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SEXUALITY AND SYSTEM IN THOMAS HARDY: THE AFFIRMATION OF EXPERIENTIAL OVER MORAL TRUTH

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I. INTRODUCTION

Methodology

This project is a psychological study of Thomas Hardy's developing attitude towards sexuality; specifically whether it could be brought into a constructive moral system, or whether the experience was fulfilling in its own right, despite being self or socially destructive. Hardy develops his concern for sexuality through the "objective correlatives" of character and landscape. The topic grew out of a close reading of Hardy's natural landscapes, which struck me as profoundly symbolic, yet finally capable of standing on their own as concrete descriptions. This natural world demonstrates Hardy's radical subjectivism; in it he makes psychological explorations. He describes the process in _Tess of the D'Ubervilles:_

> At times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her until they seemed a part of her own story. Rather they became a part of it; for the world is only a psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were.[1]

The characters themselves are psychological phenomena; they reflect Hardy's growing concern for the self and its struggle against the systems which seek to limit its sexual expression. The novels chosen for this study show striking similarities and argue for a pattern of continuity and development of complexity in Hardy's psychological vision. As Albert Guerard argues in his essay "The Women of the Novels;"

> A novel may be in direct reaction against the preceeding one, but its nearly always proceeds out of it in some discernible way - especially since a true novelist can hardly exhaust his intentions in a single book.[2]

These four novels span the twenty years of Hardy's novelist career. Under the Greenwood Tree was his earliest successful novel, and was first published in two volumes in 1872. Far From the Madding Crowd was published in 1874 to great popular acclaim. Return of the Native was the first of Hardy's tragic novels, and was published in three volumes in 1878. Tess of the D'Urbervilles, printed in 1891, raised an outcry against its sexual overtones and pessemistic conclusions.

Critical Locus

As one can see by the increasing controversy raised by each successive novel, for Hardy the process of the novel is the struggle between the author's conscious desire for order, and his avowed aim of producing experience in all its complexity. In his preface to Tess of the D'Urbervilles he describes his stance in his later works:

> ...the novel was intended to be neither didactic nor aggressive, but in the scenic parts to be representative simply, and in the contemplative to be oftener charged with impressions than with convictions...[3]

The combined effect of Hardy's popularity and controversy has spawned volumes of critical response. One of the problems of

working with Hardy is the tremendous range and breadth of these critics, both through time and literary orientation. Guerard, in another essay, states that Hardy demands a revaluation by modern readers and critics:

> And we (as Modernists) are willing to go back to Hardy for the qualities which in 1920 seemed so old-fashioned...We go back too for the tales themselves--as stark and tragic and traditional as any ballads...We are in fact attracted by much that made the post-Victorian realist uneasy...the frank acknowledgement that love is basically sexual and marriage usually unhappy... [4]

Even among the modern critics methodology, perspective, and personal styles vary so much as to render impossible any attempt to catalogue and systematize these studies in any coherent way. I will attempt in this introduction though to single out a few relevant critics, and describe their value and their shortcomings. Guerard stands as the authoritative modern Hardy critic, yet the very breadth of his critical inquires puts him in danger of being merely well-informed of tendencies, without any ordering principle to make clear Hardy's opaque vision. After having constructed an elaborate chart of character traits in Hardy's women, he admits the shortcomings of his own methodology:

> All groupings are to a degree arbitrary, however, and must be looked with remittent disgust. [5]

This remark is revealing in a way Guerard never intended. Distinctions such as his are arbitrary because they merely arrange

the pieces of a novel without any ordering principle to make the distinctions significant. Literary criticism must confront the paradox of the hermeneutic circle, and do more than nod in its direction, as Guerard does in that last citation. For in order to understand the parts of a novel--its characters, scenary, symbols, plot-we must see it as an organic whole. Yet the process of capturing this vision of the novel as a whole occurs only through a close scrunity of those same parts. These two processes must occur simultaneously, if such a thing is possible, and equal weight must be given to each side. Guerard falls on the side of those who have lost the forest for the trees.

D.H. Lawrence provides at least the psychological framework for this study, and at times, the methodology. Lawrence though runs the risk of getting too far from the text to make valuable critical statements. His essay "Sue Bridehead", though a penetrating psychological analysis, contains not one direct textual reference. His beautifully constructed skeleton has no flesh upon it:

> She must, by the constitution of her nature, remain quite physically intact, for the female was atrophied in her, to the enlargement of the male activity. [6]

From this random sample one can see the difficulties encountered by leaving the actual literary artifact out of any attempt to explain it. These abstract explanations grow directly out of the experience of the details of the text, and cannot clarify anything without the accompanying facts.

This paper represents a balance between the two extremes of Guerard and Lawrence; it contains both close reading, and the general psychological framework of the relationship of sexual satisfaction to the self-society dichotomy. I am not offering any final interpretation of them, but merely adding another, hopefully varient one, to the countless which have gone before, and will follow. Let me say in closing that these novels have survived almost a century of criticism, and will survive my efforts; for the experience of life, the life of a novel especially, is stronger than any attempt to organize it, as this paper attempts to affirm through its study of sexual experience.

II. UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE

Sexuality and Society: Constructive Purpose

In Under the Greenwood Tree, written in 1872, Hardy perceives sexuality with mixed feelings; sexuality takes the average man, Dick Dewy, from a state of undefined adolescence to that of a self-sacrificing adult member of society, but in the exceptional individual, Fancy Day, it threatens the social order, and eventually succeds in bringing the downfall of the choir, one of society's revered traditions. Sexuality takes man out of his complete submission to his environment, the state Dick is in at the beginning of the novel. The landscape absorbs Dick in the opening scene:

> Having escaped the bower of trees, he could now be distinctly seen rising against the sky, his profile appearing on the light background like the portrait of a gentleman in black cardboard. It assumed the form of a low-crowned hat, an ordinary shaped nose, an ordinary chin, and ordinary shoulders. What he consisted of further down was invisible from the lack of sky low enough to picture him on. [7]

Dick appears as a mere silhouette on the horizon; a formless, as yet undifferentiated cardboard man. Dick's first sexual stirrings for Fancy Day separate him both physically and symbolically from the undifferentiated community of the choir. Their first encounter is at night, and Hardy expresses Fancy's sexuality through the wildness of her hair and through her virginal nightgown:

> Remaining steady for an instant, the blind went upward from before it, revealing to thirty concentrated eyes a young girl framed as a picture by the window architrave, and unconsciously illuminating her countenance to a vivid brightness by a candle she held in her left hand, close to her face, her right hand being extended to the side of the window. She was wrapped in a white robe of some kind, whilst down her shoulders fell a twinging profusion of marvellously rich hair, in a wild disorder which proclaimed it to be only the invisible hours of the night that such a condition was discoverable. [8]

The description is rife with sexual suggestion: the beautiful young girl standing "unconsciously illuminated" in front of fifteen pairs of masculine eyes in a state as close to raw sexual nature as Hardy could depict in good taste. Dick becomes entranced by this vision of sexuality, and begins his struggle to fulfill his sexual fantasies.

