

Romanticism in Hardy's Novels: The Agony of Sensibilities

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Abstract

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) is a rare literary figure: a novelist and a poet of very outstanding calibre, having a unique epic drama and some critical articles and reviews to his credit as well. Though his career as a novelist (1871-1895) is much shorter than that as a poet, he is generally celebrated as a great novelist. His keen understanding of the eternal human sentiments and sensitivities has rendered his works — novels, in particular — a universal human heritage. That is why he is one of the very few English novelists who are equally read, reviewed and appreciated abroad as at home. The vast range of his readers and critics has naturally led to diversity — occasional adversity — of opinions and interpretations regarding his art. Certain concepts, notions and terms, however, are so recurrently applied to his works that they have almost become his marks of identification. These terms include Fatalism, Determinism, Pessimism, Agnosticism and 'Meliorism' etc. Most of them have typical philosophical orientation, reflective of the Victorian tendency of analyzing all modes of human perception and expression, including those of art and aesthetics, from intellectual angle, deriving therein philosophical and scientific convictions, like the ones denoted by these terms.

This thesis deviates from all such studies, as it attempts to disentangle Hardy's fictional art from the typical Victorian fetters by assigning to it more universal perspectives and connotations. The basic contention is that Hardy's literary and aesthetic concerns are the product of sensibilities, feelings and impressions, and that intellectual convictions can never cover them appropriately. Thus we have attempted to look at his art from a more relevant, convenient and interesting angle, that of 'Romanticism', reinterpreting his themes, ideals, characters and plots according to the deeper dimensions of this purely aesthetic term. It does not mean that so far no attempt has been made to study Hardy's works from this perspective. As stated in the Literature Review, some critics and biographers have used the term in reference to Hardy. But they have taken the outer dimensions of romanticism, like appreciation of Nature and

rural culture, mostly in a strictly early nineteenth century perspective, hence proving Hardy to be more akin to Wordsworth and Coleridge than to Shelley, Byron and Keats. As reflected by the subtitle of the thesis — ‘The Agony of Sensibilities’ — this discussion focuses on the deeper human dimensions of romanticism in Hardy’s novels, redefining the term ‘Romanticism’ itself in a deeper and more universal sense. It leads one to conclude that Hardy’s was a romantic heart in a Victorian frame, and if we liberate him from the intellectual compulsions of the age in which he lived, a more interesting and more convincing interpretation of his art can be derived, exonerating him from many of the stereotypical notions projecting his image as a pessimist.

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Acknowledgement

According to my limited understanding, a doctoral thesis should undertake digging deep rather than scratching a lot. Furthermore, a valid piece of research must bring forth something new — at least problems and questions, if not solutions and answers. As such, the digging should result in exploration. Thomas Hardy — the novelist whose fiction has fascinated me more than any other novelist in any language — offered the desired depth and many buried treasures worth exploring, and I ventured to undertake this seemingly not an easy task. I was fortunate to have the consent of Dr. Mujib Rahman to supervise the thesis. He helped me develop a proper sense of research and guided me in chalking an appropriate topic. His cooperative attitude, his keenness to perfect, and his ever-availability to help were great sources of encouragement for me. I am cordially grateful to him and feel proud of being supervised by him.

Belonging to a developing country, with scarcity of sources and facilities for academic research, and being the first in the University to submit a Ph. D. thesis in English literature, I had to come across many difficulties. These, however, I did foresee and was, to a great extent, able to overcome. On the other hand, with the progress of the project, some unexpected conveniences offered themselves, not only facilitating the task but also making it more interesting. The most significant among these was my timely discovery of The Thomas Hardy Society, Dorchester. I am deeply impressed by the dedication of the society to the cause of getting Hardy's genius globally appreciated. The Society has helped me a lot, particularly by sending me indices of *The Thomas Hardy Journal*, a tri-annual publication of the society, and, subsequently, copies of all the articles I requested. I am particularly grateful to Dr Geoffrey Tapper, the chairman of the Society, for personally responding to my correspondence, sending letters of commendation to The British Council Pakistan, offering to get my research supervised in Dorchester and doing all he could to get me there for attending various conferences of the Society. Dr. Tapper's personal interest in the project, reflected in his letters of appreciation, proved a great source of encouragement for me, enhancing my respect for the

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Prof. Dr. Qabil Khan and Prof. Mrs. Chand Rahman — both my teachers in the Ph. D. course work — extended guidance and help whenever necessary; Prof. Dr. M. Saleem of the Department of Philosophy guided me through frequently held sessions, along with consistently asking me to concentrate on the project; Prof. M. Ilyas, my former English teacher in Swat College, helped me with some significant books; my family members and colleagues assisted me in their own ways: I am cordially grateful to all of them.

Key to Abbreviations

DR: *Desperate Remedies*

UGT: *Under the Greenwood Tree*

PBE: *A Pair of Blue Eyes*

FMC: *Far from the Madding Crowd*

HE: *The Hand of Ethelberta*

RN: *The Return of the Native*

TM: *The Trumpet-Major*

AL: *A Laodicean*

TT: *Two on a Tower*

MC: *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

WL: *The Woodlanders*

TDU: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

JO: *Jude the Obscure*

Chapter 1

Introduction

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) is one of the most celebrated English novelists. Although he also composed voluminous poetry (even wanted primarily to be remembered as a great poet), and an epic drama, *The Dynasts*, he is remembered and appreciated basically for his great novels, particularly *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Jude the Obscure*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native*. Hardy's fiction has successfully attempted a brilliant combination of the local and the contemporary with the universal and the eternal. Thus, if on the one hand, he has made immortal the nineteenth century English country life — particularly that of the south-western county of Dorset — in the form of his unparalleled imaginative creation of 'Wessex', on the other hand, he has established contact with the inherent human sentiments and sensibilities, occupying the depths of human heart in all ages and all localities. As such, Hardy's genius has always been considered a universal human heritage, diversely interpreted, criticized and appreciated.

Some popular critical comments like 'Hardy's novels lie open for personal interpretation and understanding of every reader of every age' (Gregor 32), or 'the subjective nature of almost every reading of almost every book' (Blisshen 186) have always encouraged students of literature to be innovative in their approaches to Hardy's novels. These approaches — majority of them — have been, nonetheless, directed and restricted by some fixed critical convictions. As already stated, Hardy's creative genius is generally judged either within the overall human perspective because of the universality of his themes, by applying to him classical critical or philosophical terms — both ancient and modern — or within a strictly Victorian frame, by looking at his themes, convictions and creation as responses to the violent currents of thought, so abundant in England and Europe of the Victorian era. Consequently, some critics have tried to relate his works to the classical Greek concept of tragedy

(Abercrombie and Deen, for instance) or (like David Cecil) to the post-renaissance English drama of the Elizabethan period, deriving therein stereotypical interpretations like 'pessimist,' 'agnostic,' 'fatalist' and 'meliorist'. Others (e.g. Chapman) have examined him within the scholastic Victorian perspective, examining his art as an impulsive response to contemporary currents of thought — like the contentions of Darwin, Lyell, Marx and Freud — and other developments of the age like industrialization and scientific advancement. This thesis is founded on the realization that an equally valid and probably more interesting understanding and interpretation of Hardy's fiction can be achieved by providing a third perspective, outside the range of these classical philosophical terms and the Victorian scientific approaches. This perspective is that of romanticism, involving an aesthetic rather than a philosophical or scientific approach. This difference of approach is not just a minor diversion: it rather changes the very foundations of our attitude towards Hardy's art — our objectives, our expectations and our hypothesis. Looking at Hardy's art from this angle, we will not attempt to derive conclusions and convictions from Hardy's works, as we are inclined, probably rightly, to do from the text of philosophical geniuses like Plato and Aristotle, or of many contemporary novelists and poets, like Dickens and Tennyson. Contradictions are certainly considered a curse in philosophy and science (for these disciplines are basically meant to solve problems and answer questions); in literature and aesthetics, on the other hand, contradictions and contrasts may be the source of beauty and glory. This approach shuns the dominant Victorian trend of intellectualizing art, and strongly upholds the view that Hardy was an artist and an aesthete, and not a scholar or an intellectual. It also exonerates Hardy from the charges of 'pessimism' and 'agnosticism', because these are notions of *intellectual* conviction, while Hardy's *sentimental* journey and aesthetic quest culminate in a romantic wonder.

The originality of this thesis does not lie in just applying to Hardy's art the typical romantic standards. As later discussed in 'Literature Review', some critics and researchers (for example, F. B. Pinion and Holly Davis) have already attempted it. Most of them, however, have relied upon the Wordsworthian

version of romanticism, concentrating primarily on its extra-human external aspects; therefore, in view of the modern man's awareness of the need of environmental protection and conservation of Nature, the dominant tendency has been that of comparing Hardy to Wordsworth. The rest, those that have included other romantic poets as well (e.g. Merryn Williams), have defined the romantic ideals within their strictly nineteenth century connotations, like reaction to neo-classicism, anti-utilitarianism and devotion to The French Revolution. Furthermore, they have applied romantic ideals to Hardy's art without tracing the roots of the motivating sensibilities in his life and personality, depriving his creation of the essential element of a subjective personal involvement — a romantic concern by itself. This thesis clearly deviates from these attempts primarily in the following two ways. First, it attempts a more comprehensive understanding of 'Romanticism', redefining the term and its connotations outside the nineteenth century perspective, taking the movement as an aesthetic revolution, an outburst of the heart, not to be inherently qualified by contemporary trends or localities. Second, as evident from the subtitle, it focuses on the inner human dimensions of Hardy's romanticism from an aesthetic rather than a philosophical point of view, and thus traces his romantic creativity to the evolution of his own sensibilities and impressions.

Chapter Two reviews the literature containing major critical opinions about Hardy's life, his works in general and his novels in particular, from his contemporary critics in the late nineteenth century till the most recent evaluation in the twenty first century. Along with briefly touching upon the views not directly related to our discussion, it focuses on the critical comments that facilitate the hypothesis projected by the thesis.

Chapter Three of the thesis attempts to redefine 'Romanticism' to give it a deeper interpretation and wider connotation than the ones generally associated with it. Here, it has been proposed that 'the spirit of romanticism' lies in the inner human 'agony of sensibilities' rather than in the outer elements of Nature, or abstract literary or stylistic attitudes. In view of the researcher, it is an important task without accomplishing which the discussion cannot proceed in the desired

direction; that is why a complete chapter has been assigned to it.

Chapter Four highlights the overall Victorian canvass with its outstanding intellectual and literary currents, also undertaking to highlight their deviation from the romantic ideals — universal as well as those projected by the major romantics of the just preceding period. It also undertakes a brief evaluation of some other novelists of the age, in order to show that Hardy was different from them, and was, unlike them, not the product of his age.

Chapter Five is a romantic biography, focusing on those dimensions of Hardy's life and personality that help us understand his emotional adventures, his aesthetic concerns and his romantic ideals. It also highlights Hardy's tremendous appreciation of not only the nineteenth century romantic poets but also of oriental romantic sages like Omar Khayyam.

Chapter Six is the core and the focal point of the whole thesis to which the rest may be treated as prefixes and suffixes. It expands the thesis statement to an interesting discussion, utilizing the findings of the preceding chapters for projecting romantic ideals in Hardy's themes and characters. It covers the protagonists of almost all of Hardy's major novels in order to develop an understanding of their romantic dimensions on the basis of coherent and consistent attitudes rather than random individual eccentricities.

Chapters Seven and Eight supplement the contentions of Chapter Six by analyzing the traditionally applied agents of romanticism as coordinating rather than conflicting with the deeper interpretations of Hardy's art. Chapter Seven relates to scenes and settings, and discusses in detail the romantic peculiarities of Hardy's Wessex; while Chapter Eight analyzes Hardy's language and diction as reflective of the romantic sensibilities of the artist as well as the concerned specific characters. In accordance with the objective of the thesis, all these aspects have been dealt with as complementary auxiliaries of the romantic spirit expounded in the sixth chapter, and not as major constituents of romanticism by themselves.

Chapter Nine is the Conclusion, which sums up the entire discussion in support of the thesis statement, highlighting the originality of the attempt along with its future significance for students and researchers.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In accordance with the public appreciation of Hardy's novels, critics started to attend seriously to his novels when his career as a novelist was still in progress. In 1894, Lionel Johnson, in *The Art of Thomas Hardy*, attempted to sum up the impression of Hardy's novels published by then. He suggests a common pattern in themes and characters of Hardy's major novels, concentrating on the contact and contrast of men and women of strong and fine nature with those of ordinary nature. The passion of love, according to him, adds effectiveness to this contrast. He points out the element of a heroic hope in Hardy's works: 'He sends out his characters to that forlorn hope, life: forlorn, but not lost, and promising at least the noblest of defeats' (410). Although he has focused on Hardy primarily as an artist, giving equal coverage to his plot and narrative, he has derived from his works certain important themes like the urban invasion and the validity of the established patterns of human relationship.

An American critic, W. L. Phelps in *Essays on Modern Novelists* (1910) discussed in detail the much-trumpeted pessimism in Hardy's novels. While trying to trace the roots of Hardy's depiction of the dark and the terrible side of life in an interesting way, he claimed that Hardy was indebted to Schopenhauer, an assertion which didn't flourish later as, according to Timothy Hands, it 'drew Hardy's displeasure' (167).

Lascelles Abercrombie (1912) evolved a more comprehensive approach, affording due and almost balanced coverage to Hardy's subject and style, though slightly overemphasizing the philosophical connotations of his art at the cost of the aesthetic ones. In *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study*, he analyzes the speech of characters as representative of their minds. He applied to Hardy's fiction the classical Greek notions of tragedy, and tried to prove him to *have been* enormously influenced by Sophocles.

D. H. Lawrence concentrated on Hardy's characters as individuals struggling against the established conventions of the community. His 'Study of Thomas Hardy' (1914), appearing posthumously in *Phoenix*, is a great tribute by a contemporary admirer — himself a great creative artist. He has appreciated Hardy's protagonists' outburst of the instinctive self as the source of all sublimity as well as all tragedy and, as such, has evaluated Jude more favourably than the rest.

H.C. Duffin (1916) was the first to discuss Hardy's novels systematically, analyzing in detail his themes, plot and characters. Duffin's work, *Thomas Hardy: The Wessex Novels*, of which I have got the 1937 edition (reprinted 1967), with the addition of 'The Poems, and The Dynasts' to the subtitle of the first edition, is probably the first classified analysis of Hardy's art. Four of its chapters, in particular, entitled 'The Irony of Fate: Hardy's View of God', 'Human Nature: Hardy's View of Man', 'Convention: Hardy's View of Society', 'Pessimism: Hardy's View of Life' directly tackle some of the major issues undertaken by this research. The first chapter of the second section, entitled 'Character-Drawing', is a critical masterpiece, in which, while showing his tremendous admiration for Hardy's characters, Duffin states: 'Hardy's greatness in this direction is seldom questioned. One's memory bears unimpeachable evidence of the extra-ordinary range, variety and significance of his characters' (79). Along with a very valid critical evaluation of individual novels, there are certain invaluable comments on Hardy, which are of enormous significance for this thesis. For instance, he asserts: 'He is most incredibly sensitive. . . . It was this sensitiveness that combined with his lively imagination to endow him with that profound pity that is one of the noblest of his attributes' (309). Duffin's work is instrumental in evolving the trend of judging Hardy's art in the light of stereotypical Victorian traditions like pessimism, agnosticism, fatalism, meliorism (but no direct reference to romanticism). Duffin terms *Jude the Obscure* the greatest of Hardy's novels wherefrom he has explored many interesting dimensions of Hardy's views of marriage, love and emotional fulfillment.

Virginia Woolf (1928) admires Hardy's characters for their ability to compel the readers to remember them. 'We recall their passions. We remember how deeply they have loved each other and often with what tragic results' (74). She is of the opinion that Hardy gives impressions when he is at his greatest, and arguments when he is at his weakest, an opinion of great significance for this thesis.

In *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, we find Hardy's estimation of himself, and, to some extent, of his works. Although its authorship is nominally attributed to Florence Emily Hardy, Hardy's second wife, it is widely, rather unanimously, believed to be a disguised autobiography written in third person. Initially, it appeared in two parts: *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy* (1840-91) appearing in November, 1928, the year Hardy died; and *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy* (1892-1928) in April, 1930. The single-volume edition appeared in 1962. *The Life* is not just an autobiography in the traditional sense; it provides a valid self-estimation of Hardy's literary and aesthetic concerns, ideals and inclinations, including many dimensions of his personality directly related to this thesis; as such, frequent references are made to it in the fifth chapter of the thesis.

Arthur McDowell (1931) attempts a comparative evaluation of Hardy's tragic novels, focusing on their individual features of distinction in addition to the writer's comprehensive scheme. According to him, *The Return of the Native* is the best of all Hardy's novels, a masterpiece of art, but he considers Michael Henchard as 'the most original as well as the most forcible character Hardy ever drew' (72).

Carl J. Weber (1940), in his critical biography of Hardy, has related the subjectivity of impressions in his novels to the writer's own intellectual and emotional progress. He is of the view that Hardy started writing novels with the hope to influence the ways of the world, but discovered at the end, particularly after writing *Jude*, that the only effect was on himself. That is why he abandoned novels.

Lord David Cecil's *Hardy the Novelist* (1943) is an invaluable critical document, exploring some very significant dimensions of Hardy's art. It offers an exclusive and comprehensive coverage to Hardy's fictional art, encompassing all his major novels. He has very effectively argued that in his creative talent Hardy is *closer* to Elizabethan dramatists than to his contemporary artists; that is why his art is adversely affected when he attempts to follow other great novelists like Fielding, Scott, Dickens, etc., particularly when he tries to derive 'models' from their works. Declaring Hardy 'one of the very great English writers', he comes up with certain foundational comments like 'Hardy conceives man in relation to ultimate human destiny' (84).

Albert J. Guerard (1949) adopts a more censoring approach towards Hardy's works, accusing him of revealing 'an initial sluggishness of mind, most often perhaps in his tendency to schematize and oversimplify dilemmas' (157). He advises Hardy's readers not to search for profundity of thought, seriousness of purpose, insight into social problems, extraordinary psychological understanding, perfection of style and plot, as his real greatness rests on his flight of imagination, his talent of story-telling, his ability to relate atmosphere to character and his all-embracing human sympathy, particularly for those that are sensitive and miserable.

John Holloway (1953) terms character and environment as the spirit of Hardy's novels, incidents and events being just subservient tools. In this way, he attempts to justify improbabilities in Hardy's fiction. He also points out symbolism in Hardy's characters, objects and happenings, suggesting that a true understanding of Hardy's works can be developed only when his view of life as a whole is taken into consideration, rather than segregated fragments of his thought.

Douglas Brown (1954) discusses the strong simplicity and integrity of Hardy's feeling, taking his novels as a record of a tragic view of life. Two chapters in his *Thomas Hardy*, entitled 'Novels of Character and Environment' and 'The Uniqueness of His Art' are masterpieces of in-depth criticism. While questioning the validity of Hardy's novels as criticism of life, he highlights

Hardy's stern insight, honesty of purpose, the power to chasten and subdue, a profounder perturbation of the spirit and the marvelous depiction of the life and ways of the agricultural community as the glories of his art. He pays very high tributes to Hardy as a thrilling narrator: 'In the extreme force and the guileless fascination of his narrative, Hardy yields to no master of our language' (43). More important — with regard to this thesis — is his attempt to examine Hardy's novels with a view to finding the ways in which they move the reader to new levels of sensibilities.

George Wing (1963) has questioned the validity of the concept of Hardy's evolutionary meliorism, calling it a distant dream, not very different in terms of prospects of fulfillment from the unappealing orthodox doctrines of consolation offered by the church. His *Hardy* is an impressive critical evaluation of other Hardy critics, particularly those that have discussed the issue of pessimism versus meliorism.

Roy Morrell (1965) has challenged the evaluation of Hardy's characters as free human beings. In *Thomas Hardy: The Way and the Will*, he has adopted an interestingly original approach to Hardy's art, particularly with reference to the individual capacity of his characters. He stresses the importance of the extent of free will and choice afforded to Hardy's protagonists — Tess in particular — and concludes that their role as individuals is mostly determined by their for-granted role as characters, a blunder through which, according to Morrell, 'Hardy's reputation has suffered out of all proportion to its seriousness.' Morrell has also pointed out certain elements of irony, like in the concluding paragraph of *Tess*, also contending that 'the irony is aimed, at least partially, against the reader' (39).

David Lodge (1966) has described the causes of Hardy's being termed a great novelist 'in spite of great defects, the most commonly alleged of which are his manipulation of events in defiance of probability to produce a tragic-ironic pattern, his intrusiveness as authorial commentator, his reliance on stock characters, and his capacity for writing badly' (165). Concentrating on *Tess* in order to analyze such objections, he has pointed out many uncompromising

contradictions in Hardy's art, particularly in his relating his characters to their environment.

Robert C. Schweik (1966) and J. C. Maxwell (1968) have focused on *The Mayor of Casterbridge* in 'Character and Fate in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*' and 'The Sociological Approach to *The Mayor of Casterbridge*' respectively. The former contends that *The Mayor* shows Hardy's 'continued respect for an older, pre-scientific conception of man's dignity and worth as a moral agent' (146) in a Darwinian world of scientific utilitarianism; while the latter has contrasted the characters of Henchard and Farfrae as symbolizing the old and the new ways of life in the rural English society.

Raymond Chapman is one of the most outstanding Hardy critics. In *The Victorian Debate* (1968), he has criticized Hardy in the light of his position in reference to the Victorian society — its culture, traditions and artistic inclinations. In the article entitled 'Meredith and Hardy' in the said volume, he has appreciated Hardy's art of characterization. According to him, there may be imbalances in individuals — 'Eustacia may be too much a romantic conception and Clym may be too weak in human terms, but there is a grandeur in their portrayal which makes them bear existence beyond the simple plot' (327-328). He has also discussed Hardy's being affected by Darwinism, and his coverage of the theme of 'the survival of the fittest', comparing the helpless humans to the weak in the animals. In *The Language of Thomas Hardy* (1990), Chapman has presented an unparalleled appreciation of Hardy's use of language as reflective of the nature and moods of characters as well as of the collective patterns of life. I have benefited a lot from this invaluable source, and have frequently quoted it in Chapter 8 of my thesis. In *Forms of Speech in Victorian Fiction* (1994), he has discussed the speech of many of Hardy's characters— particularly Sue and Jude— as brilliant instances of demonstrating complexes and sensibilities of individuals.

Trevor Johnson (1968) has focused primarily on Hardy's art of characterization, calling Tess 'Hardy's most masterly portrait of a woman' (151), thoroughly tackled and shown while facing multiple problems and

persons in different situations. While tracing causes of her tragedy, he has termed her ego, her natural freedom and her delicacy of feeling responsible for her disaster.

Michael Millgate is generally believed to be Hardy's most authoritative biographer. His *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (1971) and *Thomas Hardy: A Biography* (1982) are masterpieces of critical biography. He has traced the presence of autobiography or depiction of self in all of his successful fiction. According to him, Hardy's best work is produced only when it has strong roots in his own background—at least in terms of characterization. The presence of autobiography is very vital as its absence is generally a cause of failure.

Ian Gregor (1974) has discussed Hardy's six great novels most comprehensively, claiming that there are two blended levels of his depiction of a character: as a total human being, and as a tool in the drama concerned. The alternative titles that he has suggested for the novels under discussion are very significant: 'The Creation of Wessex': *Far from the Madding Crowd*; 'Landscape with Figures': *The Return of the Native*; 'A Man and his History': *The Mayor of Casterbridge*; 'The Great Web': *The Woodlanders*; 'Poor Wounded Name': *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; 'An End and a Beginning': *Jude the Obscure*.

Merryn Williams in *A Preface to Hardy* (1976) has offered a critical survey of Hardy's life and works, equally beneficial for critics and students. After the preliminary biographical chapter and before undertaking critical evaluation of his text, there are two very important bridging chapters, entitled 'Hardy the Countryman' and 'Hardy the Victorian' respectively. Both these chapters have projected certain romantic ideals in Hardy's art, like his zeal for the provincialism of William Barnes, and the concept of liberty expounded by John Stuart Mill. Two sub-sections 'Hardy, the Romantics and Swinburne' and 'Hardy, the Agnostics and Pessimism' have discussed the tension through which an emotionally alert person, like Hardy, had to pass in a dominantly rationalistic age.

J. R. Ebbatson (1977) has evaluated Hardy as a trend setter in fiction, followed by great creative artists like D. H. Lawrence. In 'Thomas Hardy and Lady Chatterley', he has traced Lawrence's appreciation of Hardy's novels, particularly *Two on a Tower*, to the latter's keen insight of female psychology, wherefrom Lawrence has derived many elements in his *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, a novel that demonstrates the late Victorian intellectual scientific pessimism.

John Bayley in *An Essay on Hardy* (1978) has called Hardy 'the most aesthetic of all English novelists'. He asks Hardy's readers not to look at disappointments offered by Hardy's novels as a proof of his failure to do otherwise. He has discovered Hardy's fictionalized presence in his novels, and his being on very familiar terms with all his characters. Highlighting the foundational status of Hardy's characters in relation to plot and narrative, he states: 'When his characters bumble, his text bumbles too' (10).

Lance St John Butler (1978) has concentrated on eight of Hardy's novels (including *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *The Trumpet-Major* along with the generally celebrated tragic novels), his short stories and some of his poems. In his volume on Hardy in the series *British Authors: Introductory Critical Studies*, while referring to Hardy's repudiating 'pessimism' and admitting 'evolutionary meliorism', he contends, 'Although Hardy did not claim to have produced a system, he presents a remarkably consistent picture of the universe' (11).

Alan Hurst's *Hardy: An Illustrated Dictionary* (1980) is not just a dictionary in the traditional or typical sense: it provides some very intelligent critical comments on Hardy's novels, poems and characters, along with objective evaluation of his major themes and concerns. It has catalytically facilitated academic research on Hardy, and I have benefited a lot from it in accomplishing this task.

Norman Page (1980) has evaluated Hardy's diction and grammar, claiming his being enormously influenced by Horace Moule and William Barnes. He has proved with the help of epistolary evidences that, in the beginning of his career as a novelist, Hardy did have problems with style, and

was anxiously searching for a model to follow, requesting Moule to guide him therein. Moule, however, advised him not to follow any one and to be subjective and creative in style.

Roger Robinson (1980) has examined Darwin's influence on Hardy's fiction and poetry, attaching symbolic significance to many of Hardy's characters, settings and authorial comments in the light of Darwin's scientific theories. Calling Hardy 'the most honest and sensitive recorder of the shock-wave from the evolutionary discoveries' (129-30), he has commented on Hardy's tragic novels as 'trying to dramatize the disease of feeling for the popular market,' a comment of great value for this thesis.

David Ball (1987) in his article 'Tragic Contradiction in Hardy's *The Woodlanders*,' has contrasted *The Woodlanders* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*, particularly the characters of Giles Winterborne and Gabriel Oak, suggesting that Giles has a certain edge over Gabriel for his selfless sacrifice without any hope of reward.

The widespread recognition of *Literary Theory* as a discipline led to the introduction of new critical standards like 'feminism', 'misogynism', 'modernism' 'progressivism', 'Marxism' etc. On the one hand, these concepts resulted in novel approaches towards and new interpretations of Hardy's works, like Rosemarie Morgan's feminist interpretation in *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* (1988), or the sociological version of his works like *Hardy in History: A Study in Literary Sociology* by Peter Widdowson (1989). The former has added feministic concerns to the traditional Darwinian and Freudian analysis of Hardy's female protagonists, while the latter has undertaken, in his own way, according to the introduction of the work on the inner title of the book, 'to liberate Hardy from the constraints imposed by orthodox literary history'. The above mentioned notions also gave new connotations to the term 'romantic', making it convenient to be applied to artists like Hardy.

F. B. Pinion (1995) has pointed out many elements of affinity between Hardy and Wordsworth, particularly their choice of "low and rustic life"

because here “ the essential passions of the heart find a better soil”. Utilising the findings in his two earlier works, *A Hardy Companion: A Guide to the Works of Thomas Hardy and their Background* (1968) and *Thomas Hardy: Art and Thought* (1977), he has identified some dimensions of the external aspects of romanticism in Hardy’s art, dispelling the impression that Hardy, the pessimist, can never be compared to Wordsworth, the optimist. He has proved with strong arguments that, in spite of Hardy’s refusal to accept Wordsworth’s Platonic theory of pre-existence, the points of affinity between the two are stronger than those of adversity.

Phillip Mallett (1995), has examined in detail Hardy’s Wessex as a product of exceptionally strong imagination combined with his talent as a regional writer, depicting the community to which he belonged. The inherent association of Wessex setting, however, fettered his characters within certain compulsions. The protagonists of *Jude the Obscure* are free from such limitations because that novel is Hardy’s farewell to Wessex.

Gillian Beer (1996) has discussed the theme of decay and decline in Hardy’s works in the light of scientific theories like that of evolution, and certain philosophical assertions of the age. In his article ‘Hardy and Decadence,’ he has pointed out Hardy’s dislike for systemization of his art, his tendency ‘to resist settlement and hold to seemings,’ and his ‘claim for a new kind of actuality not bound to longer-known laws’ (96).

H. M. Deliski in *Thomas Hardy and Paradoxes of Love* (1997) has tried to exonerate Hardy from the charge of sexism as asserted by the feminist critics. Highlighting Hardy’s originality and profundity in tackling his female characters, he rejects the view that Hardy has shown misogynist inclinations in his depiction of characters. He has also pointed out the basic difference between Hardy and some sexist novelists like Lawrence and Joyce in tackling sexual relations and the involvement of females therein.

Angelique Richardson (1998) has projected the theme of ‘biologization of romance’ in Hardy’s novels and short stories, stressing the importance of ‘the role that biology played in broadening the franchise of fictional possibilities . .

not simply in terms of a more open treatment of sex, and sexual relations, but in broader portrayals of life, love and heredity' (61).

Holly Davis (1998) has discussed *Jude* as Hardy's disillusionment with romanticism, resulting in his farewell to writing novels. *Jude*, in his opinion, is an anti-romantic novel showing the wide gap between reality and romanticism, and Hardy's conviction that romantic ideals, though very attractive by themselves, are not practicable.

Judith Stinton (2001) has scrutinized Hardy's manuscripts, letters and other documents, attempting to discover certain dimensions of Hardy's personality, his friends, heroes and admirers. She tells of Hardy's expectation from his researchers and biographers of 'endorsing his own official version of his life', and of his 'attempting to control how posterity saw him' (63), resulting in his writing his autobiography, and his strong reaction to hostile biographies and comments by others.

These are some of the critics that have evaluated Hardy's genius. There are many more, but the quoted ones represent almost all the major critical views about his art in general and his novels in particular. I have benefited from all of them. Some of them support my findings while the rest provide contrasting perspectives to my arguments. A comparative analysis of the Introduction and this Literature Review makes it clear that even those critics that have obviously touched the issue of romanticism in Hardy's works have neither moved with the same destination before them, nor in the same direction, as undertaken by this thesis. As such, notwithstanding the help and guidance derived from these precious critical views, the findings of this attempt are likely to be different from all of them.

Chapter 3

The Spirit of Romanticism

No student or critic of literature has ever enjoyed the desired convenience while attempting to define romanticism or explain it convincingly. Detached from the antagonistic classical perspective, one must confess the fact that romanticism in itself is quite a vague term: vague not because of any inherent confusion or lexical emptiness but rather due to the multiplicity of dimensions that it found in terms of the uncontrollable modes of expression adopted by the heralds of the movement which this term symbolized in the early 19th century. Romanticism has been variously interpreted as 'the renaissance of wonder,'¹ 'the addition of strangeness to beauty,'² 'the call of the wild,'³ 'democratization of poetry'⁴ and so forth. Interestingly, some critics⁵ interpret it to imply the set of features shared by the group of poets happily, or just haply, living in the same age, and hence inspired by the same currents of thoughts and events, and compelled to respond to the same sort of intellectual obligations and emotional sensibilities. As such, romanticism means all that is common among Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, Keats and, to some extent, a few others of the immediately preceding age, like Chatterton, Goldsmith, and Blake. Almost all of them detested the near past and preferred the pre-renaissance medieval myths to the post-renaissance empirical philosophies. The medieval art and literature, however, could not become their ideal model because of the pre-dominance of ecclesiastical commitment in that age, and they turned to the ancient pagan Greek mythology for inspiration. This, however, does not mean that they were mutually in perfect harmony while dealing with these issues. They were a group because they traveled in the same direction, trying to reach the same destination. Their objectives, however, were quite different, and the diversity — in certain cases rather the adversity — in their attitude towards life poses a very serious question: have they enough affinity to be labeled as a class, in face of the sharply divergent individual

attitudes towards the very basic constituents of the movement denoted by the term which alone blankets them together? Interestingly, the points of difference among them are not some trivial secondary ones, but rather the very foundations of their being grouped together. The more vital a point in affinity, the more conspicuous it is in terms of disagreement. The immense diversity among the romantic poets, however, should not lead to the misdirected verdict that they cannot be validly labeled as a class. It is needless to emphasize that individuality and uniqueness in itself is a major demand of the romantic spirit, and perfect homogeneity among them would have negated the very essence of romanticism.

Baffled by these elements of affinity and adversity, some critics⁶ have ultimately sought consolation in the early twentieth century contention that "classical" and "romantic" are two approximate epithets whose apt comprehension develops automatically through tracing their conceptual antagonism. Classicism in itself is not an issue for the modern critic. It has been attracting attention since long as a contrasting perspective for the oft-alive antagonist—romanticism.

In order to explain the term, romanticism, mostly a catalogue of the comparative aspects of the two terms — classical and romantic — is relied upon. If classical literature is the product of the mind and involves intellect, the romantic has its roots in the heart and involves emotions. If a classical work undertakes to discuss the religious, social, political and economic issues, the romantic attempts an escape from the ordinary and the corporal and aims at discovering the thrill and the significance of the unduly neglected objects and ideas. Against the classical tradition of drawing-room orientation, the romantic aesthetics gets operational amid demonstrations of Nature, and the Supernatural images. The classical masters are actively involved in the activities of the mortal world and at ease to be a part of it, while romanticism inherently implies escape from reality through the flight of imagination, consequent upon dissatisfaction with the existing scheme of things. If the classical literature abides by the conventions both in terms of theme and style, the romantic revolts against the taboos, and goes to any extent for achieving the ideal of the novel and the

strange. The classical diction is artificial and sophisticated while the romantic is spontaneous, natural and cordial.

These contrasting assertions might suffice for a casual or superficial understanding of the romantic attitude in general, but in case of our current enterprise, such notions based on comparison and negation fall very short of the apt comprehension and exposition needed for the foundation of the succeeding critical analysis.

The following pages are meant to attempt a deeper and keener approach to the essence, spirit and distinguishing features of romanticism. One, however, should not hope to be completely liberated from the compulsion to abide by the comparative notions quoted above. Nor shall it be supposed to change the approximate perception of the term into an absolute one. It may be taken as an endeavour aimed at laying down the base for an exclusive construction. "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*" by William Wordsworth is generally supposed to be the manifesto of romanticism. It may be true in case of the late eighteenth century revolt against rationalism and materialism, consciously launched by Wordsworth and Coleridge. It, however, cannot be that confidently applied even to the second generation of the romantics, i.e., Byron, Shelley and Keats, etc., let aside the universal romantic attitude. I think (rather I feel because feeling, and not thinking, should be the medium while tackling romanticism) that no coined illustration can project the spirit of romanticism or its inherent manifesto better than the following quatrain by *Omar Khyyam*, so impressively rendered into English by Edward FitzGerald.

