

**THE MOTIF OF THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER:  
A CATALYST FOR CHANGE  
IN SELECTED HARDY NOVELS**

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**LARRY ZANE LESLIE**

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A CATALYST FOR CHANGE  
IN SELECTED HARDY NOVELS

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An Abstract

Presented to

the Graduate Council of  
Austin Peay State University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by

Larry Zane Leslie

August, 1973



## ABSTRACT

Thomas Hardy loved Wessex: the land, the people and their customs. A thorough study of the Hardy canon reveals something more than just his love for the pastoral scene. One can see Hardy struggling to understand and effectively present a realistic picture of what he saw happening to this scene. One disturbing factor was the steady disappearance of the rural segment of English society because of the advance of industrialization and social reform. Hardy saw all this happening around him, yet he understood. While man must endure this "general drama of pain," it is possible to extract some good from even the most painful situation. Hence, Hardy's feelings about the world were ones of ambivalence and not ones of total pessimism as many of his critics contend.

In part, Hardy chooses to illustrate this ambivalence in his novels through the motif of the mysterious stranger. The archetypal stranger, usually an outsider, enters an existing society and begins to break down the facade of order. The stranger may be, at various times, a trickster, a double, a wise old man, a wanderer, or a supernatural being. As a catalyst for change, he influences directly the lives of individuals with whom he has contact.

Eventually, the stranger aids in the alteration of the old order and the establishment of a new. Yet Hardy's development of the stranger leads the discerning reader to the conclusion that the painful changes being made are somehow both necessary and useful.

Thus, Hardy's message is not one of total pessimism, but one of ambivalence toward various types of change. Sergeant Troy in Far from the Madding Crowd, Diggory Venn in The Return of the Native, Donald Farfrae in The Mayor of Casterbridge, and Alec D'Urberville in Tess of the D'Urbervilles all cause turmoil and change. These strangers serve as catalysts for change in the pursuit of Hardy's real outlook on the changes he saw taking place. In addition to respect for tradition, Hardy advocated adjustment to social conditions and acceptance of one's environment and, even, one's own basic nature. The Hardy philosophy, then, is one of ambivalence--sorrow at the passing of the good life of Wessex, yet recognition that such changes were necessary.



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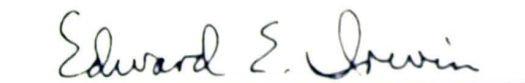
August, 1973

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Larry Zane Leslie entitled "The Motif of the Mysterious Stranger: A Catalyst for Change in Selected Hardy Novels." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

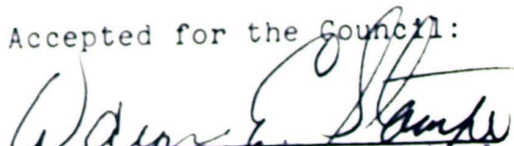
  
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and  
recommend its acceptance:

  
Second Committee Member

  
Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Council:

  
Dean of the Graduate School



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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy loved England. Of that almost everyone is sure. Most especially he loved the people and the folkways of Wessex, his own region. The people and their customs found their way into Hardy's work where he treated them as part of himself, as indeed they were. But Hardy observed his native land undergoing a kind of silent, significant change. He mused quite sadly on this change in the "Preface" to his first major novel, Far from the Madding Crowd:

The game of prisoner's-base, which not so long ago seemed to enjoy a perennial vitality in front of the worn-out stocks, may, so far as I can say, be entirely unknown to the rising generation of schoolboys there. The practice of divination by Bible and key, the regarding of valentines as things of serious import, the shearing-supper, the long smock-frocks, and the harvest-home, have, too, disappeared in the wake of the old houses; and with them has gone, it is said, much of that love of fuddling to which the village at one time was notoriously prone. The change at the root of this has been the recent supplanting of the class of stationary cottagers, who carried on the local traditions and humours, by a population of more or less migratory labourers, which has led to a break of continuity in local history, more fatal than any other thing to the preservation of legend, folk-lore, close inter-social relations, and eccentric individualities. (pp.vi-vii)

Because there is so much in Hardy that suggests he is a pessimist, like the above-quoted passage, Hardy scholars, like Albert J. Guerard, Dorothy Van Ghent, and John Holloway, rarely write about Hardy without touching, rather heavily at times, on his dark view of life. For example, Guerard, in an introduction to a collection of essays on Hardy, states: "The general darkening of Hardy's attitude, during his years of novel-writing, cannot be brushed aside."<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Van Ghent is more pointed in her discussion of Hardy's view of life: "He appears to be too much the puppeteer working wires or strings to make events conform to his 'pessimistic' and 'fatalistic' ideas."<sup>2</sup> John Holloway begins one of his critical essays by flatly stating: "The deepening and harshening pessimism of Hardy's later novels has been stressed often enough in the past. All that is needed here is to remind readers of how it is usually located in two particular aspects of his work."<sup>3</sup>

While it may well be that Hardy often took the dark

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<sup>1</sup>Albert J. Guerard, "Introduction," Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Dorothy Van Ghent, "On Tess of the D'Urbervilles," Twentieth Century Interpretations of Tess of the D'Urbervilles (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>John Holloway, "Hardy's Major Fiction," Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 52.



view of life, it must also be pointed out that Hardy actually had a rather ambivalent attitude about the world. He saw social changes taking place, yet he realized that such changes were necessary. By his own admission, Hardy was a meliorist; that is, he believed that human compassion could improve man's condition.<sup>4</sup> Babette Deutsch assesses Hardy's philosophy in this manner: "If he regarded the universe as the creation of a blind Will, without intelligence or pity, he came for a time to put his hope in what he called 'evolutionary meliorism' and to believe that the Power that had brought the planets and the pismires into being might yet achieve the awareness developed by one of the least of its creatures."<sup>5</sup> Change is a necessary pain, but Hardy did not consider his melioristic position a temporary one. Social change and commercial growth had already begun to overwhelm the pleasant, pastoral life of Wessex.

In four of his novels, Hardy has, in a stroke of genius, allowed us to see firsthand the changes he observed taking place and to understand what he felt were the correct responses to these changes. One literary motif he uses to illustrate these sweeping changes is the archetypal

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<sup>4</sup>Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 26.

<sup>5</sup>Babette Deutsch, Poetry in Our Time (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1963), p. 2.

mysterious stranger who serves as a catalyst for change. The motif is visible in Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, and Tess of the D'Urbervilles.

According to Carl Jung, "Archetypes . . . are psychic forces that demand to be taken seriously, and they have a strange way of making sure of their effect. Always they were the bringers of protection and salvation, and their violation has as its consequence the 'perils of the soul' . . . ." <sup>6</sup> Northrop Frye explains the necessity of having archetypes in literature, and for recognizing them:

If we do not accept the archetypal or conventional element . . . it is impossible to get any systematic mental training out of the reading of literature alone. But if we add to our desire to know literature, a desire to know how we know it, we shall find that expanding images into conventional archetypes of literature is a process that takes place unconsciously in all our reading. <sup>7</sup>

Thus, it is not at all surprising that archetypes can be found throughout literature, the work of Thomas Hardy included. It is a natural part of the creative process,

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<sup>6</sup>C. G. Jung, Psychological Reflections, ed. Jolande Jacobi (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p. 37.

<sup>7</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 100.

according to Jung: "The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the . . . activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work."<sup>8</sup>

Hardy's archetypal figure is the mysterious stranger. Appearing in each of four major novels, the mysterious stranger is seen as a man--somewhat superhuman or supernatural--who profoundly affects a crowd, a family, or an individual.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, the mysterious stranger has six characteristics. Not all are likely to be exemplified by the mysterious stranger of any single novel. In the course of the four, however, one can see all the traits at work.

The mysterious stranger is a wanderer. As such, he expresses a longing and restless desire for change buried deep within each individual. Sergeant Troy in Far from the Madding Crowd is obviously a wanderer. He wanders into the life of Bathsheba, sending her reeling under the effects of his charm, yet stirring within her desires for a romantic, carefree life. No one can doubt that Diggory Venn, the reddleman, in The Return of the Native is the epitome of a wanderer. He drops in and out of the lives of the Heath-folk

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<sup>8</sup>C. G. Jung, The Portable Jung, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: Viking Press, 1971), p. 321.

<sup>9</sup>Roy R. Male, "The Story of the Mysterious Stranger in American Fiction," Criticism, 3 (Fall, 1961), p. 290.



most unexpectedly. According to Jung, the myth of the wanderer is rooted deep in the unconscious mind. It has as its basis the unquenchable longing or desire for a happy, carefree, romantic life.<sup>10</sup>

The mysterious stranger is sometimes a double figure, a reflection of one's own psyche. The double, not totally unlike Conrad's secret sharer, is split off from one's consciousness and behaves as an autonomous personality. Donald Farfrae in The Mayor of Casterbridge exemplifies this trait of the mysterious stranger. Like Henchard, Farfrae participates in the corn trade, becomes Mayor, and loves Elizabeth-Jane. As Henchard's double, he possesses some admirable traits that Henchard will never possess.

