

"NOVELS OF CHARACTER AND ENVIRONMENT":
A STUDY OF THE WORKS OF THOMAS HARDY

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PREFACE

Wessex, in the novels of Thomas Hardy, unites the natural world and man. Nature, at least in the novels before Tess of the D'Urbervilles, is a powerful force, and in return for providing man with a stable norm, demands conformity to this norm. The natural world and the social world, which did not accept the natural norm, are frequently at odds. This conflict is reflected by the characters in the earlier novels. Some characters come into the natural world of Wessex as outsiders. Once they are in this natural world, their final outcome depends on their ability to adapt to the natural norm around them. This same pattern is revealed in those characters originally associated with the primary locale of the novels, the insiders.

The fate of the characters brings a new interpretation to Hardy's phrase "Novels of Character and Environment," which he first used in the General Preface to the Wessex Edition (1912) of his novels. "Environment" cannot be defined as merely the geographical area with which the characters are associated. Its definition must be enlarged to include how the characters adapt to their surroundings. Thus, Hardy could just as well have written "Novels of Character in Environment" to emphasize the importance of the relation of the characters to their natural surroundings.

Hardy includes seven novels in the division "Novels

of Character and Environment." I use six of these in my study: Far from the Madding Crowd (1874), The Return of the Native (1878), The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886), The Woodlanders (1887), Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891), and Jude the Obscure (1895). Under the Greenwood Tree was omitted because its characters lack the depth and development of those in the later novels.

In the discussion of those novels before Tess of the D'Urbervilles, I divide the characters on the basis of their relation to the locale instead of on a chronological basis. A character-division study emphasizes the results of conforming or rejecting the natural norm. By dividing the characters according to novel locale, I eliminate any confusion which could result from attempting to classify the characters by their personalities.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure are so radically different from the earlier novels they must be discussed in a separate chapter. They illustrate what happened to the novels when Hardy removes the balancing effect of the natural norm. While these works are powerful, the power is not controlled. Thus, as Hardy laments the loss creates an unbalanced world without any reliable standards, his novels lose their own artistic balance.

I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Vincent Tollers for his guidance in the writing of this thesis and to

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CHAPTER I

HARDY'S CONCEPT OF NATURE AND ITS RELATION TO THE CHARACTERS

Thomas Hardy placed his novels into three categories: Novels of Ingenuity, Romances and Fantasies, and Novels of Character and Environment.¹ His third category illustrates that he probably considered character and setting as being equally important. Yet in their various character groupings critics overlook this relation between character and environment.² In this present study, the character grouping relies upon the characters' relations to the natural areas in which the action of the novels occurs, not limited to a strict geographical basis, but including the manner in which the

¹Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the English Novel, pp. 358-359. The novels are divided as follows: Novels of Ingenuity-- Desperate Remedies, The Hand of Ethelberta, A Laodicean; Romances and Fantasies-- A Pair of Blue Eyes, The Trumpet Major, Two on a Tower, The Well-Beloved; Novels of Character and Environment-- Under the Greenwood Tree, Far From the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, The Woodlanders, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Jude the Obscure.

²For example, Gaborial Oak, Diggory Venn, and Giles Winterborne are discussed as having the same characteristics. Angel Clare, Jude Fawley, and Clym Yeebright are sometimes placed in the same category, but David Delaura views them as not only ineffective but dangerous. Desmond Hawkins classifies these three as "sensitive minfits with no settled occupation." These labels are representative of the grouping which use character and personality as a basis while overlooking the possibilities of an environmental division.

characters accept their natural environment. Thus, Weatherbury would be the standard used in studying the characters in Far from the Madding Crowd, and Casterbridge serves the same purpose in The Mayor of Casterbridge. Since Hardy states this relation in his novel divisions, one needs to consider their connection. Also, a study of character in this manner is preparatory for a study of Hardy's last important novels-- Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure-- in which the characters and the settings are servants of the theme. In the earlier novels, the characters are not so explicitly used for statement of theme. A knowledge of the character usage in the novels before Tess gives added interpretation to the later novels when character is distorted to aid expression of theme.

Hardy names the natural settings of his novels Wessex. He peoples this area with characters who range from the rustics, who love the land and are a part of it, to those who hate the land and rebel against it. Wessex was originally the area ruled by the West Saxon kings in the eighth century. By reviving the term and applying it to the setting of his fictional writing, Hardy creates a sense of "historical continuity" that provides a background for his novels.³ He views the past as living in nature. As Taylor observes, Hardy

³Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy, p. 89.

saw that " . . . the face of nature owes some of her furrows to the travails of the great dead, that her eyes are brooding in terms of history, that her mind is a Doomsday Book."⁴ Wessex recalls the times when society was a part of nature.⁵

In the natural world of Wessex, Hardy creates a small universe in which he may study different ranges of characters in different situations, typifying conflicts of people everywhere. Wessex provides a fairly stable backdrop for these conflicts. For example, since Wessex is rural, most of the novels center around agrarian occupations. Madding Crowd centers around sheep raising, Mayor around grain marketing, and The Woodlanders around lumbering and fruit growing.⁶ But Hardy uses Wessex for more than just a physical setting. The economic and social orders are firmly bonded to the land.⁷ Howe summarizes the advantages which Hardy gains in using this Wessex setting, observing that it eventually becomes

. . . a fictional world sharply contoured and superbly known, so that the very setting of his novels and poems seems a force making for dramatic control and personality.⁸

⁴Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, Introduction by Warner Taylor, pp. xx; hereafter cited as Taylor, Introduction.

⁵Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, p. 17.

⁶Samuel C. Chew, Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist, p. 110.

⁷Joseph Warren Beach, The Technique of Thomas Hardy, pp. 62-63.

⁸Howe, op. cit., p. 24.

However, Hardy's use of nature was not without precedent in the nineteenth century. For example, Chew notes that Hardy

. . . follows the Brontes, George Eliot, Trollope, William Black, and Blackmore in the development of the literary genre known as "Regionalism."⁹

Connected with the regionalistic writings is the nineteenth century belief, to which Hardy was not opposed, that human beings are perishable while nature is not and, accordingly, only nature contains the answer to the "secret of human endeavour."¹⁰ Only nature can offer an acceptable norm for judging the actions of those who come in contact with her. Society, with its fluctuating standards, does not provide a reliable norm. Nature can resist the intrusion of man, but society relies on this intrusion. Therefore, the unchanging qualities of nature provide the only objective norm for studying mankind. The heath is the most obvious use of a natural norm. The characters' fates are determined by the norm which the heath provides.¹¹ Thus, Thomasin, who accepts the heath as a norm, attains some degree of happiness, and Eustacia, who resists the heath, is destroyed

⁹Chew, op. cit., p. 104.

¹⁰Joyce Weiner, "Four Novels of Thomas Hardy: Selected Impressions," Contemp R, CKLII (August, 1932), 229.

¹¹Leonard W. Deen, "Heroism and Pathos in Thomas Hardy's Return of the Native," NCF, XV (September, 1960), 209.

by its natural forces. Davidson observes that nature, because it is unchangeable, provides a norm for the inhabitants of Wessex.¹²

The importance of a natural norm in Hardy's novels is reflected in the changes of setting from novel to novel, indicative of Hardy's " . . . increasing concern with society and a decreasing concern with external nature."¹³ Thus, the changes in the settings are connected with changes in thematic emphasis in the novels that culminates in Tess and Jude in which the balance between theme, character, and setting is destroyed. A brief examination of the settings of the novels illustrates these changes.

Madding Crowd and Native emphasize the rural setting and the norm which Hardy derives from the natural order. Madding Crowd is, according to Morrell, Hardy's "simplest handling of nature."¹⁴ While Morrell's statement is questionable, especially when Hardy's use of nature in Under the Greenwood Tree is considered, it does indicate the manner in which nature reflects characterization and

¹²Donald Davidson, "The Traditional Basis of Thomas Hardy's Fiction," Southern Review, XL (Summer, 1940), 175.

¹³Ward Hellstrom, "Hardy's Use of Setting and Jude The Obscure," VN, XXV (Spring, 1964), p. 11.

¹⁴Roy Morrell, "Hardy in the Tropics," Review of English Literature, III (January, 1962), 9.

provides a standard of judgment in the novel. The area around the town of Weatherbury is idealized. Hence, the natural world, personified by Gabriel Oak, is consistently portrayed as being superior to the civilized world, personified by Sergeant Troy. The natural world (Gabriel) is ". . . strong, enduring, self-contained, slow to change, sympathetic;" the civilized world (Troy) is weak, facile, outgoing, modern, self-centered.¹⁵

Later, in Native, Hardy delineates nature in the powerful, dominating Egdon Heath. But nature that is benign in Madding Crowd is no longer so reliable. The heath is not particularly hostile to man-- just indifferent. Scott argues that the heath is

. . . intended to be the type of that blind, massive inertia in things whose indifference to all the great aspirations of the human spirit is the proof of all the frailty and impotence of man.¹⁶

Although the action of Mayor occurs in the city of Casterbridge, the city can hardly be dissociated from nature. Hardy stresses this connection to nature in his description of the city:

¹⁵Howard Babb, "Setting and Theme in Far from the Madding Crowd," ELH, XXX (June, 1963), 148.

¹⁶Nathan A. Scott Jr., "The Literary Imagination and the Victorian Crisis of Faith: The Example of Thomas Hardy," JR, XL (October, 1960), 278.

Thus Casterbridge was in most respects but the pole, focus, or nerve-knot of the surrounding country life; differing from the many manufacturing towns which are as foreign bodies set down, like boulders on a plain, in a green world with which they have nothing in common. Casterbridge lived by agriculture at one remove further from the fountain-head than the adjoining villages-- no more.¹⁷

Casterbridge contains remnants of its Roman past. The residents of the town frequently uncover the graves of Roman soldiers. The amphitheatre, for example, has been used by the town as the execution grounds.¹⁸ The city becomes, then, a living connection of the past to the present. By returning to the past, Hardy returns to a time in which nature and society were closely related. Of more importance, he illustrates nature's enduring qualities. She had more power than the Roman empire did, and she has survived, conquered, and made as her own the soldiers who invaded her. Casterbridge with its historical connections symbolizes the past.¹⁹ The Romans represent a phase of this past in which man has attempted to conquer nature. Farfrae represents the bringing of another change to the natural

¹⁷Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, p. 67. (Text parallel to Standard Edition).

¹⁸The Amphitheatre is important to Henchard's life. For example, he is reunited with Susan at the amphitheatre.

¹⁹Howard O. Brogan, "The Visible Essences in The Mayor of Casterbridge," ELH, XVII (December, 1950), 313.

world, a change from the "old rustic order" into a "modern urban community."²⁰ While the first invasion of Wessex by the Romans failed, the second may be more successful. But, for the time being, the natural forces are stronger than the invaders, and the natural norms remain an active force affecting the lives of the characters.

Hardy, according to Huss, has related the rural and urban orders in an unusual manner:

Instead of taking the isolated rustic community as the basic setting and introducing only a modicum of urban contrasts, Hardy reverses the situation by allowing urban idealism to exact its full toll from a simple rustic intelligence.²¹

This transition away from a strictly rural setting is also demonstrated by the less frequent appearances of local color (the incidents associated with a totally agrarian area) in Mayor than in the two earlier books.²² For instance, no activity in Casterbridge parallels the rustic social gatherings in Weatherbury.²³ The local color introduced

²⁰Roy Huss, "Social Change and Moral Decay in the Novels of Thomas Hardy," DR, XLVII (April, 1967), 35.

²¹Ibid., p. 33.