The dance at the Dewy's house represents the courting prior to sexual engagement; here Dick must struggle with Mr. Shiner for Fancy's attentions. The dance becomes heated, and the older partners strip off their jackets, while the younger and more sexually self-conscious retain theirs to remain attractive in the eyes of their sexual counterparts. The scene reaches a point of sexual "incandescence":

> And now a further phase of revelry had disclosed itself. It was the time of night when a guest may write his name in the dust upon the tables and chairs, and a bluish mist pervades the atmosphere, becoming a distinct halo around the candles; when people's nostrils, wrinkles, and crevices in general seem to be getting gradually

> plastered up; when the very fiddlers as well as the dancers get red in the face, the dancers having advanced further still towards incandescence and entered the cadaverous phase; the fiddlers no longer sit down, but kick back their chairs and saw madly at the strings with legs firmly spread and eyes closed, regardless of the visible world. [9]

The sexual intensity reaches its peak when Dick and Fancy go down the dance line for the last time; Hardy's language implies that sexual union takes place, as Dick and Fancy become one:

> ...his arm (Dick's) holding her waist more firmly each time, and his elbow getting further and further behind her back, till the distance reached was rather noticeable and, most blissful, swinging to places shoulder to shoulder, her breath curling round his neck like a summer zephyr that had strayed from its proper date...Fancy was now held so closely that Dick and she were practically one person. The room became to Dick like a picture in a dream... [10]

Dick's sexual awakening brings with it self-consciousness which has the positive social value of making him aware of the need to submerge his true feelings and to wear a public mask. He delays returning Fancy's hankerchief for fear of appearing too interested:

> But he delayed in taking the extreme measure of calling with it lest, had she really no sentiment of interest in him, it might be regarded as a slightly absurd errand, the reason guessed, and the sense of the ludicrous which was rather keen in her, do his dignity considerable injury in her eyes; and what she thought of him, even apart from the question of her loving, was all the world to him now. [11]

His awakened consciousness allows him to make sacrifices and forgive Fancy for her flirations:

> Yes, in the fondness and foolishness of his young heart, after walking four miles in a drizzling rain without overcoat or umbrella and in face of a remark from his love that he was not to come because he would be tired, he had made it his business to wander this mile out of his way again from the sheer wish of spending ten minutes in her presence. [12]

Dick's love makes him a fullbodied character, yet when he forsakes his love to go nutting, he retreats to the state of undifferentiated existence in which he began; he disappears into the landscape. He rejects Fancy and tries to avenge her lack of consideration by leaving her without notice:

> Suffering great anguish at this disloyalty in himself and harshness to his darling, yet disposed to perservere in it, a horribly cruel thought crossed his mind...He leaped over the gate, and pushed up the lane for nearly two miles, till a winding path called Snail Creep sloped up a hill and entered a hazel copse by a hole like a rabbit's burrow. In he plunged, vanished among the bushes, and in a short time there was no sign of his existence upon earth save an occasional rustling of boughs and snapping of twigs in divers of Grey's Wood... [13]

Dick's love represents the healthy and natural sexuality of the average man. His courtship follows the vegetation cycle; it buds in the spring with the trip to carry Fancy back to the schoolhouse, reaches fruition in the summer with the trip back from Budmouth, which culminates in their engagement, suffers a decline in

the fall with the opposition of Mr. Day, reaches its low point in the winter with the vicar's proposal, then ends on the triumphant note of their marriage on Midsummer's Eve. Yet even behind the joyful facade of the wedding lurks the destructive potential of Fancy's exceptional sexuality, which Hardy links with the secret of the Vicar's proposal:

> 'Fancy,' he said, 'why we are so happy is because there is such full confidence between us. Ever since that time you confessed to that little flirtation with Shiner by the river...I have thought how artless and good you must be to tell me o' such a trifling thing, and to be so frightened about it as you were...We'll have no secrets from each other darling, will we ever?..no secret at all.'
>
> 'None from today,' said Fancy, 'Hark! What's that?'...'O, 'tis the nightengale,' murmured she, and thought of a secret she would never tell. [14]

Fancy will always keep her temptation within her, and Hardy implies she will always be distracted by the pretty words of an admirer. Dick's future is like the natural description Hardy gives on the day Dick and Fancy become engaged:

> The distant view was darkly shaded with clouds; but the nearer parts of the landscape were whitely illuminated by the visible rays of the sun streaming down across the heavy gray shade behind. [15]

Sexuality and the Self:
The Dangers of Sexual Egotism

As her name implies, Fancy Day is unnaturally beautiful. Her sexual attractiveness, though finally controlled by a conventional marriage, represents a threat to the social order. All the males are attracted to her, including the two most powerful, the vicar and Mr. Shiner, who are willing to sacrifice the traditional choir to please and display that extraordinary beauty. Hardy describes her as "a flower among vegetables;" a description that aptly sums up both her exceptional beauty, and the impracticality of that beauty. She is aware of the power of her beauty to attract admirers, and takes full advantage of it. On the day she plays the organ in church, she defies social convention by wearing a hat, a feather, and her hair down. Hardy links her appearance on this occasion to her overtly sexual appearance on Christmas Eve:

> With an audacity unparalleled in the whole history of the village-schoolmistresses at this date--partly owing, no doubt, to papa's respectable accumulation of cash, which rendered her profession not altogether a necessity--she had actually donned a hat and feather and lowered her hitherto plainly looped-up hair, which now fell about her shoulders in a profusion of curls. Poor Dick was astonished: he had never seen her look so distractingly beautiful before save on Christmas-Eve, when her hair was in the same luxuriant condition of freedom. But his first burst of delighted surprise was followed by less comfortable feelings as his brain recovered its power to think.
>
> 16

Dick's "less than comfortable feelings" stem from his realization that her sexual attraction extends far beyond merely stunning him; it draws notice from everywhere, which she thrives on:

'You've never dressed so charming before, dearest.'
'I like to hear you praise me in that way, Dick,' she said, smiling archly. 'It is meat and drink to a woman. Do I look nice really?' [17]

Fancy dresses to attract attention, even after she is engaged to Dick. Her desire to excite men is beyond the bounds of traditional attitudes concerning soon-to-be married maidens. A bonnet is for the demure, soon-to-be married woman, a hat the sexually searching and attractive unmarried woman:

'A hat or a bonnet, which shall it be? Which do I look best in?'
'Well, I think the bonnet is nicest, more quiet and matronly.'
'What's the objection to the hat? Does it make me look old?'
'Oh no; the hat is well enough; but it makes look rather too--you won't mind me saying it, dear?'
'Not at all, for I shall wear the bonnet.'
'--Rather too coquettish and flirty for an engaged woman.'
She reflected a minute. 'Yes; yes. Still after all, the hat would be best; hats are best, you see. Yes, I must wear the hat, dear Dicky, because I ought to wear a hat you know.' [18]

Though Fancy flaunts her sexuality, Hardy implies she does deserve better than Dick Dewy, and that her consenting to marry him and refusing the vicar, is a personal sacrifice.

'I wonder!' said Fancy, looking into vacancy with those beautiful eyes of hers--too refined and beautiful for a tranter's wife; but, perhaps, not too good. [19]

Fancy gives up her elevated social position, and declines the vicar's offer of an even higher one, though not without difficulty.

> 'Of course we would not live here, Fancy. I have had for a long time the offer of an exchange of livings with a friend in Yorkshire but have hitherto refused on account of my mother. There we would go. Your musical powers shall be further developed; you shall have whatever pianoforte you like; you shall have anything, Fancy, anything to make you happy--pony-carriage, flowers, birds, pleasant society; yes, you have enough in you for any society, after a few months of travel with me! Will you, Fancy, marry me?' [20]

Fancy's excessive sex appeal disrupts society; it causes the vicar to be willing to give up his parish and his mother to please her. The offer is too much for the opportunistic Fancy; she accepts, despite the fact that she is already engaged. At this point it seems that Fancy's excessive sexuality will bring tragedy to the novel, yet she is able at the last moment to control her overwhelming desire. She recognizes her vanity:

> 'It is my nature--perhaps all women's--to love refinement of mind and manners; but even more than this, to be ever fascinated with the idea of surroundings more elegant and pleasing than those which have been customary. And you praised me, and praise is life to me. It was alone my sensations at these things which prompted my reply. Ambition and vanity they would be called; perhaps they are so.
>
> After this explanation I hope you will generously allow me to withdraw the answer I too hastily gave.' [21]

Sexuality and Society: Destruction and Resolution

The destruction of the choir represents the clearest example of Hardy's ambivalent attitude towards sexuality. Having already seen sexuality's contributions to society--it takes a man from formless adolescence to mature selfhood--we now must link the destruction of the choir to sexuality's destructive side. That Hardy valued the choir we can see both in his preface of 1896, and in the novel itself.

