

CHAPTER I

THEMES



Before talking of Hardy's themes I would like to say something about his life, for almost all his novels reflect the things that he saw in his childhood and his nostalgia for the past as well as his adult environment. He was born in a village called Higher Bockhampton near Dorchester, in the heart of "Wessex." He was brought up in the country and was very familiar with the real country people: their characters, problems, customs and arts. Both his father and grandfather were musicians, and church and country festival music plays a large part in his novels. At the age of 16 he went to work with an architect in Dorchester. There he learnt to make drawings of the restoration of churches. The arts of architecture and sculpture play a large part in his novels.

When he worked on the restoration of a church he had to live in the village close to it for many months at a time. Thus he came to know the family history and domestic tragedies of the country people. Later he found no prospect of success as an architect, and turned to literature.⁵

Turning now to his themes, it can be seen that they resolve themselves into three main ones: the power of fate or external force controlling human beings; the relationships between people which bring about all kinds of human

suffering, of which love and marriage are the most important; and the loneliness of exceptional characters and the attitude of the world towards them.

The first of these themes is the most universal in Hardy's writing, for it occurs in every novel. It often seemed to him that human beings were like puppets controlled by forces outside themselves. In all his novels it is fate that determines the course of the characters' lives, for man cannot change the will of destiny. This idea is expressed both through the nature of the characters and through the plots.

Lord David Cecil shows that the result of this emphasis on fate is that Hardy's characters become instruments of good and evil, rather than virtuous or wicked in themselves:

All alike are striving for happiness; but whereas Eustacia or Fitzpiers or Arabella strive with selfish passion, Gabriel and Tess and Giles are prepared to sacrifice their own happiness to ensure that of other people. This difference, however, in their characters does not affect the issue. That is in the hands of Fate. And indeed it is significant that Hardy as a rule emphasises the fact that even those characters the world would call wicked are so much the creatures of circumstance that they are far more to be pitied than to be blamed. Henchard, for instance, seems, on the face of it, faulty enough—violent, vindictive and uncontrolled. From that first chapter in which he sells his wife at the Fair, until the end of the story, when he deliberately conceals from Elizabeth-Jane the news of her father's arrival, lest she should wish to leave him, he acts in such a way as to justify an old fashioned orthodox moralist in condemning him as the architect of his own misfortunes. But Hardy does not look at him in this way. Henchard as he sees him, is a pathetic figure, born with an unfortunate disposition but genuinely longing to do

right, tortured by remorse when he does wrong, and always defeated by some unlucky stroke of Fate.⁶

Troy, Wildeve, Fitzpiers and D'Urberville are destined to destroy girls. Bathsheba, Fanny, Thomasin, Grace and Tess are all victims of Don Juans.

Most of Hardy's characters are finally destroyed because they rebel against the will of the universe. Hardy says that this "tragedy exhibits a state of things in the life of an individual which unavoidably causes some natural aim or desire of his to end in a catastrophe when carried out?"⁷ Clym Yeobright in The Return of the Native is an idealist who wants to turn Egdon Heath into a civilized and cultured place. His plan and even his life are a failure. It is the will of nature that the place remain the same. Eustacia Vye's destruction is due to her own wild nature being opposed to her fate. She rebels against her destiny, and yearns for the light and colour of life in Paris, but her fate will never allow her to fulfill her desire. Frustration and misery are her only reward. In Far from the Madding Crowd, Bathsheba Everdene's misfortune comes mostly from her own strong and unyielding emotion. She pays no attention to the warning of Gabriel Oak and other friends against Troy's character. She marries him even though she does not feel sure of her marriage and regrets it later. Her greatest misery comes from her refusal to make a compromise with her situation when she finds out that Troy has had a mistress before marrying her. Michael Henchard in

✓ The Mayor of Casterbridge is a good example of the victim of fate and of his own nature. He is a man who is entirely ruled by his heart, not his head, and is frustrated and ruined in the end. He commits a serious sin in selling his wife. He lives unhappily under the vow not to drink. Even when he repents and marries Susan again, he cannot find happiness. Later he suffers terribly when he finds out that Elizabeth-Jane is not his daughter. If he tried to be reconciled to the truth and face it bravely he could have been more or less happy. It is also fate that makes Jack Durbeyfield find out that he is a member of the great but no longer prosperous family of D'Urbervilles and it is the vanity and foolishness of Tess's parents that creates the situation which ruins her.

✓ Hardy wrote in his note when he had finished Jude the Obscure:

The 'grimy' features of the story go to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, and the squalid real life he was fated to lead.⁸

✓ In Jude, Hardy tells us how a man fails to get what he most desires in life. All his life Jude is obsessed by a strong desire to learn. Here we get another theme which is that of a poor boy--Jude with a good brain and plenty of energy who is prevented by society from rising to take the place which he deserves. The objection to allowing a boy from a poor and humble family to rise in society is partly religious. At that time many people believed that a man should be con-

tent to remain in the sphere to which it had pleased God to call him. Christminster is a symbol of a city of learning that is suggested by Oxford and also a symbol of Jude's high hope and ideas which his fate will not allow him to fulfill however hard he struggles. Jude's failure is truly tragic. Like Jude, Tess is also one of Hardy's leading characters. But Tess's trouble is her own nature. She is as much the slave of her emotions as is Henchard. She is too easily swayed and very responsive and sympathetic to all good and bad things. She resents being D'Urberville's wife and tries to rebel against her circumstances. But Tess is not such a strong character as Jude. It requires a very strong woman to rebel against her condition and still remain the same. Tess is weak and not very intelligent; her heart rules her head. If Tess had been able to think she might not have come back to D'Urberville, knowing that she hated him. This shows she is defeated and her character changes. Jude is different. He wants education. He never gives up his ideal and does not yield to circumstance. His character remains the same till he dies. He fails to get what he wants but his character is not destroyed by society. Hardy himself approves of Tess and Jude's fight. He tries to say that it is not their characters but society that is wrong. Sue's unhappiness, unlike Jude's is caused by her emotional spirit. At the beginning of the story she is very intellectual and very rebellious. She recklessly marries Phillotson even

