DARWINISM IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF THOMAS HARDY

BY STEFANI F. ANIC

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Supervisor: Dr Carol Clarkson

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INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to critically examine the influence of Darwinian thought on Thomas Hardy's novels and poetry. Through the theory of evolution by natural selection Charles Darwin revolutionised the way humankind perceives and relates to the natural world. It is my contention that Hardy largely accepted and recognised the significance of Darwin's theory. Yet Hardy believes that certain aspects of Darwin's theory needed to be revised, consequently he evokes an optimistic approach towards life. Hardy argues that if all species are connected in the unity of life then humankind has a certain ethical responsibility towards its environment and to its fellow creatures.

In chapter one, Darwin's theory will be discussed through an analysis of his two seminal works, The Origin of Species and The Descent of Man. This chapter will explore the impact and importance of Darwinian Theory in the Victorian era. I will investigate some of Darwin's main contentions and attempt to explain why his theories were so widely recognised and popularised. The central focus of this chapter will be on Darwin's vision of man and nature based on his theory of evolution by natural selection. Darwin presents a new vision of life, by challenging traditional views, which maintained intelligence sets humans apart from other species. Man was no longer the centre of focus, instead in The Origin of Species Darwin chose to concentrate on the natural world. Darwin reveals how all species are linked in the unity of life. Man shares with other living creatures the common determination for survival.

In chapter two I will closely examine the evolutionary theme in Hardy's fiction through an analysis of A Pair of Blue Eyes, Far from the Madding Crowd, Jude the Obscure and Tess of the d'Urbervilles. However the primary focus will be on Tess of the
d’Urbervilles, which is abundant with the evolutionary theme. Like Darwin Hardy documents humankind’s struggle and adherence to universal laws. More importantly Hardy reveals a fundamental respect for the natural world in his fiction.

Hardy wrote in a period which is often referred to as ‘The Age of Doubt.’ The third chapter will concentrate on Hardy’s pessimism. The central focus of this chapter will be on the bleaker implications of evolutionary theory. Hardy discusses man’s insignificance in relation to the cosmos in A Pair of Blue Eyes. Hardy realised that there was something greater that the human, the natural world is consequently portrayed in majestic terms. I will be examining Hardy’s lack of faith in his poetry. The late-Victorian era witnessed the increase of pessimism, as advancements in science led to an appraisal of objective beliefs over religious faith. Evolutionary ideas resulted in a general mood of melancholy in the Victorian public, as humankind was confronted with its own insignificance.

The final chapter of this paper will examine the moral implications of Hardy’s fiction. Many critics choose to focus only on Hardy’s pessimism. Yet we cannot dismiss Hardy as a pessimist, as in his work there exists a profound optimism. Through close analysis of his texts one is able to discover the ethical implications of his philosophy. According to Hardy if all species are united through common ancestry, then we as humans should be sympathetic to other living beings. I will be discussing Hardy’s unique version of ‘evolutionary meliorism’ in relation to his fiction.
CHAPTER ONE: DARWIN’S REVOLUTION

Charles Darwin (1809-1882) had an immense impact on nineteenth century thought, of all the nineteenth century scientists he is the most remembered. Darwin’s best known work The Origin of Species (1859) transformed the way humanity perceives itself in relation to its exterior world. Cannon (1968: 166) aptly comments on evolutionary science’s impact on the scene:

Paleontology, the study of fossil forms, was the revolutionary science of the early nineteenth century. It wrecked more inherited intellectual structures than, to my knowledge, has any other new study. The Great Chain of Being, Adam, Genesis, Voltaire, the Catholic tradition—all tumbled. Poetry had to revise its habits.

Arguably Darwin’s theories remain the most influential and controversial.

Darwin describes The Origin of Species as ‘one long argument’ of ‘descent with modification’, asserting that life is subject to painful struggle and variation (435). However Darwin was not the only scientist to reach these conclusions. After years of gradually collecting evidence The Origin of Species was published in haste due to pressure from Mr Alfred Wallace who had “arrived at almost exactly the same general conclusions that I have on the origin of the species” (65).

Although evolution is largely associated with Darwin, evolutionary theories have existed for centuries. Aristotle (384-322) recognised affinities among organisms. He divided organisms into simple and complex in a “Scale of Nature”, arguing that organisms were moving from an imperfect state into a perfect state. However modern evolutionary theory purports that organisms do not necessarily progress into a perfect state.
Jean Baptiste de Lamarck (1744-1829) is acknowledged as the first notable evolutionary scientist, he suggested the change that occurs in organisms over time is a result of natural phenomena rather than the work of a supreme being (Wilson 2000:203). Despite Lamarckian evolution, in the early-1800s the popular belief maintained that the earth was far too young for organisms to have made any significant changes. At the beginning of the nineteenth century geologists were only beginning to discover that the Earth's surface was not created as it is seen in its present form; rather it has developed into its recent form over time, through processes such as erosion and volcanic activity.

Darwin's theory had much in common with the gradualist approach of the notable geologist Sir Charles Lyell. Gradualism contends that the evolutionary process occurs through countless minute changes over an immense period of time. Lyell claimed that the world was much older than previously thought. He rejected the prevailing theories of geology of the time, alleging they were biased and based on the interpretation of Genesis. In his opinion historical records had been 'distorted' by humankind's obsession with itself (Beer 2000: 16).

Darwin argued that Evolution occurs by natural selection. Evolution can be described as the process whereby miniscule changes that act over a period of time, affect a given population. In the struggle for existence inherited variations or traits improve an individual's chances for survival. As a result of natural selection better adapted organisms will survive, while others might face extinction. Darwin maintains that all living organisms have the same instinctual drive for survival. At times, Darwin’s theory appears ruthless, he describes how all organic beings adhere to 'one general law', which is to “multiply, vary, let the strongest live and the weakest die” (1985: 263). Thus life
appears to be a game of the ‘the survival of the fittest,’ a term coined by Herbert Spencer, whereby the stronger of the species will usually eliminate the weaker.

In *The Descent of Man* Darwin outlines his entire argument:

I may be permitted to say, as some excuse, that I had two distinct objects in view; firstly, to shew that species had not been separately created, and secondly, that natural selection had been the chief agent of change, though largely aided by the inherited effects of habit, and slightly by the direct action of the surrounding conditions. (92)

Suddenly, like the natural world, humankind was subject to analysis. Darwinism proposed that our environment was not made to be suitable to us, instead we adapt to our environment. Man was no longer in control over the world around him; Darwin emphasizes that “Man does not actually produce variability” (Darwin 1859: 441). Everything is subject to change. Natural Selection, described in *The Origin of Species*, “is a power incessantly ready for action, and is as immeasurably superior to man’s feeble efforts” (115).

Darwin argues persuasively that life originated only once, all species have descended from ‘some one source’ (393), or ‘one ancient but unseen parent’ (398). Thus, all living organisms as well as those that are extinct can trace their origins through numerous intermediate ancestors to a single ancestor, which itself arose from inanimate matter. In *The Descent of Man* Darwin underlines the community of descent of organisms, systematically criticizing humankind’s irrationality for believing in any other view. He elucidates:

Consequently we ought frankly to admit their [man and all other vertebrae animals] community of descent; to take any other view, is to admit that our own structure, and that of all the animals around us, is a mere snare laid to entrap our judgement. It is only our natural prejudice, and that arrogance which made our forefathers declare that they were descended from demi-gods, which leads us to demur this conclusion.” (36-37)
He continues superciliously, "I have at least, as I hope, done good service in aiding to overthrow the dogma of separate creations" (92). Thus Darwin points to the need to accept certain truths about the world, no matter how unpleasant they may be. It was time to acknowledge the truth of our existence or be forced to live in the darkness of ignorance.