Ah, love! Could you and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits - and then
Remold it nearer to the Heart's Desire! ⁷

Advocating the heart against the undue domination of the mind and the reason, the nineteenth century Romantic Movement in England initially looked at the French Revolution of 1789 for inspiration. It was, however, soon discovered that the French Revolution shared with romanticism only some of the explicit objectives like the ideal of liberty, anti-conventionalism, and

individualism. It obviously lacked the pathos of aesthetic and emotional aspirations essentially associated with romanticism. Luckily, the first generation of the romantics, particularly Wordsworth and Coleridge, soon shunned the spell of the French Revolution and concentrated on an independent literary campaign against rationalism, materialism and the just preceding eighteenth century neo-classicism. It was their firm conviction that the modern man of the industrialized era over-concentrated on fulfilling the obligations of the body and the mind at the cost of the soul and the heart. This, according to their perception, was a consequence of man's alienation from Nature. The concept of Nature, as such, also involved the supernatural ideals, images and beings, which were discarded by modern man as a proof of believing only in what was real and empirically perceptible. They believed that Nature inherently possessed a thrill, which could constantly absorb man's attention and cater for all the dimensions of his interest. The original men — the noble savages of the past — knew this capacity of Nature and appreciated her role as such. With the passage of time, however, a "dulling film of familiarity" spread over all the objects of Nature. This resulted in man's overlooking the significance of Nature and the weakening of his soul and heart. 'Return to Nature,' according to Wordsworth, was the need of the materialistic man to resume life in spiritual, emotional and aesthetic terms. Wordsworth believed that the truth of Nature, existence, life and man himself could be discovered through the uncorrupted flight of imagination for poetic pursuit rather than philosophical analysis or scientific observations. He adopted this conviction as a creed to which he adhered throughout his life after passing through many diverse stages of contemplation and conviction, as pointed out in the following passage:

Anyone who has read through 'The Prelude' knows that Wordsworth did not come easily or naturally to the poetic faith which animated the body of his writings. He was, to use the expression of William James in his book on religious experience, 'twice-born' to poetry. It will be remembered that he recounts in 'The Prelude' the disappointment and dismay he suffered as the French Revolution took its course; and he became, to renew his confidence, a student and disciple of the philosopher Godwin. He was quickly disillusioned with Godwin and then set himself to become a philosopher in his own right. But his attempt at philosophy was a failure. He tells us that he ended up by dragging

All passions, notions, shapes of faith,
Like culprits to the bar, suspiciously
Calling the mind to establish in plain day
Her titles and her honours, now believing
Now disbelieving, endlessly perplex'd
.....till, demanding proof
And seeking it in everything, I lost
all feeling of conviction, and
Yielded up moral questions in despair.

This was the result of his philosophizing and he passed
sentence as well, he tells us, on history and poetry
... their rights
Seemed mortal, and their empire passed away.

This was in 1796. His philosophical intelligence, such as it
was, proved a dissolvent of any belief and confidence that were left
to him, not only in the power of thought, but in poetry also.

And yet, in 1798, two years later, he wrote 'Lines Composed
above Tintern Abbey'; and in 'Tintern Abbey' he spoke of the
... blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world is lightened;

and said that
With an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

I must now recount the way in which he came out of his
philosophical despair into this poetic vision and the blessed moods in
which the burthen of the mystery was lightened for him. I shall only
say that he found what he called the 'hiding places of power' in his
remembered childhood; and that when he said that the child is father
of the man he only recorded what was a palmary fact about his own
poetic history. (James 33-35)

Discarding the intellectual disciplines of science and philosophy in
favour of the poetic imagination and uninterrupted emotional contact,
Wordsworth soon reached the conviction shared by all the harbingers of the
heart (though not traditionally labeled as romantics, just for having lived prior to
the invention of the term). Wordsworth vehemently announced his
disillusionment with reason, science and philosophy:

One impulse from the vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous form of things
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up these barren leaves;
Come forth and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.⁸

Coleridge initially shared Wordsworth's belief in the divine orientation and enlightening capacity of Nature. Soon, however, he discovered that Nature is just a passive lifeless agent, responding to human heart according to its own moods of delight or melancholy. In 'Dejection: An Ode' he declares:

O lady⁹, we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live,
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!

Although Wordsworth is called the high priest of Nature for his consistently abiding by the creed of the worship of Nature, yet he was not sincere with Nature in her own right. He exploited Nature for filling the severely felt religious vacuum resulting from his dissatisfaction with the contemporary creeds known to him on the one hand and his inability to do without a religion on the other. He tolerated the supernatural only when it glorified Nature. Coleridge, in contrast, believed that Nature is utterly insignificant in itself, and for escaping the mental and physical torments of the world of harsh realities, one should seek refuge in the more efficiently enchanting supernatural world.

Byron was an egotist having a sharp *belief* that the whole social set-up of his time was conspiring to deprive him of the superior status in intellectual, political and social terms, which he so meritoriously deserved. He placed his personal whims and eccentricities against social and moral values upheld by the establishment of the society, and exploited Nature as favouring and supporting his egotism against any attempt towards taming and disciplining

his genius. In his famous autobiographical poem "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" he laments:

But soon he knew himself the most unfit
Of men to herd with Man, with whom he held
Little in common; untaught to submit
His thought to others, though his soul was quelled
In youth by his own thoughts; still uncompelled,
He would not yield dominion of his mind
To spirits against whom his own rebelled,
Proud though in desolation; which could find
A life within itself, to breath without mankind.

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;
Where rolled the ocean, thereon was his home;
Where a blue sky, and glowing clime, extends,
He had the passion and the power to roam;
The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,
Where unto him companionship; they spake
A mutual language clear, than the tone
Of his land's tongue, which he would oft farsake
For Nature's pages glassed by sunbeams on the lake.

Childe Harold (III), lines 100-118.

Shelley attempted to celebrate the violent aspects of Nature, and exploited them as tools of his philosophical and political message of the revolution of liberty. To him, all the dimensions and demonstrations of Nature symbolized a continuous phenomenon of change involving regeneration through the preliminary process of destruction. He believed that these demonstrations of Nature asked mankind to follow suit. In 'Ode to the West Wind,' he asserts his affinity with Nature in heralding the spirit of change.

Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O wind,
If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

Soon, however, he got disillusioned with the power of Nature and at the last stages of his short life and poetic career, seems inclined to make it an instrument of private submissive consolation with no zeal for any vital potentials. The same Shelley who rejoices in the uncontrollability of Nature in the form of wind is found seeking refuge in the calm and pacified monotony of

Nature in "Stanzas Written in Dejection".

The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might,
The breath of the moist earth is light,
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The city's voice itself is soft like solitude's.

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found.

Keats, from the very beginning, had an unbiased and purely aesthetic view of Nature: he did not assign to 'her' any higher status except momentarily transporting those who attain emotional cohesion with her, from harsh realities to imaginative delights. He believed that Nature diversely but harmoniously demonstrates herself to expose truth and beauty without any didactic objectives. As such, every demonstration of Nature has its own independent significance. So, instead of taking winter as a preface to spring like Shelley, Keats rejoices in the charms of autumn without any connotation:

Where are the songs of spring? Aye, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too—.

Though the romantics predominantly dealt with Nature, yet it will be an exaggerated misconception to take 'Return to Nature' as the manifesto of the movement. It was just a constituent of the complex agenda of the aesthetic revolution, consequent upon a set of unprecedented sensibilities about life, man, the universe, and the pleasures and pains involved in their interaction. Almost all the romantic poets — both the major and the minor ones — pathetically felt that human instinct was fettered with unbearable chains of creeds, taboos, values and social, moral and economic obligations. They glorified themselves as leading the crusade of liberating human instinct — his soul and heart — from these chains that deprived him from exploring and exploiting his inherent

potentials. Initially, all of them were attracted by the motto of liberty propounded by the French Revolution. They hailed it as the most significant event in human history and attached very high hopes to it not only in reference to France, England or Europe, but rather in global and human perspective. Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge soon got disillusioned with the Revolution by witnessing its own measures of tyranny and suppression, while for Keats and Shelley it retained its charm till the end.

Though all the romantics were devoted champions of liberating humanity, there was a wide gap in their perception of the chains that enslaved it. To Wordsworth, liberty meant freeing the instinctive heart and the soul from the clutches of the acquired intellect, the disciplining civilization and the dulling materialism. He also indirectly sought to liberate man from the self-imposed creeds and myths and make him surrender to the all-embracing and omnipotent Nature alone. He also advocated liberating the language and diction of poetry from artificiality and sophistication, and employing a natural, instinctive and spontaneous language spoken by the common rustic people. In 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*,' the commonly believed manifesto of romanticism, he gives no less weight to style than the theme. He is strongly of the conviction that natural, humble and rustic scenes suit the passions of the heart, which are the real matter for genuine poetry.

The principal object, then, proposed in these poems, was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colour of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraints, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated, because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly,

because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.¹⁰

This long passage from "The Preface" has been quoted in original not only due to its foundational significance in highlighting the essence of the romantic movement, but also because of being a rich factor in terms of the romantics' affinity with Thomas Hardy.

Apart from these intellectual and artistic expositions, Wordsworth's view of liberty does not have deeper political implications. Nor could any such effort be found in Coleridge. To him liberty simply meant the allowance to escape from the physical and the material world — not worth living for a sensitive and refined soul — to any distant ideal world of unlimited fancy and fantasy, through the flight of imagination, even if supplemented by intoxication. Unlike Wordsworth, Coleridge was of the conviction that environment, surroundings and occupation may be congenial for the exposure of man's instinct and flourishing of natural innocence; they, nonetheless, do not constitute innocence and instinct by themselves, and escape from urbanism and industrialized materialism — according to Coleridge — does not mean automatically the trumpeted freedom of the soul and the heart.

Indeed it is often the case that Coleridge will criticize farmers as those particularly myopic in relation to large-scale capital enterprise, and the ideas implicit in negative capital and negative debt. For Coleridge, in other words, the farmer represents the economy of mere addition that Wordsworth associates with the primitive (not yet dispossessed) shepherd. When criticizing Wordsworth's matter-of-factness in *Lyrical Ballads* and the contention in Wordsworth's 1800 Preface that the sentiments and expressions of poems are derived from — according to Coleridge — "occupations and abode," or "low and rustic life" (BL¹¹, 190), he will use farmers as an example of 'rustics' singularly unenlightened by their occupation and abode. Where such enlightenment occurs in rural communities, Coleridge argues, it is less the proximity to mountains than to a few books (particularly the Bible) that affords the inhabitants of such regions the "Vantage ground" (BL, 191) necessary for an elevated appreciation of rural life. (Langan 110)

Though Shelley took liberty basically in intellectual and political terms, yet he so vehemently believed in its practical implications that his views were rightly felt as a threat to the foundations of the entire social and moral set-up,

not only of the contemporary English Society but of the human civilization in its entirety. In *Necessity of Atheism* (1810), the pamphlet that led to the abrupt termination of his university career, he demonstrated his belief that one should be absolutely free to think and act on his own without any outside fettering authority to whom he is accountable. He despised all social and moral values and institutions, eloped with girls whenever he could without any sense of guilt, and even advocated incest in some of his poems like 'Loan and Cythna' and 'The Cenci'. So Shelley's concept of liberty implies a revolt against all values, traditions and conventions — in brief everything that controls the human instinct. As the fiercest and the most violent of all the romantics, Shelley's attitude towards life, and his eccentric way of living it, has a strong affinity to Hardy's views of life in general and social institutions versus emotional inclinations in particular — something less prominent in his life than in his fiction.

Though different in perception and manifestations, Byron's view of liberty is in no way less violent than Shelley's. As an egotist and misanthropic aristocrat, he ventured to revolt against the English decorum and the class-consciousness that made him the lord. He despised the taboos that guarded the social and the political establishment of his time, revolted against them, both in views and actions, and advocated freedom from their clutches in quite an ambiguous way. Almost all his literary works have an exclusive personal orientation: unlike Shelley who adopted a generic human stance even while disclosing his deepest inner complexes, Byron's sensibilities are fettered by a sort of self-aggrandizement resulting from an injured ego. It, nevertheless, does not deprive him of the pathos and sublimity that the romantics inherently possess: he has the marvelous gift of rendering personal experiences and, more significantly, agonies into a universal philosophy. His personal involvement does not just embitter the satire; it rather enables him to demonstrate an unequalled depth of analysis and keener appreciation of sensibilities. His popular satire 'Don Juan' and his travelogue poem 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' are widely believed to be autobiographical masterpieces, the first challenging

the pretensions and decorum of the English nobility and manifesting the sensually aesthetic views of beauty, love and sex, and the second showing the wanderings of the child of imagination resulting from rejection by the world of realistic conventions.

Byron's contemporaries insisted on identifying the author with his fictional characters. But Byron's letters and the testimony of his friends show that, except for recurrent moods of black depression his own temperament was in many ways the anti-thesis of that of his heroes. He was passionate and willful, but when in good humour he could be very much a man of the world in the eighteenth century style — gregarious, lively, tolerant, and a witty conversationalist capable of taking an ironic attitude towards his own foibles as well as those of other men. The aloof hauteur he exhibited in public was largely a mask to hide his painful diffidence when in a strange company; he possessed devoted friends, both men and women, and among them he was usually unassuming, companionable, sometimes even exuberant and tactful; to his household dependants he was unfailingly generous and tenaciously loyal. But if Byronism was largely a fiction, produced by a collaboration between Byron's imagination and that of his public, then the fiction was historically more important than the poet in his actual person. (Abrams 287-8)

Though attempting to give a comparatively favourable colour to Byron's personality by segregating him from his creation, rather the offspring of imagination, the given passage cannot invalidate the unquestionable affinities between Byron and his heroes. The experiences of the legendary Don Juan were not something common in any period of English history. To depict a character like that and to produce a satire with such keen familiarity with female nature and sentimentality needed not only a great artist, but also a person with peculiar aesthetic and emotional sensibilities like Byron's. The following comments by the same writer about Byron's life leads anyone, who has gone through the scandals of Don Juan, with female to female, to acknowledge that Don Juan is essentially an image of the poet, if not the poet incarnate:

Often as a result of female initiative rather than his own, Byron incurred a sequence of liaisons with ladies of fashion. One of these, the flamboyant, eccentric, and hysterical young lady Caroline Lamb, caused him so much distress by her frenzied pursuit and public tantrums that Byron turned for relief to marriage with Anabella Milbanke, who was in every way Lady Caroline's opposite, for she was naïve, unworldly, intellectual (with a special passion for mathematics), and not a little priggish; she persuaded herself that she could make Byron over in her own image. This ill-starred

marriage produced a daughter (Augusta Ada) and many scenes in which Byron, goaded by financial difficulties, behaved so frantically that his wife suspected his sanity; after only one year, the union ended in a legal separation. The final blow came when Lady Byron discovered her husband's incestuous relations with his half sister Augusta Leigh. The two had been raised apart, so that they were almost strangers when they met as adults; also, Byron seems to have had one attribute in common with the Byronic hero — a compulsion to try the forbidden experience (including as we now know, homosexual love affairs), joined with a tendency to court his own destruction. (Abrams 289-90)

Keats, the most short-lived of all the romantics, was neither violent nor frustrated in emotional terms. His was a submissive agony, deeming no escape from the harsh realities except escape from the very agony of life in itself. His 'Ode to a Nightingale', brilliantly manifests this theme. He envies the nightingale because it does not have the agony of sensibilities. He wishes if like the nightingale he could also

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

While counting the tragedies of human life, Keats takes the mortality of beauty to be the greatest cause of agony. Even this would have been tolerable if love was not dependent on physical charms. This emotional agony, according to Keats (Ode to a Nightingale), is the climax of tragedies that surpasses all other physical and mental agonies. Neither contact with Nature, nor the flight of imagination, nor any device of intoxication can liberate one from the painful consciousness and realization of the harsh realities of life. Unlike Byron and Shelley, Keats does not accuse individuals, classes or society amongst the human beings for suppressing the liberty of others. He takes the entire humanity as the victim of mortality, worst than the other living creatures because of their feeling their unavoidable doom, which does not let them to enjoy even the short

period of youth, beauty and strength:

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charact'ry,
Hold like rich garnerers the full ripened grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starred face,
Huge cloudy symbols of high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love! Then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.¹²

After this brief analysis of the major characteristics of romanticism and the approaches of the major romantic poets regarding Nature, life and society, let us proceed to some special dimensions of romanticism that are of vital significance for the current enterprise, though commonly overlooked by superficial critical approaches.

Founding the discussion on two of the popular definitions of romanticism — 'the renaissance of wonder' and 'the addition of strangeness to beauty', we can safely establish the contention that the Romantic Movement was an aesthetic phenomenon: a revolution of sensibilities consequent upon an emotional consciousness. As such, beauty is the central theme of romanticism. Beauty to the romantics does not mean the set of physical features labelled 'attractive' by every casual observer. To them beauty is the glory of being that invites emotional attachment. Thus not only genuine beauty must possess certain extra-physical features in addition to the ability to cause sensual stimulation, an uncorrupted aesthetic genius is also needed at the receiving end to realize and appreciate this beauty. This aesthetic genius is what all the romantics so proudly thought to be exclusively their talent, distinguishing them from the rest of humanity on whom they asserted, according to them, a rightful claim to follow them as prophets and messengers of truth. When one starts examining in depth the dimensions of the romantic aesthetic attitude, it is certainly detectable at the first glance that they hated order, conventionalism,

familiarity and discipline in beauty more than they did in anything else. They seem to be of the conviction that 'Absence and distance only advance desire' (Gregor 52). Both Byron and Shelley detested the institution of marriage and the moral obligations involved therein because conventional sex takes away the thrill that exists in tasting the prohibited fruit. They advocated free sex, homosexuality and even incest for the unlawfulness and anti-ethical orientation of these experiences. Keats's 'The Eve of St. Agnes' narrates the ecstatic experience of Porphyro's access to the bed of much guarded Madeline. Really enchanting is the scene surveying an unattainable beauty just before having her:

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together pressed,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seemed a splendid angel, newly dressed,
Save wings, for heaven — Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive a while she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But does not look behind, or all the charm is fled.¹³

Even Wordsworth believed in the charm of the distant and the uncommon, and he idealized only those aspects of Nature that deviated from the objects disciplined and made familiar by the dulling film of familiarity. Though he advocated 'the ideal wild', in philosophical than sensual terms, yet it is an important feature of his aesthetic attitude both towards Nature and human beings, and it is this point in Rousseau's doctrine rather than any other dimension of liberty that made Wordsworth his great admirer.

I believe that the fundamental impulse of the Romantic Movement can be found in a very single phrase — 'the call of the wild'. Throughout by far the greater part of the history of the human race life was rough, casual, disorderly and adventurous, 'near to

Nature' as we say. In very recent times, comparatively speaking, law and order were achieved. Now law and order, even if ideally organized (as they never have been) impose tiresome fetters upon the spontaneous impulses of the individual. Moreover, what our ancestors have achieved we take for granted. We forget how great an achievement it was, what an improvement it marked on what had gone before it. Rousseau was the first great prophet of the romantic movement, and his books (which were written in the middle of the eighteenth century) are continually contrasting civilization with 'Nature', to the great disadvantage of the former. Rousseau was, incidentally, very keenly alive to the beauty of wild scenery, to Nature in the visual sense, but the 'Nature' of his political treatises is a kind of Garden of Eden, out of which man has mistakenly strayed, and to which he must at all costs find his way back. (Somervell 61)

It needs to be pointed out here that the quoted passage is extremely vital in relation to Hardy's aesthetic consciousness and emotional constitutions reflected in most of the heroes of his novels.

The trend of depicting the unattainable, uncommon, extra-ordinary and peculiar beauty, with a fatal impact on all the associated characters has been a living topic in the literature of various ages throughout human history, exclusively among the romantics — particularly Byron, Keats and Shelley. However, 'La Belle Dame sans Merci', found more pathetic appreciation than any other piece. Irrespective of the physical charms, the supreme beauty is that which is either unattainable or prohibited, and hence the attempt of having it has a certain thrill and mystery which is the real climax of ecstasy. Shelley's appreciation of 'intellectual beauty', Keats's pathetic depiction of the mysterious and unattainable virgins and, above all, Byron's depiction of Don Juan's sexual attachment to the married ladies of fashion (letting aside Byron's incestuous and homosexual tendencies in personal life) all reflect the same attitude.

The fascination of beautiful women already dead, especially if they had been great courtesans, wanton queens, or famous sinners, the idea which suggested to Villon the ballad of the *dames du temps Jadis*, suggested to the Romantics, probably under the influence of the vampire legend, the figure of the Fatal Woman who was successively incarnate in all ages and all lands, an archetype which united in itself all forms of seduction, all vices and all delights.

A typical illustration of this Romantic fantasy is given by Heine in 'Florentinische Nächte', where Maximilian professes his love for representations of women in sculpture and in paintings, and

also for women already dead. He falls in love in this way with the little Very, seven years after she is dead; and he tells of his passion for Mademoiselle Laurence, who was called 'das Totenkind' because of the strange circumstances of her birth (her mother had been buried, robbers had violated the tomb and found her in the pains of childbirth, so had taken the baby, and re-buried the mother): 'She was so slim, so young and lovely — this lily born of the tomb, this daughter of death, this ghost with the face of an angel and the body of bayadere'.¹⁴ (Praz, 1960, 236)

Needless to emphasize any further that strangeness in beauty and mystery in love was the most distinguishing feature of the romantic aesthetics. In physical terms, 'molesting the supreme beauty' has been a popular desire not only in the medieval art but also in the post-renaissance literature. When Dr. Faustus entered into diabolical contract with the Devil to have whatever he wanted for a specified period of time at the cost of his soul being taken by the Devil to Hell at the expiry of that period, he desired, above anything else, the ecstatic company of Helen of Troy, and exclaimed:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burn't the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.¹⁵

The romantic poetry, however, takes the concept of strangeness beyond the physical unattainability and gives it a spiritual and extra-empirical splendour as already explained. Such beauty not only necessarily brings agony but is also fatal. The dilemma out of which the romantic agony, in the words of Mario Praz, arises is this: the union with a disciplined, conventional and socially and legally allowed beauty may have the sanctities of law, religion, morality and society, resulting in a submissive and self-imposed emotional peace, doomed for those that have no emotional sensibilities; on the other hand the disorderly, wild, uncommon, rebellious and peculiar beauty may never lead to peace and attainment in full, due to the infinite depth and variety, but the temporary moments of emotional unification bring ecstasy in the real sense, though always followed by melancholy, emotional chaos and sensibilities that are 'too deep for tears'. The romantic willingness of Antony and all the other legendary lovers to be led to self-opted destruction by the unparalleled Cleopatra is a model case of

the fatal beauty:

Cleopatra was one of the first Romantic incarnations of the type of the Fatal Woman she massacred in the morning the lovers who had passed the night with her. . . .

In Gautier's story Cleopatra grants the enjoyment of this particular night to the extremely beautiful young lion-hunter, Meiamoun; she dances for him, and is on the point of preventing him from drinking the cup of poison when the arrival of Mark Antony seals the young man's fate. Certain elements of the story should be noticed. The young man is beautiful, wild, and chaste, and falls in love with Cleopatra because she is unattainable; . . . and the knowledge of her body is an end in itself, beyond which life has nothing to offer. (Praz, 1960, 230-31)

So it has become quite manifest that the love of the wild and the unattainable is the inherent feature of romanticism where ecstasy embodies fatality as an unavoidable accompaniment of having the desire fulfilled. From the last sentence of the quoted passage one can infer that 'love' to the romantics did not mean just the desire to be the possessor of beauty; it rather involved the adventure of wild innocence to have a peculiar thrilling experience of access to the supreme beauty, essentially followed by a heroic fatality. The realization of this tragic fact is the essence of the romantic agony, based on the consciousness that life brings lasting peace and joy to those senseless beings who toe the line of the time by activating and following the mind and the body (the intellect and the lust) at the cost of a dormant or dead heart; while for those that are sensitive and follow the dictates of the heart, delight of fulfillment is either a distant dream or catastrophic attainment.

And this is what Hardy has so beautifully and convincingly projected through the heroes of almost all his novels, his four masterpieces in particular. His heroes are sensitive beings and follow the dictates of the heart, leading them to a catastrophic attainment or non-attainment of their dream.

Notes:

- ¹ Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Ch. XIV.
- ² Abrams, p. 13.
- ³ Somervell, p. 61.
- ⁴ The essence of Hazlitt's two lectures on Wordsworth: one in a series on *The English Poets* (1815), and another in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825). The quoted version is taken from Abrams, pp. 10- 11.
- ⁵ For instance, David Sampson in 'Romanticism, Classicism and Theory' pp. 1-24 in Curren, 1993.
- ⁶ For instance, in 'Classical and Romantic' by H.J.C. Grierson.
- ⁷ *Rubiyat of Omar Khayyam in 30 Languages* (Tehran : Padidish Publishing, 1987) p.485. in Abrams, p. 1190 the word "Fate" in the first line is replaced by "Him" though the translation is referred to FitzGerald.
- ⁸ 'The Tables Turned' on p. 94 of *Norton Anthology*, vol. 2, listed under Abrams.
- ⁹ In the original version "Sara" i.e. Sara Hutchinson, with whom Coleridge was hopelessly in love. After intervening versions, in which the poem was addressed first to "William" (Wordsworth) and then to "Edmund," Coleridge introduced the noncommittal "Lady" in 1817.
- ¹⁰ Wordsworth: *Preface*, 35.
- ¹¹ *Biographia Literaria*.
- ¹² Sonnet titled 'When I have Fears' composed in January 1818.
- ¹³ Stanzas No. 25 & 26 from Keats's 'The Eve of St. Agnes.'
- ¹⁴ This second paragraph is actually given as an endnote to the opening clause of the first one, on page 306 of the book. But, due to its relevance to the text, it has been placed here just after the first one.
- ¹⁵ Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*. (Act V, Scene I)

Chapter 4

Victorian Variations

Roughly speaking, the last seven decades of the nineteenth century are referred to as the Victorian era. The middle class that had newly emerged out of circumstances in the eighteenth century was now fast establishing and was freely allowed to become a part of the English gentry. England had become the first industrialized state of the world with many advantages and disadvantages accompanying this lead. In social terms, the most significant development of the age was 'the shift from a way of life based on the ownership of land to a modern urban economy based on trade and manufacturing' (Ford 727). Though monarchy was generally detested, yet no need of any radical revolt in favour of popular democracy was felt, for everyone deemed it as an unavoidable doom. The lead in industrialization had, on the one hand, deprived England of the traditional rich agricultural culture and rural heritage, while, on the other, it had opened for her the entire world as a free market, supplemented by the unprecedented expansion of her domain in terms of colonialization.

Consequently, the general approach to life had become utilitarian. Mind and body were more active than the abstract agents of being, i.e., the soul, the heart and the conscience. Social, political and economic issues formed the main core of human discourse, and imagination was generally not allowed to dwell very distant from reality.

The serious turning of humanity towards the real problems of utilitarian life was naturally accompanied by an unprecedented outburst of human intellect. Neither the origin nor the manifestations of this outburst could be fettered within geographical or ethnic boundaries in the changed world, which had begun its journey towards the destination of becoming a global village. Thus it will be a futile attempt to examine the distinguishing features of the Victorian English society in a strictly English perspective. Before examining the local trends and tendencies, we must, by compulsion, first turn to the contemporary

currents of thought that had not only a continental but also a global impact. One of these currents was Darwin's theory of evolution, particularly his popular work *The origin of Species* (1859), challenging the basic Christian contentions about the origin of humanity and the evolution of human civilization. Although the succeeding scientific discoveries contradicted Darwin's doctrine, yet the nineteenth century widely believed in it, resulting in diverse discussions regarding human nature, human instinct, the assumed spiritual and physical constituents of an individual, and the social and the ethical laws that regulate his conduct. Almost all the modes of expression responded to this doctrine either affirmatively or negatively.

The views of Karl Marx (1818-1883) about class conflict and the vision of communist utopia based on economic equality were also topics of hot discussion. He projected the contention (e.g. in *Das Kapital* 1867-94) that economic problem was the foundation of all human problems, and an ideal phase of individual fulfillment and social stability could be achieved only through an economic revolution. His views were also vehemently responded to in the contemporary literature.

The most outstanding impact— though only on the later Victorian period— was of the psycho-analytical theories of the Austrian scholar Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). In strict terms, he cannot be labeled a Victorian, as most of his works got published in the first decade of the twentieth century; yet he had given a specific direction to his research in the early 1880's, and his theories demonstrate the collective will to go deeper into human beings themselves. Freud not only introduced the subconscious and the levels of man's psychological constitution to which all the traits of one's personality and behaviour can be traced back; he also, more significantly, talked of the essence of sexual inclination and emotional attitudes (e.g. *Contribution to the Sexual Theory* 1905). It would be incorrect to say that Freud came up with solid convictions or proved anything scientifically; he, however, like Darwin, opened new horizons of examining man's self which — unlike Darwin's exclamation— are still considered valid.

So, unlike the general trend in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries — in which Galileo and Newton lived — science concentrated on man himself rather than on the Universe and Nature outside him. This second wave of anthropocentrism focused on man in a novel form. The first radical shift from theocentrism to anthropocentrism was witnessed through the European phenomenon of the famous Renaissance that signified the transition from medievalism to modernity, and instead of the miracles, mysteries and morality plays, literature demonstrated itself in really creative artists like Marlowe and Shakespeare, covering real human attitudes. The difference between the two phenomena lies here: the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries humanism took man as a social animal, with intentions, actions and aspirations only, while the Victorian anthropocentrism peeped deeper into his inner self.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), the Scottish historian and philosopher, is also worth-mentioning whose career stretched along the entire Victorian era. He gave a literary colouring to historical events in his 'treatment of a medieval theme in the literature of social criticism' (Burrow 133), and contended that history is moulded by the actions of exceptionally talented individuals. His lectures 'On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History' of 1841 are demonstrative of this trend. Though advocating significance of individuality, he concentrates on its social and moral aspects unlike the individual emotional constitution expounded by the romantics. Carlyle also attempted to revive the zeal for the French Revolution but couldn't win sufficient appreciation from the Victorian readers faced with a totally different set of problems and prospects.

Unlike the eighteenth century and the romantic period, when religion almost remained dormant, the Victorian era witnessed a religious revival with unique connotations. In spite of the strict conservative environment, Christianity felt more threatened than ever. Although no violent, anti-religious campaign was launched, people's beliefs had suffered a blow. As a matter of fact, scientists had suspected for some time that parts of *The Bible* were inaccurate. Geologists, like Charles Lyell (1795-1875), had become convinced, from their study of fossils, that the earth was much older than six thousand years as the

theologians claimed (Chapman, 1968, 310). But this was not the sort of thing that could be said aloud in the Victorian England, where a highly bigoted form of Christianity was taught in the churches and schools. Darwin literally could not face publishing his discoveries for years, because he knew how unpopular this would make him.

Right from the Romantic period, two opposite philosophical views — that of Coleridge and Bentham — existed regarding the justification of institutions and values. The Victorian followers of these two formed two conflicting classes: those of S.T. Coleridge were labeled as the philosophical conservatives while those of Jeremy Bentham were collectively termed as Utilitarians. The latter, who found more appreciation among the Victorians, had a unique agenda of social and religious reformation.

Their aim was to test all institutions, government or church or the law, in the light of human reason and common sense in order to determine whether such institutions were useful— that is, whether they contributed to the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers of men. This "Utilitarian" test was an extremely effective method of correcting inefficiencies in government administration: the drastic remodeling of the Civil Service in Victorian England was a tribute to Benthamite thinking. The fact that some procedures in government or law had been established for hundreds of years did not daunt Bentham in the least. Man's traditional customs, the very past itself, were of little interest to his logical mind; everything had to be tested afresh in terms of the Utilitarian formula. Such a test, if applied to a long established institution like the Church of England, or to religious belief in general, could have, and did have, disruptive effects. Was religious belief useful for the needs of a reasonable man? To the Benthamites the answer was evident: religious belief was merely an outmoded superstition.

Opponents of Utilitarianism, including Coleridge, argued that Bentham's view of human nature was unrealistically narrow, that man had always needed a faith as profoundly as he had needed food, and that if reason seemed to demonstrate the irrelevance of religion then reason must be an inadequate mode of arriving at truth. These anti-Utilitarians were of two types. The first were those such as Carlyle, who abandoned institutional Christianity yet sought to retain some sort of substitute religious belief— a quest that is vividly described in Carlyle's spiritual autobiography, *Sartor Resartus*. Others, led by John Henry Newman, argued that only a powerful, dogmatic, and traditional religious institution could withstand the attacks of irreverent thinkers of the Benthamite stamp. (Ford 733-4)

Age of skepticism
and doubt

It is to be understood that the religious controversies do not reflect any real zeal for the religious revival; they rather manifest the ultimate attempt to defend religion against the violent blows of science and philosophy. In this age, Europeans in general and the Englishmen in particular found themselves at the crossroads to follow either science or religion, as these two conflicting attitudes could neither co-exist with an equal status, nor could either of them accept an inferior and subordinate role. As evident from the above quoted passage, certain attempts were made to scientify or rationalize religion but to no effect. Even those that wanted to believe could not believe with conviction and, instead, belief—particularly in the origin and end of life— was deemed an emotional compulsion. This attitude is very brilliantly explained in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*:

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know,
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;
We mock thee when we do not fear:
But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

(Lines 17-32)

The overall temperament of the Victorian England was such that religion suited it the most. The intellectuals as well as the general public were extremely disciplined, socially conscious, serious and thoughtful. It was an age of moral consciousness and expression was subjected to unmatched, willingly imposed restrictions. Sexual descriptions were tabooed, and aesthetics were supposed to be void of them.

Victorian Puritanism showed itself most strongly in the attitude to sex. The scandals of the Regency years had not reflected a general libertinism, but they had given to the aristocracy an unsavoury image to be countered by the assertion of more rigid standards. A certain constriction set in, ably led by the Prince Consort and manifested in matters as diverse as clothing and the subjects of fiction. The eccentricity for which the British had been famous abroad, and on which they had prided themselves, notably diminished. Only towards the end of the reign, when criticism of the age was growing, did tolerance of unusual views and behaviour begin a tentative return.

The result of the taboos on sex were sometimes bizarre, such as the suppression of information about birth-control in an age haunted by the theory of Malthus. In 1868 Lord Amberley was vilified for taking part in a discussion on the subject; a few years later Annie Besant and James Bradlaugh were prosecuted for publishing a pamphlet about it; in 1887 a doctor was struck off the register for issuing a six penny edition of the *Wife's Handbook* - it was the cheapness and therefore easy availability which created his worst offence. (Chapman, 1968, 47)

The Victorians in general preferred the mood of *Il Penseroso*, in Milton's phraseology, to that of *L'Allegro* (Ford 737). But when the age as a whole failed to find any solid ground for pensive contemplation and melancholy, a partially romantic reaction was also given, though not in an organized enough manner to be labeled as a school of thought. This reaction against rationalization termed the very philosophical expositions illogical and unnecessary as they could never lead to any conviction. The heralds of this revolt contended that life was a mystery and one should avail its joys and thrills to the maximum rather than attempt to examine, analyze or discuss them philosophically or scientifically. The tremendous popularity of Edward Fitzgerald's poetic translation of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1859) in the last three decades of the century indicates the popularity of this attitude. These *Rubaiyat* have a dominant melancholy theme — that the problems of life and existence are insoluble. The beautiful and sublime diction of FitzGerald has added enormously to the pathos of the original. The following is an instance:

You know, my friends, how bravely in my house
For a new marriage I did make carouse;
Divorced old barren Reason from my bed
And took the daughter of the Vine to spouse.¹

Samuel Butler, in his novel, *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), has satirized the social institutions and the family system in a way that symbolize the anti-rational attitude. The best representatives of this concept, however, were Walter Pater and his followers—'writers who concluded that the striving of their predecessors was ultimately pointless, that the answers to man's problems are not to be found, and that our role is to enjoy the fleeting moments of beauty in this short day of frost and sun' (Ford 737). Am for
ApG
Lark

Of course, an important question to ask is how the violent romantic literature — poetry in particular — could afford to be succeeded by the Victorian form of dominant intellectual Utilitarianism. In fact the end of romanticism is marked by a short transitional period, dominated by semi-romantic poets, who in fact tactfully diverted the very flow of the Romantic Movement. Their role can be comprehended by identifying them with persons who want to stop, or change the direction of, a fast moving vehicle; hence, instead of earnestly attempting to block its way, which they may rightly deem impossible or fatal, they may assume the form of its passengers, may become on friendly terms with the driver and may tempt him to hand over the steering to them one by one. With such a role, we find poets who highlighted certain aspects of romanticism with a view to negating certain other more significant aspects of it. An illustrating instance is that of Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864) who put Nature and Art as the symbols of peace and satiation against all struggles, conflicts and sensibilities. On his 75th birthday, he composed the following lines, titled as the 'Dying Speech of an Old Philosopher' :

I strove with none for none was worth my strife:
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art:
I warm'd both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks; and I am ready to depart.²

The following remarks by David Daiches, comparing Landor's pseudo-romanticism to the real romanticism of Byron, Shelley and Keats, show the very spirit of the transition.

