus to reinforce his views:

Our bodies are borne off in the manner of rivers;  
 whatever you see flees with time; none of what  
 you perceive endures. I myself, as I speak, am  
 changed. This is what Heracleitus affirms;  
 "We cannot enter the same river twice." The  
 name of the river is constant, but the water is  
 ever dispatched. This flowing is still more  
 apparent in man; for us too, no less a speedy  
 course passes over.<sup>45</sup>

Hardy's affinity with this view is reflected by the fact that he shared Huxley's admiration for the Stoics. His own favourite epigraph was the quotation from Marcus Aurelius: "Be not perturbed for all things are in the nature of the universal." Huxley's essay "Time and Life" published in Macmillans Magazine in 1859, propounds the concept of the earth, sea

and sky as intrinsically the same to the eye "a million ages before our own epoch."<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Hardy's evocation of time in the vast looming stretches of Egdon Heath in The Return of the Native asserts that the heath had been "from prehistoric times as unaltered as the stars overhead."<sup>47</sup> Traces of the ancient civilizations which had walked the vast tract of land blend imperceptibly into the present, as the individual is viewed as but an insignificant atom in the cosmic order. The gloom of existence hangs heavy over all things. Here, there is no trace of the half-hearted meliorism which Hardy sometimes espoused. Huxley's view that "Nature is harsh and wasteful in its operation. . . . incapacity meets with the same punishment as crime" is perfectly suited to the novel's mood.<sup>48</sup>

Two further ideas of Hardy can be paralleled in Huxley's writings. The first is that the human being, though a socially organized entity bears within itself "the ape and tiger." The atavistic qualities of the past remain smouldering beneath the surface of its being, ready to intrude, to add to the pain inherent in existence. This will be dealt with in my final chapter.

A second concept concerns pain's relation to consciousness. Huxley felt that the phenomenon of suffering increases with the growth of consciousness, which of course culminates in human life. In 1883, Hardy like Huxley and Darwin anthropomorphized nature when he wrote in his diary: "We human beings have reached a degree of intelligence which Nature never contemplated when framing her laws and for which she consequently has provided no adequate satisfactions."<sup>49</sup> Hence, the same fort-



uitous element which originally brought the intellect into existence was seen here as plaguing human life.

Both Hardy and Huxley became increasingly concerned with the way in which the individual might reasonably face life without the belief in a deity. Some intellectuals fought to find a way out of this dilemma. Many became agnostics. The agnostics (a term coined by Huxley) betrayed an anxiety that people would believe that ethics were a substitute for theology. They betrayed it in their insistence upon a moral law in human society which would make men and women do good even when the sanctions of religion had vanished. This, of course was a common Victorian apprehension. Huxley stated that morality is:

[A] real and living belief in that fixed order of nature which sends social disorganisation upon the track of immorality, as surely as it sends physical disease after physical trespasses. And of that firm and lively faith it is her high mission to be the priestess. 50

Critic Noel Annan, says that statements such as these were not part of a reasoned argument but were reasons trotted out to support an attitude.<sup>51</sup> Like Darwin, Huxley consistently personifies nature in its pristine unchallenged state as a goddess. He writes that the old Babylonians "wisely symbolized Nature by their great Goddess Istar, who combined the attributes of Aphrodite with those of Ares."<sup>52</sup> Huxley goes on to write that "if Istar is to reign on the one hand, she will demand her human sacrifices on the other."<sup>53</sup>

Huxley refutes the Spencerian notion that evolutionary progress must,

by implication, denote teleology in nature. In his essay "In Human Society," written in 1888, Huxley emphasizes that nature's courses do not occur for any melioration of the human condition. Neither does he have any sympathy for the quasi-Manichean leanings of John Stuart Mill.

Huxley says:

The conclusion of the whole matter seems to be that, if Ormuzd has not had his way in this world, neither has Ahriman. Pessimism is as little consonant with the facts of sentient existence as optimism. If we desire to represent the course of nature in terms of human thought, and assume that it was intended to be that which it is, we must say that its governing principle is intellectual and not moral; that it is a materialized logical process, accompanied by pleasures and pains, the incidence of which, in the majority of cases, has not the slightest reference to moral desert.<sup>54</sup>

Nature, then, according to Huxley, is not moral like humankind. Men and women can comprehend nature intellectually as long as they do not attempt to find a system of ethics in nature, for none exists. It follows that as a result of the influence of Huxley's interpretation of nature, Hardy believed that life's tragedies came as a result of human failure

to comprehend the constant and indifferent action of nature upon their lives. Nature is not concerned with the individual, and society is constantly confounded by its own misconceptions.

During Hardy's intensely creative period of the 1880's and 1890's, his reading included the German philosophers, Schopenhauer and Eduard Karl Von Hartmann. Hardy also read the works of the German zoologist, Ernst Haeckel during this period, but the latter has been seen as reinforcing the former's views, rather than affecting them to any great extent. Schopenhauer has been regarded as being the predominant influence on Hardy's mature conception of the Immanent Will, which he contained in his great epic poem, The Dynasts published between 1904 and 1908. "The Will" might be briefly defined as Hardy's mature conception of the universe. While it is not the intention of this essay to dwell upon the ramifications of the concept of "the Will," a brief summary of the inherent idea is essential to a fuller understanding of Hardy's philosophical progression.

For Hardy, "the Will" is the unconscious force of the universe, which is slowly and painfully growing aware of itself. "The Will" is within everything and above everything. With Darwinian indifference it goes blindly on, weaving its web of fate. Hardy felt that when "the Will" may finally evolve towards consciousness, it will realize the havoc it has wrought and then, perhaps, bring the universe into the harmony inherent in an immanent plan of justice. For Schopenhauer, "the Will" is not individualized but exists whole and undivided in every single thing in nature. "The Will" is endless; blind, striving

and is essentially divided against itself. Everywhere in nature there is strife and this takes the most horrible forms. The unity of "the Will" shows itself in the unison of all phenomena as related to one another. The human being is the summit of a pyramid and could not exist without this. Schopenhauer declared as clearly as Darwin that the phenomenal world is without beginning and without end, but unlike Darwin, he supposes a production of species by definite steps instead of by accumulation of small individual variations.<sup>55</sup> Schopenhauer's idea of "the blind Will" is implicit in Darwin's theory of natural selection.<sup>56</sup>

Hardy's metaphysical concept of the Immanent Will shows a slow and tentative development through the novels of the 1880's and 1890's. Critics vary in their opinions as to the extent of Schopenhauer's role in forming Hardy's mature version of "the Will". However, Hardy owned a first edition of Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung in translation (1883-1886) and it is at about this time that the concept starts to filter into his poems and novels. Nevertheless, it is significant, that although Hardy's pessimism has often been attributed to Schopenhauer, he himself did not cite Schopenhauer as a source, but his follower, Karl Von Hartmann.

In Von Hartmann's The Philosophy of the Unconscious, Darwin's idea of the tree of life is cited and expanded by the author to support his own theories of variation, particularly that of atavism, or, the reversion of an organism to an ancestral form, a theory which is played upon by Hardy, particularly in Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Although Von Hartmann felt that Darwin's theory of individual variations was insufficient

to explain the origin of human life, he admires the "signal merit" of Darwin's natural selection in the struggle of existence.<sup>57</sup>

Von Hartmann expands upon Darwin's theory of sexual selection to demonstrate how the instincts of purity, modesty, beauty and maternal love are embedded in the unconscious mind. He envisions the instinct of sexual love as an innate compulsion to sexual intercourse among both animals and humankind. The reason for this compulsion to sexual satisfaction, says Von Hartmann, must be the same given by Schopenhauer which was subsequently established as a general law of nature by Darwin, that the instinct of sexual selection intends the highest possible realization of the human race. Von Hartmann claims that a mysterious and hidden power guides all the phenomena of the objective world as well as the subjective world of humanity.

Von Hartmann's conception of the First Cause or creative principle is echoed by Hardy. In The Dynasts Hardy views the essence of the world as both transcendent and immanent. The essence externalizes itself into plurality through space and time as through the powers of individuation; while in its noumenal reality it is spaceless and timeless, immaterial and unconscious. Positively we can call it the absolute unconscious spirit. If it were conscious, says Hartmann, no answer could be obtained to the question of evil in the world. (Spencer's "unknowable" is frequently confused and interchanged with the psychic and metaphysic Unconscious of Von Hartmann).

It is only in the light of Von Hartmann's attitude to the presence

of evil in the universe that Hardy's views can be fully understood. The Hardyian postulate that the victorious presence of evil in the world is incompatible with the existence of an all-benevolent intelligent Creator has direct links with this philosophy. For Von Hartmann, the amount of pain in life far outweighs the pleasure. Love is sheer illusion, and the sacrifices love demands are not equivalent to its moments of "ephemereal bliss." His view is that love brings suffering to the individual. Its unavoidable paradox is that one must love by the impulse of that unconscious instinct which makes victims of everyone. Individuals fall literally in love in that they are used or controlled by unconscious forces for a purpose which has no concern for their individual happiness but only for propagation. For Von Hartmann, the vast majority of peoples' hopes are doomed to disappointment and the bitterness of unfulfillment is far greater than the joy of expectation.

According to Professor Dennis Darnoi, Von Hartmann's vision of the Absolute is the vision of a Creator which has neither being nor worth in itself; yet suffers endless misery as a result of an unknown and mysterious chance. In order to obtain its own deliverance it is ready to hurl innumerable creatures into an abyss of hopeless suffering. It possesses boundless egoism, blind urge and cruel insensitivity; it is a God who sows evils and reaps woes.<sup>58</sup>

Another nineteenth-century thinker who believed that love was necessarily concomitant with pain, was Leslie Stephen, better known to the twentieth century as the father of Virginia Woolf. Stephen's philosophy was influenced by both Huxley and Mill. Huxley, however, engaged in specific controversies and delved into biblical criticism, while

Stephen's ideas ranged over the whole field of theory and metaphysics.

It is the literary side of Stephen's activities which have proved to be the most enduring. His writings, particularly his History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century were well known to his generation.

During the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Stephen was a militant rationalist and proved himself to be one of the most controversial authors of that era. His articles on religion are mostly contained in two volumes, Essays on Freethinking and Plain Speaking and "An Agnostic's Apology," published in 1873 and 1893, respectively. Most of the essays in these two volumes were published in the 1870's and 1880's in The Fortnightly Review or Fraser's Magazine.

Hardy first became acquainted with Stephen in 1871, when the latter was editor of Cornhill Magazine, and it was to Stephen, that Hardy owed his early reputation as a novelist. Hardy's second wife wrote:

On a visit to London in the winter [of 1873] Hardy had made the personal acquaintance of Leslie Stephen, the man whose philosophy was to influence his own for many years, indeed, more than that of any other contemporary.<sup>59</sup>

Stephen, who had once been a Cambridge Don and an Anglican clergyman, was vehement in his attacks against religion in general and Christianity in particular. He wrote in his essay "An Agnostic's Apology":

The difficulty, as theologians truly say, is not so much that evil is eternal as that evil exists. That is in substance a frank admission that, as nobody can explain evil, nobody can explain

anything. Your revelation, which was to prove the benevolence of God has proved only that God's benevolence may be consistent with the eternal and infinite misery of most of His creatures.<sup>60</sup>

In a letter sent to and printed in The Academy and Literature in 1902 Hardy almost paraphrases Stephen's original words, saying:

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?<sup>61</sup>

Some of these attitudes may be seen to be particularly prominent in the fourteenth and eighteenth chapters of Tess of the d'Urbervilles.

Stephen believed that Christianity is immoral because it is not a good social philosophy in that it places an emphasis on personal salvation, which encourages a concern for the self. [These criticisms had, of course, been made earlier by Mill in his essay "On Liberty." Earlier still, Comte had used similar arguments.]

Stephen's Science of Ethics has two major premises, the belief that altruism (a term coined earlier by Comte) is the highest moral value and



the highest stage of human development. Stephen asserted that as the human race continued to evolve, its increasingly complex social organizations would foster a greater sense of interdependence. Hardy's statement that society will eventually begin to see and feel itself to be part of one body says the same thing. Up to this point Stephen's views coincide with those of Comte and Mill. Mill, however, had hoped that a morality could be established which would "neither sacrifice the individual to the aggregate, nor the aggregate to the individual." Stephen asserts that the path of duty does not coincide with the path of happiness. It is this difference which distinguishes Stephen and the later ethical evolutionists like Spencer and Huxley from Comte and Mill.

Hardy, like the later evolutionists, saw the claims of egoism as far more persistent than Comte had imagined. In Stephen's ethics, conduct, which he saw as a necessary part of social welfare, is an essential factor in the survival of the race. The correct kind of social behaviour serves the interests of society and requires at times, the individual to sacrifice his or her self-interest.<sup>62</sup> Clearly for the ethical evolutionists, pain was a concurrent requisite of life. This was also Hardy's position. Like Huxley, Hardy believed that altruism was the human ideal, but that happiness and altruism were mutually antagonistic, because as the human race evolves to a higher and more philanthropic state, its capacity to suffer is similarly enhanced. In the "Apology" Hardy explains that what is taken for pessimism in his writing is really intended to be curative. His aim is not simply to describe humanity's present unhappiness but to point out its future direction. He quotes his own lines from "In Tenebris" "If a way to the Better there be, / It exacts

a full look at the worst." He explains the lines as an exploration of reality with the hope for its best resolution; namely, evolutionary meliorism.<sup>63</sup> Whereas Comte had emphasized happiness, both Stephen and Hardy emphasize sorrow. Both consider pain and sorrow as the chief means by which women and men experience the world. Accordingly, Hardy allows his characters little possibility for happiness and no possible escape from the web of circumstances.

The extent to which this thinking had ultimately diverged from Darwin's own, may be seen by the final sentence in the last printing of Darwin's The Origin:

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on...from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.<sup>64</sup>

Clearly, Darwin wished his myth to have a happy ending. However, the impact of his work on society's view of itself was not initially happy. This realization may have pained Darwin, who unlike Hardy, disliked unhappy endings in fiction and said he wanted a law passed against them.

Although Darwin contributed powerfully toward shaping the dominant world view of the twentieth century, he settled nothing in either philosophy or theology. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons for

the paradoxes and contradictions in both the Darwinists and Hardy's declarations upon existence.