²²Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Introduction by Samuel Chew, p. xix; hereafter cited as Chew, Introduction.

²³In addition to eliminating some of the incidents of local color, The Mayor of Casterbridge emphasizes Michael Henschard over the other characters. Although the emphasis is not carried to the extreme in Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude The Obscure, its beginnings are evident in The Mayor of Casterbridge.

into Casterbridge usually supports the presentation of the conflict between urban and rural, as when machinery is shown at the market.²⁴

The Woodlanders is one of Hardy's last novels to have a single localized setting. The action occurs in and around Little Hintock, a small community in a wooded area to the northwest of Dorchester,²⁵ that is to The Woodlanders what the heath is to Native.²⁶ In this respect, the novel represents Hardy's return to the idyllic mode used before Mayor.²⁷ Drake labels the setting a " . . . literally and spiritually pastoral community."²⁸ However, Hardy's setting does not now serve the same purpose as in the earlier novels: in The Woodlanders Hardy is attempting to " . . . portray human life in the context of a natural setting."²⁹ In other words, he realizes that human life can

²⁴Chew, Introduction, p. xiv.

²⁵Carl Weber, Hardy of Wessex, p. 155.

²⁶William H. Matchett, "The Woodlanders or Realism in Sheep's Clothing," NCF, ix (December, 1955), 256.

²⁷John Henry Raleigh, "Victorian Morals and the Modern Novels," Part R, XXV (Spring, 1958), 203.

²⁸Robert Y. Drake Jr., "The Woodlanders as Traditional Pastoral," MFS, VI (Autumn, 1960), 252.

²⁹Richard Beckman, "A Character Typology for Hardy's Novels," ELH, XXX (March, 1963), 75, italics mine.

no longer be realistically portrayed in a natural setting in his works. In Tess and Jude, Hardy further emphasizes man and de-emphasizes nature. This change is responsible for the artistic imbalance of Tess and Jude (to be discussed later.)

In Tess, Hardy still uses the natural setting, but the locale is more expansive, changing from the Vale of Blakemore to The Chase to the Talbothays to Flintcomb-Ashe to Stonehenge. No matter where Tess is, however, she is a part of the landscape.³⁰ But in Tess the setting is not a background for the entire cast of characters: it is created only for Tess. In contrast, in the earlier novels, the background supports a group of characters, none of whom is as alone in this natural relation as is Tess. This novel, more than any of the others, stresses the extent to which a character can be related to the natural world.³¹

Hardy again emphasizes a single character in Jude, a work that is also similar to Tess in the manner in which the scene shifts: e.g., Marygreen to Christminster to Melchester to Shaston to Aldbrickham.³² But these places are thriving urban centers, not the rural areas of Tess or

³⁰Weiner, op. cit., p. 235.

³¹Holloway, The Victorian Sage, p. 267.

³²Hellstrom, op. cit., p. 11.

even the secluded towns of The Woodlanders. While in the novels written before Jude Wessex provides something of a "moral absolute" for the characters and their actions, Hardy uses neither the boundary limitations or the natural norm of Wessex in the last novel that he wrote.³³ Guerard asserts that as Hardy's concern with describing the land decreases, his pictures of society become more realistic.³⁴ But, Hardy eventually reaches a point in Tess and Jude where his attempts to be realistic create imbalanced works. Thus, the earlier novels, such as Madding Crowd, tend toward a romanticized picture of rural life, particularly in the portrayal of such rustics as Jan Coggan. In Tess and Jude, their romantic quality has disappeared, and the rustics have become the crass Durbeyfields and Donns. Holloway summarizes this sentiment as follows:

All rectifying stabilites have dropped out of sight; and nothing is left but a frustrated aggregate of querulous and disorientated individuals.³⁵

Yet, to Hardy, nature is so important that even in Jude it is not ignored. For this reason, Hardy's treatment of nature has always had a special appeal to scholars. Beach,

³³Howe, op. cit., p. 137.

³⁴Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Introduction by Albert Guerard, p. x; hereafter cited as Guerard, Introduction.

³⁵Holloway, op. cit., pp. 288-289.

for example, remarks on how the nature descriptions give "color" that adds to the feeling of reality in the novels.³⁶ Morrell states that Hardy viewed nature as a natural force, but in "chaotic disorder" and waiting for man to impose order.³⁷ Huss, agreeing with Morrell, observes that nature to Hardy is not necessarily malicious.³⁸ Hardy uses the heath to exemplify this indifference of nature. And, in fact, the heath is sometimes the only reality, for the towns away from the heath exist only in the imaginations of the characters.³⁹ Thus, Eustacia does not dream of actualities, but of fantasies named "Paris" and "Budmouth."

Critics have generally agreed that nature is traditional in her connections with the past, offering continuity, and that those who harmonize with her are unharmed.⁴⁰ Those people who do not rebel, but who best adjust to nature, are the "changeless characters," the rustics.⁴¹ But Hardy's major characters are not able to learn nature's lessons

³⁶Beach, op. cit., p. 67.

³⁷Morrell, op. cit., p. 12.

³⁸Huss, op. cit., p. 28.

³⁹Kellog W. Hunt, "Lord Jim and the Return of the Native: A Contrast," EJ, XLIX (October, 1960), 448.

⁴⁰Holloway, op. cit., pp. 283-284.

⁴¹Davidson, op. cit., p. 21.

easily. Because they have a decided tendency not to accept nature's norms, they set themselves apart from the rustics to become heroes or heroines. The characters who have taken this rebellion upon themselves are moved by " . . . reason, desire, passion, or some whim of temperament to attempt a change."⁴² And so Eustacia attempts to leave the heath; Clym, to return.

By populating a powerful natural setting with powerful characters, Hardy creates a wealth of material for study. Critics have placed these characters in various classes and categories and have given them various labels and names. Some of the ambiguity in judging the characters-- such as Clym and Jude-- may result from the basis used by most critics in which they apply personality labels to the characters. This method can result not only in viewing the characters in different ways, but also in providing numerous labels and categories for the characters. For example, Cecil divides the characters into such groups as the "staunch, selfless, tender-hearted hero" and the "willful, capricious, but fundamentally good-hearted girl."⁴³ Baker, on the other hand, uses such categories as "embodiment of feminine

⁴²Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, Introduction by William T. Brewster, p. xxviii; hereafter cited as Brewster, Introduction.

⁴³Lord David Cecil, Hardy The Novelist, p. 119.

fickleness" and "regulation libertine."⁴⁴ Lawrence's groupings range from the "bourgeois or average hero, whose purpose is to live and have his being in the community" to the "passionate, aristocratic males, doomed by their very being, to tragedy, or to misfortune in the end."⁴⁵ Such sample divisions rely on the personality label the critic chooses to give the character and are, therefore, more numerous. The present study, instead of adding more personality divisions, uses a geographical division in which character division relies on a character's relation to the locale of the novel. The two divisions are those characters from the area and those from outside the area.

Hardy frequently uses the device of introducing an outsider into the plots to further the action and, sometimes, to foil the protagonist. When the prevailing tone of the novel is one that idealizes the natural setting, the outsider frequently assumes the role of the serpent in Eden. However, not all of the outsiders are evil, nor are all of them destroyed. Some, in fact, fare better than characters who are from the region. The outsiders who play major roles in the novels have different backgrounds. For example, Eustacia

⁴⁴Ernest Baker, The History of the English Novel, IX, p. 63.

⁴⁵D. H. Lawrence, Phoenix, p. 52.

Vye, originally from Budmouth, is the daughter of a bandmaster, a Cortiote. Lucetta Templeman is originally from Jersey. Donald Farfrae comes to Casterbridge from Scotland. Felice Charmond and Edred Fitzpiers are set apart from Little Hintock through education and society background.

Other outsiders are not so easy to classify. For example, Damon Wildeve's background is never carefully examined, but he says of himself, "It [the curse of inflammability] has brought me down from engineering to innkeeping."⁴⁶ Diggory Venn, while originally from Egdon, has abandoned a fixed life for the role of the reddlemann. Sergeant Troy, also, is originally from the locale of the novel; but he is different from those close to the earth, because he is a child of a nobleman.⁴⁷ In addition, he has selected an occupation that removes him from the natural world. Elizabeth-Jane Newson/Henchard has never been in Casterbridge until she arrives with her mother in search of Henchard. But all of the other major characters in the four novels under consideration are Wessex insiders.

The same degrees of difference exist in determining which characters are from the region. Some, such as

⁴⁶Hardy, The Return of the Native, p. 52. [Text Parallel to Standard edition]

⁴⁷Babb, op. cit., p. 153.

Gabriel Oak, Giles Winterborne, and Marty South, are so closely associated with a region that there can be no doubt about their placement. Thomasin, Yeobright and Mrs. Yeobright have made Edgon Heath their home; Thomasin, however, is more adapted to the heath than Mrs. Yeobright for the niece considers it her "natural and appropriate environment."⁴⁸ Farmer Boldwood, although wealthier than most of the other inhabitants, is a landowner in the Weatherbury district. But his association with the land is further stressed by his being referred to as "Farmer." Clym Yeobright and Grace Melbury are both originally from a rural area and both return to their particular locale. Michael Henchard and Bathsheba Everdene are not originally from the areas associated with them, but both establish strong ties to their locales.

In Tess and Jude, Hardy eliminates these character divisions, since in these last novels he uses the characters differently than in his earlier ones. The reasons for these character changes, to be examined later, are to be found in Hardy's changing view of the purposes of the novel and in his changing philosophy. Rutland says of Tess and Jude:

⁴⁸Deen, op. cit., p. 209.

It has been generally recognized that Hardy's last two novels stand by themselves among his work. The reason is usually considered to lie in the manifestly different construction of these two books, each of them centered upon one human life.⁴⁹

Furthermore, Tess and Jude stand alone because of the changing use of the natural norm which distorts the characters and the artistic balance in these novels.

⁴⁹William Rutland, Thomas Hardy: A Study of His Writings and Their Background, p. 22.

CHAPTER II

THE OUTSIDERS AND THEIR RELATION TO THE NATURAL NORM

When the relationship of Hardy's characters to nature is considered, his philosophy emerges, because their final positions in the novels are determined by their acceptance or rejection of the natural standards around them. This acceptance or rejection is, in turn, determined by the method the characters choose of reacting to various situations. The emphasis that Hardy places upon the acceptance of a natural norm is best revealed by a study of the characters using their relation to the locale of the novels as a basis of division, for this locale provides the norm.

Hardy's concept of the natural norm derives from the manner in which he defines nature, which, according to Holloway, contains four parts.⁵⁰ First, Hardy sees nature as an "organic living whole" with its own life and personality.⁵¹ Nature would be, then, an active force that could oppose characters, such as in the rejection of Troy, when he attempts to plant flowers on Fanny Robin's grave. Secondly, nature

⁵⁰Holloway, op. cit., p. 252.

⁵¹Loc. cit.

is "unified on a great scale through both time and space."⁵² Thus, nature offers a connection between the past and the present, as in *Casterbridge*. Third, nature is "exceedingly complex and varied."⁵³ For example, she can be both kind and cruel to one character, as she is to Gabriel Oak. Finally, Hardy views these three principles as "integrated, however obscurely, into a system of rigid and undeviating law."⁵⁴ This law would be the natural norm, a standard relying on the qualities of the natural world.

Since Hardy sees nature as a norm, he sees the characters' fates determined by their acceptance or rejection of it. However, he also sees the natural norm threatened by the encroachment of a social one. In *Tess* and *Jude*, Hardy presents his final statements concerning the natural norm, its importance, and man's fate when it disappears. But an examination of this concept in these two novels requires a knowledge of how the natural norm is used in the earlier novels-- *Madding Crowd*, *Native*, *Mayor*, and *The Woodlanders*.