A poet of altogether larger stature, if still a minor poet to the eye of the critical historian, is Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864):
..... His short lyrics are altogether finer: here the control, the lapidary

touch, the quiet concentration, the suggestion of emotional distance, work brilliantly, and poems such as "Rose Aylmer," "Mother, I cannot mind my wheel," "Past ruined Ilion Helen lives," "On his Seventy-fifth birthday," are in sharp contrast to the emotional narcissism of Shelley and the posturing of Byron. He shared these poets' love of Italy and their Phil-Hellenism, but these sentiments in him were not the result of idealizing historical excitement or the fierce political liberalism; they were linked, rather, to humanist admiration for the achievement of Periclean Athens and a psychological curiosity about great men of the past. His *Hellenics* (1847) succeeds to a surprising degree in capturing the spirit of Greek mythology, and other poems on Greek themes show his characteristic coolness and restraint in handling subjects which Shelley handled with more obvious personal involvement and Keats with more imagistic luxuriance. (Daiches 932-3)

Landor's unique escapism of consolation in what exists is not typical or representative of the entire poetry of the age. The zeal for reformation and quest for perfection was very much alive, and religion and morality were vital subjects not only of philosophy, but also of literature. Matthew Arnold, for instance, still discussed religion not in ecclesiastical but rather in ethical and philosophical terms. Ethics was the favourite subject of the value-conscious, taboos-abiding Victorian public and in Arnold's view— more in his prose than in his poetry — they saw a ray of hope.

Arnold had spoken, in a well-known phrase, of religion as being morality touched by emotion Arnold had talked about God as 'the eternal stream of tendency, not ourselves, making for righteousness'; Arnold exposed clap-trap enough in the social and political life of Victorian England, and rendered great service in doing so. (James 77-9)

With their orientation in ethical philosophy rather than in aesthetics, and by applying the tools of intellect and logical discourse instead of the spontaneous flight of imagination, the Victorians in general stand in a marked antagonism to the great romantics. The romantic individuals found personal admirers and followers amongst the great Victorians, but none of them offered to absorb the spirit of the Romantic Movement. What we miss the most are the uncontrollability of imagination and the influence of animate Nature, the two most outstanding features shared by the romantics.

The connections between literature in the Romantic and Victorian ages are close. Victorian poets as different as Browning and Swinburne both derive from Shelley. Tennyson is a follower of Keats, Arnold is a follower of Wordsworth, and many other instances of such continuity and influence may be cited. If we are looking for a dividing point, however, we may find one in Carlyle's well-known advice to his contemporaries in 1834: "Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe." Carlyle's advice can be interpreted in two ways. The first is with reference to literary forms. By ceasing to use Byron as a model, a Victorian writer might avoid the wild excesses, the lack of controlled form of much Romantic writing. Byron himself foresaw that such a reformation was necessary. "We are all on a wrong track," he wrote. "Our successor will have to go back to the riding school and learn to ride the great horse." Some of Byron's Victorian successors ignored his prediction. The novels of the Bronte sisters, for example, are Byronic; *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* (both published in 1847) have affinities with the Gothic novels popular in Byron's day. The prose of Carlyle himself is Byronic. Yet several Victorian poets, Tennyson in particular, do fulfil Byron's prediction. The energy of Romantic literature persists, but it is channeled into a stricter concern for disciplined forms, "Nature still," as Alexander Pope recommended, "but Nature methodized." It is significant that the Romantic poet most influential in the Victorian age was Keats, the most form-conscious of the Romantics, rather than Byron. (Ford 737-38)

No different was the case of the Victorian reading public. The direct anti-materialism of Wordsworth and the escapism of Coleridge hit the essence of their interests, and hence they could not afford to appreciate them. In Byron, they found too staunch a rebel of the whole English social set-up. Shelley and Keats, however, they pretended to appreciate. But the superficiality of this pretension is exposed by their selective understanding of their perception and expression.

The Victorian reading public admired Keats and Shelley without really knowing much about them. Controversial facts about these two men, particularly the radicalism in their writings, were hushed up, and they gained the reputation of being sweet, sentimental poets who died young because they were too good for the world. (Williams 68)

The general feeling of the Victorians about the romantics was that of reverential awe. They disliked their infiniteness, yet could not escape their charming impact. This contrasting combination of conflicting attitudes moulded itself in an interesting unintelligible reaction.

The Victorians saw themselves not as themselves but as successors — often successors oppressed by a sense of guilt and enfeeblement — of the Romantics. The Romantic period had been dominated by an extraordinary set of poets. . . But these poets, so omnipresent to the Victorians metaphorically, were in the more important literal sense totally lost to them. By November 1827, when the eighteen-year-old Tennyson went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, Wordsworth and Coleridge were changed, both as poets and as people, while Blake, Byron, Shelley and Keats were all dead — and in three cases out of four with a cruel prematurity. Poetic generations which should have met failed to. (Hands 33)

It indicates that the confusion resulted because of the lack of a direct communication at the level of the creative genius. The Victorians knew the romantics as they were presented by the critics who, while ruthlessly interpreting them, deprived them of all the aesthetic richness.

Earnestness of mind and utilitarian attitude, as stated earlier, were the identity of the Victorian genius. The passage from Ford has been quoted in support of this contention because it substantially supplements the thesis by providing a solid base for distinguishing Thomas Hardy from the earnestarians and utilitarians who are supposed to reflect the spirit of the age. This attitude would never have been termed representative of the age if it had been restricted to the poets; it is an uncontroversial fact that in spite of the Victorian era being richly endowed with great poets, it is pre-dominantly an age of the novel. The novelists (with a few exceptions like the Bronte sisters in the earlier period and Hardy in the later) seem to have absorbed the creed of utilitarianism with the desired earnestness. Putting aside exceptional cases — of course including Hardy — the works of five representative novelists are briefly discussed here in order to highlight the true Victorianism in the novel. These include Charles Dickens (1812-70), Charles Reade (1814-84), Anthony Trollope (1815-82), George Eliot—Marian Evans (1819-80) and George Meredith (1828-1909).

Dickens was an artistic reformer or, more properly, a reformatory artist who combined a journalistic attitude with an aesthetic genius. He owes more to his personal experiences and observations than to any artist or school of thought. His origin from a lower middle class, his bitter experience of hard labour during childhood in blacking factory and his father's imprisonment for

debt, supplemented by his inherently sensitive nature, provided him the themes that suited the taste of the contemporary readers. Almost all his novels embody autobiographical elements which show the depth of sensitivities of childhood and their evolution through maturity. *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* are particularly endowed with the richest autobiographical experiences. Dickens concentrated on life in London, the heart of the world and the center of global power, civilization, science and arts.

Dickens's Victorianism lies in the fact that he does not allow his pathetic sensibilities to lead him to romanticism. His major characters are sentimental beings, but he deals with their aspirations, intentions, obligations, actions, achievements and failures in social, economic, institutional and materialistic terms. He cordially feels the flaws of the systems and institutions of the proud Victorians, but has the unique talent of hitting them hard through his obviously inoffensive weapons of irony and satire with their tremendously penetrating power, without the aggressive revolt of Byron and Shelley, as explained in detail in Chapter 3. The following passage from *Oliver Twist* brilliantly exposes the baselessness of the decisions in the courts of justice that are made so casually and carelessly in spite of their life-long impact on individuals' lives.

It was the critical moment of Oliver's fate. If the ink-stand had been where the old gentleman thought it was, he would have dipped his pen into it, and signed the indentures, and Oliver would have been straightaway hurried off. But as it chanced to be immediately under his nose, it followed as a matter of course, that he looked all over his desk for it, without finding it; and happening in the course of his research to look straight before him, his gaze encountered the pale and terrified face of Oliver Twist: who, despite all the admonitory looks and pinches of Bumble, was regarding the repulsive countenance of his future master, with a mingled expression of horror and fear, too palpable to be mistaken, even by a half blind magistrate.

The old gentleman stopped, laid down his pen ³

Charles Reade attempted to combine documentary description with dramatic scenes and dialogues, with a dominant objective of social enlightenment. The subtitle "A Matter of Fact Romance" given to two of his novels, *It is Never Too Late to Mend* (1856) and *Hard Cash* (1863) shows his inclination to be as realistic as possible within the frame of literature. His

melodramatic fiction as well as his novels of historical narration — like *The Cloister and the Hearth* — are meant directly or indirectly to expose a particular sin, evil or abuse through an emotional analysis.

The novels of Anthony Trollope show the ups and downs of religious politics and the importance of daily life incidences in determining the collective attitude of the Victorians. He wrote a series of novels that can be rightly called the parliamentary novels, including *Phineas Finn* (1869) and *The Prime Minister* (1876). He looked at his characters less as individuals in their own right and more as integrally dependent units of the religio-political national life. Therefore, in spite of giving a vivid picture of an important class of the contemporary England, he lacks the depth of understanding of human nature which, for instance, Dickens demonstrates.

Trollope was not a clerically minded man; the career of his dreams was a seat in the House of Commons. Yet his political novels suggest that for him the House was little more than the best of clubs and debating societies. His political novels are very pleasant, but their politics are purely formal. His Prime Minister is a Duke whose nobility (in both senses of the word) is more apparent than his statesmanship If Trollope has a lesson for the students of Victorian thought, it is that the period, in spite of the earnest exhortations of its protagonists, was after all, judged by modern standards, a fairly placed one. (Somervell 167-8)

George Eliot believed in the reformatory role of literature, and basically applied it to this objective without harming its essential artistic orientation. She was an ideally balanced artist, enriched with the best faculties of perception and creation, along with highly polished aesthetic sensibilities and a very intelligent application of imagination. Her zeal for reformation would have made her works didactic if not compensated for by the depth of her characters and her keen understanding of human nature. Her three most popular novels are *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*, written in three consecutive years respectively, i.e., 1858-1860. All of them adopt the same technique: elaboration of vice and virtue in a pastoral perspective with the latter having the elements of autobiography.

In all her fiction, George Eliot was concerned with moral problems of character, but she never abstracted her characters from their environment in order to illustrate their moral dilemmas. She was

familiar with and responsive to the varied social contexts in which nineteenth-century men and women could live; she saw the relationship between town and country, between landed families living in an ever-diminishing feudal atmosphere and neighbouring provincial towns where farmer and tradesman, banker and politician, jostled each other in a world of perpetually intersecting interests. She knew England, both town and country, metropolitan and provincial, agricultural, commercial, industrial, and professional, and she used her knowledge to make her characters move naturally in their natural occupations—something which Dickens was unable to do, for Dickens did not take the ordinary daily work of men seriously; lawyers, doctors, manufacturers, if they are seen at work at all in the novels of Dickens, are seen as engaged in quaint, preposterous, or outrageous occupations. (Daiches 1068)

George Meredith endows his characters with an unparalleled psychological depth. He applies psychology for tracing the motives of actions, exposing the instinctive and acquired aspects of the inner personality of the characters. His shortcoming is his failure to give an artistic touch and an aesthetic pathos to the events and characters in his novels. Human vanity, the exaggerated form of ego, is his favourite theme, very effectively discussed in *The Egotist* (1879). He also deals exclusively with the sensitivities of women in the society of men, but again with a dominance of psychological exposition. He makes an opportunity for irony in conflict inside the characters: conflicts between instinct and compulsions, between desire and moral awareness. The irony, however, lacks the life and pulse for its being subjected to the explicit theme of character analysis.

Meredith was perhaps the only man in the modern world who has almost had the high honour of rising out of the low estate of a Pantheist into the high estate of a Pagan. A Pagan is a person who can do what hardly any person for the last two thousand years could do: a person who can take Nature naturally. It is due to Meredith to say that no one outside a few of the great Greeks has ever taken Nature so naturally as he did. And it is also due to him to say that no one outside Colney Hatch ever took Nature so unnaturally as it was taken in what Hardy had the blasphemy to call *Wessex Tales*. This division between the two points of view is vital; because the turn of the nineteenth century was a very sharp one; by it we have reached the rapids in which we find ourselves today. (Chesterton 86)

The quoted passage, along with highlighting Meredith's tackling of Nature, projects Hardy's distinguishing qualities in this respect. Hardy's

peculiarities from the dominant Victorian trends are not restricted to dealing with Nature alone. This point, however, provides a solid base for the discussion in the succeeding chapter wherein it is attempted to prove that he lived in the great Victorian era without embracing or appreciating the causes of its greatness, and, instead, embodied the romantic spirit both in his personality and art.

Notes:

- ¹ *Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam in 30 Languages* (details in notes to Chapter 3) p.565.
- ² John Press. *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*. London: OUP, 1974. p.318.
- ³ *Oliver Twist*, Chapter 3.

Chapter 5

Evolution of Hardy's Sensibilities: A Romantic Heart in a Victorian Frame

Queer not only in personality and art, almost all the factual associations of Thomas Hardy are extra-ordinary. Born only after five months of his parents' marriage, something hard to justify, particularly in the conservative Victorian society, he would rejoice in the romantic orientation of their pre-nuptial relations, but would not acknowledge the negative implications of the same. There is a sharp contradiction between Hardy's solemnly romantic description of their first encounter and their consequent relations, and the public rumours and even the family conviction about the same.

In the poem 'A Church Romance' Hardy gives an ecclesiastical view of his parents' early encounter, Jemima admiring the energy of the violinist in the choir of the church gallery:

One strenuous viol's inspirer seemed to throw
A message from his string to her below,
Which said: 'I claim thee as my own forthright!'

Hardy family tradition tells an earthier story: that Thomas, on catching sight of the young servant-woman while working on a nearby building, promptly seduced her under the bushes by the neighbouring River Frome. (Hands 3)

Out of this uncommon union was born Thomas Hardy III (the father and the grandfather also bearing the same name) in a very unusual manner on June 2, 1840. "The doctor pronounced him dead but the nurse, feeling the flicker of life, exclaimed, 'Dead! Stop a minute; he's alive enough, sure!'" (Hurst 19). In this way, Hardy took the start of a life which kept on receiving and demonstrating quaint images and ideas till the very last moment. In his quite long span of life (he died at the age of 88), Hardy got education at schools, learnt from individuals and associations; observed, experienced and felt woes, delights, thrills and agonies as every human being should have done. The experiences in life by themselves do not have anything uncommon or thrilling in them; it is the pathos with which he received them that makes these ordinary

perceptions sublime.

The seven-room birthplace, the elegant home built by his grandfather, supplemented by the rich rural beauty of Dorset, was an ideal location for a contemplative child. His mother would tell him tales and legends ancient and modern not only from books, but also of herself that occupied a permanent place in his emotional and aesthetic consciousness:

By reason of her parents' bereavement and consequent poverty under the burden of a young family, Jemima had during girlhood and young womanhood some very stressful experiences of which she could never speak in her maturer years without pain, though she appears to have mollified her troubles by reading every book she could lay hands on. (*The Life*¹ 8)

She would often tell Hardy the stories of his own early childhood which he remembered for long and which played an enormous role in the formulation of his self-estimation in reference to the unpredictable scheme of things:

Of his infancy nothing has been handed down save the curious fact that on his mother's returning from out of doors one hot afternoon, to him asleep in his cradle, she found a large snake curled-up upon his breast, conformably asleep upon himself. It had crept into the house from the heath hard by, where there were many. (*The Life* 14-15)

Hardy's ancestors were primarily members of a choir of church musicians while his father had adopted the profession of a mason. Although Hardy seemed to appreciate both these attributes of his parenthood, yet he takes great pains to prove the ancient and established status of the families of both his parents. In the first chapter of *The Life of Thomas Hardy*¹, widely believed to be an autobiography, many pages have been dedicated to tracing the roots of his parents, with an unmistakable sense of pride even for their minor glories. He, however, rightly rejoices in the sweet memories of the rich Dorchester culture, to the innocent manifestations of which he has given a permanent life in his creation—both poetry and fiction.

As a genuine artist, Hardy received life in the form of impressions, and the country life of Dorset and that of Dorchester was never deficient in feeding his appetite for impressions. The country of Dorset was reproduced by him in

the ideal Wessex, domesticating it without doing any harm to its innocence and antiquity, while Dorchester as a town was vividly depicted in the form of Casterbridge which is considered as 'a place more Dorchester than Dorchester itself' (Hurst 42).

The foundation of the keen comprehension and apt conception of impressions on which this genuinely aesthetic reproduction was consequent must have been laid in the early childhood. The recollections of this phase of existence have been recorded in the poem 'Domicilium'², describing his birth place at Higher Bockhampton, written between 1857 and 1860.

The presentation of Higher Bockhampton is a symbolic representation of the rural glory of Dorset country, equally perceived by all observers in the first half of the nineteenth century, but in the second half containing a message only for those that were emotionally responsive and aesthetically alive. For Hardy, these recollections were not just the normal reminiscences of the fantastic childhood; they rather permanently endowed him with impressions and consciousness that would add pathos to the realization of the agonies of modernity.

Hardy's wonder at the glories of Nature, particularly in his appreciation of the Dorset country setting, though keen and cordial, differs from Wordsworth's: he does not form a belief in its redeeming power and sanctity in isolation; he rather receives it with its pathetic implications for human beings and its impact on their characters, environment and actions.

Irrespective of the environment in which Hardy opened his eyes, he himself was an alarmingly sensitive boy. He was so fragile by health and constitution that his parents kept him at home till he was eight when he was sent to the first school, the newly built National School in Upper Bockhampton. Hardy had many new experiences in this school, the most outstanding being his becoming the victim of an unusual, affectionate care of Julia Augusta Martin, wife of the local landlord, who was a part of the school management. Hardy received her affections sentimentally — unlike a child of his age — and 'his feeling for her was almost that of a lover' (Millgate 24). This emotional

attachment soon abruptly terminated, as in 1850 Hardy's mother decided to send him to Isaac Last's School in Dorchester, later on shifted to a more advanced Last's Academy. Mrs. Martin got enraged at this move and as a result of the migration, Hardy's father lost his estate business. Hardy himself experienced an emotional chaos and he often recalled the emotional intensity of his first encounter with Mrs. Martin at a Harvest Supper after leaving the school. Hardy's attachment to her was a thrilling experience, not without a slight attachment of unconscious sexual inclinations, manifesting his extraordinary sentimental attitude. He pathetically recalls the experience:

Under her dignity lay a tender heart, and having no children of her own she had grown passionately fond of Tommy almost from his infancy—he is said to have been an attractive little fellow at this time —whom she had been accustomed to take into her lap and kiss until he was quite a big child. He quite reciprocated her fondness. (*The Life* 19)

Mrs. Martin was not the only emotional experience that the hardly-boy Hardy had at the Bockhampton School. Although not fond of company at school, Hardy was aesthetically alive enough to develop emotional bonds,⁴

Hardy's dislike of being touched by his school fellows, went, so to speak, hand in hand, with an interest in female relationships, which began early and strong. A fellow pupil at the Bockhampton National School, Fanny Hurden, was probably Hardy's first experience of the wounded and wounding heart: Hardy never forgot one incident in their relationship, when, in play or anger, he burnt her hand badly by pushing her against the classroom stove. (*Hands* 4-5)

From the early childhood, Hardy was fond of reading and music. *The Life* records his 'being able to read almost before he could walk, and to tune the violin when of quite tender years' (*The Life* 15). The life in the academy was significant not only because it endowed Hardy with the earliest impressions outside home, but also because of its being the cause of Hardy's constant contact with the panoramic country as he daily walked the three miles from home and back. He was a good student of the academy, took special interest in mathematics and French language and won a prize in Latin. He, however, did not absorb himself in the social life of the institution and remained

contemplatively secluded;

He loved being alone, and he was already showing signs of the extreme sensitiveness which was to be a torment to him in later life. He has recorded that, like his own hero, Jude Fawley, he did not wish to grow up to be a man, or to possess things, but to remain as he was, in the same spot, and to know no more people than he already knew (about half a dozen) (*Life*, 16). He also saw things, before he was sixteen, which he remembered for the rest of his life; a shepherd's boy who starved to death, and two public hangings in Dorchester. One of them was of a woman who had killed her lover, and it is very likely that this was in his mind when he wrote *Tess*. (Williams 8)

While studying at the Academy, Hardy developed strange modes of attraction to ladies, a peculiar tendency which he, mostly implicitly, nourished not only in his person throughout his life but also covered it enormously in his novels and poems!

One day at this time Hardy, then a boy of fourteen, fell madly in love with a pretty girl who passed him on horseback near the South Walk, Dorchester, as he came out of school hard by, and for some unaccountable reason smiled at him. She was a total stranger. Next day he saw her with an old gentleman, probably her father. He wandered about miserably, looking for her through several days, and caught sight of her once again—this time riding with a young man. Then she disappeared forever. He told other boys in confidence, who sympathized, but could do nothing, though some ~~boarders~~ watched for her on his behalf. He was more than a week getting over this desperate attachment... Somewhat later, though it may as well be mentioned here among other such trivialities, he lost his heart for a few days to a young girl who had come from Windsor just after he had been reading Ainsworth's *Windsor Castle*. But she disappointed him on his finding that she took no interest in Herne the Hunter or Anne Boleyn. In this kind there was another young girl, a gamekeeper's pretty daughter, who won Hardy's boyish admiration because of her beautiful bay-red hair. But she despised him for being two or three years her junior, and married early. He celebrated her later on as 'Lizbie Browne'. Yet another attachment, somewhat later, which went deeper, was to a farmer's daughter named Louisa. (*The Life* 25-26)

In spite of being a brilliant student, Hardy left the School in 1856 for no obvious reason. So he could not get any significant education or any academic degree. A sense of non-accomplishment haunted him till the end of his life, and which he partially displayed in his favourite hero Jude's longing for admission in a college and his failure to do so in spite of enormous potentials. His parents

considered many prospects for his future career, and ultimately consented to an offer by a family friend, John Hicks, a Dorchester architect, to train Hardy in the profession of architecture. Here he met Horace Moule, the son of the Vicar of Fordington, who was his fellow apprentice and with whom he soon developed a keen friendship. Horace was a student of exceptional talents, and, in spite of being eight years older than Hardy, would discuss with him all topics, from philosophy and metaphysics to literature and architecture. 'Hardy's talks with Moule were as good as a course in philosophy' (Weber 27). This association had a lasting influence on Hardy: Moule is partially embodied in the character of Jude while his benevolent father is widely believed to be depicted in the role of old Mr. Clare in *Tess*.

A very significant acquaintance of this period was 'William Barnes — a university in himself — scholar, folklorist, linguist and poet' (Johnson, T. 15). Barnes's company influenced very markedly Hardy's understanding of the language of art— both fiction and poetry. 'Day by day Hardy taxed the older man with questions of all kinds; week by week he read Barnes's dialect poems as they appeared in the local paper' (Ibid.).

It was during his apprenticeship period at Hick's office that Hardy started composing poetry. His artistic instinct would not let him be at ease in pursuing the basically utilitarian career of an architect, and he frequently attempted to find a more suiting field. Interestingly, he also applied to be trained at Salisbury Cathedral as a clergyman but his request was denied for no other reason than his humble origin. This, along with a few other experiences of boyhood, led him to detest the concept of class superiority, an attitude frequently displayed in his novels.

Even from his childhood, he took great poets rather than the novelists or dramatists as his ideal heroes. This shows his aesthetic inclinations and appreciation of the flight of imagination on the one hand and his love for music and genuine poetry on the other. His rejoicing at having probably stayed at the inn visited by Shelley, while returning with his mother from her sister in Hertfordshire when he was just eight or nine years old reflects this attitude:

Their return from this visit was marked by an experience which became of interest in the light of after events. The Great Northern Railway to London was then only in process of construction, and it was necessary to go thither by coach from Hertfordshire in order to take the train at Waterloo Station for Dorchester. Mrs. Hardy had not been to London since she had lived there for some months twelve years earlier. The coaching-inn was the Gross-keys, St. John Street, Clerkenwell, and here mother and boy put up for the night. It was the inn at which Shelley and Mary Godwin had been accustomed to meet [sic] at week-ends not two-score years before, and was at this time unaltered from its state during the lovers' romantic experiences there As Mrs. Hardy and her little boy took a room rather high up the staircase for economy, and the poet had probably done so for the same reason, there is a possibility that it may have been the same as that occupied by our most marvelous lyricist. (*The Life* 17)

After this brief deviation from our discussion in terms of chronology — showing along with Hardy's love for Shelley his sense of significance of places — we return to our subject of discussion at Hick's office and Horace Moule's Company. Putting aside the minor details of his training period which, though enormously elaborated in his recollections and biographies, are not significant for our discussion (it must be kept in mind throughout this chapter that our objective is not to trace the life history of our subject in the order of his choice, that of his biographers, or even chronologically; it rather highlights the turns that led to the evolution of his sensibilities), we concentrate on the development of his taste for the classics, with Homer and Virgil as the chief ones. He recalls his earlier devotion to Shakespeare's tragedies, except *Hamlet* because the ghost did not stay till the end to add adventure and thrill to the story, as he had so earnestly desired (*The Life* 24). The study of the classics, along with his professional assignments of examining the Gothic, the Jacobean and the Georgian designs of the ancient churches in order to restore them to their original essence and identity, gave him a maturity of aesthetic and artistic comprehension. He recalls his life in the early sixties to have been a blend of three divergent threads — the scholarly, the professional and the rustic. In the early hours of the morning before dawn, he would read the classics, then he would walk to Dorchester across the panoramic country and engage in architectural occupation, while in the evening he would attend the rustic dances

and gatherings, not as a mere spectator but as a celebrated fiddler. He knew, without seeing, the speedy developments in London which had become the social, the political and, more primarily, the economic centre of the globe as the first and then the only industrialized city of the world. He, on the other hand, emerged daily from the almost secluded world of shepherds and farm-workers, absolutely unconscious of what was happening around them.

In April 1862, Hardy went to London in pursuit of 'the art and science of architecture on more advanced lines' (*The Life* 35). His journey to London was a lonely one, and his reception by this 'heart of the world' was not a cordial one. He had no friend or acquaintance except two letters of recommendation in his pocket, one of which, to John Norton of Old Bond Street — a well known architect — form Hicks, earned him an immediate part-time employment while in search of a better position. He sent Hardy to Mr. Arthur Blomfield, a well-known church designer and restorer, where Hardy began his career as assistant architect on 5th May, 1862. The office building was shared by the Alpine Club where Sir Leslie Stephen, a scholarly mountaineer and the father of the famous novelist Virginia Woolf, used to frequent. He later on helped Hardy a lot. In his capacity of the editor of *Cornhill Magazine*, he encouraged Hardy as a novelist, suggested to him many substantive improvements, and published *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) and *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876).

The first year of Hardy's stay in London was marked by hallucinations embodying memories of the past, and a renewed attachment to the events, the places and the persons involved therein. One of such memories was the lady of his first emotional attachment, Mrs. Julia Martin, then living in London. He called on her at Burton Street, but to Hardy — and also probably to the lady — the meeting proved to be disappointingly less cordial than expected.

This lengthy and significant phase of Hardy's stay in London produced many incidents and memories that he recalled later for sentimental rejuvenation. He developed long-lasting impressions not only about London but also about the city life in general, which he subjectively depicted in some of his novels.

Hardy lived in London from 1862 to 1867 and got to know every street and alley west of St Paul's like a born Londoner. He

made full use of the artistic and cultural facilities, and even when he had returned to live in Dorset came up to London for the reason with unflagging regularity. However, Hardy was a countryman all his life and felt an outsider in London. It seemed like a vast hotel and he realized early on that one 'must on no account be doing nothing in London'. In *The Life* Hardy had recorded his nightmarish experience while sleeping in London and feeling in close proximity to a monster with four million heads and eight million eyes. (Hurst 99)

In London, he made many attempts at writing poetry and fiction, but we need not focus on it since it is of no direct relevance to his emotional constitution, like many incidences and acquaintances that may be deemed quite important otherwise.

Back in Dorchester in 1867, Hardy began the novel *The Poor Man and the Lady*, the subtitle of which he frequently changed. In the first six months of the following year, he completed the manuscript. During this year he was haunted by an indescribable melancholy, the causes of which are still unknown but which can be witnessed on many pages of his diary of the said year.

On July 1, he writes down — in all likelihood after a time of mental depression over his work and prospects:

'Cures for despair:

'To read Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence".

- - - Stuart Mill's "Individuality" (in *Liberty*).

- - - Carlyle's "Jean Paul Richter".'

On July 17th he writes: 'Perhaps I can do a volume of poems consisting of the other side of common emotions'. What this means is not, quite clear. (*The Life* 58)

On 25th July of the same year, he sent the manuscript to Macmillan and devoted himself to helping his former master Hicks. On August 12, he received a letter from Alexander Macmillan, also accompanied by the critical comments of Mr. John Morley. The lengthy letter pointed out merits and demerits of Hardy's fiction that are not of direct relevance to this discussion except that the critical appreciation of his insight into characters and events shows that Hardy had become a keen and mature observer of human nature and sensibilities. Though politely, Mr. Macmillan rejected the manuscript, but as a token of encouragement, blessed Hardy with a letter of introduction to Mr. Frederick Chapman of Chapman and Hall. Chapman gave the manuscript to Meredith for

evaluation to whose presence Hardy was introduced for advice. He asked Hardy to abstain from exhausting his impressions too violently and attempt at a more calculated story with a better plot. He took the advice too literally, forsook the attempt, of which now nothing could be found, and started writing *Desperate Remedies* with the desired sensational plot.

Leaving aside Hardy the novelist and his literary adventurers, we return to Hardy the man and accompany him in his sentimental journey towards Hardy the lover.

Chance took a hand in Hardy's own life now. Illness, London's stuffy air and his own 'dislike for life as a science of climbing' sent him back to live at home and work for Hicks. From this decision to pursue a life of peace and quiet endeavour flowed his first passionate and tragic love affair, his second romance and marriage, his career as a novelist and much of his best poetry. While he was staying at his own home in the summer of 1867 he met Tryphena Sparks, the sixteen-year-old daughter of a family related to his own, and living in Puddletown, within easy walking distance of Upper Bockhampton. He fell in love with her — something which no one who has seen her portrait (taken when she was eighteen) will find in the least surprising — for she was, with her sole black hair, dark eyes and finely boned face, indubitably beautiful. She was intelligent too, passing out as a teacher, fifth in the lists, at Stockwell Training College in 1869. Hardy must have been starved of informed conversation after leaving London. No one could read the poems without realizing that Hardy's was an ardent nature, and so it seems was hers. Theirs was a passionate, tempestuous and, one suspects, precarious relationship. It appears highly probable that Tryphena bore Hardy a child in 1868 — a matter which was, of course, concealed, though the child was well cared for in later years. At all events, Tryphena returned Hardy's engagement ring in 1872, after five years — an agonizing blow for him. She died having married and had children, in 1890, and Hardy wrote a poem addressed to her in which he calls her 'my lost prize'. Her influence on his work is incalculable. Certainly she appears as Sue in *Jude*, several poems refer to her, and it would be foolish to ignore that Hardy's whole life was affected by this long love-affair in various ways. (Johnson 16-17)

Hardy's affair with Tryphena did not become a source of sweet memories alone; it also enormously embittered his not very pleasant matrimonial life. Generally, it is believed that his first wife expressed strong resentment over *Jude the Obscure* because in it Hardy advocated extra-marital sex; in reality, however, she was much enraged at his indirectly

rejoicing in his past affair with his cousin Tryphena. The absence of any reference to this romantic intimacy in the prime of his youth in *The Life* is an evidence that Hardy unsuccessfully struggled in his later life to forget the sweet memories of this romance in face of the agonies of *Dearest Emmie's* sentimental reaction whom he had started loving in the real sense after her death.

While still warmly involved with Tryphena, Hardy developed another passionate attachment, which ultimately led to his first marriage, and the agonies subsequent to it. On 11th February, 1870, he received a letter from Mr. G. R. Crickmay, an architect of Weymouth, who had purchased Mr. Hicks's practice after his death, asking Hardy if he could undertake taking the plan and particulars of a church in Cornwall, which Mr. Grickmay had to rebuild.

This was the church of St. Juliet, near Boscastle where Caddell Holder, a West Indian born son of a judge of Barbadoes was the rector. He lived with his wife and her younger sister Emma Lavinia Gifford.

The two girls were the daughters of a Plymouth solicitor and their uncle was a Canon of Worcester Cathedral, later to be made an archdeacon of London. Socially her family was much above Hardy's but they had had troubles recently—their father drank, and had gone bankrupt, and one of their brothers was insane. Emma must have been very lonely in this isolated place, for she loved excitement and an active social life. (Williams 15-16)

At the time of Hardy's arrival at the church, both he and Emma were twenty-nine, an age past the emotional eccentricities of early youth when impulsive attachments and abrupt attractions frequently take place. Furthermore, by that time Hardy was not only engaged to Tryphena but also passionately devoted to her, a reason generally considered responsible for the gap of four years between his first meeting Emma and their marriage. In face of the above-mentioned facts, it is interesting to trace all the stages^{of} the mature romance between Hardy and his future wife. In *The Life*, Hardy himself recommends the description of their acquaintance and attachment in 'Some Recollections' by Emma, found after her death in the form of the manuscript, to which half of the fifth chapter of the book has been dedicated. She describes the first meeting in

the following words:

'I must confess to a curiosity started by the coming event as to what the architect would be like; seeing few strangers we had a vivid interest in every one who came: a strange clergyman, an occasional locum-tenens, a school-inspector, a stray missionary, or school-lecturer—all were welcome, including this architect to put us to rights at once.

'It was a lovely Monday evening in March (1870), after a wild winter, that we were on the qui-vive for the stranger, who would have a tedious journey, his home being two counties off by the route necessitated changing trains many times, and waiting at stations, a sort of cross-jump journey like a chess knight's move. The only damp to our gladness was the sudden laying up of my brother-in-law by gout and he who was the chief person could not be present on the arrival of our guest. The dinner-cloth was laid; my sister had gone to her husband who required her constant attentions. At that very moment the front door bell rang, and the architect was ushered in. I had to receive him alone, and felt a curious uneasy embarrassment at receiving anyone, especially so necessary a person as the architect. I was immediately arrested by his familiar appearance, as if I had seen him in a dream—his slightly different accent, his soft voice; also I noticed a blue paper sticking out of his pocket. I was explaining who I was, as I saw that he took me for the parson's daughter or wife, when my sister appeared, to my great relief, and he went up to Mr. Holder's room with her.

'So I met my husband. I thought him much older than he was. He had a beard, and a rather shabby great coat, and had quite a business appearance. Afterwards he seemed younger, and by daylight especially so The blue paper proved to be the MS. of a poem, and not a plan of the church, he informed me, to my surprise.

'After this our first meeting there had to be many visits to the church, and these visits, of deep interest to both, merged in those of further acquaintance and affection, to end in marriage, but not till after four years.' (The Life 70-71)

Hardy stayed at St. Juliet for four days, and when he had finished his professional assignment, Emma showed him the countryside, particularly the famous Beeny Cliff which was later depicted in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* as the Cliff with no name. These visits proved a source of tremendous romantic inspiration and emotional rejuvenation in his later years. The scenes and the objects of their joint little ventures were depicted with superb pathos of which the following poem entitled 'Beeny Cliff' is a brilliant example:

O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea,
And the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free—
The woman whom I loved so, and who loyally loved me.

II

The pale mews plained below us, and the waves seemed far away
In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their careless babbling say,
As we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-sunned March day.

III

A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an irised rain,
And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull misfeatured stain,
And then the sun burst out again, and purples pinked the main.

IV

Still in all its chasmal beauty bulks old Beeny to the sky,
And shall she and I not go there once again now March is nigh.
And the sweet things said in that March say anew there by and by?

V

What if still in chasmal beauty looms that wild weird western shore,
The woman now is — elsewhere — whom the ambling pony bore,
And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will laugh there nevermore.
(Collected Poems 330)

The quoted poem bears the subtitle 'March 1870 — March 1913'. In March 1870, Hardy used to go to the cliff with Emma by his side, while in the March of 1913, he visited it alone with a great sense of loss for his missing beloved whose company he could never regain.

Emma's recollections do not describe the climax of the courting and the event of their marriage as it should have been done after such an elaborate prologue. The pathetic description of her matrimonial life with Hardy, and the thoroughly prevalent melancholy and submissive tone in the concluding passage indicates that she took it as a doom divinely destined for her. The much awaited event of their marriage is referred to hastily in a single sentence — 'The day we were married was a perfect September day — the 17th of the month — 1874, — not of brilliant sunshine, but wearing a soft sunny luminousness; just as it should be.' This attempt to escape the sad remembrance of the occasion is abruptly followed by the pathetic passage, reflecting the nature of the husband through the notions and convictions of the wife:

'I have had various experiences, interesting some, sad others, since that lovely day, but all showing that an Unseen Power of great benevolence directs my ways; I have some philosophy, and mysticism, and ardent belief in Christianity and the life beyond this present one, all which makes any existence curiously interesting. As

one watches happenings (and even if should occur unhappy happenings), outward circumstances are of less importance if Christ is our highest ideal. A strange unearthly brilliance shines around our path, penetrating and dispersing difficulties with its warmth and glow.' (*The Life* 73)

The recollections have been signed and dated January 4, 1911, almost a year before her death. Therefore, some critics assign its being void of the emotional involvement to its being written by a sober old lady long past her youth. But this contention is not valid in view of the romantic touch that the pre-marriage courting carries.