I will briefly reiterate the main points which have been dealt with in this chapter, though these will possibly recur in later chapters. In spite of his professed agnosticism, Hardy shared Thomas Huxley's opinion that religion and religious traditions are important expressions of humankind's nobler feelings. Hardy also sympathized with Huxley's notion that life's tragedies are largely a result of the individual's failure to comprehend nature's indifferent action upon his or her life. Huxley's influence is further demonstrated by Hardy's enduring sympathy with the weaker and impoverished members of society. Although Hardy shares certain Spencerian notions, such as meliorism, he rejects Spencer's notion of "fitness." Spencer's emphasis is upon the individualism and self-reliance of a single member of society. Any meliorism in the natural condition depends upon an individual's ability to outrival all other struggling companions in the race for sustenance. For Spencer, meliorism is inherent in nature's courses. Huxley sees evolution not in terms of meliorism but in terms of the necessity for a strong ethical system in order to combat the merciless qualities of nature.

In his imaginative and emotive use of time, Hardy is heavily indebted to the writings of the Darwinists and neo-Darwinists. In accordance with the prevailing scientific observations of the nineteenth century, his characters are seen as mere insignificant, transient beings moving against a backdrop which has remained visually

unchanged for aeons. The collective history of these men and women substantiate the Von Hartmann ideal that love is an illusion, a compulsion buried in the unconscious mind and destructive to happiness. Hardy also sympathizes with the view of Leslie Stephen that altruism is a noble ideal which proves to be ultimately antagonistic to happiness.

The evolutionary matters to be dealt with are not of equal importance for each novel under discussion. Nonetheless, they are significant for a comprehension of their totality. They are, perhaps, a means by which to compare Hardy's development over a twenty-five year period. With respect to Hardy's language, some attention will be given to matters of intention and anthropomorphism which creep into his texts. For the most part I have avoided the question of coincidence in Hardy. While this thematic device could certainly be dealt with in terms of a purposeless universe, I feel that it is too far-ranging in its implications for the scope of this thesis.

The above ideas are the quintessential themes which run through Hardy's work. In the following chapters I will attempt to discuss the various Darwinistic tenets of thought which are implicit in each of the novels which will be dealt with. I will also comment upon the principal Darwinistic themes which unify the plot of each work.

## III THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

Although The Return of the Native is flawed by an over-dramatic use of coincidence, it is universally accepted as one of Hardy's greatest works. It was written during 1877 and was immediately serialized in the magazine Belgravia. The period in which it was written coincided with the time when the first wave of enthusiasm for the theory of evolution had spent its force. This gave way to a profound sense of disillusionment which manifested itself in the intellectual life of the late-nineteenth century.

It was perhaps inevitable that as science had irrefutably destroyed the basis of any religious hopes which he may have had, that Hardy should now begin to write about the defects in natural laws and the quandary in which human life was placed through their operation. An earlier disastrous attempt at social criticism had culminated in his novel, The Hand of Ethelberta. This work was ill-conceived, badly written and a resounding failure. It is hardly surprising that at this point Hardy should have lost faith in his ability to effect social change through his novels.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that his own disillusionment is reflected in the essential futility (albeit noble) of Clym Yeobright's aspirations to raise the consciousness of the inhabitants of Egdon Heath.

As its title suggests, the novel deals with the return of Clym to the place of his birth. He returns with the idea of changing Egdon for the better, but he is no match for the primitive forces of the heath.

In the character of Clym Yeobright, Hardy reiterates his

own absolute conviction of the necessity for altruism if the human race is to withstand nature. Like Huxley, Hardy believes that humankind has reached a point in its evolution when it is intellectually able to embrace this ideal. Nonetheless, as Hardy makes clear, until the race is ready to accept the concept of loving-kindness in an emotional context, there can be no real victory over the natural forces which victimize it. For Hardy this was perhaps, the fundamental dilemma of modern times.

As always, suffering is an ever-present reality in Hardy's universe. In part this is caused by the laws of nature, in part by humanity's over-refined consciousness which leads to pain and which is exacerbated by an innate lack of judgement. Almost every character in the drama of Egdon Heath demonstrates a basic want of kindness and a flawed ability to make decisions. As a consequence, they lay themselves open to the merciless laws of nature which are epitomized by the heath.

Clym Yeobright, the "native" of the novel's title, is a fervent idealist, but the precise nature of his belief is not delineated by Hardy. When alluded to, it appears to be made up of the basic precepts made popular by the Social Darwinists or their precursors. The general consensus among scholars is that Hardy's contacts with the doctrines of positivism during the 1870's may have helped him to formulate his vague description of Yeobright's philosophy.

The belief that altruism and happiness are mutually exclusive is

manifested in Hardy's description of Clym. Yeobright represents a "higher" type, but his evolutionary qualities carry sobering implications for the future of men and women:

In Clym Yeobright's face could be dimly seen the countenance of the future . . . The view of life as a thing to be put up with, replacing the zest for existence which was so intense to early civilizations, must ultimately enter so thoroughly into the constitution of the advanced races that its facial expression will be accepted as a new artistic departure . . . . What the Greeks only suspected we know well; what their Aeschylus imagined our nursery children feel. That old fashioned revelling in the general situation grown less and less possible as we uncover the defects of natural laws, and see the quandary that man is in by their operation. 2

It is clear that Clym represents this new "future" type. Any "zest for existence" which he might feel is sublimated by an almost anchoritic need for total simplicity. Nevertheless, although he is a moral preacher, an advocate of high thinking and plain living, his behaviour demonstrates that he is as capable of selfishness as the less-evolved members of society. The intransigence of his sexual instincts lead him blindly to choose Eustacia for a wife, the very woman who openly craves everything that he can or will not concern himself with.

In spite of his idealism, it soon becomes clear that Clym is

essentially alienated from the other heath-dwellers by his superior education, his long sojourn in Paris and his total commitment to the prevalent French philosophies of his time. While Clym is representative of the new, the character of Eustacia Vye has strong Hellenic and romantic connotations suggesting an older order which must give way to a more evolved type of human being. It is probable that Hardy attempts to emphasize this point in his constant contrast between Clym's role as a man of the future and Eustacia's connections with the Hellenic and pagan past. Although she abhors the heath, more than any other character in the novel she embodies and anthropomorphizes its characteristics. To some extent Eustacia's obvious links with antiquity demonstrate her bond with the primitive force of Egdon itself. It is she who dares to wander its vast emptiness without fear. Furthermore, her constitutional gloom, her sense of lethargy and ennui mirror the state of the tracts about her.

It is clear that Eustacia is a romantic in the pejorative sense of the word. Her ideas are both naive and shallow; her aspirations aim no higher than the boulevards of Paris. Eustacia's lack of will and impulsive behaviour are fatal to any chance of happiness that she may have. Nevertheless, her wretchedness is ultimately both profound and touching. At the end of the novel it is stated that her soul was "in an abyss of desolation seldom plumbed by one so young."<sup>3</sup> Her hopelessness in the face of existence is in stark contrast to the social idealism and optimism of her husband. Eustacia feels existence to be meaningless; her profound lethargy is a reflection of her environment. In a bitter moment of truth she



realizes that it is not the heath which is her nemesis, but the whole world. What she refuses to realize is that her own behaviour has made her world much worse than it need have been.

It is one of the ironies of maladaptation, a theme which fascinated Hardy, that Yeobright is a man in advance of his time.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, Clym's message is lost upon the men and women of the heath, whose lives of constant hardship have made simple material advancement their natural goal. There is a sense that the inhabitants of the heath, although basically sound country folk, understand little of the loving kindness or altruism which Hardy came to believe would be the one essential factor in the meliorism of the human race. Thomasin goes to her marriage alone and friendless; Wildeve is at the constant mercy of the laws of sexual selection which cause him to be attracted against his better judgement, first to one woman and then to another. Clym, the arch-altruist is unconsciously self-serving and almost fanatical in his idealism. Eustacia's grandfather ignores her wants and Eustacia is clearly a supreme egoist.

Although Clym has much in his character that is praiseworthy, he has little regard for Eustacia's needs. His expectations of her rôle in his life are based on his own desire to change the lives of the heath-dwellers. This innate, if unconscious selfishness, combined with an instinctual and overwhelming love for his mother, is instrumental in bringing about misfortune. As he admits to Eustacia after his mother's death:

You laboured to win her round; I did nothing. I, who was going to teach people the higher secrets of happiness, did not know how to keep out of that gross misery which the most untaught are wise enough to avoid.<sup>5</sup>

Clym, although intellectually a "new" man, is emotionally much the same as any other. Like Eustacia, he is a dreamer, but his dreams go in opposite directions from hers. He is an idealist, who feels that he must help his fellow men, while Eustacia is indifferent to others, just as life seems to be indifferent to her.

As in Hardy's later novels, The Woodlanders and Tess of the d'Urbervilles, one distinctive trajectory of the narrative is the steadily developed decline of a protagonist who in some way incarnates the older order and whose decline is linked more and more with an inner misdirection or inner weakness. Eustacia and Wildeve both have elements of an older and more primitive type which has lived and died countless times upon the heath. Hardy is at pains to accentuate the contrast between these two and the idealistic and evolved Yeobright in the scene where Eustacia and Wildeve dance together upon Egdon. Hardy writes of the scene: "For the time Paganism was revived in their hearts, the pride of life was all in all, and they adored none other than themselves."<sup>6</sup>

In their mutual self-absorption Eustacia and Wildeve respond to the heath with loathing. Both are essentially egoists, drawn towards each other by a shared dissatisfaction with life, Egdon, and their

enforced existences upon it. It is ironic that Yeobright, who loves the heath and who has intellectually embraced altruism, is the indirect cause of their deaths. Clym's own awareness of his share of blame in their tragedy is evident when he says to Diggory Venn that his great regret is that "for what I have done no man or law can punish me!" <sup>7</sup>

Hardy makes it clear that without true altruism, the fundamental flaws in human judgements must lead to almost inevitable downfall. It is true that chance, in the shape of accident and coincidence makes the individual's hopes for happiness small; but natural law, the flawed nature of the human race and the power of natural and sexual selection exacerbate this condition.

We are told of Egdon that "[c]ivilization was its enemy" <sup>8</sup> and that society's ineffectual attempts to assert order upon its face must come to nothing. This proves to be prophetic, for Clym, when measured against the nature which surrounds him, is insignificant. He wishes to change life upon Egdon's vast trajectories, but he is no match for the natural forces around him. Society and education prove to be weaker than the primeval forces of love, jealousy and inertia in the face of an incomprehensible natural world.

Clym, is, in a sense, diminished by his continued existence upon the heath. He is seen in the last chapter as a pale shadow of his early aspirations, an ineffectual harbinger of social reform and an inconsequential advocate of the brotherhood of man. His early promise of brilliance has come to nothing. The inhabitants of the heath pay scant attention to him; Indeed, they are drawn into his presence only by their pity for his past. It is clear that his own innate lack of altruism and misguided

judgement have brought him low. In the end, the forces of nature have proved themselves stronger than social reform and civilization. Clym has, in effect lost his mother, his wife and his own vital forces to a heath that he had hoped to conquer. Whether, through suffering he emerges a better and wiser human being is left ultimately ambiguous. However, it is significant that his history of pain has stirred pity in the hardened heath-dwellers.

As in many of his mature novels, such as The Woodlanders, Tess of the d'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure, Hardy develops the Huxlean precept that as humanity evolves, its heightened consciousness and developed sensibilities must necessarily be accompanied by a more acute sense of pain. Hardy wrote in The Life:

Law has produced in man a child who cannot but constantly reproach its parent for doing much and yet not all, and constantly say to such parent that it would have been better never to have begun doing than to have overdone so decisively; that is than to have created so far beyond all apparent first intention (on the emotional side), without mending matters by a second intent and execution, to eliminate the evils of the blunder of overdoing. The emotions have no place in a world of defect, and it is a cruel injustice that they should have developed in it.<sup>9</sup>

Clym's level of evolution may have been too far in advance of his time but his level of development has still not saved him from suffering; but has rather exacerbated it. He states:

If it had pleased God to put an end to me it would have been a good thing for all. But I am getting used to the horror of my existence.

They say that a time comes when men laugh at misery through long acquaintance with it.<sup>10</sup>

It would appear that at this point Hardy is refuting the Spencerian idea that as people evolve and come to determine their acts more consciously those better able to determine the results of their action will be able to survive longer, which for Spencer "constitutes the supreme end."<sup>11</sup> Unlike Spencer, Hardy does not view survival as any great thing. Consequently Hardy's "heroes" rarely survive, and when they do, their survival is not based on any personal merit. Yeobright's evolved intellect prevents him from leaping blindly into the water after Eustacia in the manner of the impetuous Wildeve. Clearly his prudence has saved him from certain death. Nonetheless, his deliverance is no act of providence to the deserving, for he is left to continue through life in an emotional void, or in Hardy's words, with "a wrinkled mind."<sup>12</sup>

There can be little doubt that the over-developed sensibilities and emotions of the characters who live on Egdon cause most of the disasters which are so prolific in the text. The imbalance between people and their environment is reflected by the fact that those who live on Egdon's ancient and impassive wastes are constantly projected against a world which is essentially primeval in aspect. While ferns, snakes and in-

sects abound in this timeless and seemingly static waste, human life is an anachronism. Human consciousness alone must find a meaning to existence. The lot of those who, like Eustacia Vye, fail to do so, is usually a desperate one.