though she realizes that she will not be happy. She becomes more frustrated and lets her emotions master her mind. Once again she recklessly leaves her husband and comes to live with Jude. If she had thought carefully she would not have married Phillotson. Having married him, she should have accepted her fate if she wished to be happy. We see how she is severely punished. Troubled by religious and moral uncertainty, she finally becomes an extreme conventionalist, going back to Phillotson to punish herself for her sin. She comes to believe that she is always Phillotson's wife in the eyes of God. She cries to Jude that they were sinners and that the anger of Heaven is upon them. "...I am cowed into submission. I am beaten, beaten!... We must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God".⁹

Therefore, the only happiness possible for men lies in their accepting their destiny. The characters who have satisfactory lives are mostly country folks and characters like Diggory Venn, Tess's mother and widow Edlin. They do not demand a change in the condition in which they are placed. Phillotson is shown as an example of a man who is happy for a time through giving up ideals which are unsuitable to his place in life. Thomasin also yields to her fate. She realizes that Wildeve does not love her as much as he does love Eustacia, but she accepts everything and is rewarded by having a fairly happy life at the end. Marty South



in The Woodlanders is content in her unselfish love and devotion to Giles Winterborne even though she is not loved in return. John, the trumpet-major, Gabriel Oak, and Giles Winterborne unselfishly accede to the wishes of destiny. They never try to force the women they love to love them, but accept their failure. In The Mayor, Elizabeth-Jane makes a compromise with the world. She is content to be Lucetta's substitute as the object of Farfrae's affections. Susan and Farfrae find satisfaction in their lives. Susan is content in being Newson's wife. She becomes unhappy when people tell her that her living with Newson is illegal. She tries to compromise with what is right by coming back to Henchard and making herself content till she dies. Farfrae can find happiness by living according to the common code of morality.

Hardy also uses chance and coincidence to express the idea of fate. In The Return of the Native, chance makes Clym Yeobright marry Eustacia in spite of the contrast of their characters and thus destroys both. If he had married Thomasin he might not have met with tragic failure, for she would have been an ideal wife who would have helped him in his admirable plan. And if Eustacia had married Wildeve she might not have committed suicide in the end, for his disposition would have suited her better. Another role of chance in this novel is when Mrs. Yeobright decides to make a visit of reconciliation to her son at the one moment when,

by an unlucky combination of circumstances, Eustacia cannot allow her to enter the house. Consequently, she goes back and dies on her way home. In The Woodlanders, fate makes Giles fall in love with Grace Melbury, the most unsuitable girl for him. He pays no attention to Marty South who sincerely loves him and would have been the best wife for him if he had married her. In Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Hardy particularly emphasizes the importance of chance. Tess comes to live at Alec D'Urberville's house and begins to trust him. One day they go to a fair in the village nearby and the chance of their being delayed means that Alec and Tess spend the night together. He would never have managed to seduce her without this. He might not even have tried. This fact tortures Tess all her life especially when she meets and loves Angel Clare. She wants to tell him the truth, but cannot find an opportunity. Finally before the marriage she writes a letter to him telling him everything. Once again fate plays a trick on her, for the letter never reaches Angel. After the wedding Angel tells her about his past affair with a woman. Tess is glad and tells him her own sad experience, hoping he will forgive her. But Angel is not a man to forgive and forget easily. He is so disappointed that he leaves her. If Angel had found the letter before the wedding he would not have married Tess then, and perhaps not ever. Another coincidence is that the man who used to insult Tess and was punished by Angel later turns

out to be Tess's heartless master. The most important chance which changes Tess's life comes when she is working at Flintcomb-Ash. She is in her worst condition physically and spiritually. Angel seems to have disappeared for good. So she decides to go to see her parents-in-law at Emminster. As she is almost entering the vicarage she meets the two brothers of Angel. They happen to talk about Miss Mercy Chant whom everyone wants Angel to marry. This makes her turn back and walk home. On her way home she meets Alec whom she has never seen since her departure from his home. If she had not met the two brothers her life would not have ended so tragically. Mr. and Mrs. Clare are very generous and sympathetic. They would have understood her and would have forgiven her. This would have prevented her from coming back to Alec in spite of the temptation. Lord David Cecil writes of Henchard and Tess:

Then there is the scene in "The Mayor of Casterbridge" when Henchard wanders on to the bridge of the river, wondering whether he shall kill himself; and then, gazing into the water in the twilight, he sees with a thrill of horror his own drowned body floating pallid on the waves. In reality, it is the effigy of him which his enemies have been parading about the town and have now thrown away. But, for the minute, he takes it as a supernatural omen. The incident conveys his absolute despair, and his sense that he is under a quasi-supernatural curse that he cannot escape. Hardy conveys a similar sense of doom by similar means in "Tess". Do you remember the incident on her honeymoon at the mill, the night after her disastrous confession? She is lying in wakeful misery. Angel, she thinks, is asleep in the next room. He appears, walking in his sleep, picks her up, carries her over the narrow plank that spans the racing millstream—~~how~~ she longs they might both fall and drown together!—~~and~~, taking her to the ruined Priory, lays her down in an open stone coffin, and, then, still

asleep, picks her up and carries her back once more. The mere conception of the scene has the wild imaginative poetry of Webster; but it also suggests that the superhuman force of Destiny is compelling her irresistibly towards her death, and that Angel is a blind instrument in the hands of this Destiny. 10

Chance makes Jude meet Arabella, the most unsuitable girl for him, and fall in love with her. His future is ruined immediately. Without her he might have fulfilled his dream. In the case of Sue and Jude, who come to love each other passionately, the chance that they are cousins does not allow them to get married and thus brings about their sufferings.