Meanwhile *Desperate Remedies*, rejected by Macmillan's, was accepted by Tinsley Brothers after Hardy contributed £75 towards the expenses, was published anonymously in 1871. This was a risky move by a young man who did not have enough money. Anyhow, it sold well and he got most of his contribution back. It seems that the public generally welcomed him, but the reviewers did not do so. A review in *The Spectator* violently condemned him for 'daring to suppose it possible that an unmarried lady owing an estate could have an illegitimate child' (*The Life* 84). Hardy was deeply hurt by such reviews but Horace Moule, a former friend, reviewed it favourably and asked Hardy not to be discouraged by such comments.

However, Hardy wanted his second novel, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, to be a different one. This much shorter book was kept mostly in line with the public taste. Macmillan's were not sure to publish it, and at one time Hardy was so disheartened that he decided to give up the attempt and throw the manuscript away. He even wrote to Emma that he was going to give up literature altogether. She, however, very prudently consoled him and asked him to keep on writing and not be disappointed with hurdles. She reminded him that literature was not a certain source of earning money and that they should have a more stable source of earning before getting married. *Under the Greenwood Tree* was published in 1872, and was comparatively kindly received by the public and the critics. It, however, did not sell that well to be a means of fulfilling Hardy's desire to be independent of architecture or any other profession for his livelihood.

Hardy's father-in-law did not accept him easily due to the comparatively humble background of his family. Even after his marriage with Emma, Mr. Gifford used to refer to him as 'a low-born churl who has perused to marry into my family' (Williams 19). This led to the evolution of Hardy's bitter realization of class-consciousness which he both laments and ridicules in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, where Stephen Smith is abruptly rejected by Mr. Swancourt after the discovery that he was the son of a country mason and not the member of some ancient nobility as he had formerly believed. This love story appeared anonymously in Tinsley's Magazine from September 1872 to July 1873. In May 1873, it appeared in book form bearing Hardy's name for the first time. It is a significant piece not only for its autobiographical strains, but also for its external connotations: it marked the end of Hardy's fumbling career as an architect; it also proved a prologue to his marriage with Emma in September 1874. It bears enormous affinities to his courting of Emma in all respects, persons, events and places, and, irrespective of Hardy's desperate attempts to prove it otherwise, his critics are almost unanimous in tracing it to his own life and person.

In September 1873, Horace Moule committed suicide by cutting his throat in his room at Queen's College. Moule was his ideal intellectual to whom he owed his literary career. Hardy pathetically remembered this incident as his friend had himself been a victim of the agony of sensibilities. In spite of being tremendously tormented by his own unfavourable circumstances due to which he had turned to strong drink, Moule consistently patronized Hardy. He wrote a very favourable review of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, following which Hardy went to see him at Cambridge and often recalled their climbing on to the roof of King's College chapel and looking out over the flat country towards Ely Cathedral. In the later years, it was Hardy's conviction that the University killed him, something that is depicted in Jude's academic frustration. Moule is also believed by many critics to be reflected in the character of Knight in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. Hardy also wrote many emotionally rich poems about him, and missed him throughout his life.

Like the beginning of their love, the beginning of the emotional crisis in the life of Emma and Thomas Hardy also cannot be traced to any particular event or occasion. It looks as if Emma was too plain and simplistic to satiate Hardy's aesthetic aspiration. They did have a very brief period of happiness after marriage, including the honeymoon tour of the continent and moving to their first real house, i.e., Riverside Villa, Dorchester, where their stay Hardy recollected as 'Our happiest time'. Soon after this, however, they started experiencing the tormenting consciousness of each other's shortcomings—Hardy aesthetically and Emma emotionally.

After an initial period of happiness, during which Emma loyally laboured to assist her writer-husband, the marriage was poisoned by a tragic 'division'. Emma responded to Hardy's coldness and neglect, his continuing fascination with other women, by turning more to religion. She persevered in attempts to publish her own work and sought attention through eccentric, even deluded, behaviour. She was outraged by her husband's later thought and writings and the gulf between them was widened still further by her conviction that she had married beneath her. (Hurst 68-9)

From 1878 to 1895 (the year *Jude* was published), Hardy seems to have undergone two adverse experiences. On the one hand his popularity as a novelist went on increasing with the publication of *The Trumpet-Major* (1880), *A Laodicean* (1881), *Two on a Tower* (1882), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891), and the warm welcome that these great works of art received from the public and from the critics not only made him a leading literary figure of the age, but also endowed him with solid financial assets due to which he got free of the need to adopt any utilitarian profession. On the other hand, in the same period he passed through an emotional agony that intensified with his attempt to suppress it. This is the age that formulated his two life-lasting convictions: the conviction of the power of doomed destiny and that of the need of liberty for happiness. Both these convictions are deeply rooted in his personal experience of marriage with Emma. When the initial charm of the thrilling experience was over and Hardy frequently met other ladies of fashion and charm, he was severely haunted by a sense of stupidity for having married

Emma. While reflecting back on his decision to do so, he could find no other reason except a mysterious hand of destiny in driving him on. Then, frustrated by the emotional restrictions that marriage naturally imposed, a sense of revolt against this fettering obligation developed in him, leading him on to advocate extra-matrimonial liberty in emotional and sexual contacts.

These complexes naturally demonstrated themselves in his behaviour and attitude towards Emma. She felt his coldness and negligence severely but did not react openly with the hope of winning his passion with devotion and loyalty, and in order to avoid any social defamation; there was, nonetheless, 'a profound dissatisfaction' on her part. (Millgate, 1996, 121).

Emma Hardy was now beginning to keep private and critical diaries recording her husband's behaviour. Her interest in women's rights was also beginning to grow: 'He understands only the women he invents—the others not at all', she told her friend Mary Haweis. The death of Hardy's father on 20 July, 1892 did little to help the Hardys' marital difficulties, removing a source of good humour that had helped keep the troubled relationship between the Bockhampton and Max Gate households from excessive deterioration.

The greatest test of the marriage came with Hardy's liaison with Florence Henniker, the daughter of the first Lord Houghton and wife of an army officer, whom he met for the first time in Dublin on 13 May 1893, and with whom an intimacy quickly developed. Hardy introduced her to the proper study of architecture, collaborated with her on a short story, 'The Spectre of the Real', and by August 1893 was probably to be found clasping her hand behind the high altar of Winchester Cathedral. (Hands 18-9)

This charming and elegant woman, with all her physical and intellectual attraction, must have deepened Hardy's sense of sorrow for having married such a plain woman as Emma. Hardy's emotional attachment to her turned into a lasting friendship and became the cause of many poems like 'A Broken Appointment' and 'A Thunderstorm in Town'. Hardy's letters to her were published later under the title *One Rare Fair Woman*.

It is surprising to note that Hardy wrote the best of his novels when under the severest emotional stress and while passing through the worst stage of his relations with Emma. It may seem natural in view of Shelley's contention, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought" as it is our basic

point to stress that Hardy, in personal life and sensibilities, had an affinity with Shelley. The Florence Henniker episode, however, supplemented probably by some others of the same sort, demonstrates that Hardy was not by the time of his bitterness with Emma void of emotional ecstasy.

The publication of *Jude*, Hardy's last and most controversial novel, in 1895, proved a turning point. The central theme of the novel was so unconventionally immoral, particularly in the value-conscious Victorian perspective, that Emma could not abide by her self-imposed patience any more. She felt insulted by her husband who seemed to advocate openly sex beyond marriage with such a pathetic touch as depicted between Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead. It also smelled of his earlier attachment to Tryphena Sparks, along with presenting marriage as merely a social tie, void of any emotional connotations both in the cases of Jude and Arabella, and Sue and Richard Phillotson. The novel, though Hardy's darkest self-creation, proved a masterpiece of literature and sold the best of all his works. This intensified Emma's frustration, and the suppressed differences between the couple were exposed in the form of outright hatred by Emma for her "unworthy" husband:

We do not know exactly when Hardy and Emma began to be miserable in their marriage, but it seems certain that things grew much worse by the time he wrote *Jude the Obscure*. Not unnaturally she felt that a book which criticized marriage would be interpreted as an insult to her; moreover, she was shocked by Hardy's cynicism about the church, for as she got older she had become more devout. Her reaction to that novel becomes unforgivable when it is discovered that she secretly sponsored the attempts to suppress it altogether. Part of the difference between them may be reflected in the novel itself. Hardy writes of Jude: "One thing troubled him more than any other; that Sue and himself had naturally travelled in opposite directions....events which had enlarged his own views of life, laws, customs and dogmas, had not operated the same manner on Sue's." (V1, iii).

Later in the novel this becomes a general observation: 'strange difference of sex, that time and circumstance, which enlarge the views of most men, narrow the views of women almost invariably' (VI, x). Hardy felt this had happened to Emma. She would apologize to visitors for his unorthodox opinions, explaining that he did not really mean what he said. And this was only one example of how she snubbed him in public; on another occasion she had said, 'Try to remember, Thomas Hardy, that you married a lady'. This was the root of the problem. She did feel that her family was much more distinguished than her husband's; it is said that she refused to visit

his parents; she liked entertaining and visiting London much more than he ever did. There was too a streak of madness in her family, and about this time Emma was growing more and more eccentric. Hardy's poem, 'The Interloper', shows that at times he feared she might really go mad. He continued to live with her; in a way he even continued to love her, but increasingly they lived like strangers. (Williams 36-7)

After *Jude*, Hardy decided to write no more fiction, and turned to composing poetry. He had always felt comfortable with poetry and had a longing to be remembered as a poet who also wrote some good novels. His first poetic collection, *Wessex Poems*, appeared in 1898. As a good sale of *Tess* and *Jude* had rendered him financially independent, he kept on nourishing his desire, and the subsequent collections of poems appeared at regular intervals. His poetry, however, is not the concern of this thesis and will be discussed only per its very limited relevance.

Hardy's abandoning fiction might have academically restored the domestic normalcy previously maintained. The desired tie of love, respect and mutual trust, however, could not be restored between them till, Emma's quite unexpected death in November 1912. Her death gave him an opportunity for the first time since their marriage to view her character objectively, without the consciousness of a haunting compulsion forced upon him by the blind hand of destiny. Immediately he began not only to miss her but also to idealize her. The poems that he composed in the succeeding years demonstrate his sense of loss.

The following lines titled "Something Tapped" composed in 1913 are an evidence of this attitude:

Something tapped on the pane of my room
When there was never a trace
Of wind or rain, and I saw in the gloom
My weary Beloved's face.

'O I am tired of waiting,' she said;
'Night, morn, noon, afternoon;
So cold it is in my lonely bed,
And I thought you would join me soon!'

I rose and neared the window-glass,
But vanished thence had she;

Only a pallid moth, alas,
Tapped at the pane for me.

(*Collected Poems* 436)

On 10 February, 1914, Hardy married Florence Emily Dugdale, the daughter of a headmaster, and herself a teacher and the writer of children's books. She was originally introduced to Hardy by Florence Henniker and had worked as his secretary and research assistant prior to Emma's death. After Emma's death, she had shifted to Max Gate, and helped Hardy in his domestic as well as artistic activities. By the time of their marriage, she was 35 while Hardy was 74. So naturally this bond would not have been preceded by the romantic courting or succeeded by the emotional strains, as was the case with Hardy's first marriage. The old Hardy did not have any great expectations or ideals attached to his second wife. She herself had been long familiar with the couple, had known the coldness between them, and had effectively projected herself to Emma as her admirer and helper. As such, she never had to face the disillusionment experienced earlier by Emma.

It might occur to a mean spirited biographer that weddings of this nature are significantly cheaper than the standard sort, and it may in any case seem all too typical of Hardy that in arranging the ceremony for 10 February he neatly avoided St Valentine's day. It seems only fair to note, however, that the 14th was a Saturday, when the desired degree of privacy would have been more difficult to obtain. Paramount in all the arrangements was Hardy's determination to avoid reporters and press photographers and the especially dreaded risk of a civic deputation at Dorchester station as he and his bride returned to Max Gate. One of the few surviving examples of Florence's family correspondence shows that those of her sisters who had been excluded from the wedding ceremony were also forbidden to send congratulatory telegrams—for security reasons, so to speak. Florence did, however, send a telegram of her own to one of them early the following morning. It read: 'Business completed all well Florence'. (Millgate, 1996, 123-4)

The queer Hardy, however, could not be pacified emotionally even by the company of a devoted wife like Florence, almost half his age, and kept on attempting emotional adventures. The most outstanding among these was his attachment to Gertrude Bugler, an extra-ordinarily attractive Dorset girl whom he first met in 1914 when she was playing the role of Marty South in *The*

Woodlanders. Later she acted the role of Eustacia Vye in 1920 and Tess in 1924. Hardy was highly impressed by her performance and her ability to absorb the spirit of his female characters. His interest in her took him to Woolbridge Manor, the original place where Hardy had set the honeymoon scene of Tess and Angel Clare, to watch a rehearsal of Tess with Gertrude as the heroine (Hurst 25). In December 1924, he inscribed an autographical note on her copy of Tess, acknowledging her as 'the impersonation of Tess'. Like almost every woman, Mrs. Hardy felt alarmed by these advances.

It wasn't until 1964, in Blunt's biography of Sydney Cockcreld, that she learnt of Hardy's supposed 'infatuation' with her—an interpretation of events which has gained widespread currency. Hardy's interest in her, however, was based on his perception of her artistry and remarkable understanding of some of his heroines. Gertrude Bugler, now living in Beaminster, proudly recalls her association with Hardy, his kindness and laughter, and vigorously rejects the portrait of him as a mean and gloomy man. After her last visit to Max Gate during Hardy's lifetime he told her, 'If anyone asks you if you knew Thomas Hardy, say, "yes, he was my friend"'. (Hurst 25-6)

Irrespective of the arguments proving Hardy's passion for Gertrude as innocuous and innocent, it did trouble Florence who took it more alarmingly and detected it earlier than Gertrude herself did. In spite of Hardy's being too old to do any harm, she fully realized his susceptibility to the enchantment of unattainable beauty and did all she could to safeguard their home and good names. Generally, she presented herself far more composed than Emma, as she continued her pre-marriage literary and academic pursuits with an overall encouragement and occasional help from Hardy. Yet she became desperate at Hardy's appreciation of Gertrude, and endeavoured to keep them as distant as possible.

Bewildered by Hardy's absorption of the Tess play and in Gertrude herself, despairing at the contrast between Gertrude's youthful beauty and her own plainness and charmlessness, terrified not just of ridicule and embarrassment but of actually losing her husband and everything that gave meaning to her life, Florence struck out wildly, bringing personally to bear on Gertrude a battery of accusations, threats, sisterly pleadings, and invocations of Hardy's health and reputation that the younger woman was simply powerless to resist. (Millgate, 1996, 128)

Notwithstanding these occasional undercurrents of restlessness, Florence Emily Hardy kept on living a socially prosperous life, and proved a great support in his last days. She might have been embarrassed by Hardy's frequent remembrance of Emma, his pathetic references to her and his idealizing their golden days of courting. She, however, did not show any explicit resentment because she knew that the poor lady of the past could do nothing to disturb her matrimonial peace.

So, in a comparatively tranquil and a library like domestic environment, the old Thomas Hardy, a celebrated novelist and poet, with honorary doctoral degrees from Cambridge and Oxford, lived the last years of his life till his death on the cold night of 11 January, 1928. Florence Hardy describes his last moments in the following words:

He had a better night, and in the morning of January 11 seemed so much stronger that one at least of those who watched beside him had confident hopes of his recovery, and an atmosphere of joy prevailed in the sick-room. An immense bunch of grapes arrived from London, sent by a friend, and this aroused in Hardy great interest. As a rule he disliked receiving gifts, but on this occasion he showed an almost child-like pleasure and insisted upon the grapes being held up for the inspection of the doctor, and whoever came into the room. He ate some, and said quite gaily, 'I'm going on with these'. Everything he had that day in the way of food or drink he seemed to appreciate keenly, though naturally he seemed to take but little. As it grew dusk, after a long musing silence, he asked his wife to repeat to him a verse from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, beginning

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser earth—

She took his copy of this work from his bedside and read to him:

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take!

He indicated that he wished no more to be read. In the evening he had a sharp heart attack of a kind he had never had before. The doctor was summoned and came quickly, joining Mrs. Hardy at the bedside. Hardy remained conscious until a few minutes before the end. Shortly after nine he died. (*The Life* 446)

It is a notable point that Hardy desired on his death bed *Omar Khayyam* to be read out who is the herald of the oriental version of romanticism. The quatrain referred to shows that he died with the agony of uncertainty in futurity taken to the very soul, in spite of his obviously peaceful death.

Hardy's burial was as quaint as the associations of his birth. He passed into his grave in a way in which no one would ever have. He 'would have appreciated the sombre ironies of his double burial' (Hurst 26): his ashes at the much celebrated Westminster Abbey and his heart in his first wife's grave in his ancestral graveyard. *The Life* (Appendix 1) records the historical incident:

On the morning of Thursday, January 12, the Dean of Westminster readily gave his consent to a proposal that Hardy should be buried in Westminster Abbey; and news of this proposal and its acceptance was sent to Max Gate. There it was well known that Hardy's own wish was to be buried at Stinsford, amid the graves of his ancestors and his first wife. After much consideration a compromise was found between this definite personal wish and the nation's claim to the ashes of the great poet. On Friday, January 13, his heart was taken out of his body and placed by itself in a casket.....

At two o'clock on Monday, January 16, there were three services in three different churches. In Westminster Abbey the poet's wife and sister were the chief mourners....A spadeful of Dorset earth, sent by a Dorset farm labourer, Mr. Christopher Corbin, was sprinkled on the casket. In spite of the cold and wet the street about the Abbey were full of people who had been unable to obtain admission to the service, but came as near as they might to taking part in it. At the same hour at Stinsford, where Hardy was baptized, and where as boy and man he had often worshipped, his brother, Mr. Henry Hardy, was the chief mourner, while, in the presence of a rural population, the heart of this lover of rural Wessex was buried in the grave of his first wife among the Hardy tombs under the great yew-tree in the corner of the churchyard. And in Dorchester all business was suspended for an hour, while at St. Peter's church the Mayor and many other dignitaries and societies attended a memorial service in which the whole neighbourhood joined. (*The Life* 447-8)

Hence, the romantic heart was taken out of the Victorian frame — symbolic of the end of the anachronistic union of the two.

Notes:

- ¹ As the most important and authentic source on Hardy's life, widely believed by critics to be auto-biographical, *The Life of Thomas Hardy* by F.E Hardy, Hardy's second wife, is so frequently quoted that it looks more appropriate to refer to it throughout this text as *The Life*, its popular title, than through the name of the author in the traditional manner. For finding out the publication data, it has been properly listed in the works cited.
- ² "Domicilium" in *Hardy: The Complete Poems* (listed).
- ³ "The verses entitled 'A Man was drawing near to Me' obviously relate to this arrival. But in them Hardy assumes that she was not thinking about his coming, though from this diary one gathers that she was; which seems to show that when writing them he had either not read her reminiscence of the evening as printed above, or had forgotten it." (*The Life*, 70)

Chapter 6

Romanticism in Hardy's Novels: Themes and Characters

Tragically enough, it is generally attempted to sum up the diverse dimensions of Hardy's complex personality by assigning to his genius the stereotypical, philosophical term "pessimist". He is supposed to have chanced to see the darkest face of life and, consequently, to have depicted his rustic characters in the light of his own exaggeratedly gloomy perception of life. In fact, Hardy was neither that biased in perception nor that bitter in absorption of life. He was not oblivious of its charms and merry melodies. But, as highlighted in the preceding chapter, he felt rather than sensed life, and his comprehension of life and the living beings was founded on emotional pathos. Though occasionally he shared the jollity of others and even rejoiced in his own moments of joy (Hurst 81-2), yet the emotional pathos did not let him to receive these impulses in segregation from the overall scheme of life. In feeling and perceiving, he was passive and helpless; in reproducing what was received — perception or conception — he exercised the liberty of accommodating his own convictions and fantasies. As such, his themes and characters, created according to his own sweet will, in spite of the artistic compulsion of essential adherence to the real life, are more representative of his real being than his own intentions and actions — merely temporal responses to the destined flow of events.

The thematic richness of Hardy's novels does not lie in innovation. He has neither explored in life nor invented in fiction something unprecedented. His claim to ingenuity can be justified by his uniqueness in tackling the oft-discussed issues, and by the originality in his attitude towards events and actors. Although he depicts the average man with all his mundane concerns on a rural Victorian stage, yet he speaks for the human heart as deeply as Shakespeare did and as pathetically as Shelley and Keats did.

Like Omar Khayyam, his most favourite sage, or even like Shelley and Keats, Hardy pleads the cause of the heart, collectively suppressed by the devices of destiny, the taboos of the society and the whims of individuals. He is severely haunted by the awareness that the scheme of being is not in accordance with 'the heart's desire' and the world is framed in a way that is more congenial for the utilitarian faculties of the mind and the body rather than for a living soul and a sensitive heart. A rational and materialistic approach to life deprives one of the sense of humanity, and renders one unable to share the feelings of other fellow-beings. For sharing each other's life in the real sense and establishing the essential human understanding, the tool of the heart is to be activated.

Hardy has utilized to the maximum the extremely capacious medium of the novel to accommodate these romantic ideals. He has fully exploited his creative liberty to endow the fictional characters — protagonists especially — with the pathos and sensibilities essential for romantic undertakings.

Hardy would never assign greatness to a character — man or woman — until he or she follows the dictates of the heart or, at least, like Michael Henchard's reunion with his wife in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, of the conscience. Bathsheba Everdene in *Far From the Madding Crowd* prefers Troy to the socially elevated and financially stable William Boldwood because Troy has fascinated her romantic instinct; Boldwood's shooting of Troy is a great heroic act of a broken-hearted impulsive man with whom not only Hardy obviously seems sympathizing himself but also leads his reader in the same direction. 'Hardy could not portray love without its involuntariness, which is its danger and likely disaster' (Bayley 152). Troy, in turn, shines bright, as he willingly loses Bathsheba's love and home for a gypsy-like wandering life because of his sentimental reaction to the death of his former sweetheart — Fanny Robin. He suffers a lot because he once denies following his impulse and owning Fanny, when accompanied by Bathsheba he encounters her.

'Please, sir, do you know at what time Casterbridge Union-house closes at night?'

The woman said these words to Troy over his shoulder. Troy started visibly at the sound of the voice; yet he seemed to recover presence of mind sufficient to prevent himself from giving way to his

impulse to suddenly turn and face her. He said slowly— 'I don't know.' (FMC 264)

Fanny dies helplessly and unattended, and Hardy is very pleased to present Troy as governed only by his genuine passion, uncorrupted by social or domestic concerns, when he does not hesitate to display his passion for Fanny with full intensity in the presence of his wife.

What Troy did was to sink upon his knees with an indefinable union of remorse and reverence upon his face, and, bending over Fanny Robin, gently kissed her, as one would kiss an infant asleep to avoid awaking it.

At the sight and sound of that, to her, unendurable act, Bathsheba sprang towards him. . . . She flung her arms round Troy's neck, exclaiming wildly from the deepest deep of her heart—

'Don't—don't kiss them! O, Frank, I can't bear it—I can't! I love you better than she did. Kiss me too, Frank—kiss me! You will, Frank, kiss me too!'

There was something so abnormal and startling in the childlike pain and simplicity of this appeal from a woman of Bathsheba's calibre and independence that Troy, loosening her tightly clasped arms from his neck, looked at her in bewilderment. 'I will not kiss you!' he said, pushing her away. Had the wife now but gone no further. Yet, perhaps, under the harrowing circumstances, to speak out was the one wrong act which can be better understood, if not forgiven in her, than the right and politic one, her rival being now but a corpse. All the feelings she had been betrayed into showing she drew back to herself again by a strenuous effort of self-command.

'What have you to say as your reason?' she asked, her bitter voice being strangely low — quite that of another woman now.

'I have to say that I have been a bad, black-hearted man,' he answered.

'And that this woman is your victim; and I not less than she.'

'Ah! Don't taunt me, madam. This woman is more to me, dead as she is, than ever you were, or are, or can be. If Satan had not tempted me with that face of yours, and those cursed conquests, I should have married her. I never had another thought till you came in my way. Would to God that I had; if it is all too late! I deserve to live in torment for this!' He turned to Fanny then.

'But never mind, darling,' he said; 'in the sight of Heaven you are my very, very wife!'

'If she's — that, — what — am I?' she added, as a continuation of the same cry and sobbing pitifully: and the rarity with her of such abandonment only made the condition more dire.

'You are nothing to me — nothing,' said Troy heartlessly. 'A ceremony before a priest doesn't make a marriage. I am not normally yours.' (FMC 300-1)

too long a quote

This commitment to the cause of the heart is what makes Frank Troy a real tragic hero, pathetically more enriched and sentimentally more enchanting than the more elaborated characters like Gabriel Oak and William Boldwood.

Likewise, in *The Return of the Native*, Eustacia Vye and Damon Wildeve, being devoted to the call of the impulsive heart, are far more dominant and thoroughly vital than the calm and cautious Clym and Thomasin Yeobright. All crises and catastrophes occur because, disregarding the passionate call of the heart, a child of storm is forced to share a life of calm in both cases of matrimony.

In *A Pair of Blue Eyes* Elfride Swancourt suffers because she does not let reason govern her and is reigned by her impulse, which is innocently inconsistent. She elopes with Stephen Smith against all the cautions of reason when she finds her father unwilling to accept him, then comes back unmarried only because she feels like it. Subsequently, she betrays Smith for Henry Knight because the later has attracted her heart.

Tess is the best demonstration of Hardy's conviction that 'A heroine who is not fated cannot be one with any real substance' (Bayley 152). She has thoroughly been an interesting character, but attains her real sublimity and pathos when she undergoes the brief ecstasy with Angel after killing Alec at the urge of her tormented heart. In this phase of real honeymoon, she achieves liberation from all concerns, fears and cares, and is governed by a romantic impulse, willingly ready to embrace even death.

Some of Hardy's characters — Michael Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, for instance — are doomed because they follow impulse; while certain others — like Sue Bridehead and Jude Fawley in *Jude the Obscure*, or Grace Melbury and Giles Winterborne in *The Woodlanders* — face the tragic end because they let the social and material concerns, or conscience at times, intervene in the course of their essentially sentimental journeys.

One thing, however, is common among them all without which no character can be a valid claimant to heroic sublimity as per Hardy's criteria: the inherent inclination to follow the dictates of the heart. Whether they remain

faithful to their essence by following their passions or whether they suppress their cordial urges, they are bound to meet the catastrophic compulsions, as the scheme of being is essentially adverse to them. But by remaining devoted to the cause of the heart, they experience an emotional ecstasy and a romantic fulfillment before which the optimum disaster shrinks to nothingness. This attitude regarding the criteria of a tragic hero — essentially romantic — justifies the comment that 'Hardy's novels seem at times to be trying to conform to Aristotle's definition of tragedy' (Butler, 1978b, 40).

Escapism is a common feature of Hardy's major characters. They, as already stated, feel dissatisfied with the world they are forced to live in, and desire to leave it behind with all its harsh realities, 'the fever and the fret' in Keats's words. Jude's attempt to commit suicide, Angel's engagements in the distant lands, Clym's abandonment for missionary zeal, Henchard's farewell to Casterbridge, and even Frank Troy's leaving Bathsheba's house are demonstrations of the same escapist attitude. All of them — men or women — are haunted by the realization that, to use Shakespeare's phrases, 'the time is out of joint' and any attempt to 'set it right'¹ is bound to be futile.

Unlike the Victorian contemporaries and like the Romantics, Hardy does not most often project human beings as exploiting and suppressing others, and the entire humanity is depicted as absolutely helpless in the cruel hands of destiny. As such, Hardy is more humane than, say, Dickens who would satirize certain characters for being cruel, exploiting others and adding to the bulk of poor humanity's miseries. Hardy has a comprehensive sympathy for humanity in its entirety, and finds it difficult to laugh at anything. Dickens, like a few others of the age, is generally considered to be a greater master of looking into the depths of society and the collective aspects of life. But Hardy is a keener observer of the human heart and a better explorer of the individual's inner self than any of his contemporaries. He does not look at his characters and the tragic drama in which they are engaged as an impersonal outsider; he understands and appreciates their inner selves, establishes an emotional bond with them and perceives their very vital impulses. It is here that he is more validly romantic

than any other Victorian poet or novelist. This factor of emotional involvement adds pathos to his awareness of agonies in the sorry scheme of being. Hardy disqualifies a *L'Allegro*-type character for the status of hero in the tragic drama of life, and appreciates those who think that, in Keats's words, 'Where but to think is to be full of sorrow/ And leaden-eyed despairs'. He does not assign such a status to even someone of a sober mood who has a light and optimistic view of life. This can be seen in the following conversation between Henchard and Farfrae:

'In the nature of things, Farfrae, it is almost impossible that a man of my sorts should have the good fortune to tide through twenty years o' life without making more blunders than one. It has been my custom for many years to run across to Jersey in the way of business, particularly in potato and root season. I do a large trade wi' them in that line. Well, one autumn when stopping there I fell quite ill, and in my illness I sank into one of those gloomy fits I sometimes suffer from, on account o' the loneliness of my domestic life, when the world seems to have the blackness of hell, and, like Job, I would curse the day that gave me birth.'

'Ah, no, I never feel like it,' said Farfrae.

'Then pray to God that you never may, young man.....'

(MC 148-9)

It is not the explicit intensity of the events to the public eye that defines their tragic nature; it is rather their impact on individual sensibilities that make them sublime in intensity. The marriage of a cousin of a married man to his benevolent teacher is obviously not a matter of grave concern. But Jude receives it with an indescribable agony:

He fell asleep for a short while, 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. He thought of that previous abyss into which he had fallen before leaving this part of the country; the deepest deep he had supposed it then; but it was not so deep as this. That had been the breaking of the outer bulwarks of his; this was of his second line. (JO 147)

hope

As referred to in the Chapter 3 of this thesis, longing for the unattainable is an outstanding aspect of the romantic aesthetics. Hardy has absorbed this tendency to the fullest in his fiction. His major characters, both men and women, get more passionately attached to their objects of love when they find it

improbable or impossible to have them through the proper channel. Hardy is of the conviction that fear of loss and gloomy prospects of possession add pathos to attachment. 'Absence and distance only inflame desire, so that Troy's visit to Bath helps to precipitate Bathsheba into marriage, Fanny's death serves to revive Troy's love for her, and Boldwood seeks to turn absence into possession' (Gregor 52). To be satiated in love is to lose its very essence, and no sublimity is retained in passion without alarming apprehensions overshadowing it. Both Gabriel Oak and William Boldwood see Bathsheba Everdene with more passionate colours when they find her nearly owned by Troy. The passion of Eustacia Vye and Damon Wildevie is enhanced enormously when both of them get married to other persons. Giles Winterborne's silent but sublime love gets pathos and momentum when Grace Melbury slips away into the reluctant hands of Edred Fitzpiers, who, in turn, starts liking her in the real sense only when he feels that her severe love for him has turned into a sort of detestation. Tess experiences a quaint thrill in Clare's wooing her as she fears that the disclosure of her not being chaste might lead to an end to all the prospects of pleasure. Angel Clare, leaving her in an absolutely hopeless state when she honestly tells him the truth, feels the ecstasy of reunion when the timid and innocently fearful girl assumes the mysterious form of a murderer doomed to be hanged, herself also realizing that the moments of fulfillment are unlikely to last long. While hiding in the empty mansion to escape being apprehended, the union of the lovers is blessed with an unmatched romantic touch.

They were indisposed to stir abroad, and the day passed, and the night following, and the next, and next; till almost without their being aware, five days had slipped by in absolute seclusion, not a sight or sound of a human being disturbing their peacefulness, such as it was. The changes of the weathers were their only events, the birds of the New Forest their only company. By tacit consent they hardly once spoke of any incident of the past subsequent to their wedding day. The gloomy intervening time seemed to sink into chaos, over which the present and prior times closed as if it never had been. Whenever he suggested that they should leave their shelter, and go forwards towards Southampton or London, she showed a strange unwillingness to move.

'Why should we put an end to all that's sweet and lovely!' she deprecated. 'What must come will come.' And, looking through the shutter-chink: 'All is trouble outside there; inside here content.'

He peeped out also. It was quite true; within was affection,

union, error forgiven: outside was the inexorable.

'And—and,' she said, pressing her cheek against his; 'I fear that what you think of me now may not last. I do not wish to outlive your present feeling for me. I would rather not. I would rather be dead and buried when the time comes for you to despise me, so that it may never be known to me that you despised me.' (TDU 497-8)

Michael Henchard, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, initially feels pity for Lucetta, having come to Casterbridge to marry her with the full devotion of a woman in love. He does not feel for her the warmth of a lover, and prepares himself to marry her just out of benevolence to compensate for the wrong done to her during their former intimacy. But when he feels that she is also about to lose her passionate anxiety, his attitude abruptly changes:

All this time Henchard's smouldering sentiments towards Lucetta had been fanned into higher and higher inflammation by the circumstances of the case. He was discovering that the young woman for whom he once felt a pitying warmth which had been almost chilled out of him by reflection, was, when now qualified with a slight inaccessibility and a more matured beauty, the very being to make him satisfied with life. Day after day proved to him, by her silence, that it was no use to think of bringing her round by holding aloof; so he gave in, and called upon her again, Elizabeth-Jane being absent. (MC 246-7)

In *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, Henry Knight does not respond to Elfrida's passionate adoration, supplemented even by the realization that she has saved his life not only by endangering her own, but also putting herself to shame by making a rope of her undergarments in order to pull him up. He becomes desperate in love only when he knows of Stephen Smith's affectionate commitment to win her love. She becomes a really idealized symbol of beauty, love and virtue for them both when she dies as the wife of Lord Luxellian, and is permanently out of the reach of either.

At this point it looks both natural and convenient to divert the discussion to Hardy's comprehension of matrimony, love and sex. Hardy is not as staunchly and bitterly opposed to social customs, moral norms, values, institutions and even taboos as, for instance, Byron and Shelley are. Nor does he ever advocate or even appreciate a sweeping and generalized rebellion against

them. What he despises are the emotional fetters that restrict the romantic and aesthetic liberty of individuals, which some of these possess. Unfortunately, the contract of marriage, according to him, is one of them. He is implicitly baffled by the question why an individual, particularly the one with emotional sensibilities, shall be bound to abide for ever — at least if he desires peace and honour — by a bond in entering which he is so hopelessly the victim of destiny. This consciousness is deeply rooted in his personal experiences, sharpened by the aesthetic aspirations, and the inherent urge to have a variety of basically emotional—though essentially physical—attachments. In this perspective he looks upon the institution of marriage as a tyranny and makes it the chief target of his campaign for the comprehensive liberty of the instinct. He thinks of marriage as the fettering of instinct that naturally leads to the sense of an agony of helplessness for sensitive souls.

'He (Hardy) got a vivid, if not altogether sympathetic, account of Shelley's social radicalism, idealism and intense emotional life; with his own articulation of similar views in *Jude* several decades away, he read Shelley's famous statement on love and marriage: 'Love withers under constraint; its very essence is liberty. . . . A husband and wife ought to continue united so long as they love each other.'² (Bjork 105)

It is to the sensitive souls that destiny appears mostly revengeful. It neither makes them timely aware of the significance of marriage, nor later on lets them be at ease like the multitudes of couples. Variety of motives, looking later quite petty — like moral obligations, social necessity, domestic completeness or a temporal flow of passion — tempt them into unconscious decisions. Soon after they are past redemption, they start realizing, with full intensity, the gravity of the act and its consequences. Jude, after experiencing the torment of his union with Arabella, feels what Sue is unable even to perceive. When in her letter to him she quite light-heartedly declares that she is going to marry Mr. Phillotson, he is unable to absorb the shock.

Jude staggered under the news; could eat no breakfast; and kept on drinking tea because his mouth was so dry. Then presently he went back to his work and laughed the unusual bitter laugh of a man so confronted. Everything seemed turning to satire. And yet, what could the poor girl do? he asked himself: and felt worst than shedding tears. 'O Sussana Florence Mary!' he said as he worked,

'You don't know what marriage means!' (JO 203)

We see later on that Jude was correct that Sue did not know, a fact verified by her frustration after knowing the reality of things when the act was done and things were past redemption. It is manifest in her forced attempt to justify her act and avoid emotional exposure in her conversation with Jude. When Jude inquires about her matrimonial life, Sue starts responding diplomatically, with a sense of moral obligation. She, however, cannot maintain the same till the end of her argument and pathetically exposes her inner dissatisfaction.

Sue was silent. '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 might say, even proclaim upon the housetops, that it hurts or grieves him or her?' (JO 251-2)

In almost all of Hardy's novels marriages take place, sometimes as unelaborated secondary phenomena, as Elfride's with Lord Luxellian. Scarcely, if ever, marriage leads even to peace of mind, let aside emotional satisfaction. Hardy seems advocating that man's — and of course woman's as well — faculty of aesthetic perception should be kept unchained; marriage, he feels, necessarily enchains it as it deprives him of any meaningful prospects. He, unlike Shelley, could not attempt to break the chains himself, but endows his characters with the desire and even the moves to venture it.