Evolutionary science had a tremendous impact on religious thought. Society in general had difficulty accepting that life on this planet was not guided by divinity but an indifferent nature. Consequently, Darwin was met with criticism and confusion. Herschel described Darwin's theory as the 'law of higgledy-piggledy' (quoted in Beer 2000:7).

The rise of science led to a decline in the Christian faith, as many scientists rejected the biblical account of creation. Evolutionary theory did not privilege humankind; rather all species are bound in the painful cycle of evolution. Darwin not only dethroned man as the 'lord of creation' but continuously stressed our profound ignorance on a variety of points (Culler 1968:224).

Novelists have always been interested in man's relationship with his environment. Therefore it is not surprising that the Darwinian struggle for existence caught the imagination of so many writers, particularly his view of humankind's relation to nature. Darwin redefined humanity's position in the universe. Humankind could no longer claim a distinctive origin, as scientists were beginning to acknowledge the unity and common ancestry of all life. Darwin is fundamentally against the immutability of the species, stressing that species were not created as they exist today. Darwin even dares to suggest, "it might have been an immense advantage to man to have sprung from some comparatively weak creature" (96). Evolutionary biology relegated humankind to the
level of the lower species and 'ultimately' to the level of 'rocks and stones' (Coslett 1982: 10).

Humankind is notably omitted from The Origin of Species, instead Darwin concentrates on the non-human and the natural world, he indicates that 'in the distant future' “light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history” (458). Yet Darwin makes no endeavour to explain the origins of life; in The Descent of Man he comments: “In what manner the mental powers were first developed in the lowest organisms, is as hopeless an enquiry as how life itself first originated. These are problems for the distant future, if they are ever to be solved by man” (100). He describes the origins of the species as ‘that mystery of mysteries’ (1989: 65).

Evolutionary theory postulates that the world has been in existence for far longer than the few thousand years previously thought; in fact its existence can be traced back to millions of years. Therefore evolutionary theory acknowledges the transience of all organisms, recognising that even the human species might one day face extinction.

Darwin’s theory identifies a future which is unforeseeable. However all is not bleak. He conceives of an ennoblement in the unity of life:

The whole history of the world, as at present known, although of a length quite incomprehensible by us, will hereafter be recognised as a mere fragment of time, compared with the ages which have elapsed since the first creature, the progenitor of innumerable extinct and living descendants, was created...When I view all beings not as special creations, but as the lineal descendants of some few beings which lived long before the first bed of the Silurian system was deposited, they seem to me to become ennobled. (1859: 458)

Darwin envisions ‘a grandeur in this view of life’ as “forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved” (460). Fundamentally, it is this
optimism of the unity of life, which largely caused Hardy to derive a unique vision of man and nature from Darwin's theory.
CHAPTER TWO: HARDY'S VISION OF MAN AND NATURE

Darwin had a profound impact on Hardy. Hardy reveals in his biography that “as a young man he had been among the earliest acclamers of The Origin of Species” (153). Darwin was widely read amongst his contemporaries. Hardy cites ‘Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Comte, Hume, Mill, and others” as his greatest influences (quoted in Robinson 1980: 128). Darwin’s influence on Hardy is obvious. When a clergyman asked Hardy how he could reconcile ‘the horrors of human and animal life’ with Christianity, Hardy professes his allegiance to Darwin:

Mr. Hardy regrets that he is unable to suggest any hypothesis which would reconcile the existence of such evils as Dr. Grosart describes with the idea of omnipotent goodness. Perhaps Dr. Grosart might be helped to a provisional view of the universe by the recently published Life of Darwin, and the works of Herbert Spencer and other agnostics. (205)

The often quoted passage, taken from The Origin of Species of the “entangled bank” points to a unity and co-dependency of life. Darwin illustrates the beauty of Nature. Nature is filled with energies:

It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. (459)

Darwin describes a natural world which is teeming with plant and animal life. Hardy shares with Darwin, an appreciation and recognition of the affinities that exist in the natural world.
Hardy’s description of nature is remarkably similar to Darwin’s. As Tess and Angel ramble through the meadows of Froom Valley they are faced with an animated nature:

At these non-human hours they could get quite close to the waterfowl. Herons came, with a great bold noise as if opening doors and shutters, out of the boughs of a plantation which they frequented at the side of a mead; or, if already on the spot, hardly maintained their standing in the water as the pair walked by, watching them by moving their heads round in a slow, horizontal, passionless wheel, like the turn of puppets by clockwork. Or perhaps the summer fog was more general, and the meadows lay like a white sea, out of which the scattered trees rose like dangerous rocks. Birds would soar through it into the upper radiance, and hang on the wing sunning themselves, or alight on the wet rails subdividing the mead, which now shone like glass rods. (129)

Nature is alive and swarming with activity. Beer aptly comments how “Hardy like Darwin places himself in his texts as observer, traveller, a conditional presence capable of seeing things from multiple distances and diverse perspectives almost in the same moment” (230).

Hardy’s observing narrator pays attention to intricate detail. In Far from the Madding Crowd he meticulously describes a swamp that Bathsheba happens to stumble upon:

From her feet, and between the beautiful yellowing ferns with their feathery arms, the ground sloped downwards to a hollow, in which was a species of swamp, dotted with fungi. A morning mist hung over it now—a noisome yet magnificent silvery veil, full of light from the sun, yet semi-opaque—the hedge behind it being in some measure hidden by its hazy luminousness. Up the sides of this depression grew sheaves of the common rush, and here and there a peculiar species of flag, the blades of which glistened in the emerging sun like scythes. 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 earth and in the waters under the earth. The fungi grew in all manner of positions from rotting leaves and tree stumps, some exhibiting to her listless gaze their clammy tops, others their oozing gills. Some were marked with great splotches, red as arterial blood—others were saffron yellow, and others tall and attenuated with stems like macaroni. Some were leathery and of richest browns (314).
Hardy's observing eye captures minute details of the landscape. Even though Bathsheba is perplexed by the sight of the swamp, the narrator captures its magnificence. For Hardy nature could be both dangerous and beautiful.

Hardy documents the natural world with precision and depth. His sense of observation is impeccable. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* the four girls on their way to church, seem to disturb a peaceful nature: “Their gauzy skirts had brushed up from the grass innumerable flies and butterflies which, unable to escape, remained caged in the transparent tissue as in an aviary” (140). During a walk on a summer evening, Tess unsettles an ‘uncultivated’ nature, unknowingly killing the unsuspecting creatures that stand in her path. She intrudes onto Nature’s space:

The outskirt of the garden in which Tess found herself had been left uncultivated for some years, and was now damp and rank with juicy grass which sent up mists of pollen at a touch; and with tall blooming weeds emitting offensive smells—weeds whose red and yellow and purple hues formed a polychrome as dazzling as that of cultivated flowers. She went stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails that were underfoot, staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her arms sticky blights which, though snow-white on the apple-tree trunks, made madder stains on her skin; thus she drew quite near to Clare, still unobserved by him (121).

Hardy evokes an almost sluggish nature which is disturbed by the human. It is a world crowded with plant and animal life. It is Hardy’s Garden of Eden.