> One is inclined to regret the displacement of these ecclesiastical bandsmen (the choir) by an isolated organist or harmonium player (Fancy Day); and despite certain advantages in point of control and accompaniment which were, no doubt, secured by installing a single artist, the change has tended to stullify the professed aims of the clergy, its direct result being to curtail and extinguish the interest of parishioners in church doings.[22]

Hardy sets up an opposition between society and the individual. When viewed in connection with the next citation, Hardy's attitude towards Fancy's organ-playing show he does not approve of the displacement of the established tradition by the sexual politics surrounding Fancy.

> But, whether from prejudice or unbiased judgment, the venerable body of musicians could not help thinking that the simpler notes they had been wont to bring forth were more in keeping with the simplicity of their old church than the crowded chords and interludes it was her pleasure to produce.
> 23

That the displacement is sexually motivated Hardy makes clear through the choir, society's spokesman. In this respect, they function like the ancient Greek chorus:

> 'Ah; and I see what the parson don't see. Why Shiner is for putting forward that young woman that only last night I was saying was our Dick's sweetheart, but I suppose can't be, and making much of her in sight of the congregation, and thinking he'll win her by showing her off. Well, perhaps 'a woll.' [24]

Later in the discussion, one member puts the blame on Fancy for consciously using her sexuality:

> 'If that young figure of fun--Fancy Day, I mean,' said Bowman, 'hadn't been so mighty forward wi' showing herself off to Shiner and Dick and the rest, 'tis my belief we should never ha' left the gallery.' [25]

The novel ends optimistically: Fancy conquers her desire for complete self-realization which can only do more damage to society, and marries Dick Dewy. The choir participates in the final celebration of constructive sexuality; thus Hardy reunites the discordent elements in a joyous affirmation of sexuality and convention. He is able to do this only because Fancy is willing to give up her right to advance herself at the expense of social harmony. When Hardy invents a character like Eustacia Vye, who cares nothing for social convention, the resolution will be tragic instead of comic.

III. FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

Self-Sacrifice As Virtue: Gabriel Oak

In Under the Greenwood Tree Hardy confronts Fancy Day with a choice between channelling her sexuality for the advancement of herself or for the advancement of society. The novel reaches a comic resolution, and she chooses the system over the experience. In Far From the Madding Crowd, Hardy confronts Bathsheba Everdeme with the same choice, but has her choose self-fulfillment first, which leads her to her disasterous marriage with Troy. It is as if Hardy had had Fancy marry Mr. Shiner first, then return humbly to Dick Dewy. The novel presents Bathsheba with two clear choices: Gabriel Oak, associated with the natural system at its most altruistic, and Sargent Troy, who lives according to the natural law of the self. The natural world, the sphere inhabited by Gabriel Oak, is essentially harmonious. Hardy expresses the natural harmony through the concept of the "Great Mother", who sends signs to her faithful son, Gabriel:

> Gabriel proceeded towards home. In approaching the door, his toe kicked something which felt and sounded soft, leathery, and distended, like a boxing glove. It was a large toad humbly travelling across the path. Oak took it up, thinking it might be better to kill the creature to save it from pain; but finding it uninjured, he placed it again among the grass. He knew what this direct message from the Great Mother meant. [26]

Oak is attuned to his environment, for it gives him his self-concept. Hardy begins the novel by describing Oak in terms of how his society defined him:

> ...to state his character as it stood in the scale of public opinion, when his friends and critics were in tantrums, he was considered rather a bad man; when they were pleased he was rather a good man; when they were neither, he was a man whose moral colour was a kind of pepper-and-salt mixture.[27]

Contrasting with the emerging sexuality of Dick Dewy, Hardy has Oak mature through his submersion of the self. Oak passes from neutrality to virtue by sacrificing himself for others; he saves Bathsheba's haystacks while passing by on the road, and wins the praise of society:

> 'If this rick had gone up the barn would have followed. 'Tis that bold shepherd up there that have done the most good--he sitting on top o' rick, whizzing his great long arms about like a windmill.'
>
> 'He does work hard,' said the young woman on horseback...'I wish he was shepherd here.'[28]

Gabriel responds to the environment, instead of trying to dominate it. In this way he saves the wheat again from the great storm. He stands for endurance was well as selflessness, as his name would imply:

> 'What a way Oak had', she thought, 'of enduring things.' Boldwood who seemed so much deeper and higher in feeling than Gabriel, had not yet learnt, any more than she her-

> self, the simple lesson which Oak showed a mastery of by every turn and look he gave--that among the multitude of interests by which he was surrounded, those which affected his personal well-being were not the most absorbing and important in his eyes. [29]

Hardy bases his moral system in the novel on that "simple lesson". With altruism and endurance in mind, he defines true love, as he does at the end of Under the Greenwood Tree, as a socially rewarding experience:

> Theirs (Oak's and Bathsheba's) was that substantial affection which arises (if any arises at all) when the two who are thrown together begin first by knowing the rougher sides of each other's character, and not the best till further on, the romance growing in the interests of a mass of hard prosaic reality. This good-fellowship --camaraderie--usually occuring through similarity of pursuits, is unfortunately seldom superadded to love between the sexes, because men and women associate, not in their labours, but in their pleasures merely. Where, however happy circumstance permits its development, the compounded feeling proves itself to be the only love which is strong as death--that love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown, beside which the passion usually called by the name is as evanescent as steam. [30]

The problem Hardy encounters with his system is that "love between the sexes" begins with sexual attraction, as he showed with Dick Dewy on Christmas Eve. In Far From the Madding Crowd, Hardy no longer sees sexuality as necessary for self-definition. Instead he turns to the traditional Christian virtue of altruism: you must lose yourself to find yourself. Gabriel has no sexual

attraction, as Hardy is quick to point out, both in the passage above and when he compares him with the sexually appealing Troy:

> And Troy's deformities lay deep down from a woman's vision, whilst his embellishment were upon the very surface; thus contrasting with the homely Oak, whose defects were patent to the blindest, and whose virtues were as metals in a mine. [31]

Sexual Sacrifice and Morality: Boldwood

It seems logical then that when Bathsheba turns from her steam-like affair with the sexually exciting Troy, her alternative is sexual sacrifice; except that Hardy wants a system that can unite prosaic reality and sexual excitement. Somehow Hardy wants the "homely Oak" to embody that system, so when Bathsheba learns her "simple lesson" Hardy must introduce a character who is completely unattractive to her, and yet selfish enough to accept her sacrifice--this character is Boldwood. Bathsheba carelessly sends Boldwood a valentine to get him to acknowledge her aura of sexuality, but succeeds too well, for he falls helplessly in love with her.

> Boldwood's had begun to be a troublesome image--a species of Daniel in her kingdom who persisted in kneeling eastward when reason and common sense said that he might just as well follow suit with the rest, and afford her the official glance of admiration which cost nothing at all. She was far from being seriously concerned about his nonconformity. Still it was faintly depressing that the most dignified and valuable man in the parish should withhold his eyes, and that a girl like Liddy should talk about it. [32]

He is the least sympathetic character in the novel, for his love is neither "prosaic reality", nor physical attraction, as is Troy's but a childish worship of an idol. Hardy demonstrates Boldwood's foolishness when he offers Troy money not to marry Bathsheba, so that he might, then offers him money to marry her after hearing of their sexual relations:

> 'Fifty pounds to marry Fanny. Good. Twenty-one pounds not to marry Fanny, but Bathsheba. Boldwood, yours is the ridiculous fate which always attends interference between a man and his wife. And another word. Bad as I am, I am not such a villian as to make the marriage or misery of any woman a matter of huckster and sale...You say you love Bathsheba; yet on the merest apparent evidence you instantly believe in her dishonor. A fig for such love!' [33]

Bathsheba in turn has nothing but pity for Boldwood. She comes to feel the need to sacrifice her sexual desires to alleviate his suffering, which she feels responsible for because of Boldwood's accusations, and of a powerful moral imperative.