Although Hardy does not attempt to excuse or diminish the errors of his characters, neither does he condemn them. He perceives that the problem results from the "law" which has caused human perceptions to evolve out of all proportion to the starkness of the exterior world. Late in his life, in 1927, some years after the horrors of war which had done so much to diminish his melioristic ideals, Hardy wrote a poem in which the Creator, "blind force persisting" remarks of its creations:

Aye, to human tribes nor kindness  
Nor love I've given, but mindlessness,  
Which state, though far from ending,  
May nevertheless be mending.<sup>13</sup>

From these lines it is clear that for Hardy, any future perfection of humanity must be arrived at through kindness and love. This in turn will be apprehended through the shared suffering of the human race. Pinjon writes that for Hardy, cruelty, disease and suffering were the consequence of the general struggle for survival. Careerism, class distinctions, nationalism and war reflected competitiveness and the struggle for survival in society. Hardy's accord with Huxley's idea that altruism was the only hope for humankind is expressed in a poem, "A Plaint to Man":

The truth should be told and the fact be faced  
That had best been faced in earlier years :

The fact of life with dependence placed  
 On the human heart's resource alone,  
 In brotherhood, bonded close and graced,  
 With loving-kindness fully blown,  
 And visioned help unsought, unknown. 14

Hardy also wrote:

~ Altruism or The Golden Rule or whatever  
 "Love your Neighbour as Yourself" may be  
 called, will ultimately be brought about I  
 think by the pain we see in others reacting  
 on ourselves, as if we and they were a part  
 of one body. 15

In the Return of the Native Hardy spares the well-balanced and good-natured Thomasin and allows her to marry the good-intentioned but meddling reddleman, Diggory Venn. However, he tempers the "happy ending" (which he allowed only for the purposes of serialization) with the comment that Eustacia and Wildeve met with the "more graceful" fate. Misfortune had struck off their lives with "dash" instead of "attenuating each life to an uninteresting meagreness, through long years of wrinkles, neglect and decay." 16

When Hardy writes about the passing of time he emphasizes the essential sameness of all human experience. The loves, follies and inevitable extinction of modernity are only a repetition of the endless drama which has been forever enacted on the stage of the heath in one form or another. History which for Darwin was both exciting and wonderful, is to Hardy,

merely oppressive. His characters can never own victory over the forces which assail them for they are transient, a state which reflects their only true salvation in the escape of death. In the drama of their lives they are as insignificant as those bygone generations who have lived and died to no avail. Hardy describes Eustacia thus:

The first instinct of an imaginative stranger might have been to suppose it the person of one of the Celts who built the barrow, so far had all of modern date withdrawn from the scene. It seemed a sort of last man among them, musing for a moment before dropping into eternal night with the rest of his race.<sup>17</sup>

This juxtaposition of the ancient upon the present is used frequently to redefine time within the world of the heath. The living wander across its ancient barrows containing the remains of long-dead Celts. The furniture in the inn is carved with the initials of those of more recent times who have joined the dead and who now "lay as an alcoholic cinder in the nearest churchyard."<sup>18</sup> Timelessness shapes the heath which is described in its primeval aspect:

Lizards, grasshoppers, and ants were the only living things to be beheld. The scene seemed to belong to the ancient world of the carboniferous period, when the forms of plants were few, and of the fern kind; when there was neither bud nor blossom, nothing but a monotonous extent of leafage, amid which no bird sang.<sup>19</sup>



The external world as it is typified in the form of the heath is seen as unlimited and immutable. It is a microcosm in time and space of the total history of the world. It represents and embodies the immense spans of time which have passed since the geological upheavals which once formed it. Throughout countless aeons Egdon has remained essentially unchanged. What is conceptualized as ancient in human terms is but a yesterday upon the heath. Indeed, the scattered remains of the Romans and Celts are still part of its present. The heath-dwellers are living replicas of the now-extinct tribes who once lived and died upon its expanses. The past is present not only in the arrow-heads and shards which litter the heath but in the evocation of human mortality which is presented by Egdon. Hardy writes:

Those of the dyed barbarians who had chosen the cultivable tracts were, in comparison with those who had left their marks here, as writers on paper beside writers on parchment. Their records had perished long ago by the plough, while the works of these remained. Yet they all had lived and died unconscious of the different fates awaiting their relics. It reminded him that unforeseen factors operate in the evolution of immortality.<sup>20</sup>

In the novel's first brooding glimpse of Eustacia she is represented as a member of some ancient and long-dead tribe. She is, undoubtedly, a woman whose story might, in various ways have repeated itself through generations of heath-dwellers. Evolution proceeds tortuously onwards; the things

of importance to women and men are of no concern to nature. Eustacia's fate is of no account in the vast scheme of things.

The general desolation of a generation which had for the first time in history been faced with incomprehensible spans of time is reflected in Hardy's text. Clym expresses something of this mood when he gazes upon the heath:

There was something in its oppressive 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.<sup>21</sup>

In the use of the word "arena" there is an obvious suggestion of combat, the interminable struggle which has been fought upon the heath. It is paganism, not Christianity which predominates upon Egdon. The ancient Druidic rite of lighting bonfires at the Winter Egress is still practiced by the inhabitants of Egdon in an almost pristine form. Their roots in the pagan world are manifested in the dance and its primitive rhythms from which only the simple oaf, pointedly named Christian, abstains. Hardy wrote The Return of the Native before his contemporary Frazer's great anthropological work The Golden Bough had been published. Nevertheless, under the influence of The Origin, and The Descent of Man he gropes back in time for the essentials in the human condition. Like Darwin he sees that the power of the dance is one of the most primitive means of sexual arousal known to humankind. This primeval instinct is as alive in his own times as in the ancient past. Darwin had written:

The impassioned orator, bard, or musician

with his varied tones and cadences he excites the strongest emotions in his hearers, little suspects that he uses the same means by which his half human ancestors long ago aroused each other's ardent passions, during their courtship and rivalry.<sup>22</sup>

The pagan elements alive on Egdon are further indicated by the fact that its inhabitants do not by custom frequent the church except upon rare occasions. The heath, it seems, invests its denizens with its own indifference to the concerns of the world beyond its boundaries. The more primitive and archetypal images and values of antiquity are the real relevancies of its environment.

As in The Woodlanders, Hardy makes it clear that the ancient rural ways of life are slowly being eroded by the arrival of a new type or types. Nonetheless, this is part of a natural cycle of evolution ordained by nature itself. It is not contrary to the natural order of things but part of an evolutionary process. Happiness, however, has nothing to do with its outcome. Time is of such little consequence in the natural order of things that the changing patterns of human existence with its evolved and amplified sense of pain are immaterial. Nature "red in tooth and claw" is as impervious to Eustacia's suffering as it is indifferent to the death of Clym's mother.

As in all of Hardy's novels, coincidence is the framework upon which much of the plot develops. Yeobright fails to receive fifty guineas from his mother through Diggory Venn's altruistic but misguided in-

terference. Consequently no reconciliation takes place between mother and son. Mrs. Yeobright chances to visit Clym on the hottest day for some years. Wildeve's clandestine meeting with Eustacia takes place just as Mrs. Yeobright arrives at the door of the cottage. The door is not opened through a chain of circumstances which occur simultaneously. Later still, Clym's letter of reconciliation to Eustacia fails to arrive in time to change the course of events.

In some cases in the novel, coincidence is random and at other times causality is set in motion by a fatal error of judgement on the part of one of the characters. Frequently the coincidences which occur so often in Hardy's world are reflections of a universe which is essentially purposeless. At times it seems as if these chance occurrences signify that nature is possessed of an active malignity towards human life, that it relentlessly seeks the downfall of the main personages in the drama. Certainly Eustacia takes this view when with Promethean fury she rails against the gods who she feels have deliberately destroyed her:

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! 23

However, as Hardy seeks to make clear in the text, the coincidences which occur are not through any malignity of nature or the "gods," but are the random workings of events which are essentially motiveless because nothing exists to motivate them. Nature's laws function only

in the sense that they ensure the inexorable continuation of natural and sexual selection and nothing more.

For Hardy, the archaic mind, as exemplified by the Hellenic Eustacia, defines these purposeless occurrences in terms of a jealous or benevolent god or gods. The more intellectually evolved Clym is no less mistaken in that he believes that education and rationalism can leash the mysterious forces which have bent society throughout time itself. Much later in life Hardy wrote of his poems and said "they mortify the human sense of self-importance by showing, or suggesting that human beings are of no matter or appreciable value in this nonchalant universe."<sup>24</sup> This philosophy is discernible in most of Hardy's work. In The Return the concept of nature's indifference to its creations is particularly stressed in the account of Mrs. Yeobright's visit to Clym and Eustacia's cottage. As Clym's mother walks across the heath she stops to observe the natural life around her. She sees that

[Independent] worlds of ephemerals were  
passing their time in mad carousal.... maggoty  
shapes of innumerable obscure creatures could  
be indistinctly seen, heaving and wallowing  
with enjoyment.<sup>25</sup>

A little later she sees her son cutting furze upon the heath. As she looks at his figure, far in the distance, he is perceived as resembling a caterpillar upon a leaf. Afterwards she observes:

The silent being who thus occupied himself  
 seemed to be of no more account in life than  
 an insect. He appeared as a mere parasite  
 of the heath, fretting its surface in his daily  
 labour.<sup>26</sup>

The continuation and extension of the two images; the ephemerals, maggots, caterpillars and finally the vision of her son as an insect is, in itself an image of metamorphosis or transformation in the evolutionary chain which finally culminates in the human. It is evident that the lower the organism on the evolutionary scale the happier its state. Men and women, the highest forms of creation are, however, of no more account than the most insignificant forms which "fret" in the chain of life.

As Mrs. Yeobright nears death, the unceasing and vibrant world of nature continues to function around her. All the world is impervious and carelessly indifferent to the fact of her suffering. Reproduction and regeneration are extant around her dying form. At this point, the image of time is again manipulated by Hardy, Mrs. Yeobright's imminent fate is extended to the fate which has always awaited and will always await every creature. With a Darwinian precision she observes the ants which crawl around her;

[They] toiled a never-ending and heavy-laden  
 throng. To look down upon them was like  
 observing a city street from the top of a tower.

She remembered that this bustle of ants had been in progress for years at the same spot - - doubtless those of the old times were the ancestors of those which walked there now.<sup>27</sup>

The ants are identified with the human race and with the lost generations whom Mrs. Yeobright must soon join in death. As Gillian Beer remarks, both Hardy and Darwin insist on repetition as a basic organisation for all experience within the natural order.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, Hardy's concept of death as an end to the burden of existence is reflected in the progress of a heron:

While she looked a heron arose on that side of the sky and flew on with his face towards the sun.... Up in the zenith where he was seemed a free and happy place, away from all contact with the earthly ball to which she was pinioned; and she wished that she could arise uncrushed from its surface and fly as he flew then.<sup>29</sup>

Life and death are juxtaposed. The ants toil in a "heavy-laden throng," while the heron's progress into the zenith and away from life is defined as freedom and happiness. Like all the characters in Hardy, Mrs. Yeobright's death is depicted in terms of release and cessation. Unhappiness is reserved for the survivors.

The hope which Hardy's characters are left with is ultimately the

hope and the worth that they must find in themselves. Morton Dauwen Zabel in his essay "Hardy in Defense of his Art; The Aesthetic of Incongruity" states:

The transition in Hardy from doubt and negation to humanistic hope was encumbered by an amateur's crudity in handling philosophical machinery, and the clumsiness is evident in all his dramas. He contrives his defeats and frustrations as a means of reducing to its final and minimal condition the saving heroism, dignity, and integrity of his characters. His use of every known portent, accident and coincidence of chance destinies is notoriously excessive. The impression that survives such buffetings of the reader's patience corresponds, no doubt intentionally, to the indestructable essence of human worth and dignity with which his characters manage to survive, Greek-like, their havoc of ruin and defeat. The role of man in the universe is, for Hardy, comparable to the role of will and intelligence themselves: it is a role of emergent exoneration and the word emergent is important. Man's exoneration is not to be taken for granted. It is not to be rashly assumed by means of defiance, ambition or egotism. It materializes slowly, out of blight and despair. It materializes so slowly and painfully, indeed, that one is inclined



to think that Hardy saw an analogy for this painful vindication in the equally painful and agonized degrees by which modern man had suffered the loss of his traditional dignity in the teachings of Bacon, Montaigne, Galileo, Newton, Locke, Lyell, and Darwin, yet survived to declare a new faith and worth for himself through a sublimation of his egoistic individuality into the instinctive wisdom and slowly maturing intelligence of the natural universe itself. Some such allegory is conveyed by the stories of Clym Yeobright, Michael Henchard and Jude Fawley.<sup>30</sup>

Clym Yeobright does not emerge as a hero: he is a small pathetic and bruised individual who is hardly discernible against the heath. Nevertheless he is aptly named a "John the Baptist." In the spectacle of his pain and his altruistic if ineffectual message, he might be seen to presage the first wavering and heroic steps which humankind must take into a new age of humanitarianism and hope.

## IV THE WOODLANDERS

The Woodlanders was first published in March 1887. Although it is the least acclaimed of Hardy's mature novels, years after its publication the author remarked that as a story he liked it best of all. Hardy's growing maturity as a writer becomes evident when it is understood that beneath the pastoral beauty and muted tones of the novel, a mood of pessimism is discernible, a mood which pervades and dominates the entire work.

The Woodlanders deals with a tiny and isolated forest community which is unwittingly but effectively destroyed by the arrival of two outsiders, the physician, Edred Fitzpiers, and Felice Charmond. Even at the opening of the story it is clear that the traditions and ancient legacies of the forest-dwellers are already endangered by the inroads of the nineteenth-century. In a short time after his arrival, Fitzpiers' superior education and devastating sexual charm enable him to captivate almost every member of this weakened society. The ramifications of his continued presence lead to tragic results for many. Similarly, the sophisticated widow, Felice Charmond is another newcomer who is able to exert a social dominance over the lives of the foresters. Although she is absolutely indifferent to their world, in her role as "landlord" she wields total power over their livelihoods and their properties. By the novel's end, the rural world of Little Hintock is devastated. Some of its inhabitants are dead, some have chosen to leave the forest forever, while loneliness and dispossession are the fate of those who remain.

The rationale for Hardy's theme lies deep in his attitudes to life.

As a writer he observed that a widespread disregard for humanistic values was strengthened by the scientific observations of Darwin and Huxley.

According to them it had become clear that feeling and human will, if indeed they existed at all in a conditioned empirical universe, had little practical efficacy. As a countryman, Hardy saw that the world of rural Dorchester was gradually dying because of increased communication, transportation and the financial imperatives which made the modes of agricultural and communal traditions impossible to retain.

Hardy equates the destruction of the old ways of life with the Darwinistic concept of natural selection effecting an elimination of the 'weaker' elements of society. His response to this phenomenon is to portray the rural people and their traditions even as they vanished forever from the countryside of England. This study, will, to some extent deal with this idea of natural selection and with Hardy's development of the Darwinian concept of linkages and interdependencies in nature. This second idea includes the concept of maladaptation, the failure of things to be what they are 'meant to be.' This notion was originally propounded by Darwin and was dealt with independently by the German philosophers, Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann.

In a social context I will deal with the influence on the novel of John Stuart Mill and refer briefly to the ideas of Huxley and Stephen. It is obvious that these are not the only evolutionary influences upon this aspect of the work, but for the sake of cohesion I will restrict this chapter to these scholars.