Often Hardy’s protagonists display a close affiliation with the natural world. While harvesting wheat, Tess quietly integrates into her natural surroundings: “A field-man is a personality afield; a 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” (86). Tess moves like a ‘cat’ in the garden (121). In *Jude the Obscure* Sue Bridehead
enters a room ‘like the flitting in of a moth’ (312). In *Far from the Madding Crowd* Bathsheba perceives herself to be ‘a fair product of Nature’ (10). Yet Gabriel Oak understands Nature like no-one else in the novel. Through his acute sense of nature Oak is able to predict the impending storm, thereby saving Bathsheba’s farm produce. There is an implicit dramatisation of nature, the night appears ‘sinister’ while the moon ‘had a lurid metallic look’ (250). Despite the melodramatic scene, Oak is able to comprehend the ‘direct message’ that the ‘Great Mother’ sends; the slug that crept indoors, the two black spiders that fell to the floor and the huddled sheep were Nature’s “way of hinting to him that he was to prepare for foul weather” (253).

Hardy seeks to record human emotion in the present. In his journal Hardy comments, “To-day has length, breadth, thickness, colour, smell, voice. As soon as it becomes yesterday it is a thin layer among many layers, without substance, colour, or articulate sound” (285). Only in the present moment can human emotion be realised. The different levels and layers of human emotion evokes an image of evolutionary strata. Hardy’s protagonists are characterised by emotional experiences of high intensity. In *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* the use of months and seasons suggests cyclical repetitions. Tess flows like the seasons as her physical world reflects her emotional state. In spring Tess travels to Talbothays Farm where she meets Angel. During the summer months of July and August, in the lush green Froom valley, Tess and Angel’s passion is at its peak. For Angel, the oppressive heat of the weather reflects his inner passion for Tess. A winter later, Tess is alone in the grey world of Flintcomb-Ash. The barren fields of this desolate land mirror Tess’s soul. Hardy has restored the ancient connection between the human subject and nature (Paterson 1977: 462).
Repeatedly Hardy’s protagonists exhibit the characteristics of ‘lesser creatures.’ After Knight’s near death experience in the ‘Dark Valley’, Elfride scampers away “through the pelting rain like a hare; or more like a pheasant when, scampering away with a lowered tail, it has a mind to fly, but does not” (221). Frequently Tess’s moods are linked to the natural world. While Tess tries to repress the life within her, “a particularly fine spring came round, and the stir of germination was almost audible in the buds; it moved her, as it moved the wild animals” (98). The freshness and vitality of spring awakens Tess from her stupor. While Tess journeys to the dairy farm, a place near the d’Urbervilles ancestral lands, “some spirit within her rose automatically as the sap in the twigs” (99). After Angel leaves Tess she is once again displaced in the world, “and there was something of the habitude of the wild animal in the unreflecting instinct with which she rambled on-disconnecting herself by littles from her eventful past at every step, obliterating her identity” (271). The destitute Tess is forced to resume her ‘pilgrimage.’ Tess fights for her existence, for “Tess was trying to lead a repressed life, but she little divined the strength of her own vitality” (124).

Darwin emphasised descent and kin which too is a preoccupation of Hardy’s. Hardy’s use of heredity, as a form of determinism, suggests his characters inevitable fate. In Jude the Obscure both Sue’s and Jude’s lives are predetermined by hereditary. Jude and Sue come from a family of failed marriages, subsequently the readers expect theirs to fail. Jude Fawley is doomed as his name suggests, (it contains the word flaw). In A Pair of Blue Eyes Elfride’s life seems to be a repetition of her grandmother’s, also named ‘Elfride’. Her grandmother eloped with a poor actor, similarly, Elfride attempted to elope with Stephen. While John Smith prepares the tomb of the lately deceased Lady Luxellian,
he remarks, “That trick of running away seems to be handed down in families” (251).

Through marriage Elfride becomes the next Lady Luxellian, ironically they both die young after childbirth. It becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between the stories of the two ‘Elfrides.’ Even for Smith who recounts the entire story, “the two women begin to merge into one another in the layers of his memory” (Gilmartin 2000: 36).

In *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* the opening scenes, illustrates Hardy’s obsession with heredity, when parson Tringham immediately tells John of his noble ancestry. This dramatic introduction acts as the starting point of Tess’s troubles (Robinson 1980: 137). Tess’s heredity is continuously emphasised only to draw attention to her tragic outcome. Tess, the main protagonist, belongs to an extinct county family, yet nothing beneficial ever transpires from her ancient blood, in the opening chapters, Hardy mockingly suggests it cannot even obtain her a dance partner, “Pedigree, ancestral skeletons, monumental record, the d’Urberville lineaments, did not help Tess in her life’s battle as yet, even to the extent of attracting to her a dancing-partner over the heads of the commonest peasantry. So much for Norman blood unaided by Victorian lucre” (11). Tess remarks, “Our names are worn away to Durbeyfield” (35). Johnson believes this suggests “not only the weathering of an engraving but also the slow geological evolution that erodes landscapes” (1977: 260).

In a discussion with Angel, Tess explains her reluctance to learn:

Because what’s the use of learning that I am one of a long row only-finding out that there is set down in some old book somebody just like me, and to know that I shall only act her part; making me sad, that’s all. The best is not to remember that your nature and your past doings have been just like thousands’ and thousands’, and that your coming life and doings’ll be like thousands’ and thousands.’ (125)
As the years pass by, Tess’s nightmare is realised, her life inevitably becomes a repetition of the past. Hillis Miller explains that *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* “is centrally concerned with the way the human past determines the present” (1970: 102). Tess’s fate seems to be inevitable. Throughout the novel she is trapped by circumstances that are out of her control. Her ancestry is constantly emphasised. Tess has an eerie resemblance to the portraits of the dead d’Urberville women, ‘her fine features were unquestionably traceable in these exaggerated forms (34). Yet the past offers little consolation, “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”(71).

Tess’s expectations of Alec are disappointed, “She had dreamed of an aged and dignified face, the sublimation of all the d’Urberville lineaments, furrowed with incarnate memories representing in hieroglyphic the centuries of her family’s and England’s history” (34). In contrast ‘touches of barbarism’ could be traced in his contours. Alec is only one of the innumerable negative forces in her life. When Tess returns to her family tomb in Kingsbere, a place which contains the genealogical record of her family history, Alec is waiting for her. This signals her final entrapment and ultimately leads to her dramatic capture at Stonehenge (Robinson 1980: 138).

The legend of the d’Urberville coach-murder remains a mystery throughout the novel, as it is never explained in its entirety. Angel can only tell us, how, “A certain d’Urberville of the sixteenth or seventeenth century committed a dreadful crime in his family coach; and since that time members of the family see or hear the coach whenever” (211). On Tess’s demand, Alec offers more information, “One of the family is said to have abducted some beautiful woman, who tried to escape from the coach in which he
was carrying her off, and in the struggle he killed her-or she killed him—I forget which. Such is one version of the tale....” (348). In this ‘version of the tale’ Tess kills Alec, her life, subsequently, becomes a repetition of the past. The narrator continuously hints to Tess’ inevitable tragic fate through the use of words such as ‘doomed’, ‘destined’ and ‘fated’ (Waldoff 1979: 137). In Hardy’s novels there exists a constant irony of too late or of what might have been.

Tess is first described as a “fine and handsome girl—not handsomer than some others” (8). Her imperfections are emphasised by the narrator, “He had never before seen a woman’s lips and teeth which forced upon his mind with such persistent iteration the old Elizabethan simile of roses filled with snow. Perfect, he, as a lover, might have called them off-hand. But no—they were not perfect. And it was the touch of the imperfect upon the would-be perfect that gave the sweetness, because it was that which gave the humanity” (my italics148). Yet Tess is not an ordinary peasant girl, she displays a profound intelligence, resulting in her rising above the mentality of the working class. She believes she is ‘a peasant by position, not by nature!’ (228). Hardy’s heroine Tess is fundamentally a middle class heroine. She has enough intelligence to question her mother’s irresponsibility for having so many children when they are faced with poverty. Her existence, her vitality remains despite society’s attempt to control and pigeonhole her.