Hardy uses coincidence much more in his romances and fantasies. In A Pair of Blue Eyes, we have the parallel of the love affair of Elfride with the two men, Stephen Smith and Henry knight. The love scene of the two love affairs happens almost in the same places. The accident when Elfride saves Knight's life brings them close to each other and thus makes them fall in love. Without this chance they might not have become lovers for Elfride tries her best to be faithful to Stephen. It is also a coincidence that the same train which brings Henry Knight and Stephen Smith to Endelstow also brings Elfride's coffin. In The Trumpet-Major, when Anne is hiding in the cottage and the news arrives that Napoleon is coming, we know beforehand that Festus will come and see her. And when she runs away from Festus she meets John who has been away for a long time. There is also the coincidence that the actress John

is talking about turns out to be Matilda. John has never known any actress before.

In Two on a Tower Hardy uses coincidences to produce the turns of the story. Lady Constantine is a deserted wife who finds out later that her husband has died. She falls in love with Swithin who loves only the study of astronomy. From gratitude Swithin asks her to marry him. On the morning of the wedding day Swithin gets a letter from a solicitor concerning his dead uncle's will. Swithin is to be given an annual sum of money to continue his studies on condition that he does not marry before the age of twenty-five. The news naturally upsets and irritates him when he should be joyful. It changes him from being contented to being frustrated. However he marries Viviette. But after two or three months comes the news that Sir Blount, whom everybody thinks has been dead for a long time, has only just died. It is necessary for them to repeat their marriage. Suddenly Viviette finds out the truth about the will of Swithin's uncle and this makes her give him up. It is also a coincidence when Viviette receives the second news of her husband's death when she is writing a letter to the bishop of Melchester to refuse his proposal. She is going to tell him the truth about her marriage to Swithin when she finds out that the marriage is illegal.

We can see Hardy's pessimism in this theme. In May, 1865, Hardy wrote in his note book: "The world does not

despise us; it only neglects us".¹¹ His philosophy was gloomy. He was more or less a fatalist who felt that "the universe was a huge impersonal mechanism, directed by some automatic principle of life unknown pursuing its mysterious end, utterly indifferent to the feeling of mortals."¹² In most of his books he deals with the place of man in the Universe. Swithin in Two on a Tower, on looking at the sky gets a feeling.

Whatever the stars were made for, they were not made to please our eyes. It is just the same in everything: nothing is made for man.¹³

The imaginary picture of the sky as the concavity of a dome whose base extends from horizon to horizon of our earth is grand, simply grand, and I wish I had never got beyond looking at it in that way. But the actual sky is a horror.¹⁴

Hardy shows us the idea of the pettiness of man in the conversation of Swithin and Viviette concerning astronomy. He implies some mystical power in nature.

You would hardly think, at first, that horrid monsters lie up there waiting to be discovered by any moderately penetrating mind—monsters to which those of the oceans bear no sort of comparison.

'What monsters may they be?'

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'Impersonal monsters, namely, Immensities. Until a person has thought out the stars and their interspaces, he has hardly learnt that there are things much more terrible than monsters of shape, namely, monsters of magnitude without known shape. Such monsters are the voids and waste places of the sky. Look, for instance, at those pieces of darkness in the Milky Way', he went on, pointing with his finger to where the galaxy stretched across over their heads with the luminousness of a frosted web. 'You see that dark opening in it near the Swan? There is a still more remarkable one south of the equator, called the Coal Sack, as a sort of nickname that has a farcical force from its very inadequacy. In these our sight plunges quite beyond any twinkler we have yet visited. Those are deep wells for the human mind to let it-

self down into, leave alone the human body! and think of the side caverns and secondary abysses to right and left as you pass on'....

'There is a size at which dignity begins!', he exclaimed; 'further on there is a size at which grandeur begins; further on there is a size at which solemnity begins; further on, a size at which awfulness begins; further on, a size at which ghastliness begins. That size faintly approaches the size of the stellar universe. So am I not right in saying that those minds who exert their imaginative powers to bury themselves in the depths of that universe merely strain their faculties to gain a new horror?'

'And to add a new weirdness to what the sky possesses in its size and formlessness, there is involved the quality of decay. For all the wonder of these everlasting stare, eternal spheres, and what not, they are not everlasting, they are not eternal; they burn out like candles.

'...It is quite impossible to think at all adequately of the sky—of what the sky substantially is without feeling it as a juxtaposed nightmare. It is better—far better—for men to forget the universe than to bear it clearly in mind.'¹⁵

Michael Henchard is another character who is always conscious of some mystical power. Immediately after the death of Susan he tells Elizabeth-Jane that he is her real father. But ironically he finds out shortly after that she is not his daughter. He is very miserable. Like all lonely people Henchard is aware of all things around him. He feels that he is threatened by something over him. He thinks that the concatenation of some sinister intelligence has bent on punishing him. Later Henchard wants to stock corn in competition with Farfrae. He wants to know whether the weather will be good or bad for the harvest and goes to a weather prophet. The man tells him there will be rain

and a tempest in the fortnight. Henchard believes him and stores the corn. This results in a great loss of money for him. Once again he thinks that some power is working against him.