The Darwinian image of the interrelatedness of things was to become

The Woodlanders' unifying theme. In 1886 while in the process of writing the novel, Hardy had written: "The Human race to be shown as one great network or tissue which quivers in every part when one point is shaken, like a spider's web if touched."<sup>1</sup> Darwin had sometimes invisioned the idea of all life as interdependent in terms of web imagery and sometimes with the metaphor of a tree.<sup>2</sup> One particularly vivid representation is contained in The Origin:

As buds give rise by growth to fresh buds,  
and these, if vigorous, branch out and overtop  
on all sides many a feebler branch, so by generation I believe it has been with the great Tree of Life, which fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its ever-branching and beautiful ramifications.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of The Woodlanders Hardy appears to have used the image of trees to stress this idea. The interconnected lives of his characters are played out against the interconnected tangle of thousands of trees. The struggles of his protagonists form a part of the very struggle of the forest in which they live. Darwinian critic Gillian Beer notes that it is singularly appropriate that Hardy has made one particular tree the focal point around which the drama revolves.<sup>4</sup> The tree which kills John South shapes the destinies of many. It is felled through the injudicious advice of the doctor, Edred Fitzpiers. His remedy for John South's illness is little more than an insensitive whim which fails to take into account the deep spiritual links between the foresters and their world. Consequently, John South dies, Marty is impover-

ished, and Giles Winterborne loses his life-holding on his house, his property and his fortune. Because of his ensuing poverty Giles can no longer be regarded as a potential husband for Grace and the "everbranching" ramifications of cause and effect are continued.

Critic, F.B. Pinion finds the network of interrelations to be particularly elaborate in The Woodlanders. Pinion states, that if, for example, there had been no American Civil War at the time of the story, and if Marty South had not had particularly beautiful red hair, then Mrs. Charmond could not have died as she did.<sup>5</sup> This strange inter-relatedness of things is emphasized, not only in terms of plot but also in terms of perspective. The viewpoint of the novel moves constantly from one character to another. No character is absolutely central, while the more obvious ones lack any real intensity or spirit which might make them focal. Giles, the sole character who could be said to approximate a hero, appears only intermittently, and Marty, the only commendable woman in the novel, appears hardly at all.

Hardy uses the novel to apply an important connection between the idea of life's interdependencies and the concept of maladaptation. For Darwin, although the individual is guided by pleasurable and 'well-being', the process of development has not assured complete congruity between need and adaptation. Again Hardy renders these ideas through the medium of the forest. Here, he designs a kind of anti-Arden woodland, where the trees are vested into a powerful symbol of the human condition. Marty South hears "the creaking sound of two overcrowded branches. . . which were rubbing each other into wounds, and other voc-

alized sorrows of the trees." This is a constant image throughout.

There is an unceasing emphasis on the sinister unknown aspects of nature which underlie its beauty. There is a sense not merely of passive suffering in nature but of the violence and grossness of its disfigurements. This suffering and maladaptation is seen at its most extreme in human life. Critic, Dale Kramer feels that Hardy uses the landscape as a mirror for the human predicament. Kramer writes that:

[A]long with the external beauty of landscape and the delicacy and toleration of individual personality; the novel presents an interpretation of such pervasive frustration that the inevitable miscalculations of rigid social degrees can be approximated only by images of bleeding tree trunks and predatory animals.<sup>6</sup>

All this creates an atmosphere of universal malice and destructive egoistical energies which can only be seen as intentionally antithetical to Victorian romanticism.

In his description of the woodland setting, Hardy shares Darwin's fascination with the exquisite and repugnant aspects of nature. Growth and decay concur amidst a profusion of vegetable and animal life. In a passage which vividly describes the concomitant beauty and horror of the natural world, Hardy writes:

They went noiselessly over mats of starry moss,  
rustled through the interspersed tracts of leaves,  
skirted trunks with spreading roots whose mossed  
rinds made them like hands wearing green gloves,

elbowed old elms and ashes with great forks in which stood pots of water that overflowed on rainy days and ran down their stems in green cascades. On older trees still than these huge lobes of fungi grew like lungs. Here, as everywhere, the Unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is, was as obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling.<sup>7</sup>

Here, the forest is anthropomorphized and the image extended into a metaphor for the universality of the human plight. Like people, the trees are doomed to suffer and to destroy each other in the unceasing struggle for existence. Images of deformities and suffering prevail in much of the description of the arboreal life of the forest. Hardy's concern to objectify nature preying on itself is observable in a passage which describes the coming of day:

Owls that had been catching mice in the outhouses, rabbits that had been eating the water greens in the gardens, and stoats that had been sucking the blood of the rabbits discerning that their human neighbours were on the move directly withdrew. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Profusion, death and decay are synchronous. The metaphors of death which Hardy uses in his descriptions of nature frequently extend outwards

to embrace the whole of existence; "a sunless winter day emerged like a dead born child"; puddles had a "cold corpse-eyed luminousness"; "beads of perspiration hung from every bare twig; the sky had no colour, and the trees rose before him as haggard grey phantoms."

Felice Charmond is oppressed by the world of nature. As a former actress she is representative of the world of the artificial and as such the natural is antithetical to her. As a newcomer and a sophisticate, the life of the Little Hintock woods reflects the sorrows of life which she attempts to forget in a constant round of travel and romance. She is histrionic and melodramatic, but nevertheless her words on existence reflect some of the ideas current in her century:

. . . the world is so dreary outside.

Sorrow and bitterness in the sky, and floods  
of agonized tears beating against the panes.

I lay awake last night, and I could hear the  
scrape of snails creeping up the window glass;

it was so sad! . . . O! Why were we given

hungry hearts and wild desires if we have to live

in a world like this? Why should Death alone

lend what Life is compelled to borrow -- rest?

Answer that, Dr. Fitzpiers. . . Then, when my

emotions have exhausted themselves, I become

full of fears, till I think I shall die for very

fear. The terrible inconsistencies of society --

how severe they are, and cold, and inexorable --

ghastly towards those who are made of wax and not



of stone. O, I am afraid of them; a stab  
for this error, and a stab for that -- correctives  
and regulations pretendedly framed that  
society may tend to perfection. . . <sup>9</sup>

Her mood of near-despair is echoed later by Fitzpiers when he  
observes woodsmen dragging away a limb which had been snapped from a  
beech tree. "Everything," says the narrator, was cold and colourless."  
In a rare display of sincerity Fitzpiers speaks, "My good God!" he  
observes, "This is life!" <sup>10</sup>

Hardy's treatment of the romantic or sexual relationship between  
his characters may be derived, at least in part from his readings of Von  
Hartmann's writings on human and animal sexuality. Von Hartmann states  
that love is ultimately fatal to happiness in spite of peoples' innate  
and compulsive urges in that respect.<sup>11</sup> Like many of Hardy's characters,  
Grace Melbury, Suke Damsen and Felice Chalmers are all, in a certain sense,  
ruined because of their inability to withstand the instinct to love. Only  
Marty South is set apart in that her nature transcends sexuality. Because  
of her stoicism, even in the face of love, she rises in stature, to become  
like the dead Giles an almost mythic figure at the conclusion of the novel.

In accordance with Von Hartmann's views, Hardy believed that the maj-  
ority of human hopes are doomed to disappointment. Bitterness and un-  
fulfilment is the prevailing mood of life in the world of the novel.  
Fitzpiers upon winning Felice Chalmers finds her a "flat delight." Grace  
Melbury returns from her honeymoon with Fitzpiers to feel an "indescribable  
oppressiveness" at the prospect of her future life. Suke Damsen's  
marriage is a "source of bitter regret." Like Von Hartmann, Hardy depicts

love as an uncontrollable force which is followed by languor and decline.<sup>12</sup>

Edred Fitzpierz's sexual attractiveness is overwhelming. Nevertheless, in a rather ironic vein he is depicted as a dilettante humbug who quotes Schleiermacher and Shelley at will. It is notable that the idealism of Shelley is somehow seen as corrupted when the poet's romantic vision is debased by Fitzpierz's outpourings.

Although Fitzpierz lacks any real ethical or moral qualities he is irresistible to the women of the novel, his magnetism ultimately overcoming even the prudish Grace Melbury. Paradoxically, however, he is, perhaps, more victimized and abased by his own instincts than the women whom he captivates. Hardy emphasizes the sexual feelings which Fitzpiers elicits in the females around him. "He exercised a certain fascination over [Grace] or even more an almost psychic influence."<sup>13</sup> Felice Charmond admits to being his "slave."<sup>14</sup> Suké Damsen "would have well-nigh sacrificed half her life to him."<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, in spite of Fitzpierz's shortcomings, Hardy's strong empathy with the human dilemma precludes the idea of villains. Fitzpiers is, for Hardy, as much a victim of his own instincts as those around him. To the physician's credit, in his more reflective moods he is under no less illusions about himself than the reader. When Felice asks what might have happened had they stayed together when young, Fitzpiers answers with words which are characteristic of the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann:

Then the fire would have burnt higher and  
higher. What would have immediately followed  
I know not; but sorrow and sickness of heart  
at last.<sup>16</sup>

As the novel progresses it becomes clear that in spite of his corrupted romanticism, the sorrow and sickness of heart which dog the paths of all the characters in The Woodlanders is the true reality of Fitzpier's life. It is a measure of his character that he is "enchanted enough" to "fancy" that the Idea or Platonic Ideal has found its "objective substance" in Grace when he sees her in the forest on Midsummer eve. Nonetheless, he ends the night in a field with the coarse and buxom Sue Damsen.

Beneath the romantic, the idealistic and the beautiful, sorrow and sickness of heart are the true realities of Hardy's world. Loneliness and despair are as pervasive in the simple pastoral world of the forest as in the urban environment of Jude the Obscure. Each man and woman, like nature itself, is subject to the Unfulfilled Intention. The characters who are not bad, who never wish ill for one another, act at constant cross purposes, motivated sometimes by selfishness and sometimes by good intentions. Always they strive for happiness. Nothing, however, is fulfilled, and this extends to the condition of the entire universe. The human parallel to the matrix of the essential frustration of all things to be what they would be is an inherent condition of the group-forming instinct to restrict individual will.

In general, Hardy was opposed to social restrictions upon the individual.<sup>17</sup> His opposition to the constraining social laws of Victorian England probably derive in part from his readings of Mill. Like Mill, he castigates those dicta of society which adversely affected what little chance of happiness men and more particularly, women might obtain.

Hence, The Woodlanders presents a conflict between the course of natural love and the restraints that an elaborate social code places on the expression and fulfillment of love. Nowhere is this more evident than in the plight of Giles Winterborne. Giles does not die for a besieged and doomed traditional system of ethics in which emotional relationships are based on affinities and on acceptance of the sexual nature of women and men. Instead, he is constrained into the position of sacrificing himself for the cause of Victorian morality. There can be little doubt that the scene which leads up to Giles' death is possibly among the most ludicrous in English literature; nonetheless, his actual death is all the more pitiable because he never challenges or even comprehends the flawed morality which has destroyed him.

In this respect, Grace Melbury is at once a victim and a product of the social mores of her time. She is victimized by the injustice of the law towards women and by her subservience to both husband and father.<sup>18</sup> At the same time her own inability to cast off the yoke of convention in order to follow her innate desires is her nemesis. When she is mistakenly informed that a new law exists which will make divorce possible for the less privileged members of society, she immediately places her own moral conduct within its confines: Hardy writes:

The "new law" was to her a mysterious, beneficent, god-like entity, lately descended upon earth, that would make her as she once had been without trouble or annoyance. Her position fretted her, its abstract features rousing an aversion greater than her aversion to the personality of him who caused it. It was mortifying, productive of slights, undignified.

Him she could forget; her circumstances she had  
always with her. <sup>19</sup>

Later, she refuses to let Giles hold her hand, saying, "Not that I feel morally bound to any one else after what has taken place; . . . But I wish to keep the proprieties as well as I can." <sup>20</sup> Clearly, Grace is a prisoner of her own sense of propriety, as Giles is a victim of his altruism.

Mill's influence on The Woodlanders is felt not only in terms of society but also in the portrayal of the country folks' attitudes to their environment. Throughout the novel, Hardy skilfully merges nature in its primeval and mythological role, with nature in its Darwinian and implacable aspect. In the latter instance, it is evident that the community of Little Hintock can, at best, only hope to live in an uneasy truce with the mighty forces which surround it. Hardy takes Mill's view that nature, in which the human role is both participatory and combative, is flawed. Consequently, Hardy stresses the innate enmity between humanity and the natural world, an enmity in which both struggle for supremacy. The situation of Felice Charmond's house is described as "prejudicial to humanity" but "a stimulus to vegetation." <sup>21</sup> On the night of the storm which kills Giles, Grace feels that:

She had never before been so struck with the  
devilry of a gusty night in a wood. . . .

Sometimes a bough from an adjoining tree was  
swayed so low as to smite the roof in the manner  
of a gigantic hand smiting the mouth of an ad-  
versary, to be followed by a trickle of rain, as

blood from a wound. <sup>22</sup>

It is evident that the human race is no longer seen as set apart<sup>2</sup> as lords over creation; men and women are predators like other predators who inhabit the forest. Human life is necessarily as cruel as the nature which surrounds it. A fragile type of concordance with nature is discernible only in the sense that the evident moral superiority of Giles and Marty is associated with their rapport with the natural cycle of the woods and with their respective skills in its characteristic forms of work. As denizens of the forest, both Giles and Marty must oppose nature in order to survive within its domain. At the same time, because of their work, they have gained a singular understanding of nature's ways.

Giles' close alignment with nature is unquestionably emblematic of the myth of the dying earth God, a theme which had become intellectually topical through the work of Frazer. Giles has a "marvellous power" to make trees grow. Trees that would certainly die when planted by others flourish if planted by him. Hardy makes the special, almost mystical relationship that Giles and Marty share with each other and the forest clear in the following passage:

Grace. . . found that she had never understood Giles as Marty had done. Marty South alone, of all the women in Hintock and the world, had approximated to Winterborne's level of intelligent intercourse with Nature. . . The casual glimpses which the ordinary population bestowed upon that wondrous world of sap and leaves called the Hintock.

woods had been with these two, Giles and Marty, a clear gaze. . . . They had planted together, and together they had felled. . . . The artifices of the seasons were seen by them from the conjuror's own point of view, and not from that of the spectator. <sup>23</sup>

In one haunting image which vividly describes the pain to which all living things are subject, the felling of a tree is depicted as an act of execution. Men and women are the violators. The tree is "doomed to the flaying process", it is made to look "ridiculous" ; it stood naked legged as if ashamed while the woodsmen attacked it like locusts." <sup>24</sup> The trees, like the very people who despoil them are represented as oppressed by existence. Marty says:

How they sigh directly we put 'em upright,  
though while they are lying down they don't  
sigh at all. . . . It seems to me. . . as if  
they sigh because they are very sorry to be-  
gin life in earnest -- just as we be. <sup>25</sup>

This, and similar imagery throughout the novel stresses the universality of suffering. Both victim and despoiler are coextensively subjected to the unknown and inexorable laws pervading all existence.