The mysterious stranger is often a trickster. Again according to Jung, the trickster ". . . is the epitome of all the inferior traits of character in individuals. And since the individual shadow is never absent as a component of personality, the collective figure can construct itself out of it continually."<sup>11</sup> Alec D'Urberville qualifies as just such a trickster. He pretends to be something he is not--a member of the aristocracy. He successfully seduces

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<sup>10</sup>C. G. Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1965), p. 231.

<sup>11</sup>Paul Radin, The Trickster (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), p. 209.



a naive and innocent Tess. Alec turns to the ministry, only to abandon God's work later when he again sees the opportunity to seduce Tess. His actions reflect the trickster set loose in moral England. In Far from the Madding Crowd, Sergeant Troy is the trickster who encounters both Fanny Robin and Bathsheba, persuading them to enjoy sexual delights at great expense, especially for Fanny who dies as a result of Troy's broken promises. J. O. Bailey, in an article titled "Hardy's Mephistophelean Visitants," states that these strangers who enter and disturb a society are actually Satanic figures. He says, for example, that in the case of at least two of the characters, the color red denotes the devilish characteristics of the man. Such appears to be the case with the uniformed Sergeant Troy and with Diggory Venn, the reddleman.<sup>12</sup>

The mysterious stranger sometimes appears as the wise old man. This archetype appears in ". . . situations in which insight, understanding, good advice, determination, and planning are needed, but cannot be mastered by one's own resources. . . ." <sup>13</sup> Although not as old in years as he is in experience, Diggory Venn offers many of these same things to those who come in contact with him. He

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<sup>12</sup>J. O. Bailey, "Hardy's Mephistophelean Visitants," PMLA, 61 (December, 1946), p. 1146.

<sup>13</sup>Antonio Marenco, Jung, Gods, and Modern Man (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), p. 58.

advises Thomasin on marriage, Mrs. Yeobright on making amends with her son, and Wildeve on his relationship with Eustacia. Donald Farfrae fits this pattern, too, but to a somewhat lesser extent. One cannot ignore his insight, understanding, and planning in turning the Casterbridge corn trade into an efficient, profitable business.

The mysterious stranger sometimes has supernatural attributes. Hardy himself establishes Venn as a supernatural figure in a rather clever way. At one point, in the early part of The Return of the Native, a young boy is lost and by chance stumbles into the reddleman's camp. As Hardy explains it, the boy is afraid of the reddleman in much the same way a modern child would be afraid of the "boogeyman." Parents in England at this time often threatened their children with punishment--leaving them for the reddleman to carry off--if they did not behave. The idea, once started, grew so quickly that in later generations, the reddleman was almost a legend and did indeed seem like a supernatural "boogeyman."<sup>14</sup> Though not supernatural, Donald Farfrae certainly could be viewed as having special powers or qualities. He is capable of restoring bad grain. A man with such talent would certainly seem godlike to a town like Casterbridge so dependent on the corn trade.

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<sup>14</sup>Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967), p. 67.

Above all, the mysterious stranger is a catalyst for change. He works on both a social and an individual level. As an influence on society, he often has great power over groups of individuals. Farfrae obviously is an influence on the entire city of Casterbridge. To a somewhat different degree, D'Urberville challenges the existing social order by being seducer--preacher--usurper of the D'Urberville name. The mysterious stranger also influences the lives of individuals. Troy sways Bathsheba; Venn influences Thomasin, Wildeve, and Eustacia; Farfrae impresses Henchard; and D'Urberville overpowers Tess. Each affects others in a different way, yet there can be no doubt that the lives of individuals are profoundly changed by the likes of Troy, Venn, Farfrae, and D'Urberville. In short, the stranger forces change--for the better or the worse. It is here that Hardy's ambivalent attitude becomes obvious. Often the changes are good ones, yet often they are not. Hardy realizes--a bit sadly--that change is necessary and that adjustment to it is also necessary. He further realizes that not everyone will accept change. Some will be caught under its grinding wheels.

The mysterious stranger motif surfaces in four Hardy novels: (1) in Far from the Madding Crowd, a sophisticated, roguish Sergeant Troy disrupts the pastoral scene and three of its individuals; (2) in The Return of the Native, a mild Diggory Venn appears and disappears,



always reminding others of their essential natures and warning against unreasonable actions; (3) in The Mayor of Casterbridge, loveable Donald Farfrae brings youth, sophistication, and industrialization to Casterbridge and ruin to the Mayor; and (4) in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, an unprincipled Alec D'Urberville destroys a beautiful maiden and challenges religion to keep pace with social reform.

J. O. Bailey's contention that these strangers function as Satanic figures is sound enough. However, Bailey's approach constitutes little more than an application of Satanic or shadow characteristics to these outsiders. Further, Bailey, in a footnote, almost entirely dismisses Alec D'Urberville as having little more than an incidental effect on others in the novel. But most important, Bailey's main point is that these "visitants" illustrate the darkening Hardy view of the world and man's place in it.<sup>15</sup> This is precisely the view that this paper hopes to modify. An examination of the motif of the mysterious stranger in Hardy's novels will show that his philosophy is one of ambivalence--sorrow at the passing of the good life of Wessex, yet recognition that such changes are necessary.

The archetypal stranger, usually an outsider, enters an existing society and begins to break down the facade

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<sup>15</sup>Bailey, op. cit., p. 1169.



of order. As a catalyst for change, he influences directly the lives of those with whom he has contact. Eventually, the stranger aids in the alteration of the old order and the establishment of a new. Yet Hardy's development of the stranger leads the discerning reader to the conclusion that the painful changes being made are both useful and necessary. Thus, the Hardy philosophy here is one of ambivalence: respect tradition but adjust to social change.

It will be the purpose of this paper to trace the development of the mysterious stranger in four Hardy novels and to illustrate precisely how the stranger serves as a catalyst for change. Although modest, this study is significant in that it explores Hardy's use of an archetype, thereby directing attention to Hardy's ambivalent attitude toward the changes he saw taking place in his beloved England.

## Chapter II

### SERGEANT TROY

Hardy's use of the motif of the mysterious stranger begins with Sergeant Troy in Far from the Madding Crowd. Troy enters an established society, breaks down the facade of order, and brings about change in the lives of four characters.

Most evident is Troy's influence upon Bathsheba Everdene. After her uncle's death, Bathsheba assumes management of his farm. Her farm activities do not dampen her activities as a woman; she continues to be her frivolous self, especially with William Boldwood, a neighboring farmer. She is considering marriage to Boldwood when Troy appears. Almost immediately, the "order" established by prior events begins to crumble. Returning home through a grove of pine trees, Bathsheba hears a noise:

The noise approached, came close, and a figure was apparently on the point of gliding past her when something tugged at her skirt and pinned it forcibly to the ground. The instantaneous check nearly threw Bathsheba off her balance. In recovering, she struck against warm clothes and buttons.

'A rum start, upon my soul!' said a masculine voice, a foot or so above her head. 'Have I hurt you, mate?'

'No,' said Bathsheba, attempting to shrink away.

'We have got hitched together somehow, I think!' (p. 142)<sup>1</sup>

Hardy suggests more with this scene than one at first realizes. Notice that Bathsheba is almost thrown off balance by the confrontation. Troy's spur becomes tangled in her dress, an act which symbolizes the effect that Troy will have on her life. Up to now, she has had masterful control of her situation. She has directed the activities of both Gabriel Oak and William Boldwood to her satisfaction. But Troy will not be subjugated so easily. From the first moment with Troy, Bathsheba begins to alter her nature. Troy's charm and cavalier manner both impress and startle her. A short time after the initial meeting, she muses on the incident:

'Was ever anything so odd!' she at last exclaimed to herself, in her own room. 'And was anything ever so meanly done as what I did--to skulk away like that from a man who was only civil and kind!' Clearly she did not think this barefaced praise of her person an insult now. (p. 146)

Bathsheba, infatuated with the charms and the off-hand manner of the soldier, becomes interested in him as a potential lover. Troy, as the mysterious stranger, thus begins to unsettle the established order and to involve

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957). Note: the Riverside Edition will be used throughout and subsequent quotations indicated by page number following the text.

himself in Bathsheba's life. A wanderer, he enters her life as a trickster and reflects her subconscious yearning for sexual delights.

Troy's sudden hold over Bathsheba is nowhere more obvious than in a subsequent meeting between the two. Having agreed to watch a demonstration of Troy's swordsmanship, Bathsheba really expects to be quite overcome by his charm and skill; she is not disappointed. Troy continues to amaze her by consistently keeping her off balance. He forces her to trust him as he brandishes the sword about her head:

'That outer loose lock of hair wants tidying,' he said, before she had moved or spoken. 'Wait: I'll do it for you.'  
An arc of silver shone on her right side: the sword had descended. The lock dropped to the ground.