The outsiders of the earlier novels are those characters who are not geographically associated with the

⁵²Loc. cit.

⁵³Loc. cit.

⁵⁴Loc. cit.

primary locale of the novel. They include Eustacia, Wildeve, Lucetta, Elizabeth-Jane, Farfrae, Mrs. Charmond, Fitzpiers, Venn, and Troy. Some of the characters, such as Venn, have chosen to dissociate themselves from the area. Others, such as Lucetta and Mrs. Charmond, come from the world outside Wessex.

Lucetta and Mrs. Charmond appear as "types," rather than as people, who are introduced into the narrative to further the plot. Yet, they are representative of the characters who do not conform to nature. Duffin comments that Lucetta is "colorless in a completely unattractive way."⁵⁵ This comment is perhaps too extreme, but she is colorless when her struggle against nature is compared to that of Michael Henchard. Lucetta's character is a composite of symbols. For example, she wears red dresses and lives in High-Place Hall.⁵⁶ But, primarily, Lucetta, just as Clym, symbolizes a person who tries to escape the past and, therefore, nature, because in the town of Casterbridge, the past and nature are one. When Lucetta attempts to escape the past, she " . . . tries to defy the precepts of a malevolent universe that demands obedience

⁵⁵Henry C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems, and The Dynasts, p. 36.

⁵⁶Brogan, op. cit., p. 311.

to its strict terms of behavior."⁵⁷ She defies the norm of nature around her. But nature will not allow her to disregard the past. The skimmity ride reminds Lucetta of the past, and her feat causes her to suffer a nervous collapse and a miscarriage, which lead to her death.

While the results are the same, Mrs. Charmond's defiance of nature differs from Lucetta's, Mrs. Charmond receives visitors while reclining on a couch, or takes drives through the country side. Her life is "largely spent in gratifying the idle whims of a capricious fancy."⁵⁸ In contrast to her indolence, the inhabitants of Little Hintock are physically involved with the natural world. Mr. Melbury sells timber, Giles moves with his cider press through the country, and Marty works into the night preparing staves. At times, Mrs. Charmond is in direct conflict with nature: by refusing to extend Giles' lifeholdings, she injures a person whose association with nature ranks with that of Gabriel Oak's. Mrs. Charmond's flatness may result from Hardy's difficulty in portraying wealthy characters, but even her wealth places her in opposition to nature.⁵⁹ Mrs. Charmond does not associate

⁵⁷Frederick R. Karl, "The Mayor of Casterbridge: A New Fiction Defined," MFS, VI (Autumn, 1960), 203.

⁵⁸Drake, op. cit., p. 255.

⁵⁹Matchett, op. cit., p. 252.

with the world of Little Hintock except when she is concerned about financial matters. By separating herself from the people of the area and the area itself, she refuses either to acknowledge or notice the natural norm. The report of her death at the hands of a mysterious South Carolina gentleman is in keeping with her isolation from Little Hintock, for her death is as removed from the area as was her life.

Troy, Wildeve, and Fitzpiers are similar to Lucetta and Mrs. Charmond because of their passionate and glamorous characteristics. Troy, for example, is enhanced by his red uniform and his sword play.⁶⁰ Chew describes Troy as a ". . . romantic, fascinating trivialist, who has yet in him something not altogether ignoble."⁶¹ In fact, Bathsheba is, at first, so impressed by him that she views him in this romantic way.⁶² The different ways in which the other characters in the novel see Troy could justify Bailey's term, "Mephistophelian visitant," since Troy at times does assume the role of Satan.⁶³ Another way of viewing Troy, however,

⁶⁰Duffin, op. cit., p. 17.

⁶¹Chew, Thomas Hardy, p. 36.

⁶²Roy Morrell, Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way, pp. 59-60.

⁶³J. O. Bailey, "Hardy's Mephistophelian Visitants," PMLA, LXI (December, 1946), pp. 1147-1148.

is that which is in opposition to the natural forces around him. Throughout the novel, in a company of soldiers, he remains apart from the natural world.⁶⁴ This natural world represents, in Babb's terms, a ". . . continuity of past and present with gradual changes."⁶⁵ Troy does not believe in gradual changes; instead, he acts upon impulse. By refusing to make gradual changes, he opposes the natural world.⁶⁶ He also opposes the natural world by neglecting the farm work. Gabriel and Bathsheba, in contrast, do not neglect work, and, therefore, the natural world.⁶⁷ Their dedication is illustrated in the scene in which they labor to save the grain ricks while Troy and the laborers are drunk. Probably the scene which best illustrates Troy's relation with nature concerns his planting flowers on Fanny Robin's grave. Nature shows her antagonism to Troy by washing away the flowers, thereby rejecting and rebuking him.⁶⁸ Carpenter says of this incident:

Nature is opposed to him it seems, because he has brought into Weatherbury the callous, sophisticated ways of the outside world.⁶⁹

⁶⁴Babb, op. cit., p. 153.

⁶⁵Loc. cit.

⁶⁶Loc. cit.

⁶⁷Howe, op. cit., p. 53.

⁶⁸Babb, op. cit., p. 158.

⁶⁹Thomas Hardy, Far From the Madding Crowd, Introduction by Richard C. Carpenter, p. xi.

Nature's opposition to Troy culminates in his death, which is, as Bailey states, ". . . a violent last resort to get him out of the scene."⁷⁰ Nature, using Boldwood as an agent, removes Troy from her world. When Troy dies, his disturbing influence disappears, and the natural world is again predominant, as shown by the marriage of Gabriel and Bathsheba.

Wildeve resists Egdon Heath, which is one of Hardy's strongest presentations of a natural force. In Native the heath assumes a personality of its own. Throughout the narrative the heath is an always present force, which reflects the moods of the characters who inhabit it. Because of its strength, Wildeve's attempts to escape from the heath seem particularly futile. His battle against its natural forces also seems insignificant when compared to Eustacia's discontent, which is so overwhelming. Wildeve is a "chip of the same sensual block" as Troy.⁷¹ But again, his passion seems small when compared to Eustacia's. Moreover, his character suffers the same fate as Lucetta's: both appear insignificant when compared to the greater ones

⁷⁰Bailey, op. cit., p. 1150.

⁷¹Baker, op. cit., p. 38.

of Henchard and Eustacia. But because Wildeve is caught in her resistance to the heath, he suffers her fate.

Edred Fitzpiers, while similar to Troy and Wildeve, is also Mrs. Charmond's counterpart in The Woodlanders.

According to Huss, these two are

. . . complete aliens in the forest-world of Hintock, and the tastes, manners, and education which they have acquired render them incapable of communication with the rustics and imperceptive of the real, as opposed to the apparent, workings of Nature.⁷²

Fitzpiers is divorced from the natural world of Little Hintock primarily through his "modern" attitudes. Hence, he is interested in medical science, particularly its experimental aspects. For example, he pays Grammer Oliver ten pounds in order to examine her brain after she dies. Early in the narrative, the rustics suspect that Fitzpiers is associated with the devil. One of the rustics, addressing Barber Percombe, says

A very clever and learned young doctor, who, they say, is in league with the devil, lives in the place you be going to . . .⁷³

Later, Bawtree tells a story about a carton of books sent to the parson instead of to Fitzpiers. When the parson saw the books, he wrote "Beware!" on the package before sending it

⁷²Huss, op. cit., p. 33.

⁷³Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders, p. 5. [Text parallel to the standard edition]

on.⁷⁴ Furthermore, Fitzpiers does not attend church regularly. In all of these matters he is in opposition to the people around him. He becomes what DeLaura calls a "study of the cost of modernity."⁷⁵

Fitzpiers' final break with the natural world occurs when he rejects Grace for Mrs. Charmond and the outside world that she represents. Even though he eventually returns to Grace, he does not return to Little Hintock. Instead, they decide to leave the area. Fitzpiers is able to return to Grace because of his knowledge of himself. Troy and Wildeve, because they are not as intellectual as Fitzpiers, are unable to make this adjustment to a former life.⁷⁶ However, Fitzpiers is similar to the other two in that he is "indolent and impudent like Troy" and "unstable like Wildeve."⁷⁷ All three men have strong sensual desires combined with a small amount of willpower. Fitzpiers is drawn to Mrs. Charmond just as Wildeve, to Eustacia and Troy, to Bathsheba. His discontent with Little Hintock parallels Wildeve's attempts to escape the heath.⁷⁸

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 62.

⁷⁵DeLaura, op. cit., p. 393.

⁷⁶Chew, Thomas Hardy, p. 50.

⁷⁷Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Introduction by J. F. A. Pyre, p. xiv; hereafter cited as Pyre, Introduction.

⁷⁸Deen, op. cit., p. 209.

The struggles of these characters-- Lucetta, Mrs. Charmond, Troy, Wildeve, and Fitzpiers-- pale when compared to the struggle of Eustacia Vye. Eustacia is Hardy's greatest portrayal of an outsider in conflict with nature, or, more specifically, with Egdon Heath. Because she is an outsider and because of her conflict with nature, she is similar in some respects to the other characters who have the same classification and who are involved in the same conflict. For example. Eustacia is very sensual. As Duffin says, she is a woman who " . . . lives to love, and to love in a hot, blind lustful way."⁷⁹ As the other characters, such as Mrs. Charmond, resist their surroundings, Eustacia also resists the heath. The motive for all of her action is to escape the "leveling influence of the heath."⁸⁰ This drive is so strong that, combined with Eustacia's age and temperament, it has " . . . distorted her view of the world around her."⁸¹ As a result, Eustacia has almost no concept of the heath as reality. But, what she does view as reality-- Budmouth and Paris-- are, to her, not really

⁷⁹Duffin, op. cit., p. 17.

⁸⁰Eleanor McCann, "Blind Will or Blind Here: Philosophy and Myth in Hardy's Return of the Native," Criticism, III (Spring, 1961), 143.

⁸¹Robert C. Schweik, "Theme, Character, and Perspective in Hardy's The Return of the Native," PQ, XLI (October, 1962), 761.

cities but an escape from the heath.⁸²

The heath, in turn, reflects Eustacia's discontent, just as it reflects the thoughts of all its inhabitants. For example, while Thomasin sees nothing evil in the heath and regards it as home, for Eustacia it is a "hell."⁸³ In her resistance to the heath, Eustacia becomes a Promethean figure. Goldberg states:

In Eustacia Vye is embodied the all-pervasive symbol of fire which flames out within the novel, a light antagonistic to the darkness, defiant of its gloom and foulness.⁸⁴

Eustacia is associated with fire throughout the narrative.⁸⁵ For example, she is described in terms of fire imagery,⁸⁶ and she suffers a death by fire in effigy.⁸⁷ This association with fire enhances her image, since fire is a gift of the gods.

Even though Clym is also seen in terms of Promethean imagery and is, therefore, on the same plane as Eustacia,

⁸²Loc. cit.

⁸³Deen, op. cit., p. 210.

⁸⁴M. A. Goldberg, "Hardy's Double Visioned Universe," EIC, VII (1957), 379.

⁸⁵John Paterson, "The Return of the Native as Anti-Christ Document," NCF, XIV (June, 1959), 113.