Hardy's depiction of the gradual erosion of the old world of the forest is an integral part of his theme. Intruders with their new ways first confuse and then destroy the ancient and once-isolated forest society. This may be seen to reflect Von Hartmann's conviction that the struggle for existence gradually reduces and exterminates the less in-

tellectual races of the world. Darwin, of course, had visualized this process as taking place through natural selection: He writes upon the subject thus in *The Origin*:

As natural selection acts by competition, it adapts and improves the inhabitants of each country only in relation to their co-inhabitants; so that we need feel no surprise at the species of any one country, although on the ordinary view supposed to have been created and specially adapted for that country being beaten and supplanted by the naturalised productions from another land. 26

Edred Fitzpiers and Mrs. Charmond are newcomers to the forest. Their combined presence disturbs the lives of all the other characters in the community. Both are alienated from the forest by their birth and education. Fitzpiers is the son of an ancient family from outside the community; Felice is the widow of a wealthy Northern manufacturer. She represents the nineteenth century social phenomenon of the absentee landlord who allows the estate to be run by ruthless hired managers. Both she and Edred are "modern" types in the deeply traditional forest world. Fitzpiers survives because he is "fitter" not "better" than Giles -- fitter to survive in a "modern" age. This is the real significance of the arguably happy ending.

To some extent Grace Melbury is also alienated from the forest by her superior education which has made her unfitted for country life. She is a gentle and sweet woman but more than any other character in the novel she is a product of educated refinement and the social niceties



of her time. She eschews any sexual relationship with Winterborne for the sake of propriety, yet ultimately chooses a faithless husband over the man who died protecting her. It is clear that Grace will always survive, for, like her husband, her choices are ultimately self-serving. At the end of the novel she selects a man with a future in the Midlands over a man whose individual death symbolizes the old order passing. Nonetheless, the "life, the future" that awaits her is mere middle-class respectability with a faithless husband.

The struggle between the old and the new order of things is made further evident when it is understood that the moral superiority of Giles and Marty is connected with their lives of ceaseless struggle within the natural world of the forest. Conversely, the morally dubious characters, Fitzpiers and Mrs. Charmond, have no understanding of their surroundings.

In this respect, Grace's father Melbury, a man whose character bears much in common with Michael Henchard in The Mayor of Casterbridge is, perhaps, the least blameless of anyone. While he is a pragmatic plain-talking woodsman, he has, in many senses betrayed his class. It is he who brings unhappiness upon nearly every character in the novel by aspiring vicariously, through his daughter, to the socially prestigious but morally corrupt world of Fitzpiers and Felice Charmond.

In this sense much of the tragedy of the novel might have been avoided if Melbury's decisions had been more sound. He is competitive, ambitious and selfish. His sense of competition (the same competition which years earlier had caused him to steal his first wife from his best friend, Giles' father) is undiminished by life's experiences. Melbury

strives constantly for supremacy, not only over the forest, but over his fellow men and women. His ambition for his daughter to marry "out of her class" is part of the web of circumstances that leads to tragedy. Grace is his possession, his revenge for his own lack of opportunities in childhood. The author comments that:

Mr. Melbury's tone evinced a certain exultation  
in the very sense of that inferiority he affected  
to deplore; for this advanced and refined being,  
was she not his own all the time ? 27

By aspiring to the values of the greater world outside the forest, Melbury brings tragedy into his small tightly-knit community. The man who is sacrificed to Melbury's ambition is Giles, whom he had formerly chosen as a husband for Grace.

Hardy stresses the fact that although Giles has remained spiritually untouched by the changes encroaching upon the forest his resilience is not from any boorish lack of sensitivity. Giles, like Marty, is not of peasant stock. Both are descendants of "well-to-do families" whose lineage extends far back in time. Indeed, as Hardy points out with reference to Marty:

Nothing but a cast of the die of Destiny had  
decided that the girl should handle the tool;  
and the fingers which clasped the heavy ash  
-haft might have skilfully guided the pencil or  
swept the string, had they only been set to do  
it in good time. 28

As the novel progresses it may be seen that the last members of these ancient families are forced out of their time-honoured homes and

constrained to become transient workers struggling to survive:

It is the misfortune of Giles that he lacks the essential attributes which might have made him better suited to survive in a modern age. There is little evidence of Hardy's faith in evolutionary meliorism when it is considered that Giles actually embodies the finest ideals of Christian and Stoic virtues, the very virtues which were lauded by Huxley. Hardy says of Giles:

The purity of his nature, his freedom from the grosser passions, his scrupulous delicacy, had never been fully understood by Grace till this strange self-sacrifice in lonely juxtaposition to her own person was revealed. <sup>29</sup>

Giles' real shortcoming is in a certain mental limitation. To some extent he sets the machinery for his own failure in motion by a sort of vulnerable innocence which is unable to comprehend the changes around him. Even when he is dispossessed and driven to a squatter's hut in the forest he is strangely quiescent, even apathetic. His character is possessed of a similar type of listlessness or acquiescence to fate which will later characterize Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Giles' lack of assertion is manifested when he fails to act in time to save his house, even though the means are at his disposal. Similarly, he does not at any time make a serious attempt to win Grace Melbury back to him. Giles, the last remnant of an ancient and depleted race is in Darwinian terms, in the process of being superseded by new and "fitter" types. It is his very meekness and virtue which seems to add to his tribulations.

In this sense, Giles' fate may be viewed as an exemplification of Leslie Stephen's view that altruism and happiness are mutually antagonistic. Certainly, the only two morally commendable characters in the novel, Giles and Marty are the most victimized of all. Stephen wrote on the subject to altruism:

To exhort a man to be virtuous is to exhort him to acquire a quality which will in many cases make him less fit than the less moral man for getting the greatest amount of happiness from a given combination of circumstances.<sup>30</sup>

Virtue, in Hardy, is not its own reward. In fact, one could almost say that virtue will bring its own punishment.

At the end of The Woodlanders the reader is left with the knowledge that with the tenuous reunion of Grace and Fitzpiers the life-force of the old order has gone forever. It is a measure of Hardy's growing mastery over his fiction that the seemingly happy ending is as illusory as the mellow beauty of the forest. There is no real happiness. At the beginning of the novel, the rapacious barber points to the imminent violation of the rural world. At the end, one woman has been killed, one mourns and two are doomed to unfulfilling marriages. The loss of the regenerative power of the rural sensibility is clear.<sup>31</sup> Giles, "Autumn's own brother" is dead. Marty South stands by his grave alone, and through her words Hardy laments the final moments of a passing order:

Now, my own own love. . . you are mine, and only mine; for she has forgot 'ee at last,

although for her you died. But I --  
whenever I get up I'll think of 'ee and  
whenever I lie down I'll think of 'ee again.  
Whenever I plant the young larches I'll think  
that none can plant as you planted; and whenever  
I split a gad, and whenever I turn the cider  
wring, I'll say none could do it like you. If  
ever I forget your name let me forget home and  
heaven. . . . But no, no, my love, I never can  
forget 'ee; for you was a good man, and did good  
things ! 32

## V TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

Tess of the d'Urbervilles was published in novel form in 1892. It is without doubt Hardy's masterpiece and the culmination of his long novelistic career. Although the influence of Darwinism is not as immediately apparent as in most of his earlier work, a careful reading of the novel yields an understanding of Hardy's more mature thoughts upon the question of evolution and men and women's places in the universe.

Tess deals with two main premises; the validity of the laws of society in relation to the natural forces around it and the question of human freedom in light of the newly discovered laws of heredity. As always in Hardy, natural and sexual selection play their roles in his characters' downfall, "flux and reflux-the rhythm of Change" have diminished those who were once strong, while newcomers enter to encroach upon the traditional domain of the country-dweller.

The first indication of a new attitude to evolution came in an article by Huxley on "The Struggle for Existence in Human Society" in 1888, directed particularly against Spencer. (Spencer was not mentioned by name, but Huxley's private letters identify him). It was a protest against the idea that nature and particularly the struggle for existence, could or should be projected into society as a moral idea. Nature, Huxley insisted, was neither conspicuously benevolent nor necessarily progressive. Even if it could be shown that the struggle would eventually lead to meliorism, this would still not absolve nature of the evils of suffering and death, the sufferings of one generation could not

expunge the satisfactions of a later generation. Moreover, the Darwinian doctrine did not entail that necessary progression from lower to higher forms which might be thought to justify suffering. Retrogression was as probable a phase of evolution as progression.<sup>1</sup>

In 1889 in an article entitled "Agnosticism" Huxley took the opportunity to condemn both the Christian and the Comteian brands of religion for worshipping what he felt was unworthy of worship: a god who created evil, and a humanity that was itself evil. "I know no study," he announced "which is so unutterably saddening as that of the evolution of humanity." He proceeded to indict mankind for bearing the mark of the beast, his slow rise having been attended by "infinite wickedness, bloodshed, and misery". For Huxley, the best men in the best times were those who "make the fewest blunders and commit the fewest sins." Later in his "Romanes Lecture," Huxley declared that the cosmos must stand condemned. Those who preached an "ethics of evolution" tend to confuse two things: a knowledge of how the good and evil have come about, and a guide to what is good and evil, or why the good is preferable to the evil. Huxley emphasized that there is no ethics of evolution, the cosmic process furnished no guide for morality except the negative guide.<sup>2</sup>

Evidences of Huxley's later philosophy seem to be evident in Tess. Hardy asks whether those who most frequently succumb are not actually more fitted by nature to survive. Hardy makes the point that what was once ordered by nature for the purpose of improving humanity's chances of survival has, in modern times become unacceptable in relation to society's laws. Gillian Beer states:

The proper action of sexual selection, undistorted by social problems and the male dominance peculiar to humankind, would result in the union of Angel and Tess. The social emphasis on virginity, Hardy suggests, cannot be naturalised: "She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known in the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly." Hardy's passionate depiction of Tess's purity and fitness runs directly counter to the punitive tautology which exalts the survivors as necessarily those proper to survive. He suggests that it may be, at least among women and the poor, that those fit for their environment must be less perfect than those who go under, and that sexual selection according to the oppressive criteria of current society will set us, in Grant Allen's words, "on the high-road to extinction." <sup>3</sup>

An even more disturbing implication could be derived from Darwin's work. This was that the characteristics of both the individual and the race are preconditioned by mechanical forces outside humanity's control. According to Peter R. Morton in his "Neo-Darwinian Reading of Tess of the d'Urbervilles" Tess is the victim of hereditary determinism. Tess's fate is pre-determined by her d'Urberville traits. <sup>4</sup>

Interest in the phenomena of transmitted impulses and habits had begun to acquire importance towards the end of the nineteenth century.



Scientists had begun to explore what emotions and reflex actions help the race to survive. At the time of Tess, Hardy had read the neo-Darwinist, August Weismann's work on early genetics. This dealt with the persistent reversals of a type to earlier forms in nature.<sup>5</sup> Weismann postulated on "the complete immutability of the conveyor of heredity, the germ plasm, which creates and passes through the bodies of generation after generation as a parasite passes from host to host."<sup>6</sup> Hardy inserted much of the idea of Tess's noble ancestry, and details of the atavistic qualities inherent in her make-up only in his final handwritten manuscript of Tess. The effect of this calculated emphasis on Tess's place at the exhausted ending of a long family line is to put her in a tragic situation from which there can be no escape, a captivity made the more harrowing because her every response to it may be seen as having been conditioned by that very heredity. While Huxley emphasizes that a violent heritage in a modern cooperative society is disabling, Hardy emphasizes that passivity too, can be disadvantageous in a competitive world. Although Tess's family has dwindled until it is that of humble farm labourers, her sensibilities are clearly far in advance of her social stature. She is a maladaptation in terms of lineage and in terms of society itself. The proud 'aristocratic' blood and the capacity to kill which once raised her Norman family high becomes evident in some of Tess's strange moods of passion. Conversely, Tess's inborn passivity, a genetic "symptom of that reckless acquiescence in chance so apparent in the whole d'Urberville family"<sup>7</sup> is another major factor in her downfall. What had in her Norman forebears been an expression of their privileged place in nature, has, by Victorian times degenerated

into mere "patience, that blending of moral courage with physical timidity."<sup>8</sup> These atavistic qualities, while undoubtedly 'noble' in their historical context, are pejorative to a young woman who is a farm-worker and a social outcast.

Tess's trials are almost boundless; her diffidence and humility limitless. Although she is resourceful in surviving in a harsh and uncaring environment, she cannot ultimately withstand the stigma that society, and more particularly Angel Clare, places upon her. Although Tess's actions may have been predetermined by hereditary factors it is society that makes Tess a pariah and society that condemns her to death. What might, in terms of nature, have been viewed as survival, has become unthinkable in the eyes of society. Huxley recognized this dilemma in his essay "Evolution and Ethics" published in 1893:

Man, the animal, in fact, has worked his way to the headship of the sentient world, and has become the superb animal which he is, in virtue of his success in the struggle for existence.

The conditions have been of a certain order, man's organization has adjusted itself to them better, than that of his competitors in the cosmic strife.

In the case of mankind, the self-assertion, the unscrupulous seizing upon all that can be grasped, the tenacious holding of all that can be kept, which

constitute the essence of the struggle for existence, have answered, for his successful struggle throughout the savage,

state, man has been largely indebted to those qualities which he shares with the ape and the tiger; his exceptional physical organization; his cunning, his sociability, his curiosity, and his imitativeness; his ruthless and ferocious destructiveness when his anger is roused by opposition.

But, in proportion as men have passed from anarchy to social organization, and in proportion as civilization has grown in worth, these deeply ingrained servicable qualities have become defects. After the manner of successful persons, civilized man would gladly kick down the ladder by which he has climbed. He would be only too pleased to see the ape and tiger die. But they decline to suit his convenience; and the unwelcome intrusion of these boon companions of his hot youth into the ranged existence of civil life adds pains and griefs, innumerable and immeasurably great, to those which the cosmic process necessarily brings on the mere animal. In fact, civilized man brands all these ape and tiger promptings with the name of sins; he punishes many of the acts which flow from them as crimes; and, in extreme cases, he does his best to put an end to the survival of the fittest of former days by axe and rope.<sup>9</sup>

Hardy gives no answer for Tess's predicament. His preoccupation is to trace the history of a woman, who, although ideal in many respects, is driven through a constant malignity of circumstances, whether social,

hereditary or cosmic to the act of murder. Tess's unforgivable error is, perhaps, her failure in the game of chess, which according to Huxley, every man and woman must play with the cosmos.<sup>10</sup> Like the good and altruistic Giles Winterborne in The Woodlanders Tess possesses a peculiar passivity which is at times strangely lacking in spirit. As she herself admits, "... whatever her sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence." This "inadvertence" combined with her moments of atavistic rage is her nemesis. At the same time, neither Angel Clare nor Alec d'Urberville can be seen as villains. Both are in some respects despicable men, but at the same time each has redeeming qualities. Neither sets out deliberately to ruin Tess, although both succeed eminently. Critic William Rutland states with some truth:

Insofar as it voices a grievance against human society Tess is a failure. As Johnson showed, the indictment lacks both coherence and consistency; moreover, Hardy did not even clearly make up his mind what it was that he was indicting. He struck out wildly, but he hit nothing. Now he attacks human society for framing laws and conventions which run counter to Nature; and now he cries out against the cruelty of universal Nature, in whose breasts there runs none of the milk of human kindness.<sup>11</sup>

Tess's fate is also determined by the omnipresent force of sexual selection. She is seduced (or raped) because she is physically attractive. Even the dispassionate Angel is attracted to her beauty by "every heave of his pulse."