'Bravely borne!' said Troy. (p. 163)

Bathsheba would not normally have allowed a man to dominate her. But Troy is different:

'Only once more.'  
'No--no! I am afraid of you--indeed I am!' she cried.  
'I won't touch you at all--not even your hair. I am only going to kill that caterpillar settling on you. Now: still!' (p. 163)

It is not at all like Bathsheba to permit such rudeness, but she responds to something special in Troy, a mysterious masculinity.

Troy's encounters with Bathsheba inevitably result in a dramatic change in her life and the life of the farm. She



has been tamed, yet how Troy tricks her into marriage is unknown. A second-hand tale from Cainy Ball, Gabriel Oak's young helper, offers the only clue:

'I seed our mis'ess go into a sort of a park place, where there's seats, and shrubs and flowers, arm-in-crook with a sojer,' continued Cainy firmly. . . 'And I think the sojer was Sergeant Troy. And they sat there together for more than half-an-hour, talking moving things, and she once was crying a'most to death. And when they came out her eyes were shining and she was white as a lily; and they looked into one another's faces, as far gone friendly as a man and woman can be!' (p. 195)

Cainy's description implies that Troy used every persuasive technique at his command, reduced Bathsheba to tears, and received her consent to the marriage. Thus Troy destroys the old order and establishes a new one. Bathsheba is no longer mistress of the farm; she is wife to Troy. She is no longer the center of all single men's attention; she is wife to Troy.

Troy's influence upon other characters becomes evident following his marriage to Bathsheba. Immediately after the event, Boldwood accosts Troy upon the road, and we note Boldwood's feelings about Troy:

Troy turned up the hill and quickened his pace. Boldwood stepped forward.

'Sergeant Troy?'

'Yes--I'm Sergeant Troy.'

'Just arrived from up the country, I think.'

'Just arrived from Bath.'

'I am William Boldwood.'

'Indeed.'

'I wish to speak a word with you,'  
he said.

'What about?'

'About her who lives just ahead there--  
and about a woman you have wronged.' (pp. 200-201)

Boldwood, disgruntled by Troy's interest in Bathsheba, is even more upset about Troy's lack of interest toward Fanny Robin, a victim of Troy's trickery in a previous affair. Boldwood, agitated and irritated by Troy's attitude, makes him an offer:

. . . 'Marry Fanny, I'll make it worth your while.'

'How will you?'

'I'll pay you well now, I'll settle a sum of money upon her, and I'll see that you don't suffer from poverty in the future.' (p. 202)

Hardy definitely demonstrates how Boldwood has changed:

His manner has lapsed quite from that of the firm and dignified Boldwood of former times; and such a scheme as he had now engaged in he would have condemned as childishly imbecile only a few months ago. (p. 202)

Of course, Troy accepts the money graciously, then almost immediately reveals that he has tricked Boldwood because he and Bathsheba are married:

'This may be called Fort meeting Feeble, hey, Boldwood?' said Troy. A low gurgle of derisive laughter followed the words. . . .  
'Now that I've taught you a lesson, take your money back again!'

'I will not; I will not!' said Boldwood, in a hiss. (p. 207)

Accordingly, Boldwood joins Bathsheba as an individual whose ordered life has been disturbed and changed by Troy.

Boldwood, no longer the cool farmer always in control of himself and his emotions, is now hot-headed and irrational. Both Boldwood and Bathsheba are approaching a complete recognition of their true selves.

Troy's effect upon Gabriel Oak is almost negligible. As the name suggests, Oak is the solid foundation, the patient and enduring type. He represents the traditions that Hardy holds dear. He is purposeful, resourceful, and knowledgeable enough to realize the negligible worth of a man like Troy. Troy's actions do, however, force Oak to shoulder additional responsibility. Following the harvest, Troy rewards the workers with a large banquet. The banquet turns into a drinking party, much to the disgust of both Oak and Bathsheba. To complicate matters, a storm causes Oak's concern about the state of the newly-harvested crops. He must cover the crops to protect them from the bad weather. Unfortunately, when Oak goes to the barn to enlist the help of the hired hands, Troy has given them too much liquor and no one, not even Troy, is sober enough to help Oak with the crops:

Here, under the table, and leaning against forms and chairs in every conceivable attitude except perpendicular, were the wretched persons of all the work-folk, the hair of their heads at such low levels being suggestive of mops and brooms. In the midst of these shone red and distinct the figure of Sergeant Troy, leaning back in a chair. (p. 216)



Oak must undertake the entire task himself, helped only by Bathsheba; but the task is primarily his because Bathsheba is a poor substitute for knowledgeable, able-bodied workmen. Oak's feelings about Troy are now reinforced; he believes more strongly than before that Troy is incapable of managing a farm. Nor is Troy worthy of Bathsheba in Oak's eyes.

Troy does, however, influence the life of Fanny Robin. In a sense, he is her life. Totally devoted to him, she is willing to forsake all and travel great distances to be near him. She desperately needs to share Troy's love. Troy merely takes advantage of her and then leaves her when Bathsheba beckons. Out for a ride in the gig, the newlyweds come upon a forlorn figure walking beside the road:

Her face was drawn into an expression which had gladness and agony both among its elements. She uttered an hysterical cry, and fell down.

'O, poor thing!' exclaimed Bathsheba instantly preparing to alight.

'Stay where you are, and attend the horse!' said Troy . . . 'I'll see to the woman!' The horse, gig, and Bathsheba moved on.

'How on earth did you come here? I thought you were miles away, or dead! Why didn't you write to me?' said Troy to the woman, in a strangely gentle, yet hurried voice, as he lifted her up.

'I feared to.'

'Have you any money?'

'None.'

'Good Heaven--I wish I had more to give you!' (pp. 230-231)

Troy doesn't realize it yet, but he is reacting to this situation in precisely the same way Boldwood reacted to his appearance. Troy tries to buy his way out of an unpleasant



situation. He is polite and civil to Fanny, but obviously has little feeling for her:

'I have only another moment,' continued Troy; 'and now listen. Where are you going to-night? Casterbridge Union?'

'Yes; I thought to go there.'

'You shan't go there; yet, wait. Yes, perhaps for tonight. . . . I can do nothing better--worse luck! Sleep there to-night.' (p. 231)

Fanny does go to Casterbridge, but the trip proves too much for her delicate condition. Shortly after arriving in the city, she dies. Without doubt, Troy is responsible for the death of Fanny.

More directly, this incident marks the first flaw in the relationship between Bathsheba and Troy. Bathsheba is naturally curious about the strange woman Troy spoke with on the road. Further questioning nets Bathsheba little additional information except the fact that the woman was once of interest to her husband. Bathsheba discovers that Troy has a lock of Fanny's hair and suggests he destroy that lock to show his love for her:

. . . 'You like the woman who owns that pretty hair--yes; it is pretty--more beautiful than my miserable black mane! Well, it is no use; I can't help being ugly. You must like her best, if you will!' (p. 241)

Bathsheba has become a jealous wife, a shrew, which is a new role for her and another example of change brought on by Troy. He has broken down her calm exterior and exposed a new one.

Following the death of Fanny Robin, Troy reverts to type. He mysteriously wanders away just as he had mysteriously arrived a few years earlier. His failure to return leads to speculation that he is dead. This belief gains widespread support when a passerby reports seeing Troy swimming in a lagoon and being swept out to sea. Troy's absence of fifteen months from the pastoral scene prompts yet another change in Bathsheba. Boldwood again approaches to propose marriage. She does not give a definite answer, saying only that she needs more time to consider the offer. Soon Boldwood succeeds in forcing Bathsheba to agree to a "temporary engagement." He plans to announce this engagement at a party at his home. The neighborhood will display the pastoral tradition of which Hardy was so fond. With melodramatic flair, Hardy chooses this scene for Troy's reappearance. It had been rumored for some time that Troy was in the area, though no substantial proof of his presence could be obtained. The final act for Troy as the mysterious stranger comes at this party. It is well under way when he enters:

There was an unearthly silence, all looking towards the newcomer. Those who had just learnt that he was in the neighborhood recognized him instantly; those who did not were perplexed. . . Boldwood was among those who did not notice that he was Troy.

Troy next advanced into the middle of the room, took off his cap, turned down his coat-collar, and looked Boldwood in the face.

Troy began to laugh a mechanical laugh:  
 Boldwood recognized him now.

Troy turned to Bathsheba. . . .

Then Troy spoke. 'Bathsheba, I come  
 here for you!'

She made no reply.

'Come home with me: come!'

Troy stretched out his hand to pull her  
 towards him, when she quickly shrank back. . . .  
 he seized her arm and pulled it sharply. At  
 the moment of his seizure she writhed, and  
 gave a quick, low scream.