Regarding love and marriage, Hardy seems struggling between two uncompromising currents, equally valid and convincing. Should the attachment be given a sublime spiritual status that must be retained for its own sake as a token of devotion even after the decline of the physical charms that might have initiated it; or should it be taken as a physical one, based on animal passion and attraction in the flesh, and subject to decay with the slackening of that attraction? As a man of conscience, he is bent upon supporting the former

contention but also finds himself helpless to be swayed by the latter. He frequently, though implicitly, attempts a compromise between the two, but fails to do so. 'Hardy is always interested in passionate love, and he juggles increasingly openly with the trio love-sex-marriage' (Butler, 1990, 132). He finds a practical escape from the dilemma in his distinctive view of beauty. The question of love is naturally dependent on the question of beauty. Does beauty lie in the flesh, or somewhere else visible to the inner eye? Hardy has raised this issue in most of his novels, and looks comparatively at ease while tackling it. He seems to be of the following conviction: beauty may attain an extra-physical supremacy; but it must, in the first phase, be, at least partially, visible in the physique. One may explore the inner charms by closer contact, but how can it be done if the obvious charms do not attract and lead to a desire to come closer. As a sensual aesthete, Hardy is more akin to Keats than any other romantic poet. He peeps into the depths of beings but not disregarding what they at the surface present. Though certain features of attraction are assigned to male heroes as well, a female character is not commended for appreciation until having commendable physical charms. Every beauty — even Arabella's — must first attract senses. In the second phase, it may provide emotional satisfaction — though not necessarily a satiated conscience — if it is a true one, and just frustration and regret if a false one.

Hardy does not have any dogmatic notions in defining beauty. It may have diverse or even adverse forms as long as it is genuine. This diversity is evident in the peculiar charms attributed to his various heroines. Tess Durbeyfield's beauty, for instance, is partially described as thus:

She had an attribute which amounted to a disadvantage just now; and it was this that caused Alec d'Urberville's eyes to rivet themselves upon her. It was a luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was. She had inherited the feature from her mother without the quality it denoted. (TDU 47-8)

Tess's 'fullness of aspect' is supplemented by the unique cut of her soft lips and the largeness of her deep eyes along with certain other features that render her 'a pure woman' — the subtitle of the novel. 'Tess is pure because she

is a child of nature, compounded of the milk, butter and honey on which she lives' (Butler, 1990, 105). All these glories of appearance and style, however, would never have made her, in the words of Irving Howe, 'that rare creature in literature, goodness made interesting' (Hurst 155), if she had not got the romantic sensibilities on which her character as well as the entire narrative is founded.

Sue Bridehead, on the other hand, is a woman of manly habits and tendencies. She is a dark-haired, nervous woman of not very extra-ordinary aspect; her novelty in thinking, liberty in behaviour, confidence in interaction and earnestness, blended with her emotional vulnerability, endows her with a peculiar charm.

She is described almost as vividly as Tess (indeed most of Hardy's heroines are 'seen' in a way that is hardly true of men). We even see her (through the eyes of her old aunt) as a child— a pert little thing with tight-strained nerves, often getting smacked for impertinence, celebrated for her tragic delivery of The Raven at the vicar's penny-reading, and given to sliding with the boys on the frozen pond. (Of Tess's childhood we were only told how she used to walk home from school on long stinky legs with little ladder-like holes at the knees, her hair hanging like pot-hooks and her waist embraced by the arms of two other little girls.) Now Sue has liquid untranslatable eyes, not large like Tess's, but full of mystery as well as of keenness and tenderness; she is dark in colouring, light and slight in figure, mobile and living and all nervous motion; she is "significantly light in touch"— indeed, when we get to know her better she is Ariel, all spirit and fire, incapable of being caught, held, pinned down. Her nervous constitution is more than once indicated, and towards the end she becomes "a mere cluster of nerves".

Can we call Sue 'an intellectual woman?' Certainly she is, with Ethelberta and Elizabeth-Jane, on the one side of the line that separates the intellectual from the non-intellectual types, just as surely as Tess, Eustacia, and Elfrida are on the other. But she is no hard-boiled logician, no self-regulating clockwork, no frigid unemotional robot. She is quiveringly sensitive, she is often perverse; she is alive with emotions and acts on lightening impulses.... She describes herself as "a woman tossed about, with aberrant passions and unaccountable antipathies". But she thinks as well as feels; she is capable of estimating right and wrong by argument; she could have met Clare and Henry Knight on their own ground. She is the less woman for it; argument is man's prerogative (or penalty); and we know what tragic part her reasoning plays in her destiny. . . Sue is no unexpressive she, as Tess and Elfrida.... Her intellect combines with her under-sexed nature to give her that dangerous habit of playing with her emotions — Hardy calls her "an epicure in emotion". Yet her intellectuality does not save her from

falling, at the most critical moment of her life, a victim to the most unintellectual of human frailties—jealousy. (Duffin 224-5)

Though the above quoted critic has assigned certain attributes like boldness, confidence and freedom of thought and action to Sue, qualities which are wanting in Tess, yet one must keep in mind the fact that Sue has never been confronted with the circumstances that deprived Tess of all these. Destiny, of course, tortured Sue for a sin that she knew; none of mankind, however, exploited her like Tess for no fault or sin of hers. She, of course, would have faced with confidence people like Angel Clare and Henry Knight, but could she have guarded herself against a person like Alec d'Urberville?

Aesthetically, Hardy is creative enough to endow his heroines — Grace Melbury, Thomasin, Elfride, Eustacia, Elizabeth-Jane, Lucetta, for instance — with peculiar features and habits that render them attractive. Tess, however, stands above them all as the embodiment of Hardy's ideal of female beauty — a pure woman, as he calls her. All the rest, including Sue Bridehead, owe their charm mostly to the eyes of the beholder. They don't attract and enchant all those that look upon them. Bathsheba Everdene may be quoted as an instance that simultaneously attracts three lovers — Gabriel Oak, William Boldwood and Sergeant Troy. She, however, soon loses the passion of the lover she chooses as her husband and feels defeated and humiliated by the dead Fanny Robin. Tess is the only one whose beauty keeps 'her lustrous eye' till her tragic doom and attracts all. Her tempting beauty is the chief cause of her miseries, irrespective of its blessing her with a few moments of ecstasy. But, nevertheless, it is always there — alive, fresh and potent.

Tess lives in all her breathing beauty, with the touch of the imperfect upon the would-be perfect— as Clare perceived— that gave sweetness because it was that which gave humanity. Legend has it that Hardy drew Tess from a glimpse he got of a girl driving a cart in the West country, and certainly the picture has the warm reality of life—her long heavy clinging tresses of dark brown hair; her deep dark eyes— Hardy loses himself in those "large tender eyes, neither black nor blue nor gray nor violet; rather all these shades together, and a hundred others, which could be seen if one looked into their irises—shade behind shade— tint beyond tint— around pupils that had no bottom!" Her grace and vitality constantly call up the likeness of a wild creature: "There was something of the

habitude of the wild animal in the unreflecting instinct with which she wandered on from place to place" . . .

But her mental characteristics are no less rare and delightful. She is high-strung, impressionable, poetic: her soul soars into space when she gazes at the night heavens; in the stress of her emotions at the round of Clare's harp the whole of the twilight garden grows instinct with harmony and passion; and at his touch her accelerated pulse drives the blood flushing to her finger-ends. She is heroic, for we hear of "her many months of lonely self-chastisement, wrestlings, communings, schemes to lead a future of austere isolation"; and her long endurance of retributive agonies in sublime. And she shows perfect nobility and generosity of sentiment, in her attitude towards her simple rivals at the farm and in her splendid faith in Clare, which amounts indeed to a quite ineffable humility. . .

Whatever else we call her, Tess remains the most lovable of Hardy's heroines. All women adore her, and some men. What she might have made of life, what life might have made of her, had circumstances and Clare been kind, is beyond dreaming. (Duffin 220-1)

From the description of his ideal heroine it can be inferred without difficulty that Hardy thinks of the mental or intellectual dimensions of beauty as secondary and complementary to the physical and sensual aspects of it. Hardy's is, of course, a romantic rather than an Epicurean sensuality, but sensuality, after all, it is, irrespective of its mental connotations and qualification. In other words, his view of love is neither platonic nor sensual; it is an amalgam of both that can be most appropriately encompassed by the term 'romantic'. He very masterly adjusts charms of flesh, features, style, dress, impulses, gestures, movements and moods in the overall sphere of aesthetic impressions, with an emotional sublimity unknown to the scholastic Victorians. In this regard, he is more in tune with Byron and Keats than with any Victorian poet or novelist.

Thus it can be safely concluded that Hardy does not believe in any spiritual or intellectual sublimity to compensate for the deficiency in perceptible charms. The sweet sense of companionship prevails only when it is desired to possess the other. Forced companionship is a tyranny, and continuation of marriage without mutual attraction may prove the worst form of it. The desire to have an outlet for romantic and aesthetic aspirations, against this tyranny and suppression, has led Hardy to idealizing extra-conventional cohabitation between Jude and Sue more than any regular matrimony. There may be romantic

pathos in the pre-conjugal courting of couples, but nothing of the sort could be retained after marriage in any of his novels.

Is Hardy's despising marriage a reaction in isolation or is it a part of the overall attitude of revolt against social and moral taboos? The answer to this question is not a complicated one. Hardy does not hold any human being or institution responsible for the prevalent tyranny, oppression and exploitation of mankind. Humanity, as a whole, is a suffering victim before him. Providence, Nature, Destiny and other mysterious, unpredictable and uninterpretable agents are inherently cruel to all sensitive members of the species (Duffin 252). To escape their clutches one has to be insensitive, as they do not normally interfere with the utilitarian and physical aspects of life. The fatality of the sensitive, however, is more heroic and more glorious than the prosperity of the non-sensitive. The non-sensitive, to Hardy as well as to the romantics, is the materialist to whom gain and loss can be nothing else except in material objects. That is why Farfrae is left far shorter of any heroic stature in spite of his many commendable qualities, because he is mostly governed by reason, and the commercial aspect of his personality overshadows the romantic one. Henchard, on the other hand, remains the only real hero and properly elaborated male character of Hardy's fiction because, irrespective of his many shortcomings, he is always governed by impulse, and thus becomes a more charming victim of ruthless destiny. The mysterious victimizing agents, both Natural and Supernatural, do not select from amongst humanity according to any logical formula while hitting out their blind blows, except to make sure that the victim is the one who feels rather than thinks. Eustacia's soliloquy at the Rainbarrow reflects the awareness of even a devilish heroine like her of the cruelties of destiny and the consequent helplessness of the human lot:

'Can I go, can I go?' she moaned. 'He's not great enough for me to give myself to -- he does not suffice for my desire!... If he had been a Saul or a Bonaparte -- ah! But to break my marriage vow for him—it is too poor a luxury!... And I have no money to go alone! And if I could, what comfort to me? I must drag on next year, as I have dragged on this year, and the year after that as before. How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me!... I do not deserve my lot!' she cried in a frenzy of bitter revolt. 'O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was

capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed
by things beyond my control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise
such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!
(RN 422)

Similarly, Jude's helplessness in marrying Arabella shortly before he
meets Sue is very brilliantly described in the following words, reflective of
Hardy's overall bitter awareness of the antagonistic power of destiny.

In short, as if materially, a compelling arm of extraordinary
compelling power seized hold of him — something which had
nothing in common with the spirits and influences that had moved
him hitherto. This seemed to care little for his reason and his will,
nothing for his so-called elevated intentions, and moved him along,
as a violent schoolmaster a schoolboy he has seized by the collar, in
a direction which tended towards the embrace of a woman for whom
he had no respect, and whose life had nothing in common with his
own except locality. (JO 48)

Another pathetic inference to the incomprehensible *tactics* of destiny is
made when Jude comes across these words of the author of *Apologia*:

My argument was... that absolute certitude as to the truths of
natural theology was the result of an assemblage of concurring and
converging probabilities... that probabilities which did not reach to
logical certainty might create a mental certitude. (JO 95)

The same theme — the tragic doom of those that try to find logic and
rationale in the illogical drama of life — is supplemented by Hardy's
observations on the death of Oak's dog in *Far from the Madding Crowd*:

George's son had done his work so thoroughly that he was
considered too good a workman to live, and was, in fact, taken and
tragically shot at twelve o' clock that same day— another instance of
the untoward fate who so often attends dogs and other philosophers
who follow out a train of reasoning to its logical conclusion, and
attempt perfectly consistent conduct in a world made up so largely of
compromise. (FMC 48)

Such is the spirit of fate or destiny in Hardy's fiction that overshadows
the actions and intentions of the human race. The ones that think and act,
equally ineligible for a heroic status by Hardy as well as by the romantic poets,
judge it in terms of material loss and gain, while those with alive sensibilities —
who feel and receive — take it emotionally. It is this blind force of destiny,

sometimes referred to as Nature and Providence as well, that designs curious turns in the lives of individuals and their mutual interaction. It is this that leads to Henchard's turning, on second thought, to the tent where the old woman used to mix strong liquor in fummery, then to the appearance of Newson precisely at the time when the intoxicated Henchard was putting his wife for sale, to Farfrae's chancing to listen Casterbridge people complaining of the substandard wheat, to Henchard's compelling Farfrae to stay at Casterbridge as his manager, to his premature reading of Susan's letter and discovering that Elizabeth Jane was not his daughter, just after his having revealed to her that she was his daughter, to his undue delay in visiting Lucetta after her settlement in Casterbridge, and so many other events — all leading to Henchard's disaster and his tragic doom in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

In *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, likewise, the untimely discovery of Stephen Smith's parentage by Mr. Swancourt, the circumstances leading to Elfride's returning unmarried after her elopement with Stephen, the unlikely appearance of the unexpected, though much discussed, Henry Knight on the scene at a time when Smith was abroad — all these culminate into the course leading to Elfride's tragic end and the melancholic termination of the episode.

In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the marriage arranged between Francis Troy and Fanny Robin that would have prevented so many tragic events in future is postponed, never to take place again, because the bride disappoints her waiting lover and groom by going to All Souls' Church instead of All Saints' by mistake at the appointed time. Similarly, Bathsheba Everdene chances to meet Sergeant Troy exactly when she is about to accept Boldwood's marriage proposal, whom she abandons for the impulsive and adventurous seducer. Troy, thought to be drowned, again returns at the most crucial moment when the consistent Boldwood is about to marry Bathsheba, to be shot there by Boldwood who, in turn, gets death penalty, thus clearing the way for the hesitant Gabriel Oak to marry Bathsheba.

In *Tess* also, the association of events with time play a crucial role in directing the flow of affairs in the destined direction. The sudden turn that events take in the following episode is a symbolic demonstration.

By-and-by they reached a branch road to a village.

'I must get down. I live out there,' said Izz abruptly, never having spoken since her avowal.

Clare slowed the horse. He was incensed against his fate, bitterly disposed towards social ordinances; for they had cooped him up in a corner, out of which there was no legitimate pathway. Why not be revenged on society by shapping his future domesticities loosely, instead of kissing the pedagogic rod of convention in this ensnaring manner?

'I am going to Brazil alone, Izz,' said he. 'I have separated from my wife from personal, not voyaging, reasons. I may never live with her again. I may not be able to love you; but—will you go with me instead of her?'

'You truly wish me to go?'

'I do. I have been badly used enough to wish for relief. And you at least love me disinterestedly.'

'Yes—I will go,' said Izz, after a pause. . .

'Remember, you are not to trust me in morals now. But I ought to remind you that it will be wrong-doing in the eyes of civilization—Western civilization, that is to say.'

'I don't mind that; no woman do when it comes to agony-point, and there is no other way!'

'Then don't get down, but sit where you are.'

He drove past the cross-roads, one mile, two miles, without showing any sign of affection.

'You love me very, very much, Izz?' he suddenly asked.

'I do—I have said I do! I loved you all the time we was at the dairy together!'

'More than Tess?'

She shook her head.

'No,' she murmured, 'not more than she.'

'How's that?'

'Because nobody could love'ee more than Tess did!...She would have laid her life for'ee. I could do no more.'

Clare was silent; his heart had risen at these straightforward words from such an unexpected unimpeachable quarter.....

'Forget our idle talk, Izz,' he said, turning the horse's head suddenly. 'I don't know what I've been saying! I will now drive you back to where your lane branches off.' (TDU 343-44)

Along with reflections on the blind turns of destiny, the preceding passage also shows that Hardy, unlike Shelley and Byron who would have welcomed such a situation, does not allow his hero to break the moral

conventions for a character like Izz, far short of Sue in *Jude* for whose sake he can afford to venture that.

Of the blind hand of destiny, these are just a few instances. Its ruthless tricks can be traced throughout Hardy's novels, leading heroes and heroines — and occasionally minor characters like Fanny Robin and Lucetta — to their destined doom.

Hardy's conception of destiny has multiple implications on his views of life, existence and humanity. Out of these, three are very outstanding and vital for our current enterprise: his views of God, religion and Providence; his art of characterization; and his concept of Nature.

Like most of the romantics, Hardy feels that the affairs of the world are not run according to the dictates of justice, and as such there is no such thing as Divine Justice. But does it mean that there is no controlling authority in the universe — in other words, God? Hardy is not able to find a convincing answer to this question; his inclination, nonetheless, is not towards atheism. When he looks at the beauty, variety and plenty in Nature and feels the diverse demonstrations of life, he feels compelled to acknowledge the presence of a Supreme Authority that has created all and controls all. But when he looks at the injustices in the world and at man's frustration at his helplessness in moulding his own course in life, he is confounded as to why the creating and controlling authority does not interfere. He cannot see any reason why He lets His creation — endowed with all richness, beauty and variety — to suffer so hopelessly at the hands of ruthless destiny and other mysterious agents. He, unlike Shelley, does not jump at a forged conclusion like 'the necessity of atheism' for he knows that man's belief or disbelief in God would not affect the antagonistic course of Fate. Here Hardy makes the error made by most of the agnostic intellectuals of the modern age. He considers life in this world as an event in isolation. He would have tolerated its injustices had he taken it as a continuation, a phase succeeding and preceding other unknown phases, a trial and a test, the result of which will be seen in the next stage. He wishes to see the last scene of the drama of being concluded in this world according to the logical

dictates of natural justice, and fails to do so. Thus, irrespective of the creative and controlling role of a supreme authority, he does not believe in its role as a guardian and a judge.

But, might some say, where was Tess's guardian angel? Where was the providence of her simple faith? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was in journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked. (TDU 91)

The concluding paragraph of *Tess* demonstrates Hardy's satirical attitude regarding the concept of divine justice, consequent upon his frustration at the victimization of the innocent.

Justice was done, and the president of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess. And the d'Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing. The two speechless gazers bent themselves down to the earth, as if in prayer, and remained thus a long time, absolutely motionless: the flag continued to wave silently. As soon as they had strength they rose, joined hands again, and went on. (TDU 508)

From this passage, one can also infer human insensitivity towards the tragedies of those that have been nearest to them and have even embraced the catastrophe for their sake. Angel and Liza Lu might be commemorating Tess's fatality with solemnity and devotion, but still they don't miss her as Hardy seems suggesting that they should. Beside the grave of the unfortunate but the most devoted beloved, the lover she adored and the sister she loved are ready — rather sanguine — to stage a new drama, seemingly a comedy.

The hand of Providence, chance or even Nature may sometimes play a role of kindness to certain individuals not only in the real life but also in Hardy's fiction. Donald Farfrae is the most outstanding example in this regard. But this kindness of Nature and Providence does not embrace humanity in entirety. Benevolence to a less sensitive Farfrae means cruelty to a more sensitive Henchard. Hence rarely any chance of appreciation is offered to those whose appreciation really matters, at least in case of our current discussion.

Hardy's view of Nature and Providence and his estimation of the role of chance and destiny and their inclinations in reference to individuals and

humanity in general, are all closely related to his view of God and his religious convictions. It is questionable whether Hardy was agnostic, or pagan, or atheist, or believer in a very personal way. It is, however, certain that he was essentially romantic in terms of beliefs and religious views because, like all the major romantic poets, he did not believe in any established form of Christianity, particularly in its nineteenth century versions. His dissatisfaction with the Christian views and practices did not lead him, like Shelley, to a violent revolt against religion at all. He was not a committed or even convinced atheist, and occasionally attended churches and participated in religious rituals. In Universe and Nature, he saw a harmony, a rhythm which necessitated the existence of an omniscient and omnipotent creator. But frustrated in his quest to find out an all embracing justice — for reasons already quoted in this thesis — he felt compelled to disagree with Browning's assertion, 'God is in his heaven: all's right with the world'.

Part of Hardy's greatness as a writer comes from the tension between his basically religious and very compassionate nature and his feeling that no higher power really cared about human suffering. His thinking is elusive, not presented in a formal system and he did not encourage his readers to find a philosophy in his work or to draw moral lessons from it. (Chapman, 1990, 59).

Hardy's emotional sensibilities were too sensitive and too curious to be satiated, like Wordsworth, by deriving a cult of conviction from the mystery of destiny, as demonstrated in the following lines from *The Prelude*:

Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be.³

Religious doctrines like atheism or pantheism develop when one gets engaged into the debate on divinity from a theological angle. As such, the humanistic and anthropological concerns assume a secondary and subsidiary status. This is the case with both Wordsworth and Shelley. Hardy, in contrast, attempts to see a divine authority only through the manifestations of its role on the human stage. Thus, he links religion to destiny more keenly than any of the

romantic poets does. The consequent convictions or, more precisely, impressions are too peculiar to be encompassed by any stereotypical term; for a generic reference, however, 'agnostic' is the nearest term that can be applied to Hardy in this regard. His quest for finding a logic in the drama of destiny seems terminating in wonder and a sort of pessimistic abandonment, like his favourite Oriental sage Omar Khayyam, who exclaimed:

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate;
And many Knots unravel'd by the Road;
But not the Master-Knot of Human Fate.

Hardy added pathos to this bewilderment by associating it with individual sensibilities. We may again refer to the already quoted authorial comments, questioning the indifference of Providence at Tess's seduction (TDU 91), lamented with a deeper melancholy and agony.

'As with the Aeschylean phrase', we must be wary of taking this passage as a suggestion on Hardy's part that there is some malign or indifferent actual presence overlooking Tess. The point of the rather heavy irony is that there is *no* presence, no Providence. We may also recall Tess's explanation to her younger brother Abraham that they live on a planet blighted like some of the apples on the stubborn tree. The analogy of heavenly bodies with apples on a tree is significant, because it seduces that which had always been seen as the province of God's particular and certain care to objects indifferently sound or blighted, purely according to chance.

De Laura's third theme is the direct condemnation of Christianity by Hardy, particularly as it is manifested in the practices of the late nineteenth century church. It is here that the most bitterly ironic of Hardy's feelings are manifested, usually by way of direct authorial commentary. At Tess's seduction there might have been a possibility of some retribution 'lurking in the present catastrophe'; 'But though to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children may be a morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature; and it therefore does not mend the matter'.....

Yet again, care is needed in reading such passages. The somewhat sneering attack is crude enough, but Hardy is attacking dogma and the ridiculous paraphernalia of faith as he saw it, rather than the sincere practice of Christianity. The reverend Mr. Clare is treated with considerable sympathy. He and his wife are something of the type of primitive Christianity, simple, honest and charitable. (Wright 26-7)

Hardy's agnostic inclinations are confirmed by his tremendous appreciation for T.H. Huxley, a distinguished biologist and a committed disciple of Charles Darwin. Huxley was the very inventor of the word 'agnostic' which, according to him means 'one who does not know' (Williams 73). Hardy met Huxley a few times in London and was heard 'speaking of him as a man who united a fearless mind with the warmest of hearts and the most modest of manners' (Williams 75).

Hardy's admiration of Huxley proves by itself that he was impressed by Darwin's theory of evolution in general and the concept of the 'survival of the fittest' in particular. 'When Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared, Hardy was one of the first to read it' (Weber, 1965, 27). Still he has demonstrated his pro-romantic and anti-Victorian attitude by not indulging in abstract philosophical contentions, and by accommodating his convictions or inclinations in terms of human feelings and experiences. Likewise, in his indirect responses to Marx's theory of class conflict and Freud's doctrine of psychoanalysis, Hardy seems abhorring abstract philosophy and rationalistic logic very popular with the Victorians. He is inclined to judge factors in their capacity as causes and effects in human life, and their impressions on individual sensibilities.

The romantic ideal of liberty, discussed in detail in the third chapter of this thesis, has not yet been properly highlighted in relation to Hardy. In this chapter only one aspect of that attitude — desire for unconventional matrimony — has been partially covered so far. Let us refer back to it, to expand the discussion in order to encompass Hardy's ideal of liberty in its entirety.

Of the romantics, Hardy admired Shelley the most (though he saw through his Platonic ideas) (Johnson, T. 126), and that is why the most pathetic and romantic mode of living together between Jude and Sue is called 'Shelleyan' by Phillotson, the learned schoolmaster. For writing *Jude*, Hardy was condemned as Shelley was condemned for writing *Necessity of Atheism* and for some of his poems advocating free sex and loose morality. Thus it is widely believed that Hardy advocated liberty in the same sense as Shelley did.

Shelley's ideas on sexual relationship were unconventional. After he left his wife for Mary Godwin he suggested that she should

come and live with them as a friend, and in the same way Sue optimistically hopes that she can go on being friends with her husband after she has left him. It would be a mistake, though, to think that Hardy necessarily agreed with Shelley's theories. He did reject the Victorian concept of marriage, and in *Jude the Obscure* he examined several arguments about divorce and free love. But his final conclusion was that 'Shelleyan' characters like Angel Clare and Sue Bridehead did more harm than good. Shelley's theory of love left out too many things—the 'fret and fever, derision and disaster', the human need for deep emotional commitments and the earthly, as opposed to the heavenly, aspects of love.

Jude the Obscure often refers to Shelley, whom Hardy describes as 'the last of the optimists'. Shelley did, indeed, have an idealistic faith in goodness. . . . It was much more difficult for Hardy to believe this at the end of the century, when, as we shall see, he acquired a reputation for being a 'pessimist'. It looks on balance as if, despite his reverence for Shelley, he finally came to see some of his ideas as naïve. (Williams 67-8)

With the inherent romantic, or more precisely, Shelleyan foundation, Hardy's conception of liberty is less idealistic, less philosophical, more humanistic and, in my opinion, far deeper and sublime. Its foundation is sympathy with the fettered Man rather than revolt against the authority of Providence or society.

Hardy primarily derived his theory of liberty from John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, which is one of the two most impressive arguments in favour of freedom of thought and speech (the other being Milton's *Areopagitica*), and which Hardy knew by heart (Hurst 109). Mill's contention was that all human beings need peace, happiness and emotional satisfaction, and that they must have liberty to have them. The community or its taboos should not be allowed to deprive individuals of these rights on moral or social pretexts. However, if an individual's sacrifice in terms of these blessings can guarantee the provision of these to humanity in general, or even a community of people, an individual's considerations should be social enough to offer such sacrifice voluntarily (Williams 83). It is here that Hardy deviates from Shelley's doctrine of liberty, and his obvious admiration for Mill confirms this deviation. In *Jude* he speaks of Mill through Sue, while convincing her husband to let her leave him:

Sue continued: 'She, or he, "who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his own portion of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation". J. S. Mill's words

those are. I have been reading it up. Why can't you act upon them? I wish to, always.'

'What do I care about J. S. Mill!' moaned he. 'I only want to lead a quiet life!' (JO, IV, iii)

Generally, the Victorians celebrated Tennyson more than any other poet. He was officially declared the Poet Laureate of the age whose content and style both catered well to the Victorian confusion and sensibilities. But Hardy admired Swinburne more than Tennyson or any other Victorian poet, mainly because he was more independent in his thinking, and considered Man rather than God as the central figure of the Universe. In his famous poem, 'Hymn to Man,' he boldly projects man against God and declares: 'Glory to Man in the highest! For Man is the master of things.' Thus Hardy's liking for Swinburne, like Mill, is due to his ideal of liberty being of a humanistic orientation. So irrespective of liberty being a major point of affinity between Hardy and the romantic poets, the dominant humanism is what makes Hardy different from all of them, whose view of liberty was the result of philosophical or aesthetic commitments.

Along with framing his view of liberty, Hardy's romantic humanism has other dimensions too, including his pathetic concern for human ego. Disregarding the late nineteenth century debate emerging out of Freudian doctrines of psycho-analysis, Hardy again took a romantic stance by depicting human ego in the comprehensive perspective of human sensibilities. Ego is a must for stimulating sensibilities, and the real pathos is added to human tragedies in Hardy's novels by the injured egos of sensitive human beings. In this regard, Byron and Shelley are Hardy's models among the romantics whose richest creations were motivated by the consciousness of an injured ego. But again Hardy's range is more generic than of either of these. Shelley's words may be pathetically richer when he implores the 'West Wind':

Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift and proud.

But Hardy's impersonal expositions in broadly human terms are more appealing as demonstrated through the medium of a variety of characters in a variety of practical circumstances. It is Jude's ego that prevents him from openly persuading Sue Bridehead not to marry the schoolmaster, a timely warning that might have avoided many future tragedies. In spite of all his unconventional thoughts, it is Angel Clare's ego as a husband which primarily tempts him to repudiate Tess after she honestly tells him the story of her past. And it is Tess's injured ego rather than any material convenience which primarily tempts her to give up one-sided faithfulness and devotion to Clare, and put herself at the mercy of her past seducer.

Tess remained where she was a long while, till a sudden rebellious sense of injustice caused the region of her eyes to swell with the rush of hot waters thither. Her husband, Angel Clare himself, had, like others, dealt out hard measures to her, surely he had! She had never before admitted such a thought; but he had surely! Never in her life—she could swear it from the bottom of her soul—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. (TDU 455)

Troy's display of passion for the dead body of Fanny injures Bathsheba's ego to the extent of a sense of humiliation that provides a base for the ultimate tragedy. 'She sinks down like a wounded animal in a thicket near the farm' (Bayley, 1981, 114)

The one feat alone—that of dying—by which a mean condition could be resolved into a grand one, Fanny had achieved. And to that had destiny subjugated this recounter to-night, which had, in Bathsheba's wild imagining, turned her companion's failure to success, her humiliation to triumph, her lucklessness to ascendancy. (FMC 298)

The Mayor of Casterbridge is not only entirely a story of the consequences of the wounded ego of Michael Henchard; the tragic act of the story itself takes place when the ego of simple and innocent Susan is hurt by the drunken Henchard who, disregarding her imploring protests, declares her a commodity for sale at the fair. hurt
7

The most brilliant demonstrations, however, of ego in operation are to be found in *The Return of the Native*. Thomasin tells Wildeve:

'Then do let us go!— O Damon, what you make me say!' She hid her face in her handkerchief. 'Here am I asking you to marry me; when by rights you ought to be on your knees imploring me, your cruel mistress, not to refuse you, and saying it would break your heart if I did. I used to think it would be pretty and sweet like that; but how different!' (RN 49)

In a part of the same conversation Wildeve asserts, referring to the labour he had to do in order to make Mrs. Yeobright agree to his marrying Thomasin:

Think what I have gone through to win her consent; the insult that it is to any man to have the banns forbidden: the double insult to a man unlucky enough to be cursed with sensitiveness, and blue demons, and Heaven knows what, as I am. I can never forget those banns. A harsher man would rejoice now in the power I have of turning upon your aunt by going no further in the business.' (RN 49)

Eustacia's peculiar 'ego' is a product of her romantic aspirations and awareness of her physical charms, frustrated by a sense of loneliness and placement in circumstances not congenial for her inclinations.

Thus it happened that in Eustacia's brain were juxtaposed the strangest assortment of ideas, from old time and from new. There was no middle distance in her perspective: romantic recollections of sunny afternoons on an esplanade, with military bands, officers and gallants around, stood like gilded letters upon the dark tablets of surrounding Egdon. Every bizarre effect that could result from the random intertwining of watering-place glitter with the grand solemnity of a heath, was to be found in her. Seeing nothing of human life now, she imagined all the more of what she had seen. (RN 78)

✓ The myth of the presence of supernatural agents, and belief in omens and forecasts is a prominent feature of Hardy's novels. Not only the seemingly supernatural factors influence the characters' thinking and sensibilities; ordinary events also do have certain modes of coincidence that give them a symbolic touch. The evening Susan and Elizabeth-Jane entered Casterbridge was a fatal day in Henchard's life as Donald Farfrae also entered the town the same time, and from that day onwards Henchard's decline started. The weather, also

seemed conspiring against Henchard's interests which frustrated him so much that he felt compelled to go secretly for seeking the prophecy of the isolated man believed to have the mysterious faculty of forecasting the modes of weather.

In *Jude the Obscure*, both Jude and Sue, in spite of being liberal and progressive, are haunted by the stories of bad omens attached to matrimony, told by their ancestors. In Jude's words:

'The Fawleys were not made for wedlock: it never seemed to sit well upon us. There's sommat in our blood that won't take kindly to the notion of being bound to do what we do readily enough if not bound.' (JO 81)

Hardy's extraordinary inclination to depict the supernatural is manifested to the optimum in his short stories. Quite a bulky collection of his short stories is titled *The Supernatural Tales of Thomas Hardy* (listed). The titles of the stories themselves show the tendency to add mystery and horror to the tales at the very outset: 'What the shepherd saw,' 'The Superstitious Man's Story,' 'The Spectre of the Real,' 'The Grave by the Handpost' and 'A Christmas Ghost-Story' are a few instances. Unlike the novels, here he is less bothered by thematic concerns, and invents thrilling images with a child-like wonder. In 'The Withered Arm,' for instance, Trendle the Conjuror advises Gertrude Lodge to touch with her limb the neck of a newly hanged man before he is cold, to cure the wound left by the mysterious blow, with the ever-visible finger prints. The abundance and pathos of such queer events and tips in the stories reflect Hardy's faculty not only of inventing supernatural settings and characters but also of relating them to actual life. Notwithstanding their enchanting charm in this regard, we must not go deeper into the stories as they are not our direct subject in this thesis. With the hope that this slight deviation will not be found inexcusable, let us resume our discussion on the novels.

The medieval and partially romantic belief of human happening being governed by modes of stars and other heavenly bodies is frequently displayed in Hardy's characters, not in an abstract Coleridgean sense, but rather as a complementary note to man's helplessness and his vulnerability to be controlled

by certain forces not only inaccessible but also uninterpretable.

An ascription more traditional in English literature relates destiny to the influence of the stars. When Elizabeth-Jane remains attracted to Farfrae, she does not know 'what her malignant star had done to blast the budding attentions' which she had received from him, but, as Gabriel's hopes prosper, 'his 'malignant stars were assuredly setting fast'. Jude resolves to 'battle with his evil star' but has to acquire his learning through 'years of struggle against malignant stars'. Even more ominously, Tess tells her small brother that 'the stars are worlds' and that the earth is 'a blighted one', just as there are good and bad apples on the trees. Time can also take on the role of adverse fate — another idea which Hardy's literature shares with that of the Renaissance. 'Treacherous Time' afflicts Melbury in his later years and Henchard's wife looks like 'one who deems any thing possible at the hands of Time and Chance except, perhaps, fair play'. The grim irony of naming Jude's son 'Father Time' is revealed in his suicide and killing of the other children. (Chapman, 1990, 61-2).

Along with omens there are mysterious coincidences and indications from unknown quarters that change the scenario of action against human determination. Michael Henchard is prevented from committing suicide by the appearance of the effigy of himself in the water below the bridge wherefrom he was about to jump down. In the same way, Jude's attempt to commit suicide is foiled by the ice not giving way to let him be drowned, showing that extra-human forces are not necessarily instrumental in bringing about human misery.

Jude put one foot on the edge of the ice, and then the other; but this did not deter him. He ploughed his way inward to the centre, the ice making sharp noises as he went. When just above the middle he looked around him and gave a jump. The cracking repeated itself; but he did not go down. He jumped again, but the cracking had ceased. Jude went back to the edge, and stepped upon the ground.

It was curious, he thought. What was he reserved for? He supposed he was not a sufficiently dignified person for suicide. Peaceful death abhorred him as a subject, and would not take him. (JO 82)

In Hardy's novels, there are neither ghosts and witches like in Shakespeare's dramas, nor actual mythological persons like in the medieval mystery and miracle plays. Nor there are any haunting spirits or invisible beings as in the contemporary Gothic novels. The term *supernatural* in, or in reference to, Hardy's novels refers to what is not justifiable on rational, logical and

scientific grounds. The ominous impact of such happenings depends more on people's responses to them than on their actual potential to influence. Tess in her early girlhood, before going to claim kinship with D'Urbervilles, sees Angel Clare for the first time when he intrudes upon a group of dancing girls. Tess is in no way less attractive than any other girl in the group, but Angel takes the hand of someone else for a dancing partner. She recalls this incident on the farm at Talbothays when Angel proposes her, and takes it as a bad omen of the past, threatening to overshadow her future with him.