'I wonder if it can be that somebody has been roasting a waxen image of me, or stirring an unholy brew to confound me! I don't believe in such power! And yet--what if they should ha'been doing it!' 16

Tess is the best example of a person who is conscious of the hostility of the world toward men. Hardy puts the abstract view into the mouth of Tess, who is only a young girl, in the conversation she has with her brother.

'Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess?'

'Yes'

'All like ours?'

'I don't know; but I think so. They sometimes seem to be like the apples on our stubborn-tree. Most of them splendid and sound—a few blighted.'

'Which do we live on—a splendid one or a blighted one?'

'A blighted one.' 17

Later when she becomes D'Urberville's mistress Tess is very miserable. She comes back home and works in the fields. In her agony and loneliness she feels there is no sympathy in the world.

"The past was past; whatever it had been it was no more at hand. Whatever its consequences, time would close over them; they would all in a few years be as if they had never been, and she herself grassed down and forgotten. Meanwhile the trees were just as green as before; the birds sang and the sun shone as clearly now as ever. The familiar surroundings had not darkened because of her grief, nor sickened because of her pain." 18

To all humankind besides Tess was only a passing thought. Even to friends she was no more than a frequently passing thought. If she made herself miserable the livelong night and day it was only this much to them--'Ah, she makes herself unhappy.' If she tried to be cheerful, to dismiss all care, to take pleasure in the daylight, the flowers,

the baby, she could only be this idea to them—'Ah, she bears it very well.' Moreover, alone in a desert island would she have been wretched at what had happened to her? Not greatly. 19

Later when Tess comes to live at the dairy-farm, her life is happier, but she still takes a pessimistic view of life, and she expresses this to Angel Clare early in their friendship.

And you seem to see numbers of to-morrows just all in line, the first of them the biggest and clearest, the others getting smaller and smaller as they stand farther away; but they all seem very fierce and cruel and as if they said, 'I'm coming! Beware of me! 20

Even when Tess is in love with Angel she is conscious of something awful around her. She always feels that "doubt, fear, moodiness, care, shame" are "waiting like wolves just outside the circumscribing light." 21 When Angel leaves Tess after the wedding she has to work hard in order to earn her living. Her strength of mind is gradually broken down by her meeting with Alec D'Urberville and by her own realization that Angel does not care for her. She feels he has been cruel and harsh towards her. But "these harshnesses are tenderness itself when compared with the universal harshness out of which they grow." 22

The second theme is the relationship between people which brings about all kinds of suffering. Hardy is much concerned with love and marriage in all his novels. Lord David Cecil writes about his idea of love:

Indeed, it is very natural that love should dominate Hardy's scene. Man, cast into a dark and unsatisfying world, thirsts for happiness. The happiness promised by

love is the most universal symbol of this thirst that Hardy could have chosen. For every sort of human being in every sort of circumstance responds to the call of love; in love's ecstasy they find an intimation of the happiness that they hope will free them from the burden of the human lot. Alas, their hope is vain. For love, so far from being a benevolent spirit, consoling and helping man in his struggle with the inhuman forces controlling human existence, is itself a manifestation of these forces. Love, conceived by Hardy, is "the Lord of terrible aspect"—a blind, irresistible power, seizing on human beings whether they will or not; intoxicating in its inception, but more often than not, bringing ruin in its train. His men and women would find it possible to walk the bleak road from the cradle to the grave resignedly enough; they might endure life fairly easily, even if they did not enjoy it, were it not for this storm which sweeps them off their feet, only to fling them down again, broken and despairing. 23

From his novels we see Hardy as a humanist whose heart is full of compassion for all his fellow creatures. So deep is his concern for human tragedies that his scope embraces not only their causes and effects but also possible solutions to these miseries. He shows love in its various shades as experienced by each individual in his or her own way and the happy or tragic results of such loves, perfect or imperfect. The effect of external influences on domestic life, such as environment, personal background and society, are likewise observed.

Hardy's interest in domestic affairs was not confined to his books. In 1893, he made his usual yearly visit to London. There, during his attendance at social and intellectual gatherings, he paid a visit to Lady Londonderry. The Duchess of Manchester and Lady Jeune, both of them friends and admirers of Hardy were also present. After this visit,

Hardy noted in his memoranda that, during the conversation, he was led into discussion of marriage-laws, the difficulties of separation, terminable marriage with children, and the strain on a wife whose husband is capable of throwing her over at any time.²⁴ Another example can be seen in the effect of Tess on the first readers. Mrs. Hardy says that Tess produced such a deep impression on the general and uncritical public that Hardy received many strange letters from readers. Some were from husbands whose experiences had borne a resemblance to that of Angel Clare; and many more were from wives with a past like that of Tess, who had not told their husbands. They all asked for his advice. A few begged to meet him privately. Some of the writers of these letters were even educated women of good position. This showed that the domestic interest of Hardy's work was very great, and infused with so much generosity and sympathy that his readers looked on him as their confidant and counsellor in adversity. He was astonished that they should have put themselves in the power of a complete stranger by their revelations, when they would not trust the people nearest to them with their secrets. However, they did themselves no harm, for though he was unable to advise them, he carefully destroyed the letters and never mentioned their names to anyone. Hardy said that he owed them that much for their trust in his good faith.²⁵

✓ Hardy wants to show that from his point of view, laws and customs are like fetters which turn love and marriage

into destroyers. Hardy's reading public was still Victorian in spirit with strict rules of propriety. It therefore, rejected any action that might be regarded as immoral or indecorous. It placed a taboo on discussion of sex and married life. The artificiality and strictness of the relationship between the sexes, where the upper and middle classes were concerned, was a great feature of the Victorian Age.