Angel has a self-made image of Tess’s innocence and virginity. He thinks to himself how she is a ‘daughter of the soil’ (125), and “what a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature that milkmaid is!” (119). Angel idolises Tess, “She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical
form. He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names half teasingly" (129). While Tess asks him to, "Call me Tess," he persists to glorify her. However the narrator constantly undermines Angel's idealistic vision of Tess. In the early morning, Angel sees Tess looking 'ghostly, as if she were merely a soul at large' (128), and the dew on Tess's eyelashes and hair appears to be seed pearls. When the day breaks Tess loses her 'strange and ethereal beauty', and once again she is 'the dazzlingly fair dairymaid only' (130). Angel's vision of Tess is an illusion. After learning the truth of Tess's circumstances surrounding her lost innocence, he cannot accept her. Angel cries out, "Here I was thinking you a newsprung child of nature; there were you, the belated seedling of an effete aristocracy!" (228). His obsession with innocence has tragic consequences. Angel fails to reconcile his idealistic image of "the innocent milkmaid with the reality of a sexually experienced woman" (Waldoff 1979:147).

During Angel's time spent at Talbothays he gains a new perspective on Nature and humanity, "he made close acquaintance with phenomena which he had before known but darkly-the seasons in their moods, morning and evening, night and noon, winds in their different tempers, trees, waters and mists, shades and silences, and the voices of inanimate things" (117). Yet Angel's psychic evolution can only be realised in the concluding chapters, when 'tenderness was absolutely dominant in Clare at last' (378). Clare, eventually, is able to display a sensitive awareness of the world.

Hardy notes in his journal, "A "sensation-novel" is possible in which the sensationalism is not casualty, but evolution; not physical but psychical....in the psychical the casualty or adventure is held to be of no intrinsic interest, but the effect upon the faculties is the important matter to be depicted" (266). Tess of the d'Urbervilles
is one such novel where by the characters undergo moments of psychic evolution. This is evident in a passage taken from the novel, “It was probable that, in the lapse of ages, improved systems of moral and intellectual training would appreciably, perhaps considerably elevate the involuntary and even the unconscious instincts of human nature” (62).

Despite the good intentions of the characters, their efforts are often cancelled by their stronger instinctual impulses. Man is selfish in his demands. Darwin elucidates, “his actions are in a higher degree determined by the expressed wishes and judgement of his fellow-men, and unfortunately very often by his own strong selfish desires” (1909: 168).

Angel chooses to abandon Tess, a wife with such an ‘immoral’ past would be deemed unsuitable in his social circle. Angel is the ‘new man’ yet he fails to recognize that Tess might be the ‘new woman’. He remains a slave to custom, “In considering what Tess was not, he overlooked what she was, and forgot that the defective can be more than the entire” (261). Gose observes:

After leaving Angel, Tess undergoes a reversal of psychic evolution. Having lost her chance of breaking free of Alec’s seal, of becoming a fuller individual guided by Angel’s high spiritual nature, she reverts first to the peasant level with her family, and then below that to the animal level after she leaves them (1963: 269).

Social law and natural law tend to be antagonistic forces, which ultimately have a ‘destructive effect’ (Elliott 1966: 100). The social emphasis on a woman’s innocence and purity does not to correspond with the reality of the Natural world. After giving birth to her child ‘Sorrow’, Tess is consumed with feelings of immense guilty, but Hardy continues to assert her innocence, “She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly”.
As Hillis Miller suggests, "Tess is "maiden no more," unfit for honest society, she is no less what the subtitle of the novel calls her, "a pure woman," as pure as any other expression of nature's will to life and reproduction" (1970: 80). There is a new morality to be found, not in the social or religious worlds but rather in Nature.

Hardy documents humankind's struggle and adherence to universal laws. Cosslett reveals that "for Hardy, sex is a potentially destructive primitive force, arising from our animal ancestry, our physical oneness with Nature" (1982: 158). Sexual attraction is a powerful force which often is not desired. The girls at Talbothays farm feel strong emotions for Angel, they, "writhed feverishly under the oppressiveness of an emotion thrust on them by cruel Nature's law-an emotion which they had neither expected nor desired" (144). Yet their biological impulses cannot be suppressed, "The full recognition of the futility of their infatuation, from a social point of view; its purposeless beginning; its self-bounded outlook; its lack of everything to justify its existence in the eye of civilization (while lacking nothing in the eye of Nature); the one fact that it did exist, ecstasizing them to a killing joy" (144-145). It is an emotion that acts against all reason. Angel could also not debase his sexual instincts, "Living in such close relations, to meet meant to fall into endearment; flesh and blood could not resist it" (152). Eventually, Tess and Angel do give into their natural passions. Jude explains how "People go on marrying because they can't resist natural forces, although many of them may know perfectly well that they are possibly buying a month's pleasure with a life's discomfort" (356).

Despite the painful struggle that faces the species, the will strives for pleasure. Hardy describes man's undeniable pursuit for pleasure:

Thought of the determination to enjoy. We see it in all nature, from the leaf on the tree to the tilted lady at the ball....It is achieved, of a sort, under superhuman
difficulties. Like pent-up water it will find a chink of possibility somewhere. Even
the most oppressed of men and animals find it, so that out of a thousand there is
hardly one who has not a sun of some sort for his soul. (Hardy 1962: 213)

Although evolutionary forces seek to suppress the individual, the ultimate desire of life is
the will for pleasure. Even Tess, whose life is characterised by a battle with social laws,
is unable to deny herself the right to pleasure, “The “appetite for joy” which pervades all
creation, that tremendous force which sways humanity to its purpose, as the tide sways
the helpless weed, was not to be controlled by vague lucubrations over the social rubric”
(188). Thus nature’s laws overpower social laws. Tess succumbs to her passions. Despite
Tess’s convictions not to marry Angel, in the interest of her own happiness, she finally
agrees. Jude succumbs to his sexual instincts, twice he forgets his scholarly ambitions to
follow his ‘animal passion for a woman (101). Alec and Arabella attempt to change their
nonchalant ways by immersing themselves in religion. Yet when tempted, both discard
their new found religion to follow their instincts. Ultimately these ‘lower impulses’ will
lead to a struggle with an individuals ‘social instincts’ and ‘their derived virtues’,
nonetheless the individual will remain a slave to his instincts (Darwin 1909: 191).

In The Origin Of Species Darwin discusses the power of sexual selection. The
male of the species seeks to gain possession of the female. Sergeant Troy’s performance
of the sword-exercise for Bathsheba is reminiscent of Darwin. Darwin elucidates,
“generally, the most vigorous males, those which are best fitted for their places in nature,
will leave most progeny. But in most cases, victory will depend not on general vigour,
but on having special weapons, confined to the male sex.” (136) Darwin goes on to
describe how the male rock–thrush of Guiana “display their gorgeous plumage and
perform strange antics before the females, which standing by as spectators, at last choose
the most attractive partner" (137). Cosslett explains how "Troy, clad in his scarlet 'gorgeous plumage', performs 'strange antics' in front of his female 'spectator', as he shows off his 'special weapon' (1982: 159).

Despite Hardy's belief in the cooperation of the species he also identifies man's aggressive tendencies. One is reminded of Alec's seduction and forceful pursuit of Tess. Tess acknowledges Alec's mastery over her. Yet when Alec tries to control Tess, she is defiant:

"Now punish me!" she said, turning up her eyes to him with the hopeless defiance of the sparrow's gaze before its captor twists its neck. "Whip me, crush me; you need not mind those people under the rick! I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim—that's the law!" ... He stepped across to her side and held her by the shoulders, so that she shook under his grasp. "Remember, my lady, I was your master once! I will be your master again. If you are any man's wife you are mine!" (326)

This passage evokes an image of Tess as a caged animal. She is trapped by Alec. On the authority of the law of nature, Tess is more Alec's wife than she is Angel's. In the concluding chapters Tess kills Alec, "I feared long ago, when I struck him on the mouth with my glove, that I might do it some day for the trap he set for me in my simple youth" (377). This is the only way she can dissolve their union. Alec's spilt blood frees Tess from her captor.