> She breathed and then said mournfully: 'O what shall I do? I don't love you, and I much fear that I never shall love you as much as a woman ought to love a husband. If you, sir, know that, and I can yet give you happiness by a mere promise to marry at the end of six years...It is hardly too much to say that she felt coerced by a force stronger than her own will, not only into the act of promising upon this singularly remote and vague matter, but into the emotion of fancying that she ought to promise. [34]

<u>Sexuality as Egotism</u>:
Sargent Troy

Bathsheba learns the lesson of self-sacrifice only after indulging her sexual desires and suffering for them. She is dazzled by Troy's handsome exterior and romantic past:

> A hand seized the lantern, the door was opened, the rays burst out of their prison, and Bathsheba beheld her position with astonishment. The man to whom she was hooked was brilliant in brass and scarlet. He was a soldier. His sudden appearance was to darkness what the sound of a trumpet is to silence. Gloom, the genius loci at all times hitherto, was not totally overthrown, less by the latern-light then by what the latern lighted. 35

Troy's sexuality dazzles Bathsheba in the dark of night. His uncontrollable self-expression is both alarming, and irresistible. She is attracted by his unconventionality, which she will eventually reject:

> There are occasions when girls like Bathsheba will put up with a great deal of unconventional behavior. When they want to be praised, which is often; when they want to be mastered, which is sometimes; and when they want no nonsense; which seldom. Just now the first feeling was in the ascendent with Bathsheba, with a dash of the second. 36

Bathsheba wants Troy to sexually overwhelm her, which he does, but she soon learns that his attachment to her is purely physical, and is "evanescent as steam". Only weeks after their marriage, Troy returns to his corrupt bachelor habits, to Bathsheba's chagrin:

> 'Only a few short weeks ago you said that I was far sweeter than all your other

> pleasures put up for me..Do, Frank. Come let me fascinate you by all I can do--by pretty words and pretty looks, and everything I can think of--to stay at home. Say yes to your wife--say yes!' [37]

Troy is not bound by promises, but lives only in the excitement of the moment. He represents superficial sexuality. He is the instinctive man who sees only immediate gratification of his desires:

> Simply telling, considering, and caring for what was before his eyes, he was vulnerable only in the present. His outlook upon time was as a transient flash of the eye now and then...With him the past was yesterday, the future, tomorrow; never, the day after. [38]

Hardy sympathetically portrays Troy and his philosophy, as he realizes the change as a vital force. Troy wants to change the architechture of Bathsheba's farmhouse and gives good reasons why:

> A philosopher once said in my hearing that the old builders, how worked when art was a living thing, had no respect for the work of builders who went before them, but pulled down and altered as they thought fit; and why shouldn't we? "Creation and preservation don't do well together," says he, "and a million antiquarians can't invent a style." My mind exactly. I am for making this place more modern, that we may be cheerful whilst we can. [39]

Hardy's sympathy springs from his realization tht "creation and preservation" might not go well together, just as sexual fulfillment and moral virtue--sacrifice--do not "do well together." Troy does serve to show Bathsheba the evils of sexual indulgence, for

he treats her cruelly once his lust is gone. When he learns that his true love, Fanny Robin, is dead, he deliberately breaks Bathsheba's heart:

> 'You are nothing to me--nothing,' said Troy heartlessly. 'A ceremony before a priest doesn't make a marriage. I am not morally yours.' [40]

She has tried to complete herself through sexual indulgence, but finds only suffering:

> The revulsion from her indignant mood a little earlier, when she had meditated upon compromised honour, forestallment, eclipse in maternity by another, was violent and entire. All that was forgotten in the simple and still strong attachment of wife to husband. She had sighed for her completeness then, and now she cried aloud against the severance of the union she had deplored. [41]

She flees the union, and all self-interest, and loses herself to her environment, which brings her back to life.

> Whether she slept or not that night Bathsheba was not clearly aware. But it was with a freshened existence and a cooler brain that, a long time afterwards, she became conscious of some interesting proceedings which were going on above her head and around. [42]

Sexuality and Morality Harmoniously United: The Marriage of Bathsheba and Oak

Despite his sympathy for the natural law of sexuality which rules Troy's life, Hardy feels it is destructive, and places it outside his moral system. When Bathsheba wakes from her egotistic

sexual desires, she realizes how close she came to being consumed by them. Hardy represents the natural law in nature with the swamp; which, though beautiful in the morning sunlight, is nevertheless malignant:

> A morning mist hung over it now--a fulsome yet magnificent silvery veil, full of light from the sum, yet semi-opaque--the hedge behind it being in some measure hidden by its hazy luminousness.. But the general aspect of the swamp was malignant. From its moist and poisonous coat seemed to be exhaled the essences of evil things in the heath, and in the waters under the earth...
> 43

The next lines capture perfectly Hardy's ambivalence concerning sexuality--it is healthy when channeled by society and convention, and destructive when pursued selfishly:

> The hollow seemed a nursey of pestilences small and great, in the immediate neighborhood of comfort and health, and Bathsheba arose with a tremour at the thought of having passed the night on the brink of so dismal a place. 44

Once Bathsheba rejects her sexual impulses, it seems the only other course is complete self-sacrifice.

> 'No; I've altered my mind. It is only women with no pride in them who run away from their husbands. There is one position worse than that of being found dead in your husband's house from his ill-usage, and that is, to be found alive through having gone away to the house of somebody else. I've thought of it all this morning, and I've chosen my course. A runaway wife is an encumbrance to everybody, a burden to her-

> self and a byword--all of which make up a heap of misery greater than any that comes by staying at home--though this may include the trifling items of insult, beating, and starvation.[45]

But Hardy still sees another side to sexuality, which is where Bathsheba comes at the end of the novel. She agrees to marry Boldwood, and thus gives in to the moral system Hardy has created. For this sacrifice she is rewarded with the constructive sexual relationship Hardy set up for Fancy Day. First though, she must realize the importance of the "romance growing in the interstices of a mass of hard prosaic reality" of her dealings with Gabriel Oak. Oak threatens to move away, and only then does she make this realization:

> 'And what shall I do without you? Oh, Gabriel, I don't think you ought to go away. You've been with me so long--through bright times and dark times--such old friends as we are--that seems unkind almost.[46]

After Bathsheba's admission of dependence, she and Oak are back to where they began the novel--on sexual terms. When Bathsheba goes to plead with Oak to stay, she is admitting her sexual attraction to him:

> She tapped nervously, and then thought it doubtful if it were right for a single woman to call upon a bachelor who lived alone...It was very odd to these two persons, who knew each other passing well, that the mere circumstance of their meeting in a new place and in a new way should make them so awkward and constrained. In the fields, or at her house, there had never been any embarrass-

> ment; but now that Oak had become the entertainer their lives seemed to be moved back again to the days when they were strangers.
> 47

It is not enough for Bathsheba to merely sacrifice her dignity by visiting Oak, she must also admit she desires to marry him. Thus Hardy joins the apparently irresolvable contraries--self-sacrifice and sexual desire--under the socially constructive marriage of Bathsheba and Gabriel:

> 'Marrying me! I didn't know it was that you meant,' she said quietly. 'Such a thing as that is too absurd--too soon--to think of, by far!'
> 'Yes; of course, it is too absurd. I don't desire any such thing; I should think that was plain enough by this time. Surely, surely you would be the last person in the world I would think of marrying. It is too absurd, as you say.'
> '"Too s-s-soon" were the words I used!...'
> 'Bathsheba,' he said, tenderly, and in surprise, and coming closer: 'If I only knew one thing--whether you would allow me to love you and win you, and marry you.'
> 'But you will never know,' she murmured.
> 'Why?'
> 'Because you never ask.' 48

The novel ends with an affirmation of Hardy's moral system; it implies Bathsheba's sacrifice can almost return her virginity:

> Repose had again incarnadined her cheeks; and having, at Gabriel's request, arranged her hair this morning as she had worn it years ago on Norcombe Hill, she seemed in his eyes remarkably like the girl of that fascinating dream, which considering that she was now only three or four-and-twenty, was perhaps not very wonderful. 49

Hardy traces a cyclical movement for Bathsheba in the novel, which he makes implicit with this return to the beginning: Bathsheba moves from adolescence into indulgent sexual experience, then into complete self-immolation, which allows her to find happiness and sexual fulfillment within the bounds of social convention. This novel is the greatest triumph of Hardy's affirmative vision of sexuality; in his later works he feels more strongly that the destructive pure natural law of sexuality cannot be contained by any constructive moral system.