Nowhere in Hardy is sexual selection so clearly emphasized as in the description of Talbothays. It contained "the great passionate pulse of existence, unwarped, uncontorted, untrammelled by those creeds which futilely attempt to check what wisdom would be content to regulate." <sup>12</sup> In the famous and oft-quoted scene of the dairymaids' sleeping chamber, Hardy depicts the women as powerless to control their attraction for Angel Clare. The same forces which cause the surrounding countryside to luxuriate in "oozing fatness and warm ferments" causes the women to "palpitate with hopeless passion." Hardy describes them thus:

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. . . . The differences which distinguished them as individual, were abstracted by this passion and each was but portion of one organism called sex. . . . The full recognition of the futility of their infatuation, from a social point of view; its purposeless beginning; its self-bounded outlook; its lack of everything to justify its existence in the eye of civilization (while lacking nothing in the eye of nature); the one fact that it did exist, ecstasizing them to a killing joy. <sup>13</sup>

It is evident that at this juncture all four have lost their separate autonomies as women and have reverted to a sort of feminine principle awaiting the male. No one except the most favoured male can satisfy their longing and herein lies tragedy for everyone.

Tess is preoccupied with the force of sexuality. Tess d'Urberville

tries to be true to her sexual feelings, to bring them into accord with her ideals and to construct her own ethic--an ethic of charity--both of body and mind--even in defiance of social conventions. Rooted in nature and always seen against the rhythms of the natural world and the seasons, she is Hardy's medium for connecting sexual feeling with social and moral law. D.H. Lawrence felt that both Alec and Angel are sexually inadequate men. For Lawrence, Alec is the victim of a rampant sexuality that controls and denies him any true self whether he aspires to the self of libertine or preacher. Angel is the victim of his intellect. This has permitted him to free himself from repressive dogmas but has not permitted contact with the openness of natural feeling.<sup>14</sup> Both Angel Clare and Alec d'Urberville are representative of morally deficient individuals. In Hardy's stereotypic and melodramatic portrayal of Alec, one sees a sensualist of the most lurid kind. Antithetically, Angel is a "slave to custom and conventionality."<sup>15</sup> Indeed there is much in Angel's character which is similar to that of Clym Yeobright. Like Clym, Angel leans towards a philosophy which has something in common with that of Mill:

He held that education had, as yet but little affected the beats of emotion and impulse on which domestic happiness depends. It was probable that, in the lapse of ages, improved systems of moral and intellectual training would appreciably, perhaps considerably, elevate the involuntary and even the unconscious instincts of human nature.<sup>16</sup>

Angel is intellectually liberated but emotionally barren. He seeks a wife from "unconstrained nature" but fails to comprehend that nature and conventional morality are opposed.

Tess derives from Hardy's involvement with and reaction against the Victorian cult of chastity, which, from the beginning of his career, he had known to be corrupted by meanness and hysteria. Tess falls; she violates the standards and conventions of her day and yet, in her incomparable vibrancy and altruism she comes to represent a spiritualized transcendence of chastity.<sup>17</sup> Through the character of Clare, Hardy appears to examine the double-standards of Victorian morality in light of the new rationales of Darwinism thereby denigrating the conventional and stultified morality which existed in relation to discarded religious dogma. Although Tess is diffident, her deeply passionate nature is evident. Like most of Hardy's characters she is imbued with that immense "appetite for joy," the "aviditas vitae" of Huxley or that Darwinian sense of "normative felicity" which the latter sees as pervading all life.<sup>18</sup> It is this which carries her through her trials, and it this which will eventually betray her and lead her to her death. The narrator remarks of Tess as she is about to marry Angel Clare: "Her one desire, so long resisted, to make herself his, to call him her lord, her own -- then, if necessary, to die -- had at last lifted her up."<sup>19</sup> Like Eustacia before her, Tess yearns for happiness at any price, even at the cost of life itself. What Freud may, at a later date, have termed a death wish and Darwin had associated with life and pleurability, Hardy sees as imbued with both rapture and disaster.

Tess understands that her time with Angel will be fleeting. She chooses to die because she is aware that to escape with Angel would eventually lead to a recurrence of sorrow. She fears the disillusionment which time would bring. She says: "I do not wish to outlive your present feeling for me."<sup>20</sup> Tess's heightened spiritual and sexual sensibilities are nowhere better illustrated than in the scene where she hears Angel playing his harp in the garden. Here, her spiritual transcendence blends with the external imagery of *primaeva*, even archetypal intensity. Amidst weeds "whose red and yellow and purple hues formed a polychrome," she passes through the garden "gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts. . . staining her hands with thistlemilk and slug-slime," drawing sticky blights which "made madder stains on her skin."<sup>21</sup> Dale Kramer in Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy feels that this scene delineates a fully-articulated evocation of a sensitivity too extreme to survive the shocks of a powerful order of material nature and the grossness of the social world. He goes on to cite critic David Lodge's statement that "the force of this connection between Tess and the natural world is to suggest the 'mad' passionate, non-ethical quality of her sensibility."<sup>22</sup> It is clear that Tess's innate and over-developed consciousness, combined with the ancient and wayward d'Urberville blood, is a delimiting factor in her quest for happiness. Nature in an evolutionary context has placed Tess beyond the boundaries of ethics, while society has placed her beyond the hope of redemption. In this sense she might indeed be viewed as a plaything of the gods.

For Hardy, Tess's lack of ethics is a true condition of nature.



He points out the amorality of nature when he emphasizes that the children of the poor should be viewed not as a blessing but as a gratuitous effect of the "vulpine slyness of Dame Nature." <sup>23</sup> He comments on the children of Joan Durbeyfield's household;

[S]ix-helpless creatures, who had never been asked if they wished for life on any terms, much less if they wished for it on such hard conditions as were involved in being of the shiftless house of Durbeyfield. Some people would like to know whence the poet whose philosophy is in these days deemed as profound and trustworthy as his song, is breezy and pure gets his authority for speaking of 'Nature's holy plan' <sup>24</sup>

Gillian Beer states that Darwin sought to share Wordsworth's testamental language in his image of 'Natural Selection' which he saw as being ultimately benign. David Lodge, however, makes the point that twice in the novel Hardy derides Wordsworth's idea that God moves through nature. Unlike Wordsworth and Darwin, Hardy sees nature as malign and entrapping because it functions without any regard for the individual life. Hardy emphasizes this opposition in his rendition of Tess's wanderings. Tess is a "child of the soil" and her life involves a close relationship with the natural world. Nature does not, however, harbour Tess. She is forced to witness the horrible spectacle of the dying birds, she is present at the slaughter of an army of entrapped rats and she is rendered "maiden no more" in a scene of Wordsworthian magnificence:

Darkness and silence ruled everywhere around.

Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks  
of The Chase, in which were poised gentle  
roosting birds in their last nap; and about  
them stole the hopping rabbits and hares.<sup>25</sup>

Hardy, at this point asks in a sardonic vein, where Tess's guardian angel could have been. No divinity in nature extended itself to Tess. At the same time, Hardy often depicts nature in terms of an almost lyrical beauty. Lodge suggests that a dichotomy existed in Hardy's mind because, on the one hand his undertaking to emphasize Tess's kinship with nature perpetually drew him towards the Romantic view of nature as a reservoir of benevolent impulses, a view which Hardy partially rejected as falsely sentimental. Lodge writes that many Victorian writers struggled to reconcile the view of nature inherited from the Romantics with the discoveries of Darwinian biology. This same conflict is widely evident in their writings, but it is particularly evident in Hardy.<sup>26</sup>

In terms of natural selection Tess's story is clearly charted in relation to the Darwinian struggle for survival. At every point in her history Tess's physical and emotional state mirrors her environment. The family region of Blackmoor is harsh but still adequate in that it sustains the impoverished remnants of a traditional way of life. Tess finds well-being and love in the fertile valley of Froome, while Flintcombe-Ash, as its name suggests, is a barren wasteland which reproduces her numb misery and the larger malaise of a

dying rurality. Although Tess's last inner resources are broken in the artificial world of the coastal town, she is somehow restored in the pagan wilderness of Stonehenge.<sup>28</sup> Roger Robinson in his essay "Hardy and Darwin" comments that it is in this way that "Hardy. . . creates an environment which both physically conditions Tess and metaphorically figures her, which is both an unflinching testimony to Darwinian science and a poetic device of great richness and flexibility." <sup>28</sup>

The imagery which abounds in Hardy's description of Talbothays is perhaps the best representation of this idea. Talbothays almost certainly represents the traditional way of country life which Hardy prized dearly. Nonetheless, in its intensified beauty and harmony it seems to indicate an idealized representation of the world when seen through the subjective eyes of love. Its fertility exacerbates Tess's desire for Angel, and this ensuing heightened state of perception adds further dimensions to its beauty in her mind. Angel is in a similar position, and Hardy comments that "the magnitude of lives is not as to their external displacements, but as to their subjective experiences." <sup>29</sup>

In relation to Tess's love of the surrounding countryside, Hardy comments "Beauty to her, as to all who have felt, lay not in the thing, but in what the thing symbolized."<sup>30</sup> Hence Tess's wanderings are characterized by her different mental states which colour what she sees. Life is seen as oppressive or benevolent according to her subjective impulses at the time. The idealizing vision denotes the operation of a 'false' idealism which in Hardy's view had to be replaced by a 'true' idealism, because it is understood not as a subjective

projection but as a mode of perception which sees life as it is. Hardy believed that it was in the power of imaginative writing to effect this transformation because it allowed the reader to see or catch a glimpse of the possibility of a deeper reality.<sup>31</sup>

Themes of victimization are implicit throughout the novel. Images of death, of people as predators and of nature's indifference to suffering abound. Animals are cornered in a hayfield, the pheasants die a slow and terrible death. A terrifying image of existence is conveyed by the birds who arrive from the Arctic:

gaunt spectral creatures with tragical eyes -- eyes which had witnessed scenes of cataclysmic horror in inaccessible polar regions of a magnitude such as no human being had ever conceived.<sup>32</sup>

Strife and cruelty abound. Women and men are not set over nature but a part of the cosmic struggle. Accordingly, Tess and Marian share the frigid landscape with the Arctic birds. The two women are depicted against the earth and sky "crawling over the surface of the former like flies."<sup>33</sup> This scene might be viewed as an inversion of that part of The Return of the Native when Mrs. Yeobright perceives the ants as resembling a city crowd. There, the animal was compared with the human. Here, the human is compared with the animal. In both scenes the gradations of life are intertwined and in both the "will to enjoy," the normative felicity engendered in all life is contrasted against the reality of a cruel environment. On Egdon Heath, the dying Mrs Yeobright's eyes pass from a colony of ants to the careless flight of a heron, thus emphasizing the cruelty and beauty which

exist simultaneously in life. On Flintcombe-Ash, Tess stands in the misery of a barren turnip field and her eyes fall upon Talbothays, far in the distance. It is the country of "impassioned summer-steeped heathens." Hardy writes: "The two forces were at work here as everywhere, the inherent will to enjoy, and the circumstantial will against enjoyment." <sup>34</sup>

As always in Hardy, coincidence plays a significant part in the continuity of the plot. Earlier, I stated that Hardy's detractors have often accused him of an inherent lack of artistry in light of the chance occurrences or coincidences which occur so frequently in his novels.

There can be little doubt that at times this is a valid criticism.

Nonetheless, Hardy's use of coincidence is not merely a crude ploy or a demonstration of literary inadequacy. <sup>35</sup> His ideas on chance stem from his belief in evolutionary theory. In the same way that many theistic writers sought to assert their beliefs through their work, so Hardy operated from an evolutionistic point of view. The deists, like the evolutionists, believed that nature was governed by fixed laws. For them, however, law was the antithesis of chance. It operated to ensure perfect stability in nature's basic structures and perfect equilibrium in its operations. It pointed clearly to a wise and omnipotent Law-giver. But the law of natural selection was a new kind of law, governing the chances of randomly varying organisms in an overcrowded world. It was the law of trial and error, of adaptation through wholesale extinction, of survival by luck. <sup>36</sup> This is a universe in which coincidence is just as probable as anything else. Thus, Tess's wagon collides with the mailcart leaving the Durbeyfields with no means of support. She is unluckily in a state of extreme fatigue when she is seduced by

Alec. Chance causes her letter of explanation to slip under Angel's mat without being read. Her attempt to seek out Angel's parents is frustrated, Clare returns too late from Brazil to divert the course of events and so on. Tess might have escaped her fate had she made different and wiser choices at various points in the story, but for Hardy, she is still a victim, if not of chance then certainly of that heredity which makes her what she is.

Tess's misery is compounded by these elements and the fact that she is a victim of a changing social order which is in every way as repressive as that of her Norman ancestors. Her forefathers when they came from France were the new and strong invaders of a weakened Saxon territory. Now her people and others like them are driven off their lands by the nouveau-riche industrialists, of which Alec is one; while their ancient traditions and social interdependencies are eroded. Men from the industrial North, the home of the steam engine, have taken over the traditional harvesting tasks. The new farming system is reflected in the wasteland of Flintcombe-Ash where the country folk have become temporary and homeless hired hands. Only in Talbothays do we see something of the lost world of the countryside, the world which Hardy depicted at length in his early novel Under the Greenwood Tree.