The scream had been heard but a few seconds  
 when it was followed by a sudden deafening  
 report that echoed through the room and  
 stupified them all.

In bewilderment they turned their eyes to  
 Boldwood. Boldwood's face of gnashing despair  
 had changed. The veins had swollen and a  
 frenzied look had gleamed in his eye. He had  
 turned quickly, taken one of the guns, cocked  
 it, and at once discharged it at Troy.

Troy fell. (pp. 333-335)

Once again, Troy has entered an orderly scene. And again,  
 Hardy demonstrates Troy's power as the mysterious stranger.  
 He breaks the facade of order and forces change, with one  
 difference: he loses his life. So he leaves the society  
 almost as violently as he entered it. Yet he has provoked  
 numerous changes. Fanny Robin is dead. Boldwood has  
 proved to be the unstable person many feared him to be.  
 Despite the fate of these two, Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba  
 survive. Their survival is the result of their being able  
 to weather the changes brought about by the mysterious  
 stranger. Oak, the least changed, is now more resolute in  
 his belief that the way to happiness is through patient  
 acceptance and careful adjustment. Bathsheba has learned



to approach life in a more mature fashion. Her true nature was always present, but she had to learn to control her superficial, often emotionally extreme, actions. Her most influential teacher was Sergeant Troy. Richard L. Purdy comments: "The clash of urban and country life, the intrusion of sophistication into a simple peasant world of ancient codes and conventions, is a favorite theme of Hardy's. It occupied him with some frequency as he went on . . . but it makes its first appearance here. Sergeant Troy is the disturbing force in this instance."<sup>2</sup> Hardy's philosophy--in this novel at least--carries a positive note: individuals must recognize themselves, must accept what they are, and then must adjust themselves to their pastoral environment.

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<sup>2</sup>Richard L. Purdy, ed., "Introduction," Far from the Madding Crowd, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. vii.

### Chapter III

#### DIGGORY VENN

In The Return of the Native, a mild Diggory Venn, a reddleman, is the mysterious stranger who profoundly affects the lives of several people. That Hardy would choose such a man as Venn is appropriate, for the reddleman was a traditional figure who was becoming a rarity in England.

As Hardy puts it:

He is a curious, interesting, and nearly  
perished link between obsolete forms of  
life and those which generally prevail. (p. 11)<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, Diggory Venn, the reddleman, forces a crumbling of the old order and the establishment of a new. Venn reflects several characteristics of the archetypal motif. He is at times a wise man, trickster, supernatural being, and mysterious catalyst. Unlike Sergeant Troy, Venn moves slowly. He appears and involves himself with the people of the Heath and, often mysteriously, disappears for weeks, even months. Venn is somewhat like Gabriel Oak in that he believes patience, perserverance, and a thorough knowledge of oneself pave the way for travel through this

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967). Note: the Riverside Edition will be used throughout and subsequent quotations indicated by page number following the text.

life.

The reader meets Venn the wanderer as he journeys along the highway where he aids Thomasin Yeobright. Thomasin, intent on marrying Damon Wildeve, journeys to another town only to discover that the marriage license is invalid. Weary and upset, Thomasin encounters Venn and requests that he carry her home. The novel thus opens with Venn on his way to Thomasin's house with the exhausted girl asleep in the back of his van. Encountering Thomasin's aunt, Mrs. Yeobright, he explains what he knows of the situation:

I can't explain much, ma'am. All I know is that, as I was going along the road this morning, about a mile out of Anglebury, I heard something trotting after me like a doe, and looking round there she was, white as death itself. (pp. 33-34)

This indeed is all Venn knows, but he involves himself quickly in the life of the Heath. He had once hoped for Thomasin as his wife, but she never consented. Obviously, the reddleman still loves Thomasin, though his chances with her now seem more remote than ever.

Anxious to see Thomasin happy and feeling she will be happy if she marries Wildeve, Venn the catalyst sets about investigating an alleged affair between Wildeve and Eustacia Vye. Venn first questions Johnny Nunsuch, a young lad whom Eustacia had enlisted to build a signal fire to Wildeve. Venn learns that Wildeve, at the point of marrying Thomasin, remains interested in Eustacia. The reddleman is offended by Wildeve's duplicity and, like a typical stranger, resolves



to remedy the situation. Lacking the tact and charm of a Sergeant Troy, Venn confronts Eustacia directly and succeeds in convincing her, first, that Wildeve loves only Thomasin and, second, that continued meetings between herself and Wildeve serve no purpose:

Eustacia looked for a moment what she felt, and murmured . . . 'I wish I knew what to do. I don't want to be uncivil to him; but I don't wish to see him again; and I have some few little things to return to him.'

'If you choose to send 'em by me, miss, and a note to tell him that you wish to say no more to him, I'll take it for you quite privately. That would be the most straightforward way of letting him know your mind.' (p. 127)

Eustacia agrees, and Venn takes parcel and letter to Wildeve. Upon delivering the note, Venn gleefully watches as Wildeve reads the note and struggles for a complete understanding of Eustacia's actions. Wildeve resolves to confront Eustacia immediately to demand explanation. Venn's accomplishment seems almost perfect until Wildeve hints that Mrs. Yeobright has mentioned the possibility that Thomasin might yet marry the reddleman instead of himself. This suggestion completely unnerves the trickster reddleman who hastily departs. Wildeve decides that he had best choose which of the two women he wants to marry. His choice made, he strides off in the direction of Thomasin's house, arriving there minutes before the reddleman who has given up trying to bring Thomasin and Wildeve back together and is now committed to winning Thomasin for

himself. But Venn is too late. Wildeve calls at the Yeobright home first, makes his apologies, and once again agrees to marry Thomasin.

Venn's actions thus far have caused Eustacia, Wildeve, and Thomasin to analyze their lives. Although no major conclusions have yet been reached, the reddleman has succeeded in stirring up ideas, situations, and emotions. The reddleman, as the mysterious stranger, pops up frequently to involve himself in different situations. Venn can now be seen also as the wise man who aids the several main characters in coming to a better understanding of themselves. This is illustrated in the famous gambling scene. Mrs. Yeobright dispatches Christian Candle with a sum of money for Thomasin and an equal sum for her son Clym. But on his way to deliver the money, the confused, naive Christian is persuaded to gamble by Wildeve who wins everything. Christian, much upset by his run of bad luck, departs quickly while Wildeve prepares to go home richer than he was a few hours before:

While he was closing the little horn door  
a figure rose from behind a neighbouring  
bush and came forward into the lantern  
light. It was the reddleman approaching. (p. 189)

Venn takes his place opposite Wildeve and challenges him to continue throwing the dice. "Down with your stake," he said. "Or haven't you pluck enough to go on?" (p. 190) Wildeve indeed has pluck enough to go on, and go on he does

until the reddleman wins everything. In the process of losing, Wildeve reveals (to the reader and to himself) a part of his character that had heretofore been hidden. Wildeve, in gambling as in love, is impulsive, reckless, and hot-headed. In contrast, Venn remains cool and calm, thereby infuriating Wildeve even more. Thus, Venn succeeds. He has upset Wildeve, allowing us a close look at the man behind the mask, and he has won the money that rightfully belongs to his beloved Thomasin. He promptly carries the entire sum to her, not knowing that half belongs to Clym. This error, typical of the trickster element, will have serious effects, causing a further breach between Clym and his mother.

Venn sometimes reflects the unconscious psyche of others. He is just as accurate a listener and an observer as he is a man of action. The entire Heath knows of the trouble between Mrs. Yeobright and Clym over his marriage to Eustacia. Venn, in the interest of peace and harmony, visits Mrs. Yeobright to plead with her to visit her son. This exchange between the reddleman and Mrs. Yeobright is an example of how Venn is able to help others find the recognition of self they often so desperately seek:

'Well, since it has come to this,' said Mrs. Yeobright sadly, 'I will own to you, reddleman, that I thought of going. I should be much happier if we were reconciled. The marriage is unalterable, my life may be cut short, and I should wish to die in peace. He is my only son; and since sons



are made of such stuff I am not sorry  
 I have no other . . . I forgive him now.  
 I'll go.' (p. 223)

Venn succeeds in helping Mrs. Yeobright uncover her true feelings about her son. In this respect, he fulfills his role as the mysterious stranger.

