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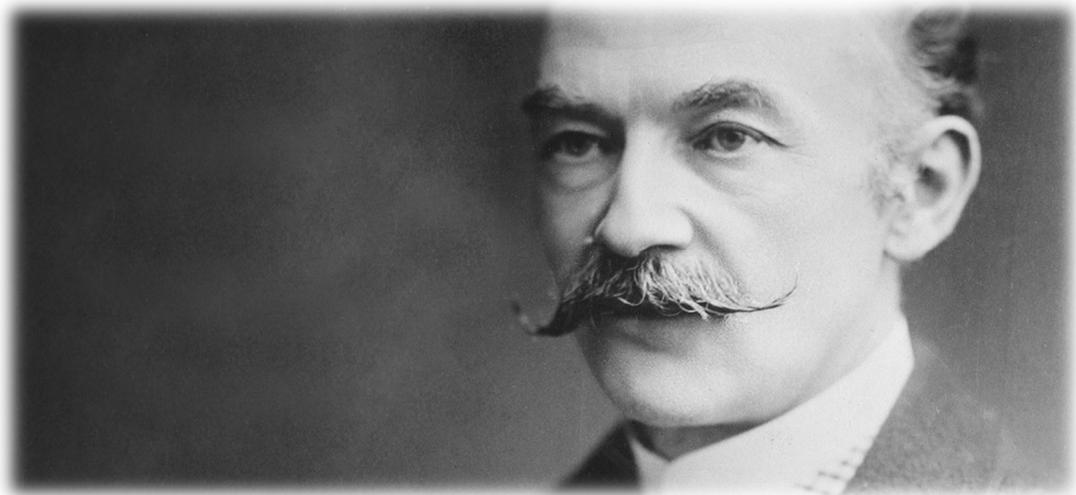
Immanent Will and Fatum in Thomas Hardy's *A pair of Blue Eyes*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and a selection of *The Collected Poems*

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**Immanent Will and Fatum
in Thomas Hardy's *A Pair of Blue
Eyes*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and a
selection of *The Collected Poems*.**

Par Justine Ruch

**Mémoire de Recherche en Langue et Culture Anglophones
Sous la direction du Professeur Lawrence Gasquet**

6 juin 2016

To Mr Adam Thorpe – writer, and teacher at the Ecole des Beaux Arts
and University of Nîmes – who introduced me to Thomas Hardy’s poetry
three years ago.

To my incredible friend Marianna Drapaniotis, my first reader.

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INTRODUCTION

*“The best tragedy – highest tragedy in short –
is that of the worthy encompassed by the inevitable.”
(Thomas Hardy, 24 October 1892)¹*

A Short Biography of Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy was born on the 2nd of June 1840 in the family cottage at Higher Bockhampton. On the one hand, Hardy drew his sensitivity and his great intellectual curiosity from two important female figures in his life: his mother and his grandmother. On the other hand, his personality was similar to his father's, another Thomas Hardy with a quiet nature and a fondness for music. Both sides transmitted to Hardy the youngest a great inheritance of folk music, tales and traditions. Except from his parents, another important influence on Hardy was the environment of rural Southern England.

His ambitious mother sent ten years-old Hardy to a non-conformist school in Dorchester, three miles west from their isolated cottage. He was still doing the same journey every day as he turned sixteen and became an apprentice to a local architect in 1856. The abrupt changes occurring during the Victorian era appeared very bluntly to Hardy in the discrepancy between his pastoral background and the effervescent town:

Owing to the accident of his being an architect's pupil in a county-town of assizes and alderman, which had advanced to railways and telegraphs and daily London papers; yet not living there but walking in every day from a world of shepherds and ploughmen in a hamlet three miles off, where modern improvements were still regarded as wonders, *he saw rustic and borough doings in a juxtaposition peculiarly close.*² [my italics]

Architecture surrounded Hardy's existence from the very beginning. He was born in a cottage built by his great-grandfather, and his father was a builder. When the time came to decide his career, Hardy's mother knew her son would not work with his hands but with his intellect. That is the reason why they put him under Hicks's tutelage to become an architect. During his apprenticeship, Hardy learned much about

¹ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 14.

² Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891*, (Cambridge, 2011), p. 41.

architectural drawing and restoring old houses and churches. He was also glad to learn the histories of the houses and the families that lived there.

Church restoration drove him back and forth to different places in Dorset. In 1862, he suspended his architectural apprenticeship in order to settle in London. He worked as an assistant architect for Arthur Blomfield for five years. At this time, he began to write poems but he did not published them yet. Then he went back to Dorset and for purely practical reasons turned to prose fiction with *The Poor Man and the Lady*, and then a sensation novel entitled *Desperate Remedies*, which was published by William Tinsley in 1871.

In March 1870, Hardy reluctantly travelled to St Juliot (North Cornwall) to restore a church. There, he fell immediately in love with his first wife Emma Lavinia Gifford and fictionalized their courtship in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873). A few novels later, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874) became a best-seller which allowed Hardy to devote himself fully to writing and marry Emma.

The Hardys first years consisted in moving from one rented house to another, mainly in Dorset but also in London during the great season. In 1885 they moved into Max Gate, the brick villa which Hardy had built in an isolated spot near Dorchester.



*Max Gate, Dorchester*³

Once married, Hardy fulfilled his ambition to become a writer publishing ten Wessex novels and more than fifty short stories over the next twenty years. Like Dickens, Hardy's novels were published in serial forms in magazines that were popular

³ Photograph from Andrew Butler for *The Telegraph*.

in both England and America. Nevertheless, in spite of his success, he abandoned his career as a novelist when *Jude the Obscure* (1895) was banned for indecency. Even though he felt deeply hurt by his detractors' criticisms, it represented an opportunity to go back to his true passion for poetry. Thus the Victorian novelist became a twentieth-century poet, publishing eight volumes of verse containing more than nine-hundred poems over a thirty year period commencing with *Wessex Poems* in 1898.

In the meantime, the passionate early love celebrated in his romance novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) had in his personal life cooled into neglect and estrangement. The couple, who remained childless, became increasingly unhappy with each other. Hardy gradually excluded Emma from his professional life. He was spending his days in his study while Emma secluded herself in the attic to avoid his numerous visitors and write about her anger. Eventually, Emma's sudden and unexpected death in 1912 at the age of 72 threw him into disarray and despair. He slept by Emma's coffin for three nights, out of enormous regret over lost time. By the winter of 1912, with Modernity swiftly colonizing English culture, such an operatic gesture was something of a throwback. Yet the gap between his love for the young Emma and his regret for their estrangement precipitated an intense outpouring of lyrical poetry. As we will see, Hardy will try to revive through poetry the Cornish woman he used to love passionately.