Tanner specifically rejects the symbolic overtones in favour of seeing such scenes as Prince's death as omens. Each omen is part of a cumulative pattern which builds up the scene of Tess's fate. So we have the red brick of the d'Urberville home looking forward to the red brick of the prison where she is hanged. Alec d'Urberville presses roses and strawberries upon her; a thorn on one of the roses pricks her chin. The words of ill omen are painted on walls and fences in red paint. The threshing-machine to which Tess is tied, metaphorically, is a "buzzing red glutton". She strikes Alec and draws blood, only to strike him at the end and mortally spell his heart's blood, which shows itself as a terrible ace of hearts on the ceiling below. There is nevertheless a symbolic element in the use of colour by Hardy, and Tanner recognizes it. Stabbing may mean death or procreation—both let out blood. Tess's blood frequently rises as a bluish, suggesting passion, but blood released is also death: 'Life starts in sex and ends in death, and Hardy constantly shows how closely allied the two forms of blood-letting are in one basic, unalterable rhythm of existence.'⁵ (Wright 37)

Hardy ridicules logical convictions and highlights the instability of human opinion. This is a purely romantic theme which was expounded by the major poets of the class in different degrees and different perspectives. In Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', the ancient mariner shoots the albatross that followed the ship; the weather turns worse and all the fellow mariners accuse him:

And I had done a hellish thing
And it would work'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!⁶

Then suddenly the sky is cleared and the weather becomes pleasant.
Then the same people start appreciating him:

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'T was right, said they, such birds to slay
That brings the fog and mist.

In his novels, Hardy has depicted several cases of this attitude. The following observations by Jude are an instance.

But I don't admit that my failure proved my view to be a wrong one, or that my success would have made it a right one; though that's how we appraise such attempts now a days— I mean, not by their essential soundness, but by their accidental outcomes. If I had ended by becoming like one of these gentlemen in red and black that we saw dropping in here by now, everybody would have said: "See how wise that young man was, to follow the bent of his nature!" But having ended no better than I began they say: "See what a fool that fellow was in following a freak of his fancy!" (JO 393)

This shows that success or failure is not a valid criterion for judging the validity or authenticity of a theory or scheme. Theories are experimented through human tools and the composition of the tool matters a lot. Not only the external factors already discussed — chance, Providence, luck and Nature etc. — play a vital role in determining the degree of correspondence of results to intentions; there are multiple internal or intra-human factors that operate with tremendous significance. Such an opinion moulds the attitude to look deeper into the inner selves of human beings — their hearts and souls — which, I daresay, is an essentially romantic attitude. We cannot trace it explicitly in the poetic creation of the nineteenth century romantics, because as poets they could not afford in depth and exclusive characterization, like the novelists. In case of the twentieth century novelists this may be an affirmation of the Freudian doctrine of analysis of the psyche; but in case of Hardy it is a purely artistic, extra-scientific and extra-philosophical attitude, concentrating on the individual and his story rather than tending to derive generalized principles. The comparative analysis by Hardy of the characters of William Boldwood,

Bathsheba Everdene and Sergeant Troy in three different passages taken from *Far from the Madding Crowd*, highlights Hardy's art in this regard:

The phases of Boldwood's life were ordinary enough, but his was not an ordinary nature. That stillness, which struck casual observers more than anything else in his character and habit, and seemed so precisely like the rest of inanition, may have been the perfect balance of enormous antagonistic forces— positives and negatives in fine adjustment. His equilibrium disturbed, he was in extremity at once. If an emotion possessed him at all, it ruled him; a feeling not mastering him was entirely latent. Stagnant or rapid, it was never slow. He was always hit mortally, or he was missed. (FMC 127)

Bathsheba's was an impulsive nature under a deliberative aspect. An Elizabeth in brain and a Mary Stuart in spirit, she often performed actions of the greatest temerity with a manner of extreme discretion. Many of her thoughts were perfect syllogisms; unluckily they always remained thoughts. Only a few were irrational assumptions; but, unfortunately, they were the ones that most frequently grew into deeds. (FMC 138)

Troy was full of activity, but his activities were less of a locomotive than a vegetative nature; and, never being based upon any original choice of foundation or discretion, they were exercised on whatever object chance might place in their way. Hence, whilst he sometimes reached the brilliant in speech because that was spontaneous, he fell below the commonplace in action, from inability to guide incipient effort. He had a quick comprehension and considerable force of character; but, being without the power to combine them, the comprehension became engaged with trivialities whilst waiting for the will to direct it, and the force wasted itself in useless grooves through unheeding the comprehension. (FMC 172)

The quoted passages show Hardy's deep understanding of the art of characterization not only in terms of inventing complex characters in a life-like style, but, more essentially, in terms of his expressive capability to help the reader share his comprehension and appreciation of their depth and complexity, through immense visualization and realistic depiction (Johnson 95). Unpredictable though they are — like people in the real life endowed with emotional sensibilities — the major characters in Hardy's novels are pathetically grand and romantically rich for their creator's capability to expose to the optimum their hearts, the centres wherefrom all motives generate. Along with the body that acts, the mind that thinks and the heart that feels, there is a superior faculty of more foundational status that can be labeled as an

individual's 'nature'— something instinctive and endowed by birth, by the directives of which an individual must helplessly abide. This 'nature' plays a more vital role in directing the affairs of one's life than the obvious traits of character do. In addition to repudiating the stereotypical depiction of characters, this approach also negates the concept of 'psyche' as the central core of personality. As such, Hardy minimizes the role of willingness on human behalf, and subjects his personae to factors that are personal but out of the person's control. control

Human nature, however, has been generally depicted as a constituent of the comprehensive scheme of character in Hardy's fiction because it operates only in interaction with other constituents of character, and hence, irrespective of its superior status among these constituents, its tackling in isolation is neither possible nor convenient.

Hardy is not generally profound or exploratory in his analysis of human character and motive. His narrative art calls rather for a strong, simple delineation, one that convinces the reader by confident definition. The imaginative sympathy, and the certain touch, of the strokes that compose the portrait of Bathsheba, have often been appreciated. Yet Hardy's skill is, (in the best sense) conventional. Bathsheba's voice is very compelling in its various roles: essaying fine manners with Boldwood, or patronage with Oak, or masculine forthright authority with the labourers, or feminine authority with Liddy. Suddenly it will break into the voice of the mere country girl. With a keen eye, too, Hardy catches the indicative movement or gesture. All these effects express his grasp of village psychology, and illuminate the limits within which his narrative art functions most happily. Think of the moment when the Valentine upon which much is to depend, is dispatched. Bathsheba dominates the novel, not as a human personality created and explored with the searching art of the classical novelist, but as someone present to a balladist's imagination, confidently taken for granted as what she seems to be, recognized by the gesture of the hand, the inflexion of the voice; even the gradual transformation of her nature under the impress of suffering reveals itself in dramatic strokes. (Brown 48-9)

Bathsheba, like most of female protagonists in Hardy's novels, is, at least partially, the embodiment of Wordsworth's 'Lucy Gray' and 'Solitary Reaper'. The excellent depiction of her character shows that Hardy is not to be bothered by outward complexities, as she is placed against three male protagonists and 'her relationship with Troy is the most confused one in Hardy's

novels' (Bayley 114). Hardy's heroines are human personages placed in a realistic environment but depicted with an idealistic imaginative pathos — something very common among the romantics and very alien to the Victorians. When we see Tess, the 'Solitary Reaper,' working in the field, we as Hardy's readers probably surpass Wordsworth himself, in sharing her emotions and receiving the full impressions of her sentiments and impulses.

Hardy's heroes and heroines pass from innocence to experience. It is along the course of this passage that the story develops and the characters are elaborated. Unlike Blake, however, Hardy does not consider experience — essentially an interaction with evil — as an essential phase in the full development or maturity of innocence. He wishes the virtue to have attained authenticity without being molested or intermingled with evil, but, unfortunately, it happens to be otherwise. Tess and Eustacia, and even Bathsheba, don't pass idealistically uncorrupted and untouched as Lucy Gray does.

Hardy has an anti-scientific attitude, which is often interpreted as the tendency of inertia inherently possessed by rural inhabitants. It looks as if Hardy is lamenting the loss of rural innocence and the charms of the simple country life, as Goldsmith did in his 'Deserted Village'. Of course both resented the flood of industrial utilitarianism and materialism which threatened all innocence, simplicity, generosity of the heart and all that distinguished human beings from animals or, more significantly, from machines. But the difference is that Goldsmith looks at the issue in a contemporary perspective (Daiches 663), while Hardy's perception is a universal and human one. Hardy seems to have a realization that there is a continuous decline not only in the spiritual sense but also in senses physical, mental, environmental, human, social and cosmological. Every succeeding generation experiences an addition in degeneration, and with the passage of time humanity and the Universe undergo decline rather than development. Looking at the phases of human history from a truly humanistic viewpoint, the more distant has been the more pleasant and the richer in blessings. As such, future cannot be dreamt of as better than the present. Human

beings are constantly changing for the worst spiritually, physically, morally and emotionally. This sense of decline played a vital role in earning for Hardy the much-trumpeted title of 'pessimist'. Anyhow, the attitude is primarily a romantic one. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge vigorously lamented the losses inflicted upon humanity by the growing industrialization and the consequent materialism, though according to them redemption was possible by re-establishing contact with Nature and 'the supernatural'. Though Shelley initially dreamt of a revolution of liberty, but he soon got disillusioned and his hope and zeal vanished in a melancholy despair.

Hardy's indirect antagonism to science and scientific development emerges out of this sense of continuous decline. The so-called development, according to him, not only deprived individuals of their instinctive human attributes; it, equally tragically, meant the vanishing of certain professions and occupations that endowed individuals with peculiar identities, communities with rich traditional cultures, and rendered both the symbols of a particular life-style.

The figure of Venn distinguishes *The Return of the Native* in a new way. The Reddleman seems to personify the interplay between the ballad-tale and the country environment that gives to Hardy's best novels their unique quality.----- Venn seems not to belong to plot or character, as these are usually understood. He is like a chord, modulating between the heath and the fable. His craft, significantly, is a dying craft. 'Reddlemen are now but seldom seen.' Once, redde used to colour all rural life thereabouts, challenging, as it were, the dark countenance of the heath. 'Redde spreads its lovely hues over everything it lights on.' The first account of Venn's trade is substantial, and his figure is so devised and used that, later on, every phrase regarding him flashes out towards a wider circuit of meaning. He exerts an odd fascination, for he is a particularly apt projection of Hardy's feeling for the country at this time: a man, so to speak, dyed into a way of life, and that way fast disappearing. At times, a dream-like quality enfolds him, a 'poetry of existence', suggesting an unchecked, regressive nostalgia in Hardy. But chiefly we feel in Venn those qualities of passive firmness, self-denying fidelity, and patient watchfulness that Hardy values so much, and connects with the intimacies and the routines of agricultural life. His is not a day-dream figure; he is an effective emblem because Hardy represents him with detached accuracy as a particular practitioner of a particular trade. Local status defines his respectability, and his 'good nature' is allied to 'acuteness as extreme as it could be without verging on craft'. Venn suggests, in fact, simultaneously, a poetry of existence, and the finances of the trade in redde. (Brown 57-8)

Along with the social and communal changes abruptly brought about by industrialization which threatened putting an end to the local customs and rich traditions like the one mentioned above, Hardy also laments urban intrusion into the local calm and peace on the individual level. In almost all his novels, the peace and tranquillity of the rural setting and a romance in progress between two children of the country is disturbed by the urban outsiders who are more cunning and apparently more impressive due to their imposing artificiality. In *Tess*, Alec d'Urberville is a bogus aristocrat, absolutely void of either the country innocence or the intellectual polishing of Angel Clare. In *Jude the Obscure*, Arabella and, to some extent, Phillotson are the intruders. Knight plays the same role in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. The most outstanding examples of this intrusion, however, are there in *The Return of the Native*, *The Woodlanders* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Clym Yeobright is the kind-hearted civilized man from the city — though domiciled in the heath — who disturbs the devilish but ecstatic romance between Damon Wildeve and Eustacia Vye, instinctively born for each other. The situation grows more complex when Wildeve in turn intrudes into the life of Thomasin to block the silent courting admirer Diggory Venn. In *The Woodlanders*, Edred Fitzpiers, a modern replica of Dr. Faustus, a doctor that undertakes mysterious practices; and Mrs. Charmond, the fashionable landlady that had former intimacy with the doctor, are the most violent intruders in the ideal woodlands of Little Hintock. Grace Melbury is basically a woodlander who is educated elsewhere, and the corrupting influence of education — though Hardy never openly declares it so — affects her affection for Giles Winterborne. Giles and Marty South are the genuine woodlanders who represent the ideal innocence and rural simplicity to the fullest.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the case is a bit more complicated. All the major characters come from outside and play their role on the stage of the changing but still conservative town. The modes of life confined in the town become insignificant for the narrative if not enlivened by the advent and impact of these intruding outsiders. By the time we are introduced to the town, Michael

Henchard has already become not only an integral part of the body of Casterbridge, but also its head and chief in all respects. Susan, Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae enter the town the same day, each contributing to Henchard's decline; none of them, however, can be called an urban intruder in any sense because each one of them carries a different version of innocence and simplicity. Lucetta, the woman from Jersey, Henchard's former mistress, is the real intruder who not only stamps the tragic fate of Henchard, but also influences enormously the progress of the half-expressed romance between Farfrae and Elizabeth.

A very popular romantic tendency was the moodiness and the alternating inclinations towards zeal and lethargy. Shelley shows this tendency to the maximum, while Byron and Keats also present instances of it. Most of Hardy's heroic characters also demonstrate the same attitude. Before discussing them, however, let us refer to two cases of this mood in Shelley. In 'Ode to the West Wind' he dreams of a sweeping revolution, and exploits the violent wind in support of his revolutionary creed:

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

The same Shelley — the defiant rebel against all taboos and conventions and the self-assumed messenger of revolution — is found at times crying for peace and tranquillity:

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steel on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.⁷

In another poem 'Invocation' addressed to the 'spirit of delight', Shelley wants to win back the favour of the former happiness at every cost, and subjects even the much celebrated bliss of love to the peace and calm brought by the spirit of delight:

Rarely, rarely comest thou,
Spirit of delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

I love tranquil solitude,
And such society
As is quiet, wise and good.
Between thee and me
What difference? But thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.

I love Love — thou he has wings,
And like light can flee,
But above all other things,
Spirit, I love thee—
Thou art love and life! O come!
Make once more my heart thy home!⁸

Hardy's characters also have longings, incentives, ideals and enthusiasm for action in the start, but soon the frustration and hopelessness, which result from their attempts, compel them to yield to a passive desire for mental peace. Jude has a lot of academic aspirations and dreams of becoming a scholar, from the very childhood. But the untimely and misfit matrimony and the resultant tragedies leave him with no option but to surrender to the flow of events with absolute passiveness of which his second union with Arabella is the climax. In Tess's case, though the initiative primarily comes from her mother, Tess does have a desire to add dignity to her identity and win some respectable patronage to suit her quest for a future of nobility. The very desire to change her lot makes her a victim of the devilish designs of Alec who ruins her forever and makes her more unlucky and miserable than her fellow country girls with no aspirations at all. At the end, we see the same sanguine lovely girl as a meditating philosopher haunted by a melancholic hopelessness, ultimately willingly giving up her

struggle for anything in life and surrendering in passive desperation to her former seducer. Clym Yeobright returns to Egdon Heath with the zeal of a social and educational reformer with many welfare plans for the community around him. The way things happen in his life force him to turn to God and become a preacher, with no mundane schemes to accomplish. Gabriel Oak — the ideal country hero with almost all the traditional attributes of the fast vanishing shepherd culture — dreams of winning the impulsive but meditative Bathsheba Everdene, and spending a life of peaceful ecstasy. After witnessing her access to prosperity, her attraction to Boldwood and then her enchantment by Troy, he adopts an exemplary mode of adoration by becoming her silent guardian without any personal motives. He, like Venn in *The Return of the Native*, ultimately wins over the beloved through unremitting though silent consistency. The middle-aged confirmed bachelor William Boldwood, famous for his seriousness and reserve nature, gets his dormant emotions fired by Bathsheba's valentine, sinks into a passive melancholy after losing her to Troy, revives the lulled passion after Troy's disappearance and assumed death, wins her over again, and shoots Troy to death in a Samson-like action when he reappears at the crucial moment when Boldwood is about to marry Bathsheba. Michael Henchard's fate is a pathetic story of struggle and abandonment in turns. When alone and without emotional concerns, he exercises his energy and talents to the maximum and becomes the mayor of the town. Then a host of occasions for these concerns emerge from the past or from nowhere and the sentimentality and impulsiveness with which he responds frustrate him. He leaves the town in his search for mental peace and ultimately dies in a state of pathetic helplessness and isolation.

Personal involvement and reference to personal experiences has been an outstanding feature of the romantic poetry. Wordsworth's 'Prelude' and Byron's 'Don Juan' and 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' are perfect examples of this tendency, while Shelley's 'Adonais' — the elegy dedicated to Keats — also has autobiographical dimensions. This depiction of the self enriched their poetry with an emotional pathos alien to the classical, the metaphysical and the modern

philosophical poetic themes. Such autobiographical references to personal experiences are very abundant in Hardy's novels. His poetry is generally supposed to be more personal and self-centred, as many of his poems refer either to reminiscences of his childhood, the sense of loss after the death of Emma, or probably to Tryphena Sparks. But in poetry, he has to speak directly on behalf of himself, inevitably observing certain limits in order to camouflage some significant aspects of his emotional constitution. In novels, he incorporates his feelings into his characters, and is at liberty to assign to them any sphere of his sub-conscious. These autobiographical allusions not only establish a harmony between his poetry and fiction, but also enrich his characters with the essentially romantic compliment of personal involvement. Elfride Swancourt in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* is widely believed to be a replica of Emma Gifford while Stephen Smith is Hardy himself not only in terms of courting and romantic experiences but also in profession and architectural assignments, notwithstanding his taking pains in *The Life* 'to deny the suggestion that Stephen Smith was a self-portrait' (Hurst 146). Mr. Knight's intellectual grandeur and the patronage he extends to Smith can be easily traced in the personality of Hardy's benevolent friend, Horace Moule. Mrs. Charmond in *The Woodlanders* is believed to contain partially certain aspects of the personality of Julia Augusta Martin, while some other female characters are supposed to have been created on the model of Florence Henniker. Sue Bridehead is generally identified with Tryphena Sparks, who, as already explained in the fifth chapter of this thesis, is supposed to have ^{had} a child from Hardy, while Jude in many respects is an impersonation of Hardy himself whose aspirations for quality education are frustrated by youthful tragedies at the hands of destiny:

In his preface Hardy wrote that the novel dealt with the 'derision and disaster' that may result from 'the strongest passion known to humanity'; with a deadly war between flesh and spirit; and with 'the tragedy of unfulfilled aims'. The first chapter of the book is partly autobiographical, though Jude Fawley is by no means entirely Thomas Hardy. Young Jude comes from Mellstock, is crazy for books, - - - - abandons Homer for the New Testament, but fails to enter either university or church. Then, according to the original scheme, he should have committed suicide; and he does half-heartedly try to drown himself before going to Christminster, but gets drunk instead. It is here that the theme unsuitable for family reading

enters the story: that of the war between flesh and spirit, between sexual passions and ideals. - - - - And with Sue autobiography returns, or an element of autobiography.

'Sue is a type of woman which has always had an attraction for me,' Hardy wrote to Gosse, 'but the difficulty of drawing the type has kept me from attempting it till now,' and his second wife told Professor Purdy that she was in part drawn from Mrs. Henniker. He had met her shortly before writing *Jude* at full length, and, like Sue, she was a small woman: 'My dear little friend,' he called her in his letters. On the other hand he was just finishing the outline of the story when he met her, and it is improbable that he would make a prominent society woman the recognizable original of such a controversial character. Lois Deacon, Terry Coleman and F.R. Southerington argue that Sue was drawn largely from Tryphena. Hardy himself tells us that 'some of the circumstances' in the book were 'suggested by the death of a woman' in 1890; Sue Bridehead came from Marygreen (Fawley), Jude Fawley from Mellstock (Stinsford), and they were cousins. That Sue was drawn to some extent from life seems certain from two charming descriptions, the first when she is taking her students to see the model of Jerusalem in Christminster (for she like Tryphena was a school mistress), the second when she and Jude visit the Agricultural Show at Stoke Barehills. (Halliday 139-41)

Like his conception of life and its diverse demonstrations, Hardy's view of death and its connotations is pathetically romantic. Death is the termination of all activity, thinking and feeling on the visible stage of this world. It is a passage to a new phase of either oblivion or some new unpredictable activity, none of which Hardy, like most of his contemporary agnostics, could afford to believe, for none could be ascertained. As such, death is a very significant event and a tragically crucial turn irrespective of what follows it. Life is an extension in the duration of activity, sparing individuals till the inevitable advent of death. The death of those that complete the generally estimated or approximately average period of life is deemed natural, and hence rendered less lamentable. But those that die prematurely and unnaturally arouse our sense of loss and emotional sympathy to the optimum. Such a death is a romantic phenomenon by itself—a tragedy that generates the feelings of pity and fear: pity for those that become its victims and fear for ourselves for being equally susceptible to such fate. Such fears are excellently expressed by Keats in his popular sonnet 'When I have fears'⁹ reproduced in full in Chapter 3.

Wordsworth's 'Lucy Gray', Shelley's 'Adonais', and Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' also project the theme of premature death. Such a death is forced upon the innocent victim by the senseless agents of Nature, fate, society and its laws and institutions. Henchard, Jude and Elfride obviously die their natural death. Every sensitive reader, however, can easily understand that these sensitive beings become helpless victims of the flow of events combined with their emotional sensibilities, and assisted by some tragic deed at a crucial moment of one's life. Tess becomes the victim of "the justice of law"; Alec d'Urberville and Francis Troy are killed by frustrated lovers; Eustacia Vye and Damon Wildeve are drowned to death by their desperate move to follow the dictates of their impulse.

Like most of the romantic poets, Hardy's perception of life, as already stated, is an extremely gloomy one, and, therefore, such cases are not rare when an early death would prove a blessing in disguise, shortening the duration of an individual's miseries and suffering. In Keats's words:

Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful death,
Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!¹⁰

Such cases of longing for death are not infrequent in Hardy's novels. Jude obviously attempts suicide while in the same emotional mood, thinking death as the only road to peace and an end to all frustration and the tormenting awareness of failure. The same romantic spirit is evident in the song repeatedly sung to Tess on her demand by her younger brothers and sisters:

Here we suffer grief and pain,
Here we meet to part again;
In Heaven we part no more. (TDU 456)

The following pathetic but deeply philosophical observation of Hardy about the emotional conviction of Tess also demonstrates the same trend:

To her and her like, birth itself was an ordeal of degrading personal compulsion, whose gratuitousness nothing in the result seemed to justify, and at best could not palliate. (TDU 456)

Though generally Hardy places extra-human agents like Nature, Providence and Destiny as cruel, unjust and oppressive against the entire humanity, he occasionally but emphatically refers to the tragic facts that human beings by themselves — through their customs and institutions — rarely attempt to redeem this oppression. He feels that through their systems of individual and collective exploitation they misuse even the very limited liberty granted to them by the super-human controlling forces. This consciousness of the class system and a condemning attitude towards its negative repercussions brings Hardy nearer to Byron. In reference to Marty South — a young beautiful lady with romantic sensitivities, subjected to harsh labour for earning her livelihood — Hardy remarks in *The Woodlanders*:

The young woman laid down the bill-hook for a moment and examined the palm of her right hand which, unlike the other, was ungloved, and showed little hardness or roughness about it. The palm was red and blistering, as if her present occupation were as yet too recent to have subdued it to what it worked in. as with so many right hands born to manual labour, there was nothing in its fundamental shape to bear out the physiological conventionalism that gradations of birth show themselves primarily in the form of this member. Nothing but a cast of the die of destiny had decided that the girl should handle the tool; and the fingers which clasped the heavy ash haft might have skillfully guided the pencil or swept the spring, had they only been set to do it in good time. (WL 40-41)

Sue Bridehead effectively highlights the social anomaly that prevented Jude to get higher education in spite of his earnest desire to do so and his enormous potentials for it:

'You are one of the men Christminster was intended for when the colleges were founded; a man with a passion for learning, but no money, or opportunities, or friends. But you were elbowed off the pavement by millionaires' sons.' (JO 181)

Inter-human oppression, notwithstanding its tragic orientation, is insignificant in front of the extra-human tyranny to which humanity as a whole is susceptible to be victimized, though the real victims are the sensitive beings selectively chosen without any logical or justifiable criteria.

Men are too often harsh with women they love or have loved; women with men. And yet these harshnesses are tenderness itself when compared with the universal harshness out of which they grow; the harshness of the position towards the temperament, of the means towards the aims, of today towards yesterday, of hereafter towards today. (JO 436)

The contention of this passage provides a convincing conclusion to the discussion undertaken in this chapter: life, according to Hardy, offers a variety of interpretations, diversely received by individuals as per their emotional constitution and the intensity of their sensibilities. It may be a source of delight for those that take it superficially; but for those that think and feel, or who are endowed with the tormenting faculty of sensitivity, the scheme of existence is essentially tragic, its occasional delights or jolly characters just deepening the pathos of the prevalent and all-embracing melancholy by providing a contrast — insignificant by itself — to the prevalent agony in the mysterious phenomenon of this mortal existence. Based on these romantic ideals, it can be safely contended that Hardy fully supports La Bruyere's proverbial exclamation that 'Life is a tragedy for those who feel, and a comedy for those who think.'¹¹

Notes:

- ¹ *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene V, Lines 188-89.
- ² Walter Bagehot, *Estimates of Some Englishmen and Scotchmen*, 1858, 280.
(Recorded in Notes on p. 125 of Page, 1980).
- ³ Abrams, *Norton Anthology*, Vol.2 (listed), p.186.
- ⁴ FitzGerald's translation in *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam in 30 Languages* edited by Mohsin Ramezani, Padideh Publishing, Tehran, 1987,p.43.
- ⁵ The last sentence has been quoted from, and the whole passage refers to, Tony Tanner's 'Colour and Movement in Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles*,' *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No.3, pp.219-239.
- ⁶ Part II, Stanza No.3.
- ⁷ 'Stanzas Written in Dejection, Near Naples,' Stanza No.4.
- ⁸ Taken from *The Golden Treasury*, selected and arranged by F.T. Palgrave, London, Oxford University Press, 1964, pp.225-6.
- ⁹ Sonnet titled 'When I have fears' composed in January 1818, taken from *The Norton Anthology* Vol. II (listed), pp.514-5.
- ¹⁰ 'Ode to a Nightingale,' Stanza No.6.
- ¹¹ Lewis C. Henry, ed. *Best Quotations for All Occasions*. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications.

Chapter 7

Romanticism in Hardy's Novels: Scenes and Settings

As discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, I believe romanticism to be primarily an aesthetic consciousness, covering all the dimensions of human aesthetic sensitivities and the means of their fulfillment. Thus the term encompasses the outer or extra-human demonstrations of beauty — both natural and man-made — with the same validity as it does in case of inner emotional sensitivities and aesthetic inspirations. It may be claimed (and of course a number of critics — Timothy Hands, for instance — have put it forth) that Hardy is more explicitly romantic in his depiction of scenes and settings than anything else. Irrespective of the fact that I don't agree with assigning to Hardy's novels the prime status of this aspect of romanticism, of which the theme of the preceding chapter is a proof, it cannot be denied that Hardy has animated and personified meadows, heaths, farms, cliffs, buildings and even ruins in a way unparalleled by any romantic poet, even Wordsworth. In spite of Hardy's glorious contribution in this regard, this analysis is not meant to cover in its own right the romantic tackling of scenes and settings. This aspect of Hardy's romantic attitude has been widely and keenly elaborated by his critics and biographers (for instance, F. B. Pinion, 1995). They, however, have paid more attention to the appreciation of Hardy's ideal Wessex and its being identical with the countryside of Dorset and the town of Dorchester than to the correspondence of these scenes with his themes and characters. The following discussion deviates from all such attempts, and I wish to stress at the outset of this chapter that Hardy's sense of scenery and architecture cannot be fully understood in isolation or primarily in its own right. As demonstrated by the subtitle of the thesis — 'The Agony of Sensibilities' — our basic concern is to project the comparatively ignored inner human dimensions of Hardy's romanticism. The scenes and settings, like language and diction as discussed in

the succeeding chapter, will not be allowed to overshadow, or come in a conflicting position with, the main theme of our discussion. They are intended to be interwoven into the major theme in such a way that their secondary and supplementary capacity is clearly and thoroughly retained, so as they are seen as coordinating agents in the process of discovering the romantic sensitivities of Hardy's characters. As such, instead of providing an abstract or objective coverage of scenes and settings, we are to realize them as perceived by the human heart and the mind, and, instead of their graphic richness, the impressions that human sensitivities derive from them are to be evaluated.

In England, the second half of the nineteenth century saw an end of what little was left of the rural innocence and village culture. The last two decades of the century, in particular, witnessed a rapid change in the individual and the collective modes of life, not only unprecedented in the past but also unparalleled in the many decades to follow. The expansion of colonial rule demanded more and more industrialization, which subsequently brought a utilitarian and materialistic culture of its own, ruthlessly pushing into oblivion the glorious heritage of countryside innocence. Goldsmith and Wordsworth had predicted these waves in advance, and tried to block their advent or, at least, minimize their impact. Hardy, however, actually witnessed the unwelcome revolution and its dire consequences personally.

Hardy is one of the pioneers of what in the late twentieth century terms can be called 'environmental awareness'. He worships Nature — though in a way different from the way Wordsworth does — and does not like anyone or anything to disturb its purity and innocence. Hardy does not deal with the countryside environment and the issue of its presentation in isolation, in abstract scientific or sociological terms; he personifies and animates places through the senses and impulses of his characters who are directly influenced by changes in their environment.

His considerable triumph was in the observation and recreation of atmosphere, of the demanding spirit of place—a triumph which every critic has recognized. It is not so often recalled that this is an extremely perilous art, which was abused by nearly all the romantics and most flagrantly, no doubt, by Poe and by such

popular novelists as d'Arincourt. The extreme to which the abuse may be carried appears in Hardy's "A Tryst at an Ancient Earthwork" (A Changed Man), first published in the *Detroit Post* and consisting of seven or eight pages of gloomy and mysterious word-painting which introduces a trivial anecdote told in a few hundred words. But this was Hardy's one total failure in his prolonged effort to show human beings bound to the world on which they move, saved in fact by their very bondage to the soil and the living past. The Cornwall coast of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and the rocky Isle of Slingers in *The Well-Beloved*, both intended to be regions of mystery where anything can happen, are partial failures which, like most partial failures, define the intention better than do conspicuous successes. Not climate or landscape alone or the trades practiced, but also the particular folk customs and traditions of a place determine the kind of human drama likely to occur there. Egdon Heath, visited by birds from every climate and region of the world, and so undulated that bonfires may be seen for miles, is preeminently a place where a man may lose his way following endlessly crisscrossing trails; where isolated human beings overlook each other longingly or hunt each other in the dark; where the human purpose is as minute and directionless as the purpose of scurrying ants which accidentally collide. *The Return of the Native* is a tragedy of universal and enormous cross-purpose. *The Woodlanders* is a tragedy of minute divagation from the norm. And thus the tiny Hintocks, where men depend for their living on trees which all but shut out the sun, is so secluded from the outside world and so tied to the visible past that even the highest rebellion against tradition and the soil takes on a "Sophoclean grandeur". To succeed with symbolic environments as obvious as these required not only genius but tact. (Guerard 78-9)

We may disagree with the quoted author's notion of Hardy's failure in certain respects not directly related to our current enterprise, but the passage suggests a solid foundation for blending Hardy's characters with their environment. He had lived in London for a considerable time, and it cannot be believed that he did not find any material worth depicting in that 'Heart of the World' during its Victorian climax. We rarely find any noteworthy urban character in his fiction, because, in his opinion, only the uncorrupted children of Nature can possess the romantic pathos and emotional sensitivity essential for a heroic status.

Like Wordsworth, Hardy had collected impressions from the country life during his childhood and boyhood, which he retained in his imagination till his mature age. He derived themes, events and characters from these fantastic but not unrealistic impressions. He longed to retain his world of impressions as it

used to be, and attempted to resist any move that threatened to spoil that world of innocence and inspiration. Materially, he could not resist the ruthless phenomenon of change brought about by industrialization and the subsequent utilitarianism. He, however, sought refuge in the world of imagination, and reconstructed the country of his childhood, with a certain colouring of imagination, in the form of his ideal Wessex, the setting of almost all his major novels. It is a fact established beyond doubt that Wessex is nothing but the county of Dorset in the later half of the nineteenth century, particularly during its early decades (Hurst 1980).

Deriving settings of art from the world of personal experience by adding to the factual objects and places a colouring of imagination is certainly a romantic tradition, endowing the artist with the subjectivity essential for passionate involvement in the creation. Hardy's enormous success therein testifies to the hypothesis of the thesis. Along with idealizing the personal observations and experiences through the infinite possibilities of art, and glorifying the innocence and genuineness of country life, there is a deeper romantic aspect in Hardy's presentation of settings, particularly in reference to this thesis. It is the art of exploiting places and environment for adding mystery, pathos and thrill to human actions. Undertakings of romantic orientation in his fiction are strikingly queer, and they could never have been queer if not supplemented by the queer but very carefully designed settings wherein places are made integral to actions, not as inanimate objects and locations but rather as personified beings with a life of their own.

Hardy's Wessex is so panoramic and volatile within a harmonious framework that it conveniently affords to satisfy his voracious quest for appropriate stages and settings to project diverse themes and happenings. Here we find Egdon Heath, Weatherbury Farms, the vale of Blackmoor, the lush green tableland of Froom Vale, the awful but romantic Beeny Cliff, Oxwell Hall, Rainbarrow Mounds, Mixen Lane, Norcombe Hill, Sylvania Castle, the dairy-farm of Talbothays, and the town of Casterbridge standing at the junction of past and present, and what not!

Nearly every place in Hardy's fiction has a real counterpart in a large area of southern and western England from Hampshire to Cornwall. Hardy divided it into North Wessex (Berckshire), Mid-Wessex (Wiltshire), Upper Wessex (Hampshire), Outer Wessex (Somerset), South Wessex (Dorset), Lower Wessex (Devon), and Off-Wessex (Cornwall). South Wessex is the heart of the region. Hardy adopted the name 'Wessex', first used in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, from the ancient West Saxon kingdom. The now-familiar names of Wessex places were gradually evolved. There is controversy over the identification of some of them but most can be definitely located—from Hardy's identification, the names themselves (e.g. Abbot's Cernel for Cerne Abbas), topographical features reflected in the names, historical association, detection by literary pilgrims.

In the 1895 Preface to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy wrote, 'It may be wise to state clearly at the outset that the author has never admitted more than that places named fictitiously were suggested by such and such real places. But assuming these places of fiction and verse to be idealizations, there is little difficulty in recognizing the majority of them in substance.' This established an important principle of relationship between Casterbridge and Dorchester.

Hardy discovered himself as a novelist by exploiting his exceptionally strong sense of place for a deeper purpose. He translated personal and intractable material into parable and was able to preserve both his privacy and his artistic freedom. Wessex, Hardy's 'partly real, partly dream-country' in which he was both observer and participant, remains essentially fictional. (Hurst 182)

The emphasis on Hardy's love for the rural and the unsophisticated should not lead one to the conclusion that Hardy is essentially antagonistic to progress and development. He appreciates every innovation and discovery — progress of course — that does not threaten to uproot rural culture or obliterate its essence. He is even charmed by a balanced combination of the traditional and the modern, which gives a sense of continuity and a natural flow to past into the present. The following artistically sublime description of Casterbridge, with a homogenous blend of crosscurrents of the traditional country culture on the one hand, and the civilized English modernism on the other, is an evidence that strongly supports this contention:

Casterbridge, as has been hinted, was a place deposited in the block upon a corn-field. There was no suburb in the modern sense, or transitional intermixture of town and down. It stood, with regard to the wide fertile land adjoining, clean-cut and distinct, like a chessboard on a green tablecloth. The farmer's boy could sit under his barley-mow and pitch a stone into the office-window of the town-

clerk; reapers at work among the sheaves nodded to acquaintances standing on the pavement corner; the red-robed judge, when he condemned a sheep-stealer, pronounced sentence to the tune of Baa, that floated in at the window from the remainder of the flock browsing hard by; and at executions the waiting crowd stood in a meadow immediately before the drop, out of which the cows have been temporarily driven to give the spectators room. (MC 162)

This great passage, demonstrating Hardy's unmatched and tremendous sense of place, and his capacity for keenly observing, artistically absorbing and masterly reproducing scenes and environments in terms of impressions and concrete animated images, should not lead us to an extremist conviction that Hardy is appreciative of Casterbridge with its modern trends and commercial culture. Casterbridge, though a symbolic presentation of Dorchester, is not a typical Victorian town of England. It is a town of Hardy's ideal Wessex, and an understanding of the Wessex environment is essential for appreciating the distinguishing features of Casterbridge as a town. However, it is quite clear that Hardy's appreciation of variety within the harmony of Casterbridge should not be mistaken as his admiration for the life-style of late Victorian English towns in general.