In the meantime, Venn continues to dissuade Wildeve from meeting Eustacia, using every trick he knows. He does this partly because of his love for Thomasin and partly because he thinks it the proper course for a man to take in such circumstances. Hardy calls Venn's technique "rough coercion." The activity involves a series of steps Venn takes to discourage Wildeve from meeting Eustacia. For example, walking along a path after a brief encounter with her, Wildeve's ankle is caught by something and he falls headlong to the ground. Upon looking around, he finds a piece of reddish string tied around two tufts of heath and strung across the footpath. At another time, Venn prevents a meeting of the two by knocking on the door and then disappearing just as Eustacia is about to slip out to meet Wildeve in the garden. Scared by the knocking, Wildeve hurries away, hoping he will not be seen:

Half-way down the hill the path ran near  
 a knot of stunted hollies. . . . When  
 Wildeve reached this point a report startled  
 his ear, and a few spent gunshots fell  
 among the leaves around him. (p. 221)

Obviously, Venn, as the mysterious stranger, exercises some control over the lives of Wildeve, Eustacia, and

Thomasin.

Venn's trade and his basic nature keep him mysterious, but without his actions, the actions of others would be entirely different. He makes his move and then watches the others react. The tendency might be to discount the actions of the reddleman as insignificant. Consider, in retrospect, just how much he has already accomplished. He became involved in the lives of the Heath people when he transported Thomasin home from her scheduled marriage. He becomes interested in Thomasin again himself while at the same time trying to help her achieve happiness by discouraging Wildeve from meeting Eustacia. In the process, he has challenged the existing order by disturbing the normal current of events. He has forced Wildeve to remain somewhat faithful to his wife; he has forced Eustacia to abandon Wildeve for Clym. Also he has unmasked Wildeve as a reckless, passionate, confused man, unsure of who he is or what he wants. Finally, Venn has convinced Mrs. Yeobright that she should make peace with her son. In short, the reddleman is present when needed, especially when he thinks others need reminding of their basic natures. His actions attack the old order and suggest a new one based on an understanding of self.

In the latter part of the novel, Venn completes his role as the mysterious stranger. The old order verges on complete collapse. After a lengthy absence during which

Mrs. Yeobright has died, Wildeve has met Eustacia again, and Clym and Eustacia have separated, Venn reappears and begins to stabilize the new order. The complete collapse of the old order occurs when Eustacia persuades Wildeve to help her "escape" from the Heath. Wildeve agrees, but a suspicious Thomasin sets out after him. At the same time, Clym wanders the Heath to find Eustacia and to persuade her to return to him. Venn enters the picture when Thomasin becomes lost as she searches for her husband:

At length Thomasin reached a hollow and began to discern through the rain a faint blotted radiance, which presently assumed the oblong form of an open door . . . .

'Why, it is Diggory Venn's van, surely!' she said. (p. 296)

Venn, most helpful, aids Thomasin in carrying the baby and in finding her way on the Heath. As they begin the journey toward the Quiet Woman Inn, they spot a lantern light visible in a slightly different direction. Thinking it might be her husband, Thomasin urges Venn to follow the light.

While Venn and Thomasin are making their way across the Heath, Clym meets Wildeve on the road. Both are looking for Eustacia. As they stand face to face in the rain:

A dull sound became audible above the storm and the wind . . . it was the fall of a body into the stream in the adjoining mead, apparently at the point of the weir. (p. 300)

Both Clym and Wildeve are suddenly immobile, fearing that Eustacia has fallen into the water. Both men seize lanterns



and rush toward the sound. Upon reaching the water, Wildeve plunges recklessly in. Clym goes around and wades in from the shallow end. Both are intent upon saving whoever fell in, presumably Eustacia. Venn now arrives on the scene, sees something floating in the water, and immediately realizes what has happened. He dispatches Thomasin for help and returns to the pool to attempt a rescue. He wades in and propels himself around the pool, trying to find the body of the one who has fallen in:

His search was now under the left wall, when something came to the surface almost close beside him. It was not, as he had expected, a woman, but a man. (p. 302)

Venn succeeds in dragging this body to shore, only to discover that he has rescued two men. The one pulled out had been holding another man under the surface of the water. Clym is the man on top, Wildeve the dead one on the bottom. Yet another task faces the reddleman:

Venn vanished under the stream, and came up with an armful of wet drapery enclosing a woman's cold form, which was all that remained of the desperate Eustacia. (p. 303)

The rescue complete, Venn returns to shore. Of the three rescued, only Clym lives. The old order has been destroyed, and Venn is present for its demise. He is responsible for it, but the others must also bear some responsibility, for they were at the mercy of their desires and ambitions. They failed to exercise the control that Venn attempted to show was needed.

The changes are significant. Even Venn notices the difference in the order of things:

Yet, of all the circle, he himself was the only one whose situation had not materially changed. (p. 304)

There yet remains one task for Venn, the reddleman, and the establishment of the new order will be complete. Venn proposes to Thomasin, who now accepts him, and the two are married.

In a moment an open fly was driven past, in which sat Venn and Mrs. Venn, Yeobright, and a grand relative of Venn's who had come from Budmouth for the occasion. (pp. 323-324)

Prior to the wedding, Venn gave up the reddle trade and is now a prosperous dairy farmer. All is complete. The old order of Eustacia and Wildeve, of Mrs. Yeobright and Clym, of Thomasin and Wildeve has been destroyed. Patience and perserverance have won. Diggory Venn has aided Hardy in presenting a glimmer of hope for tradition. He lives his life best who knows the virtues of patience and self-control. In short, adjustment to one's environment and to abrupt change is necessary for happiness. The reckless world of Wildeve and the restless world of Eustacia upset the Heath only momentarily. It is the traditional and the pastoral that survive in this novel.

## Chapter IV

DONALD FARFRAE

. . . there appeared a stranger--a young man of remarkably pleasant aspect--who carried in his hand a carpet-bag of the smart floral pattern prevalent in such articles at that time.

He was ruddy and of a fair countenance, bright-eyed, and slight in build. He might possibly have passed by without stopping at all, or at most for half a minute to glance in at the scene, had not his advent coincided with the discussion on corn and bread. . . . He whispered some inquiries of the other bystanders, and remained listening. (p. 32)<sup>1</sup>

Hardy's description of the arrival of Donald Farfrae in Casterbridge immediately demands attention. Both revealing and mysterious, Hardy's description signals the arrival of the mysterious stranger in The Mayor of Casterbridge. Donald Farfrae will bear the responsibility for changing the old order and establishing a new. Moreover, he is by far the most complex stranger so far, more diverse than Sergeant Troy and better defined than Diggory Venn. But we expect results. Accordingly, he challenges the existing order with new ideas and a fresh personality, forcing Michael Henchard to take off his mask of deception.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962). Note: the Riverside Edition will be used throughout and subsequent quotations indicated by page number following the text.



In several ways, Farfrae influences the entire community of Casterbridge as well as Michael Henchard. To completely understand Farfrae's influence, it is necessary to trace his path through the city. His intrusion into the established society occurs almost immediately upon his arrival in Casterbridge:

When he heard Henchard's closing words, 'It can't be done,' he smiled impulsively, drew out his pocketbook, and wrote down a few words by the aid of the light in the window. He tore out the leaf, folded and directed it, and seemed about to throw it in through the open sash upon the dining table; but, on second thoughts, edged himself through the loiterers, till he reached the door of the hotel, where one of the waiters who had been serving inside was now idly leaning against the door-post.

'Give this to the Mayor at once,' he said, handing in his hasty note. (p. 32)

Already Farfrae has begun to challenge the established order. A short time later, the Mayor receives the note, reads it, pauses from the evening's activities, and falls into a moment of serious thought. Suddenly, he leaves his place at the head of the dining table.

Outside the door of the assembly-room he saw the waiter, and beckoning to him asked who brought the note which had been handed in a quarter of an hour before.

'A young man, sir--a sort of traveller. He was a Scotchman, seemingly.'

'Did he say how he had got it?'

'He wrote it himself, sir, as he stood outside the window.' (p. 34)

The Mayor, wishing to know more about the stranger, proceeds to the Three Mariners Inn in an attempt to find the man who

wrote the note. Shown into Farfrae's room, he finds the young man finishing supper. Taking a seat, Henchard comes directly to the point:

'Well, first I should ask, did you write this?'

'Yes, I did,' said the Scotchman.

'Then,' said Henchard, 'I am under the impression that we have met by accident while waiting for the morning to keep an appointment with each other? My name is Henchard; ha'n't you replied to an advertisement for a corn-factor's manager that I put into the paper--ha'n't you come here to see me about it?'

'No,' said the Scotchman, with some surprise. My name is Donald Farfrae. It is true I am in the corren trade--but I have replied to no advairrtisment, and arranged to see no one. I am on my way to Bristol--from there to the other side of the warrid, to try my fortune in the great wheat-growing districts of the West. . . .' (p. 39)

The preliminary picture of Farfrae nears completion. The exchange of information between the two reveals the contents of the note. Farfrae has devised a method of partially restoring bad corn. This possibility comes at a most opportune time for Henchard, the local corn merchant, because he has just experienced some bad luck and most of the current crop is spoiled. Henchard knows of no way by which to redeem bad grain. Farfrae's disclosure that he knows a way is, in itself, welcome news to Henchard.