Fourteen months after Emma's death Hardy married Florence Dugdale; near forty-years his junior, she was a literary admirer he had known and 'employed' for a decade or so as his researcher and secretary. As a wife, she was extremely devoted until the end. After a long and highly successful life, Thomas Hardy died on January 11, 1928, at the age of 87. His ashes were deposited in the Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey but his heart was placed next to his family and first wife. Florence Hardy posthumously published Hardy's autobiography in two parts under her own name.⁴

The Victorian Era: 'the Age of Doubt'

Thomas Hardy was a novelist and a poet who straddled the nineteenth and the twentieth century. As such, he perfectly embodied a man torn in the course of history

⁴ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* and *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011).

and amid literary movements. It is impossible to classify him, to confine him in one “genre” or “movement.” The former architect was in literature an outsider split between tradition and innovation. Maybe it is possible to assume that he is closer to the Modernists, but once more it does not mean anything as a profound heterogeneity is at the core of this movement. Besides, it would be very reductive of Hardy’s multifaceted talent as a writer not to see further. His fiction includes hints of Romanticism, uses Biblical parables, and sometimes respects patterns worthy of Greek tragedies.

One important aspect of his personality must be taken into consideration to understand his work: duality. Indeed, Thomas Hardy had the misfortune to live in a turning point of British civilization: the Victorian Era. The new age in frantic progress sounded the death knell of the pastoral background he grew in. For instance, the railways spreading everywhere to ease trade and communications changed dramatically the country; cutting off the countryside, hurting Nature deeply.

This period used to be qualified as ‘The Age of Doubt’ as the Victorian society had to face a critical moment in the history of Western ideas: the biblical understanding of the world was upended by leading nineteenth-century intellectuals’ radical scientific discoveries. The new civilization made a *tabula rasa* of all the knowledge it has accumulated as time goes by, therefore it created chaos. The objective beliefs became the new values and pushed religious faith into the background.

How is man supposed to live in a world without God? What place is left to him in Nature if he is not the chosen creature of an omniscient and conscious power? These ontological questions echo in Thomas Hardy’s novels and poems. As J. Hillis Miller argues: “Hardy’s heroes have religious desires in a world which offers no satisfaction for such desires. Their lives are spent in the attempt to find a substitute for God in a world without God.”⁵

After a moment of despair and vertigo, the void implied by the absence of God generated an anthropocentric vision of the world, and thus a trend towards vanity which turned against men and generated a fatalistic world where man is punished for his *hybris*. Man’s actions and creations seem to be violently thrown back to him, as fated boomerangs. Paradoxically enough, it is not a Godlike figure that inflicted this

⁵ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 114.

punishment upon him, but a blind and indifferent force: the Immanent Will. This Will is a force inherent to Nature and governs every existence, from the smallest insect to the human being able of *logos*; this force is completely deprived of compassion for their existences. Thomas Hardy demonstrates that human actions and innovations are vain because in the end man has to die beaten up by the laws of Nature.

Throughout his work, Hardy expresses disdain as regard to the discoveries of his age. We can see this in the rural background of his work and within an implicit praise of the peasants' lives – dwelling in idealized pastoral surroundings. The poem 'The Convergence of the Twain'⁶ shows well the vanity and decadence of the Victorian Era presenting the sinking of the Titanic as a fate-driven calamity:

IV
Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V
Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?"...

VI
Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything.

VII
Prepared a sinister mate
For her – so gaily great –
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII
And as the smart ship grew
stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

IX
Alien they seemed to be;
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,

X
Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event,

⁶ 'The Convergence of the Twain' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 278.

XI

Till the Spinner of the Years

Said "Now!" And each one hears,

And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres. (ll. 10-33)

The Immanent Will “that stirs and urges everything” runs on into the following lines, as an unstoppable force. The seventh stanza begins with the verb, showing the action that the Immanent Will propels into being: ‘Prepared a sinister mate / For her ... / A Shape of Ice.’ Now, at last, we know what is meeting or converging with the Titanic: ‘A Shape of Ice’. Although it is ‘for the time far and dissociate’ we know that the two will experience a disastrous encounter. Indeed, for J. Hillis Miller, “though the Immanent Will is not conscious, it is still will, a blind force sweeping through the universe, urging things to happen as they do happen, weaving the web of circumstances, shaping things in patterns determined by its irresistible energy.”⁷ The force, or power, of the Immanent Will drives across verse and line boundaries. Hardy carefully chose a meaningful old-fashioned vocabulary: for instance, the etymology of “august” (l. 30) suggests that the event was planned in some auguries and brought to fruition. Man was fashioning the ship while the Immanent Will was preparing the iceberg.

Then the use of ‘the Spinner of the Years’ for the Immanent Will refers to the Fates who spin and cut the web of life and brings us to our topic: the paradoxical coexistence of the Immanent Will and *Fatum* in Thomas Hardy’s work. This poem raised confusion among both admirers and detractors of Hardy as it is surprisingly very impersonal and detached. While the tragedy of the Titanic was calling for sympathy and compassion, Hardy seized the opportunity to blame mankind for his vanity in his obsession with goods. It would seem that Hardy is alerting his audience that humanity, no matter how progressive we may become, will always be at the whim of nature, which has no feeling or care.

The reason why Nature always wins over man, even though she is not conscious, is because she has always been and will last forever whereas man and all his creations are inevitably short-lived. Hardy's allegorization of both Nature and Time in the last six stanzas contribute to the ominous and fated quality of the Titanic disaster. Hardy suggests that the Titanic converging with the iceberg – its “sinister mate” (l. 20)

⁷ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 15.

– was not a coincidence, but rather an event planned by an "Immanent Will" (l.18) and "The Spinner of the Years" (l.31) in the last stanza. Therefore, he infers that the ship had been destined for destruction since its inception.

Here again, Thomas Hardy goes back to the Greek idea of tragedy: the asymmetrical conflict between human beings and an omnipotent superior Will (replacing any possible form of deity) which leads to the triumph of the universal over the particular. The battle against the impersonal force of fate is from the very beginning to be lost by mankind.