If a woman went in a hansom alone with a man who was neither her father nor her husband, nor old enough to be her grandfather, her reputation was irretrievably lost. The ruling convention was directed against unmarried men and women ever being alone together unless they were engaged, and not always then, for it would appear to have been tacitly assumed that on the slightest provocation the Victorian male would take advantage of the Victorian female, who would then suffer the fate described by contemporaries as 'worse than death'. If an engagement was broken off the girl suffered in consequence, while divorce was never mentioned in polite society.²⁶

∞ In the Christian world, marriage has always been considered holy, for it is a sacrament of the church. In Hardy's time, the attitude of the church was reflected in the law, which made even the legal form of marriage very difficult to dissolve, and this could result in frightful pain and suffering. A marriage could become hell for one or both of the partners, but could not be broken. Before the latter part of the nineteenth century, an Act of Parliament was required to effect a divorce. Having this background in mind it is easy to understand Hardy's books. Angel finds out Tess's past life after their wedding but cannot divorce her for she has not committed adultery. The result is mutual suffering.²⁷

✓ The flaw in the rigid Victorian family code with its prohibition of the breaking of the marriage bond^{sub + law} results in Tess's murder of Alec. Tess is not at all a strong person. She is a simple humble girl who wants only peaceful happiness. To acquire a chance of happiness with Clare, she kills Alec. Hardy says in his note: "When a married woman who has a lover kills her husband she does not really wish to kill the husband; she wishes to kill the situation."²⁸ ✓ Arabella tricks Jude into marriage and immediately unhappiness results from this. The worst result is that for economic reasons Jude has to give up his ambition to get a university education. Even when Arabella has deserted him to go to Australia he cannot get a divorce. When he and Sue fall in love they are prevented from marriage by the existence of Jude's wife. Because of her inexperience and ignorance of the meaning of marriage, Sue marries Phillotson whom she really likes, but sadly discovers a kind of physical repulsion to him. Hardy felt very strongly that it is unfair and inhuman to force two people married under such conditions as these to remain together always. ✓ In The Woodlanders, Dr. Fitzpiers and Grace find out immediately after their honeymoon that their marriage is a disappointment and a mistake; but they cannot get a divorce however much they need it. Consequently they suffer much, especially Grace who has to remain faithful to her husband while he is enjoying a good time with his mistress. In many novels, he attacks marriage ceremonies, customs and

laws. He felt that a marriage ceremony is a kind of lie because during the ceremony bride and bridegroom vow to love each other forever. But who, in this world, can honestly make such a vow? This we can see from the conversation between Sue and Phillotson when Sue wants him to let her go to Jude.

"...And you vowed to love me."

"Yes—~~that's~~ it! I am in the wrong. I always am! It is as culpable to bind yourself to love always as to believe a creed always, and as silly as to vow always to like a particular food or drink!"²⁹

Troy in his desperate sorrow concerning Fanny's death says to Bathsheba, "You are nothing to me—~~nothing~~. A ceremony before a priest doesn't make marriage. I am not morally yours."³⁰ Hardy means that it is the spirit, not the form that counts in all contracts. Since life is made by living people, not by ceremonies and laws, the relationships to each other are the only holy things.

Jude the Obscure was regarded as a manifesto of a new view of marriage. Hardy said that the main concern was:

...first with the labours of a poor student to get a University degree, and secondly with the tragic issues of two bad marriages, owing in the main to a doom or curse of hereditary temperament peculiar to the family of the parties.³¹

As Hardy presents it to us in the book, the tragic outcome of Jude and Sue's relationship is due to a considerable extent to that doom and to the curse of hereditary temperament. But, in the case of Jude's involvement with Arabella, it is no more than mutual physical desire, and of

Jude in particular, the foolishness of youth. Hardy also expresses his objection to the marriage ceremony through the mouths of Jude and Sue.

'Is it wrong, Jude,' she said with a tentative tremor, 'for a husband or wife to tell a third person that they are unhappy in their marriage? If a marriage ceremony is a religious thing, it is possibly wrong; but if it is only a sordid contract, based on material convenience in householding, rating, and taxing; and the inheritance of land and money by children, making it necessary that the male parent should be known—which it seems to be—why surely a person may say, even proclaim upon the housetops, that it hurts and grieves him or her?'³²

We can also see this in Sue's words to Phillotson when she wants to leave him and go to Jude:

'...Domestic laws should be made according to temperaments, which should be classified. If people are at all peculiar in character they have to suffer from the very rules that produce comfort in others! ...Will you let me?'

'But we married...'

'What is the use of thinking of laws and ordinances.' she burst out, 'if they make you miserable when you know you are committing no sin?'

'Why can't we agree to free each other? We made the compact, and surely we can cancel it—not legally of course; but we can morally, especially as no new interests, in the shape of children, have arisen to be looked after. Then we might be friends, and meet without pain to either. O Richard, be my friend and have pity! We shall both be dead in a few years, and then what will it matter to anybody that you relieved me from constraint for a little while? I daresay you think me eccentric, or super-sensitive, or something absurd. Well—why should I suffer for what I was born to be, if it doesn't hurt other people?'³³

Hardy implies here that divorce is probably the best remedy for the failure of a marriage. As Sue has no children and does not love her husband it is better to part as friends. The decision of Sue's elderly husband to take compassion on her and allow her to go to live with Jude provides a very

special kind of moral problem. From the Victorian point of view she should stay with her husband, Phillotson. Moreover Jude is a married man. If she had allowed these factors to influence her she would have suffered greatly. Later when Jude and Sue have been divorced from their partners and are free to marry, she still refuses to do so because she thinks that marriage is like a chain which will gradually strangle love.