Troy and Arabella epitomise the stronger of the species. The more sympathetic Oak is contrasted with a reckless Sergeant Troy. Troy lives for the moment, he exists entirely in the present:

He was a man to whom memories were an encumbrance and anticipations a superfluity. Simple feeling, 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: that projection of consciousness into days gone by and to come, which makes the past a synonym for the pathetic and the future a
word for circumspection, was foreign to Troy. With him the past was yesterday; the future, to-morrow; never, the day after. (176).

Similarly in Jude the Obscure Arabella displays the same characteristics as Troy. Robinson comments how Arabella “living entirely for the present, mating, separating, bearing and discarding offspring, re-mating, all without compunction, Arabella accepts the reality of the struggle for survival with matter-of-fact self-interest” (1980: 134). When the time comes to kill the pig, Jude is filled with despair for his ‘fellow creature’, Arabella accuses him of being a ‘tender-hearted fool’. She remarks how ‘Pigs must be killed’ as ‘Poor folks must live’ (72-73). Arabella and Troy live in the present, simply disregardful of their fellow men and creatures. They are controlled by their baser instincts. Although Troy dies, Arabella outlives Jude. She displays staying power. According to Darwin’s laws of nature, the strong usually survive and supplant the weak.

In his novels, Hardy present us with different time scales in which he juxtaposes the human subject with nature, consequently, alluding to humankind’s reduced significance. In his journal Hardy notes the different species perception of time, “To insects the twelvemonth has been an epoch, to leaves a life, to tweeting birds a generation, to man a year” (Hardy 1962: 55). Hardy was conscious that he had to delineate a place for the human within the natural order. However humankind assumes a secondary role. In the barren plains of Flintcomb-Ash, Tess and Marian are ‘crawling over the surface of the former like flies’ (280). In Far From The Madding Crowd the ‘twinkling’ and ‘brilliancy’ of the stars is juxtaposed with Gabriel’s music which “came from the direction of a small dark object under the plantation hedge” (15). The human subject is small in comparison to the vast universe. In his poem ‘At Castle Boterel’ the narrator remembers an early love affair, among:
Primaeval rocks form the road's steep border,
And much have they faced there, first and last,
Of the transitory in Earth's long order..... (331)

The timelessness in Hardy's fiction alludes to something far greater than the human.

Hardy evokes images of ancient times and places through his references to Paganism. Tess is more of a Pagan than a Christian. As Tess approached the Valley of the Great Dairies her spirits rose and she began to chant a Christian hymn, which more resembled a pagan song: "and probably the half-unconscious rhapsody was a Fetichistic utterance in Monotheistic setting; women whose chief companions are the forms and forces of outdoor Nature retain in their souls far more of the Pagan fantasy of their remote forefathers than of the systematized religion taught their race at later date" (103).

Interestingly the false d'Urbervilles or Stokes estate borders The Chase, "a truly venerable tract of forest land, one of the few remaining woodlands in England of undoubted primaeval date, wherein Druidical mistletoe was still found on aged oaks, and where enormous yew-trees, not planted by the hand of man, grew as they had grown when they were pollarded for bows" (32). The antiquity of the forest is immediately contrasted to the newness of the Stokes home, where everything echoes new money and looked like 'the last coin issued from the Mint.' Intriguingly it was amongst "the primeval yews and oaks of The Chase" (71), where Tess is seduced by Alec.

Paganism is perhaps a more humane religion than Christianity. Hardy's concern is with a changing world. It seems some individuals have been left behind in the age of modernisation. Tess is a symbol of the old world, she struggles to find a place for herself in an increasingly hostile new world. It is symbolic that her capture occurred at
Stonehenge, which is a relic of the old Pagan world. Angel describes Stonehenge, as a place, "older than the centuries; older than the d’Urbervilles!" (385).

Tess’s story culminates with her dramatic capture at Stonehenge. Hardy’s narrative echoes the prehistoric. The time scale moves beyond the human. Robinson notes how “even more diminishing than the physical setting, is the large-scale chronological background against which Hardy increasingly made his figures move” (131).

In *Jude The Obscure* Hardy comments on humankind’s mortality:

The brown surface of the field went right up towards the sky all round, where it was lost by degrees in the mist that shut out the actual verge and accentuated the solitude. The only marks on the uniformity of the scene were a rick of last year’s produce standing in the midst of the arable, the rooks that rose at his approach, and the path athwart the fallow by which he had come, trodden now by he hardly knew whom, though once by many of his own dead family. (16)

Jude is a mere mortal being. The world will continue to exist even after Jude is dead. Following the birth of her child Sorrow, Tess experiences feelings of extreme guilt, yet the narrator points to their insignificance, “whatever its consequences, time would close over them; they would all in a few years be as if they had never been, and she herself grassed down and forgotten. Meanwhile the trees were just as green as before; the birds sang and the sun shone as clearly now as ever. The familiar surroundings had not darkened because of her grief; nor sickened because of her pain” (89). Whether the human subject experiences delight or pain, the natural world will be left unchanged. The human subject’s strife appears small and trivial in relation to the vast forces of the cosmos.
Chapter Three: The Ache of Modernism

Hardy has been criticized for his overtly pessimistic novels, particularly his late novel Jude the Obscure. Hardy is concerned with capturing ‘the substance of life’ (Hardy 1962: 104). In his biography, Hardy elucidates: “There is something [in this] the world ought to be shown, and I am the one to show it to them” (208). Hardy aims to illustrate human suffering, loss and pain through his fiction. Hardy himself was able to share ‘the ache of modernism’ with Jude, Sue and Tess. In his journal one of Hardy’s earliest memories is of despair:

He was lying on his back in the sun, thinking how useless he was, and covered his face with his straw hat. The sun’s rays streamed through the interstices of the straw, the lining having disappeared. Reflecting on his experiences of the world so far as he had got, he came to the conclusion that he did not wish to grow up. Other boys were always talking of when they would be men; he did not want at all 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). (15-16)

Hardy would have things remain constant, like Jude he wishes not to grow up. Yet change is inevitable, and the law of change is unconcerned with human desires (Malett 2000: 161).

Hardy’s pessimistic philosophy is encapsulated by his concept of the Immanent Will. The individual is not free, but is governed by the Immanent Will. There is no God. The Will is a force of nature that is ceaseless (Hillis Miller 1970:14). There is no escape from the Will in Nature. Ultimately life is suffering. Nature is primarily indifferent to the individual. Man must endure the relentless force of the Immanent Will, “this unthinking force is sure to inflict pain on a man until he is lucky enough to die” (Hillis Miller 1970: 13). In a letter to his friend Edward Clodd, Hardy discusses the ‘Will’, “‘What you say...
about the "Will" is true enough, if you take the word in its ordinary sense. But in the lack of another word to express precisely what is meant, a secondary sense has gradually arisen, that of effort exercised in a reflex or unconscious manner. Another word would have been better if one could have had it, though "Power" would not do, as power can be suspended or withheld, and the forces of Nature cannot" (320). Further along in his journal he continues, "The will of man is, according to it, neither wholly free nor wholly unfree. When swayed by the Universal Will (which he mostly must be as a subservient part of it) he is not individually free" (335). Hardy’s documentation of the struggle for existence resembles the Schopenhauerian Will. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was noted for his atheistic and pessimistic world view. According to Schopenhauer, the world is the will, it is the ultimate reality. Existence is the expression of an insatiable, pervasive will.