Darwin

Despite his explicit disdain for the pride and importance his contemporaries placed upon scientific and technological progress, Hardy was interested in new theories such as the Darwinian theory of the Evolution of the Species and Schopenhauer's concept of 'Will'; two rather pessimistic theories against the trend of vanity of the Victorian Era, replacing man in his meaningless right spot.

According to Christopher Lane in *The Age of Doubt*, there was at the time a spreading "deist argument that God created the world once, then retired to let nature take its own course."⁸ But one of the main theories of the time goes even further: Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859).

Darwin's work was very influential on Hardy's fiction. The theory presupposes that man is not in harmony with Nature anymore, but that he is just a mere strata of the evolution and has to deal with the pessimistic idea of an imminent extinction of humankind. Man who has lost his humility in front of Nature trying to dominate her becomes her helpless victim: the victim of hereditary flaws (as we will see with Elfride and Tess doomed to repeat the same schemes as they ancestors), and most of all, of *Fatum* which epitomizes human existential helplessness. Through the "Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection," Charles Darwin revolutionized the way humankind perceives and relates to the natural world. It completely reverses humankind's obsession with itself. To him, organisms do not necessarily progress into a perfect

⁸ Christopher Lane, *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty* (New Haven, 2012), p. 42.

state. Evolution occurs by natural selection so every species always finds itself on the verge of extinction. Evolutionary biology relegated humankind to the level of the lower species and ultimately to the level of rocks and stones. Man who attempted to destroy Nature seems to be stopped in his movement, and to be forced by Nature to enter a moment of powerless contemplation of her beauty. As Darwin pointed it:

It is interesting to contemplate a tangled 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 upon each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us.⁹

Living in the close-knit life of a small rural community, Hardy had himself a first-hand Darwinian moment of being: “I sit under a tree, and feel alone: I think of certain insects around me as magnified by the microscope: creatures like elephants, flying dragons, etc. And I feel I am by no means alone.”¹⁰ (28 November 1875) He realizes quite optimistically the relief experienced among other species when one is alone among his pairs.

To conclude on Darwin, the new focus is on the natural world. Man, who is a really trivial and futile part of cosmos, has to behave in a fundamental respect for it. He has to be conscious of his strata in terms of species, and to face his own possible extinction.

Schopenhauer

Moreover, man has to face his inexorable existential helplessness in the cosmos since there is no God to protect him. On this point, we can state that Thomas Hardy has absorbed Schopenhauer’s concept of “Will”. An exemplary of the *Four-fold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (followed several years later by *On the Will in Nature*) – Schopenhauer’s doctoral dissertation – was found in Thomas Hardy’s library. Among the passages which were marked, we can find this one:

The fundamental truth of my doctrine, which places that doctrine in opposition with all others that have ever existed, is the complete separation between the will and the intellect. [...] I am the first who has asserted that a will must be attributed to all that is lifeless [...] With

⁹ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (Oxford, 2008), p. 564.

¹⁰ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891 and The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 141

me, the will is not [...] an accident of cognition and therefore of life; but life itself is manifestation of will.¹¹

Numerous aspects of Hardy's fiction can be found in Schopenhauer's theory. In a way, the Wessex world he created is the mirror-image of what the German philosopher called "the Will in Nature."

Arthur Schopenhauer is the one who broke the spell of the naïve realism presupposed by Western science. He makes us realize that the empirical or spatio-temporal world is as much a construction of the mind as it is an objective reality, and as such, our permanent quest for scientific and practical knowledge creates a world that indefinitely revolves upon itself.

His position is that the Will (that is to say "the thing-in-itself") and the representations (created by our sensations) are one and the same reality, regarded from different perspectives, like two sides of the same coin. They stand in relationship to each other, such as the relationship that exists between a force and its manifestation. At this point of his theory, we can wonder if the ill-omens spread everywhere on the paths of Elfride Swancourt and Tess of the d'Urbervilles are manifestations of that same Will. We will also see throughout our essay how he considers individual motivation as a purposeless human free will, inferior to the great Will of Nature as it is a small part of it.

What Schopenhauer simply calls "Will" – or "world as it is in itself" – is a mindless, aimless, absolutely free, entirely self-determining, almighty, non-rational and non-intellectual impulse at the foundation of our instinctual drives, and at the foundational being of everything. Furthermore, Schopenhauer turns upside down the perennial cosmological argument for the existence of God, which attempts to trace all particular experiences back to "God" as ultimate cause. Indeed, within his vision of the world as Will, there is no God to be comprehended, and the world has to be conceived as being meaningless.

Thus, for mankind the world is represented as being in a condition of eternal frustration, as it endlessly strives for nothing in particular, and as it goes essentially nowhere. It is a world beyond any ascriptions of good and evil.

¹¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root of Sufficient Reason, and On the Will in Nature, Two Essays* (London, 2012), p. 236.

This marks the origins of Schopenhauer's renowned pessimism: he claims that as individuals, we are the unfortunate products of our own epistemological making, and that within the world of appearances that we structure, we are fated to fight with other individuals, and to want more than we can ever have. Throughout his theories, he employs images of frustration taken from classical Greek mythology, such as that of Sisyphus and its condemnation to an eternal frustration. We will be able to establish numerous parallelisms with Thomas Hardy's characters in the two novels and his speakers in the poems. Schopenhauer defends a "pessimistic" ontology in which there is no purpose to existence: "In fact, the absence of all aim, of all limits, belongs to the essential nature of the will-in-itself, which is an endless striving."¹²

Impressionist approach

A close working knowledge of Schopenhauer and Darwin will be assumed and the theories will be wrenched from their philosophical context to provide analytic tools for a new approach to Hardy's novels and poems. Nevertheless, we shall be cautious with the place of philosophy in Hardy's writing. Hardy is a writer, and as such an artist. It is important to consider the difference between the general character of these philosophies as opposed to their very specific use in Hardy's fiction. According to our writer, philosophy is first and foremost something built on one's private experience of life: ". . . Let every man make a philosophy for himself out of his own experience . . . by working out his own views as given him by his surroundings."¹³ (31 December 1901).

At this point, we need to keep in mind that Hardy is first a keen observer of nature and it is only after his observations that he brings some theories into his own philosophy, and only because they are similar and relevant to his own vision of the world. Brennecke gives an interesting definition of Hardy's philosophy: "Hardy's 'philosophy,' by which I mean the prevailing colour and composition of the screen

¹² Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind* (London, 1924), p. 128.