IV. THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

Unconscious Sexual Energy versus the Moral System: The Heath and Diggory Venn

In The Return of the Native, Hardy's belief that sexuality can be channeled into socially constructive marriages breaks down, despite his attempt to resurrect it with the final marriage of the two most moral characters. Here there is no distinction between constructive and destructive sexuality; instead of the swamp, there is the Heath, embodiment of the unconscious sexual energy. As D.H. Lawrence writes:

> 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 new instinct. Egdon, whose dark soil was strong and crude, and organic as the body of a beast. [50]

Hardy instills varying amounts of the heath's energy and power in the characters, ranging from Eustacia, the flower of the heath, to Clym, the bright young man worn from too much hard work, who returns to the heath to recover his strength. Hardy can merely present us with the world of experience unable to make it conform to his moral system. The heath is this raw, amoral world of experience, untamed and untamable. Those who live entirely within the moral system are the minor characters in this tragedy; their

success at the end cannot match the power of the life and death struggle which claims the energy and lives of those who dare to assert themselves. The sheep-dog like faithfulness of Gabriel Oak, so highly valued earlier, in this novel becomes the bizzare self-sacrifice of Venn the Reddleman: Like Gabriel, he has been refused by his love, and like Oak, he finds himself in a position to help his beloved:

> Since the arrival of that letter, on a certain morning long ago, the reddleman and Thomasin had not met until today...During the interval he had sighted his position even further from hers than it had originally been, by adopting the reddle trade...-Then came the incident of that day, and the reddleman still loving her well, was excited by this accidental service to her a critical juncture to vow devotion and active to her cause... [51]

Venn hides his sexuality under his fantastic costume, for he is unable to channel it towards anyone other than Thomasin--just as Dick Dewy cannot enjoy his picnic with another woman because of his devotion to Fancy:

> He was clothed throughout in a tight-fitting suit of corduroy, excellent in quality, not much worn, and well-chosen for its purpose, but deprived of its original colour by his trade. It showed to good advantage the good shape of his figure. A certain well-to-do air about the man suggested he was not poor for his degree. The natural query of an observer would have been, why should such a promising being as this have hidden his prepossessing exterior by adopting that singular occupation. [52]

Though Venn lives clearly within the bounds of convention he is outside the action, and he functions as a supernatural interloper on behalf of society in his red outfit. Hardy surrounds Venn with the reddleman myth:

> A child's first sight of a reddleman was an epoch in his life. That blood-coloured figure was a sublimation of all the horrid dreams which has afflicted the juvenile spirit since imagination began. [53]

As in the earlier novels Venn's patience is rewarded; he marries Thomasin in the end. Hardy himself hardly felt uncomfortable with this strained effort to affirm the moral system, for he adds in a footnote:

> The writer may state here that the original conception of the story did not design a marriage between Thomasin and Venn. He was to have retained his isolated and weird character to the last, and to have disappeared mysteriously from the heath, nobody knowing whither--Thomasin remaining a widow. But certain aspects of serial publication led to a change of intent.
>
> Readers can therefore choose between the endings, and those with an austere artistic code can assume the more consistent conclusion to be the true one. [54]

Venn and rest of conventional society live on the heath, but according to their own laws, and not its natural law.

The Moral System's Conquest of Sexual Potential: Clym Yeobright as the Modern Man

Clym is a product of the heath and society expects something great and original from him, for he was supposed to be in touch with its energy as a child:

> He had been a lad of whom something great was expected. Beyond this all was chaos. That he would be sucessful in an original way, or that he would go to the dogs in an original way, seemed equally probable. The only absolute about him was that he would not stand still in the circumstances amid which he was born...Clym had been so interwoven with the heath in his boyhood that hardly anyone could look upon it without thinking of him. [55]

Despite this early promise, Clym enters the novel spent by his life of work and study in Paris. He has lost his zest for life, and becomes the type of the modern man who, through too much thought, loses his innate sexual energy:

> In Clym Yeobright's face could be dimly seen the typical countenance of the future...The view of life as a thing to be put up with, replacing that zest for existence which was so intense in early civilizations, must ultimately enter so thoroughly into the constitution of the advanced races that its facial expression will become accepted as a new artistic departure. [56]

The struggle within Clym is between the experience of life, unconscious sexual energy, and the systems of thought which drain this energy. Hardy makes it clear that Clym has great sexual potential:

> Had heaven preserved Yeobright from a wearing habit of meditation, people would have

> said, "A handsome man." Had his brain unfolded under sharper contours they would have said, "A thoughtful man." But an inner strenuousness was preying upon an outer symmetry, and they rated his looks as singular. 57

Clym is the best example of Hardy's altered views of the conflict of experience and knowledge or system. In his early novels, Hardy affirmed the power of his moral system to successfully channel sexual energy, without killing it. In Return of the Native, and especially through Clym Yeobright, Hardy shows how the moral system, or any knowledge which seeks to organize experience drains sexual potential. If there is one thing that people felt sure of concerning Clym's destiny, it was that he would affirm himself, even at the expense of standing in society. When he returns to Egdon Heath, he no longer has the strength to stand on his own. He wants to support the advancement of civilization, not realizing that this is the enemy of his source of energy--the heath:

> The untameable, Ishmaelish thing that Egdon now was it always had been. Civilization was its enemy; and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the particular formation. 58

Clym is willing to be the first individual sacrifice for society:

> He had a conviction that the want of most men was knowledge of a sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence. He wished to raise the class at the expense of indivi-

> duals rather than individuals at the expense of the class. What was more, he was ready to be the first unit sacrificed. [59]

Hardy no longer feels sacrifice is positive, for the two characters who give up their self-interest are pathetic--Diggory Venn is a ridiculous figure in red, and society does not want Clym's sacrifice. They think everyone would be better off if he minded "his own business:"

> "'Tis good-hearted of the young man," said another. "But for my part, I think he had better mind his own business." [60]

Society, Hardy implies, needs individuals look up to, in order that they see success is possible:

> When the instinctive question about a person is, What is he doing? it is felt that he will not be found to be, like most of us, doing nothing in particular. There is an indefinite sense that he must be invading some region of singularity, good or bad. The devout hope is that he is doing well. The secret faith is that he is making a mess of it. [61]

The Power of Uncontrolled Sexuality: Eustacia Vye as the Flower of the Heath

Clym makes the right move by marrying Eustacia, but for the wrong reasons. By returning to the heath, he unconsciously is admitting his need to tap its sexual energy, which Eustacia contains more of than anyone in the novel:

> She had pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries, and their light, as it came and went, and came again, was partially hampered by their oppressive lids and lashes; and of these the under lid was much fuller than it usually is with English women...-Assuming that the soul of men and women were visible essences, you could fancy the colour of Eustacia's soul to be flame-like. The sparks that rose into her dark pupils gave the same impression. 62

Hardy makes it clear in the next sentence that the reader realize he is associating sexuality with Eustacia:

> The mouth seemed less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss. Some might have added, less to kiss than to curl.
>
> 63

Clym thinks by marrying her, he can take Eustacia out of the range of society's condemnation. He associates the ignorance he has vowed to fight with the hostility directed towards her. When Eustacia goes to church to try to catch a glimpse of Clym, she is pricked by another woman who thinks she has bewitched her son:

> "Has this cruelly treated girl been able to walk home?" said Clym.
>
> "They say she got better, and went home very well.."
>
> When they were gone into the heath again Yeobright said quietly to his mother, "Do you think I have turned teacher too soon?"
>
> 64

Clym tries to fit Eustacia into his plans for instilling morality and modern knowledge in Egdon society:

> "Do you think she would like to teach children?" said Clym. 65

Clym does not realize that it is his moral system that he must escape, or as Hardy puts it: "an inner strenuousness was preying on his outer symmetry."