⁸⁶John Paterson, "'The Poetics' of The Return of the Native," MFS, VI (Autumn, 1960), 220.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 219.

the two characters are not similar. Their differences are best represented on the basic level of Clym's attempt to return to the heath and of Eustacia's attempt to escape from it. Eustacia's infatuation with Clym further illustrates the way in which she sees, and is in conflict with, her surroundings. Eustacia sees Clym in the same way in which she sees Paris and Budmouth. What Heywood terms her "bookish romanticism" causes her romance with Clym.⁸⁸

Eustacia, blinded by her desire to escape the heath, does not accept Clym's attempt to return to it. She does not realize his love for the heath equals her hatred for it.⁸⁹

Eustacia's fate, then, is in part determined by her character. She would probably have been dissatisfied in any locale. Her unwillingness to compromise is the direct outcome of a "godlike desire for independence."⁹⁰ Schweik notes that, in the "Queen of Night" chapter, Eustacia is sometimes described as a

. . . dangerous citizen of the commonwealth of hearts and hands, a young girl whose dreamy and imaginative yearning has so distorted her views that she understands neither the heath nor the world beyond it.⁹¹

⁸⁸C. Heywood "The Return of the Native and Miss Bradden's The Doctor's Wife: A Probable Source," NCF, XVIII (June, 1963), 93.

⁸⁹MaCann, op. cit., p. 143.

⁹⁰Schweik, op. cit., p. 762.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 761.

Yet, Eustacia is also the victim of forces around her and makes the strongest statement of these forces when she says:

O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted beyond control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all.⁹²

Eustacia is an outsider on the heath; she is not only unable to accept the natural world around her, but she must also engage in actual conflict with it. Since she cannot accept it, she is destroyed by nature. Beach summarizes her desire to escape and her destruction:

It will be the eternal irony of this poetic figure that no reader will ever be able to dissociate her from the lonely and gloomy setting from which she made her desperate vain attempt to escape.⁹³

Eustacia is Hardy's finest example of a character unable to accept the natural world and its demands. She is similar to Lucetta, Mrs. Charmond, Troy, Wildeve, and Fitzpiers in her disregard of the natural norm. But not all of the outsiders resist the natural norm. Indeed, some do not rebel against it, but, instead, adopt it. Among those who accept it are Venn, Farfrae, and Elizabeth-Jane.

⁹²Hardy, The Return of the Native, p. 356.

⁹³Beach, op. cit., p. 103.

Venn, although native to Egdon, becomes an outsider when he adopts the profession of a traveling reddleman.⁹⁴

Bailey labels this symbolic character as

. . . an aspect of some such force as the Ismaelitic heath seems to be, rather than one of the human beings who play out their drama according to its pulls upon them.⁹⁵

Critics have studied Venn in two ways. Some view him as Bailey does, stressing his satanic qualities, describing him as a "Mephistophelian Visitant."⁹⁶ Others, like Duffin, go to the other extreme and compare Venn to Gabriel Oak.⁹⁷ Yet, he seems to be between these two extremes. Hagan notes that Venn intervenes in the action at four important points. Each time he has good intentions, but always the results are bad.⁹⁸ He intends to save two marriages, but, instead, he destroys them.⁹⁹ Because of the good intentions but the bad results, he becomes an ironical figure who looks evil but means well.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴Baily, op. cit., pp. 1150-1151.

⁹⁵Ibid., pp. 1153-1154.

⁹⁶Loc. cit.

⁹⁷Duffin, op. cit., p. 17.

⁹⁸John Hagan, "Note on the Significance of Diggery Venn," NCF, XVI (September, 1961), 151.

⁹⁹Hunt, op. cit., p. 452.

¹⁰⁰Hagan, op. cit., p. 153.

Although Venn has assumed the role of an outsider in which he attempts to manipulate the lives of the characters around him, he remains chose to nature. While he interferred with the other characters, he does not attempt to interfere with the natural world. The profession he has chosen does not dissociate him from nature. He acknowledges nature's norm and does not interfere with it; yet he sees nothing wrong in interfering with the lives of people who do not acknowledge this norm-- e.g., Eustacia and Wildeve. Because Venn does not resist the heath he lives in harmony with the environment.¹⁰¹ Because he is compliant and does not change, he achieves a degree of happiness in the conclusion of the novel.¹⁰² As noted, Hardy had originally intended for Venn to return to his traveling instead of marrying Thomasin. Had Venn done so, he still would have maintained

¹⁰¹Chew, Thomas Hardy, p. 39.

¹⁰²Lionel Stevenson, The English Novel: A Panorama, p. 389. Carl Weber in "Hardy's Grim Note in The Return of the Native," notes that Hardy included an explanation in Book VI of the Wessex edition (1912) of the original conclusion of The Return of the Native. The note says: "The writer may state here that the original conception of the story did not design a marriage between Thomasin and Venn. He was to have retained his isolated and weird character to the last, and to have disappeared mysteriously from the heath, nobody knowing hither-- Thomasin remaining a widow. But certain circumstances of the serial publication led to a change of intent. Readers can therefore choose between the endings, and those with an austere artistic code can assume the more consistant conclusion to be the true one."

his connection with the natural world.

While Elizabeth-Jane is an outsider to Casterbridge, she represents the complete acceptance of the natural surroundings. In fact, her acceptance is so great that she is termed by several critics a "stoic."¹⁰³ In stressing this quality, critics frequently describe her by the qualities she lacks. For example, Chew describes her as not "fascinating like Eustacia," not "lovable like Tess," and "not intellectual like Sue."¹⁰⁴ Beckman adds that she has "Lucetta's charm without her foolishness, Farfrae's stability without his narrowness and superficiality," and "Henchard's emotional intensity without his self-destructiveness."¹⁰⁵ Because of her ability to accept whatever life has to offer, Elizabeth-Jane, like Vann, achieves a degree of happiness. Brogan analyzes her fate:

In action as well as appearance she is embodied wisdom because she does not seek her desire by will and passion, as Henchard and Lucetta do, but in perfect resignation makes the best of what fate sends to her.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Pyre describes her as Hardy's "most complete and perfect portrait of the feminine stoic." Beckman describes her as a stable stoic character.

¹⁰⁴Chew, Introduction, p. xix.

¹⁰⁵Beckman, op. cit., p. 85.

¹⁰⁶Brogan, op. cit., p. 216.

Farfrae possesses the same stoic qualities as Elizabeth-Jane. Beckman says that the Scotsman does not try to understand the universe since he knows how to use it for his own purposes.¹⁰⁷ In some respects, the battle between Farfrae and Henchard represents the conflict between the new and the old ways of life. Henchard, for example, is identified with custom and tradition.¹⁰⁸ Farfrae, in contrast, typifies new methods and ideas.¹⁰⁹ Even though Farfrae brings a new way of life into Casterbridge, he does not set this way of life against the natural world around him. Henchard is not able to adapt to the natural world but, instead, tries to force it to adapt to him. Farfrae has a pliability which Henchard lacks and which accounts for his success in the novel.¹¹⁰ Henchard is continually defeated by his passions. For example, his decision to ruin Farfrae financially is one of passion and results in his own defeat. Farfrae's only departure from the natural norm is his marriage to Lucetta. When he marries Elizabeth-Jane, he acknowledges the

¹⁰⁷Beckman, op. cit., p. 85.

¹⁰⁸John Paterson, "The Mayor of Casterbridge as Tragedy," VS, III (December, 1959), 157.

¹⁰⁹Chew, Thomas Hardy, pp. 48-49.

¹¹⁰Brogan, op. cit., p. 315.

supremacy of the natural order and proves that he is willing to conform to it. In this way, he assures his success.¹¹¹

The geographic basis of these characters, then, is less important than their willingness to accept or reject the natural norm. Although Lucetta, Mrs. Charmond, Troy, Wildeve, Fitzpiers, Eustacia, Venn, Elizabeth-Jane, and Farfrae are all outsiders, their final position in the novel depends upon their ability to accept the natural norm. Their final outcome is determined by their flexibility, their willingness to accept whatever nature offers, and their lack of dominating passions.¹¹² But Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane achieve a degree of happiness because of their willingness to conform to nature; Eustacia and the others do not because they resist the natural norm. Beckman says of these resisters:

Instead of passing humbly through the iron gates of life, as do the choral rustics, they violently collide with them.¹¹³

Because of their resistance to the natural norm, they are destroyed, usually by nature or by an agent for her.

¹¹¹Paterson, "Mayor of Casterbridge," p. 169.

¹¹²Karl, op. cit., p. 211.

¹¹³Beckman, op. cit., p. 78.

CHAPTER III

THE INSIDERS AND THEIR RELATION TO THE NATURAL NORM

The outsiders in Hardy's novels are those characters who are not associated through their backgrounds with the primary locale of the novel and those who have chosen to dissociate themselves from the primary locale. These characters contrast with those who are associated with a novel's particular locale-- Boldwood, Mrs. Yeobright, Clym, Thomasin, Michael Henchard, Grace, Giles, and Marty. A study of the insiders also further emphasizes the importance of the natural norm in the novels of Hardy, for the conclusions correspond to those derived from the study of the outsiders. The insiders are affected by the necessity of conforming to the natural world, as the outsiders are, and they must suffer the consequences when they fail to conform to this norm. For example, Michael Henchard's resistance to the natural norm is as great as Eustacia's, and his destruction is just as tragic. The insiders, then, have the same basic division as the outsiders: those who resist the natural norm and those who accept it. Huss emphasizes this division:

Though such characters as Gabriel Oak in Far from the Madding Crowd occasionally have an advantage because they live on the most intimate terms with Nature, others, such as Michael Henchard in The Mayor of Casterbridge suffer both spiritual and material losses because of their alienation from Nature of their inability to meet its changing moods.¹¹⁴

Boldwood, Mrs. Yeobright, and Michael Henchard are the characters among the insiders who resist the natural norm. The actions of these characters demonstrate their conflict with the natural world. The characters who do not resist the natural norm-- Gabriel Oak, Bathsheba, Clym, Thomasin, Grace, Giles, and Marty-- are more difficult to classify. This difficulty arises, in part, from Hardy's shift to social, as distinguished from cosmic, criticism.¹¹⁵ Thus, they illustrate the difficulties of using such terms as "successes" or "failures," for critical judgment of them and their situations varies. Clym is the most notable example of a character whose final outcome is disputed by critics. If success is being rewarded total happiness, then there are few, if any, characters who qualify, in a Hardy novel. More often than not, the characters who accept the natural norm are between the two extremes of total destruction or total happiness. For example, death

¹¹⁴Huss, op. cit., p. 28.

¹¹⁵Wagenknecht, op. cit., p. 363.

has not made Giles a failure since he dies in the so-called happy way of giving his life for someone he loves. Bathsheba, Gabriel, Thomasin, Clym, and Grace are, at the conclusion of the narratives, surrounded by the question of what quantity or quality of happiness they will receive. These characters who conform to the natural norm, but who are difficult to classify as successes or failures, best typify Hardy's philosophy. These characters give rise to the labels of "Immanent Will" or "determinism" or "pessimism" which are frequently applied to Hardy's writing, as critics try to answer why conformity does not bring happiness.

The resistance of the three insiders who do not accept the natural norm takes different forms. Boldwood, one of Hardy's earlier attempts of a complex character study, alienates himself from nature. Hardy illustrates through Boldwood how false appearances can be.¹¹⁶ Ernest Baker describes Boldwood as ". . . the traditional calm, self-disciplined nature stung to infatuation by a woman's capricious blandishments."¹¹⁷ He owns a farm in the area of Weatherbury, which connects him with nature. His wealth, however, is beginning to alienate him from

¹¹⁶Richard C. Carpenter, "The Mirror and the Sword: Imagery in Far from the Madding Crowd," NCF, SVIII (March, 1964), 337.