¹³ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 91.

through which he views the world in his writings.”¹⁴ Darwin’s theory according to which man is a mere species prey to evolution and extinction, and Schopenhauer’s “will” are only two colours of his colour palette, two aspects of Hardy’s fatalistic outlook on life, two ways to express man’s deep existential tragedy, two strings in his complex net of fiction. Even though there is an obvious innovative philosophical scope in his work, Hardy declared: “being a mere impressionist I must not pretend to be a philosopher in a letter”¹⁵ (Letter to Dr. Caleb Saleby, 21 December 1914).

Furthermore, Hardy also said in July 1917: “I hold that the mission of poetry is to record impressions, not convictions.”¹⁶ In an attempt to be as faithful as possible to the writer, we will rely on an impressionistic approach to throw some philosophical light on his work.

The Immanent Will

We can easily assert that Hardy’s theory of the “Immanent Will” was inspired by Schopenhauer’s philosophical theory. The Immanent Will is an answer to ‘Nature’s Questioning’ difficult to accept:

“We wonder, ever wonder, why we find us here!

“Has some Vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?

“Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains?...
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

“Or is it that some high Plan betides,
As yet not understood,
Of Evil stormed by Good,
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achievement strides?”

Thus things around. No answerer I...

¹⁴ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy’s Universe: A Study of a Poet’s Mind* (London, 1924), p. 8.

¹⁵ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 269-270.

¹⁶ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 178.

Meanwhile the winds, and rains,
And Earth's old glooms and pains
Are still the same, and gladdest Life Death neighbors nigh. (l.12-28)¹⁷

As J. Hillis Miller states, the sad answer is that:

events happen as they do happen. They have neither value in themselves nor value in relation to any end beyond them. Worse yet, suffering is certain for man. In place of God there is the Immanent Will, and this unthinking force is sure to inflict pain on a man until he is lucky enough to die."¹⁸

The Immanent Will falls on humankind as a predator to his prey and left them bewildered like "chastened children sitting silent in a school."¹⁹ (l. 4)

First it is important to define the 'will' itself. It is obviously similar to Schopenhauer's theory but it can be slightly different in Hardy's impressionistic philosophy.

Hardy's concept of 'Will' is summarized in one of his letters (answer to Mr. Edward Wright about the philosophy in *The Dynasts*²⁰):

I quite agree with you in holding that the word 'Will' does not perfectly fit the idea to be conveyed – a vague thrusting or urging internal force in no predetermined direction. . . . That the Unconscious Will of the Universe is growing aware of Itself I believe I may claim as my own idea solely . . . I believe, too, that the Prime cause, this Will, has never been called 'It' in any poetical literature, English or foreign. This theory, too, seems to me to settle the question of free-will v. Necessity. The will of a 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; but whenever it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is in equilibrium the minute portion called one person's will is free.²¹ (2 June 1907).

Hardy's 'Will,' even though it finds its origins in Schopenhauer's presents a new metaphysical model. It took him years to elaborate such a complicate 'Prime Cause;' in a note of the 17 October 1896 he was already acknowledging its 'stirring and urging everything' unconsciously: ". . . the Supreme Mover or Movers, the Prime Force or Forces, must be either limited in power, unknowing, or cruel."²² The Christian

¹⁷ 'Nature's Questioning' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 58.

¹⁸ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 13.

¹⁹ 'Nature's Questioning' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 58.

²⁰ *The Dynasts* is a play about Napoleonic wars that Hardy published in three parts between 1904 and 1908. The play is based on a huge amount of work as Hardy actually visited some of the battlefields. It deals with a lot of ontological questions. It stands out from Hardy's work, as a consequence the play was received with some perplexity.

²¹ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 125.

²² Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 57-58.

benevolent God is not in charge anymore if he ever was. It is quite contradictory to talk about a 'Prime cause' when we refer to the Immanent Will. Indeed the Will is not a transcendental force; there is not an explainable "Cause" of all that exists in the world and we cannot answer 'Nature's Questioning': "We wonder, ever wonder, why we find us here!" (l. 12).

Brennecke defines well Hardy's Will as what Schopenhauer calls the "thing-in-itself." First it is important to know the thing-in-itself is timeless, spaceless, and impossible to perceive. Secondly, it implies that there are different degrees of Will from the will of man (guided by intelligence and inspired by motive) to a "semi-conscious and unconscious will and all forms of blind and mute striving in the inorganic world."²³ Thirdly, the Will is the fundamental essence of every phenomenon in the universe; we will see in the first part of this essay the phenomenology acting between the characters' moods and the landscape. It also means that it is acting *through* men and not acting *on* them, even though he can act through different living creatures at the same time. Hardy presents this all-invasive Will in a letter to Dr. Caleb Saleby:

The nature of the determination embraced in the theory is that of a collective will; so that there is a proportion of the total will in each part of the whole, and each part has therefore, in strictness, some freedom, which would, in fact, be operative as such and whenever the remaining great mass of will in the universe should happen to be in equilibrium. . . .²⁴ (Dec. 21, 1914)

Then, one of the key features of this Will is its unconsciousness. It is nor cruel nor good, therefore it can arbitrarily be both and alternatively presents the world's living creatures with joys and harshness. "Viewless and voiceless, the Turner of the Wheel works unconsciously"²⁵ and endlessly, without any aim. This force hits without warning, and as human beings cannot address prayers to it they are turned into its helpless preys.

Yet, the most important because innovative part of this will is the epithet adjective Hardy qualifies it with: "Immanent." For Brennecke, "he is primarily interested in excluding every conception of an exterior force essentially different from

²³ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind* (London, 1924), p. 29.

²⁴ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 269-270.