Like Giles Winterbourne and Marty South before her, Tess is the victim of a changing or reductive environment. Like them, she is the end-result of an exhausted family line. Newcomers have entered the traditional ordered world of the countryside and the old ways have irrevocably changed. Tess's ancient line is described as already "socially extinct."<sup>37</sup> In one of the several stresses that Hardy places on the

flux and reflux of things he emphasizes that the d'Urbervill family must once have inflicted the same cruelties that were meted out to Tess when they were in their ascendent. When Tess is deflowered, Hardy remarks: "Doubtless some of Tess d'Urberville's mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time."<sup>38</sup>

Tess's family were once the 'fit'; ruthless, aggressive Normans, French invaders who took what they wanted. Now they have become weak. Dairyman Crick paraphrases Angel's words when he tells Tess: "All your skill was used up ages ago in Palestine, and you must lie fallow for a thousand years to git strength for more deeds."<sup>39</sup>

When Tess's family is dispossessed of its cottage by the new phenomenon of the tenant farmer, Hardy comments:

Thus the Durbeyfields, once d'Urbervilles, saw descending upon them the destiny which, no doubt, when they were among the Olympians of the country, they had caused to descend many a time, and severely enough, upon the heads of such landless ones as they themselves were now.. So do flux and reflux - the rhythm of change-- alternate and persist in everything under the sky.<sup>40</sup>

Hardy's concern with the idea of flux, with the concept of some new power overruling what was once the domain of an older species is reflected in his concern for the new 'landless,' a social phenomenon of his century. The echo of Darwinian thought is evident when we

consider Darwin's utterances upon the subject: Speaking of the great and complex battle for life, Darwin wrote:

We shall best understand the probable course of natural selection by taking the case of a country undergoing some slight physical change. . . . If the country were open on its borders, new forms would certainly immigrate, and this would likewise seriously disturb the relations of some of the former inhabitants. . . . For as all the inhabitants of each country are struggling together with nicely balanced forces, extremely slight modifications in the structure or habits of one species would often give it an advantage over others . . . . for in all countries, the natives have been so far conquered by naturalised productions, that they have allowed some foreigners to take firm possession of the land. And as foreigners have thus in every country beaten some of the natives, we may safely conclude that the natives might have been modified with advantage, so as to have better resisted the intruders.<sup>41</sup>

The stresses upon the d'Urberville past delineate a glory and a cruelty that now exists only in a diminished and undesirable form. Tess has no use for her ancestors; she is repulsed by their ugliness and obvious cruelty. She is, however, drawn to them in death. They have reached the desired state of extinction; while she is at the mercy of the world.<sup>42</sup> When she is finally drawn to Stonehenge it is because the ancient stones embody the deep roots of human life. It is "older than the



centuries; older than the d'Urbervilles." She tells Angel: "One of my mother's people was a shepherd hereabouts, now I think of it. And you used to say at Talbothays that I was a heathen. So now I am at home."<sup>42</sup>

Tess goes beyond her d'Urberville origins which had contributed so much to her tragedy. At Stonehenge she is finally reconciled with the heathen past. The mute timelessness of the scene enhances the idea of Tess as both sacrificial and victim. She is the avenger and the scapegoat. There is an implicit feeling that she will be sacrificed for the ingressions of a ruthless and uncaring society which did nothing to save her from her downward path. In the brooding silence of Stonehenge the reader is cast back, not into a golden age, for Darwinism has forever dispelled it, but into a time when human life and nature was not divided by the laws of society. For Hardy, the ethics of humanity and the ethics of nature have come to mean different things. In Tess Hardy suggests that society's laws are often without foundation under any ethos except that of its own making.

## CONCLUSION

In the first two chapters of this thesis I have attempted to provide an overview of the scientific thought of the nineteenth century. In order to arrive at a point of departure for Hardy's basic ideas it was necessary to examine the numerous tenets of thought which may help to explain the zeitgeist of his century. Much of this thesis, has therefore, been of necessity, historiographic in nature. Like Darwin's own web of interconnections and interdependencies, the thoughts of one scholar would at times make it necessary to define the ideas of another. To have created an adequate synthesis of Darwinistic thought would have been a work of immense scholarship. I have therefore contented myself with touching upon the main ideas of those closest in thought or spirit to Darwin. Not all of the ideas contained in these early chapters relate directly to my latter three chapters. Nonetheless, they fulfill an important function in that they better explain the rationale behind the man, the work and his century.

In my last three chapters I have not attempted any real philosophical explanation of the ideas behind Hardy's words, but have basically allowed the text to stand for itself. I have used such ideas as I have hitherto outlined to clarify concepts or to observe convictions in conflict or contradiction. To do otherwise would have been unnecessarily pedantic and didactic and would pretend to a clarity in Hardy which is not there.

In the Return of the Native I have examined Hardy's reaction to, and ultimate rejection of Comteism. As I have attempted to demonstrate, human evolution for Hardy is accompanied by an almost unavoidable trauma.

As Hardy reiterates many times, the very evolutionary forces which have brought humanity's heightened consciousness into being, have paradoxically, made impossible any unreflecting acceptance of existence.

In Hardy's depiction of Egdon Heath he suggests that nature is indifferent to both human life and the suffering of all creatures. He further uses the heath as a metaphor for the Darwinistic concept of geological time. Egdon's listless indifference typifies not only nature itself, but also the countless aeons which have passed since the heath's creation. The detritus of history which lies littered across its surface was once part of the long-gone Roman Empire and the Celtic Tribes of antiquity. The message is clear; Egdon is unconquerable. Clym and Eustacia's generation is itself destined to become a mere part of its history. Human life is inconsequential against the forces of nature.

The Woodlanders, written ten years later is perhaps, a more subtle work than The Return of the Native. Whereas Hardy uses the scenario of Egdon in the earlier novel to suggest nature's absolute indifference, he now uses the forest to emphasize the Darwinian idea of maladaptation and strife. The interdependencies of nature are reflected in the interconnections of human life. Hardy demonstrates that one action or event -- however insignificant -- will invariably have important ramifications upon the life or lives of others. As in all three novels which are dealt with here, Hardy is fascinated by the idea of a new order supplanting an old. He suggests that in the context of the "survival of the fittest" the morally fit are often the "weak" in the Spencerian sense of the word.

This theme is redeveloped in Tess of the d'Urbervilles which is an indictment of society, and -- indeed, of nature itself. Hardy upholds Huxley's condemnation of Spencer's "ethics of evolution" and like Huxley, points to a "failure of the fittest" according to the precepts of this philosophy.

Tess also deals with the question of hereditary determinism. For Hardy, it is not sin, but heredity which makes us what we are. Tess's misery is caused by natural selection, her bloodline and a reductive environment. Hardy's concern with a changing rural world is denoted in his depiction of the plight of the country folk. The land and traditions which had sustained rural society for many centuries are seen to have been reduced by the 'march of progress', a progress which, as Hardy vividly details, brings wretchedness to many.

In all three works Hardy's response to the intransigence of a Darwinistic universe is clear. Altruism is the one ballast which human life must cling to in the struggle with nature.

Hardy has often been criticized for the gloom and pessimism inherent in his work. His belief in humankind is not based on any idea of heroism or valour and even less in any hope of reward in a future existence, but only in the good that we do here. Throughout his life Hardy was profoundly opposed to even the slightest form of cruelty to any living thing. This empathy with all creatures is far-reaching. Unlike many of his contemporaries he refuses to deride or scoff at the foibles of the human race. For him, every man and woman, no matter how simple or ignorant has some value. The good and 'villainous' alike are all subject to nature's laws which make them what they are. Given

the terms of his universe his works are not without heroes. Some are heroic by virtue of their continued existence upon a 'blighted' earth, some by the mode and terms by which they choose to die. The oft-repeated accusations of pessimism which are levelled at Hardy's memory may have a certain validity if one fails to take into account some of the current ideas of his time. Nonetheless it is indisputable that a deep and emotive rendition of humanity's capacity and potential for goodness must surely be Hardy's greatest legacy to our troubled times.

## NOTES : Introduction

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2 Bernard J. Paris, "Experiences of Thomas Hardy," The Victorian  
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## NOTES : Chapter One

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 1963) 52.

<sup>2</sup> Henkin 55.

<sup>3</sup> Horatio Hackett Newman, Evolution, Genetics and Eugentics,  
 (Chicago:Chicago UP, 1925) 215.

<sup>4</sup> John C. Greene, The Death of Adam: Evolution and its Impact on  
Western Thought, (Iowa : Iowa State UP, 1959) 265-66.

<sup>5</sup> Charles R. Darwin, The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin,  
 ed. Francis Darwin, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (1888; London: J Murray; New York:  
 Johnson, 1969) 1: 309.

<sup>6</sup> Henkin 57.

<sup>7</sup> Henkin 57.

<sup>8</sup> William Irvine, Apes, Angels, and Victorians: The Story of Darwin,  
Huxley, and Evolution, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955) 97.

<sup>9</sup> An informative account of Darwinism in relation to theology is  
 contained in John C. Greene's Darwin and the Modern World View,  
 Louisiana: Louisiana State UP, 1973) 39-87.

<sup>10</sup> Gillian Beer, Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin,

George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Fiction, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 53. Beer discusses Darwin's writings in relation to nineteenth century fiction. She states that the problems raised by his writings manifest themselves most acutely when they are transferred to another work. Their extraordinary hermeneutic potential -- the power to yield a great number of significant and various meanings has been noted by numerous critics not least by Stanley Hyman in his definitive essay on Darwin contained in The Tangled Bank.

11

Beer 70.

12

Beer 68-69.

13

Beer 9.

14

Ernest A. Baker, The History of the English Novel, 2nd ed., 10 vols. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1963) 9: 24. Baker observes that although Hardy rationalized his acute apprehensions of humanity's plight in a Darwinistic universe, something deeper in his nature was in conflict with the rationalization. Baker points to Hardy's deep preoccupation with superstition; a theme which occurs in most, if not all of, Hardy's novels. Baker concludes that Hardy succumbs [perhaps unconsciously] to a sort of Manicheism, 'a philosophy, which as I stated in Chapter 2 of this study, had greatly interested John Stuart Mill.

15

Stanley Edgar Hyman, The Tangled Bank: Darwin, Marx, Frazer and Freud as Imaginative Writers, (New York: Atheneum, 1962) 33.

16

Hyman 36-37.



17

Hyman 36-38. My own observation upon this subject is that Darwin seems at first to have envisaged nature in an evil or 'Hecate' aspect. One example of this is contained in his Journal of Researches where he writes "I do not know of any other instance where Dame Nature appears so wilfully cruel."

18

Thomas Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman, 5th ed (1891; London: n.p.; New York: Harper, 1920) 160., qtd in Bert G. Hornback, The Metaphor of Chance: Vision and Technique in the Works of Thomas Hardy. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1971), 6.

19

W.J. Harvey, Character and the Novel, London: Chatto and Windus, 1965) 146-74.

20

Greene 303.

21

Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, (London: n.p., 1878: London: Macmillan 1961) 455.

22

Florence Emily Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928, (London: Macmillan 1962. Although popularly supposed to have been Hardy's second wife's biography of his life, Hardyian scholars are unanimous in declaring The Life to be an autobiographical work. It was dictated ad verbatim and later published as two volumes shortly after Hardy's death. Michael Millgate in his widely acclaimed Thomas Hardy: A Biography suggests that Hardy, in keeping with his self-protective nature, is at times judicious -- to the point of untruthfulness -- in what he has chosen to reveal.

23 Baker 24.

24 Florence Hardy 364.

25 Charles R. Darwin, The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex, (1871. Chicago: Rand, McNally, 1874) 117.

26 Darwin, The Descent 121.

27 Darwin, The Descent 110.

28 Darwin, The Descent 605.

29 Florence Hardy, 230.

## NOTES : Chapter Two

1 Algernon Charles Swinburne, "Anactoria," The Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, (Philadelphia: McKay, n.d.) 31-35.

2 Daniele Moyal, "The Supreme Evil, God": Swinburne's Atheism in 'Atalanta in Calydon.' thesis, Concordia U., 1980, 7.

3 Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure.

4 Thomas Hardy, The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy, ed: James Gibson. (London: Macmillan, 1976) 9.

5 Georg Roppen, Evolution and Poetic Belief: A Study in Some Victorian and Modern Writers, (Oslo: Oslo UP, 1956) 288.

6 Loren Eiseley, Darwin's Century: Evolution and the Men who Discovered It, (New York: Doubleday, 1958) 334.

7 Eiseley 335.

8 Roppen 62.

9 Robert Gittings, The Older Hardy, (London: Heinemann, 1978) 5-6.

10 Gittings, 9.

11 William Irvine, Apes, Angels, and Victorians: The Story of Darwin, Huxley and Evolution, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955) 180.

12 Florence Hardy 330.

13 John Stuart Mill, The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill: Ethical,

Political and Religious, Ed. Marshall Cohen (New York: The Modern Library, 1961) 487.

14 Mill, "Nature." The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill. 460

15 Mill, "Nature." The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill. 468

16 Mill, "Theism." Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society,  
Ed. J.M. Robson, 9th ed Vol 10 of Collected Works of John Stuart Mill,  
(U of Toronto P, 1969) 450.

17 Mill, "Utility of Religion." The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill,  
520.

18 Mill, "On Liberty." The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill, 185

19 Mill, "Nature." The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill, 469

20 Mill, "On the Logic of Moral Sciences." A System of Logic  
Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of  
Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation. ed. J.M. Robson,  
9th ed. 21 vols. Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, (Toronto: U of  
Toronto P, 1973) 7: 951.

21 Mill, "On the Logic of Moral Sciences." A System of Logic, 7: 952.

22 Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies: Coleridge to Matthew  
Arnold, 1949. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1950) 180. Willey's study of  
Hardy is a critical examination of the Ethical Evolutionists' influence  
upon his writing.

23

Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, 455. It should, of course be borne in mind, that at this point Hardy demonstrates one of his many philosophical contradictions. At this juncture he conceives of a First Cause whose moral qualities are lower than those of humankind. At other times the First Cause is seen as amoral or conversely as struggling to resolve its creative dilemma.

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William R. Rutland, Thomas Hardy: A Study of His Writings and their Background (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962) 57.

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Herbert Spencer, First Principles (1861; London: New York, D. Appleton, 1898) 116.

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Noel Gilroy Annan, Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to His Time (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1951) 210-11.

27

Florence Hardy 387.

28

Irvine 110.

29

Spencer 286-87.

30

Florence Hardy 168.

31

Florence Hardy 410.

32

Thomas Hardy, "To Edward Clodd," 2. Jan. 1907, Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, Eds. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate, 5 vols. (Oxford UP, 1982) 3: 244. Ludwig Feuerbach's The Essence of Christianity is still regarded by many as one of the seminal works of the nineteenth century. Feuerbach attempts to show that all major Christian doctrines,

especially those of God and the incarnation -- can best be understood as anthropology. The second part of this work is more negative, seeking to establish that Christian theology is full of contradictions, if these human predicates are attributable to a single metaphysical being. More information on the subject may be found in The Encyclopedia of Religion, Eds. Mircea Eliade et al. 15 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1987) 5: 315-17.

