

**THOMAS HARDY: "THE TRAGEDY OF
UNFULFILLED AIMS"**



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THOMAS HARDY: "THE TRAGEDY OF UNFULFILLED AIMS"

An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Harriett Noland Mabry

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ABSTRACT

Thomas Hardy's pessimism has long been a subject of dispute among his readers and critics. Victorians condemned him for portraying their world so darkly. Early critics saw him as completely pessimistic. More recent critics have offered various interpretations, some suggesting that he is not really pessimistic at all. There is a continuing attempt to explain the underlying basis of what most readers interpret as pessimism in his fiction.

It is the purpose of this thesis to show that Hardy's pessimism stems, not from an acceptance of natural determinism or universal malevolence as that which decides a man's fate, but from a man's inability to reconcile the real world and the ideal world. Goals, realistically and diligently pursued, bring rewards. Dreams which become obsessions, however, delude the dreamer and, in the end, bring his downfall. There is, in Hardy's fiction, from beginning to end, the idea that the man who demands too much may lose all. Through the portrayal of characters in his novels, Hardy indicates that a man's demands must be in proportion to his particular talents and situation, and while he must strive for success, he must be able to accept disappointment. He cannot depend on "Nature" or natural determinism to dictate either his success or his failure.

Five novels, representing various periods in Hardy's literary career, all from that group of novels which he designated as "Novels of Character and Environment," will be used to develop this thesis.

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Harriett Noland Mabry entitled "Thomas Hardy: The Tragedy of Unfulfilled Aims." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Edward E. Jewin

Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Lewis C. Tatham

Second Committee Member

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This thesis is dedicated to my English professors whose inspiration and encouragement helped formulate the goal, and to my family, whose help and understanding made possible its fulfillment.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy's pessimism has long been a subject of dispute among his readers and critics. Victorians condemned him for portraying their world so darkly. Early critics saw him as completely pessimistic. More recent critics have offered various interpretations, some suggesting that he is not really pessimistic at all. There is a continuing attempt to explain the underlying basis of what most readers interpret as pessimism in his fiction.

Upon a first reading of Hardy, we are struck by the numerous forces which seem to propel a character toward ruin or destruction. It is this overwhelming sense of oppression which has led to one of the most prevalent critical approaches to Hardy's fiction--that view which embraces a kind of natural determinism as Hardy's life view. John Holloway is one critic who belongs to this school of criticism. He views Hardy's characters as illustrating everywhere "That human life, and indeed human consciousness itself, is wholly subject to the control of Nature. . . ." He further states that Hardy's people ". . . are not simply in, but governed by and subdued to their environment."¹ Heredity, the rhythmic process of change, the idea that human events move to an appointed conclusion, are all theories which support Holloway's belief that in Hardy there is "a determined system of things which ultimately controls human affairs without regard for human wishes."²

¹The Victorian Sage (London: Macmillan Co., 1953), pp. 265-66.

²Ibid., p. 286.

Hardy's view of life is much more complex than Holloway would allow, however. Hardy does recognize heredity and environment as forces which, to a degree, dictate a man's success and happiness, but equally important as a determining factor in the Hardy character's fate is the character's own reaction to the circumstances of his life. Hardy's people always have a choice to make. Each character reacts in his own way to an event, and the way he reacts, the choices he makes, may decide his fate. The fact that a character often has more than one chance to make a decision concerning a particular situation is further proof of Hardy's belief in the individual's responsibility for his success or failure. It is possible for a man to change the course of his life.

Roy Morrell, in a recent critical account of Hardy's works, acknowledges that Hardy's ". . . eye was ever upon the chink of possibility of mankind's betterment and happiness."³ His novels, Morrell notes, depict life as difficult but not impossible. This critical approach to Hardy's pessimism is more acceptable than Holloway's because it does justice to Hardy's complex view of life. It recognizes the role a man plays in directing the course of his life.

It will be the purpose of this thesis to show that Hardy's pessimism stems, not from an acceptance of natural determinism or universal malevolence as that which decides a man's fate, but from a man's inability to reconcile the real world and the ideal world. Goals, realistically and diligently pursued, bring rewards. Dreams which become obsessions, however, delude the dreamer and, in the end, bring his downfall.

³The Will and the Way (Singapore: Univ. of Malaya Press, 1965), p. 16.

It is the nature of man to pursue ideals, to dream of a more satisfying life, and to set goals for himself, but in doing so, he must not blind himself to the reality of life. He must not try to ignore or deny what has already taken place in his life; and if he is to survive in Hardy's universe he must meet each crisis with decisions which recognize and accept the reality of the particular situation rather than an illusionary situation he might wish for.

The Hardyan character who succeeds and finds happiness in life is the one whose goals are realistic and possible of achievement for him. He accepts the limitations put upon him by heredity, society, nature; he accepts disappointments and continues to strive toward the attainment of his goal, his ideal. The character who fails to find happiness and success is a dreamer, one who sets unrealistic goals. The dreamer expects too much, and his selfish dreams embody false values. He becomes caught up in a world of illusion, and the decisions he makes are based on the ideal situation rather than on the situation as it really exists. He frequently tries to deny his past, and he procrastinates in making decisions until it is sometimes no longer in his power to stem the flow of events. By his actions, he destroys himself and often those around him.

There is, in Hardy's fiction, from beginning to end, the idea that the man who demands too much may lose all. Through the portrayal of characters in his novels, Hardy indicates that a man's demands must be in proportion to his particular talents and situation, and while he must strive for success, he must be able to accept disappointment. He cannot depend upon "Nature" or natural determinism to dictate either his success or his failure.

Five novels, representing various periods in Hardy's literary career, all from that group of novels which he designated as "Novels of Character and Environment," will be used to develop this thesis. The novels to be considered are: Under the Greenwood Tree, Far from the Madding Crowd, Return of the Native, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and Jude the Obscure. His early novels are neither so serious nor so dark as his later works, especially his last two, Tess and Jude. There is, however, from Under the Greenwood Tree, first published in 1872, to Jude the Obscure, published in 1895, a deepening perception of man's inability to accept life realistically and to make the decisions which govern his life on the basis of truth rather than illusion.

CHAPTER II

UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE

Under the Greenwood Tree, published in 1872, is sub-titled "The Mellstock Quire" and deals initially with the characters Hardy remembered as members of a parish choir in the early part of the nineteenth century. The choirs of this time were composed of string musicians and singers who performed from the gallery of the church and who, until they were supplanted by the modern-day organist, were responsible for the only music in the worship service.

The tone of this pastoral novel is light, its subject matter is far from serious, and it is filled with good-natured humor. The central narrative device in the novel is the love affair between one of the young choir members, Dick Dewey, and Fancy Day, daughter of Geoffrey Day, a gamekeeper.

Geoffrey Day has worked long and hard to educate his beautiful young daughter, Fancy. He has dreams of material success and social prestige for Fancy. By providing her with a superior education and by saving enough for a handsome dowry, he hopes to insure her acceptance by a proper and prosperous mate.

As Geoffrey dreams, so dreams Fancy. Come home to teach in young Parson Maybold's school, Fancy Day creates quite a stir with her dainty boots, her muslin dresses, and her coquettish ways. Dick Dewey falls in love with Fancy and she with him, or perhaps with his praise for her; but Dick is only the tranter's son, and while he makes a fair living by

hauling goods for others, his position will never afford what Geoffrey and Fancy have dreamed of for Fancy. Geoffrey opts for Mr. Shiner, a farmer who drives a shiny, new rig and whose financial security is much greater than Dick's will ever be. Mr. Day refuses Dick's plea for Fancy's hand. Fancy, who has decided that Dick will be her husband, is unaccustomed to having her wishes denied. By feigning illness, she brings her father around to sanctioning their marriage, and the date is set for summer.

In the interim, young Parson Maybold calls on Fancy, professes his love for her, and asks her to marry him and to go with him to a distant parish. He promises to see that she continues her musical education and to buy her a pianoforte. The temptation is too great for Fancy. New surroundings, an educated husband, a chance to advance--she accepts his offer but begs him to tell no one. The next day, however, the parson hears some disturbing news. As he is walking along a country lane, contemplating his good fortune, he meets Dick Dewey, who confides that he is to be married in the summer--to Fancy Day.

Distressed at Fancy's inconstancy, Parson Maybold writes to her that he has learned that she is not a "free woman" and while his offer holds good, he wonders if she can with honor forsake Dick Dewey. Fancy's reply is properly contrite and also revealing:

It is my nature--perhaps all women's--to love refinement of mind and manners; but even more than this, to be ever fascinated with the idea of surroundings more elegant and pleasing than those which have been customary. And you praised me, and praise is life to me. It was alone my sensations at these things which prompted my reply. Ambition and vanity they would be called; perhaps they are so.¹

¹Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree (London: Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 189.

Fancy recognizes that her ambition, her vision of life, has nearly cost her a greater price than she is willing to pay. She receives one last note from the parson, advising her to tell all to Dick Dewey, that he will understand and forgive.