¹¹⁷Baker, op. cit., p. 34.

his surroundings. His infatuation for Bathsheba causes him to become progressively more and more alienated from nature while his connection with the civilized world increases.¹¹⁸ Eventually, his break with the natural world is complete when he is declared legally insane for the murder of Troy.¹¹⁹

Mrs. Yeobright is another character who resists her natural world. Deen states that Mrs. Yeobright is "only less reconciled to her existence than Eustacia"¹²⁰ Her resistance, however, is revealed in her determination to see Clym leave the heath. Because in this way she resists the heath and the natural world, it retaliates against her.¹²¹ She is destroyed by a force of the heath-- an adder.

Henchard's resistance to the natural norm results from his inflexibility. His stubbornness equals Mrs. Yeobright's. Like Boldwood, he struggles with emotions and passions beyond his control. Michael Henchard's character, however, is much greater than that of Boldwood. At times, Henchard appears more as an unexplainable force than as a person.¹²²

¹¹⁸Babb, op. cit., p. 155.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 151.

¹²⁰Deen, op. cit., p. 209.

¹²¹McCann, op. cit., p. 143.

¹²²Karl, op. cit., p. 197.

Paterson describes him as possessing the "heroism of spirit that prefers the dangerous satisfactions of the super human to the mild comforts of the merely human."¹²³ Thus, he cannot accept mere friendship from Farfrae because he expects a greater affection. Henchard is neither submissive to nature nor is he a "sensitive misfit."¹²⁴ Instead, he is a man of character, and, as such, he determines his own fate. All of the other characters in Mayor appear to be secondary when compared to Henchard in his struggle with his natural surroundings and with himself. Henchard " . . . fills the horizon and towers over the minor characters, in passion and sobriety, in fury and in repentance, in predatoriness, and finally in ennobling humility."¹²⁵

Henchard possesses the same type of Promethean strength and is involved in the same type of Promethean struggle as Eustacia and Clym. Pyre states that Henchard is one of the "true Prometheans" who "are not, necessarily, the obviously good, much less the secure."¹²⁶ A Promethean figure takes part in a lonely, tragic struggle, as Henchard does, for his

¹²³Paterson, "Mayor of Casterbridge," p. 156.

¹²⁴Desmond Hawkins, Hardy The Novelist, p. 39.

¹²⁵Weiner, op. cit., p. 232.

¹²⁶Pyre, Introduction, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

cause may be opposed by powers greater than his. Henchard is always alone and isolated; he enters Casterbridge alone, he builds his business alone, he fights alone, and he leaves Casterbridge defeated and alone.¹²⁷

Yet Henchard realizes that something-- his pride and passion-- has to be controlled.¹²⁸ Whenever he cannot control them, he conflicts with the natural norm around him. Because his pride and passion are responsible for his defeat, Henchard, probably more than any other of Hardy's characters, "carries his fate with him."¹²⁹ The very qualities which make Henchard such an outstandingly strong character are responsible for his downfall, for these are the qualities which he cannot control. Brogan notes:

The author never loses an opportunity to point out that Henchard's presiding sin is pride, and it is no doubt for his pride that he is made to go before a certain Mr. Fall, whose prophecy that in the coming season it will be more like living in Revelations that in England turns out, as ancient prophecies often did, to be correct in its main outlines though deceptive in its details.¹³⁰

¹²⁷Karl, op. cit., p. 197.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 198.

¹²⁹Chew, Thomas Hardy, p. 47.

¹³⁰Brogan, op. cit., p. 315.

Henchard is also unable to control his passion or ambition, and these emotions, connected with his pride, destroy him. His tragedy is that he is a victim of himself.¹³¹ Because he is ruined by his own "tragic flaws," he is equal in stature to some Greek or Shakespearean heroes.¹³² Like these characters, for example, Oedipus and Lear, Henchard must, as Paterson states, ". . . rediscover in suffering and sorrow the actuality of the moral power he had so recklessly flouted."¹³³

Henchard's pride will not allow him to admit the supremacy of the natural world, nor will it allow him any flexibility. Through the novel he acts against the natural world and deviates from its norm.¹³⁴ For example, Henchard acts against nature when he attempts to make the damaged wheat whole and when he seeks a weather prediction.¹³⁵ These acts reveal Henchard's attempts to trespass on the natural world's domain. In addition to refusing to accept the actions of the natural world, he emphasizes the necessity

¹³¹Rutland, op. cit., pp. 207-208.

¹³²Stevenson, op. cit., p. 406.

¹³³Paterson, "Mayor of Casterbridge," p. 153.

¹³⁴James R. Baker, "Thematic Ambiguity in Mayor of Casterbridge," PCL, I (May 1955), 15.

¹³⁵Paterson, "Mayor of Casterbridge," p. 139.

of conforming to the natural norm even if that norm changes. Henchard is a part of the past.¹³⁶ Casterbridge, however, is adopting new ways; and the same virtues that made Henchard succeed in the old Casterbridge destroy him as he resists the changes around him.¹³⁷ Huss states:

Casterbridge, which seems poised and waiting for the Industrial Revolution . . . becomes the cage which imprisons the unhappy Henchard as he tries to conform both to its conventions and to its progressive spirit.¹³⁸

Henchard is willful, assertive, and resistant to his fate; Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane are not.¹³⁹ Henchard resists the natural world and its norm, but Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane remain flexible. He is destroyed by the norm which he resists. They attain a degree of success.

The other insiders-- Gabriel Oak, Bathsheba, Clym, Thomasin, Grace, Giles, and Marty-- do not resist the natural norm. In an attempt to determine Hardy's philosophy, critics usually rely on these characters. Through them Hardy illustrates that nothing can bring guaranteed happiness; the best that can be offered is the hope for less

¹³⁶Brogan, op. cit., p. 314.

¹³⁷Howard O. Grogan, "Science and Narrative Structure in Austin, Hardy, and Woolf," NCF, XI (March 1957), 280.

¹³⁸Huss, op. cit., p. 36.

¹³⁹Brogan, "Science and Narrative Structure," p. 280.

unhappiness. This attitude is particularly important when considering Gabriel Oak, for he is usually regarded as being the closest to nature. He represents "nature and its norm."¹⁴⁰ Babb, who describes him as "sturdy" and "natural," stresses that he remains

. . . allied with the processes of nature through performing the ordinary tasks of farmer or shepherd, his feet firmly planted in the natural world.¹⁴¹

Woolf describes him as " . . . stable in his temperament, steadfast in his affections, and capable of open-eyed endurance without flinching."¹⁴² Beckman terms Oak an " . . . elevated rustic whose ironical attitudes are exhibited practically instead of verbally and seriously instead of comically."¹⁴³ However, no matter what label is applied to him, Gabriel Oak is usually viewed as the character Hardy was best able to associate with the enduring norms of nature. As such, Drew states that he becomes a

. . . symbol of man's true place in his universe, of the control of passion by self-discipline, and of all that which to Hardy gives man dignity and worth.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰Beckman, op. cit., p. 83.

¹⁴¹Babb, op. cit., p. 149.

¹⁴²Virginia Woolf, The Second Common Reader, p. 227.

¹⁴³Beckman, op. cit., p. 77.

¹⁴⁴Drew, op. cit., p. 150.

Hardy stresses Oak's connection with nature through a choice of descriptive terms. For example, in the first reference, he states:

When Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun.¹⁴⁵

Because of his association with nature and the natural norm, Gabriel should, logically, receive many rewards from her. Yet, the irony remains that Hardy should interject a question in the conclusion of the novel concerning Oak's happiness. At the conclusion of the narrative, when Bathsheba and Gabriel are married, Poorgrass comments

"Yes; I suppose that's the size o't, . . . and I wish him joy o' her; though I were once or twice upon saying to-day with holy Hosea, in my scripture manner, which is my second nature, 'Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.' But since 'tis as 'tis, why might have been worse, and I feel my thanks accordingly."¹⁴⁶

Bathsheba's acceptance of her natural surroundings is not, at first, as total as Gabriel's. She has the impulses of both the socially refined (shown by her glancing in the mirror) and of the natural (shown by her horse-

¹⁴⁵Thomas Hardy, Far From The Madding Crowd, p. 1.
 [Text parallel to Standard edition.]

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 464.

riding.)¹⁴⁷ When she first arrives at Weatherbury, she mildly wants to "be somebody."¹⁴⁸ Because of this desire, she revolts against the norm of the country life.¹⁴⁹ In her revolt, she marries Troy, a person in direct opposition to nature, instead of Oak.¹⁵⁰ According to Babb,

The fact that Bathsheba does belong essentially to the natural world is indicated over and over by Hardy in the figurative language he applies to her.¹⁵¹

By the end of the novel, however, she has learned to value Oak.¹⁵² Her return to him on the death of Troy leads to the "moderately happy" ending of the novel.¹⁵³ In her temporary departure from the natural norm and her attempt to return to it, she resembles Clym. And while her future is probably more promising than Clym's, the closing remarks of Madding Crowd do not guarantee so.

Clym leaves his natural world and later returns to it. He finds tragedy in his return and, finally, attempts

¹⁴⁷Babb, op. cit., p. 155.

¹⁴⁸Beckman, op. cit., p. 77.

¹⁴⁹Stevenson, op. cit., p. 385.

¹⁵⁰Hawkins, op. cit., p. 47.

¹⁵¹Babb, op. cit., p. 157.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁵³Bailey, "Visions of Self," p. 78.

to reconcile the knowledge gained through tragedy to his surroundings on Egdon Heath. Clym leaves the heath and becomes a diamond merchant, a profession dependant upon promoting ultimate symbols of vanity, self-indulgence, and wealth.¹⁵⁴ He does not find contentment in the outside world, however, and returns to the heath, his love of it having been intensified by his experiences.¹⁵⁵ In his return he is seeking an " . . . impossible world where the externals of society do not count."¹⁵⁶ His desire to return to the heath, however, is so great that it distorts his view of himself and those around him. Baker explains that while Clym sees himself as "strong and determined," he is actually suffering from "paralysis of the will."¹⁵⁷ Clym's failure to see himself and others realistically, combined with Eustacia's similar fault, produces the tragedy of the novel. They are drawn together because of a "mutual misunderstanding" of each other.¹⁵⁸

Clym's goal in returning to the heath is an unrealistic as his views of himself and Eustacia. His desire to

¹⁵⁴Otis B. Wheeler, "Four Versions of Return of the Native," NCF, XIV (June, 1959), 34.

¹⁵⁵Chew, Thomas Hardy, p. 41.

¹⁵⁶Schweik, op. cit., p. 766.

¹⁵⁷Baker, History of the Novel, p. 39.

¹⁵⁸McCann, op. cit., p. 143.

better man is Promethean.¹⁵⁹ But, in attempting to better the rustics, he is tampering with the natural world, one that he has already seen fit to leave. Hardy's final attitude toward Clym and his attempted return is ambiguous.¹⁶⁰ Beckman, for example, sees Clym's return as one

. . . to a neutral, native condition of existence. He endures just as the heath endures, leads a life drab as it is drab, and becomes purblind as it remains monochromatic.¹⁶¹

However, while he physically returns, Clym is not able spiritually to return to the heath: the norm he once rejected will not totally accept him. His fate, as Schweik views it, is to " . . . remain the victim of a partial delusion which effectively distorts partial insight."¹⁶² Hardy says of the reception to Clym's preaching, "But everywhere he was kindly received, for the story of his life had become generally known."¹⁶³ Since his story is known, he will always be set apart by it. As a result, Clym will never be anything but a "fish out of water."¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹Ted R. Spivey, "Thomas Hardy's Tragic Hero," NCF, IX (December, 1954), 188.

¹⁶⁰DeLaura, op. cit., p. 384.