33

Beer 214.

34

Philip Appleman, "Darwin: On Changing the Mind," Darwin: A Norton Critical Edition, ed. Philip Appleman (New York: Norton, 1970) 646.

35

Thomas Henry Huxley, "Evolution and Ethics," Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays 6th ed. 9 vols. Collected Essays by T.H. Huxley, (London: Macmillan, 1896-1910) 9: 85.

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- - - "On the Relationship of Man to the Lower Animals," Collected Essays 7: 151.

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Florence Hardy 332.

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J.O. Bailey, The Poetry of Thomas Hardy, (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1970) 429-30.

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Thomas Hardy, The Collected Letters, 3: 5.

40

Greene, 335.

41

Huxley, "The Interpreters of Genesis and the Interpreters of

Nature," Collected Essays 4: 162

42

Florence Hardy, 332.

43

Bert G. Hornback, The Metaphor of Chance: Vision and Technique in the Works of Thomas Hardy, (Ohio: Ohio UP, 1971) 7.

44

Hornback, 8-9..

45

Huxley, "Evolution and Ethics," Collected Works, 9: 89. Here, Huxley refers to his earlier words (see p. 49 of the same essay) "As no man fording a swift stream can dip his foot twice in the same water, so no man can, with exactness, affirm of anything in the sensible world that is."

46

- - - "Time and Life," Macmillans Magazine (Dec. 1859) Rpt in Lectures and Essays, (London: Cassell, 1908) 133.

47

Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, 7.

48

Huxley, "A Liberal Education," (1868) Collected Essays, 3: 85.

49

Florence Hardy, 163.

50

Huxley, "Science and Morals," (1886) Collected Essays, 9: 146 qtd in Noel Gilroy Annan's Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to His Time, 211-12.

51

Annan, Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character, 211-12.

52

Huxley, "The Struggle for Existence in Human Society," (1888)

Collected Essays, 9: 200.

53

- - - . "In Human Society," 209.

54

- - - . "In Human Society," 202.

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Thomas Whittaker, Reason: A Philosophical Essay with Historical  
Illustrations, (1938; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, New York: Greenwood, 1968)

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Whittaker, 101.

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Eduard Karl Von Hartmann, Philosophy of the Unconscious, trans  
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Dennis N. Kenedy Darnoi, The Unconscious and Von Hartmann,  
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Florence Hardy, 100.

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Rutland, 81.

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Florence Hardy, 315.

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Noel G. Annan, Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian, (New York:  
Random House, 1984) 283.

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Charles R. Darwin, The Origin of Species by Means of Natural  
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6th ed., 2 vols. (1859; London; New York: Appleton, 1931) 2: 305-06.

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1 Harvey Curtis Webster, On a Darkling Plain: The Art and Thought of Thomas Hardy, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1947) 137.

2 Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, 7th ed. (1878; London: Smith, Elder; London: Macmillan, 1961) 197.

3 Thomas Hardy, The Return 426.

4 Thomas Hardy, The Return 203-04.

5 Thomas Hardy, The Return 371.

6 Thomas Hardy, The Return 307-8

7 Thomas Hardy, The Return 449

8 Thomas Hardy, The Return 6.

9 Florence Hardy 149.

10 Thomas Hardy, The Return 482.

11 Etienne Gilson, "Philosophy of Evolution," Recent Philosophy Hegel to the Present, 4 vols. A History of Philosophy (New York: Random House, 1962) 4: 444.

12 Thomas Hardy, The Return 455.

13 Thomas Hardy, "A Philosophical Fantasy," The Complete Poems 893-97.  
The mature Hardy's close philosophical links with the thought of Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann are clearly discernible in this poem.

For Hardy, The First Cause is unconscious, without gender, emotion or ethics.

14 Thomas Hardy, The Complete Poems 325-26

15 Florence Hardy, The Life 224.

16 Thomas Hardy, The Return 453.

17 Thomas Hardy, The Return 13.

18 Thomas Hardy, The Return 261.

19 Thomas Hardy, The Return 241

20 Thomas Hardy, The Return 456.

21 Thomas Hardy, The Return 245.

22 Charles Darwin, The Descent 567-8.

23 Thomas Hardy, The Return 422.

24 Florence Hardy, The Life 378.

25 Thomas Hardy, The Return 327.

26 Thomas Hardy, The Return 328

27 Thomas Hardy, The Return 343

28 Beer 245.

29 Thomas Hardy, The Return 343.

30

Morton Dauwel Zabel, "Hardy in Defense of His Art: The Aesthetic of Incongruity," Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Albert J. Guerard (New Jersey: Prentice Hall 1963) 37-8.

## NOTES: Chapter Four

1 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders (1887; Macmillan; London: Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) 24.

2 This idea becomes clear if we consider what Darwin had written some years earlier in The Origin 2: 228-31.

[W]e can understand the excessively complex and radiating affinities by which all the members of the same family or higher group are connected together. For the common progenitor of a whole family, now broken up by extinction into distinct groups and sub-groups will have transmitted some of its characters, modified in various ways and degrees, to all the species; and they will consequently be related to each other by circuitous lines of affinity of various lengths. . . . As it is difficult to show the blood-relationship between the numerous kindred of any ancient and noble family even by the aid of a genealogical tree, and almost impossible to do so without this aid, we can understand the extraordinary difficulty which naturalists have in describing . . . the various affinities which they perceive between the many living and extinct members of the same great natural class. . . . We can clearly see how it is that all living and extinct forms can be grouped together within a few great classes; and how the

several members of each class are connected together by the most complex and radiating lines of affinities. We shall never, probably, disentangle the inextricable web of affinities between the members of any one class.

3 Charles Darwin, The Origin 1: 163.

4 Beer, 250.

5 F.B. Pinion, Thomas Hardy: Art and Thought, (1977; London: Macmillan, 1978) 43.

6 Dale Kramer, Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy, (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1975) 110.

7 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 53.

8 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 26.

9 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 186.

10 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 205-06.

11

Hardy's concern with the failure of things to be what they are meant to be might be ascribed in part to Eduard Von Hartmann and his idea of a deity struggling painfully for realization. Von Hartmann's, Die Philosophie des Unbewusstes was published in 1868 and translated into English in 1884. Hardy expressed his sympathy with the premises of Hartmann in a volume entitled Real Conversations by William

Archer, published in 1904. Hardy is quoted as saying:

A ghost story that should convince me would make me a happier man. And if you come to that, I don't know that the grotesqueness, the incompleteness of the manifestations [of spiritualism] is at all conclusive against their genuineness. Is not this incompleteness a characteristic of all phenomena of the universe at large? It often seems to me like a half-expressed -- an ill-expressed idea. Do you know Hartmann's Philosophy of the Unconscious?

It suggested to me what seems almost like a workable theory of the great problem of the origin of evil. . . namely that there may be a consciousness, infinitely far off, at the other end of the chain of phenomena.

This concept of a half-expressed idea derives from the notion of Von Hartmann that the Creator or First Cause is, in a sense eternally divided against itself and is struggling to reach a perfection which it may or may not attain. This struggle extends into the whole of existence and reaches its culmination in the human dilemma. Von Hartmann asserts that love is ultimately fatal to happiness, in spite of peoples' innate and compulsive urges in that respect. Hartmann declares:

Whoever has once understood the illusory nature of successful love after union, and therewith also of that before union, whoever has come to see pain outweighing the pleasure in all love, for that man the phenomenon of love has no more health, because his consciousness offers

resistance to the imposition of means to ends which are not his ends; the pleasure of love has been for him undermined and corroded, only its smart remains to him unrelieved.

Interested readers are referred to Hartmann's Philosophy of the Unconscious.

13 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 150

14 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 228.

15 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 243.

16 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 182.

17 In conjunction with his attack on the hypocritical sexual conventions of his time, Hardy rails against the injustice of the Victorian Marriage Laws which added to the subjugation of women and the general unhappiness of the populace. Hardy was far in advance of most of his contemporaries in his attitude to women. He not only believed in their absolute equality with men but he was, furthermore, a staunch supporter of the cause of womens' suffrage. In his introduction to The Woodlanders (p. 3.) he invites his readers to ponder on the futility of the decrees which constrain the individual to remain in an unhappy marriage:

In the present novel, as in one or two others of this series which involve the question of matrimonial divergence, the immortal puzzle -- given the man and woman, how to find a basis



for their sexual relation -- is left where it stood; and it is tacitly assumed for the purposes of the story that no doubt of the depravity of the erratic heart who feels some second person to be better suited to his or her tastes than the one with whom he has contracted to live, enters the head of reader or writer for a moment. From this point of view of marriage as a distinct covenant or undertaking, decided on by two people fully cognizant of all its possible issues, and competent to carry them through, this assumption is, of course logical. Yet no thinking person supposes that, on the broader ground of how to afford the greatest happiness to the units of human society during their brief transit through this sorry world, there is no more to be said on this covenant; and it is certainly not supposed by the writer of these pages.

18

See Mill, "The Subjection of Women," On Liberty: Representative Government: The Subjection of Women: Three Essays 15th ed. (1869; London; Oxford UP, 1952) 427-548. As an admirer of Mill and an advocate of women's rights, Hardy would probably have read Mill's essay "The Subjection of Women." In this, Mill delineates the plight of women under British law and asserts:

It is only legal separation by a decree of a court of justice, which entitles her to live apart, without being forced back into the custody of an

exasperated jailer -- or which empowers her to apply any earnings to her own use, without fear that a man whom perhaps she has not seen for twenty years will pounce upon her some day and carry all off. This legal separation, until lately, the courts of justice would only give at an expense which made it inaccessible to anyone out of the higher ranks.

It seems that Grace Melbury alludes to this same law when she tells Giles:

I have vowed myself to somebody else than you, and cannot be released. . . I am not bound to him by any divine law, after what he has done; but I have promised and I will pay. . . . In a week, at the outside I should be discovered if I stayed here; and I think that by law he could compel me to return to him.

The Woodlanders 285.

19

Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 258.

20

Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 262.

21

Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 58.

22

Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 285-86

23

Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 306-07

- 24 Thomas Hardy The Woodlanders 130
- 25 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 64.
- 26 Darwin, The Origin 2: 283
- 27 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 35
- 28 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 11-12.
- 29 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 291.
- 30 Virginia R. Hyman, Ethical Perspectives in the Novels of Thomas Hardy (Port Washington: New York National UP, 1975) 22.
- 31 Perry Meisel, Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Repressed: A Study of the Major Fiction (New Haven: Yale UP, 1972) 116.
- 32 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders 338-39.

## NOTES: Chapter Five

1 Gertrude Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution,  
(New York: Norton, 1968) 404-05.

2 Himmelfarb 405.

3 Beer 214.

4 Peter R. Morton, "Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Neo-Darwinian  
Reading," Southern Review 7 (1974) : 38-50.

5 Himmelfarb 328.

6 Roger Robinson, "Hardy and Darwin," Thomas Hardy: The Writer and  
his Background, ed. Norman Page (London: Bell & Hyman 1980) 139.

7 Thomas Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman. 1891;  
London: n.p.; New York: Harper, 1920) 323-24.

8 Thomas Hardy, Tess, 363

9 Huxley, "Evolution and Ethics," Collected Essays 52.

10 In his essay "A Liberal Education and Where to find It,"  
(1868) Huxley states:

Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth, that  
the life, the fortune, and the happiness of every  
one of us, and, more or less, of those who are  
connected with us, do depend upon our knowing some-  
thing of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult

and complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well, the highest stakes are paid, with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated -- without haste, but without remorse.

<sup>11</sup> Rutland, Thomas Hardy, 230.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Hardy, Tess 203.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hardy, Tess 187-88.

<sup>14</sup> D.H. Lawrence, "Tess and Alec as Aristocrats," Twentieth Century Interpretations of Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Albert J. Lavalley (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969) 70.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Hardy, Tess 338.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Hardy, Tess 211-12.

17 Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, (1966; New York: Macmillan; New York: Collier, 1973) 111.

18 In the "Prolegomena" to "Evolution and Ethics," Huxley quotes Seneca to elaborate upon his own definition of "the insatiable hunger for enjoyment" of humankind.

Moreover, with all their enormous differences in natural endowment, men agree in one thing, and that is their innate desire to enjoy the pleasures and to escape the pains of life; and, in short, to do nothing but that which it pleases them to do, without the least reference to the welfare of the society into which they are born. That is their inheritance (the reality at the bottom of the doctrine of original sin) from the long series of ancestors, human and semi-human and brutal, in whom the strength of this innate tendency to self-assertion was the condition of victory in the struggle for existence. That is the reason of the aviditas vitae -- the insatiable hunger for enjoyment -- of all mankind, which is one of the essential conditions of success in the war with the state of nature outside; and yet the sure agent of the destruction of society if allowed free play within.

19 Thomas Hardy, Tess 270

20 Thomas Hardy, Tess 498.

21 Thomas Hardy, Tess 158.

22 David Lodge, Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1966) 185.

23 Thomas Hardy, Tess 24

24 Thomas Hardy, Tess 90

25 Thomas Huxley, Tess 90

26 Lodge 176.

27 John Holloway qtd in "Hardy and Darwin," The Writer and his Background 136.

28 Robinson, 137.

29 Thomas Hardy, Tess 198

30 Thomas Hardy, Tess 378.

31 George Wotton, Thomas Hardy: Towards a Materialist Criticism (Totowa, New Jersey: Gill & Macmillan 1985) 93-4.

32 Thomas Hardy, Tess 367.

33 Thomas Hardy, Tess 364.

34 Thomas Hardy, Tess 365

35

In his essay "The Profitable Reading of Fiction," (1888) Hardy asserts that the writer's task is an appeal to emotional reason rather than to logical reason because this is the way in which people are acted upon, and act upon others. He states:

It must always be borne in mind, despite the claims of realism, that the best fiction, like the highest artistic expression in other modes, is more true, so to put it, than history or nature can be. In history occur from time to time monstrosities of human action and character explicable by no known law which appertains to sane beings; hitches in the machinery of existence, wherein we have not yet discovered a principle, which the artist is therefore bound to regard as accidents, hinderances to clearness of presentation, and, hence, weakeners of the effect.

See Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings ed. Harold Orel, (Lawrence: U of Kansas Press; 1966) 57-70.

36

Greene, Darwin and the Modern World View

37

Thomas Hardy, Tess 463.

38

Thomas Hardy, Tess 91.

39

Thomas Hardy, Tess 164.

40

Thomas Hardy, Tess 447

41

The Origin I: 99-100





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