²⁵ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind* (London, 1924), p. 34.

the universe and outside of it.”²⁶ Furthermore, the Will is the “one and only source from which all life and activity are flowing, and its patterns underlie all mundane phenomena.”²⁷ The Will is a force inherent to Nature, that is to say to the physical world. As the Will is “One” it brings unity in the world, bonding things together. The “Spinner of the Years” (‘The Convergence of the Twain’) is weaving between people, events and pulls the different strings. J. Hillis Miller confirms this idea when he talks about “a universe in which each part is a helpless victim of the weaving energy which unconsciously knits together the whole.”²⁸ Therefore, “to admit the possibility of a transcendental force would be to destroy the unity of the world, flowing from the Oneness of the Will.”²⁹

J. Hillis Miller concludes on the Immanent Will showing men’s quasi-absent will and helplessness as “It” blows them away from one event to the other as mere puppets: “It is as if they were caught up in a great wind of history which whirls them into the rigid forms of a predetermined dance. This dance moves them toward other people or away from them in ways they do not choose.”³⁰

The coexistence of the Immanent Will and Fatum

Thomas Hardy’s use of the word “quadrille” as he refers to the structure of *Jude the Obscure* in a letter to Edmund Goose is relevant: “The rectangular lines of the story were not premeditated, but came by chance: except, of course, that the involutions of four lives must necessarily be a sort of *quadrille*.” [My italics] (4 January 1896). This dance is originally composed of four couples but here we find “the involutions of four lives” forced to dance with each other by the laws of necessity. This “quadrille” is to be compared to the fated triangular relationships in our two novels. Indeed, Elfride and Tess are pushed to dance with two partners each. We can also notice that *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* opens on a dance celebrating spring where a

²⁶ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy’s Universe: A Study of a Poet’s Mind*, (London, 1924), p. 66.

²⁷ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy’s Universe: A Study of a Poet’s Mind*, *ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁸ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 12.

²⁹ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy’s Universe: A Study of a Poet’s Mind* (London, 1924), p. 57.

³⁰ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 155.

large group of girls have only one partner (Angel) for all of them at the beginning and where we sadly witness the disappointment of Tess as she is not the chosen one.

For Thomas Hardy, *Fatum* is the realization by each man that he is the victim of an unconscious immanent power which acts through him and uses his “free” acts as part of the irresistible forward movement which hurries him on, keeping him from fulfilling his intentions and from attaining any desirable life.

In its traditional definition, *Fatum* means that man’s actions are part of a larger determinism and that his ineluctable destiny is written from his birth. In the Greek and Roman Mythology *Fatum* was personalized by the Fates, three goddesses (Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos) who preside at the birth, life and death of humans. They were superior to the Gods and each person was thought of as a spindle, around which they would spin the thread of human destiny. In classic tragedies, *Fatum* lost the personalisation and became a great, impersonal primitive force existing through all eternity, absolutely independent of human wills.

In Hardy's novels and poems *Fatum* appears as an artistic motif in a great variety of forms — passions, conventions, human mistakes, ‘Time the Cynic,’ chance and coincidence. None is Fate itself, but rather all of these are manifestations of the Immanent Will as we will see throughout this essay.

First of all, *Fatum* touches the characters because of their inner passions. As Hardy puts it:

A Plot, or Tragedy, should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions, by reason of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said passions, prejudices, and ambitions.³¹ (April 1878)

Human nature and will, as parts of the great Immanent Will, seem to push men into the nets of *Fatum*. Their choices and ambitions can also put them in danger. According to D. H. Lawrence, tragedy occurs with their outburst out of the shell of convention:

This a tragedy of Hardy, always the same: the tragedy of those who, more or less pioneers, have died in the wilderness, whither they had escaped for free action, after having left the walled security, and the comparative imprisonment, of the established convention. This is the theme of novel after novel: remain quite within the convention, and you are good, safe,

³¹ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891*, (Cambridge, 2011), p. 157.

and happy in the long run, though you never have the vivid pang of sympathy on your side: or, on the other hand, be passionate, individual, willful, you will find the security of the convention a walled prison, you will escape, and you will die, either of your own lack of strength to bear the isolation and the exposure, or by direct revenge from the community, or from both. . . . the convention of the community is a prison to his natural, individual desire, a desire that compels him, whether he feel justified or not, to break the bounds of the community, lands him outside the pale, there to stand alone, and say: 'I was right, my desire was real and inevitable; if I was to be myself I must fulfil it, convention or no convention,' or else, there to stand alone, doubting, and saying: 'Was I right, was I wrong? If I was wrong, oh, let me die!' – in which case he courts death.³²

Nature punishes those who attempt to use their own will, who try to escape her immanence. In a way, she is the new "God" punishing mankind for his *hybris*. D. H. Lawrence lays the emphasis on the double nature of the tragedy. On the one hand, society with its narrow-minded codes and convention is a "walled security" where humans can be safe if they abide by the laws. On the other hand, it is also a "walled prison" for the individual and its desires and natural instinct which are in conflict with social regulations. The escape is thus deadly. One dies from his "lack of strength to bear the isolation and the exposure" or by "direct revenge from the community," or both. Surprisingly, the non-respect of the social codes is also part of *Fatum*.

In *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, Elfride's elopement with Stephen can be seen under this light, as she is deliberately escaping the fortress with the man her father forbade her to marry. She will suffer the consequences of this act, even though it was aborted. Mrs Jethaway had witnessed the deed and will be from this moment a Damocles sword above Elfride's happiness with Knight. This mistake she did as a young and naïve maiden will follow her until the end and co-operate with her *Fatum*.

Nonetheless, D. H. Lawrence's argument has to be balanced. Indeed, for Hardy *Fatum* does not spare anyone, even those respecting the rules of Nature:

To those musing weather-beaten West-country folk who pass the greater part of their days and nights out of doors, Nature seems to have moods in other than a poetical sense: predilections for certain deeds at certain times, without any apparent law to govern or season to account for them. She is read as a person with a curious temper; as one who does not scatter kindnesses and cruelties alternately, impartially, and in order, but heartless severities or overwhelming generousities in lawless caprice. Man's case is always that of the prodigal's favourite or the miser's pensioner. In her unfriendly moments there seems a feline fun in her tricks, begotten by a foretaste of her pleasure in swallowing the victim.³³

³² D. H. Lawrence, "The Real Tragedy" (1914) in R. P. Draper, *Hardy, The Tragic Novels, A Selection of Critical Essays* (London, 1991), p. 66.

³³ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 215.

Hardy often personifies the unconscious Immanent Will as Nature itself. In this excerpt, he gives her a bipolar personality. Nature is psychiatrically sick as she blindly provides the country folk with joys and harshness without any logic or sense of fairness. The discrepancy between the “heartless severities” and the “overwhelming generousities” is highly ironic as Nature is not conscious at all and as such cannot have neither good nor bad intentions towards mankind. Whether it is a kindness or a cruelty, it is seen from man’s perspective who notices with despair that he has no control on his existence and is the prey to an unconscious force. We will study in more depth how Hardy’s characters are struck by *Fatum*, but the Original *Fatum* of mankind (as opposed to the other species which are equally crushed but cannot rationalise) is to find oneself conscious in a universe ruled by an Unconscious Will. The tragedy at stake is the tragedy of human finiteness, mortality, and vulnerability. Human beings live with a countdown and are incapable to escape a universe where every deed of man is a hostage to a predetermined and hidden fate.