Fancy and Dick are married, in all the splendour Geoffrey Day and Mellstock can muster. Before the wedding there is already a note of discontent from Fancy. We see her on her wedding day admonishing her father and the tranter

. . . to avoid saying 'thee' and 'thou' in their conversation, on the plea that those ancient words sounded so very humiliating to persons of newer taste; also that they were never to be seen drawing the back of the hand across the mouth after drinking--a local English custom of extraordinary antiquity, but stated by Fancy to be decidedly dying out among the better classes of society.²

Here then, in almost the first of Hardy's novels, and perhaps his most optimistic work, begins the idea that when man loses himself in a dream he may lose sight of what is truly valuable and rewarding. Fancy has realized her error in time to avoid dishonor, but she cannot yield completely. Although we are left with the final scene of wedding festivity, it is with a hint of disaster to come. In the last sentence of the novel, Fancy thinks of her proposal from the parson, of "the secret she will never tell," and the reader must feel that Dick, as well as Fancy, will perhaps be disappointed in life. Although Dick's goal is realistic, Fancy's vain ambition is likely to destroy any chance for happiness for either of them. She must decide whether or not to accept something less than her "ideal," and this decision will be the factor that leads to either fulfillment or destruction.

²Ibid., p. 216.

We note a characteristic common to many of Hardy's people in this early novel: the tendency to try to hide one's past. This is often one of the ways in which a man attempts to achieve his ideal, one of the ways in which he attempts to escape the real world, one of the steps which leads to his destruction. In the later novels in which this idea is more fully developed, it never succeeds; on the contrary, it is always defeating. In this novel, Fancy refuses to take the parson's advice. She conceals from Dick her true character and her experience with Parson Maybold. She hides her past but she cannot forget it.

Fancy Day, although she recognizes ambition as a possible destructive agency in her life, still has visions of a kind of life that she will most probably never enjoy. Just as she cannot accept her father and the tranter for what they are, she will perhaps not be able to accept the reality of her world and will keep her eye on some distant dream which is, in her case, unattainable. The novel ends happily, with only a suggestion of problems for Dick and Fancy in the future. When one has read Hardy's later novels, the suggestion of doom in Under the Greenwood Tree becomes more than just a possibility.

CHAPTER III

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

In 1874, Hardy published what is generally considered to be his first masterpiece, Far from the Madding Crowd. There are three characters in this novel whose destinies illustrate the degree of their acceptance of reality: Gabriel Oak, Bathsheba Everdene, and Farmer Boldwood.

Gabriel Oak, a stalwart shepherd-farmer, falls in love with Bathsheba Everdene, who is living with an aunt on a farm adjoining his. She is beautiful and intelligent, and he falls in love with her almost on first sight. He envisions a future with her as his wife, and sees himself as increasing his holdings and providing prosperity for her and the family they will have.

When Bathsheba's uncle dies, leaving her his thriving farm, she disappears without telling Gabriel where she is going, although she is aware of his love for her. Bathsheba has visions not only of a "better" man than Gabriel Oak but also of the kind of material success which she fears he can never offer.

When Gabriel's untrained dog runs his sheep off a cliff, he is left destitute, his frugal savings gone to repay the loan on the sheep. With no means of making a living, and with his farm lost, he sets out to find a job, offering himself first as a bailiff and then as a shepherd. He is walking toward the village of Weatherbury, still seeking work, when he sees a fire in some hayricks on a farm near the road and rushes to be of assistance. His ability to organize and to act quickly saves

the ricks and the barn, whose owner he discovers to be no other than Bathsheba Everdene. She is surprised to see Oak in the guise of a shepherd:

There was room for a little pity, also for a very little exultation: the former at his position, the latter at her own. Embarrassed she was not, and she remembered Gabriel's declaration of love to her at Norcombe only to think she had nearly forgotten it.¹

Bathsheba discovers that Gabriel needs a job. Since she needs a shepherd, she advises him to speak to her bailiff. Soon after Oak is hired, the bailiff is caught stealing, and Bathsheba decides to serve as her own bailiff. Gabriel must answer, like the rest of the laborers, directly to her, still loving her but concealing from everyone that he has ever known her before.

Bathsheba works hard, rising early before her workers, and attends to her affairs competently. She is more concerned with her independence, her importance as a person, her ambition to achieve financial security, than with the question of marriage. She is, nonetheless, accustomed to approval from the opposite sex, and her vanity is piqued when she is totally ignored by her neighbor, bachelor Boldwood, a wealthy farmer who is indifferent to all the ladies in the parish.

In a moment of wild abandon, Bathsheba and her serving girl, Liddy, send an anonymous Valentine to Mr. Boldwood, choosing as a jest a seal which says, "Marry Me." Boldwood makes inquiries about the handwriting, finds it to be Miss Everdene's, and, assuming the missile is seriously intended, falls in love--completely and unrealistically.

¹Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), p. 43. Page numbers for further references to this novel will be put in parentheses following the quotation.

Bathsheba attempts to explain and to discourage Boldwood but is unable to do so and finally agrees to "think" about marriage. Before she has leisure to think, a dashing young soldier, Frank Troy, enters the story, dazzles Bathsheba and weds her, much to the agony of both Boldwood and Oak who are aware of Sergeant Troy's reputation as a philanderer.

Sergeant Troy buys his discharge from the army with his wife's money and takes over the management of her estate. It becomes obvious within a very short time that he is neither capable of nor interested in assuming such a responsibility. He chooses, rather, to spend his time following the horse races at which his gambling ventures prove unprofitable. When Troy's old sweetheart, Fanny Robin, turns up in Weatherbury, makes her way to the poorhouse and dies having his child, Bathsheba is crushed. Troy spends what money he has to erect a monument to Fanny, attesting publicly to his love for her, and then he disappears.

News that Troy has drowned reaches Weatherbury, and although Bathsheba never quite believes it, Boldwood seizes the opportunity to allow his feelings for Bathsheba to surface once again. His desire for her soon becomes an obsession. After some months and much persuasion, Bathsheba promises to marry him, but only at the end of a long waiting period at which time she will be legally free of Troy in the event that he is not really dead.

Boldwood entertains the neighborhood at a Christmas ball to celebrate Bathsheba's promise. It is obvious to her that he is obsessed with the idea of marrying her, and she is frightened by his emotional state. She represses her own feelings, however, and promises to marry him because of the guilt which she feels for having falsely encouraged

him by sending the Valentine. Bathsheba is leaving the party when Sergeant Troy walks in the door and announces that he has come for her. Boldwood, in a fit of passion, kills Troy, then goes to the jail to surrender himself.

With both Troy and Boldwood gone, Gabriel, still deeply in love with Bathsheba, decides that he can no longer remain on her estate as bailiff and so resigns his job. Realizing that Gabriel has been the steadying influence in her life, the only one whom she can trust completely, Bathsheba goes to him and begs him to stay. He buys a place of his own nearby, and she promises to marry him in the not-too-distant future.

Bathsheba was, in her younger days, much like Fancy Day: vain and concerned primarily with materialistic pursuits. Almost the first glimpse we have of Bathsheba reveals something of her character. Looking into a mirror,

She simply observed herself as a fair product of nature in the feminine kind, her thoughts seeming to glide into far-off though likely dramas in which men would play a part--vistas of probable triumphs--the smiles being of a phase suggesting that hearts were imagined as lost and won (p. 6).

Bathsheba could dream, but Gabriel was ready to act. His first pangs of love brought resolution: "I'll make her my wife, or upon my soul, I shall be good for nothing!" (p. 23). The loss of his sheep and his land had disillusioned Gabriel as much as had the disappearance of Bathsheba, but the Gabriel who survived these two misfortunes was a wiser, stronger man:

He had passed through an ordeal of wretchedness which had given him more than it had taken away. He had sunk from his modest elevation as pastoral king into the very slime-pits of Siddim; but there was left to him a dignified calm he had never before known, and that indifference to fate which, though it often makes a villain of a man, is the basis of his sublimity when it does not (p. 35).

Thus Gabriel's goal has been thwarted, lost, he believes. He thinks about suicide, but as Morrell notes, ". . . he accepts defeat and begins to make something of the worst life has to offer." Using Oak as an example, Morrell sees Hardy as asserting "the virtue of re-engagement in life, rather than withdrawal from it; his eye was ever upon the chink of possibility."² Gabriel makes his choice; he gives himself another chance.

Bathsheba's test is yet to come. When Liddy asks her if anyone ever wanted to marry her, her vanity comes to the fore: "A man wanted to once," she said. ". . . He wasn't quite good enough for me" (p. 67). Bathsheba is not completely insensitive, however, as we see in her reaction to Mr. Boldwood's avowal of love. She feels a responsibility for his predicament, and she is ashamed of the unthinking deception which led to sending the Valentine. Nevertheless, her own vanity at not being noticed by Boldwood is at root responsible for the whole affair.

Quite honestly, Boldwood admits: "My life is not my own since I have beheld you clearly. . . ." He reminds Bathsheba that he has been led to "hope," and she is continually held responsible by him for the impulsive moment when she mailed a Valentine. She feels that Boldwood is ". . . kind to offer me all that I can desire" (p. 110). Hardy sees this "kindness" as something else. "Yet Farmer Boldwood, whether by

²Morrell, pp. 11-12.

nature kind or the reverse to kind, did not exercise kindness here. The rarest offerings of the purest love are but a self-indulgence, and no generosity at all" (p. 114). Boldwood's dream is a completely selfish one. He sees Bathsheba as a possession, not as a person. He lives in a world of illusion, not in a world of reality.

Gabriel Oak's goal is to share his life with Bathsheba, but this goal does not preclude an acceptance of life without her. Sergeant Troy is set in contrast to Oak and Boldwood. "He was a man to whom memories were an incumbrance, and anticipation a superfluity" (p. 146). Sergeant Troy had no real goal. He concerns himself with nothing except the present and what he can wrest from "today."