¹⁶¹Beckman, op. cit., p. 72.

¹⁶²Schweik, op. cit., p. 767.

¹⁶³Hardy, Return of the Native, p. 406.

¹⁶⁴Thomas Hardy, Return of the Native, Introduction by John Paterson, p. xi; hereafter cited as Paterson, Introduction.

And, Paterson asserts, he " . . . has as little in common with the barbaric heath as any character in the novel."¹⁶⁵

Thomasin does not attempt a partial rebellion, as does Clym, but instead accepts her environment just as much as Oak does. She sees nothing evil about the heath, and does not attempt to rebel against it. She does not attempt to bring change into the heath, but wants to conform to it. Yet, in the original plan of the novel (stated earlier in this study) Thomasin was to remain widowed after the death of Wildeve. Even though she conformed to her natural surroundings, her final happiness would have been questionable.

Grace is not as accepting of the natural world as Thomasin but leaves Little Hintock. Her departure is the result of Mr. Melbury's desire to apologize for a slight to Giles Winterborne's father. Mr. Melbury views marriage between Giles and Grace as a means of setting things right. When she returns to Little Hintock, her education " . . . superimposed upon her rustic background causes her to be at odds with herself as to which values she will choose."¹⁶⁶ She finds herself between the outsiders (Mrs. Charmond and

¹⁶⁵Paterson, Return of the Native as Antichristian, p. 116.

¹⁶⁶Huss, op. cit., p. 33.

Fitzpiers) and the insiders (Giles and Marty).¹⁶⁷

When Grace chooses to marry Fitzpiers, she aligns herself with the outside world.¹⁶⁸ Grace learns, however, that she is not a member of the outside world, and she tries to gain admittance to her former world through her love of Giles.

When she sees him the morning after he has left his cabin for her, she gains knowledge of herself and of her place in the natural world.¹⁶⁹ As Drake states, her ". . . reconciliation with the Arcadian world which she had momentarily betrayed in her marriage is now complete."¹⁷⁰ Giles' death subdues her to the native environment; but she turns back to the outer world, represented by Fitzpiers.¹⁷¹

Giles Winterborne and Marty South are the last of the characters who conform to their natural surroundings, yet who are difficult to label as "successes" or "failures." They are as closely related to the woodlands of Little Hintock as Clym is to Egdon Heath, or even more closely, because they do not even partially rebel. Drake states

¹⁶⁷George S. Fayer Jr., "Hardy's The Woodlanders: Inwardness and Memory," SEL, I (April, 1961), 81.

¹⁶⁸Drake, op. cit., p. 255.

¹⁶⁹Bailey, "Visions of Self," p. 88.

¹⁷⁰Drake, op. cit., p. 256.

¹⁷¹Chew, Thomas Hardy, p. 50.

that they are able to perceive the " . . . natural world . . . as at once a reflection of and a parable for the lives of men."¹⁷² Raleigh says of their relation with nature that they are " . . . in tune with the natural world-- whose symbols they can decipher like hieroglyphs-- instinctive, and personal."¹⁷³ Giles is frequently compared to Gabriel Oak because of his "practical sagacity . . . constancy and solid virtue, and . . . his modest estimate of his own merit."¹⁷⁴

Marty has the same characteristics as Giles. While Hardy generally neglects her in the middle of the narrative in order to follow the activities of Grace, she is present in the beginning and conclusion of the novel. Matchett says her development in the early part of the novel suggests that she will be the heroine.¹⁷⁵ Even though attention centers on Grace, Marty appears frequently enough throughout the narrative to remind the reader of her presence and to stress her unchanging connection with nature. She acts as a " . . . symbol of a neutral, pessimistic attitude

¹⁷²Drake, op. cit., p. 254.

¹⁷³Raleigh, op. cit., p. 253.

¹⁷⁴Pyre, Introduction, p. xvi.

¹⁷⁵Matchett, op. cit., p. 250.

toward the vicissitudes of existence."¹⁷⁶ Neither Giles nor Marty ever question the natural forces around them. For example, Giles does not hesitate to leave his home for Grace and to stay in the rain, even though he is not well enough to do so. Marty, even though she is saddened by Giles' death, is, in a way, triumphant; because, as she tells Grace:

" . . . he belongs to neither of us now, and your beauty is no more powerful with him than my plainness. I have come to help you, ma'am. He never cared for me, and he cared much for you; but he cares for us both alike now."¹⁷⁷

She continues to express this attitude in the final passage in the novel when she says over Giles' grave:

Now, my own, own love, . . . you are mine, and on'y mine; for she has forgotten '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. Whenever I plant the young larches I'll think that none can plant as you planted; 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!¹⁷⁸

One of the difficulties in dealing with the characters of The Woodlanders results from the fact that the

¹⁷⁶Beckman, op. cit., p. 75.

¹⁷⁷Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders, p. 390.

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p. 444.

novel is transitional; it is illustrative of the changes Hardy was seeing in the natural world and, thereby, the changes in his philosophy. Through his novels, Hardy shows an increasing connection with the effects of the influx of society in the natural world and the corresponding changes in the natural norm. Rutland states that Mayor marks the end of the period in which Hardy's novels "are before all else works of art."¹⁷⁹ Hardy had always had a tendency to preach, but it is only in the novels beginning with The Woodlanders that this tendency interferes with the story.¹⁸⁰ In The Woodlanders, Hardy's artistic balance began to weaken. Through the novels, he reveals the increasing encroachment on the natural norm by society. Finally, the only place that he can use to illustrate a workable natural norm is Little Hintock, an area so secluded that even the residents of Greater Hintock regard it as totally isolated.

While the novel, for the most part, centers around the lives of the people in Little Hintock, Hardy uses the characters to comment on social conventions. In this way, he was putting these characters to the same purpose as he later does in Tess. In The Woodlanders, he advances the

¹⁷⁹Rutland, op. cit., p. 211.

¹⁸⁰Cecil, op. cit., pp. 187-188.

theme that ". . . society, and the institutions which it supports, may be the critical determinants of an individual's life."¹⁸¹ He attacks education when it is used in the manner that Mr. Melbury uses it-- as a ". . . means for reaching a higher stratum of society."¹⁸² More importantly, he is concerned with the marriage question.¹⁸³ Huss describes the importance of this concern in the development of Hardy's novels:

. . . the emphasis upon the problem of sexual selection, which the conventional attitude towards marriage complicates, prepares the way for Hardy's more violent and overt attack upon conventions in Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure.¹⁸⁴

In The Woodlanders, according to Brennecke, Hardy ". . . turns from an instinctive fatalist into a conscious philosophic artist."¹⁸⁵ In Tess and Jude, he uses characters and setting as tools to express his philosophy. By the time of the composition of Tess and Jude, he has changed his use of setting; in Tess the rural order is subjugated by civilization; in Jude it has been replaced. But part

¹⁸¹Harold Orel, Thomas Hardy's Epic-Drama: A Study of the Dynasts, p. 36.

¹⁸²Huss, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁸³Cecil, op. cit., p. 188.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁸⁵Ernest Brennecke, Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind, p. 47.

of the old pattern remains, for the characters are still faced with the problem of defining a norm and conforming to it; however, now such conformity is more difficult, because the obvious natural norm has disappeared.

CHAPTER IV

TESS AND JUDE

A CONCLUSION

When studied in relation to Hardy's other novels, Tess and Jude are representative of his changing philosophy and the ways in which he adapts the novel form to express the changes. Probably they are among the novels most often associated with Hardy. Yet, because they are not among his more artistically balanced works, such as Mayor or Native, in which the elements of theme, character, and setting work together, Chew sees Hardy's last major novels as non-characteristic of the author.¹⁸⁶ Tess and Jude show Hardy, as Chew states, ". . . emerging from the implicit to the explicit in the illustration and expounding of his view of life."¹⁸⁷ In his novels, Hardy almost always attacks some social convention. Even his first work, The Poor Man and the Lady, was rejected because of the social criticism it contained.¹⁸⁸ But in most of the novels before Tess and Jude, the criticism was implied rather

¹⁸⁶Chew, Thomas Hardy, p. 60.

¹⁸⁷Loc. cit.

¹⁸⁸Wagenknecht, op. cit., p. 362.

than directly stated.¹⁸⁹ For example, in Mayor, Hardy suggests the evils that mechanization will bring to the rural areas when Whittle comments that even though Farfrae is an easier master, the pay is a shilling a week less. However, in Tess and Jude, Hardy becomes obviously didactic, so much so that the purpose of the story interferes with the story itself.¹⁹¹ Hellstrom defines three causes for the pessimistic atmosphere in Tess and Jude: first, fewer characters are at ease with their environment; secondly, the urban setting lacks the "inherent beauty" of the natural settings; and thirdly, Hardy's bitterness about remediable ills which are not remedied is apparent.¹⁹²

One of the major changes in Tess and Jude is the way in which the use of nature varies from the earlier novels. Earlier, nature offers a norm to which the characters are expected to conform. Howe states that

Wessex was his fixed principle of order and recollection, the constant about which he could maneuver the modernist variables of rebellion and doubt.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Granville Hicks, "Was Thomas Hardy a Pessimist?" Educational Forum, II (November, 1937), 60.

¹⁹⁰ Rutland, op. cit., p. 221.

¹⁹¹ Hellstrom, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁹² Howe, op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 21.

Throughout Tess and Jude, however, Hardy questions exactly what will be the results of conformity, and his questioning is shown in the qualified amount of happiness achieved by the characters at the conclusions of the novels. Hardy's interpretation of the natural norm changes through the novels. While Madding Crowd is one of the least complicated presentations of the natural norm, in Jude the natural norm is eliminated. This gradual disappearance of the natural norm is connected with the changing emphasis of the novels. In the novels, country life is idealized to a diminishing degree. This change can be traced through Hardy's changing portrayal of the rustics. One recalls that the rustics of Madding Crowd are almost faultless; they present a picture of rural life at its best. However, in Mayor the rustics change to the originators of the skimmity ride, and in Jude they assume the form of Arabella and her family.

The Woodlanders marks the transition from well balanced novel to those which become vessels of philosophy. Yet even in this transitional novel, the natural norm is still present. But The Woodlanders also reveals that the natural norm is disappearing. Little Hintock, a secluded area withdrawn from the outside world, is its last stronghold. Tess shows a further weakening of the natural norm. Tess is portrayed as part of the natural world, but

society, represented by Alec and Angel, defeats the natural world through the defeat of Tess. In Tess, the natural norm which has become passive is personified in Tess's passivity. In the earlier novels, strong nature, when provoked, acts against a character (such as when the flowers planted by Troy are destroyed). In Tess, however, nature (Tess) is stoic and is acted upon. Nature becomes as accepting of the forces around her as was Elizabeth-Jane in Mayor.

Jude represents the final phase of the transition, because, since the natural norm has been destroyed, society is attempting to create an artificial one. Its failure is illustrated by the characters' attempts to find acceptance by conforming to the societal norm and by their subsequent outcomes. Howe says of this loss of the norm

The countryside in the Wessex novels comes to embody the accumulated richness-- but since Hardy is realistic and honest, also the accumulated stagnation-- of an old and stable culture. As long as that culture remains available for Hardy's protagonists to come back to, away from the pressures of ambition and thought, they need not feel entirely homeless in the world. Once it is no longer there or no longer felt to be vital, there follows the deracination of Jude the Obscure.¹⁹⁴

Hardy uses both Tess and Jude as a means of strongly criticizing faults in the Victorian society. For example,

¹⁹⁴Howe, op. cit., p. 21.