Some critics were deploring Tess’s passivity because to them it diminishes the sense of free will on which the ennobling effect of tragedy depends. But we will see that Tess is an active agent in her destiny and if Hardy’s characters (according to Virginia Woolf) “need all their strength to deal with the downright blows, the freakish ingenuity, the gradually increasing malignity of fate,”³⁴ they are still struggling against *Fatum*.

Furthermore, we will notice across our study that Hardy proposes a new form of tragedy which does not involve aristocratic heroes but “the worthy:” “The best tragedy – highest tragedy in short – is that of the worthy encompassed by the inevitable.”³⁵ (24 October 1892)

Hardy’s heroes and especially heroines are most of the time from the lower classes. Their greatness as tragic protagonists does not come from their social status but from their courageous and dignified fight against an ineluctable force that crushes them, despite of their littleness and their vulnerability.

³⁴ Virginia Woolf, “The Novels of Thomas Hardy” (1928) in R. P. Draper, *Hardy, The Tragic Novels, A Selection of Critical Essays* (London, 1991), p. 74.

³⁵ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 14.

Nonetheless, they are trapped as every event in a man's life, every place he has lived in or visited, every choice, every emotion, and every person he has known, all can be seen retrospectively to fit closely together to form the fated structure of his life.

The Immanent Will is a sort of sleeping craftsman which brings tragic irony into the tragedy of human existence. Tragic irony occurs when the hero rebels against *Fatum* and by such a deed, instead of warding off his destiny to happen, plunge into it.

The nature of the modern tragedy is shifting, it can be something very poignant and pitiful at the beginning, but turn into a farce in one instant: "If you look beneath the surface of any farce you see a tragedy; and on the contrary, if you blind yourself to the deeper issues of a tragedy you see a farce."³⁶ (15-21 October 1888) Hardy extensive use of coincidence to demonstrate cosmic absurdity proves that in Wessex, as we will develop later, there is neither hero, villain, nor Providence but the impenetrable mystery of the cosmic scheme.

At first, the presence of coincidence seem to be contradictory with the fatalistic determinism structuring everything that exists in the universe. But Jean Brooks finds a solution:

There is no inconsistency between Hardy's determinism and the important role in his works of chance and coincidence. Chance is direction which we cannot see; but it is the direction of a blind, groping force, unrelated to anything we can conceive as conscious purpose. Once more the double perspective of chaos and determinism conjures up a richly complex poetic response to the fate of living creatures subject to inhuman cause and effect.³⁷

Once more, from the human point of view there are coincidences. But there are part of the Immanent Will that "urges and stirs everything" blindly and unconsciously. Indeed, the meeting of the Titanic and the iceberg in 'The Convergence of the Twain' was not coincidental but part of the plan: while the ship was built, the iceberg was already on its way. Brennecke concludes: "Therefore the universe is ruled by the immutable laws of necessity, determinism is at the base of apparent arbitrariness, and chance is only a form and manifestation of necessity."³⁸

³⁶ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891*, (Cambridge, 2011), p. 282)

³⁷ Jean Brooks, "The Poetic Structure" (1971) in R. P. Draper, *Hardy, The Tragic Novels, A Selection of Critical Essays* (London, 1991), p. 80.

³⁸ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind* (London, 1924), p. 31.

To conclude on *Fatum*, the Modern era lays on a paradox. Even though the world seems to be deprived of God or any divine transcendence, man is still the victim of *Fatum*. Indeed, man is condemned to live a short time and therefore a vain existence in comparison to the universe and the endless Immanent Will.

Thomas Hardy's writing challenges Victorian codes

We have seen the modern and iconoclastic nature of Hardy's works in the way he understood the world and coloured it with philosophical theories. But he goes even further in his writing. He is not satisfied by the techniques and tastes of the Victorian Era. According to Dale Kramer, "Hardy's objection to the tastes of his age is grounded in an abhorrence of the results of literary realism."³⁹ To Hardy, their realistic approach make them forget that a story must be striking.

Yet, despite of his apparent disappointments, Hardy is well involved and inscribed in his age. He takes advantage of the door left open by 'the Age of Doubt.' The fact that "skepticism becomes welcome and creative, rather than obtrusive and disabling"⁴⁰ allows him to approach important existential issues and expose quite explicitly the non-existence of God. Moreover, Roger Ebbatson makes an interesting connection between the evolutionary theory and its influence on literature, especially on the way novels are written. To him, "the novel as a form premises a self coming to grips with time and process, and the evolutionary perspective clearly presented the novelist with a new mode of handling temporal experience."⁴¹

Thomas Hardy, straddling tradition and modernity, forged a modern style that nonetheless hewed closely to poetic convention and tradition. They illuminate the contradictory nature of the writer between the vulnerable prey to the Immanent Will and Fate on the one hand, and the serene and detached inhabitant of the natural world on the other hand.

³⁹ Dale Kramer, *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 10.

⁴⁰ Christopher Lane, *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty* (New Haven, 2012), p. 5.

⁴¹ Roger Ebbatson, *The Evolutionary Self: Hardy, Forster, Lawrence* (Brighton, 1982), p. x.

Hardy's work explores a fatalist outlook against the gloomy landscape of his native Dorset. He rejected the Victorian belief in a benevolent God, and much of its codes: whether it concerned society or writing. For instance, Hardy did not hesitate to modify the typical figure of the villain in order to reinforce the fatalism at stake in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. In the words of Morell:

Alec d'Urberville is sometimes described as a villain of Victorian melodrama. Hardy obviously intended the likeness to be noticed, but he was making one big difference clear to his Victorian readers: Alec's seduction of Tess, 'a pure woman', was successful. A typical villain of Victorian melodrama would have been foiled by the intervention of Providence.⁴²

Providence does not exist in Hardy's Wessex and he sardonically signals to his contemporaries that it does not exist anywhere just before Tess's tragic deflowering:

Darkness and silence ruled everywhere around. Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks of The Chase, in which there poised gentle roosting birds in their last nap; and about them stole the hopping rabbits and hares. But, might some say, where was Tess's guardian angel? where was the providence of her simple faith? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked.⁴³

We will see that Hardy shows some compassion in his poems to those who cannot accept the new order and still believe in God. But here he mocks them without restraint. We can anticipate and affirm that they deserve it as the poor Tess's fate will be worse in the hands of mankind than in those of the Unconscious Will.