To Bathsheba Everdene, Troy's ability to flatter by pretty phrases and chivalrous manner provides a new interest in life. She is charmed completely, so charmed that she fails to see below the superficial Troy.

And Troy's deformities lay deep down from a woman's vision, whilst his embellishments were upon the very surface; thus contrasting with homely Oak, whose defects were patent to the blindest, and whose virtues were as metals in a mine (p. 166).

Both Oak and Boldwood are far better men, but the dashing young sergeant appeals to Bathsheba's vanity, her dreams of triumph, of hearts lost and won. Nothing either Oak or Boldwood can say has any effect on Bathsheba. Oak seeks to convince her that Troy is not good enough for her. Boldwood--his eye never deviating from the dream--pleads with her: "O, Bathsheba--have pity upon me! . . . God's sake, yes--I am come to that low, lowest state, to ask a woman for pity! Still, she is you--she is you" (p. 178).

Bathsheba marries her sergeant. Oak accepts Bathsheba's marriage to Sergeant Troy in his usual, uncomplaining way, but Boldwood gives in to grief:

The only signs of the terrible sorrow Boldwood had been combating through the night, and was combating now, were the want of colour in his well-defined face, the enlarged appearance of the veins in his forehead and temples, and the sharper lines about his mouth. The horse bore him away and the very step of the animal seemed significant of dogged despair. Gabriel, for a minute, rose above his own grief in noticing Boldwood's. He saw the square figure sitting erect upon the horse, the head turned to neither side, the elbows steady by the hips, the brim of the hat level and undisturbed in its onward glide, until the keen edges of Boldwood's shape sank by degrees over the hill. To one who knew the man and his story there was something more striking in this immobility than in a collapse (p. 211).

Bathsheba soon realizes that her dreams of triumph--both in love and in material matters, are not likely to succeed. Troy is indifferent to the management of her estates and his attention to her soon wanes. He gambles with her money; he revels with the laborers while a storm threatens the grain stacks. Only Gabriel Oak is sober enough to be aware of impending disaster. With Bathsheba's help he is able to save her from financial ruin by covering the grain stacks during the furious storm.

In contrast, Boldwood admits to Oak that he "overlooked" his grain ricks, failed to cover them, and lost nearly all his grain.

A few months earlier Boldwood's forgetting his husbandry would have been as preposterous an idea as a sailor forgetting he was in a ship. Oak was just thinking that whatever he himself might have suffered from Bathsheba's marriage, here was a man who had suffered more (p. 227).

At this point, Boldwood is well on his way to destruction. He has chosen a path of least resistance.

Some months later, Boldwood happens to be near Bathsheba when word of Troy's drowning is brought to her. His reaction to the news is what we expect: "Thereupon a strange fire lighted up Boldwood's eye, and his face flushed with the suppressed excitement of an unutterable thought" (p. 289). With no encouragement from Bathsheba, Boldwood renews his vision and determines to let nothing stand in his way this time. He is convinced that he will have his reward, and it doesn't matter if he has to wait for years to get it. He begs for her promise to marry him in some distant year. That she does not love him is no longer a concern. Acknowledging Oak's interest in Bathsheba, he attempts to make amends, so certain is he of victory. Oak, in his humble, independent manner, needs no help.

"Oak, I have learned a little about your secret. Your interest in her is more than that of a bailiff for an employer. But you have behaved like a man, and I, as a sort of successful rival--successful partly through goodness of heart--should like definitely to show my sense of your friendship under what must have been a great pain to you."

"O, that's not necessary, thank 'ee," said Oak, hurriedly. "I must get used to such as that; other men have, and so shall I" (p. 323).

Unknowingly, Gabriel is closer to reaching his goal than is Boldwood, but he is prepared to accept whatever life brings. He is realistic; he knows that man is often disappointed in his dream.

When Troy unexpectedly arrives in Weatherbury and presents himself at Boldwood's party, Boldwood cannot adjust to the fact that once again his dream has been thwarted. He destroys Troy, and in the process, destroys himself. At no point has his dream brought happiness or

fulfillment. He has lost all perspective and in so doing has lost even his own freedom. He is never aware of the part he plays in his own destruction.

In Far from the Madding Crowd, Hardy represents man's ability to achieve success and happiness on three different levels and in three different ways. None of the characters, however, achieves his goal with the ease of Dick Dewey in Under the Greenwood Tree. Only one reaches the goal which he originally set for himself. Another comes to accept something less than the dream when she realized it was a false one. A third totally destroys himself in pursuit of an illusion.

Gabriel Oak achieves his goal, but after much hardship. He has the ability to accept disappointment and defeat and still keep trying. Gabriel's goal is larger than himself. He is always thinking first of Bathsheba; his love for her continues, and his support and loyalty continue, even though she is married to Troy. It is this steadfastness which in the end makes Bathsheba realize his real worth and his devotion to her. Had Gabriel surrendered to the kind of natural determinism Holloway seems to suggest, he would not have struggled to save the hayricks from disaster. Twice he battles nature at her most primitive-- fire and storm--and is both times victorious, which is further proof that Hardy does not see man as a victim of "Nature." Just as he may triumph over the storm, he may triumph over his own emotions. It is not always easy to succeed, but it is possible.

Bathsheba does not find success in the dream world she at first imagined, but she realizes that it was a less-than-perfect world to begin with. As a result, she is able to reconcile her life and her dream. She exchanges the glamorous, superficial trappings of her dream

world for the stable, dependable qualities which Gabriel Oak represents. Her ability to reconcile the real and the ideal represents the "chink of possibility" which Hardy always allows his characters.

Boldwood, of course, refuses to deviate from the path he has set for himself. His actions enforce Hardy's statement that "Men endeavor to hold to a mathematical consistency in things, instead of recognizing that certain things may both be good and mutually antagonistic. . . ."³ By refusing to accept the reality of his particular situation, Boldwood destroys himself and Sergeant Troy.

In Far from the Madding Crowd, Hardy has demonstrated three results of man's struggle for life: Boldwood's complete lack of success in achieving his dream, Gabriel's attainment of his goal after much difficulty and suffering, and Bathsheba's realization that her initial goal was an unworthy one and her ultimate acceptance of something less than her "ideal." In Hardy's emerging universe, it has become more difficult for man to make the right choice, the choice which will provide him some measure of happiness, reward, or promise.

³Florence Emily Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1930), p. 54.

CHAPTER IV

RETURN OF THE NATIVE

In Return of the Native, published four years after Far from the Madding Crowd, Hardy is, as always, concerned with his characters' desire to find happiness and fulfillment in love. In addition, the "ideal" is represented in this novel by a desire for intellectual achievement on the part of one character and by a dream of far-away places on the part of another.

To Egdon Heath has come the beautiful Eustacia Vye to live with her grandfather. Intelligent and accustomed to city life, Eustacia finds little in common with the rustics of the countryside and becomes something of a recluse except for her relationship with Damon Wildeve, the proprietor of the village inn. Wildeve, educated as an engineer, is something of a philanderer, and like Eustacia, he is a newcomer to the community.

Wildeve has attempted to marry Thomasin Yeobright, whose aunt strongly objects to a marriage between the two, but an error in the license has prevented the scheduled ceremony from taking place. Thomasin, disappointed and confused, returns to Egdon in the back of Diggory Venn's van. Diggory, a reddleman, is in love with Thomasin, but he has been rebuffed because his social position is not up to Yeobright standards. In spite of this denial, the reddleman still loves Thomasin. He accepts the reality of the situation and tries to serve her in any way that he can.

Thomasin idealizes Wildeve in spite of her aunt's remonstrances: "Remember, Thomasin, this business was none of my seeking; from the very first, when you began to feel foolish about that man, I warned you he would not make you happy." And Thomasin admits her foolishness: "I know how wrong it was of me to love him, but don't pain me by talking like that, Aunt!"¹ Nevertheless, in spite of her own misgivings, she determines that she will marry Wildeve.

Wildeve vacillates in his desires, attracted most strongly to what is, at the moment, most unattainable. On the night of the abortive marriage attempt, he is summoned by Eustacia Vye to a tryst on the hill-top near her home. He is drawn to the bonfire, a pre-arranged signal, as if to a magnet. Both Wildeve and Eustacia are victims of their own unfettered desires; they make no real attempt to bridle their passions and emotions. Both are primarily interested in achieving their own selfish desires.

When she hears the marriage did not take place, Eustacia is sure it is because of Wildeve's true love for her. Learning the truth, she forswears him. His responses indicate two things--their real natures and their awareness of themselves. "You have said as much before, sweet; but such natures as yours don't so easily adhere to their words. Neither, for the matter of that, do such natures as mine" (p. 55). Eustacia knew that ". . . he trifled with her; but she loved on" (p. 56).

Like Fancy Day and the young Bathsheba, Eustacia is vain. Her attitude toward love and her desire for it are established early in the novel:

¹Thomas Hardy, Return of the Native, Ed. A. Walton Litz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), p. 36. Page numbers for further references to this novel will be put in parentheses following the quotation.

Fidelity in love for fidelity's sake had less attraction for her than for most women: fidelity because of love's grip had much. A blaze of love, and extinction was better than a lantern glimmer of the same which should last long years. On this head she knew by prevision what most women learn only by experience: she had mentally walked round love, told the towers thereof, considered its palaces; and concluded that love was but a doleful job. Yet she desired it, as one in a desert would be thankful for brackish water. . . .