Cecil states that, even though Hardy " . . . would have called the earth a blighted star when he was twenty-four," he did not have the impulse in his earlier works to "proclaim it so openly."¹⁹⁵ Ironically, in Tess the object of the indictment is not constant.¹⁹⁶ As Rutland states:

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.¹⁹⁷

The two areas of the Victorian social code which Hardy attacks most strongly in Tess are sexual standards and religious hypocrisy. He attacks the social system that " . . . makes her misfortune a tragedy by converting the victim of her own innocence and a man's rapacity into a fallen woman."¹⁹⁸ Howe observes that Hardy had always regarded the Victorian "cult of chastity to be corrupted by meanness and hysteria."¹⁹⁹ In other words, those who taught the importance of chastity used unpleasant means to support their teachings.

The other major area criticized in Tess is personified

¹⁹⁵Cecil, op. cit., p. 187.

¹⁹⁶Rutland, op. cit., p. 230.

¹⁹⁷Loc. cit.

¹⁹⁸Hicks, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

¹⁹⁹Howe, op. cit., p. 110.

by Angel Clare. Angel, who has supposedly freed himself from any condemning moral codes, proved the strength of his convictions by refusing to enter the church. Yet in his so-called "free-thinking" he is actually a hypocrite, for he condemns Tess while he himself does not have a spotless reputation, having had his own sexual adventures while in London. Schweik argues that Hardy was not limiting his attack to sexual and religious hypocrisy:

What Tess reveals, then, is not only Hardy's feeling about the shallowness of certain Victorian social mores but his sense of the general limitations of moral vision and the common arbitrariness of moral formulae.²⁰⁰

In Jude, Hardy includes more criticism of Victorian codes. Although education, marriage, and the church receive most of the attack, Orel describes the work as a ". . . novel aflame with criticism of the age."²⁰¹ Jude is portrayed as the type of student most universities should want because of his intelligence and strong desire to learn. Nevertheless, he is denied admission to Christminster because he lacks a formal education geared to university acceptance. Thus, the educational system loses those students which it should want. The effects of this

²⁰⁰Robert Schweik, "Moral Perspectives in Tess of the D'Urbervilles," CE, XXIV (October, 1962), 18.

²⁰¹Orel, op. cit., p. 36.

loss on the educational system are revealed in the decay and stagnation attached to Christminster. For example, age has not resulted indignity but, instead, in disrepair.

The marriage laws are attacked, because they make no provision for change, even justifiable change. Hardy comments at the time of Jude and Arabella's marriage:

And so, standing before the aforesaid officiator, the two swore that at every other time of their lives till death took them, they would assuredly believe, feel, and desire precisely as they had believed, felt, and desired during the few preceding weeks. What was as remarkable as the undertaking itself was the fact that nobody seemed at all surprised at what they swore.²⁰²

Jude is also an attack upon Victorian Christianity, or, as Alexander states, an attack upon the theory of a "good" God.²⁰³ Holland comments:

Hardy uses images and symbols derived from the evolution of Christianity to criticize the so-called Christian society he knew in late nineteenth century England and to criticize the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice.²⁰⁴

The criticism of Christianity is related to criticism of the general moral code of the times. Hardy stresses the difference between enforcing morality in the guise of

²⁰²Thomas Hardy, Jude The Obscure, p. 101. (Text parallel to standard edition).

²⁰³B. J. Alexander, "Thomas Hardy's Jude The Obscure: A Rejection of Traditional Christianity's 'Good' God Theory," SOQ, III (October, 1964), 76.

²⁰⁴Norman Holland Jr., "Jude The Obscure: Hardy's Symbolic Indictment of Christianity," NCF, IX (June, 1954), 50.

Christianity (condemning "bad" behavior) and actually practicing Christianity (forgiving). For example, while Phillotson believes it is right to let Sue go instead of keeping her with him, society condemns him for what was actually a kind act. Similarly, society approves when he takes Sue back; but by conforming to the acceptable social mores, he begins to assume society's cruel characteristics. Also, society will not accept Sue and Jude because they have behaved "improperly." And, in its attempt to enforce good behavior, it acts in an unchristian way. Sue comments:

I can't bear that they, and everybody, should think people wicked because they may have chosen to live their own way! It is really these opinions that make the best intentioned people reckless, and actually become immoral.²⁰⁵

Hardy's purpose in both Tess and Jude is to criticize the social system. Since these weaknesses were societal faults, they could not be judged by a natural norm. In Tess Hardy kept the natural setting, but portrayed nature as a victim of society just as Tess is. Thus, nature cannot resist the intrusions of the new-- either people (Alec) or machinery (the threshing machine). While remnants of the natural setting remain in Jude (the portrayal of Jude's boyhood at Marygreen, for instance), the one controlling idea throughout the novel is the spirit of Christminster.

²⁰⁵Hardy, Jude The Obscure, p. 178.

Just as setting has been sacrificed to theme in Tess and Jude, so has character. Hardy manipulates the characters in order to intensify his statement of theme and, thus, loses the balance of the earlier novels. The characters become "nonrealistic symbols for ideas."²⁰⁶ Tess represents nature as the victim of society. Alec and Angel represent the forces that are corrupting the natural world. Beach states that the characters of Jude represent the

. . . stunted growth of modern life, with all its maladjustment, discontent, and restless, craving intellectuality. They are the poor creatures of an urban industrial order.²⁰⁷

Ironically, however, while the natural norm has disappeared, the characters are still trying to find something to which they can conform. This attempt often causes their tragedy because the social code which they select as a norm offers no stability or reliability. It lacks the unchangeable qualities of the natural norm. An attempt to conform to the transient social norm brings disaster to the characters.

The characters of Tess and Jude cannot be divided into the categories of insider and outsider as could the people of the earlier novels who could be, because of the

²⁰⁶Holland, op. cit., p. 50.

²⁰⁷Beach, op. cit., p. 243.

presence of the natural norm in the narrative. Since this norm no longer exists, this division cannot be applied in these two later novels. The types of the earlier novels combine in the six primary characters of Tess and Jude-- Tess, Alec, Angel, Jude, Arabella, and Sue.²⁰⁸ Yet, the characters of Tess and Jude are similar to each other. For example, Alec and Arabella represent the corruption of the natural world by society; Angel and Sue, the weaknesses of people who attempt to become "free-thinkers" unrestricted by society's teachings; and Tess and Jude, the pure who are destroyed by society. These six characters are also trying to find something to which they can conform; and, therefore, they also represent the tragedy of departing from the natural norm.

Alec represents the new rich emerging from the change of rural to urban life.²⁰⁹ Davidson says that he has ". . . appropriated an old country name and bought his way into Wessex."²¹⁰ He brings with him the corruption of society. Through the destruction of Tess and, therefore, nature, he represents the disappearance of the natural norm.

²⁰⁸Beckman, op. cit., p. 71.

²⁰⁹Frank Plikington, "Religion in Hardy's Novels," Contemporary Review, CLXXXVIII, (December, 1955), 32.

²¹⁰Davidson, op. cit., p. 22.

Ironically, while Tess is at Flintcomb-Ashe, Alec is kinder to her than anyone else, for he is the only figure to offer Tess and her family help, even though he has ulterior motives.²¹¹ But even when offering help, he is a " . . . kind of devil, embodying the amiable sloth, the slackness of will and value, which is the devil's world."²¹² Alec is not a well-drawn character because of the role he is assigned to play in portraying the corruption of the natural world. For example, Hawkins refers to him as a " . . . muddle of useful improbabilities."²¹³ Baker comments upon the distortion of Alec's characterization by saying he represents the " . . . almost impersonal foulness of the world."²¹⁴ Van Ghent summarizes the role he must play in the novel when she states:

Alec is the smart aleck of the Book of Job, the one who goes to and fro in the earth and walks up and down in it, the perfectly deracinated one, with his flash and new money and faked name and aggressive ego.²¹⁵

Hardy further distorts Alec's character by stressing his

²¹¹Howe, op. cit., p. 127.

²¹²Loc. Cit.,

²¹³Hawkins, op. cit., p. 76.

²¹⁴Baker, History of the Novel, p. 73.

²¹⁵Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novels: Form and Function, pp. 208-209.

sensuality and portraying a character out of balance within himself, for Alec has no redeeming qualities. Society has distorted his character, and he brings his distortion into the natural world of Wessex.

Arabella's character also is distorted to fit the purposes of the novel. She represents the force that releases the uncontrollable qualities in Jude, introducing him to a sensual world in continual strife with his intellectual world. In order to intensify Arabella's characteristics, Hardy associates her with unpleasant imagery through the novel: e.g., liquor, blood, and, most frequently, pigs.²¹⁶ McDowell views the throwing of the pig's pizzle at Jude as a "ritualistic yielding" of Jude's virginity to Arabella.²¹⁷ But Jude loses more than just his virginity. He also yields his single-minded goal of Christminster. Hardy describes Jude's room after he returns from a day with Arabella:

When he got back to the house his aunt had gone to bed, and a general consciousness of his neglect seemed written on the face of all things confronting him. He went upstairs without a light, and the dim interior of the room accosted him with sad inquiry. There lay his book open, just as he had left it, and

²¹⁶Holland, op. cit., p. 54.

²¹⁷Frederick McDowell, "Hardy's 'Seeming or Personal Impression': The Symbolical Use of the Image and Contrasts in Jude The Obscure," MFS, VI (Autumn, 1960), 237.

the capital letters on the title-page regarded him with fixed reproach in the grey starlight, like the unclosed eyes of a dead man.²¹⁸

However, in spite of the evil role she play, Arabella has a type of natural wisdom that permits her to know more about Sue and Jude than they probably know about themselves.²¹⁹

She demonstrates this kind of wisdom in the concluding passage of the novel when she states:

[Mrs. Edlin]: Well-- poor little thing, 'tis to be believed she's found forgiveness somewhere! She said she had found peach!

[Arabella]: She may swear that on her knees to the holy cross upon her necklace till she's hoarse, but it won't be true! . . . She's never found peace since she left his gras, and never will again till she's as he is now.²²⁰

This evidence of natural wisdom illustrates the true tragedy that Hardy portrays in Arabella. It demonstrates the remains of the rustic chorus, thus emphasizing that Arabella is a part of the natural world, yet one that has been thoroughly corrupted by society. Guerard states that in Jude

. . . the gentle landscapes of the earliest novels have almost disappeared, the peasants are mean and grasping, and Arabella Donn is a vulgar and selfish animal.²²¹

²¹⁸Hardy, Jude The Obscure, p. 92.

²¹⁹Frederick McDowell, "In Defense of Arabella: A Note on Jude The Obscure," ELN, I (June, 1964), 280.

²²⁰Hardy, Jude The Obscure, p. 449.

²²¹Guerard, Introduction, p. x.

The rustics have degenerated into the characteristics of Arabella. In the earlier novels, the rustics are closely associated with nature and reflect the natural norm around them. Arabella represents the corruption of this natural norm. She is also searching for a new norm, for she is intent upon conforming to the values of society. For example, in Australia she marries another man, even though she is still legally married to Jude, in order to meet society's norm. Through her, Hardy illustrates the result of conformity to society's norm instead of to nature's.

Angel Clare, like Alec and Arabella, is representative of the influences of society's norm. While he believes that he is free from society's corrupting influence, his reaction to Tess's confession, in Lodge's words, ". . . demonstrates conclusively that his temperament is essentially puritannical and conventional."²²² Lodge further indicates that Angel's stay at the dairy is not to learn an occupation but is

. . . something of an affectation on the part of Angel, a kind of compensation for his exclusion from the busy civilized world of the nineteenth century, a swaggering advertisement of his free thinking.²²³

²²²David Lodge, The Language of Fiction, p. 184.