'Apart from ourselves, and our unhappy peculiarities, it is foreign to a man's nature to go on loving a person when he is told that he must and shall be that person's lover. There would be a much likelier chance of his doing it if he were told not to love. If the marriage ceremony consisted in an oath and signed contract between the parties to cease loving from that day forward, in consideration of personal possession being given and to avoid each other's society as much as possible in public there would be more loving couples than there are now. Fancy the secret meetings between the perjuring husband and wife, the denials of having seen each other, the clambering in at bedroom windows, and the hiding in closets! There'd be little cooling then.' 34

This was an unusual point of view to Hardy's public. We clearly see how Jude and Sue are always threatened by the idea of the marriage ceremony. After the first attempt at legal marriage they make the second one after the arrival of Father Time. Their sensibility is aroused by Mrs. Edlin's narration of their ancestor's fatal union, the dismal atmosphere of the registrar's office, and the sight of the marriage proceeding there—the woman, pregnant and alcoholic, dragging to the office her seducer, just released from jail. Jude and Sue bitterly discuss the inevitable miserable outcome of such a marriage; whereas they, living as they are,

are in happy harmony, their love undiminished. They again decide against marriage.

✓ Jude has many features looked on by the Victorians as improper. There are the episodes of Sue's sleeping in the closet of spider webs rather than in the bedroom with Phillotson, of her shrinking at his touch; and moreover Hardy apparently approved Sue's separation from Phillotson, believing that either to live with him or to return was wrong and dreadful. As to Phillotson himself, he cannot help Sue's lack of feeling toward him. In the situation like this, as his friend Gillingham teaches him, the action of a proper and honorable Victorian husband would be to lock her up and get rid of the lover. But Phillotson is too human to agree. Against the opposition of Gillingham, who represents the Victorian point of view, he lets her go. Consequently, society condemns him for his kindness and rejects him. The same thing happens to Jude and Sue who have never been legally married. They cannot find lodgings at Christminster. This makes Father Time feel it is not well to be in the world and that they, the children, are not wanted. This leads the strange child to the horrible incident of the hanging "Done because we are so many."³⁵ The pressure of society has not only worked on Jude and Sue but has become unbearable to the mind of the sensitive child who has grown to know about suffering and trouble before his time. The same thing happens to Tess's child who cannot be baptized and can receive no

Christian burial because he is illegitimate.

In The Mayor, which is not a marriage novel, Hardy nevertheless attacks the Victorian view of marriage. At that time a wife, although bound by marriage in the same way as a man, had no legal rights. She only existed as a wife and became part of her husband who ruled her. It was true to say that she belonged to him, like any other possession. This can be considered as one motive for Michael Henchard's selling his wife. Later, Henchard turns Elizabeth-Jane away because she is not related to him, not realizing that the true bond between people is spiritual, and not one of blood. Henchard accepts forms and ceremonies instead of spiritual values. His punishment is that the outward signs of his prosperity are taken away. In the case of Tess, Hardy says that it is the spiritual, not the physical or material reality, which counts. Tess loses her virginity but she still preserves her spiritual innocence. For Hardy purity is a quality of the mind rather than of the body.

Hardy also regards real love as the necessary condition for real marriage. Many of his novels are studies in true devotion. This true marriage contract is possible only for good people. Hardy is very idealistic about love; but he is also realistic in his sympathetic acknowledgment that both men and women are still human and capable of erring in love. In his novels, he portrays many admirable lovers. To these people the fulfillment of their passion is not

important. They are lovers who are not loved in return, yet they go on loving and giving, since real love is not desire. There is no demand for the possession of the beloved person. Gabriel Oak's love for Bathsheba is real. He respects her as his mistress, admires her and thinks of her good before his own. All his life he is true to his words. "I shall do one thing in this life--~~one thing certain--that is,~~ love you, and long for you, and keep waiting you till I die."³⁶ Gabriel understands Bathsheba's nature--the good as well as the defective side. He realizes that she does not care for him and that her flirtation with Troy is the result of her blindness and ignorance of the arts of men. He thinks it would be good for her to marry Boldwood and very much regrets her marriage to Troy. But he is always by her side whenever any crisis occurs, and still devotes his life to her welfare. Later he pardons her and even admires her strength of mind. Bathsheba's eyes are finally opened to Gabriel's love and worthiness. In The Return of the Native Diggory Venn, assuming the passive role of a guardian, delivers Thomasin from worries and dangers and towards her he shows only love, care, and tenderness. He is like Michael Henchard who sincerely says to Elizabeth-Jane at the end of the story: "...but think of me sometimes in your future life...and don't let my sins, when you know them all, cause'ee to quite forget that though I loved'ee late I loved'ee well."³⁷ Both are content merely to be near the objects of their love: Henchard wanders around

Casterbridge where Elizabeth-Jane lives, and Diggory's wanderings as a reddleman frequently take him toward Egdon, so that he may be on the same heath with Thomasin, near her, yet unseen. Diggory tries to persuade Eustacia Vye to give Wildeve up so that he can marry Thomasin. His love surprises Eustacia. "What I feel...is that if she cannot be happy without him I will do my duty in helping her to get him, as a man ought."³⁸

John, the trumpet-major, gives up Anne because he truly loves both her and Bob and thinks that marriage is the best thing for them ~~both~~. In The Woodlanders, Giles Winterborne's devotion to Grace Melbury is incomparably great. From childhood she has been his best love, and her father promised to give her to him as his wife. But when Grace comes back from the city school as an educated and accomplished lady Giles gives up his right to claim her. He realizes that he is simply a poor woodlander and will never make her a suitable husband. After her marriage he still worries about her welfare and always helps her in her trouble. At the end of the story he gives his hut to her and he himself though very ill, stays outside. His death shows his endless love and sacrifice.