And so we see our Eustacia . . . filling up the spare hours of her existence by idealizing Wildeve for want of a better object (pp. 60-61).

Eustacia is always looking beyond what her present condition involves to the advent of something greater. Most of all, Eustacia longs for the glamor and the mystery of far-away places.

When the news of Clym Yeobright's return to Egdon is announced, Eustacia begins a new dream. Clym, manager to a diamond merchant in Paris, is coming home for a visit. Eustacia spies on his return, hears a cultured voice, and begins to dream of Paris: "That night was an eventful one to Eustacia's brain, and one which she hardly ever forgot. She dreamt a dream; and few human beings from Nebuchadnezzar to the Swaffham tinker, ever dreamt a more remarkable one" (p. 99). Eustacia does not easily forget this dream and Wildeve, who is no more constant in his affections than she, becomes, for a time, inadequate to her purposes.

Disturbed by her niece's state of affairs, Mrs. Yeobright advises Wildeve that there is another who wants to marry Thomasin and that he must either marry her at once, thus stilling the gossip, or give her up. To Wildeve, Thomasin is made more attractive by the appearance of another suitor; to Eustacia, Wildeve is made less so because he is not the sole object of attraction for Thomasin. Eustacia, now intent upon

her dream of Clym and Paris, dismisses Wildeve, whereupon he marries Thomasin.

Clym Yeobright has come home to pursue a new goal. Concluding that the idle, purposeless life of Paris is not for him, he has decided that he would ". . . give it up and try to follow some rational occupation among the people I know best, and to whom I could be of most use. I have come home and this is how I mean to carry out my plan. I shall keep a school as near to Egdon as possible, so as to be able to walk over here and have a night-school in my mother's house. But I must study a little at first, to get properly qualified. . . . He had a conviction that the want of most men was knowledge of a sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence" (pp. 142-43). His mother considers his goal a foolish one and tells him that his fancies will be his ruin.

Eustacia and Clym meet. The attraction is mutual. Although Clym testifies to the fact that he sees Egdon Heath as the most desirable place on earth, Eustacia, her course set for the boulevards of Paris, has faith in her ability to motivate Clym to return to his job with the diamond merchant. She promises to marry him. "You will never adhere to your education plan I am quite sure; and then it will be all right for me; and so I promise to be yours for ever and ever" (p. 164).

Clym is aware of Eustacia's desire for a life in Paris, and he knows it will be impossible for him to grant her desires. His mother's attitude also complicates matters for him. She has an aversion not only to his desire for a school in Egdon Heath, but also to Eustacia. Mrs. Yeobright knows Eustacia's true character, knows of her alliance with Wildeve, and is afraid for Clym. She is skeptical of all of Clym's

plans: "Dreams, dreams! If there had been any system left to be invented they would have found it out at the universities long before this time" (p. 167).

Reason, however, yields to passion. Clym and Eustacia marry, but Mrs. Yeobright refuses to attend the wedding. The young couple finds a cottage some miles away, isolated from all neighbors, and Clym begins to study in earnest, preparing himself to teach. As time passes, Eustacia's dream becomes less and less of a possibility:

Her hopes were bound up in this dream. In the quiet days since their marriage, when Yeobright had been pouring over her lips, her eyes, and the lines of her face, she had mused and mused on the subject, even while in the act of returning his gaze, and now the sight of the books, indicating a future which was antagonistic to her dream, struck her with a positively painful jar. She was hoping for the time when, as the mistress of some pretty establishment, however small, near a Parisian Boulevard, she would be passing her days on the skirts at least of the gay world, and catching stray wafts from those town pleasures she was so well fitted to enjoy. Yet Yeobright was as firm in the contrary intention as if the tendency of marriage were rather to develop the fantasies of young philanthropy than to sweep them away (p. 197).

Clym becomes almost blind from too much reading, but even in the face of little encouragement from the doctor as to when or even whether his sight will improve, Clym does not despair. That he is not totally blind seems enough for the present. While he still clings to his goal of intellectual achievement, he dons the clothes of a furze cutter and by day engages in the lowliest occupation the Heath has to offer. Eustacia is shocked to see Clym going about this business with a song.

She begins to see both their lives as wasted. Escaping for a while, Eustacia goes to a village picnic, dances with Wildeve who ". . . had long since begun to sigh again for Eustacia; indeed, it may

be asserted that signing the marriage register with Thomasin was the natural signal to his heart to return to its first quarters, and that the extra complication of Eustacia's marriage was the one addition required to make that return compulsory" (p. 214).

Eustacia blames Clym for returning to Egdon and altering the lives and destinies of five people. His mother is separated from her son, Thomasin and Wildeve are separated by the attraction which Wildeve has for Eustacia, and Clym is unhappy because Eustacia and his mother are unhappy. Eustacia clings to her selfish dream:

Many women would go far for such a husband. But do I desire unreasonably much in wanting what is called life--music, poetry, passion, war, and all the beating and pulsing that is going on in the great arteries of the world? That was the shape of my youthful dream; but I did not get it. Yet I thought I saw the way to it in my Clym (p. 231).

Mrs. Yeobright is prompted by Diggory Venn to go to Clym's home and try to heal the breach between mother and son. In the meantime, Wildeve, who is determined to see Eustacia, has decided that a daytime visit will be less suspicious, and he reaches the house moments before Mrs. Yeobright. Clym is asleep on the hearth, exhausted after a day's work in the furze, and does not hear Wildeve come in. When Eustacia peers out the window and sees her mother-in-law, she hustles Wildeve out a back door, certain that Clym will hear his mother's knock and answer the door. She escapes to the garden in order to avoid a confrontation with her mother-in-law.

Clym sleeps on and does not hear the knock. Mrs. Yeobright knows that they are home and assumes that they deliberately refrain from answering the door. Brokenhearted, she begins the long trek home, falls ill on the path, and is found some time later by Clym, who has in the

interim determined to go to her. She dies, and it is not until later that Clym finds that she had come to his house and Eustacia did not answer the door. His fury knows no bounds when he discovers that not only did Eustacia fail to answer the door but that there was a man in the house with her at the time.

Eustacia is forced to return to her grandfather. She arranges with Wildeve, who has inherited a large sum of money, to take her to a nearby port to catch a ship out of the country. He offers to join her, but Eustacia gives no thought to such a thing until she fully realizes that she is alone and has no money. Half hoping for a reconciliation with Clym, she becomes despondent. Clym sends a letter to her, forgiving her and pleading with her to come home, but the letter arrives after her departure to meet Wildeve. While waiting for some word from her, Clym is summoned by Thomasin, who fears there is trouble brewing between Eustacia and her husband. Near the inn, he meets Wildeve, finds that Eustacia has not kept her appointment with him, and begins a search for her. Her body is found in a pool at the base of the weir. In attempting to save her, Wildeve drowns, and Clym is almost gone when Diggory Venn rescues him.

Clym never recovers from his grief. He feels that he has caused the death of two women--his mother and his wife. By procrastinating in his intent to make things up with his mother, he has killed her. His procrastination in forgiving Eustacia he sees as responsible for her death. Although his love is lost, Clym still has a goal: "But anyhow God has set a mark upon me which wouldn't look well in a love-making scene. I have two ideas in my head and no others. I am going to keep a night-school; and I am going to turn preacher" (p. 320). Clym succeeds

to a degree. He never realizes his dream of a school for Egdon Heath, but he does become a preacher, an itinerant preacher who roves from place to place with a calm acceptance of his lot in life:

Some believed him, and some believed not; some said that his words were commonplace, others complained of his want of theological doctrine; while others again remarked that it was well enough for a man to take to preaching who could not see to do anything else. But everywhere he was kindly received, for the story of his life had become generally known (p. 328).

All of the chief characters in Return of the Native are disappointed in life. Only two succeed, and they are the two who have demanded or desired the least from the very beginning.

Eustacia, the most vital character in the novel, is completely destroyed because of her insistence on and adherence to her selfish dream. Wildeve is destroyed with her, because he is led by the insatiable longings of a man whose dream is always for that which he does not have or cannot have. His ambition always involved some nebulous ideal which attracted him only temporarily.

Clym, whose ideal was a noble one, doesn't come close to achieving what he had hoped for. His obsession with his dream of educational culture for Egdon Heath and his dream of life with Eustacia blinded him to the realities of life around him. So intent was he upon his dream that he failed to accept the fact that Eustacia was just as intent upon hers. Refusing to heed the warnings of others, refusing to see Eustacia as she really was, he lost touch with reality and lost his dream, or the greater part of it, by marrying Eustacia. That he does achieve some small part of his goal indicates perseverance in, and an acceptance of life which Eustacia does not possess. Just as he was able to surrender to his blindness, he is able to accept what is left of life.

Thomasin and Diggory Venn are the only characters who achieve happiness. Venn has suffered, but his love, like Gabriel Oak's, has endured, has been unselfish, undemanding, and he is rewarded. Thomasin, who is not the strong-willed, intelligent, superior being that Eustacia Vye is, demands little from life except a peaceful domestic situation. Like Bathsheba Everdene, she realizes that the decision which governed her first marriage was based on the ideal man rather than the man as he really was, and like Bathsheba, she has a second chance.