While Clym may be the best indicator of Hardy's shift in attitude towards sexuality, Eustacia is the best picture of his new respect for the power of unconventional or destructive sexuality. She is the flower of the heath; the representative of natural law.

> Her loneliness deepened her desire... 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 ws but a doleful joy. Yet she desired it, as one in a desert would be thankful for brackish water. [66]

Hardy is still concerned that uncontrolled passion, or assertion of the self, is dangerous to society, but he sees more need for it:

> To have lost the godlike conceit that we may do what we will, and not to have acquired a homely zest for doing what we can, shows a grandeur of temper which cannot be objected to in the abstract, for it denotes a mind that, though disappointed, forswears compromise. But, if congenial to philosophy, it is apt to be dangerous to the commonwealth. [67]

The Failed Union of Sexuality and Morality: The Marriage of Clym and Eustacia

The conflict Hardy thought he had resolved in his earlier novels between sacrifice and sexuality causes the tragedy in this novel. Clym insists on following through on his desire to sacrifice himself as a schoolteacher, and succeeds in blinding himself:

> Amid these jarring events Yeobright felt one thing to be indispensible--that he should make some show of progress in his scholastic plans. With this view he read far into the small hours during many nights.
> One night, after a severer strain than usual, he awoke with a strange sensation in his eyes...[68]

He succeeds in completely obliterating his individuality by becoming a furze-cutter, and thus avoiding the difficulties of fulfilling his promise as an individual:

> This man from Paris was now so disguised in leather accoutrements, and by the goggles he was obliged to wear over his eyes, that his closest friend might have passed by without recognizing him. He was a brown spot in the expanse of midst of an olive-green gorse, and nothing more.[69]

Clym commits himself to the social system and it crushes him. Eustacia remains outside of it, determined to live despite the hardships which have fallen upon her since marrying Clym:

> To Eustacia the situation seemed such a mockery of her hopes that death appeared the only door of relief if the satire of Heaven should go much further.
> Suddenly she aroused herself and exclaimed, "But I'll shake it off. Yes, I will shake it off! No one shall know my suffering. I'll be bitterly merry, and ironically gay, and I'll laugh in derision!"[70]

The split between Clym and Eustacia grows until the death of Clym's mother, when he rejects the living for the dead:

> Forgive you I never can. I don't speak of your lover--I will give you the benefit of the doubt in that matter, for it only affects me personally. But the other--had you half-killed me, had it been that you willfully took the sight away from these feeble eyes of mine, I could have forgiven you. But that's too much for nature!"..I am going way now. I shall leave you." [71]

Clym survives the great drowning catastrophe, unable even to die heroically. He lives on a mere shell, bound to life only by the code of duty. He believes his cousin should marry, yet cannot conjure up the proper emotion which his marrying her would require:

> He could not help feeling that it would be a pitiful waste of sweet material if the tender-natured thing should be doomed from this early stage of her life onwards to dribble away her winsome qualities on lonely gorse and fern. But he felt this as an economist merely, and not as a lover. His passion for Eustacia had been a sort of conserve of his whole life, and he had nothing more of that supreme quality left to bestow. [72]

The conventional system kills Eustacia. Society's fear of the unconventional drives her to madness, grief. They condemn her, then ritually execute her. The same superstitious woman who pricked her with a needle, blames Eustacia for her son's illness, and burns her in effigy on the night she drowns:

> Seizing with the tongs the image of Eustacia, she held it in the heat, and watched it as it began to waste slowly away. And while she stood thus engaged there came from between her lips a murmur of words.
> It was a strange jargon--the Lord's Prayer repeated backwards--the incantation usual in proceedings for obtaining unhallowed assistance against an enemy. [73]

Eustacia finds the completion for which she lived only in death. By challenging the system to the end though she never escapes it alive, she succeeds in death:

> They stood silently looking at Eustacia, who, as she lay there in death, eclipsed all her living phases. [74]

Thus Hardy has reversed his values: self-assertive sexuality is positive, yet cannot escape the bounds of the limiting, sexually inhibiting social conventions. Instead of looking for an unrealistic resolution to the conflict of sacrifice and sexuality, Hardy presents the struggle faithfully, intruding his morality only in the final marriage of Thomasin and Venn.

V. Tess of the D'Urbervilles

Tess as Feminine Archetype

In The Return of the Native Hardy describes the struggle between Eustacia's self-assertive sexuality and the moral system of self-sacrifice which ensnares and makes impotent Clym Yeobright. Though the novel ended on an optimistic note, the marriage of the two conventional characters, Hardy's sympathy lay with the raw power of the assertive and unrestrained self. Eustacia must die for opposing the moral order, even though she follows the natural law. She succeeds through her struggle in achieving the kind of beauty and harmony in her death that she could never have attained while living. Clym, on the other hand, gives in to the system, forsaking his potential and living on only as a monument to the power of morality to kill the human spirit. In Tess of the D'Urbervilles Hardy again sets up an opposition between the natural law of sexual self-realization, and the moral law of sexual-repression, yet finds a character who balances the two extremes. Hardy subtitles the book, "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented," and by doing thus locates the problem of sexuality in the nature of the sexes. Hardy identifies Tess as a female archetype--she is a pure woman--and then through the novel, links her exploitation and victimization with the inability of the male characters to combine the conflicting views of sexuality as she does. Hardy implies that the moral system the masculine society has created fragments

men and destroys women. Though the implications of this vision are grim, the novel captures most consistently the psychological concerns Hardy began exploring in Under the Greenwood Tree. Here there is no third party introduced as in Far From the Madding Crowd, where Boldwood provides an outlet for Bathsheba's sexual sacrifice, so that Gabriel can step in as the perfect compromise, thus insuring a happy ending. The novel establishes that the natural law and the spirit of self-sacrifice are joined in women, but can never be truly united in men. The Dick Dewy characters have given way to the fragmentary Clym Yeobrights and Sargent Troys. The novel qualifies as a true tragedy, for Tess achieves unity of being at the expense of her life. She is able to break free of the system which exploits her, and brings with her into wholeness, if only momentarily, the fragmentary Angel Clare.