Besides all these faithful men Hardy also shows us the sincere love and devotion of women characters. In A Pair of Blue Eyes, Elfrida Swancourt sincerely loves Henry Knight. She prefers being his servant to separating from him. In The Hand of Ethelberta, Ethelberta's love for her family is

so great that she sacrifices herself to their welfare. She gives up Christopher Julian, her admirer, to her sister Picottee. Her marriage to Lord Montclere comes mostly from her self-sacrifice, for she does not love him, but wants his money for her family. Charlotte de Stancy in A Laodicean secretly admires George Somerset, the young architect. She realizes that George loves Paula Power, but she keeps her sorrow to herself. She even refuses to help her brother who loves Paula though by doing so she would be able to win George's attention. Being honest and honorable, she helps Paula and George to understand each other. This shows her self-sacrifice. Viviette in Two on a Tower gives up Swithin because she realizes that science is better for him than a wife. In The Woodlanders, Marty South shows her lifelong love for Giles. She shows her sacrifice in helping Giles to win Grace in the night of Midsummer Eve. We see the perfect type of love in Marty, for she is faithful to Giles even after his death. This is shown in her speech over his tomb:

'Now, my own, own love,' she whispered, 'you are mine, and only mine; for she has forgot 'ee at last, although for her you died! But I—whenever I get up I'll think of 'ee, and whenever I lie down I'll think of 'ee again. Whenever I plant the young larches I'll think that none can plant as you planted; and whenever I split a gad, and whenever I turn the cider wring, I'll say none could do it like you. If ever I forget your name let me forget home and heaven! ...But no, no, my love, I never can forget 'ee; for you was a good man, and did good things!' 39

Tess, in spite of her desperate love for Angel, tries to give him up to her friends, Izz, Marian, and Retty. She thinks that each of them is a better girl than she and will make

Angel a better wife. We can see the noblest type of love in Tess's statement: "Having begun to love you, I love you forever--in all changes, in all disgraces, because you are yourself."⁴⁰ It is in this sublimity of love that Tess, at Stonehenge, sensing the approach of her end, implores Angel to marry her sister, 'Liza-Lu:

"O I could share you with her willingly when we are spirits! If you would train her and teach her, Angel, and bring her up for your own self! ...She has all the best of me without the bad of me."⁴¹

The three farm-girls love Angel but they are willing to sacrifice him to Tess, feeling that she is more suitable for him. Izz even refuses the chance that she is longing for when Angel asks her to go with him to Brazil because she realizes that Tess is the best wife for him.

Hardy provides many examples of the woeful consequences resulting from marriage entered into for mistaken reasons, from youthful folly, innocence, and ignorance. He sums up various causes for the failure of marriage. Fanny Robin runs away from home, penniless, to be rejected at the wedding because she keeps Troy waiting at the church. Seduced and deserted, Fanny has an intensely difficult life. Upon meeting Troy on the road, she falls to the ground because of an outburst of joy and agony. Her death through exhaustion shows the spiritual and physical sufferings of a girl who lets herself be influenced by ignorance and youthful fancy. For her mistake she has to pay with her life. Bathsheba's fate is more fortunate than Fanny's. Troy's death saves her

from the lifelong suffering of an unbreakable marriage bond that many of Hardy's later characters have to undergo.

Hardy shows that marriage between people of very different characters, principles, and intelligence is a tragedy. This is illustrated by Clym Yeobright and Eustacia Vye. Clym is intellectual, idealistic and contented, while Eustacia is ignorant and very ambitious. In this case, Hardy says that love alone is not enough. Clym loves Eustacia, but the failure of their marriage is as much his fault as hers. He is more intelligent and should have realized that she would not be suitable for him. It is dishonest for an intellectual man to act only on his emotions and to ignore his mind. Thus, honesty beforehand is necessary. And after their marriage, he should have tried to educate Eustacia. But Clym is self-sufficient. He sees and desires her, but not as a person in herself; in fact he only loves his idea of her. Troy and Bathsheba also have different principles. Bathsheba, though feminine, is very serious in her intentions. She tries her best to fulfill her position as the mistress of the farm. Troy, on the other hand, wants only comfort and money and to enjoy life as much as he can. He refuses to help his wife in her work. Troy is too shallow to have a happy married life. Farmer Boldwood's love for Bathsheba is a kind of delirium and excess of emotion. Living a reserved, serious, intellectual life, he pays no attention to women. A valentine card saying "marry me" from the reckless Bathsheba and some glimpses of her are enough to make him

think he loves her. He becomes a passionate young man and tries to get rid of Troy. He fails and, heartbroken, he loses all interest in life. His collection of all kinds of jewelry and dresses is a pathetic sign of how his mind has been destroyed. For Jude and Arabella, the foundations of their marriage are sexual impulse, deception and thoughtlessness. Both are also different from each other in every respect. Jude is intellectual, idealistic, generous, and high-principled, while Arabella is ignorant, shallow, selfish, deceptive and coarse. Like Eustacia, who laughs at Clym's admirable plan to develop Egdon Heath, Arabella makes fun of Jude's desire and plan to study.