The tone of this novel is darker than Hardy's preceding works. There is little humor; and an aura of gloom, of impending disaster, pervades the novel. Partially responsible for this effect are the characterizations of Wildeve and Eustacia. It is obvious from the beginning of the novel that neither of them attempts to bridle his passions and that they will let nothing stand in the way of their selfish desires. Since their lives touch so many others, the feeling of impending ruin becomes a part of the atmosphere.

All of the characters in this novel are propelled to their destinies by virtue of the decisions they make. Thomasin has the second chance to consider her marriage to Wildeve. Eustacia and Wildeve break off their relationship and then resume it, several times. Clym's choice of a wife is not forced upon him. He refuses to accept reality when he decides to ignore Eustacia's determination to live in Paris. He chooses freely and with time to consider, and he alone is responsible for his choice. Eustacia complicates her situation by trying to conceal from Clym his mother's visit and Wildeve's presence in the house. As Morrell points out in his study of Hardy's novels, Clym, Eustacia, and

Mrs. Yeobright allow misunderstandings to multiply, and Mrs. Yeobright brings the "closed door" across the Heath with her.² Hardy emphasizes that preconceived notions allow little room for the reconsideration of a problem.

It is noteworthy, however, that the main characters in this novel make an attempt to rationalize their defeat, to place the blame for unrealized goals on other sources. Eustacia, instead of blaming herself for the issue, ". . . laid the fault upon the shoulders of some indistinct, colossal Prince of the World, who had framed her situation and ruled her lot" (p. 243). Later she says,

I do not deserve my lot! . . . O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-condemned world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all! (p. 288).

Hardy makes it clear that it is Eustacia who is to blame, that things have been very much under her control, that she has been responsible for her tortures. Her determination to marry Clym as a means to her selfish dream of Paris and her inability to accept a life in the real world of Egdon Heath brought about her downfall.

Clym also tries to shift the blame to another source:

He did sometimes think he had been ill-used by fortune, so far as to say that to be born is a palpable dilemma, and that instead of men aiming to advance in life with glory they should calculate how to retreat out of it without shame. But that he and his had been sarcastically and pitilessly handled in having such irons thrust into their souls he did not maintain long. It is usually so, except with the

²Morrell, p. 50.

sternest of men. Human beings, in their generous endeavor to construct a hypothesis that shall not degrade a First Cause, have always hesitated to conceive a dominant power of lower moral quality than their own; and, even while they sit down and weep by the waters of Babylon, invent excuses for the oppression which prompts their tears (p. 308).

In the end, though, he realizes that it is he who is really responsible for his fate. He remembers his mother's advice on his marriage:

He should have heeded her for Eustacia's sake even more than for his own. "It was all my fault" he whispered. "O, My mother, my mother! Would to God that I could live my life again and endure for you what you endured for me" (p. 327).

Mrs. Yeobright is not blameless. Although she blames Eustacia for all that has happened, Mrs. Yeobright, like her son, has delayed in making amends. Moreover, she complicated Thomasin's life by denying Diggory Venn the right to court Thomasin. Her false social values helped to produce tragic disappointments.

In Return of the Native, Hardy has portrayed his characters as less likely than his earlier creations to be able to accept the realities of life. When these realities run counter to their aspirations, they are unacceptable. The decisions they make have come to be based even more than before on illusion instead of truth, with predictably dark results.

CHAPTER V

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure, Hardy's last two novels, are set apart from his previous works in that they are more serious and at the same time less optimistic. The "chink of possibility" which has been ever-present in his works has noticeably narrowed by the time of Tess in 1892.

In Tess, even in the least serious scenes, there is an underlying pathos that reinforces Tess's statement that we live on a "blighted planet." In this novel and in Jude, there is more concern with the effects of environment and heredity on a character's fate. The odds against achieving success are greater, life is more difficult, and we are continually made aware of the characters' tendency to deny the reality of particular situations. Hardy seems to have become increasingly concerned with man's inability to endure the hardships of his existence and to overcome the obstacles which separate him from the achievement of his goal.

To some extent, it is the dreams of those around her which determine the destiny of Tess, the protagonist in the novel. In addition, her own reactions to the desires of others, and the choices and decisions she makes combine to decide her fortune. As in many of Hardy's novels, deceit and procrastination play a part in this character's inability to realize her goal.

It is John and Joan Durbyfield's ambitious assumption of new roles which is to a great degree responsible for Tess's misfortune. When John,

an illiterate country haggler, is told by a neighboring parson that he is a lineal descendent of the D'Urberville family, whose founder came to England with William the Conqueror, he assumes all the airs of nobility and wealth. The advent of such news seems to John and his wife to be a Godsend. Since they enlarge it out of all proportion, however, it becomes a means of destruction.

Once aware of the fact that he is a D'Urberville rather than a Durbyfield, John remembers that there is a rich widow D'Urberville who lives in a nearby village and who most assuredly will help them and be happy to hear of their kinship. Tess, as the most promising member of the family both physically and intellectually, is the logical choice to make the overture to their new kin. In reality, the widow is not a D'Urberville at all, but an impostor whose family "took" the name because it had an aristocratic sound and because the original family no longer existed, so far as anyone knew.

Unaware of all this, Tess knew nevertheless that her parents' plan was neither acceptable nor wise. A low point in the family's economy for which Tess feels largely responsible forces her to attempt to make contact with the wealthy D'Urbervilles. The son of the family, Alec, meets Tess, is impressed by her beauty, and arranges to hire her as a poultry keeper. Behind Tess's back, he treats the matter of kinship as a huge joke, and his mother never learns of the bond which Tess believes unites them and is responsible for their concern in her welfare.

Tess, who knows little about life and men, tries to fend off Alec's advances but is finally seduced. The affair goes on for some weeks until Tess, realizing she is pregnant and hating Alec for what he

has done to her, leaves the D'Urberville household and returns home in disgrace.

Her child is born, some months later dies, and Tess begins at length to come to grips with her guilt and to venture into the world and life once again. A summer job at a dairy farm some miles from home brings her into contact with Angel Clare, the educated gentleman son of a clergyman, who is serving an apprenticeship on the farm in order to learn about dairying, a step toward fulfilling his ambition to become a farmer.

Angel, impressed by Tess's beauty and her innate intelligence, and believing that she will make an ideal farmer's wife, marries her. Their wedding night brings a confession from Tess about her past which Angel is not able to accept. He deserts her, goes to Brazil to seek land in the colonies, and tells Tess that he will perhaps send for her when he has learned to live with her secret.

Sick at heart, again in disgrace at home, Tess wanders the countryside doing the lowliest of field work in order to support herself. She is drawn to a large gathering one day where an itinerant preacher is admonishing the crowd to "obey the truth." She recognizes the preacher to be Alec D'Urberville. He recognizes her; his passion is once again inflamed; and he pursues her, forgetting the ideals represented by his conversion to Christianity. When Tess rejects him he proposes marriage, but Tess is still very much in love with Angel, and is, of course, not free to marry. She is repulsed by Alec and begs him to leave her alone.

When John Durbyfield dies about this time, the family is turned out of their house. Once again, economic necessity leads Tess to accept Alec's terms. Letters of entreaty to Angel have brought no reply.

Alec's assurances that Angel will never return help entice Tess back to a life with him. However, Angel does return. He finds Tess living with Alec, and too late he recognizes and regrets the role he has played in her misfortunes. Tess kills Alec because he has misled her about Angel and then flees with her husband. They have a few idyllic days together but are found by the police and Tess is arrested.

Angel's dream of a "pure" woman and the Durbyfield's dream of nobility and riches help to destroy Tess. She is, however, in the final analysis responsible for her own fate. The decisions she makes dictate her end. This novel suggests, as do the others, that even when the odds are against a character's successful accomplishment of what he most desires, there is still the possibility that his own strength and character will make the difference between success and failure. Each character is responsible for his own fate, but in Tess he is not capable of making the right decision. Logical, constructive thinking and action are often beyond the man who is caught up in a dream.

Earlier in the novel, upon learning of her husband's illustrious ancestry, Joan Durbyfield immediately begins to drift away from reality. Tess notices a difference in her mother before she knows the reason for it. "There was a dreaminess, a preoccupation, an exultation, in the maternal look which the girl could not understand."¹ Even the children echo Joan's dream for Tess. Little Abraham has visions of the life which the widow, their kinswoman, leads. "And we'll all go and see her

¹Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900), p. 13. Page numbers for further references to this novel will be put in parentheses following the quotation.

when Tess has gone to live with her; and we'll ride in her coach and wear black clothes" (p. 19). Joan is sure that the widow will introduce Tess to a noble gentleman and that her marriage will be the salvation of the Durbyfield family.

After Tess's initial visit to the D'Urbervilles, Alec comes to offer her the job, and Joan is more convinced than ever that Tess's fortune is assured. Coaxing her husband, who has brief doubts as to the advisability of the matter, to let Tess go, Joan begs: "But do let her go, Jacky. . . . He's struck wi' her--you can see that. He called her Coz! He'll marry her, most likely, and make a lady of her; and then she'll be what her forefather was" (p. 37).

While Tess did not consider the possibility of marriage and read more into Alec's character than concern for a "cousin," she did feel an obligation to try to better the position of her brothers and sisters.