²²³Loc. cit.

When Angel learns that Tess is not " . . . respectable and innocent in the conventional moral sense," his free thinking stops.²²⁴ He becomes an evil force that destroys Tess.²²⁵ DeLaura condemns Angel's philosophy as being

. . . objectionable logically and theologically in its attempts to retain the old religiosity without the old basis of belief.²²⁶

Angel Clare attempts to replace the societal norm, which had replaced the natural norm, with another. He attempts to replace the societal norm with a "free-thinking" norm. Tess is the only contact Angel has with nature, and by rejecting her, he rejects the natural world, rejects his own norm, and adopts the civilized world and the norm it offers.

In some ways, Angel is similar to the characters of Mayor whose fates depend on their adaptability. Those who cannot adjust to the world around them are destroyed. Hardy places Angel in the same position, but the outcome reveals the author's different attitude toward nature in this novel. Since Angel cannot adjust to Tess (the natural world), she is defeated by his rejection. Davidson states:

²²⁴Loc. cit.

²²⁵Stevenson, op. cit., p. 421.

²²⁶DeLaura, op. cit., pp. 390-392.

The tragedy arrives when he cannot adjust . . . his delicate sensibility to a gross, but, in the natural order, an understandable biological fact.²²⁷

Van Ghent explains his inability to adjust to the situation which results " . . . when the human has been cut off from the community and has been individualized by intellectual education."²²⁸

Sue also faces a conflict between her attempts to be a free-thinking modern woman and her desire to conform to the society around her. According to Van Ghent, Hardy intended for her to represent modern woman who is able to reason along with modern man.²²⁹ But her failure to achieve this thinking, reasoning status symbolizes Hardy's fear that mankind may not be evolving in an orderly manner.²³⁰ He indicates Sue's conflicting tendencies of wanting to break away from society's conventions while at the same time conforming to them by associating both Christian and pagan imagery with her. She is surrounded by pagan allusions and pagan sympathies.²³¹ She illustrates her desire to be associated with paganism when

²²⁷Davidson, op. cit., p. 22.

²²⁸Van Ghent, op. cit., p. 209.

²²⁹Chew, Thomas Hardy, p. 72.

²³⁰Hawkins, op. cit., p. 22.

²³¹McDowell, "Hardy's 'Seemings or Personal Impressions,'" p. 240.

she buys the figures of Venus and Apollo. Nevertheless, according to McDowell, Sue " . . . feels instinctive sympathy more with Christian asceticism than with pagan sensuousness."²³² She is similar to Angel in that she attempts not to conform to the standards of the society around her. However, the "free-thinking" norm that she attempts to substitute is not strong enough to resist society's. The value of the societal norm that has replaced the natural norm is revealed through Sue's return to Phillotson. Duffin comments upon Sue's attempted break with society:

So of free-action; to do and live according to one's personal ideals in defiance of earth's opposition and the thunders of heaven-- such a course, with its almost inevitable disaster of defeat, is only for vast Promethean natures; perhaps only for male natures; certainly not for fine and fragile natures such as Sue's.²³³

The marriage laws are one part of the societal norm. Sue's final conformance to these laws is an indictment of the entire societal norm. Angel and Sue try to substitute a new norm for the societal one, but fail. Tess and Jude are in a new category, for they are the victims of the societal norm and present the true tragedy of the loss of the natural norm.

Tess is associated with nature and natural forces

²³²McDowell, "Indefense of Arabella," p. 274.

²³³Duffin, op. cit., p. 74.

through-out the novel. Wagenknecht states that she is never detached from her rural background.²³⁴ Beach adds, "Neither she nor her peers are ever seen as other than a part of the landscape."²³⁵ By stressing Tess's relation with nature, Hardy conveys through her some of nature's characteristics, including the passiveness of nature. He has changed the emphasis from nature as a master of society to nature as a slave of society. In the earlier novels, the characters reject or conform to the natural norm. Now, the natural norm has lost its ability to determine a character's fate. Tess assumes this passive role of nature through the narrative. She is the victim of society in the characters of Angel and Alec. In fact, her passivity is an important part of her seduction by Alec.²³⁶ She is victimized by the social world without her resistance. The strength of the societal norm is demonstrated by Tess's believing it necessary to conform to the norm through the act of confessing to Angel. Ironically, the society that presented virginity as necessary for marriage would probably have labeled Tess a fool for believing that she must tell Angel

²³⁴Wagenknecht, op. cit., p. 361.

²³⁵Beach, op. cit., p. 214.

²³⁶Elliott B. Gose Jr., "Psychic Evolution: Darwinism and Initiation in Tess of the D'Urbervilles," NCF, XVIII (December, 1963), 263.

of her past. In her mind, she is dominated by society's norm; therefore, she sees herself as having sinned. A natural norm would not judge her in this way. Schweik notes that, if Tess thinks she is innocent, she also finds herself guilty.²³⁷

The natural world does enjoy a brief resurgence in Tess before disappearing in Jude. Tess stops being passive when she kills Alec.²³⁸ O'Grady states:

The stabbing is a last fierce outcry against being forced into situations, positions into which she did not put herself and over which she had no control.²³⁹

For awhile, nature continues triumphant, as Tess and Angel roam the countryside. Gose states that only after Tess disregards society does she obtain any happiness.²⁴⁰ She discards the societal norm and returns to the natural norm. Even at the Talbothays, Tess is under the influence of the societal norm, because worries about her past keep her from being content. But the novel ends with nature, which has for a time been triumphant, once more dominated by society. However, in Hardy's last novel, the natural world does not even

²³⁷Schweik, "Moral Perspectives," p. 18.

²³⁸William R. Herman, "Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles," Expl XVIII, (1959), Item 16.

²³⁹Walter O'Grady, "On Plot in Modern Fiction: Hardy, James, Conrad," MFS, XI (Summer, 1965), 113.

²⁴⁰Gose, op. cit., p. 271.

have this brief resurgence.

Jude is similar to Tess in his innate goodness; neither of them ever harmed anyone, but he lacks Tess's close association with nature.²⁴¹ Jude has nothing with which he can identify, for the one thing with which he tries to align himself, Christminster, rejects him. Although Jude comes from the country, he spends most of his life in towns.²⁴² He becomes a "working-class individual."²⁴³ Because he is a contemporary man, he must be defeated by a contemporary world.²⁴⁴ Since Wessex is not a part of the contemporary world, it cannot be associated with the primary action of the novel, which must center in the towns and cities that personify contemporary life.

In Jude, the contemporary world appears in the form of Christminster. Here, Christminster serves the same purpose as does Egdon Heath in Native, becoming a "symbolic background" representing Jude's "aspirations and frustration."²⁴⁵ Similarly, while Eustacia is defeated by Egdon Heath and

²⁴¹May Tomlinson, "Jude The Obscure," SAQ, XXIII (October, 1924), 336.

²⁴²Howe, op. cit., p. 137.

²⁴³Walter Ernest Allen, The English Novel, p. 320.

²⁴⁴Loc. cit.

²⁴⁵Hellstrom, op. cit., p. 12.

herself, Jude is defeated by Christminster and himself.²⁴⁶

But, as Beach says, Jude is "humanly weak."²⁴⁷ The parts of Jude's character, represented by Arabella and Sue, conflict. Beckman says that

Arabella and Sue correspond to Jude's body and soul, his sense and intellect, his earthy durability and his airy fragility, his Caliban and his Ariel.²⁴⁸

Jude's struggle is further intensified by the lack of a suitable norm by which to judge himself. The natural norm has been completely removed because he has been disestablished from the land.²⁴⁹ The natural setting has been removed from the novel; only society remains. But because the societal norm is unreliable, Jude is not able to adjust to it. Thus, he is continually victimized by it. Holland states that Jude, at the conclusion of the narrative, is

. . . left to die in his Old Testament gloom, while the pagan spirit Sue is defiled and conventionalized, the ostensibly Christian society plays at "Remembrance Games," and his "truly religious" wife is deceiving him²⁵⁰

Hardy uses both Tess and Jude as means of stating

²⁴⁶Ibid., p. 13.

²⁴⁷Beach, op. cit., p. 242.

²⁴⁸Beckman, op. cit., p. 82.

²⁴⁹Hellstrom, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁵⁰Holland, op. cit., p. 57.

grievances against society. In fact, as Baker states, he " . . . seems to go out of his way to denounce social iniquities."²⁵¹ Since the natural norm does not provide a suitable background for his purpose, Hardy discards it. The novels are consequently thrown out of balance. Cecil states that in both novels:

Just when we are spellbound by Hardy the novelist, Hardy the preacher bobs up, and instantly the spell is broken.²⁵²

Although Tess and Jude are not artistic failures, neither are they as well designed as Native or Mayor. When Hardy is overly enthusiastic for the causes he is advancing, he exchanges art for journalism.²⁵³ In order to fit the purpose of the novel, Hardy distorts the characters to fit the theme. For example, Jude becomes a " . . . puppet, constructed for a didactic purpose, who is jerked by Hardy from the wings."²⁵⁴ Little Father Time is the most distorted character, however, for he is obviously not a child but, instead, a means of delivering Hardy's pronouncements. Cecil summarizes the weaknesses of Jude:

²⁵¹Baker, History of the Novel, p. 69.

²⁵²Cecil, op. cit., p. 187.

²⁵³Pyre, Introduction, pp. xxii.

²⁵⁴Rutland, op. cit., p. 256.

No doubt, working-men of intellectual aspirations and strong sexual impulses did tend to have a poor time in Victorian England; but there is no reason to suppose that their children were particularly liable to hang each other.²⁵⁵

While Tess and Jude are both powerful novels because of Hardy's concern with the loss of the natural norm, at the same time they are weakened by this concern. Beach states

Not merely has he declined to avail himself of the poetry of the Wessex background which goes so far to mitigate the sadness of the earlier stories; he insists on forcing upon us the dreary prose of town and country seen in their least prepossessing light.²⁵⁶

Because of the distortion of elements, both works suffer. In both books, argument dominates everything else, and events and characters are manipulated to support the arguments. Although the power is in the novels, it is so misused that it is overwhelming instead of tragic.²⁵⁷

In Jude, Hardy expresses that the natural norm has disappeared. He shows through the fate of the characters that the societal norm which has replaced it is not satisfactory. According to Holloway, Hardy realized that the old order was helpless before the new one.²⁵⁸ Some of the characters-- such as Angel and Sue-- seek a "free-thinking"

²⁵⁵Cecil, op. cit., p. 190.

²⁵⁶Beach, op. cit., p. 222.

²⁵⁷Ibid., p. 223.

²⁵⁸John Holloway, "The Charted Mirror", p. 96.

norm with which to replace the societal norm. But those who are seeking a new norm are not yet independent enough or strong enough to establish one. After having stated in Jude his belief that an individual is not strong enough to exist outside a societal norm, Hardy stopped writing novels, and, in The Dynasts, his major work after the novels, he turns to question the cosmos that creates the environment.

In the novels before Tess, nature provides a norm to which the characters must conform. Whether the characters are from the locale of the novel or from outside becomes of secondary importance to their willingness to accept the natural norm. Hardy's use of the natural norm is also responsible for the artistic balance of the earlier novels. In Tess and Jude, however, Hardy no longer presents nature as a powerful force, but instead presents society as the arena of conflict. Because of this emphasis, these later novels are not as artistically balanced as the earlier ones, for both character and setting are distorted to aid the presentation of theme. Although Tess and Jude are powerful books, the absence of the natural norm (and Hardy's bemoaning its disappearance) results in a weaker structure than in the earlier novels.

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