The late Victorian era was characterised by a general mood of loss, there was a rising sense of being on the wrong side of change (Gilmour 1986: 149). Victorian science led to a breakdown of faith. There was an apparent scientific backing of atheism, that officially discredited Christianity. The historian of science Gerald Holton reveals:

The reigning [cosmology] until about the mid-nineteenth century [pictured] ... a finite universe in time and space; a divine temple, God-given, God-expressing, God-penetrated, knowable ... [as completely] as the nature of things admits in this mortal life.
This representation was gradually supplanted by another, particularly in the last half of the nineteenth century. The universe became unbounded, "restless." ... The clear lines of the earlier [cosmic structures] have been replaced by undelineated, fuzzy smears....
It is therefore not surprising that [we] ... find little comfort in the beauty of scientific advances. (quoted in Dale 1989: 222)
This mood of 'restlessness' can be attributed to the upheaval caused by science. Science envisioned a bleak future. Man, now demeaned, had to deal with the harsh reality that the human species itself might one day face extinction.

Darwinian consciousness recognises man’s new awareness of his own insignificance. In his poem 'Before Life and After', Hardy appears to lament humankind’s new found knowledge:

A TIME there was-as one may guess
And as, indeed, earth’s testimonies tell-
Before the birth of consciousness,
When all went well…..

But the disease of feeling germed,
And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong ;
Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed
How long, how long ?'

(260).

Hardy identifies the time preceding 'the birth of consciousness' as one which is fundamentally better. Arguably this 'new awareness' was psychologically detrimental to man. Now it seems Man is no longer in control of anything. Rather he is a helpless victim. The numerous forces, outside of humanity's control, that seem to act against the individual, are identified by Hardy as Providence, Nature, hereditary flaws, President of the Immortals or the 'silent workings of an invisible hand' (Robinson 1980: 135).

We need to look at the religious and philosophical climate of the nineteenth century in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of Hardy's pessimism. As I have discussed in chapter one, evolutionary science contradicts the account of creation given in Genesis. In The Descent of Man Darwin suggests that developed man always ascribes his existence to a deity, he quotes Mr. M'Lennan, “and to judge from the
universality of it, the simplest hypothesis, and the first to occur to men, seems to have been that natural phenomena are ascribable" (143). Thus Darwin’s theory ultimately casts doubt on the truth and validity of Christianity. By refuting the existence of a benevolent God, Darwin offers a response to William Paley’s ‘Watchmaker.’ Culler explains, “Where Paley has taken intelligence to be the cause and adaptation the result, Darwin had shown that adaptation was the cause and survival the result-survival of those fittest to Survive” (1968: 228).

Many philosophers were arguing against the existence of God. Although David Hume (1711-1776) wrote before the time of Hardy and Darwin, his theory corresponds with the disenchantment of the nineteenth century. Hume argued that man, in order to justify his existence, needed to invent a cause for things and a designer. Therefore his theory “asserts that it is not design which implies a designer but the appearance of design which gives rise in our minds to the conception of a designer (Culler 1968: 230). Thus, according to Hume, religion has no rational foundation (Wilson 2000: 26). Hume removed “any philosophical necessity for believing in God” (Wilson 2000: 28). It appeared that in the scientific outlook of the nineteenth century there was no space for religion. Huxley expounded that Science and Christianity are incompatible. The rise of German metaphysics, continued to diminish the plausibility of Christianity. Hegel asserts that Christianity is a product of man. While Auguste Comte, the father of Positivism, claims we no longer need to look to deities to explain our existence. Even Hardy asserts, “I have been looking for God for 50 years, and I think that if he had existed I should have discovered him” (Hardy 1962: 224).
Wilson appropriately describes the religious background of the nineteenth century, “for the first time in Europe a generation was coming to birth who had no God, or no God of any substance” (2000: 56). As Friedrich Nietzsche reveals, God is dead and we have killed him. Hardy’s poem ‘God’s Funeral’ captures the bleakness of modern life. Hardy dramatically imagines he is attending God’s funeral. As sorrow overcomes him, he joins in the procession:

Almost before I knew I bent
Towards the moving columns without a word;
They, growing in bulk and numbers as they went,
Struck out sick thoughts that could be overheard:

"O man-projected Figure, of late
Imaged as we, thy knell who shall survive?
Whence came it we were tempted to create
One whom we can no longer keep alive? ......
(V, VI :307)

Man has produced God, from a ‘need of solace’, yet it is now unable to sustain its ‘early dream.’ Hardy wonders ‘how to bear such a loss’ and ‘who or what shall fill his place’. Hardy bereaves the loss of God, as he is left feeling ‘dazed and puzzled’ by the experience (Wilson 2000:3).

Consequently man does not accept his helplessness, “Hardy sees agnostic man resolutely facing the destructive powers of inanimate Nature, and determinedly combating with his intelligence and will-power” (Coslett 1982: 151-152). Oak has a knowledge of nature’s underlying laws. During the storm Nature becomes menacing, as the moon vanishes ‘it was the farewell of the ambassador previous to war’ (257). The scene is melodramatic, “The night had a haggard look like a sick thing, and there came finally an utter expiration of air from the whole heaven in the form of a slow breeze, which might have been likened to death” (257). When lightning strikes Hardy wonders


how "it hardly was credible that such a heavenly light could be the parent of such a diabolical sound" (260). Yet despite Nature's menacing tone, Oak remains objective in the face of adversity. Oak is characterised by his stoic attitude. He suppresses his subjective emotions, in preference for scientific objectivity. He has a remarkable ability to adapt and readjust. After losing his sheep, "He had sunk from his modest elevation as pastoral king into the very slime-pits of Siddim; but there was left to him a dignified calm he had never before known and that indifference to fate which, though it often makes a villain of a man is the basis of his sublimity when it does not. And thus the abasement had been exaltation and the loss gain" (43). Hardy identifies subjective emotion and Nature as 'primitive destructive forces', both of which Oak is able to control (Cosslett 1982: 155). Yet unlike Oak, Henry Knight fails to remain objective when faced with the violent forces of nature.

Nowhere in Hardy's fiction is the evolutionary theme more evident than in his early novel A Pair of Blue Eyes (1873). The famous passage where Henry Knight is dangling off a cliff serves as a strong reminder of man's insignificance in the face of nature. Hardy illustrates Nature's harshness and indifference to man.

However in order to appreciate the significance Henry Knight's experience, we must return to an earlier description of Knight. Stephen Smith visits Knight at his lodgings in Bede's Inn in London. In Knight's room we find an aquarium by the window:

It was a dull parallelepipedon enough for living creatures at most hours of the day; but for a few minutes in the evening, as now, an errant, kindly ray lighted up and warmed the little world therein, when the many-coloured zoophytes opened and put forth their arms, the weeds acquired a rich transparency, the shells gleamed of a more golden yellow, and the timid community expressed gladness more plainly than in words. (129).
Nature appears to be subdued and controlled in Knight’s room (Cosslett 1982: 140). This seemingly controlled environment, containing caged zoophytes and shells is at a later stage juxtaposed with the cruel and violent Nature Knight is forced to deal with. In his room the aquarium is the ‘little world’ of a ‘timid community’, soon Nature will be fierce and uncontrollable.