Thus Casterbridge was in most respects but the pole, focus, or nerve-knot of the surrounding country life; differing from the many manufacturing towns which are foreign bodies set down, like boulders on a plain, in a green world with which they have nothing in common. Casterbridge lived by agriculture at one remove further from the fountain-head than the adjoining villages— no more. The townsfolk understood every fluctuation in the rustic's condition, for it affected their receipts as much as the labourer's; they entered into the troubles and joys which moved the aristocratic families ten miles round— for the same reason. (MC 130)

Thus, it is not the town life style that Hardy admires: it is the reflection of Wessex culture in the townsfolk and their life that attracts him. He appreciates its being different from the commercial towns in general, and its being able to maintain its rural and agricultural identity in spite of sharing the essential progress of the age. Hardy's Wessex is a secluded world — with a variety of manifestations of Nature, and the people strongly believing in the supernatural agents — which he obviously desires to keep secluded from the

threatening influence of the modern utilitarianism. The world of Wessex is the Victorian Dorset presented with a certain romantic and gothic colouring that is the product of Hardy's artistic imagination founded on his keen observation of beings and objects in the real world. It is not a world of Nature depicted in its own right; it is rather presented as an appropriate stage for the romantic interaction of its inhabitants: 'At the simplest level then, Wessex is a place where a range of fictional conventions, a set of unspoken rules, come into play at Hardy's will' (Mallett 49-50). ✓

Setting-wise the most impressive of Hardy's novels is *The Return of the Native* where the fantastic world of Egdon Heath is a brilliant caption of the imaginary romantic ideals in the Victorian rural perspective. It simultaneously fulfils Wordsworth's quest for an uninterrupted calm, Coleridge's ideal of the supernatural or the gothic in Nature, Shelley's longing for the infinite freedom of the soul and Keats's love for the ancient and the distant. Egdon Heath is a brilliant demonstration of Hardy's unique capability to visualize images so vividly that scenes and places attain a life of their own, occasionally overshadowing the characters for whose elaboration they have been set. Along with seeing the rural south of England with all its traditions and customs of the agricultural labourers in the Victorian era, the reader also finds himself in a mysterious world, an uninterpretable amalgam of the gothic and the romantic. It is, in Coleridge's words: ✓

A savage place as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover!¹ ✓

It is striking how this casually coined image of Coleridge in a dream poem applies so virtually to Hardy's Egdon Heath where the wailing woman (Eustacia Vye) — considered by the people around as a sort of witch or someone possessed — is actually seen waiting on the mysterious heights of the savage heath for her demon-lover (Damon Wildeve). The place and the characters are so thoroughly and homogeneously blended together that their segregation would absolutely distort everything — the plot and the story. ✓

Neither the Heath could make any impression without Eustacia and Diggory Venn, nor these characters could have become so memorably alive without the suiting background of the Heath. This successful attempt of Hardy to animate and personify places not as geographical localities but rather as human associates— perspectives for aspirations, emotions, intentions and actions — is very significant for this thesis as it supplements the theme of the unification of the external and the internal elements of romanticism. D. H. Lawrence was the first to realize the extra-ordinary significance of Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*:

The real sense of tragedy is got from the setting. What is the great tragic power in the book? It is Egdon Heath. And who are the real spirits of the heath? First, Eustacia, then Clym's mother, then Wildeve. The natives have nothing or little in common with the place.

What is the real stuff of tragedy in the book? It is the Heath. It is the primitive, primal earth, where the instinctive life heaves up. There, in the deep, rude stirring of the instincts, there was the reality that worked the tragedy. Close to the body of things, there can be heard the stir that makes us and destroys us. The heath heaved with raw instinct. Egdon, whose dark soil was strong and crude and organic as the body of a beast. Out of the body of this crude earth are born Eustacia, Wildeve, Mistress Yeobright, Clym, and all the others. They are one year's accidental crop. What matters if some are drowned or dead, and others preaching or married: what matter, any more than the withering heath, the redennin berries, the seedy furze, and the dead fern of one autumn of Egdon? The Heath persists. Its body is strong and fecund, it will bear many more crops beside this. Here is the sombre, latent power that will go on producing, no matter what happens to the product. Here is the deep, black source from whence all these little contents of lives are drawn. And the contents of the small lives are spilled and wasted. There is savage satisfaction in it: for so much more remains to come, such a black, powerful fecundity is working there that what does it matter? (Lawrence 415)

I could not derive any convincing interpretation from the last sentence of the first paragraph of the quoted passage. Why we should not consider Eustacia, Clym's mother and Wildeve as natives of the Heath, and in what sense the real natives do not have anything in common with the Heath? Most probably Lawrence alludes to the fact that the other heath-folks lived *on* the Heath while these impulsive beings with romantic sensibilities lived *with* the Heath. Though none of them (i.e. the latter class) found peace or prosperity either emotionally or

socially for their being victims of 'the agony of sensibilities'. They lived a life that suited the Heath. Lawrence's subsequent exposition substantiates this view.

Man has a purpose which he has divorced from the passionate purpose that issued him out of the earth into being. The Heath threw forth its shaggy heather and furze and fern, clean into being. It threw forth Eustacia and Wildeve and Mistress Yeobright and Clym, but to what purpose? Eustacia thought she wanted the hats and bonnets of Paris. Perhaps she was right. The heavy, strong soil of Egdon, breeding original native beings, is under Paris as well as under Wessex, and Eustacia sought herself in the gay city. She thought life there, in Paris, would be tropical, and all her energy and passion out of Egdon would there come into handsome flower. And if Paris real had been Paris as she imagined it, no doubt she was right, and her instinct was rightly expressed. But Paris real was not Eustacia's imagined Paris. Where was her imagined Paris, the place where her powerful nature could come to blossom? Beside some strong-passioned, unconfined man, her mate. (Lawrence 415-16)

Eustacia's longing for the glamour of Paris provides a base for contrasting the vividly drawn picture of Egdon Heath against the unseen city culture of Paris to which no direct access is provided. Clym Yeobright represents its fashion, its artificiality, its intellectual grandeur, its social etiquette, and its utilitarian and scientific approach. Yet he is not its typical representative, for he is the child of Egdon by birth and brought up there during his tender years. Hardy celebrates his settlement in the Heath as the return of the native but does not offer him any adjustment except through ecclesiastical escapism. No one in this novel is an intruder in the real sense as are Dr. Fitzpiers and Mrs. Charmond in *The Woodlanders*, Henry Knight in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* or Alec D'Urberville in *Tess*. All of these — the three men, at least — exploit the un-Wessex-like ambitions of the Wessex characters. Their victims are the half-enlightened individuals who wrongly think that the world outside is more interesting and fascinating than their Wessex.

To Hardy, unlike them, Wessex embodies all fascination — charm, innocence, instinct, life. To him the city does not qualify for becoming the setting of any significant piece of fiction. The actual setting may vary from novel to novel with a variety of scenes and sites, the overall perspective of the unmistakable Wessex, however, can be seen and sensed in all of them. Except

for *Jude the Obscure*, the action of which is set in the North-Wessex and in Christminster (a pseudonym for Oxford), all of Hardy's major novels operate within the South Wessex, which by itself comprises a panoramic variety of places. These include the two vales of little and great dairies, one adjacent to The Hintocks on way out to Sherton Abbas, the other adjacent to Casterbridge and surrounded by Egdon Heath, Mellstock and Overcombe, containing the romantic Talbothays of *Tess*; the slopes neighbouring Trantridge Cross on way to Melchester; the Bulbarrow Hill and Flintcombe Ash in the centre on the off side; the thinly populated locations like Mellstock, Weatherbury, Overcombe, Kingsbere, Emminster, Marlott — varying from small villages to well enough towns, each having its own particular temperament; ports, heaths, heights, woodlands, farms and what not; with Casterbridge as the central town, almost in the same relation to Wessex as London was to the Victorian world.

Both as poet and novelist, Hardy is an artist that imparts impressions, and Wessex as such is a world of impressions rather than objects. He has absorbed his creative genius so entirely in this imaginary world that it has become an inevitable compulsion for him, and he could not work outside it even if he liked.

Melvyn Bragg has suggested, in an essay 'Thomas Hardy and *Jude the Obscure*' (Budmouth Essays, 1976) that the invasion of Hardy's personal experiences into his final novels, *Jude the Obscure* especially, led to the disintegration of Wessex and his abandonment of the novel. 'In *Jude*...he saw that the things inside him could get out in ways which could disturb his sense of secrecy, propriety, and perhaps even survival.' But his fictional kingdom had been created and is one of the great achievements of modern literature. (Hurst 182-83)

Hardy's Wessex, however, should not be mistaken as merely a masterpiece of artistic talent or a product of creative imagination. The autobiographical traits in his depiction of Wessex cannot be overlooked. To Hardy, Wessex symbolizes all that he knew of the world that was worth-depicting — England, Europe, the earth, Paradise; it, nevertheless, symbolizes more than anything else the Dorset and Dorchester that he observed and experienced in his childhood. His daily walk of three miles from Higher

Bockhampton to Dorchester and back as a student of Isaac Last's school from 1849 to 1856 provided him an opportunity not only to constantly observe the panoramic scenes in various weathers, but also to form a sense of unification and harmony between the conservative countryside and the developing Dorchester (Weber 12-13). As he daily witnessed the evolutions in the town, he was never stunned by any progress therein and had been able to accommodate it as a natural product of time.

Hardy also learnt things from the town of Dorchester. It was no ordinary or average small town but one that possessed unusual features, some of them extremely impressive. There was, for instance, the Ring, 'the local name of one of the finest Amphitheatres...remaining in Britain. The Amphitheatre was a huge circular enclosure, with a notch at opposite extremities of its diameter north and south...It was to Casterbridge (Hardy's fictional name for Dorchester) what the ruined Colesium is to modern Rome, and was nearly of the same magnitude.' There were other marks of age in Dorchester. In one of the little used alleys of the town was an ancient doorway, the keystone of the arch of which was a mask. 'Originally the mask had exhibited a comic leer, but generations of Casterbridge boys had thrown stones at the mask, aiming at its open mouth; and the blows thereon had chipped off the lips and jaws as if they had been eaten away by disease. The appearance was so ghastly that one could not bear to look at it.' But obviously young Thomas Hardy had looked often and steadily at it.

The boy's daily walk between Bockhampton and Dorchester gave him an opportunity to study faces and to read character. As he approached the town he had to cross two bridges. The first one was built of stone; the second, at the end of High Street, was of weather-stained brick. (Modern visitors to Dorchester can no longer see the weather-stained bricks, for the old bridge was rebuilt in 1954 of stone, and it no longer presents the contrasts which Hardy's observant eyes had noticed.) In his day, it was not the bridges themselves that attracted his attention but the people he learned to associate with them. For 'to this pair of bridges gravitated all the failures of the town. There was a marked difference of quality between the personages who haunted the near bridge of brick, and the personages who haunted the far bridge of stone.....' The 'failures of the town' can have little suspected how much a slight boy who passed them every day was observing. (Weber 13-14)

The underlined sentences within the passage from *The Mayor of Casterbridge* demonstrate how accurately Hardy has recorded personal experiences and observations in his novels. That is why critics and biographers have faced no inconvenience in identifying a real counterpart for almost every

fictional location. Hardy does not employ just his creative talent while picturing Wessex; he rather pours his soul and self into it. His love for Wessex, its scenes, settings and culture in their own right has led some critics to refer to him primarily as the 'Historian of Wessex' (Mallett 48). Wessex does not emerge out of his novels; rather the novels emerge out of Wessex, taking for their canvas some of the glorious impressions recollected by Hardy in tranquillity. As such, Wessex has an existence beyond the novels on a sub-fictional level that could find an outlet in the more personal mode of poetry only. Hardy's much celebrated poem 'Wessex Heights'² (1886) is one of such pieces.

We can conclude the evaluation of Wessex by contending that it is a brilliant combination of three outstanding traditions: Hardy's enormous sense of place and situation supplemented by his enormous ability to detect and depict minute details of locations; secondly, his immense talent of enriching these locations with images and fantasies in order to add an idealistic touch to the real; and, thirdly, the artistic recreation of the setting and associations of his own past, glorifying those phases of it wherein he ^{get} deeper and more pathetic impressions. The status of the first tradition may be debatable, but the last two are definitely genuinely romantic, and it can be safely asserted that Hardy's Wessex is one of the most romantic fictional settings ever designed, not only in the explicit sensuous sense, but also in the deeper sense of absorbing, motivating and reflecting human sensibilities.

Within this broad perspective of Wessex, Hardy's artistic talent presents a variety of settings and stages in such a panoramic manner that we see the scenic beauty of landscapes, grooves, hills and woodlands, without our emotional involvement in the pathetic progress of the narrative being blocked. The diverse manifestations of the weather play an enormous role in animating the scenes in accordance with human requirements of the episode concerned. The changing weather — tumults, rains, snowfall, sunny days — does not just present a befitting or illustrating background; it rather shares the very human moods as a personified active agent in its own right. In the following description, the melancholic mood of the scene foretells the coming crisis that

will disturb the smoothly progressing romance of Elfride and Stephen in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*:

As seen from the rectory dining-room, which took a warm tone of light from the fire, the weather and scene outside seemed to have stereotyped themselves in unrelieved shades of grey. The long-armed trees and shrubs of juniper, cedar, and pine varieties, were greyish-black; those of the broad-leaved sort, together with the herbage, were greyish-green; the eternal hills and tower behind them were greyish-brown; the sky, dropping behind all, grey of the purest melancholy. (PBE 35)

This passage is very significant because along with the pathetic fallacy assigned to trees and the sky, forestalled by the title of the chapter — 'Bosom'd high in tufted trees' — it manifests Hardy's unmatched use of colour-schemes, particularly the diverse combinations of the grey for depicting humans moods, and those of Nature and the cosmos. It is quite possible that this might have been the root of the frequent and effective use of the grey colour by the early twentieth century novelists, the best instance being the image "grey nothingness" employed by D. H. Lawrence — Hardy's great contemporary admirer — to describe Lydia's feelings of loneliness and meaninglessness on her first arrival at Cossethay in *The Rainbow*. The application of phrases like 'long-armed' to trees is also a proof of Hardy's tendency to personify the objects of Nature. With a more precise description of the weather-signs predicting gloom opens the twelfth chapter of the same novel:

The few tattered clouds of the morning enlarged and united, the sun withdrew behind them to emerge no more that day, and the evening came to close in drifts of rain. The water-drops beat like duck shot against the window of the railway carriage containing Stephen and Elfride. (PBE 112)

Personifying weathers and the objects of Nature is a prominent romantic attitude adopted by almost all the romantic poets as illustrated in the third chapter of this thesis. Hardy's tackling of such situations, however, is more profoundly romantic for he produces a comprehensive environment rather than just animated locations. The environment is both capacious and voracious enough to accommodate places, persons, modes of weather and demonstrations of Nature. This peculiarity of Hardy's art has been discussed in detail by

Douglas Brown (1954) in "A Novel of Character and Environment". Although this article focuses on *Tess*, it encompasses Hardy's art as a whole, highlighting the need of studying the 'environment' and its integral association with the human agents, rather than the typical aspects of the plot.

The twentieth chapter of *The Woodlanders* opens in a gay style. The weather foretells some pleasing romantic happenings, and Hardy's rare smile can be well imagined while setting a mischievous stage for the light-hearted description of the sensually rich scene at the end of the chapter.

The leaves over Hintock unrolled their creased tissues and the woodland seemed to change from an open filigree to a solid opaque body of infinitely larger shape and importance. The boughs cast green shades, which disagreed with the complexion of the girls who walked there; and a fringe of the same boughs which overhung Mr. Melbury's garden dripped on his seed-plots when it rained, pitting their surface all over as with pock-marks, till Melbury declared that gardens in such a place were no good at all. The two trees that had cracked all the winter left off cracking, the whirr of the night-hawk, however, forming a very satisfactory continuation of uncanny music from that quarter. Except at midday the sun was not seen complete by the Hintock people, but rather in the form of numerous little stars staring through the leaves.

Such an appearance it had on midsummer eve of this year, and as the hour grew later, and nine o' clock drew on, the irradiation of the day-time became broken up by the weird shadows and ghostly nooks of indistinctness. Imagination could trace amid the trunks and boughs swarthy faces and funeral figures. This was before the moon rose. Later on, when that planet was getting command of the upper heaven, and consequently shining with an unbroken face into such open glades as there were in the neighbourhood of the hamlet, it became apparent that the margin of the wood which approached the timber-merchant's premises was not to be left to the customary stillness of that reposeful time. (WL 174)

Any keen observer of Hardy's artistic and narrative schemes would feel unconvinced that an elaborate preliminary design, like the one just quoted, should terminate in a slight and insignificant event, just succeeding the passage:

'You are in my arms, dearest,' said Fitzpiers; 'And I am going to claim you, and keep you there all our two lives!'

She rested on him like one utterly mastered; and it was several seconds before she recovered from this helplessness. Subdued screams and struggles audible from neighbouring brakes revealed that there had been other lurkers thereabout for similar purpose. Grace, unlike most of these companions of hers, instead of giggling and writhing, said in a trembling voice, 'Mr.

Fitzpiers, will you let me go?'

'Certainly,' he said, laughing; 'as soon as you have recovered.'
(WL 178)

The really corresponding episode is the one in which the charged Fitzpiers puts aside all the dictates of decency and follows Suke Damson's call, resulting in return to instinctive animalism recorded in a Fielding-like manner, not very frequently seen in Hardy's fiction. The significance of this event is that Hardy, unlike Fielding, does not believe in any lighter aspect of life. The obviously amusing scene under discussion becomes a cause of the tragic doom as Grace's discovering Fitzpiers's affair with Suke primarily leads to her disillusionment and their ultimate separation, breeding tragedy upon tragedy. Thus happiness, according to Hardy, is not only an interlude in the tragedy of life but rather a part of the tragic action itself.

On a sudden another girl came bounding down the same descent that had been followed by Grace; a fine-framed young woman, with bare arms. Seeing Fitzpiers standing there she said with playful effrontery: 'May'st kiss me if 'canst catch me, Tim!'

Fitzpiers recognized her as Suke Damson, a hoydenish maiden of the hamlet—the girl whom he had heard swear to herself when she got soiled by the newly painted gate. She was plainly mistaking him for her lover. He was impulsively disposed to profit by her error, and as soon as she began racing away he started in pursuit.

After the preliminary stages of this sudden romance, they cross all the limits. Hardy, as usual, does not describe or directly allude to the actual act but lets the reader's imagination take its own course. Certain novelists, D. H. Lawrence for instance, would exploit such an opportunity for glorifying the physical and sensual dimension of the undertaking. Hardy, in contrast, leaves the description incomplete to make it clear that the event is not meant to be rejoiced in, but as a proof of the unreliability and baselessness of the occasionally comic face of life. The following paragraph that concludes the episode, particularly the clause 'the coarse' whirl of the eternal night hawk burst sarcastically' exploits the environment to forecast the tragic termination of the obviously amusing and sensually thrilling scene.

He did not pursue his questioning. In the moonlight Suke looked very beautiful, the scratches and blemishes incidental to her outdoor occupation being invisible under these pale rays. While they remained silent on the hay the coarse whirr of the eternal night hawk burst sarcastically from the top of the tree at the nearest corner of the wood. Besides this not a sound of any kind reached their ears, the time of nightingale being now past, and Hintock lying at a distance of two miles at least. In the opposite direction the hay-field stretched away into remoteness till it was lost to the eye in soft mist. (WL 179-80)

Any one familiar with Hardy's use of images and symbols can predict the way in which the scene turns into a preface of tragedy, as the emotional lapses on behalf of Fitzpiers and their physical consequences have a very deep impact on the future relationship of Fitzpiers and Grace Melbury, and the tension arising therein leads to the tragic doom of another sensitive and innocent being — Giles Winterborne.

Hardy does have the rare ability of modifying and modeling the same objects and aspects of Nature into different moulds according to the requirement of the situation and the event they connote. The same agents, that is, trees and birds in the same situation i.e. darkness (though without pale moonlight of the afore-mentioned one) amid night's prime, have been applied in the scene of Tess's loss of chastity in such a way that the impact is a pathetically melancholic one:

Darkness and silence ruled everywhere around. Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks of The Chase, in which were poised gentle roosting birds in their last nap; and about them stole the hopping rabbits and hares. But, might one say, where was Tess's guardian angel? (TDU 90-91)

Along with the stationary scenes, Hardy also presents panoramic views of landscapes, environments and other manifestations of Nature through the eyes of a mobile observer, as travelling is a frequent undertaking with his characters. These modes of travelling by themselves put forth memorable settings, whether they are Henchard and Susan on foot, Angel and Izz Huett on horseback, Tess and Alec in the coach, or Stephen and Elfride with the former on foot and the later on horseback, or even both of them travelling in train for an

intended marriage. In Hardy's novels, travelling does not imply change of places only: it leads to substantial developments which could not be properly adjusted in stationary settings. Let us take the following instance from *A Pair of Blue Eyes* where Elfride is sitting on horseback, led by Stephen on foot; and she wants her newly charmed lover to feel like the 'Knight-at-arms' of Keats's romantic song 'La Belle Dame sans Merci', the romantic dimension being Elfride's desire to be loved in a wild way portrayed in ancient epics and songs rather than in the traditional stereotypical Victorian sense.

She looked sideways at him with critical meditation tenderly rendered.

'Do I seem like La belle dame sans merci?' she began suddenly, without replying to his question. 'Fancy yourself saying, Mr. Smith:

"I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song. . . .

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild and manna dew."
and that's all she said.'

'No, no,' said the young man stilly, and with a rising colour:
' "And sure in language strange she said,
I love thee true."
'Not at all,' she rejoined quickly. 'See how I can gallop. Now, Pansy, off!' (PBE 57)

A demonstration of the love of the heroic can be seen in Elfride's preferring Knight to Smith. In the phase of conflict, her inclinations are directed by a clearly romantic concern: the more gloomy the prospects, the stronger the emotional attachment. A Stephen seen mostly with business concerns or in riskless moods of emotional outburst like the one quoted above, cannot match Knight behaving with a Samson-like grandeur in the face of death, and thus it is the latter that wins her appreciation.

Hardy is crazy for elucidating architectural glories. He has a unique sense of architectural aesthetics unparalleled by any English poet or novelist. For him, architecture is a branch of fine arts whose primary concern should be emotional satisfaction rather than material convenience. This architectural

consciousness has two diverse demonstrations: it leads to a better and more vivid exposition of the background of a situation; but it also, at least occasionally, blocks the flow of the actual narrative and creates a sense of undue deviation on behalf of the novelist. It is neither convenient nor needed for our current discussion to go into the details of Hardy's architectural ideals and aspirations and their reflection in Max Gate and other buildings he designed. We will just briefly discuss the role of architecture in setting stages for human episodes and their significance in conveying the tastes of individuals and communities — families in particular; our focus being Hardy as a novelist rather than as an architect.

Hardy's writings frequently reveal his involvement with his former profession. *The Poor Man and the Lady*, *Desperate Remedies* and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* all have an architect as their hero. The lines of the buildings in Chief Street, Christminster, in *Jude* are 'as distinct in the morning air as an architectural drawing' (iii,ix), and architectural terms recur: 'Viewed sideways, the closing line of [Eustacia's] lips formed, with almost geometric precision, the curve so well known in the art of design as the cima-recta, or ogee' (*Return of the Native*, I,vii), just as Lucetta is to fling herself 'on the couch in the cyma-recta curve which so became her' (*Mayor of Casterbridge*, xxii). When Hardy was unduly driven back on his personal resources, the architectural element tended to grow in proportion. Thus *Jude*, the novel into which Hardy feared he had put too much of himself, has a mason as its hero; and *A Laodicean*, into which Hardy, fearing death, put more of the facts of his own life than he otherwise might, has yet another architect (and, indeed, more architectural matter than any other Hardy novel). (Hands 133)

Picturing buildings in words is Hardy's pleasure, and he does not hesitate to do it too recurrently in his novels. While depicting two sorts of buildings, however, his architectural aesthetics is seen coordinating with his creative genius: countryside dwellings and isolated churches.

The Weatherbury of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, with Bathsheba's manor house as its focus, presents a broader perspective gradually narrowed down in such a way that the mode of living of the owner of the house can be easily compared with that of the surrounding multitudes. It is believed to be based on the pattern of Waterston Hall, one and a half mile west of Puddletown, partially built by Hardy's father (Hurst 196). The comprehensive impression is

that of a gothic building, harmoniously extending its image to the rich agricultural surrounding. Though an outsider, having occupied the estate by inheritance, Bathsheba is so homogeneously blended with the place that her introduction only adds beauty to the gothic without disturbing it in any way. Oak's inclusion in the manor labourers adds romance to the scene. More significantly than anything else, however, it provides an evidence of how dwellings and surroundings influence human conduct, as seen in Bathsheba's susceptibility to following the dictates of the heart against the arguments of reason.

By daylight, the bower of Oak's newly found mistress, Bathsheba Everdene, presented itself as a hoary building, of the early stage of Classical Renaissance as regards its architecture, and of a proportion which told at a glance that, as is so frequently the case, it had once been the manorial hall upon a small estate around it, now altogether effaced as a distinct property, and merged in the vast tract of a non-resident landlord, which comprised several such modest demesnes.

Fluted pilasters, worked from the solid stone, decorated its front, and above the roof the chimneys were panelled or columnar, some coped gables with finials and like features still retaining traces of their gothic extraction. Soft brown mosses, like faded velveteen, formed cushions upon the stone tiling, and tufts of the houseleek or sengreen sprouted from the eaves of the low surrounding buildings.
(FMC 80)

The description proceeds with typical, boring references to minute architectural technicalities, which probably Hardy realized to be uninteresting, but could not resist to elaborate. He, however, succeeds in involving the reader when such descriptions are interwoven with the progress of the story and human concerns involved therein.

I personally believe Doctor Fitzpiers's cottage to be the most charming of all of Hardy's presentation of dwellings, though the detailed architectural description adds very little to its charm which is basically due to its location and the romantic-cum-gothic mysteriousness assigned to it. It is clearly visible from Melbury House as well as from anywhere around. The initial description of the cottage, befitting the mysterious occupations of the intruder-doctor, is not very much different from that of Bathsheba's manor-house; it contains architectural

details of the building, along with an overview of the comprehensive perspective of its location:

Dr. Fitzpiers lived on the slope of the hill, in a house of much less pretension both as to architecture and as to magnitude than the timber merchant's. The latter had without doubt been once the manorial residence appertaining to the snug and modest domain of Little Hintock, of which the boundaries were now lost by its absorption in the adjoining estate of Mrs. Charmond. . . .

Mr. Fitzpiers's dwelling, on the contrary, was small, box-like, and comparatively modern. It had been occupied, and was in part occupied still, by a retired farmer and his wife, who, on the surgeon's arrival in quest of a home, had accommodated him by receding from their front rooms into the kitchen quarter, whence they administered to his wants, and emerged at regular intervals to receive from him a not unwelcome addition to their income.

The cottage and its garden were so regular in their plan that they might have been laid down by a Dutch designer of the time of William and Mary. In a low, dense hedge was a door, over which the hedge formed an arch, and from the inside of the door a straight path, bordered with clipped box, ran up the slope of the garden to the porch, which was exactly in the middle of the house-front, with two windows on each side. Right and left of the path were first a bed of gooseberry bushes; next of currant; next of raspberry; next of strawberry, next of old-fashioned flowers; at the corners opposite the porch being spheres of box resembling a pair of school globes. Over the roof of the house could be seen the orchard on yet higher ground, and behind the orchard the forest trees, reaching up to the crest of the hill. (WL 142)

The location of the dwelling is so recurrently and vividly described through the eyes of Hintock residents that any sensible reader is able to visualize it through imagination. It plays an enormous role in indirectly describing the taste of its occupant whose nature has rich romantic traits. Unable to retain his usual composure in this dream-like environment, he is swayed by reason and conscience on the one hand and instinct and emotions on the other, yielding to the latter in all crucial turns and latter on regretting but to no effect. Furthermore, it is due to the projected location of the dwelling and its being visible from Melbury's that events like the following take place.

It was now day out of doors, though the tones of morning were feeble and wan, and it was long before the sun would be perceptible in this overshadowed vale. Not a sound came from any of the out-houses as yet. The tree-trunks, the road, the out-buildings, the garden, every object, wore that aspect of mesmeric passivity which the quietude of daybreak lends to such scenes.

Helpless immobility seems to be combined with intense consciousness; a meditative inertness possessed all things, oppressively contrasting with her [Grace's] own active emotions. Beyond the road were some cottage roofs and orchards; over these roofs and over the apple-trees behind, high up the slope, and backed by the plantation on the crest, was the house yet occupied by her future husband, the rough-cast front showing whitely through its creepers. The window-shutters were closed, the bedroom curtains closely down, and not the thinnest coil of smoke rose from the rugged chimneys.

Something broke the stillness. The front-door of the house she was gazing at opened softly, and there came out into the porch a female figure, wrapped in a large cloak, beneath which was visible the white skirt of a long loose garment like a night-dress. A grey-arm, stretching from within the porch, adjusted the cloak over the woman's shoulders; it was withdrawn and disappeared, the door closing behind her.

The woman went quietly down the box-edged path between the raspberries and currants, and as she walked her well-developed form and gait betrayed her individuality. It was Suke Damson, the affianced one of simple young Tim Tangs. (WL 196-7)

The first paragraph of the quoted passage manifests Hardy's technique (not there in the two earlier quoted descriptions) of minimizing the monotony of describing scenes and buildings by assigning a romantic type of pathetic fallacy to the objects and aspects involved, and personifying them in such a way that they become units of the flow of life rather than of static existence.

Along with dwellings, Hardy's description of churches is also noteworthy. Personal romantic adventures inevitably connote churches needing repairs, and autobiography reigns supreme in describing any such phenomenon. Hardy's first mature romance developed amid such gothic features of a church (the secluded church and rectory of St. Juliet) where he met Emma Lavinia Gifford in 1870. The church theme can be seen as a symbol of the power of destiny in autobiographical sense as it had played an enormous role in driving Hardy to the matrimonial bond which he so vehemently, though implicitly, lamented as a cause of emotional chaos. As such, its romantic orientation is stamped.

Her memoirs (Some Recollections)³ describe this romantic spot, 'with beautiful sea-coast, and the wild Atlantic Ocean rolling with its magnificent waves and spray, its white gulls and black choughs and grey puffins, its cliffs and rocks and gorgeous sunsettings sparkling redness in a track widening from the horizon to

the shore'. St. Juliet was an emotional focal point for Hardy to which he returned in his imagination again and again. (Hurst 140)

Undoubtedly, the most impressive depiction of churches is in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Jude the Obscure*, both strongly autobiographical. In the former, the very object of the young architect's love lives in the rectory, and the entire passionate attachment, ultimately doomed to culminate into a romantic tragedy, develops inside or around the church and the rectory; while in *Jude*, Sue Bridehead accompanies her frustrated cousin in his assigned task of renovating certain calligraphic carvings in a church. Churches in Hardy's novels are not just places of performing rituals or religious gatherings; they embody an amalgam of religion, romance, tradition and art. Jude takes great pleasure in, and derives inner satisfaction from, the process of renovating the Christian codes but as pieces of art rather than as pieces of any attested sanctity. He passes through the stages of scepticism and partial conviction and finds it hard to believe with full conviction. He takes Sue with him inside the church, which is strongly objected to by the beholders.

Apart from churches under-restoration or under-renovation, where they are described minutely through the eyes of an architectural artist, churches are also frequently introduced as instrumental agents advancing and directing the action of the narrative.

Though there are fewer church scenes in *Far from the Madding Crowd* than in the three novels⁴ which precede it their weightiness is noticeable. Fanny, in a late addition to the manuscript, mistakes All Saints' and All Souls' (XVI). Oak has his comparably decisive final encounter with Bathsheba in Weatherbury churchyard where he has also ascertained the unsuitability of Troy (XXIX), and had his first meeting with Fanny (VII). Here too Troy 'almost for the first time in his life ... wishes himself another man' as a result of the aquatic ravages of the gargoyle on Fanny's grave (XLVI). Lengthily described in what seems almost a self-sufficient grammar of ornament, the gargoyle represents just that kind of detail that would have been Hardy's responsibility as an architect's assistant; characteristically he turns it into something more; in the words of one critic 'this charade—one of many in the novel—epitomizes much of Hardy's attitude to life and his method of expressing it'.⁵

The same emotional and thematic prominence marks the church scenes of *Jude the Obscure*: Jude listening to psalm 119 as he watches Sue in the Cathedral-church of Cardinal College (II, iii); Jude and Sue witnessing a wedding in one church in the

Aldbrickham locality and then painting the Ten Commandments in another; Sue fleeing to the Church of St Silas (modeled by Hardy on a Blomfield design he knew well, St Barnabas in the Oxford suburb of Jericho); and, finally, in a re-use of the *Far from the Madding Crowd* strategy, Jude and Sue's encounter in Marygreen Church. (Hands 144)

In addition to the afore-mentioned recurrent settings, Hardy has selected some extraordinary stages for quite a significant section of the action in his fiction. The ring in Casterbridge, the dairy-farm of Talbothays, the resting-spots on Egdon Heath and the empty mansion where Tess and Angel spend the time of their ecstatic reunion are examples of such non-conventional settings. Two of such settings, however, are so queer and unique that it will not be inappropriate to wind up this chapter with an evaluation of their depiction. These two settings, along with their rich romantic sensuality, present a strange gothic atmosphere with symbolic mysteriousness, manifesting Hardy's ability to create unprecedented imaginary worlds for attaching due pathos to queer events. These two events are Angel's walking in dream with Tess in his arms, after her disclosing to him, at the outset of honeymoon, the tragic episode of her losing chastity; and the scene in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* where Elfride makes a rope of her undergarments to rescue Henry Knight from certain death while he keeps on hanging by the awesome cliff.

In the former one, the romantic impression is based on the strangeness of love that exists between the couple at this stage of their story. Frustrated by the crucial tricks of destiny, the pathos of which is intensified by Angel's awareness of Tess's honesty, faithfulness and sense of honour. He punishes her and himself by defying physical contact, yet loves her extremely at the same time. To Tess, on the other hand, the sense of Angel's being almost unattainable endears him beyond all limits. Thus, with mundane sexual contact shunned as self-chastisement, their emotional bond strengthens in the form of a spiritual interaction, an undertaking for which a dream scene is the most appropriate setting, supplemented by the queerness of enchanting scene in the dark cold night.

While Tess has almost got accustomed to the agonies of loneliness and abandonment, Angel unexpectedly walks into her room. She soon recalls his habit of walking in sleep, particularly when in a state of emotional stress. After talking of her belief in his protectiveness for herself and describing his lifting her from her bed, Hardy proceeds with Clare exclaiming:

'My poor, poor Tess—my dearest, darling Tess! So sweet, so good, so true!'

The words of endearment, withheld so severely in his waking hours, were inexpressibly sweet to her forlorn and hungry heart. - - -

'My wife—dead, dead!' he said.

He paused in his labours for a moment to lean with her against the banister. Was he going to throw her down? Self-solicitude was near extinction in her, and in the knowledge that he had planned to depart on the morrow, possibly for always, she lay in his arms in this precarious position with a sense rather of luxury than of terror. If they could only fall together, and be dashed to pieces, how fit, how desirable.

After kissing her passionately, Clare lifted her against his shoulders, for she was light in weight due to the absence of clothes. He came out of the house in this position and took her in the direction of the river nearby. She was highly pleased to be in his absolute possession. She knew that he was dreaming of the Sunday morning during the courting period when he had borne her along through the water with other dairymaids.

Clare did not cross the bridge with her, but proceeding several paces on the same side towards the adjoining mill, at length stood still on the brink of the river.