We have seen that Hardy was educated by two important female figures: his mother and grandmother, and we shall keep in mind that most of Hardy's main characters are women. Using heroines is for him a way to display the hypocrisy of late Victorian attitudes towards women. He lived in a context where women were victims of the double standard: men could have a sexuality while women had no definition nor legal status except for daughters, wives and mothers (therefore they were the property of their fathers and then husbands). The Contagious Disease Acts⁴⁴ (1864, 1866, 1869, so when Hardy was living in London) represented a climax of the society's injustice

⁴² Roy Morrell, *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way* (Kuala Lumpur, 1965), p. 38.

⁴³ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), pp. 64-65.

⁴⁴ The Contagious Disease Acts epitomize the exclusion of the 'respectable' woman from the public sphere. She was always confined in the household under the supervision of a male figure. Josephine Butler, an intellectual middle-class woman, fought the acts for two decades through the Ladies' National Association (LNA) for the repeal of the Contagious Disease Acts. These acts eventually repealed in 1886 are part of a larger revolution of women who claim for their rights as human beings and want to escape patriarchal institutions and their biological definition as inferior.

towards women. They consisted in a medical rape of every woman suspected to be a prostitute in order to provide safe sex for men.

Thomas Hardy did not have to look far to find inspiration for his heroines. In his family he was told stories about his neighbourhood and admired “the eminently modern idea embodied in this example – of a woman’s not becoming necessarily the chattel and slave of her seducer – impressed Hardy as being one of the first glimmers of woman’s enfranchisement.”⁴⁵ Another example was the execution of Marta Brown he assisted at the age of sixteen in August 1856. She was convicted for the wilful murder of her second husband. The image of the woman in his black silk gown never left Hardy retina and undoubtedly inspired him for Tess’s hanging.

In Casagrande’s words, Hardy presents to his reader “unforgettable heroines struggling to escape the always confining, at times crushing, roles imposed on them by patriarchal institutions.”⁴⁶ These heroines are “unforgettable” because they fiercely resist a Fate and male institutions that crush them. But Hardy gives a new definition to the “Pure Woman” which does not take into consideration the Victorian society’s codes and prejudices. Hardy explains his project by a striking statement in a letter: “Ever since I began to write . . . I have felt that the doll of English fiction must be demolished, if England is to have a school of fiction at all . . . the development of a more virile type of novel is not compatible with sound morality.” (December 1891) the term ‘virile’ seems awkward regarding what we have said earlier, but in reality the intention is to give women equality. We will see that Tess is able to assume successfully male roles when male figures fail to help her.

Eventually, “The Ruined Maid” represents the ultimate demolition of “the doll of English fiction.” As opposed to Tess who cannot find a way to deal with her ruin, the “Ruined Maid” sarcastically embrace it and accepts a relative happiness in material comfort. The poem is conversational as she meets an old acquaintance who is impressed by and envious of her new standards of living and good looks.

And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?"-
"O didn't you know I'd been ruined?" said she. (1.3-4)

And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers three!"-

⁴⁵ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 204.

⁴⁶ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 6.

"Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined," said she. (1.7-8)

"Some polish is gained with one's ruin," said she. (1.12)

And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!"-
"We never do work when we're ruined," said she. (1.15-16)

"at present you seem
To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!"-
"True. One's pretty lively when ruined," said she. (1.18-20)

"My dear - raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she. (1.23-24)

Melia (the ruined maid) is very sarcastic as her friend enumerates all her fine pieces of jewellery and clothing. Casagrande describes her as "a clever ironist, a woman fully aware that "prosperi-ty" can be the reward of sin, and poverty the wage of virtue."⁴⁷

This essay on Will and Fatum will focus on Thomas Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and a selection of *The Collected Poems*.

How do the Immanent Will and *Fatum* coexist in Thomas Hardy's writing?

Throughout this essay we will try to answer the following questions: How does Hardy replace the merciful and benevolent Christian God? How do his characters cope with this absence of transcendence? What remains of the human will in this fatalistic world?

First of all, we will study the importance of the triangular relationships in the three works. In which ways do the triangles of the lovers - Elfride-Knight-Stephen and Tess-Angel-Alec – are doomed? We will first see the symbolism of the triangle itself: from the traditional Trinity and link with God to a truncated pyramid where God is replaced by a pervasive force. Then, we will see their transformation into a dangerous love triangle where idolatry takes place of faith and an idealized human being the one of God. At this stage of the reflection, we will also have to deal with the implications of these doomed triangles and think about the different expressions of *Fatum* for the characters through the phenomenon of repetition.

⁴⁷ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 10.

Secondly, we will explain the cynical simulacrum of a Christian pattern after the loss of God in the two novels and some of the poems. We will see how the new world means the death knell of the Edenic and pastoral existence.

Eventually, our reflection will extend to a larger perspective with the issue of 'Time the Cynic.' We will see how it plays a cruel game with the characters and we will focus on their attempts to resist the inexorable.

I. Doomed Triangular Relationships

1. Symbolism of the Triangle

It is necessary to begin this essay on “Will and Fate in Thomas Hardy’s work” with an insight in the triangular relationships at the core of the two novels this dissertation tries to study: *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*. Before dwelling on the relationships themselves, we must start at the very beginning with the triangle as a geometrical figure, and keep in mind all the primary implications of the figure itself.

As it is defined by Euclidian geometry, a triangle is a plane surface formed by three points called angles related to one another by three segments, called sides. It is a perfect prime form in geometry which often represents stability. Nonetheless, we are not interested here in Thomas Hardy’s geometrical skills as an architect.