Tess is able to fend off Alec's amorous advances for some weeks, but on a particular night, when he has rescued her from a drunken revel of her fellow workers and taken her miles away into the middle of a forest, she is at his mercy. She finds it difficult to explain her situation to her mother who admonishes her: "You ought to have been more careful if you didn't mean to get him to make you his wife" (p. 72). Tess reminds her that she was a child four months before, that she had been told nothing of the "danger in men folk."

Thus the odds have been against Tess from the start. An uneducated mother who was too caught up in a world of fantasy to deal with reality, a conceited selfish young man concerned only with his own appetites, a strange community in which there was no friend, and the knowledge that the family depended on her, all conspired to force Tess

into an undesirable situation. Hardy does not absolve Tess of responsibility, however. Her reaction to her mother's plea that she must get Alec to marry her shows the situation from a different perspective:

Get Alec d'Urberville in the mind to marry her! He marry her. On matrimony he had never once said a word. And what if he had? How a convulsive snatching at social salvation might have impelled her to answer him she could not say. But her poor foolish mother little knew her present feelings toward this man. Perhaps it was unusual in the circumstances, unlucky, unaccountable; but there it was; and this as she had said, was what made her detest herself. She had never wholly cared for him, she did not at all care for him now. She had dreaded him, winced before him, succumbed to adroit advantages he took of her helplessness; then temporarily blinded by his ardent manners, had been stirred to confused surrender awhile; had suddenly despised and disliked him and had run away. That was all. Hate him she did not quite; but he was dust and ashes to her, and even for her name's sake she scarcely wished to marry him (p. 72).

Tess has continued her relationship with Alec voluntarily, and this is the one fact which is most abhorrent to her. Unlike her mother, she must face the reality of her own weakness; she blames herself for her willing surrender. To Joan, even the avoidable disaster, once it happens, can be dismissed as: "Tis 'nater, after all, and what do please God" (p. 72).

Tess makes an attempt to forget her past. She "... felt the pulse of hopeful life still in her; she might be happy in some nook which had no memories" (p. 87). She finds it impossible to forget, but her days at the dairy pass happily enough. She is attracted to Angel Clare because of his intellectual superiority and because he is a gentleman, but she does nothing to encourage his admiration of her.

Angel, unable to follow the orthodox religious beliefs of his father, has not been sent to Oxford as were his older brothers. Pressed to do something, he settles on farming as a vocation which will allow intellectual freedom and also provide a livelihood. He quickly recognizes that Tess is a superior "milkmaid," something well above the ordinary. He falls in love, and life takes on new meaning. "Latterly he had seen only life, felt only the great passionate pulse of existence, unwarped, uncontorted, untrammelled by those creeds which futilely attempt to check what wisdom would be content to regulate" (p. 140).

Angel's attitude toward Tess seems to be one of simple acceptance:

It was for herself that he loved Tess; her soul, her heart, her substance--not for her skill in the dairy, her aptness as his scholar, and certainly not for her simple formal faith professions. Her unsophisticated open-air existence required no varnish of conventionality to make it palatable to him (p. 146).

But we find that Angel does not really love Tess for "herself." He is supposedly a liberal thinker; he sees the conventional as commonplace. And yet, Angel is really more of a traditionalist than he knows. He confesses to Tess on their wedding night an affair with a London woman, and he expects and is granted forgiveness. When Tess makes a similar confession about her affair with Alec d'Urberville, his reaction is one of horror; he cannot apply the same moral standards to Tess which he demands for himself. His dream of a pure and innocent woman has been destroyed. That his dream is all-important is evidenced by the fact that he no longer sees Tess as the same person. Tess begs his forgiveness, reminding him that she has forgiven him. "O, Tess, forgiveness does not apply to the case! You were one person; now you

are another. My God--how can forgiveness meet such a grotesque--prestigitation as that!" (p. 202).

Where Tess's love is pure and unselfish, Angel's love is dependent upon the conventions and varnish of society, in spite of his beliefs that he is unconcerned with such matters. Angel, like Tess, is a product of a specific social environment. The false values of his society are far-reaching, and Angel does not have the strength of character to rebel against those "futile creeds" which dictate the morals and manners of men.

Tess, of course, has no control over Angel's reaction at this point. Nothing she can say makes any difference. They are married; Angel has no grounds for divorce, and yet he cannot live with her. Once again, circumstances seem to trap Tess.

Tess has made some decisions, however, which have helped to place her in this particular situation. From the first time that Tess realized the attraction between herself and Angel, she determined to discourage him, mindful of her past and believing that to marry such a gentleman as Angel Clare, one should be pure and spotless. Her attempts to discourage Angel are, in reality, half-hearted attempts. She continually tells him that she cannot marry him, but never tells him why. Tess rationalizes about her procrastination in telling Clare about her past. He interrupts at the logical moment, or she decides to ignore the past. Her own sense of guilt compels her to confession and yet "her instinct of self-preservation was stronger than her candour" (p. 162). As their relationship progresses, she begins to fear that he will blame her for not having told him sooner. In a last desperate attempt to confess, Tess writes a letter to Angel a few days before the wedding, which

describes the events in her past, and she slips it under his door. She saw no change in his attitude toward her; he did not mention a letter. On her wedding day, Tess climbed the steps to Angel's room and found the unopened letter peeking out from under the rug. "The incident of the misplaced letter she had jumped at as if it prevented a confession; but she knew in her conscience that it need not; there was still time" (p. 186).

But Tess does not confess while there is still time. She procrastinates until the vows have been made and Angel's reaction brings heartbreak and disgrace. A confession before the wedding would have insured against any greater penalty than heartbreak. Angel mourns: "O, Tess! If you had only told me sooner, I would have forgiven you!" (p. 237). There is no guarantee that he would have forgiven, but in any case, a confession would have meant less pain in the long run for Tess.

Tess's fortunes begin once again to wane. Her love for Angel remains true and she hates the men who are attracted to her. She crops her eyebrows and wears old clothes in order to make herself less attractive to passing glances. Hardy describes her feelings as she trudges along the road to the farm where she hopes to find work:

Inside this exterior, over which the eye might have roved as over a thing scarcely percipient, almost inorganic, there was the record of a pulsing life which had learnt too well, for its years, of the dust and ashes of things, of the cruelty of lust and the fragility of love (p. 248).

Desperation drives Tess to apply to her in-laws for help. Physically exhausted from long hours at hard labor, her meager earnings insufficient to meet her needs, and the money which Angel left her gone, Tess finally decides to appeal to the Clares for news of Angel. While waiting for

them to return from church, Tess overhears Angel's two brothers discussing him and "regretting his precipitancy in throwing himself away upon a dairymaid" (p. 267). Tess's pride and the hurt at hearing herself discussed in such disparaging terms cause her to turn around and trudge back toward her place of exile, without waiting to see Angel's father.

Then she grieved for the beloved man whose conventional standard of judgment had caused her all these latter sorrows, and she went her way without knowing that the greatest misfortune of her life was this feminine loss of courage at the last and critical moment through her estimating her father-in-law by his sons. Her present condition was precisely one which would have enlisted the sympathies of old Mr. and Mrs. Clare (p. 267).

When Alec d'Urberville once again finds Tess and begins to besiege her with persistent demands, even offering to marry her, she is particularly vulnerable. Her father is dead, and no means of support is forthcoming for her mother and the children. Tess once again feels the burden of responsibility. Still refusing to ask the Clares for help, she writes Angel, begging him to save her from what is threatening.

A much-changed Angel has begun the journey home.

During the time of absence he had mentally aged a dozen years. What arrested him now as of value in life was less its beauty than its pathos. Having long discredited the old system of mysticism, he now began to discredit the old appraisements of morality. He thought they wanted readjusting. Who was the moral man? Still more pertinently, who was the moral woman? The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay not among things done, but among things willed (p. 303).

Had Angel not procrastinated at this point and had he communicated his feelings to Tess, her life could perhaps have been salvaged. No communication comes from Angel, however, and assuming herself to be completely forgotten, Tess yields to temptation.

Her husband, Angel Clare himself, had, like others, dealt out hard measure to her, surely he had! She had never before admitted such a thought; but he had surely! Never in her life . . . had she ever intended to do wrong; yet these hard judgments had come. Whatever her sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should she have been punished so persistently? (p. 317).

Hardy portrays Tess as pure because her intent, her dream, has always represented a "beauty of character." That she has not succeeded in her desires can be attributed to several factors, not the least of which are the choices Tess makes which help determine her fate. J. Hillis Miller, adhering to Holloway's school of thought, suggests that Tess illustrates the impossibility of avoiding the effects and repetition of the past: "The past has embodied itself in the persons of the present as well as in their surroundings. This embodiment forces people against their will to re-enact the patterns of the past. It is as if they were caught up in a great wind of history which whirls them into the rigid forms of a predetermined dance."²

It is true that Tess's cultural and intellectual environment is far from being one which would aid her in achieving any kind of success in life. Tess, however, is so far beyond her parents in innate intelligence and in social responsibility that she cannot be compared to them. Her initial seduction by Alec is perhaps more to be credited to environment than any other disaster which befalls her. Her parents have failed to warn her of the pitfalls she will probably encounter in life. Nevertheless, even in this instance, there is a natural intuition which warns Tess of the danger involved and her half-hearted surrender implies

²Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), p. 155.

a certain amount of willingness and acceptance on her part. The Durbyfield's illusions have helped to destroy Tess, but somehow one expects so little of John and Joan Durbyfield that it counts for little in the final analysis.