Because of his geological background, Knight can be described as a modern thinker, a conscious observer of the world. When Knight and Elfride look over the cliff, he boasts of his scientific knowledge, “‘Over the edge,’ said Knight, ‘where nothing but vacancy appears, is a moving compact mass. The wind strikes the face of the rock, runs up it, rises like a fountain to far above our heads, curls over us in an arch, and disperses behind us. In fact, an inverted cascade is there – as perfect as the Niagara Falls – but rising instead of falling, and air instead of water.’” (206). After identifying a ‘backward eddy’ (207), he leans over the bank, astonishingly forgetting the power of the air-current. After vanishing in search of his hat, he is suddenly in a dangerous position. As a student of science Knight should have known better than to test his hypothesis in this setting. Unexpectedly he is faced with, “Haggard cliffs, of every ugly altitude” (212). Knight has moved from the position of experimenter, to a position of being experimented on by Nature (Coslett 1982: 145).

While Knight hangs off the ‘Cliff without a Name’, he is confronted with an ancient creature, “with eyes. The eyes, dead and turned to stone, were even now regarding him. It was one of the early crustaceans called Trilobites.” Knight is faced with his mortality and can only think of saving himself. Nature appears grotesque and
unflinching. Nature persists in its torture, as Knight remains gazing at the creature, contemplating his ever-present death:

The creature represented but a low type of animal existence, for never in their vernal years had the plains indicated by those numberless slaty layers been traversed by an intelligence worthy of the name. Zoophytes, mollusca, shell-fish, were the highest developments of those ancient dates. The immense lapses of time each formation represented had known nothing of the dignity of man. They were grand times, but they were mean times too, and mean were their relics. He was to be with the small in his death. Knight was a geologist; and such is the supremacy of habit over occasion, as a pioneer of the thoughts of men, that at this dreadful juncture his mind found time to take in, by a momentary sweep, the varied scenes that had had their day between this creature's epoch and his own. There is no place like a cleft landscape for bringing home such imaginings as these. Time closed up like a fan before him. He saw himself at one extremity of the years, face to face with the beginning and all the intermediate centuries simultaneously. Fierce men, clothed in the hides of beasts, and carrying, for defence and attack, huge clubs and pointed spears, rose from the rock, like the phantoms before the doomed Macbeth. They lived in hollows, woods, and mud huts — perhaps in caves of the neighbouring rocks. Behind them stood an earlier band. No man was there. Huge elephantine forms, the mastodon, the hippopotamus, the tapir, antelopes of monstrous size, the megatherium, and the mylodon — all, for the moment, in juxtaposition. Farther back, and overlapped by these, were perched huge-billed birds and swinish creatures as large as horses. Still more shadowy were the sinister crocodilian outlines — alligators and other horrible reptiles, culminating in the colossal lizard, the iguanodon. Folded behind were dragon forms and clouds of flying reptiles: still underneath were fishy beings of lower development; and so on, till the life-time scenes of the fossil confronting him were a present and modern condition of things. (213-214)

In the above passage, Hardy documents the entire evolutionary process, he moves from the 'fishy beings of lower development' up to the 'modern condition of things'. Knight is faced with several layers of strata in the evolutionary scale, apparently some even predating man. Nature is relentless in her cruelty. Nature appears grand and wondrous, while man is nothing more than a mere spec in the evolutionary scale. Knight realises his own 'smallness in geological time' (Gilmartin, 35).

Knight is forced to recognise his own insignificance in relation to the power of an unforgiving Nature. Nature's moods are unpredictable and careless:
To those hardy weather-beaten individuals who pass the greater part of their days and nights out-of-doors, Nature seems to have moods in other than a poetical sense: moods literally and really-predilections for certain deeds at certain times, without any apparent law to govern or season to account for them. They read her as a person with a curious temper. Thus: she does not scatter kindnesses and cruelties alternately, impartially, or in order-shining on them one day, raining on them the next-but heartless severities or overwhelming kindnesses in lawless caprice. Their case is always that of the prodigal’s favourite or the miser’s pensioner. In her unfriendly moments there seems a cruel fun in her tricks—a feline playfulness begotten by an anticipated pleasure in swallowing the victim. (215)

It seems Wordsworth’s romanticised nature is ultimately destroyed.

Knight assumes he will die so he resorts to irrational or ‘absurd’ thinking. Prayer cannot save him, his only hope is for Elfride’s hasty return. Temporary superstitions seize him. As a man of science Knight should know better. Henry Knight is faced with the very things he has studied. Yet he fails to remain objective. Knight is unable to preserve his scientific objectivity, as he is consumed with his subjective feelings.

‘Pitiless Nature’ seems to be torturing him, “Knight could think of no future, nor of anything connected with his past. He could only look sternly at Nature’s treacherous attempt to put an end to him, and strive to thwart her” (213). Still Knight underestimates nature. For he may try, but he will fail to ‘thwart’ her. Darwin dispelled the idea that nature is under the control of the human.

Hardy evokes an image of evolutionary kinship. Knight and the trilobite meet in ‘their death’, both have the common determination for survival. However Knight fails to realise the implications of their kinship. Knight wonders why a lesser creature or man could not have been in his position, he maintains his arrogance:

Most men who have brains know it, and few are so foolish as to disguise this fact from themselves or others, even though an ostentatious display may be called self-conceit. Knight, without showing it much, knew that his intellect was above average. And he thought — he could not help thinking — that his death would be a
deliberate loss to earth of good material; that such an experiment in killing might have been practised upon some less developed life.” (217)

Nature needs to keep species, including man in check. Darwin evokes a powerful nature, that holds the potential for destruction, “the face of Nature may be compared to a yielding surface, with ten thousand sharp wedges packed close together and driven inwards by incessant blows, sometimes one wedge being struck, and then another with greater force” (119). Even Jude recognises Nature’s callous indifference, “the scorn of Nature for man’s finer emotions, and her lack of interest in his aspirations” (191). Jude identifies a fundamental flaw in Nature’s laws. As Jude puts it, “Nature’s logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony” (21). Jude cannot reconcile Nature’s apparent contradictory forces of brutality and ‘mercy.’

Darwin presents us with a chaotic world. Hardy agrees we live in a trivial world, “Since I discovered, several years ago, that I was living in a world where nothing bears out in practice what it promises incipiently, .. I am content with tentativeness from day to day” (155).

While trying to reconcile a scientific view of life with the emotional and spiritual, Hardy concludes that “the emotions have no place in a world of defect, and it is a cruel injustice that they should have developed in it” (Hardy 1962: 149). Hardy’s narratives capture human suffering and the resulting apathy.

Wilson identifies that the Scepticism of the nineteenth century, was characterised by ‘profound depressions, self-hatred and melancholy’ (12). These are precisely the symptoms that Jude displays. Jude is described as a “thoughtful [child] who has felt the pricks of life somewhat before his time” (13). Jude feels misplaced in the world. He
claims a union with the birds as they both “seemed to be living in a world which did not want them” (17), because, “Puny and sorry as those lives were, they much resembled his own” (18). Through the character of Jude, Hardy fundamentally captures the prevailing melancholic mood of the time. Man is helpless. Jude’s aspirations amount to nothing, he is rejected by both the Church and the colleges at Christminster. Only to awake in hell, Jude realises his failure in ambition and love (134). Nobody can save him, he must bear his pain in solitude. He only solace is in drink. Sue describes Jude as, “You are Joseph the dreamer of dreams, dear Jude. And the tragic Don Quixote. And sometimes you are St. Stephen, who, while they were stoning him, could see Heaven opened. O my poor friend and comrade, you’ll suffer yet!” (223). Jude’s is bound in an endless cycle of suffering.