Hardy adds that even if the difference in characters is not great and a couple can live in harmony, this alone is not enough. They do not have positive happiness. This can be seen in the case of Thomasin and Wildeve. Thomasin is a devoted wife while Wildeve does not care much for her. His main interest is given to Eustacia, so that he is spiritually unfaithful. In The Trumpet-Major, though Hardy does not give the result of the marriage between Anne and Bob, we can see that they cannot be very happy together since they are too different. He is too selfish and too fickle. This is also an unequal love, like that of Swithin and Viviette. Their marriage does not work because he has the selfishness of all true scientists and scholars. The same thing happens to the marriage of Sir Blount and Viviette. The three men who have

come into Viviette's life are all selfish. Sir Blount is a jealous and egotistical husband. Before going to Africa to satisfy his mania for lion hunting, he makes Lady Constantine take a vow that, during his absence, she will avoid all men and all social gatherings. But he himself marries an African Princess. A selfish husband like Sir Blount makes married life a misery for his wife. Later Viviette has an affair with Swithin but she sacrifices him. She is bound to marry Bishop Helmsdale when she discovers her pregnancy. Her love in contrast with that of the men in the book includes sympathy, friendship and benevolence. In the case of Fitzpiers and Grace in The Woodlanders it is also an unequal love.

So we can see that marriage to be a positive and fruitful state, demands generosity. Eustacia, Troy, Wildeve, Sir Blount, Swithin and Fitzpiers are too selfish to sacrifice anything for the sake of their married life. Henry Knight in A Pair of Blue Eyes and Angel Clare in Tess are also selfish. They refuse to give up their ideal and theories and condemn those who are not like them. In Under the Greenwood Tree, Fancy Day finally refuses the temptation of luxurious life offered to her by Mr. Maybold, the vicar, and comes back to marry Dick. She realizes that she loves Dick and prefers the simple life.

The third theme is the loneliness of exceptional characters, and the attitude of the world towards them. This arises from Hardy's conception of fate. He shows us

that people who rebel against the will of nature are punished as I have already shown.⁴² Thus happiness lies in being reconciled to one's environment and fate. This is shown in most of Hardy's minor characters and also in all the rustics who appear almost as the chorus. These country people live humbly and happily in an admirable way. Nothing grand nor tragic occurs to such people. In Under the Greenwood Tree we have the Mellstock Choir and the villagers. In Far from the Madding Crowd Hardy portrays a group of Bathsheba's labourers, Joseph Poorgass, Leban Tall, Matthew Moon, and Henery Fray. In The Return of the Native we have Christian, Fairway and Grandfer Cantle. In Tess we have the picture of the happy life of the labourers at the dairy farm of Mr. and Mrs. Crick. The humble and peaceful country life is the sort of life Hardy admired most and he shows it as something noble in itself. Like the rustics, all Hardy's minor characters find happiness in their resignation. We can see this in Gabriel Oak, Thomasin, Diggory Venn, Anne, Farfrae, Elizabeth-Jane, Susan, Newson, Giles Winterborne, Marty South and Phillotson. But, as I have said, to be reconciled to life most of us have to give up ideas, ambitions and dreams which we have in youth. If we refuse to do this we must suffer. From this we see how Hardy tells us the main causes of human suffering and also the possible solutions. Clym and Jude are idealists who refuse to give up their dreams. Eustacia is as much the slave of her ambitions as Tess, Michael

Henchard and Sue are of their emotions, and life-long suffering is their reward. For the answer to the problems of these people, Hardy gives us the lives of Phillotson, Thomasin, and Elizabeth-Jane, who renounce their youthful ideals.

Hardy's exceptional people are those to whom their own ideas, ambitions and dreams are so strong and so significant that they prefer them to happiness. Some cannot live without them and some, less numerous, force themselves to give them up but live in much more misery, for they have no strength of their own. Clym and Jude can never give up their ideals, and Jude, particularly clings to his dream of education and of Christminster which he has cherished since his childhood. However much they suffer for these ideas, they never yield. Clym later becomes blind for a while but his mental strength never weakens. Though we do not know the end of his life we can be sure that he will always continue to live in a bitter sweet dream and to derive pleasure from it. All her life Eustacia tries her best to struggle against external forces in order to fulfill her ambitions. Jude is born with high ideals and great aspirations which have gradually grown bitter and stronger with him. They only weaken slightly at the end and die with his death. The same thing happens to Michael Henchard who until the end of his life never yields to the world. His will, which is written shortly before his death shows us that he is never reconciled to his fate and that he is not spiritually defeated. Tess and Sue

recklessly fight with the universe. Their characters change immediately when they yield to the world. There is absolutely no hope for happiness in changing their attitudes. On the contrary they suffer more when they deny their own natures.

" So we see that these people find happiness in their own ways, for they are different from the vast mass of people. Consequently, they are rejected and condemned by society because we all dislike things and people that we do not understand and that are different. Society revenges itself on those who do not conform. That is why exceptional characters are isolated and draw strength only from themselves, where most people gain strength from being a part of society.

" Being reconciled to one's fate does not necessarily mean that one will be happy. Sue is the best example of this. In the end she yields to society; but she is far more miserable than she ever was when she kept to her rebellious course. Hardy, being a pessimist, did not consider happiness to be the normal state of man. But one can be contented, even if one's fate is harsh, and this is often the best one can hope for. Hardy shows this in Susan, Elizabeth-Jane, Thomasin and Phillotson. These people are not completely happy, but they are contented. Nevertheless, he also says that it is still morally better and nobler to fight, even though it is a hopeless struggle—this is, in fact, a central idea of tragedy. A character who lies down under disaster is not a tragic hero, though he may be a good man and contented. One

✓ who struggles, even though the struggle destroys him, is tragic. Jude is the best example in Hardy of a tragic hero, for tragedy requires human resistance as well as dignity.