An attempt to hide her past and her procrastination in communicating with Angel, both before and after marriage, further help to destroy Tess. As we have already seen, he who tries to hide from his past cannot escape the reality of the present, and is often a victim of his own schemes.

Angel's dream of purity and innocence does not allow for human error. When he is unable to reconcile himself to something less than the ideal, he helps to destroy Tess as well as their goal. He recognizes his mistake, but it is too late to help Tess.

Hardy, in this novel, portrays Tess's failure to succeed more sympathetically than he portrays the failure of his earlier protagonists. There is a "purity" in Tess's desire for fulfillment in that her values are not false and her goal is realistic. She is a victim of others' passions as well as her own. While the emphasis has shifted somewhat, we must still acknowledge the fact that Tess does have opportunities to alter the events in her life and this gives support to Hardy's belief that it is possible for man to change the course of his life.

CHAPTER VI

JUDE THE OBSCURE

It is in Jude the Obscure that we see Hardy's world at its darkest. All the characters in Jude fail to accept the reality of their particular situations, and in doing so they close the door on the possibility of fulfillment. In his Preface to the First Edition of this novel, Hardy remarked that one purpose of the novel was ". . . to tell, without a mincing of words, of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit, and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims."¹ In Jude the Obscure, as in his previous novels, aims become obsessions, and the characters become so caught up in illusions that they are unable to accept the realities of life.

Jude argues, much like Joan Durbyfield, that ". . . human nature can't help being itself," and Sue's reply, "O yes--that's just what it has to learn--self mastery" (p. 279) echoes just what Hardy has implied throughout his works: that self mastery is the key to man's success. A man must master himself in order to deal with the real world. He must master himself in order to make the decisions which will insure his success.

Jude the Obscure begins with the recurring Hardyan dream of intellectual achievement. The young orphan boy, Jude, fixes his star over Christminster, the citadel of learning, and it never really wavers throughout his life.

¹Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.), p. 3. Page numbers for further references to this novel will be put in parentheses following the quotation.

Alone in the world, except for an aunt who really doesn't want him, Jude is influenced by his schoolmaster's departure for Christminster to attempt to carry out his dream of being a university graduate. The schoolmaster, Mr. Phillotson, soon forgets the young Jude, but Jude forgets neither the schoolmaster nor the dream. The dream becomes his own and provides him an "anchor" to cling to. From his earliest thought of Christminster as the "City of Light," or the "New Jerusalem," Jude begins to formulate plans which will enable him to reach his goal. He studies the classics, hoping to amass the knowledge and background which will provide an entrance to the academic world, and he begins to learn the trade of stone-masonry in order to support himself while he prepares for the university. And all the while ". . . he continued to dream, and thought he might become even a bishop by leading a pure, energetic, wise, Christian life" (p. 32).

Jude's eye is so steadfastly fixed on his dream that he fails to observe much of life around him. While walking through the countryside one day, dreamily contemplating his future achievements, Jude is struck by a piece of pig flesh, thrown over a hedge by Arabella Donn, a country lass who is helping to butcher a pig. As she watches Jude pass the hedge, Arabella creates an opportunity for conversation. She talks with Jude, recognizes in him those qualities which set him above the ordinary country lad, and determines to win him.

Jude's dream is temporarily suspended and he is caught up in a world which he has not known before. He makes a date with Arabella, conscious that she is morally and intellectually miles apart from him, and yet unable to resist her.

It had been no vestal who chose that missile for opening her attack on him. He saw this with his intellectual eye, just for a short fleeting while, . . . And then this passing discriminative power was withdrawn, and Jude was lost to all conditions of things in the advent of fresh and wild pleasure. . . . (p. 35).

Jude cannot defend himself against Arabella's practiced wiles. After a brief affair, Jude is already beginning to feel pangs of guilt from having been away from his studies too much, when Arabella announces that she is pregnant. While Jude admits to some disappointment and knows Arabella is not all she should be, he plays the part of the honorable man. "It is a complete smashing up of my plans--I mean my plans before I knew you, my dear. But what are they, after all: Dreams about books, and degrees, and impossible fellowship and all that. Certainly we'll marry: we must" (p. 47).

It is not long before Jude realizes that Arabella's scheme had been nothing more than a trap. He recognizes the fact that his own weakness is responsible for his wedded state, and while the "immediate reason of his marriage had proved to be non-existent," the marriage nevertheless remains. No more pleased with the union than Jude, Arabella emigrates to Australia with her family. Jude renews his dream once again, but his first mistake, marrying Arabella, is to be one which haunts him the rest of his life.

Jude leaves for Christminster and sets out to find a job. "For the present, he said to himself, the one thing necessary was to get ready by accumulating money and knowledge, and await whatever chances were afforded to such an one of becoming a son of the University. . . . His desire absorbed him, and left no part of him to weigh its practicability" (p. 71).

Another desire begins to absorb Jude's interest. Alone in the city of Christminster, he requests his aunt to send a picture of his cousin Sue, who also resides in the city. Antipathy between the families leads the aunt to advise Jude to refrain from contacting his cousin, but he finds her, and at first observes her from a distance, without making himself known to her.

Thus he kept watch over her, and liked to feel she was there. The consciousness of her living presence stimulated him. But she remained more or less an ideal character, about whose form he began to weave curious and fantastic daydreams (p. 72).

The two passions which are to dominate Jude's life, Christminster and his cousin Sue, are both the results of dreams which are idealistic in their inception, but Jude's attempts to fulfill his desires are frustrated by his inability to accept reality, to separate the real from the ideal, and to accomplish some reconciliation of life and dream.

At length, Jude and Sue meet, are drawn to each other intellectually, and, on Jude's part at least, emotionally. "For Sue to be the loved one of a man who was licensed by the laws of his country to love Arabella and none other until his life's end, was a pretty bad second beginning when the man was bent on such a course as Jude purposed" (p. 79). Jude procrastinates in telling Sue of his past. Knowing he must not allow himself to fall in love with her, he attempts to hide his past and to ignore or rationalize about his present feelings.

Sue Bridghead is reminiscent of Angel Clare in her rebellion against the orthodox and the conventional. Her claims to the unorthodox are responsible for a lack of acceptance in certain quarters. She loses her job because she brings what her landlady terms pagan statuary into

her rented room. Jude, in an attempt to keep her near Christminster, introduces her to his old schoolmaster, Mr. Phillotson, who engages her as an apprentice teacher for a school which he keeps a few miles away.

Jude's first real disillusionment comes when he goes unexpectedly one evening to call on Sue and discovers her walking with Phillotson, his arm around her waist. He retreats without making his presence known, finally brought to the realization that he has no right to interfere in Sue's life. Jude also begins to realize that he is making no progress toward realizing his ambition. Lack of funds has kept him out of the University--a place which in his day was only for the wealthy. Jude begins to wonder about his future:

He was set regarding his prospects in a cold northern light. He had lately felt that he could not satisfy himself in his Greek--in the Greek of the dramatists particularly. So fatigued was he sometimes after a day's work that he could not maintain the critical attention necessary for thorough application. . . .

It was decidedly necessary to consider facts a little more closely than he had done of late. What was the good, after all, of using up his spare hours in a vague labor called 'private study' without giving an outlook on practicabilities? (p. 91).

Jude chooses five academic dignitaries and writes to them for advice about his difficulties. No answers arrive. He realizes the impossibility of qualifying himself for a scholarship without a good deal of coaching which he does not have available to him. Finally, one brief reply affirms his fears. The one master who deigns to answer his plea advises him to remain in his own sphere--to stick to his own trade.

Disillusioned, forced to face the reality of the moment, Jude
 ". . . looked over the town into the country beyond, to the trees which
 screened her whose presence had at first been the support of his heart,

and whose loss was now a maddening torture. But for this blow he might have borne with his fate. With Sue as companion, he could have renounced his ambition with a smile" (p. 94).

But Jude does not have Sue as a companion. He retreats to his old home at Alfredson where he had lived with Arabella. He falls asleep soon after arriving there, and "when he awoke it was as if he had awakened in hell. It was hell--"the hell of conscious failure, both in ambition and in love" (p. 100). A new dream soon supplants Jude's "hell of conscious failure," however. The village clergyman calls and Jude confides in him. The clergyman supplies a surrogate dream. Why not enter the church as a licentiate? "A man could preach and do good to his fellow-creatures without taking double-firsts in the schools of Christminster, or having anything but ordinary knowledge" (p. 102). A note from Sue informing him that she is attending a Teacher's College in the town of Melchester gives impetus to Jude's new ambition. There is a Theological College at Melchester. Jude determines to seek employment at Melchester and begin reading for his admission to the college.

Jude and Sue spend an idyllic afternoon walking in the countryside. A missed train and a night spent at a shepherd's cottage conspire to cause Sue's dismissal from the college. Confiding to Jude that there are those who think he should marry her in order to save her reputation, she forces Jude at last to reveal his marriage and also to defend their actions to Mr. Phillotson, who has begun to have a dream of his own regarding Sue.

Sue and Mr. Phillotson marry, but it is evident to Jude that Sue is not happy in her marriage. He cannot stay away from her; he cannot cease to think of her. Once again, Jude finds that the spirit is willing

but the flesh is weak. Sue's physical aversion to her husband leads her to plea for freedom to leave him and go to live with Jude.