Sue and Jude are complex and sensitive characters. Sue believes it is “such a terribly tragic thing to bring beings into the world” (337). This acute sensitivity eventually destroys Jude and Sue. Sue explains that “Everybody is getting to feel as we do. We are a little beforehand, that’s all. In fifty, ay, twenty tears, the descendants of these two will act and feel worse than we. They will see weltering humanity still more than we do now” (311). Jude’s and Sue’s story is indeed a sad one, their suffering is unrelieved throughout the novel.

The character of Father Time is the ultimate embodiment of the pessimism that reigned at the time. He personifies the prevailing gloom of the modern world. He is far beyond his years, for “He was Age masquerading as Juvenality” (300). He kills himself and Sue’s and Jude’s children, ultimately denying evolutionary succession. Father Time could not bear to live a life of constant degradation and strife. He leaves a note explaining
his actions, 'Done because we are too menny' (363). As callous as it may seem, more organisms are being born than can ever survive. Hardy shows in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* that not necessarily the best of the species survive.

In *The Origin of Species* Darwin purports, "Although some species may be now increasing, more or less rapidly, in numbers, all cannot do so, for the world would not hold them" (117). Nature cannot manage humankind’s increasing growth. As Hardy puts it:

> A woeful fact—that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions, the nerves being evolved to an activity abnormal in such an environment. Even the higher animals are in excess in this respect. It may be questioned if Nature, so far back as when she crossed the line from invertebrates to vertebrates, did not exceed her mission. (Hardy 1962: 218)

In his poem ‘The Mother Mourns’, Natures imperfections are exposed:

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Weary plaint that Mankind, in these late days,
Had grieved her by holding
Her ancient high frame of perfection
In doubt and disdain....

-“I had not proposed me a Creature
  (She soughed) so excelling
All else of my kingdom in compass
And brightness of brain

“As to read my defects with a god-glance,
  Uncover each vestige
Of old inadvertence, annunciate
  Each flaw and each stain!

“My purpose went not to develop
  Such insight in Earthland;
Such potent appraisements affront me,
  And sadden my reign!

“Why loosened I olden control here
  To mechanize skywards,
Undeeming great scope could outshape in
  A globe of such grain? (101-102)
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Essentially, Nature did not intend for man to reach the stage of development it has. For now man was able to uncover her defects. Perhaps this is a more realistic portrayal of Nature. Yet Hardy laments the unfolding of nature’s imperfections and shortcomings. Nature is saddened as man condemns her for her ‘fitful inventions.’ Humankind is, subsequently, not innocent. The modern age of man can only be responsible for the ‘dwindling’ of her species and her ‘barren forests.’
CHAPTER FOUR: HARDY'S ETHICS

Although Hardy recognised the darker implications of evolution, through close analysis of his novels and journals one can discover a certain altruism in his novels, which he terms 'evolutionary meliorism.' Even Hardy could not accept the implicit darkness of evolution's 'struggle for existence'. Through a revision of Darwin's theory he attains an inimitable moral sense of the universe. Hardy believed that Darwin's doctrines needed 'readjusting': "For instance, the survival of the fittest in the struggle for life. There is an altruism and coalescence between cells as well as an antagonism. Certain cells destroy certain cells; but others assist and combine"(Hardy 1962: 259). Thus species are not only in conflict, but a degree of cooperation is required between all living things. In order to sustain the whole, the individual parts need to set aside their antagonism.

Hardy forms a meaningful and moral conclusion from evolution. Hardy elucidates his altruistic position in his biography:

Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of all species is ethical, that it logically involved a readjustment of altruistic morals by enlarging as a necessity of rightness the application of what has been called "The Golden Rule" beyond the area of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom. Possibly Darwin himself did not wholly perceive it, though he alluded to it. While man was deemed to be a creation apart from all other creations, a secondary or tertiary morality was considered good enough towards the "inferior races"; but no person who reasons nowadays can escape the trying conclusion that this is not maintainable. And though I myself do not at present see how the principle of equal justice all round is to be carried out in its entirety, I recognize that the League is grappling with the question. (Hardy 1962: 349)

Intelligent man has the ability to extend "The Golden Rule". Although not quite sure how, Hardy is nevertheless hopeful that this form of evolutionary consciousness will
reach the masses. Hardy is confident that this new consciousness will eventually lead to a more humane society.

Hardy shifts from a position of pessimism to one of altruism. Yet if life is ultimately an endless cycle of struggle and pain, his position appears paradoxical. Thus the entire notion of meliorism appears groundless in the reality of life.

In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin does point to the 'affinity' between species. The kinship of species is as important a part of his theory as the 'struggle for existence.' However, Darwin did not develop this aspect of his theory. The unity within nature implies a oneness. The organism as a whole cannot function without its individual parts. Therefore if this universality is extended to the field of ethics, undeniably, humanity's morality will be elevated. As 'man advances in civilisation' “there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races” (Darwin 1909: 188). If we lift the 'artificial barriers' that exist we can achieve a more humane society.

Although scientists discarded old beliefs in a supreme deity, the new belief in a unified nature has elevated man. Dowden explains, "It may be questioned whether man's dignity is not more exalted by conceiving him as part – a real though so small a part – of a great Cosmos, infinitely greater than he, than by placing him as king upon the throne of creation" (quoted in Cosslett 1982: 19).

Even though Tess and Jude display Hardy's meliorism. They ultimately struggle with the forces of society which remain antagonistic to this ideal of oneness. Tess and Jude have problems assimilating into modern society. Their lives are an endless struggle against the limiting forces of society.
As I have shown in chapter one Jude, Tess and Gabriel Oak are in harmony with the Natural world. It seems Tess and Jude are most content in their natural environment, "they were what Nature made them, before the smear of "civilisation" had sullied their existences" (Hardy: 1962, 165).

Gose argues that "Hardy is affirming a certain attitude toward nature, an attitude that puts a somewhat different emphasis on the relations among natural creatures than did Darwin's notion of the survival of the fittest" (1963: 265). As the 'dominant animals' humankind need to take responsibility for its actions. Man should be sympathetic to the 'lower animals.' Perhaps we should be more compassionate like Tess and Jude.

Tess displays an empathy towards animals, she is distraught when comes across the destruction of the pheasant hunters, "they ran amuck, and made it their purpose to destroy life-in this case harmless feathered creatures, brought into being by artificial means solely to gratify these propensities-at once so unmannerly and so unchivalrous towards their weaker fellows in Nature's teeming family" (274). Tess takes it upon herself to end her 'kindred sufferers' torture.

Hardy argues for the need for cooperation amongst the species, "The discovery of the law of evolution, which revealed that all organic creatures are one of the same family, shifted the centre of altruism from humanity to the whole world collectively" (Hardy 1962: 346).
CONCLUSION

As I have argued Darwinism has influenced many aspects of modern thought. In his influential work, The Origin of Species, Darwin argued that evolution occurs by natural selection. Evolutionary theory shows that life is a constant process of change. Species are faced with a daily struggle for life.

Although Hardy depicts the Darwinian struggle for existence in his fiction, his pessimism is undeniably overshadowed by his altruism. Darwin reveals that all species have ‘a common but unknown progenitor.’ Thus there is a mutual dependence to be found in life. This is the cornerstone of Hardy’s ‘evolutionary meliorism.’ Hardy believes man should embrace his kinship with all organisms. Ultimately this will grant humankind a greater awareness and sensitivity.

In Hardy’s fiction there exists a force far greater than the human. When confronted with the vast cosmos, the individual’s most significant problems seem trivial. Tess finds console alone in the words, amongst nature: “She knew how to hit to a hair’s-breadth that moment of evening when the light and the darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraint of day and the suspense of night neutralize each other, leaving absolute mental liberty. It is then that the plight of being alive becomes attenuated to its least possible dimensions.” (1981: 263)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