Its waters, in creeping down these miles of meadow-land, frequently divided, surpentine in purposeless curves, looping themselves around little islands that had no name, returning and re-embodying themselves as a broad main stream further on. Opposite the spot to which he had brought her was such a general confluence, and the river was proportionately voluminous and deep. Across it was a narrow foot-bridge; but now the autumn flood had washed the handrail away, leaving the bare plank only, which, lying a few inches above the speeding current, formed a giddy pathway for even steady heads; and Tess had noticed from the window of the house in the daytime young men walking across upon it as a feat in balancing. Her husband had possibly observed the same performance; anyhow, he now mounted the plank, and, sliding one foot forward, advanced along it.

Was he going to drown her? Probably he was. The spot was lonely, the river deep and wide enough to make such a purpose easy of accomplishment. He might drown her if he would; it would be

better than parting tomorrow to lead severed lives.

The swift stream raced and gyrated under them, tossing, distorting and splitting the moon's reflected face. Spots of froth travelled past, and intercepted weeds waved behind the piles. If they could both fall together into the current now, their arms would be so tightly clasped together that they could not be saved; they would go out of the world almost painlessly, and there would be no more reproach to her, or to him for marrying her. His last half-hour with her would have been a loving one, while if they lived till he awoke his daytime aversion would return, and this hour would remain to be contemplated only as a transient dream.

The impulse stirred in her, yet she dare not indulge it, to make a movement that would have precipitated them both into the gulf. How she valued her own life had been proved; but his— she had no right to tamper with it. He reached the other side with her in safety. (TDU, XXXVII)

It takes five more paragraphs to describe the remainder of the episode. The quoted part, however, takes us to the climax and serves the purpose of making us comprehend this memorably unique setting by Hardy with its extraordinarily rich romantic and gothic dimensions. The following comment brilliantly sums up the impact of this scene, fully supplementing our inferences from the same:

The powerful, if faulty, sleepwalking scene records the passivity and the doom most poignantly. It balances precariously between sentimentality and tragedy, yet its impact transcends its place in the story. Hardy has constructed a perfect imaginative equivalent for the deepest perceptions which inform the novel as a whole. (Brown 159)

The cliff scene in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* is the greatest manifestation of Hardy's artistic feat of creating memorable stages and settings, by applying imagination to experiences and observations.

We may refer here to the poem, 'Beeny Cliff', which has been reproduced in full in Chapter 5: this poem describes Hardy's feelings about his two visits to the cliff in March 1870 and March 1913, the former in Emma's company during the courting period; and the later alone, haunted by her memories.

It is a huge blue-black cliff situated on the north-eastern coast of Cornwall, near Bocastle, a few miles from the village of Saint Juliet where

Hardy had met Emma and from where they frequently walked to the cliff.⁶ Rising 200 feet above the sea (lesser in height than the counterpart in the novel) it resembles the Cliff with no Name in many respects, and there is no controversy of Hardy having taken it as the model for 'the miracle of rare device' in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*.

Before focusing on the scene in the novel, let us look at the way in which Hardy and Emma remembered the cliff in later life, in order to grasp autobiographical touches in the comprehensive romantic pathos of the episode.

Hardy walked there with Emma while she rode her pony. In his notebook he described the scene:

'Beeny Cliff. . . green towards the land, blue-black towards the sea. Every ledge has a little, starved, green grass upon it: all vertical parts bare. Seaward, a dark-grey ocean beneath a pale-green sky, upon which lie branches of red cloud. A lather of foam around the base of each rock. The sea is full of motion internally, but still as a whole. Quiet and silent in the distance, noisy and restless close at hand.'

(*Thomas Hardy's Notebooks*⁷ 38)

Emma has described their trips to the cliff in the following words:

Scarcely any author and his wife could have had a much more romantic meeting, with its unusual circumstances in bringing them together from two different, though neighbouring counties to this one at this very romantic spot, with a beautiful sea-coast, and the wild Atlantic Ocean rolling in with its magnificent waves and spray, its white gulls, and black choughs and grey puffins, its cliffs and rocks and gorgeous sunsettings, sparkling redness in a track widening from the horizon to the shore. All this should be seen in the winter to be truly appreciated. No summer visitor can have a true idea of its power to awaken heart and soul.[It was] an unforgettable experience to me, scampering up and down the hill on my beloved mare alone, wanting no protection, the rain going down my back often, and my hair floating on the wind. (*The Life* 69)

Now let us return to the novel. Chapter XXI entitled, 'On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!', commences with Stephen having sent a letter to Elfride that he would be coming from abroad through a steamer. Knight has already started charming her, and she is passing through an internal emotional conflict. Accidentally, Knight, absolutely unaware of her former romance, accompanies her to the coast where she intends to watch Stephen's steamer through a telescope, now obviously secretly from Knight. During this process, they climb

over the legendary cliff. While leaning over the bank, Knight's hat drops down, and attempting to get it back, he also slips downward along. While trying to pull him up, Elfride also slips down and they hang onto the rock locked together. He manages with great effort to get her back to the level ground but in the process goes further down, clinging to the last support on the gigantic cliff and looking closely into the eyes of the awaiting death in the form of whirling waves of the deep sea. Hardy is extremely successful in creating an environment wherein the reader can trace Elfride and Knight through their journey of sensitivities. The environment provides a perspective for Elfride's seeing Knight in a heroic colouring for his courage to face the threat of approaching death with composure. It is this heroic image imprinted on her heart rather than Knight's intellectual talents that optimizes the image of Knight and pushes Stephen into obscurity. The awesome cliff, its hanging rocks, the whirling waves, the clinging Knight and the nervous Elfride in a haunting solitude collectively contribute to liberate the two human actors from many superficial fetters: Elfride from those of social and moral artificiality, giving her the courage to respond to the call of the genuine passion of the heart against the dictates of the Victorian sense of modesty; and Knight from those of intellectual convictions, enabling him to see life and the universe more vividly and with far deeper meaning than conceivable under normal conditions. Let us follow the rest of the episode through the text:

Between the turf-covered slope and the gigantic perpendicular rock intervened a weather-worn series of jagged edges, forming a face yet steeper than the former slope. As he slowly slid inch by inch upon these, Knight made a last desperate dash at the lowest tuft of vegetation—the last outlying knot of starved herbage ere the rock appeared in all its bareness. It arrested his further descent. Knight was now literally suspended by his arms; but the decline of the brow being what engineers would call about a third in one, it was sufficient to relieve his arms of a portion of his weight, but was very far from offering an adequately flat face to support him.

In spite of this dreadful tension of body and mind, Knight found time for a moment of thankfulness. Elfride was safe.

She lay on her side above him. Seeing him again steady she jumped upon her feet.

'Now, if I can only save you by running for help!' she cried. 'O, I would have died instead! Why did you try so hard to deliver

me?' And she turned away wildly to run for assistance.

'Elfride, how long will it take you to run to Endlestow and back?'

'Three quarters of an hour.'

'That won't do; my hands will not hold out ten minutes. And is there nobody nearer?'

'No; unless a chance passer may happen to be.'

'He would have nothing with him that could save me. Is there a pole or stick of any kind on the common?'

She gazed around. The common was bare of everything but heather and grass.

A minute— perhaps more time— was passed in mute thought by both. On a sudden the blank and helpless agony left her face. She vanished over the bank from his sight.

Knight felt himself in the presence of personalized loneliness.

The next chapter entitled 'A Woman's way' describes in detail Knight's waiting in this tormenting condition. Seeing ruthless death's jaws closing on him, he indulges in philosophical meditation, seeing himself and the world around in a strange symbolic light. Hardy exploits to the optimum this opportunity of asserting his doctrine of associating Nature with human mood, and here we find the much-sought-for clue that Hardy is nearer to Coleridge than Wordsworth regarding this major aspect of romanticism:

We colour according to our moods the objects we survey.
The sea would have been a deep natural blue had happier auspices
attended the gazer: it was now no otherwise than distinctly black to
his vision. (PBE 212)

The anti-climax of the episode — though only an initial milestone leading towards the real tragedy in store for future — is in no way lesser in its romantic pathos than the terrifying climax itself. It also manifests how brilliantly Hardy depicts indescribable human emotions through the tools of concrete images, psychological exposition and an amalgam of the two. Elfride's return is described in these words.

At the moment of taking no more thought for his life, something disturbed the outline of the bank above him. A spot appeared. It was the head of Elfride.

Knight immediately prepared to welcome life again.

The expression of a face assigned to utter loneliness, when a friend first looks upon it, is moving in its pathos. In rowing sea-ward to a light ship or sea-girt lighthouse, where, without any immediate terror of death, the inmates experience the gloom of monotonous seclusion, the grateful eloquence of their countenances at the

greeting, expressive of thankfulness for the visit, is enough to stir the emotions of the most careless observer.

Knight's upward look at Elfride was of a nature with, but for transcending, such an instance as this. The lines of his face had deepened as furrows, and every one of them thanked her visibly. His lips moved to the word 'Elfride,' though the emotion evolved no sound. His eyes passed all description in their combination of the whole diapason of eloquence, from lover's deep love to fellow-man's gratitude for a token of remembrance from one of his kind. (PBE 213)

She rescues him by pulling him up through a rope made of all her garments, having taken them off the while, except the outer-bodice and skirt which she is wearing instead. The scene of rescue, the passionate embrace consequent upon it, Elfride's cordial joy at having saved Knight's life and Knight's overwhelming gratefulness by knowing that she has not only saved his life but has done so through the device made of her undergarments, something very unlikely from a lady of her temperament and background — all these impressions have been brilliantly integrated with the overall romantic environment.

All the above stated evidences prove that Hardy's settings — environments rather than scenes — with all their diverse demonstrations, are romantic not only in the external Wordsworthian sense of glorifying Nature and its manifestations, but, more significantly, in the deeper sense of motivating and coordinating impressions on human sensibilities. Be they dwellings, or churches, or cliffs, or farms — they have been endowed with a life of their own which they share with human agents, the comprehensive life and the broader theme developing from the homogenous integration of the two.

Notes:

- ¹ "Kubla Khan" Lines 14-16.
- ² "Though dated 1896 this magnificent and central poem was not published with Hardy's first volume of verse in 1898 (*Wessex Poems*) but held back until *Satire of Circumstance*, his fourth volume, published in 1914. It was written during the fierce critical onslaught on *Jude*. Although there are several biographical references (to Florence Henniker, the 'one rare fair woman' for example) the poem exists independently of them and assumes a mythology proper to itself. The poet, depressed and lonely visits the hills of Wessex where, at least, he can know some liberty. Elsewhere he feels but a 'strange continuator' of his 'simple self that was'. Paradoxically, Hardy's description of this dispiriting state of identity crisis, imprisoned within eight bulky stanzas, is itself full of personality and life." (Hurst 172)
- ³ A small volume of reminiscences by Emma Hardy, written a few years before her death, which Hardy found on going through her papers. He quoted part of it in *The Life* but it was not published in full until 1961. (Hurst 146)
- ⁴ The three novels preceding *Far from the Madding Crowd* are *Desperate Remedies* (1871), *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873).
- ⁵ Yarker, Patrick. 'Meredith, Hardy and Gissing.' *Sphere History of Literature in the English Language*, vol. 6, ed. Arthur Pollard. London, 1970. p. 245.
- ⁶ These details about the cliff have been taken from Alan Hurst's *Hardy: An Illustrated Dictionary*, p.16, and Merryn Williams's *A Preface to Hardy*, p.151, (both listed).
- ⁷ The quotation, along with the introductory sentence, is taken from Merryn

Williams, *A Preface to Hardy*, p. 151 (listed) where on p. 170 the source has been quoted as *Thomas Hardy's Notebook*, ed. Evelyn Hardy, 1955.

Chapter 8

Romanticism in Hardy's Novels: Language and Style

Though just briefly touched in the third chapter of the thesis (consciously so, for not allowing this oft-assumed aspect overshadow what was really meant to be elaborated), language is, nonetheless, a subject of our concern. It is a major part of the romantic legacy to give more importance to the substance than the form. This is a basic point of difference between the classical and the romantic traditions that the former is more, or at least equally, concerned about style and diction, while the latter considers language and form mere tools of expression. Wordsworth's "Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*" is the best demonstration of the romantic deviation from the classical artificiality of expression and decorum of style. Thus, it can be safely contended that Hardy is perfectly and clearly romantic in his conception of form and style. He has never valued form as of any status equal or near to substance and has always put language subservient to themes. His following observation is a vivid proof:

Style — consider the Wordsworthian diction (the more perfectly the natural object is reproduced, the more truly poetic the picture). This reproduction is achieved by seeing into the *heart of a thing* (as rain, wind, for instance), and is realism, in fact, though through being pursued by means of imagination it is confounded with invention, which is pursued by the same means.¹ (Chapman, 1990, 36)

So the more naturally blended with characters and settings, the more impressive the language becomes from Hardy's point of view. A great artist should concentrate on assigning the desired grandeur and pathos in the form of impressions to his themes and personae, and then employ the language according to the dictates of ease and convenience, without bothering about it being a source of grandeur itself.

Except *Jude*, almost all of Hardy's major fiction is restricted to the ideal Wessex, duly elaborated in the preceding chapter. In *Jude* also the setting and

environment are very much Wessex-like, only the commercial town of Casterbridge is substituted by the academic town of Christminster. The natives of Wessex rarely bother about sophistication of diction, for them language is a channel of expression of emotions. The occasional intruders are always sentimentally charged or placed in romantically rich situations so that any slight variation they demonstrate in modes of expression hardly imprint any mark of difference. As such, the tool of expression (natural language of the uncensored instinct) suit, and supplement, like the themes and characters they project, the romantic ideals of Hardy's fiction.

This assertion, however, should not be taken to an undue extreme. His disregard for stylistic grandeur in its own right must not be misinterpreted as carelessness about language. Themes and characters — the prime concern of the novelist — would bury with the novelist if not imprinted on the readers' sensibilities through a very effective use of language. Hardy, just like the romantic poets, believes that the best language can be produced when its units are the natural representatives of genuine emotions, rather than by taking pains to invent fine phrases by coining terms and words and then searching for suitable ideas to embody them. Words should not come, in Sir Philip Sydney's phrase, 'halting forth, wanting invention's stay'² and one should not take time to listen to the voice of the muse: 'Fool, . . . look in thy heart, and write!'² Again, Hardy's own words would throw better light on the assertion:

Any detailed rules as to the formation of style I could not possibly give, for I know of none that are of practical utility. A writer's style is according to his temperament, and my impression is that if he has anything to say which is of value, and words to say it with, the style will come of itself. (Purdy 168)

This extract from Hardy's letter in response to an invitation to contribute to a volume about writing-style, shows his thinking about the rules of writing — literary style in other words. It reflects his firm conviction that words should correspond to the sentiments they are intended to convey, and literary creations should be let loose to pick their own diction as per their requirement to impress sensibilities.

This argument provides a convincing and logical justification for inconsistency in Hardy's style — an assumed flaw assigned to him by many critics, particularly those that look at his style and diction in segregation from his thematic concerns. The diversity of opinions noted in the following passage demonstrate the puzzlement of such critics:

The most important evidence of the use of language by Hardy, or by any other writer, is the whole body of his work. His own ideas about style, and his replies to critics, are also of interest in preparing an approach to his fiction and poetry; the judgment of others upon his work can suggest further lines of investigation but should not be used as a ready made structure for evaluation. In order that we may begin with an open mind, consider these statements:³

'Mr. Hardy disfigures his pages by bad writing, by clumsy and inelegant metaphors, and by mannerism and affectation.'

'Mr. Hardy's style can now be recognized as his own, and as one of the best in English fiction.'

'As we read this curious and wearisome volume, these many slovenly, slipshod, uncouth verses, stilted in sentiment, poorly conceived and wrought, our respect lessens to vanishing-point.'

'Neither in verse nor in prose is Mr. Hardy a master of style.'

'A style which is at once recognized as individual in its simplicity, its strength, its grace.'

'Poor stuff, poetically — Johnsonian in heaviness of thought, and sesquipedalian in verbal expression.'

'Mr. Hardy's volume . . . is full of poetry; and yet it is also full of ugly and cumbrous expressions, and flat, prosaic turns of speech.'

'No style in literature, save Scott's, is so difficult to analyze; it is on the face of it so bad, yet it achieves its aim so unmistakably.'

'The problem of Hardy's style is its inconsistency.'

(Chapman, 1990, 34-5)

Though referring equally to his poetry as to his fiction, these diverse judgments provide enough evidence regarding the style of his novels, for, as clear from these comments themselves, he mixes the images and expressions of prose and poetry. If we refer back to the passage just preceding the quoted one, the inconsistency highlighted therein in Hardy's style, if taken positively, enables us to defend him against the charges of a bad style.

Before proceeding further, it seems appropriate to clarify that this discussion is meant to encompass the language of Hardy's novels as reflective of the sentiments and sensitivities of his characters and the relevant themes arising out of their romantic interaction. Thus the discussion should be taken as

one of literary criticism highlighting the supporting role of language and diction in favour of artistic assertions, rather than that of linguistic discourse analysis looking at the technicalities of style and language in their own right.

Like any creative artist, Hardy has to make use of the multiple channels of communication: narration, description and conversation (the latter including monologues and soliloquies along with the well-known device of dialogues). The narrative, being an imaginative re-creation from factual life, has to pass through many ups and downs, sinking into trivialities at times while causing tempests at others. The characters, derived from, and representative of, the human beings of flesh and blood, have also to act and react in different modes, directed by intellect at occasions and swayed by passions at others. As such, to express consistency in oral or literal expressions, like consistency in behaviour, is unnatural and unjustified. It may be said that novelists of the same age as well as other ages — Dickens and Brontes, for instance — have maintained a level of consistency in spite of their having the same sort of concerns and limitations. The answer is simple and clear: Hardy's concerns and limitations are different from all the rest. Dickens does have a colouring of conscious decorum in style — artificiality in other words — due to which his themes and style cannot be termed romantic; Bronte sisters, on the other hand, have produced very limited fiction with very few characters — protagonists in particular — due to which they were not obliged to create so many diverse characters, as Hardy was. Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is more widely acknowledged as a romantic piece than any of Hardy's novels. But, in spite of the fact that it is Emily's only novel, she has not been able to maintain stylistic uniformity, and the passages, even whole chapters, void of any pathetically romantic undertaking, fall far shorter of the grandeur and pathos in style found in those that depict the emotional interaction of Heathcliff and Catherine. Keeping in view the depth and range of his concerns, Hardy's inconsistency is more genuine and justifiable than either Emily's inconsistency or Dickens's consistency through artifice.

Hardy has generally been considered a careless writer, whose use of language falls short of his genius as a tragic novelist. He has been accused of the unnecessary use of rare and recondite words, of involved and untidy sentence construction, and of a

general lack of decorum in haphazardly mixing the learned and the colloquial, the simple and the complex. A study of his work shows that he is not free from these and other faults, but it also reveals stylistic qualities which match his total achievement in literature. Language is the writer's raw material, and greatness cannot be found where there is incompetence in its use. Not all our leading writers were great stylists, but to create something unique and memorable out of the linguistic resources available is the qualification for literary status. Hardy may not always have used English with full discrimination, but his acknowledged power of creating character, writing scenes of natural description, and touching some of the deepest points of human experience, did not come with disregard for language. (Chapman, 1990, 36)

Hardy has never desired or attempted uniformity in style. Stylistically, he is at his best while covering the matters of the heart, where a sublime romantic language of the most impressive sort automatically presents itself without any great effort. He creates a congenially pathetic environment in terms of events, characters and settings where the best units of the language get attracted and adjusted by themselves. It is here that his prose fiction comes very near to poetic expression. The following observation about *Far from the Madding Crowd*, manifesting Hardy's effective use of language for conveying sentiments, can be applied to almost all his tragic novels:

Again and again we are made aware of surges of feeling, arising precipitately, and ransacking language for their expression. We have Oak to Bathsheba, 'I shall do one thing in this life — one thing certain — that is, love you, and long for you, and *keep wanting you* till I die.' Bathsheba about Troy, 'O, I love him to very distraction and misery and agony! Don't be frightened at me, though perhaps I am enough to frighten any innocent woman.' Boldwood to Bathsheba, 'I am beyond myself about this . . . I wish you knew what is in me of devotion to you; but it is impossible. In bare human mercy to a lonely man, don't throw me off now!' Troy about Fanny, 'This woman is more to me, dead as she is, than ever you were, or are, or can be But never mind, darling . . . in the sight of Heaven you are my very, very wife!'

These are the tones which sound throughout this novel and if the total impression made by the novel is not quite of this kind, the intensity of feeling which these assertions and pleadings expose is an integral part of the experience which Hardy is concerned to communicate: an experience of intense human vulnerability. (Gregor 51)

For the sake of convenience, we divide Hardy's language of sentiments into two types: his own description and exposition of pathetic conditions; and the language spoken by his characters involved in sentimental interaction. In both cases, the diction is romantically rich — spontaneously but appropriately applied — with a very significant point of difference. When Hardy assigns such expression to himself, the emotional crisis is mostly philosophized and conveyed in the form of unanswerable questions. Thus, irrespective of the romantic orientation of the issue, it gives the impression of an intellectual tackling of a romantic concern. On the other hand, when the agents of expression are the involved characters themselves, the logical and philosophical effect ceases, and the mood is that of pathetic exclamation. Speaking generically, the former attitude is not very frequently displayed, as most of the romantically significant communication takes place through the characters in the form of dialogues, monologues and soliloquies.

Few other novelists have included so much dialogue in their novels and Hardy is an expert at the rendering of different voices. His English, and the English of his characters, is of multiple origin and considerable ingenuity. As a narrator he has at his command a dozen shades of irony and seriousness. . . . He doesn't use much free indirect speech because he doesn't need to, instead he specializes in revelatory dialogue. I would suggest that it is in the careful analysis of this dialogue that we will find his deepest political opinions expressed. These turn out finally to be immensely complex, quite unable to be divorced from questions of morality, religion, history and science, 'irrational' for the hard-pressed politician and, ultimately, anthropomorphic, man-shaped, individualized, subjective, personal; each voice has its turn, each voice is known to be the appropriate one for that individual within his or her brief sojourn on earth, each is to be listened to and pitied. (Butler, 1996, 52)

Only in the latter novels, like *Tess* and *Jude*, we find crucial questions raised by the novelist himself. Apart from a few personal observations like the one made at the time of Tess's being raped — 'But, might some say, where was Tess's guardian angel' — most of such contentions are also raised through the unexpressed feelings or internal monologues of the characters. The following are instances.

All the way along this point her heart had been heavy with an inactive sorrow; now there was a change in the quality of its trouble. That hunger for affection too long withheld was for the time

displaced by an almost physical sense of an implacable past which still engirdled her. It intensified her consciousness of error to a practical despair; the break of continuity between her earlier and present existence, which she had hoped for, had not, after all, taken place. Bygones would never be complete bygones till she was a bygone herself. (TDU 391)

Along with the collective romantic impression of this paragraph, certain phrases and statements have their own specific romantic connotations. The phrase 'inactive sorrow' is an excellent wording for the emotional state termed by Mario Praz as 'romantic agony', when it assumes the form of melancholy rather than desperation. To be 'engirdled' by 'implacable past' is a brilliant demonstration of the romantic hopelessness in reference to the inevitability of the destined doom — a theme more impressively summed up in the last sentence of the paragraph, which has assumed almost a proverbial status.

The following passage from the same novel makes a very effective use of the device of contrast in statements, in order to achieve the same objective:

During this time of absence he (Angel) 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 systems of mysticism, he now began to discredit the old appraisements of morality. He thought they wanted readjustment. 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. (TDU 433)

The third instance of unexpressed internal monologue spelled out by the novelist is from *Jude*.

Phillotson had no doubt passed through a similar intellectual disappointment to that which now enveloped him [Jude]. But the schoolmaster had been since blest with the consolation of sweet Sue, while for him there was no consoler. (JO 137-8)

The really great dialogues and monologues — those that are romantically pathetic — are the ones where love is the governing spirit, enriching the language with its unmatched pathos and sublimity. As such they deserve a more thorough and deeper tackling. Prior to that, however, we will have a brief look at pathetic dialogues and soliloquies involving sentiments other than love, in order to evaluate Hardy's artistic grandeur in appropriation of

language to the modes of emotions.

The simple and earnest Gabriel Oak rejoices in the otherwise lamentable fact of his not having married Bathsheba, for in case of marriage she would have been forced to share his doomed poverty consequent upon the death of his flock, thus deriving consolation even from utter loss:

'Thank God I am not married: what would she have done in the poverty now coming upon me!' (FMC 47)

Tess, in her bewilderment at the request of her seducer to pray for him, finds it hard to respond appropriately and has to rely on a simple, question-like exclamation, not reflective of her inner agony and resentment:

'How can I pray for you,' she said, 'when I am forbidden to believe that the great Power who moves the world alter his plans on my account?' (TDU 408)

At the end of *Jude the Obscure*, when informed that Sue lives peacefully with her husband Phillotson, Arabella bursts out:

'She may swear that on her knees to the holy cross upon her necklace till she's hoarse, but it won't be true!' said Arabella. 'She never found peace since she left his [Jude's] arms, and never will again till she's as he is now.' (JO 494)

In many cases, the authorial comments are brilliantly intermingled with the direct statements of the characters to convey the intended impression in entirety — the message as well as the effect. Hardy has been marvelously successful in maintaining harmony, if not uniformity, of style in such cases, with an additional richness offered by the mutual coordination of the two channels of expression. Here Hardy assumes the role of the architect of the background — involving the stylistic perspective as a major component — using all his creative and imaginative potentials to establish the environment wherein the characters have to undertake sentimental communication. He also exploits the opportunity for bridging such gaps where continuation of the direct speech might not have been effective or convenient.

As stated earlier, the most impressive of passionate expressions in Hardy's fiction are, undoubtedly, when couples in love talk to each other or about each other, or when the novelist describes their inward feelings too deep

and private to be accommodated through the obvious channels of expression. The language of love in Hardy's novels is both pathetic and sublime. Though not entirely free from the typical Victorian decorum of expression, his diction of love is highly romantic, imprinting itself on the deepest sensibilities of the reader, as he firmly believes that it comes live from the heart.

Cytherea Graye in *Desperate Remedies*, moved by the agony of her former lover, Edward Springrove, just after her marriage with Aeneas Manston, disregards all worldly concerns in confessing the then immoral and illegal passion for Edward to Owen — her brother and guardian, something she refrained from when she was free, and the act was neither illegal nor immoral. He starts the conversation with scolding her:

'Cytherea,' he said, 'I know the cause of this emotion of yours. But remember this, there was no excuse for it. You should have been woman enough to control yourself. Remember whose wife you are. You are altogether wrong, Cytherea, and I am vexed with you more than I can say — very vexed.'

She bitterly asks him if he feels ashamed of her to which he angrily responds in affirmative. Then follows her emotional outburst which is very significant, particularly in view of her reserve and modest nature.

'Owen,' she said, and paused. Her lips trembled; her eyes told of sensations too deep for tears. 'No Owen, it has not left me; and I will be honest. I own now to you, without any disguise of words, what last night I did not own to myself, because I hardly knew of it. I love Edward Springrove with all my strength, and heart, and soul. You call me a wanton for it, don't you? I don't care; I have gone beyond caring for anything!' She looked stonily into his face and made the speech calmly.

'Well, poor Cytherea, don't talk like that!' he said, alarmed at her manner.

'I thought that I didn't love him at all,' she went on hysterically. 'A year and a half had passed since we met. I could go by the gate of his garden without thinking of him — look at his seat in church and not care. But I saw him this morning — dying because he loves me so — I know it is that! Can I help loving him too? No, I cannot, and I will love him, and I don't care! We have been separated by some contrivance — I know we have. O, if I could only die.' (DR 202)

This passage has two outstanding romantic features, one in Wordsworthian sense and the other Shelleyan. The phrase 'sensations too deep

for tears' is a significant variation for Wordsworth's concluding line of the famous ode "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" — 'To me the meanest flower that blows can give/ Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.' The word 'sensations' instead of 'thoughts' shows the profundity of Hardy's understanding of human miseries and the force with which they get imprinted on sensibilities. The Shelleyan spirit lies in Cytherea's outburst in the simplest of words — 'No, I cannot, and I will love him, and I don't care.' Along with the tendency of defying all taboos and not caring for any one's opinion in front of the call of the heart, it also demonstrates Hardy's great ability to convey the deepest of sentiments through the simplest of words.

Some of the most impressive dialogues embodying complex human feelings are there in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. The first significant conversation in this regard commences between Stephen and Elfride, after the young architect feels that his host's daughter has intentionally let him win the game of chess at the twelve move after being defeated by her in all the preceding turns:

He drew a long breath, and murmured bitterly, 'Ah, you are cleverer than I. You can do everything — I can do nothing! O Miss Swancourt!' he burst out wildly, his heart swelling in his throat, 'I must tell you how I love you! All these months of my absence I have worshipped you.'

He leapt from his seat like the impulsive lad that he was, slid round to her side, and almost before she suspected it his arm was round her waist, and the two sets of curls intermingled.

So entirely new was full-blown love to Elfride that she trembled as much from the novelty of the emotion as from the emotion itself. Then she suddenly withdrew herself and stood upright, vexed that she had submitted unresistingly even to his momentary pressure. She resolved to consider this demonstration as premature.

'You must not begin such things as those,' she said with coquettish hauteur of a very transparent nature. 'And — you must not do so again — and papa is coming.'

'Let me kiss you — only a little one,' he said with his usual delicacy, and without reading the fictitiousness of her manner. (PBE 54)

The last sentence of the first paragraph is significant as it embodies a very significant romantic theme that the passion of love is intensified by separation. 'Trembling from the novelty of the emotion' is a brilliant phrase,

attaching thrill to the unexpected and unobtained.

Hardy's own description of the sentimental constitution of characters in love demonstrate a far richer diction, befitting the deeper tackling, for here, unlike direct statements, the language in its entirety is at his service, without any fettering compulsion of keeping the diction and composition according to the status of the producing character. The ease and convenience with which he exposes the queer romantic constitution of Eustacia Vye in the following passage from *The Return of the Native* substantiate this contention, also signifying the fact that in describing love, like the rest of his favourite subjects, language plays a more vital role than just that of a tool of expression — in no way lesser than that played by events, characters and scenes:

To be loved to madness — such was her great desire. Love was to her the one cordial which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than for any particular lover. Through want of it she had sung without being merry, possessed without enjoying, outshone without triumphing. Her loneliness deepened her desire. On Egdon, coldest and meanest kisses were at famine prices; and where was a mouth matching hers to be found?

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 joy. Yet she desired it, as one in desert would be thankful for brackish water.

- - . - - . Her prayers were always spontaneous, and often ran thus, 'O deliver my heart from this fearful gloom and loneliness: send me great love from somewhere, else I shall die.' (RN 79-80)

'To be loved to madness' shows the uncontrollability and infiniteness of love: a brilliant phrase for a great romantic theme. The opening sentence of the second paragraph echoes of Shelley in a simpler form. The phrases 'a blaze of love, and extinction' and 'a lantern glimmer' are expressions for layman's comprehension of the great romantic theme that stronger love for shorter period is far better than slighter one for the whole life.

Assigning sublimity to the language involved in situations of emotional interaction of the protagonists in Hardy's novels does not mean that the minor characters and episodes are romantically insignificant, obviously from linguistic point of view. It is through them that we are enabled to peep into the comprehensive scheme of the Wessex life, beyond the limited range of the narrative. They are the producers of the dialects, and they are our gateway to whatever picturing of the contemporary life has been attempted, for the protagonists' concerns are too universal to accommodate contemporarities⁴. These minor characters, so interesting and so abundant, are mostly neither part of the main flow of events, nor do they get consistent or thorough coverage as personae. So what they say is our only channel of approach to their personalities. Their diction, grammar and style are an integral part of the rich country culture, threatened by modernism and industrial materialism. Their voices are the voices of the last generation of a species deeply rooted in immemorial past. Hardy wants to defend these symbols of innocence against the onslaught of materialistic modernism, and to enable them to speak out the voice of the heart that strengthens their cause. Thus, unlike many novelists and dramatists, the use of local dialect or unrefined diction by Hardy's characters is not meant to show the vulgarity of a character only; it rather projects the ingenuity of expression and the originality of meaning as compared to the artificiality of the more cautious and refined characters. The dissolution of the natural modes of expression of these children of Nature has been deemed by Hardy as an outstanding constituent of the phenomenon of overall degeneration and decline — discussed in detail in the sixth chapter of this thesis — so pathetically lamented in his novels. So he does not incorporate his aesthetic and imaginative ideals or sensibilities in the protagonists only: he pours a significant part of his soul and heart into these obviously minor characters — the speakers of the country dialect, who express themselves primarily through the language they speak. The following conversation of the labourers after Lady Luxellian's death in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* has many sarcastic remarks of deep philosophical nature, conveyed with an unmatched ease of simplicity, or even vulgarity; and

the novelist's occasional comments on the characters supplement their suitability for the tone and diction they use.

'And who is dead?' Stephen repeated.

'Lady Luxellian, poor gentlewoman, as we all shall,' said the under-mason. 'Ay; we be going to enlarge the vault to make room for her.'

'When did she die?'

'Early this morning,' his father replied, with an appearance of recurring to a chronic thought. 'Martin has been tolling ever since, almost. There, 'twas expected. She was very limber.'

'Ay, poor soul, this morning,' resumed the under-mason, a marvelously old man, whose skin seemed so much too large for his body that it would not stay in position. 'She must know by this time whether she's to go up or down, poor woman.'

'What was her age?'

'No more than seven or eight and twenty by candlelight. But, Lord! by day 'a was forty if 'a was an hour.'

'Ay, nighttime or daytime makes a difference of twenty years to rich females,' observed Martin.

'She was one and thirty really,' said John Smith. 'I had it from them that know.'

'Not more than that!'

'A looked very bad, poor lady. In faith, ye might say she was dead for years afore 'a would own it.'

'As my old father used to say, " dead, but wouldn't drop down." '

'I seed her, poor soul,' said a labourer from behind some removed coffins, 'only but last Valentine's-day of all the world. 'A was arm in crook wi' my lord. I says to myself, "You be ticketed churchyard, my noble lady, although you don't dream on't." ' (PBE 242-3)

Furthermore, Hardy does not have any tendency to always take lightly what these lighter characters say. Wisdom, according to him, does not lie only in the sermons of sages or the volumes of scholars. Nor is it a prerogative or privilege of the cultured and enlightened ones in the society or the protagonists in fiction. There can be more valid wisdom, better applicable to life in practice rather than theories and assumptions, in the ordinary and unguarded colloquial exchanges of these unsophisticated beings. Another instance is the following extract from *Desperate Remedies* where old Farmer Springrove and his friend Farmer Baker talk out their feelings on watching an empty coffin on the carpenters' shoulders. Unlike the sarcasm of the preceding conversation, the tone here is serious and pathetically sublime:

'I always feel a satisfaction at being breasted by such a sight as that,' said Springrove, still regarding the men's sad burden. 'I call it a sort of medicine.'

'And it is medicine. . . . I have not heard of any body being ill up this way lately? D'seem as if the person died suddenly.'

'May be so. Ah, Baker, we say sudden death, don't we? But there's no difference in their nature between sudden death and death of any other sort. There's no such thing as a random snapping off of what was laid down to last longer. . . .'

'It is just a discovery to your own mind, and not alteration in the Lord's.'

'That's it. Unexpected is not as to the thing, but as to our sight.'

'Now you'll hardly believe me, neighbour, but this little scene in front of us makes me feel less anxious about pushing on wi' that threshing and winnowing next week, that I was speaking about. Why should we not stand still, says I to myself, and fling a quiet eye upon the Whys and the Wherefores, before the end o' it all, and we go down into the mouldering-place, and are forgotton?'

'T is a feeling that will come. But 'twon't bear looking into. There's a back'ard current in the world, and we must do our utmost to advance in order just to bide where we be.' (DR 313-4)

The last sentence of the quoted conversation carries a hypothesis on the basis of which an entire approach towards life can be evolved. It is noteworthy how excellently Hardy adjusts such statements of deep philosophical orientation in the uncensored words of these vulgar children of nature.

Such notions of wisdom and philosophical reflections in the colloquial statements of minor characters, though very significant, are occasionally there. Very often they speak the language in its own right and say things which neither advance any major or secondary theme nor impart any significant meaning even in isolation. At such points, Hardy seems to have been fascinated by the spontaneously produced meaningless utterances, the loss of which was imminent in the face of modern utilitarianism. If we agree with Wordsworth that the language of art should be like the language of actual communication, this aspect of Hardy's style can be safely called a romantic one, because these lexically valid but semantically void statements formed a major part of the dialogues of the lower class nineteenth-century Englishmen. Though debatable, it will not be out of place to project another possibility in reference to this tendency in Hardy's novels: he might have been advocating the liberation of

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