Farfrae next demonstrates his skill by restoring some of the grain:

'It's complete!--quite restored, or--well--nearly.'

'Quite enough restored to make good seconds out of it,' said the Scotchman. 'To fetch it back entirely is impossible.' (p. 40)

Naturally, Henchard thinks rapidly: such a man would be of invaluable service to him. With this man, he might save a goodly portion of his grain. He might avoid the sacrifice of profits because of a bad year. Henchard, always the opportunist, offers Farfrae the job as manager. However, Farfrae is determined to see the world and insists "it cannot be! it cannot!" He will depart next day. Yet the effect of Farfrae on Henchard is amazing. During dinner, Henchard wore a troubled expression, for he feared his fortune in danger. Now he is optimistic about the future because he has found a man who knows how to treat bad grain. All is not yet lost. Moreover, Henchard has taken an immediate liking to the young stranger, though obviously for selfish reasons.

Before his departure, Farfrae manages to capture the hearts of the townspeople, among them Elizabeth-Jane, the daughter Henchard deserted long ago. His Scottish accent and his knowledge of popular folk ballads endear him to the rustics in the community. Of course, Elizabeth-Jane sees him in a somewhat different light. She has not yet fully revealed herself to her father who deserted her when she was a child. Consequently, she cannot be as frank and open with Farfrae as she would perhaps like to be. She expresses



the mood of the whole community as she muses on Farfrae's departure:

'He was a good man--and he's gone,' she said to herself. 'I was nothing to him, and there was no reason why he should have wished me good-bye.' (p. 49)

Elizabeth-Jane forgets Farfrae for the moment as she is sent to Henchard with a note, revealing that she and her mother are in town and inquiring whether Henchard wishes to recognize them. Wandering in back of the Henchard home, Elizabeth-Jane enters an out-building searching for Henchard. However, she finds someone else:

. . . there stood before her, bending over some sample-bags on a table, not the corn-merchant, but the young Scotchman Mr. Farfrae--in the act of pouring some grains of wheat from one hand to another. His hat hung on a peg behind him, and the roses of his carpet-bag glowed from the corner of the room. (p. 53)

In typical mysterious stranger fashion, Farfrae has re-appeared. How he came to be there is easily explained. Henchard had followed the Scotchman out of town in a final effort to convince him to stay. Finally, Farfrae, obviously deeply touched, agreed to stay: "No; I'll not go to America; I'll stay and be your man!"

Thus, it is obvious that Farfrae's mere presence in the city was in itself profoundly influencing. It was so influencing, in fact, as to force Elizabeth-Jane, a girl who hardly knew him, to sigh at his departure. Further, Mayor Henchard seems to be quite taken with the Scotchman,

perhaps more for economic reasons than for any other. But the effect is there and it is already being felt. Like Troy and Venn before him, Farfrae is moving quickly against the established order. His approach is more sophisticated than either Troy's or Venn's and, as a result, requires more time to develop. Hardy has just begun to unveil a mysterious stranger who will, in the final analysis, illustrate the qualified optimism Hardy seems to be showing. One cannot fault Hardy for taking additional time and space to carefully construct this stranger, one that will add substantially to his argument.

Farfrae gains the force of a double figure. His effect on Henchard is so profound that the Mayor begins at once to take the young stranger into his complete confidence about his mistress Lucetta. He tells Farfrae:

'It is odd,' said Henchard, 'that two men should meet as we have done on a purely business ground, and that at the end of the first day I should speak to 'ee on a family matter. But, damn it all, I am a lonely man, Farfrae: I have nobody else to speak to; and why shouldn't I tell it to 'ee?' (p. 65)

Something in Farfrae's nature solicits this kind of response from Henchard. Farfrae is in fact a double figure.

Farfrae continues to prosper, as does Henchard under the expert guidance of the Scotchman:

Meanwhile the great corn and hay traffic conducted by Henchard thrives under the management of Donald Farfrae as it has never thriven before. It had formerly

moved in jolts; now it went on oiled castors. The old crude viva voce system of Henchard, in which everything depended upon memory, and bargains were made by tongue alone, was swept away. Letters and ledgers took the place of 'I'll do't,' and 'you shall hae't;' and, as in all such cases of advance, the rugged picturesqueness of the old method disappeared with its inconveniences. (pp. 76-77)

Change is everywhere. The entire corn market now bears the recognizable touch of Donald Farfrae. His influence can be seen much more than Henchard's.

Numerous changes gain wide acceptance, though some are particularly abrupt. Suddenly, Henchard cannot readily agree to some of them. A reflection of Henchard's psyche, Farfrae yet behaves as an autonomous personality. A major instance concerns Abel Whittle, an employee of Henchard's. Abel dozes longer than he should in the mornings and often reports to work late. Henchard has issued numerous warnings to Abel. Despite Henchard's stern warnings, one morning Abel again dozes much too long and Henchard storms down the street to Abel's house, rouses the poor, sleeping man, and marches him to work without his breeches:

Just at this time Farfrae, who had been to Henchard's house to look for him, came out the back gate, and saw something white fluttering in the morning gloom, which he soon perceived to be the part of Abel's shirt that showed below his waistcoat. (p. 84)

Farfrae, naturally surprised by the sight, reacts to the situation in a more rational manner than Henchard did:



'Get back home, and slip on your breeches, and come to wark like a man! If ye go not, you'll ha'e your death standing there!' (p. 85)

This order puts Farfrae in direct conflict with Henchard:

'Hullo, hullo!' said Henchard, coming up behind. 'Who's sending him back?' 'I am,' said Donald. 'I say this joke has been carried far enough.'

'And I say it hasn't! Get up in the wagon, Whittle.'

'Not if I am manager,' said Farfrae. 'He either goes home, or I march out of this yard for good!' (p. 85)

It is a tense situation for both Farfrae and Henchard. The first rift between the two men does not go unnoticed by the other workers who soon begin to compare the two men:

Where would his business be if it were not for this young fellow? 'Twas verily Fortune sent him to Henchard. His accounts were like a bramble-wood when Mr. Farfrae came. . . . But now this accomplished young man does it all by ciphering and mensuration. (pp. 91-92)

Thus there exist both personal and professional differences between the two men. As could be expected, tension continues to run high following the Whittle incident.

Farfrae soon decides that it would be best for them both if he were to set up his own business. He doesn't plan to steal Henchard's business, for he feels that there is enough business for them both.

So determined was he to do nothing which would seem like trade-antagonism to the Mayor that he refused his first customer--a large farmer of good repute--because Henchard and this man had dealt together

within the preceeding three months.

'He was once my friend,' said Farfrae, 'And it's not for me to take business from him.'

In spite of this praiseworthy course, the Scotchman's trade increased. (p. 98)

Soon, Farfrae's success spells ruin for Henchard. Most corn traders prefer Farfrae's orderly way of conducting business. Little by little, Farfrae manages to upstage Henchard. He is a wise man who brings blessings to some but ruin to the dissemblers.

Financial disaster besets the Mayor who soon declares bankruptcy. To make matters worse, Farfrae purchases Henchard's bankrupt business, thus more firmly establishing himself in business:

Henchard's stores, which had remained in a paralyzed condition during the settlement of the bankruptcy, were stirred into activity again when the new tenant had possession. Thenceforward the full sacks, looped with the shining chain, went scurrying up and down under the cat-head, hairy arms were thrust out from the different doorways, and the grain was hauled in . . . while the scales and steelyards began to be busy where guess-work had formerly been the rule. (pp. 191-192)

Henchard, now practically penniless and deprived of the Mayorship, asks Farfrae for a job. The compassionate Farfrae hires him:

Farfrae was always considerate to his fallen acquaintance; but it was impossible that he should not, by degrees, cease to regard the ex-corn-merchant as more than one of his other workmen. Henchard saw this, and concealed his feelings under a cover of

stolidity, fortifying his heart by drinking more freely at the Three Mariners Inn every evening. (p. 205)

Henchard, a broken man, had always been proud, proud of his corn business and of his job as Mayor. But the facade of order has been completely destroyed by the mysterious stranger. The sad reality now is that Farfrae has almost totally replaced Henchard in business, in social prominence, and even in the Mayor's chair. Henchard, the proud, quick-to-anger, ex-corn merchant has begun to suffer. His fall is nearly complete.