Hardy makes it clear that Tess is not an exceptional or extraordinary woman, just a pure specimen. When discussing the controversy over his choice of the adjective "pure" to describe a woman who has born a child out of wedlock, Hardy alludes to the use of the word as describing a pure type, as well as to its use for describing the disputed Christian spirituality:

> The more austere if these (critics) maintain a conscientious difference of opinion concerning, among other things, subjects fit for art, and reveal an inability to associate the idea of the sub-title adjective with any but the artificial and derivitive meaning which has resulted to it from the ordinances of civilization. They ignore the meaning of the word in Nature, together with all the aesthetic claims upon it, not to mention the spiritual interpre-

> tation afforded by the finest side of Christianity.[75]

Not only can one see that Hardy uses pure to mean archetypical, but also to mean natural and unspoiled by civilization. Thus when Tess appears with the undifferentiated mass of womankind on Club-walking Day, he means for us to see her as pure in the sense of unsullied as well as unadulterated. Hardy works in both meanings in that first scene:

> A young member of the band turned her head at the exclamation. She was a fine and handsome girl--not handsomer than some others, possibly--but her mobile peony mouth and large eyes added eloquence to colour and shape...Tess Durbeyfield at this time of her life was a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience...Yet few knew, and still fewer considered this. A small minority, mainly strangers, would look long at her in casually passing by, and grow momentarily fascinated by her freshness, and wonder if they would ever see her again: but to almost everybody she was a fine and picturesque country girl, and nothing more.[76]

The club-dance is a celebration of feminine fertility, which is rapidly disappearing in the face of the pressure from masculine society:

> Its singularity lay less in the rentention of a custom of walking in procession and dancing on each anniversary than in the members being solely women. In men's clubs such celebrations were, though expiring, less uncommon; but either the natural shyness of the softer sex, or a sarcastic attitude on the part of the male relatives, had denuded such women's clubs as remained (if

> any other did) of this their glory and consummation. The club of Marloot alone lived to uphold the local Cerealia. [77]

The Sexual Experience and its Truth

From her state of feminine innocence, Tess moves to a state of sexual experience. Ordinarily the destruction of a girl's virginity would constitute the entire history of a Victorian woman, but Hardy wants to show that sexual experience is not the end of individual development, but rather the beginning. The environment Tess lives in offers no alternative to sensuality; Hardy implies that the crude delights of the natives are in keeping with the spirit of the natural world:

> Every village has its idiosyncrasy, its constitution, often its own code of morality. The levity of some of the younger women in and about Trantridge was marked, and perhaps symptomatic of the choice spirit who ruled The Slopes in that vicinity. The place had also a more abiding defect; it drank hard. [78]

On the night of Tess's sexual initiatin, Hardy sets up an opposition between the sensuality of the group, and Alec's sexual advances. By choosing to go with Alec, Hardy shows that Tess chooses individual fulfillment over self-subordination to the group. Thus her submission to sexuality is an act of self-definition:

> Tess was standing apart from the rest, near the gate. He bent over towards her. 'Jump up behind me,' he whispered, 'and we'll get shot of the screaming cats in a jiffy!'

> She felt almost ready to faint, so vivid was her sense of the crisis. At almost any other moment of her life she would have refused such proffered aid and company, as she had refused them several times before; and now the loneliness could not of itself have forced her to do otherwise. But coming as the invitation did at the particular juncture when fear and indignation at these adversaries could be transformed by a spring of the foot into a triumph over them, she abandoned herself to her impulse, climbed the gate, put her toe upon his instep, and scrambled into the saddle behind him. [79]

Tess's sexual initiation brings tragedy upon her; she has an illegitimate child, whom she loves despite the hardship it brings, but who dies in its first year. Hardy makes it clear that the experience is valuable, despite its tragic outcome:

> 'By experience,' says Roger Ascham, 'we find out a short way by a long wandering.'...Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from a simple girl to a complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice...her soul that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize. [80]

Femininity as the Balance Between Sacrifice and Sexuality

Paradoxically, through the self-defining sexual experience Tess learns true sacrifice, as Hardy would say is characteristic of her sex. Tess is thus a complex development of the earlier Dick Dewy. As a mother, she sacrifices her lunch hours to feed her child, and later learns to bear suffering through the loss of her child. Women learn sacrifice through both submission to sex, and

the experience as a mother; thus Hardy believes women can escape the bounds of the self more easily than their counterparts.

> But those of the other sex were the most interesting of this company of binders, by reason of the charm which is acquired by the woman when she becomes part and parcel of out-door nature, and is not merely an object set down therein as at ordinary times. A field-man is a personality afield; an field-woman is a portion of the field; she has somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it. [81]

While men like Dick Dewy must struggle against this assimilation to their surroundings, for a woman like Tess it constitutes her greatest virtue. In this sense she becomes a substitute for Gabriel Oak, yet Oak's submission to his environment cost him his sexuality. In Tess of the D'Urbervilles Hardy avoids this conflict of sexual assertion and self-submersion by making this combination inherent in the feminine character. The world which the women lose themselves to is ripe with fertility. Like the Heath this dairy world produces life in excess:

> ...large veined udders hung ponderous as sandbags, the teats sticking out like the legs of a gypsy crock; and as each animal lingered for her turn to arrive the milk oozed forth and fell in drops to the ground.
> 82

In this atmosphere of feminine fertility and sexuality, Tess's earlier sin is no sin at all, except that she did not love Alec when she surrendered to him:

> How a convulsive snatching at social salvation might have impelled her to answer him she could not say. But her foolish mother little knew her present feeling towards this man...Hate him she did not quite; but he was dust and ashes to her, and even for her names sake she scarcely wished to marry him. [83]

In the fertile dairyland Tess finds someone she loves and desires sexually--a combination Hardy feels can occur harmoniously only in a woman:

> Amid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of the Froom Vale, at a season when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization, it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate. [84]

Masculinity and the System Which Fragments It

While women can successfully accept their sexuality, and make it compatible with spiritual love, Hardy believes men cannot. Alec D'Urberville is a pure sensualist, who can feel nothing but animal lust. He has no desire to lose himself into a reciprocal sexual relationship, but only desires gratification for himself. Tess is correct when she sees through his conversion to Christianity as just another selfish scheme:

> You, and those like you, take your fill of pleasure on earth by making the life of such as me bitter and black with sorrow; and then it is a fine thing, when you have had enough of that, to think of securing your pleasure in heaven by becoming converted! Out upon such--I don't believe in you-I hate it! [85]

Hardy constructs two types of males in this novel: Alec, the sensualist, and Angel the spiritualist. D.H. Lawrence correctly labels Alec a fragmentary being, and also describes the spirit of self-subordination, which he says makes a man:

> He (Alec) is male enough, in his way; but only physically male. He is constitutionally an enemy of the principle of self-subordination. It is this principle which makes a man, a true male, see his job through, at no matter what cost. A man is strictly only himself when he is fulfilling some purpose he has conceived: so that the principle is not of self-subordination, but of continuity, of development. Only when insisted on, as in Christianity, does it become self-sacrifice. And this resistance to self sacrifice on Alec D'Urberville's part does not make him an individual, an egotist, but rather a non-individual, an incomplete almost a fragmentary thing. [86]

Alec is a parasite, who draws his life from Tess. To finally fulfill herself, she must kill him to stop him from draining her, even though it means her destruction.

The other type of male Hardy portrays in the novel is Angel, who though he renounces Christian doctrine, still cannot escape it. He is out of place in the Froom Valley, for though he cannot kill his lust, neither can he give in to it. He cannot integrate his physical needs with his spiritual aspirations, as Tess does:

> He loved her dearly, though perhaps rather ideally and fancifully than with the impassioned thoroughness of her feeling for him. [87]

Tess needs the physical contact to insure the existence of their more ethereal affection:

> At a pause in the service, while they were kneeling together, she unconsciously inclined herself towards him, so that her shoulder touched his arm; she had been frightened by a passing thought, and the movement had been automatic, to assure herself that he was really there, nad to fortify her belief that his fidelity would be proof against all things. [88]

Angel lacks a normal understanding of man's need for physical contact. He cannot reconcile his unconscious sexuality with his Christian morality:

> Some might risk the odd paradox that with more animalism he would have been a nobler man. We do not say it. Yet Clare's love ws doubtless ethereal to a fault, imaginative to impracticability. With these natures, corporeal presence is sometimes less appealing than corporeal absence; the latter creating an ideal presence that conveniently drops the defects of the real. [89]

His search for purity limits itself to only the spiritual realm, which is not compatible with the physical sensuality of the Froom Valley. He cannot escape the destructive Christian dichotomy of body and spirit, real and ideal. He realizes the inconsistency of his living in a sensual world, like the dairy at Talbothays, and advocating pure spirituality:

> His inconsistencies rushed upon him in a flood. He had persistently elevated Helenic Paganism at the expense of Christianity; yet in that civilization an illegal surrender was not certain disesteem. [90]

Hardy believes men live in a fragmented civilization; they can choose either spirituality or carnality, but not both. Alec is a demon, as he admits himself:

> You are Eve, and I am the old Other One come to tempt you in the disguise of an inferior animal. [91]

Pagan World of Experience Conquers the Moral System

Hardy opposes the Christian world of dichotomy with the pagan natural world. In this world sensuality and divinity are inseparable. This is the world Tess rejects when she goes off with Alec:

> Through this floating, fusty debris of peat and hay, mixed with the perspirations and warmth of the dancers, and forming together a sore of vegeto-human pollen, the muted fiddles feebly pushed their notes, in marked contrast to the spirit with which the measure was trodden out...Of the rushing couples there could be barely discerned more than the highlights--the indistinctness shaping them to satyrs clasping nymphs--a multiplicity of Pans whirling a multiplicity of Syrinxes; Lotis attempting to elude Priapus, and always failing. [92]

There is no place for Tess as a sensual creature in the Chrisitian world, except as Alec's mistress. The masculine world exploits the feminine vegetative world. The threshing machine and the man who runs it symbolize this exploitation:

> By the engine stood a dark motionless bineg, a sooty and grimy embodiment of tallness, in a sort of trance, with a heap of coals by

> his side: it was the engineman. The isolation of his manner and colour lent him the appearance fo a creature form Tophet, who had strayed in to the pellucid smokelessness of yellow grain and pale soil, with which he had nothing in common, to amaze and discompose its aborigines...He was in the agricultural world, but not of it. He served fire and smoke; these denizens of the fields served vegetation, weather, frost, and sun. 93

Tess is the sacrificial victim to the masculine system. She does succeed in escaping their exploitation by denying that to be sensual means to serve the devil. She escapes by killing Alec.

> 'Angel,' she said, as if waiting for this, 'do you know what I have been running after you for? To tell you that I have killed him!' A pitiful white smile lit her face as she spoke...He has come between us and ruined us and now he can never do it any more...It came to me as a shining light that I should get you back that way. 94

Tess fulfills her relationship with Angel, and thus both of them are made whole, by her rejection of the masculine Christian dogma which Angel on his own cannot escape. They live in union for five blissful days, knowing though that their time together will not last:

> Whenever he suggested that they should leave their shelter, and to 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...It was quite true; within was affection, union, error forgiven: outside was the inexorable. 95

The novel is a tragedy because fulfillment brings with it death. Hardy makes not attempt to make the novel fit any optimistic moral order:

> I will just add that the story is sent out in all sincerity of purpose, as an attempt to give artistic form to a true sequence of things; and in respect of the book's opinions and sentiments, I would ask the too genteel reader, who cannot endure to have said what everybody nowadays thinks and feels, to remember a well-worn sentence of St. Jerome's: If an offense come out of truth, better is it that offense come than that the truth be concealed.96

This view of the novel as a glimpse of truth, however disconcerting that truth might be, is quite different from the view of the earlier Hardy, who affirmed the system over the true experience. Sexuality is experience, and experience cannot be successfully contained in any moral or other system. With Tess of the D'Urbervilles Hardy becomes then a modern novelist. In Return of the Native Hardy displayed the triumph of the system over Eustacia's self-assertion and Clym's potential self-expression. Here Hardy shows Tess breaking out of that system, and balancing the apparently contradictory virtues of sexuality and sacrifice for those "five blissful days." Hardy affirms the power of experience, especially the potentially destructive sexual experience, to bring a woman to fulfillment, while the system entraps the males in the roles they have created for themselves. Thus Alec, true to his word, "dies bad," and Angel walks out of the novel still clinging to "a spiritualized image of Tess." Hardy

becomes modern when he refuses to force the novel to fit his moral system. Hardy shifts from establishing a moral-social system and trying to find the place of experience in it, to viewing the truth of experience, and showing how the system can obscure or block this most powerful truth.

FOOTNOTES

1. Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1965), p. 72.

2. Albert J. Guerard, "The Women of the Novels," (in) Hardy, Twentieth Century Views, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 67.

3. Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, "Preface to the Fifth and Later Editions," p. 2.

4. Albert J. Guerard, "Hardy and the Modern Reader: A Revaluation," in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, p. 431.

5. Guerard, "The Women of the Novels," p. 67.

6. D.H. Lawrence, "Sue Bridehead," in Hardy: Twentieth Views, p. 72

7. Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree. (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1903; Reprint ed., Pocket Papermacs, 1971), pp. 12-13.

8. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

9. Ibid., p. 58.

10. Ibid., p. 88.

11. Ibid., p. 68.

12. Ibid., p. 175.

13. Ibid., pp. 146-7

14. Ibid., p. 204.

15 Ibid., p. 97.

16. Ibid., p. 170.

17. Ibid., p. 171.

18. Ibid., p. 141.

19. Ibid., p. 193.

20. Ibid., p. 178.

21. Ibid., p. 184.

22. Ibid., Preface to 1896 ed., V.

23. Ibid., p. 173.

24. Ibid., p. 94.

25. Ibid.

26. Idem, *Far From the Madding Crowd*. (New York: Signet Classics, New American Library, 1960), p. 229.

27. Ibid., p. 14.

28. Ibid., p. 53.

29. Ibid., p. 275-6.

30. Ibid., p. 368.

31. Ibid., p. 180.

32. Ibid., p. 97.

33. Ibid., p. 222.

34. Ibid., 329.

35. Ibid., p. 156.

36. Ibid., p. 159.

37. Ibid., p. 254.

38. Ibid., p. 160.

39. Ibid., p. 226

40. Ibid., p. 282.

41. Ibid., p. 280.

42. Ibid., p. 282.

43. Ibid., p. 283.

44. Ibid., 284.

45. Ibid., p. 285.

46. Ibid., p. 362.

47. Ibid., p. 366.

48. Ibid., p. 367.

49. Ibid., p. 372.

50. D.H. Lawrence, "The Study of Thomas Hardy," in _Selected Literary Criticism_, ed. Anthony Beal. (New York: _Viking Press_, 1966), p. 172.

51. Thomas Hardy, _The Return of the Native_. (New York: Signet Classics, New American Library, 1959), p. 86.

52. Ibid., p. 16.

53. Ibid., p. 83.

54. Ibid., p. 396

55. Ibid., p. 172.

56. Ibid., p. 171.

57. Ibid., 142.

58. Ibid., p. 14.

59. Ibid., p. 176.

60. Ibid., p. 176.

61. Ibid., p. 172.

62. Ibid., p. 72.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid., p. 182.

65. Ibid., p. 183.

66. Ibid., p. 75.

67. Ibid., p. 77.

68. Ibid., p. 250.

69. Ibid., p. 253.

70. Ibid., pp. 257-8.

71. Ibid., p. 328.

72. Ibid., p. 391.

73. Ibid., p. 356.

74. Ibid., p. 375.

75. Hardy, <u>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</u>, "Preface to the Fifth and Later Editions," 1892, p.2.

76. Ibid., p. 12.

77. Ibid., p. 10.

78. Ibid., p. 51.

79. Ibid., p. 58.

80. Ibid., p. 84.

81. Ibid., p. 74.

82. Ibid., p. 90.

83. Ibid., p.69.

84. Ibid., p. 125.

85. Ibid., p. 256.

86. Lawrence, "The Study of Thomas Hardy," p. 193.

87. Hardy, <u>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</u>, p. 171.

88. Ibid., p. 179.

89. Ibid., p. 205.

90. Ibid., p. 283.

91. Ibid., p. 289.

92. Ibid., p. 53.

93. Ibid., p. 270.

94. Ibid., p. 318.

95. Ibid., p. 323.

96. Ibid., "Explanatory Note to the First Edition," 1891, p. 1.

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