They live together, their early platonic relationship a strained existence to Jude, who begins to suspect that Sue is incapable of really loving anyone. In time, Arabella writes Jude to divorce her so that she can legally marry. Both Sue and Jude are now free, yet they still procrastinate about the matter of marriage. "They thought it over, or postponed action, and seemed to live on in a dreamy paradise" (p. 215). Dependent upon each other, they are lost souls when it comes to making decisions. They fear that they will no longer be "free" to love each other once they are married.

The advent of a son, born in Australia eight months after Arabella left Jude, and until now unknown to Jude, presents the need for marriage between Jude and Sue. Old Father Time, as the child is called, has never felt wanted before, has never had a real home. He calls Sue "mother" and the situation demands at least the outward pretense of the acceptability and legality of a marriage. The two attempt several times to marry and are always disillusioned by the artificial trappings involved in licenses, witnesses, ceremonies. Religious services bring to Sue's mind the fact that her once-pledged vows to Phillotson have not been honored. Sue suggests to Jude that they not kill their dream, that for the two of them an irrevocable oath is risky. Neighborhood gossip endures, and after some time the taunts to the boy make it necessary for them to move elsewhere. Here begins a nomadic existence in which Jude travels from job to job. Sue bears Jude two children and is pregnant with the third when Jude falls ill. In order to subsist, Jude, confined indoors, makes gingerbread cakes shaped

like cathedrals, and Sue sells the "Christminster" cakes at the county fairs nearby.

One day Sue is confronted by the recently widowed Arabella, who recognizes her son and stops at the table to inquire about the family. "Still harping on Christminster--even in his cakes!" comments Arabella. And it is true that Jude still has dreams of Christminster. Although ambition was sacrificed for love, even Sue admits to Arabella that "Christminster is a sort of fixed vision with him, which I suppose he'll never be cured of believing in" (p. 247).

In his illness, Jude has begun to think more and more of Christminster and determines to go back there. As the family enters the town on a holiday, accommodations for a couple and three children, with another obviously ready to make an appearance, are impossible to find. Sue and the children finally find a room in a private home but Jude must go to the public house. Young Father Time, distressed by the fact that "nobody wants them" and told by Sue that another baby is on the way, is overcome by melancholy, and while Sue goes to the hotel to talk to Jude, he hangs the two younger children and then himself.

Sue is crushed with grief. Her baby is born prematurely and is dead. All that has happened Sue regards as a judgment upon her. She tells Jude that their lives have been "a vain attempt at self-delight," and she returns to orthodox religion, hoping to find some peace with herself. Still unable to accept the tragedy, Sue decides that she must return to Phillotson, her rightful husband, in an attempt to make amends.

Jude is sick at heart and helpless without Sue. He is found in a drunken stupor by Arabella and once again is trapped into marriage. For the second time Arabella repents her scheming, for Jude falls seriously

ill and she is forced to care for him. When Arabella refuses to send word to Sue that he is ill, Jude makes his way to Marygreen and one last reunion with Sue. In spite of good intentions she embraces him and tells him that she still loves him. Jude returns to Christminster alone and Sue returns to her home. On this same night, she begins to live with Phillotson, making the final sacrifice as punishment to herself for revealing to Jude her love for him and allowing him to kiss her.

It is shortly after his trek to Marygreen that Jude dies, alone, begging for water, while Arabella consorts with some new-found friends. As Jude dies, he whispers defeatedly the words from the Book of Job: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived." His dream has been unrealized, he has found little peace in life, and he dies alone, cursing the day he was born.

Jude the Obscure is in one sense a comment on the institutions of the day. Man must not only master himself, he must confront elements in society which are antagonistic towards him. Wealth, as a requirement for intellectual pursuit, is one of the factors which influences Jude's life; the social stigma of divorce touches all the characters in the novel. In spite of what may be injustice in a social system, however, man must deal with the realities of life around him. He must make decisions based on the way things are rather than the way he wishes them to be, and the degree of his achievement reflects the wisdom of his decisions. In no other novel does Hardy see man as so incapable of making the right decisions, as so unable to master himself, and as so unlikely to achieve his goal.

As with other Hardy women--Fancy Day, Bathsheba Everdene, Eustacia Vye--Sue Bridehead's vanity is, in the beginning, responsible for the frustration in her life. Her "love of being loved" leads her into the alliance with Mr. Phillotson. There is never any deep emotional attachment for him, only her need to be praised and adored.

Sue is like Angel Clare in that the world of convention is more deeply ingrained in her than she realizes. She finally rebels against her unorthodox ideas much as she formerly rebelled against the orthodox. In neither milieu has she been able to find peace or to achieve fulfillment. Rebellion against conformity in society results in her dismissal from the training school, and creates the need to marry Phillotson. When she and Jude refuse to marry, they bring condemnation from the community, and find it necessary to embark upon a nomadic life, finding less and less work because of their moral reputation. When she rebels against her unorthodox life and goes back to Phillotson, Sue is more unhappy than ever. None of her decisions bring satisfaction. While we can understand and sympathize with Sue's rejection of various social standards, we must recognize that she continually refuses to consider the consequences of her actions. Her eye on the "ideal," she fails to acknowledge the "real" and complicates her life accordingly.

Jude's obsession with his dream of Christminster knows of no real respite throughout his life. For brief intervals, he seems to channel his energies in other directions, but his final move back to Christminster belies the fact that he has ever forgotten his dream.

Jude is never able to achieve the self-mastery necessary to accept the realities of life. His impulsive marriage to Arabella complicates his life and while it probably has little effect on his

inability to attend Christminster, it does affect his dream of life with Sue. When he fails to tell Sue that he is married to Arabella, he allows their relationship to progress. The legal marriage with Arabella helps, perhaps, to propel Sue toward marriage with Phillotson; it may have prevented an early marriage between the two after Phillotson divorced Sue; and it has a psychological effect on both characters' desires to legalize their marriage. Jude is well on his way to destruction before his second marriage to Arabella, and this liaison only emphasizes and intensifies the waste which is evident in Jude's life. By refusing to accept the limitations put upon him by society, Jude allows his dream to dominate his life to the point that all his family suffers from the impracticality of his vision.

Both Sue and Jude allow their dreams to become obsessions. Each time they refuse to accept life in terms of reality, they move farther away from fulfillment.

We see even the minor characters in Jude the Obscure as unable to accept reality. Arabella refuses to accept the fact that marriage with Jude will mean nothing more than a physical union. Twice she schemes to trap Jude into marriage, thinking to improve her position in life, and twice she is disappointed. Phillotson refuses to accept the fact that Sue does not love him. He clings to a dream that cannot be realized and he does not learn from experience. Like Arabella, he marries for the second time, and will once again be disappointed.

Jude is a novel of thwarted dreams, of intellectual, spiritual, and emotional frustrations. But there are still the "chinks of possibility" which have been present in the early novels. All the

characters make decisions which dictate their destinies and more important, they make the same mistakes more than once. We are made painfully aware of what might have been.

... we know that he
... by the time he
... he views man's
... of existence as the
... his own.

... who find the greatest degrees of
... are ruled by a willingness
... keep striving. It is the
... of Hardy's world.
... their rivals--the
... concerned
... with the problems

... how to
...
...
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CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

From the emphasis Hardy places on the subject, we know that he views unfulfilled aims as a tragedy in life. Certainly, by the time he writes Jude the Obscure there is ample proof that he views man's inability to master himself and accept the realities of existence as the primary reason for his failure to achieve his aims.

We have seen that those people who find the greatest degree of happiness and fulfillment in Hardy's world are marked by a willingness to accept defeat and disappointment and still keep striving. It is the Gabriel Oaks and Diggory Venns who are the backbone of Hardy's world. They are perhaps not as attractive and exciting as their rivals--the Sergeant Troys and Damon Wildeves--but they are unselfish, concerned first with others and are able to deal constructively with the problems and disappointments in their lives.

And then there are those who learn from their failures how to find fulfillment. Fancy Day chooses honor rather than materialistic pursuit. Bathsheba Everdene learns that materialism and superficial glamor do not bring happiness, and when she reassesses her values and accepts the reality of her life, she finds fulfillment. Clym Yeobright finds a degree of contentment in his ability to accept misfortune, too late for real happiness, but not too late to salvage some small part of self-respect. Angel Clare learns that he cannot find fulfillment in a world of double standards. All of these characters come to some

reconciliation between their dream and the real world in which they live, and in so doing find a degree of fulfillment.

Those who continually deny reality or demand too much of life find themselves trapped in an idealistic world in which goals become dreams. The man who tries to escape reality cannot master himself or the problems he confronts in his life. When Tess attempts to hide her past, she fails to accept reality; when Jude fails to realize that he is limited by his environment, he denies the real world; when Eustacia refuses to acknowledge Clym's decision to remain in Egdon Heath, she rejects the real world; and when Boldwood insists on marriage with a woman who obviously does not love him, he removes himself from the world of men.

Thomas Hardy's world is a dark world in which life is difficult, a world which shows little sympathy for daydreams and illusions. It is a world in which man must battle the elements of nature, cope with the false values and standards of society, and deal with the weaknesses in himself and in others. It is a world which does not permit us the luxury of blaming another source for our failures--whether Nature, some "colossal Prince of the World," an earthly being, or society at large.

Hardy does not, like many others, suggest that a Utopia is possible. He does suggest that man can be happy and find fulfillment if his goal in life is realistic, and if he can accept the disappointments and problems that inevitably arise.

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