Several other incidents between Henchard and Farfrae result in additional conflicts, hostilities, and accusations. Hidden feelings are skillfully revealed in what many critics see as the climax of the novel. The scene depicts a meeting between Henchard and Farfrae in one of the grain barns. Arriving before the scheduled time of meeting, Henchard climbs to the loft. When Farfrae enters Henchard coaxes him up into the loft, where the two exchange words and accusations. Henchard then suggests a solution to their differences:

Now this is the case. Here be we, in this four-square loft, to finish out that little wrestle you began this morning. There's the door, forty foot above ground. One of us two puts the other out by that door--the master stays inside. If he likes he may go down afterwards and give the alarm that the other has fallen by accident--or he may tell the truth--that's his



business. As the strongest man I've tied one arm to take no advantage of 'ee. D'ye understand? Then here's at 'ee! (p. 236)

Farfrae has little choice but to defend himself. The scuffle continues until Henchard gains the upper hand:

He instantly delivered the younger man an annihilating turn by the left fore-hip, as it used to be expressed, and following up his advantage thrust him towards the door, never loosening his hold till Farfrae's fair head was hanging over the window--sill, and his arm dangling down outside the wall.

'Now,' said Henchard between his gasps, 'this is the end of what you began this morning. Your life is in my hands.'

'Then take it, take it!' said Farfrae. 'Ye've wished to long enough!' (p. 237)

At the moment of truth, Henchard's anger seems to drain from him. He softens almost immediately and voices his true feelings for his double, the Scotchman:

'O Farfrae!--that's not true!' he said bitterly. 'God is my witness that no man ever loved another as I did thee at one time. . . .' (p. 237)

Henchard realizes that Farfrae is not totally responsible for his fall. He must, in time of truth, admit that his pride and his series of deceptions are his responsibility alone. He releases Farfrae, and the two part.

Michael Henchard's suffering is almost over. Soon all of Casterbridge knows of his selling his wife and daughter. In addition, Elizabeth-Jane turns out to be someone else's daughter and not his own as he first thought. Henchard finds sorrow after sorrow unbearable. He is totally broken.

But with all the suffering comes self-knowledge; Henchard realizes, as Hardy carefully points out, that the suffering is justified. He acted against tradition and must pay the price. Henchard's recognition of self is nowhere more evident than in his will:

#### MICHAEL HENCHARD'S WILL

That Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told of my death, or made to grieve on account of me.

& that I be not bury'd in consecrated ground.

& that no sexton be asked to toll the bell.

& that nobody is wished to see my dead body.

& that no murners walk behind me at my funeral.

& that no flours be planted on my grave.

& that no man remember me.

To this I put my name.

Michael Henchard. (p. 289)

It might be argued that he was much too severe with himself, but Henchard's pride was such that any other course of suffering would not have been acceptable to him, for he felt that he had grievously sinned.

With Michael Henchard's death, the role of Farfrae as the mysterious stranger ends. Henchard is no longer Mayor. The corn trade in Casterbridge is no longer a slipshod business. The old order has been destroyed and a new one has been put in its place. Donald Farfrae is Mayor. The Casterbridge corn trade is thriving under his efficient, knowledgeable direction. But the new order brings with it

a sense of recognition. Elizabeth-Jane recognizes life as a general drama of pain, yet Farfrae recognizes that the search for truth in life and the introduction of progress into a society are never easy and often result in the destruction of those one least intends to destroy.



## Chapter V

### ALEC D'URBERVILLE

The mysterious stranger motif reaches its final stages of development in Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Over the scope of several novels, Hardy has embellished the role of the stranger. Sergeant Troy's influence was visible only in the lives of three or four individuals. Diggory Venn influenced three or four individuals, though his movements were closely watched by residents of Egdon Heath. Donald Farfrae not only influences the lives of several individuals, but also has a profound effect on the corn trade and the entire city of Casterbridge. Hardy introduces in Alec D'Urberville a mysterious stranger whose actions have broader implications than have heretofore been discussed. D'Urberville will not only upset the life of Tess, the heroine, but also shake the foundations of social and religious acceptance, ultimately providing ample proof that change is inevitable.

Like other mysterious strangers, Alec Stoke-D'Urberville is an intruder and a trickster. Alec is not a member of the aristocracy, yet he has claimed the name D'Urberville because he wishes to appear more a part of the traditional countryside than he actually is:

Parson Tringham had spoken truly when he

said that our shambling John D'Urbeysfield was the only really lineal representative of the old D'Urberville family existing in the country or near it; he might well have added, what he knew very well, that the Stoke-D'Urbervilles were no more D'Urbervilles of the true tree than he was himself. (pp. 29-30)<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, Hardy wants the reader to understand that Alec has usurped the role of an aristocrat. After choosing the D'Urberville name as his own, Alec moves quietly into that section of England where the D'Urbervilles were last known to live. His scheme is complete.

Alec's first meeting with Tess appears similar to the first meetings other mysterious strangers had with those they were to influence. It is abrupt, enlightening, yet somewhat romantically pleasing. Although Tess's visit to the D'Urberville estate is necessitated by the failing health of her parents and the sad state of their finances, the initial meeting is carried off with considerable joviality. Alec establishes himself and the tone of their relationship as he addresses Tess shortly after her arrival:

' . . . Beauty, what can I do for you?' said he, coming forward. And perceiving that she stood quite confounded: 'Never mind me. I am Mr. D'Urberville. Have you come to see me or my mother?'  
This embodiment of a D'Urberville and

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960). Note: the Riverside Edition will be used throughout and subsequent quotations indicated by page number following the text.

a namesake differed even more from what Tess had expected than the house and grounds had differed. She had dreamed of an aged man and dignified face. . . . (pp. 30-31)

Tess, lost from the first moment, does not readily take to this man, but her responsibility to her family pressures her into asking for the aid so desperately needed. In addition to matters of economics, Alec and Tess discuss the D'Urberville name while they walk in the garden almost as lovers:

For a moment--only for a moment--when they were in the turning of the drive, between the tall rhododendrons and conifers, before the lodge was visible, he inclined his face towards her as if--but, no; he thought better of it, and let her go. (p. 33)

When Tess has gone, Alec reflects on the meeting. Suddenly, he breaks into a loud laugh:

'Well, I'm damned! What a funny thing! Ha-ha-ha! And what a crumby girl!' (p. 34)

Thus, Hardy has again brought together the ingredients for change. The agricultural world of Tess D'Urberville is already beginning to crumble. She seeks aid from the aristocracy. Alec, pretending to be a member of the aristocracy, soon offers her aid.

Alec D'Urberville now seizes the initiative and as trickster promotes the first conflict. It comes shortly after Tess joins the Stoke-D'Urbervilles as an aide to Alec's mother. One Saturday evening, some of the women in town are critical of Tess and of Alec's obvious affinity for



her. Tess, usually calm, becomes upset and angered by the insults and sets out for home alone. She has not traveled far when Alec rides up and requests that he take her the remaining distance home. Against her better judgment, she does as Alec directs. As they ride along together, Alec begins at once to challenge Tess:

'Tess, why do you always dislike my kissing you?'

'I suppose--because I don't love you.'

'You are quite sure?'

'I am angry with you sometimes.'

'Ah, I half feared as much.' (p. 59)

As they continue their fog-shrouded journey, Tess dozes momentarily and Alec purposefully misses the turn to the farm. When she awakes, Tess angrily scolds Alec for his treachery. She demands to be let down. Alec complies. Now he is in complete control. After they both slide from the horse, Alec makes a bed of leaves for Tess and departs to search out a landmark by which he might reckon their position. Tess lies down in the leaves and falls asleep. Upon his return, Alec embraces the sleeping Tess, presses his face close to hers until, in the silence of the foggy night, a sleepy Tess allows Alec to seduce her. Tess's controlled facade has collapsed. Alec's challenge to the existing order has been initially successful. The old and the new have met, and the old has been significantly changed, especially the pastoral image of rural goodness and simplicity. Tess leaves the D'Urberville estate several days after her

seduction. She carries Alec's child, but does not love Alec. Upon her return home, her mother urges her to marry, but she refuses. Soon the child is born, only to die a few months later. There can be no doubt that Alec is most certainly involved in these activities though he knows nothing of them. He intruded into Tess's life and is now very much a part of it.

Soon the tarnished order, now represented by Tess, meets the old moral order, represented by Angel Clare, the son of a minister. Clare is educated, reserved, gentle, and somewhat sad. He is the opposite of Alec D'Urberville. Angel meets Tess in the course of their work together at Talbothay's dairy. As affection between the two develops, Angel presses Tess to marry him. She is unwilling to consent for she fears that Angel, grounded in the fundamental faith, will be unable to accept her past. She is so sure, in fact, that she finds ways of postponing a decision on Angel's countless proposals. The pressure mounts, however, and Tess finally consents to the marriage. Yet she says nothing of her past. Several times she attempts to inform Angel, but each attempt is unsuccessful: a letter goes astray, she loses her nerve, and nightmares are blamed for strange behavior. She simply cannot tell Angel about Alec. She cannot, that is, until her wedding night. Of all possible nights she might have picked, poor Tess picks the wedding night. Prior to retiring for the evening, the

newlyweds engage in a truth ceremony, each telling all important past events to the other. Angel makes his confession and then Tess makes hers:

. . . pressing her forehead against his temple, she entered on her story of her acquaintance with Alec D'Urberville and its results, murmuring the words without flinching, and with her eyelids drooping down. (p. 169)

Unfortunately, Angel represents tradition. Like the church he loves, he refuses to accept and understand what has happened. The truth becomes an invisible barrier between the newlyweds. Angel, quite upset, suggests a trial separation, giving him time to think. Thus, Hardy has allowed a single act by the mysterious stranger to have far-reaching effects that go beyond the one individual to all of society. Tess has been changed, to be sure, but the now-changed Tess has shaken the concept of pastoral religion in England, represented by Angel Clare. Angel's philosophy is not as intense as that of his father or even his brothers, but he has been trained in fundamental faith and, like it or not, it is his foundation. This philosophy apparently leaves little room for understanding and forgiveness; for at least the present, Angel cannot forgive Tess. Hardy uncovers this moralism which seems destined, perhaps, to come out second best in any conflict.

Yet a second incident allows Hardy another chance to shake the established religious system. It involves a



second encounter between Tess and the mysterious stranger, Alec D'Urberville. Passing through a small village one Sunday afternoon, Tess hears a "ranter" preaching the gospel at a revival meeting.

His voice became so distinct in the still, clear air that she could catch his sentences, though she was on the closed side of the barn. But more startling to Tess than the doctrine had been the voice, which, impossible as it seemed, was precisely that of Alec D'Urberville. (p. 268)

Tess ventures toward the entrance to the barn. She peers cautiously in and, much to her surprise, sees the man whose voice she recognized, Alec D'Urberville, her seducer. Alec sees Tess precisely at the moment she turns to go, and the fire "seems to go out of him." Obviously upset, Alec strains to finish his sermon. Tess, naturally shocked to see Alec, leaves immediately, but Alec follows, overtakes her, and engages in conversation. He explains how he came to be a preacher, about his conversion, and about his zeal for God and all God's children. Tess listens patiently but skeptically and, in turn, tells Alec of the baby and its death and of her subsequent life. She fails to mention, however, that she is now married to Angel Clare. After some additional small talk, the two separate, each quite disturbed at seeing the other. Hardy establishes obvious parallels here. Alec has been both lover and religious man. Angel has been both husband and religious man. Tess has reacted differently to each. Both Alec and Angel have turned to

roles they would have scorned at the outset of their relationship with Tess. Change is everywhere implicit in the activities of these three.

Alec D'Urberville willingly gives up his life as a preacher of the gospel almost as quickly as he adopted it. In several encounters with Tess in the harvest fields where she works, Alec first offers marriage and a partnership in missionary activities, then appears to lose faith completely and simply asks Tess to come live with him. Alec has reverted to type. Once again he is the trickster and the seducer. Implicit in this series of events is, of course, an indictment of fundamental religion. Hardy seems to be asking just what kind of religion would allow a man to put on and then pull off his clerical robes at the slightest whim. It must certainly be weak and perhaps based more on convenience than real faith.

In addition, events in the novel also question popular social standards. Following her seduction, Tess consistently slips on the scale of social acceptance. She has an illegitimate child and becomes the talk of the entire village. Rejected by her husband, she sleeps alone on her wedding night. She must ultimately work in harvest fields and dig with her hands in the dirt, an object of the ridicule of her employer and her fellow workers. The reader becomes increasingly aware that social condemnation is taking place. Near the end of the novel, the extent of Tess's social

degradation is emphasized. Alec D'Urberville's insistent pressure on a weakening Tess proves successful. Tess agrees to leave the fields and go with Alec. In a series of powerful scenes, including one between the returning Angel and the degraded Tess, Hardy skillfully shows the extent of the degradation. Angel, in search of Tess, arrives in Sandbourne, a seaside town where Tess now lives with Alec. Upon making some inquiries, Angel finds a "Mrs. D'Urberville" living in an expensive hotel. He makes additional inquiries and awaits the appearance of Tess. The reunion is less than joyous, for as Tess steps from the stairs, she does not run to meet him as he had hoped. She is, instead, reserved, though surprised. Angel pleads for her return to him so that they might yet find happiness and a life together. Tess declines, reminding Angel that she waited, wrote letters, and pleaded for his return. Now, Tess says, there is no chance for a life together. Her reason is quite simple: "He has won me back to him." Disappointed and hurt, Angel wanders from the hotel as Tess disappears up the stairs.

Although Alec seems to have won, his success this time is short-lived. Mrs. Brooks, the hotel landlady, becomes puzzled when Tess leaves the hotel a short time later without a word to anyone. Noticing a large red blot on the ceiling, Mrs. Brooks recognizes the moist stain as blood, and summoning a man from the street, together they go to the



D'Urberville room. The man enters first and quickly surveys the room. Walking toward the folding doors, he explores the adjoining room:

He opened the doors, entered a step or two, and came back almost instantly with a rigid face. 'My good God, the gentleman in bed is dead! I think he has been hurt with a knife--a lot of blood has run down upon the floor.' (p. 341)

In a moment of seeming triumph, Alec D'Urberville dies, but he carries Tess's degradation to completion. She has sunk as low as she could possibly go. She is now a murderess. Alec D'Urberville's departure from Tess's life is almost as violent as his entrance. Each incident between Tess and Alec, and subsequently between Tess and Angel, contributes to a challenging of the old order. All is now turmoil.

Alec D'Urberville is a functioning mysterious stranger. His actions influence the lives of Tess and Angel. His actions shake the foundations of religion and society. But perhaps more significantly, all activities carry the implicit Hardy message: change is inevitable, whether it comes through the sham of a trickster or the natural growth of a society. D'Urberville himself made this point quite clear:

'The old order changeth. The little finger of the sham . . . can do more for you than the whole dynasty of the real . . . .' (p. 325)

Even Angel Clare must accept change. In spite of all that

has happened, even Tess finds a temporary happiness. She has now learned to accept change and to adapt as necessary. Tess and Angel consummate their marriage and together await the inevitable. Soon the people of the entire countryside are aroused, searching for the murderer. They soon find her, asleep in Angel's arms:

'What is it, Angel?' she said, starting up. 'Have they come for me?'

'Yes, dearest,' he said. 'They have come.'

'It is as it should be,' she murmured. 'Angel, I am almost glad--yes, glad! This happiness could not have lasted.' (p. 353)

If Tess and Angel had been as receptive to change at an earlier point in their lives, they might have found a lasting happiness. Both Tess and Angel learned to accept change, but too late. Hardy used the mysterious stranger not only to illustrate the effect of change but also to emphasize that an acceptance of it is paramount to happiness and, even, survival.

## Chapter VI

### CONCLUSION

Change is everywhere in Thomas Hardy's England. He sees it and records it. At the same time, he suggests to the perceptive reader ways to make that change more palatable: adjust, accept, understand. The mysterious stranger motif is the device Hardy uses toward that end. In Far from the Madding Crowd, Sergeant Troy, as the trickster, succeeds in upsetting practically the entire pastoral scene with his sophisticated charm and cavalier actions. Yet the individual least affected is Gabriel Oak. Oak sees Troy for what he is: a tool of change. Oak, consequently, never allows Troy to obstruct what he believes is his best course in life. He eventually profits because he analyzes and waits, but, most of all, because he adapts to something new and startling. He reacts differently to Troy than does Boldwood, Fanny Robin, and even Bathsheba. He survives to find happiness and manages to aid Bathsheba in saving herself.

Diggory Venn in The Return of the Native guides several characters toward an understanding of self. Without such an understanding, adjustment is difficult. Sometimes as the wise old man and sometimes the trickster, Venn shows that patience, perserverance, and self-control must be part



of the adjustment process. Neither Wildeve nor Eustacia understands the environment or the changes taking place. Neither survives. Clym never really adjusts to Eustacia's death and his own misfortunes and becomes an itinerant preacher. Thomasin and Venn do, however, understand both themselves and the Heath. They adjust and survive.

In The Mayor of Casterbridge, Donald Farfrae embodies a type of change which often besets a society and its members. He arrives from Scotland with new ideas and a fresh personality. Those who fail to adapt to the new while respecting tradition are often left with nothing. Henchard fails to adapt, partly because of his pride and partly because of his past. Farfrae, serving the cause of truth and change, alters life in Casterbridge and as Henchard's double forces him to admit the truth about his life. Unable to make the necessary adjustments in his life and philosophy, Henchard is destroyed, a victim of his own weaknesses.

Alec D'Urberville in Tess of the D'Urbervilles completes Hardy's picture of the mysterious stranger. Through Alec, Hardy shows the kinds of attacks being launched against the pastoral scene. As the trickster, Alec seduces Tess in much the same way industrial growth and social change seduce the pastoral scene. Tess cannot adjust to her seduction; she is destroyed. Angel Clare, at the outset like Tess, is unable to make the necessary adjustments in

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