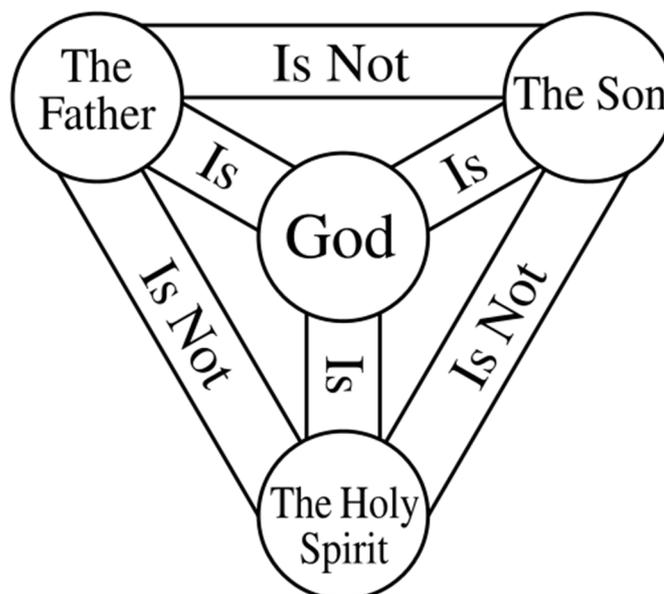
We shall focus on the relationship between his writing and the religious and symbolical dimension of the triangle because according to the orientation of the figure, the symbolism can take a completely different significance. First of all, we need to study the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Then, in contrast, we will analyse the “deviant” emblem of the Freemasons: the truncated pyramid. The loss of faith of the Victorian era turned the figure upside down, moreover the angles changed and became humans. The sides are representing different kind of connections between the three angles. This comparative study will allow us to enter the *leitmotiv* of the doomed triangular relationships.

a. The Christian Trinity

It would be impossible to explain the mystery of the Trinity because the Christian God’s essence is beyond all comprehension for human beings. According to Saint Thomas d’Aquin, God revealed to his believers this mystery in order to give them a fair notion of the Creation and the Salvation that the Father accomplishes through his Son in the Holy Spirit.

But the difficulty at stake in the mystery is the idea of three persons who share the same nature, or substance. That is to say that God can be defined as three consubstantial persons or hypostases: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. As Christian religions are monotheistic, it means that there is one God in three persons who are distinct, yet are one substance, essence or nature. In this mystery, the “nature” refers to what one is, while a “person” is who one is. The explanation given by the Fourth Lateran Council gives a possible interpretation of the mystery: “it is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.” But what is very important is the relationship the “three persons” have with one another as they are stated to be one in all else, co-equal, co-eternal and consubstantial: “each is God, whole and entire.” To conclude on this aspect of the Christian doctrine, all things that exist are from the Creator Father, pass through the Redemptive Son and lie in the Holy Spirit which can be assimilated to Love.

The following diagram of the “Shield of the Trinity” which is part of the Christian tradition simplifies well the intricate mystery of the consubstantiation.



The Shield of Trinity or Scutum Fidei (Latin for “shield of faith”)⁴⁸

⁴⁸ <http://christianity.about.com/od/christiandoctrines/tp/denytrinity.htm>

In *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, we can find a sort of transposition of the consubstantiation in the end of the novel, when the two rivals unit in their grief after Elfride's death. The way the narrator lays the emphasis on them can be interpreted as a kind of consubstantiation. Knight, the intellectual mentor would be the Father, Stephen would be the Son because everyone is didactic with him, and Elfride the Holy Spirit in the sense of Love. In this sentence the two lovers seem to share the same substance, reduced to the love they feel for the same woman: "Stephen and Knight – as if animated by one soul."⁴⁹ In the same way, another sort of consubstantiation occurs at the end of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, when the two persons she cares the most about assist her final apotheosis:

One of the pair was Angel Clare, the other a tall budding creature – half girl, half woman – a spiritualized image of Tess, slighter than she, but with the same beautiful eyes – Clare's sister-in-law, 'Liza-Lu. Their pale faces seemed to have shrunk to half their natural size. They moved on hand in hand, and never spoke a word . . .⁵⁰

First, Angel and 'Liza-Lu appeared as a perfect pair with simultaneity and symmetry in their countenance and behaviour. Then, the syntax of the first sentence creates an effect of suspension of the pair through the long and solemn juxtaposition. It is again a triangle, close to the mystery of Trinity because Liza-Lu is Tess's sister and in a way her reincarnation as Tess is about to die and as the narrator's description insists upon the fact that 'Liza-Lu looks very similar and even better than her older sister. Besides, Angel and 'Liza-Lu are blessed by Tess who gave Angel her benediction before she dies. In a way, she's the Holy Spirit above their head.

b. The Truncated Pyramid

Now, on the opposite of the Christian mystery of the Trinity, it is interesting to study the truncated pyramid as a symbol of the loss of Faith and the absence of Deity.

Indeed, in the context of the Victorian Era which appears chaotic because of the loss of God, man who cannot live without faith has to transfer it to another object. We can wonder if this new object derived from modern times cannot be himself. Undoubtedly, the context is favourable for a parallelism with the secular and universal

⁴⁹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 375.

⁵⁰ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 349.

symbolism of the truncated pyramid and the “Eye-in-the-Triangle.” It will be relevant to study this aspect of the symbolism of the triangle as regard to the human existential crisis provoked by the absence of deity.

The first focus has to be on what this ‘universal religion’ teaches. Indeed, those believers are engaged in a powerful mystical practice called “Awakening Our Third Eye.” To them, deep down in each one of us is an eternal spiritual “soul,” the real true immortal “self” which is actually a Deity with great powers. “A man is a god in ruins.”⁵¹ This quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson is very interesting because it emphasizes the central problem of this “belief;” the fact that man has forgotten about his immortal godhood Self (capital S) because it is covered up by his mortal animal bodily self (lowercase s) while he lives his life on earth.

The goal to pursue for them is to transcend our body and see our real Self within. Throughout every esoteric doctrine, the third Eye is affirmed to exist. If we come back to Schopenhauer’s theory, the Third Eye would be a way to attain the world-in-itself. Moreover, Plato used to call it the “Eye of the Soul:” “I quite admit the difficulty of believing that in every man there is an Eye of the soul which [...] is far more precious than ten thousand bodily eyes, for by it alone is truth seen.”⁵²

As a consequence, according to the Universal Religion, we humans are inherently divine, but in some sense we have fallen from our heavenly home into a human form. The divine soul still exists within us – indeed, it is our true Self – and through the use of the Third Eye we can reawaken our inner godhood. This conception also covers the idea of a Third Eye as an “All Seeing Eye,” the Eye of God.

⁵¹ R. Spiller and A. Ferguson (ed.), *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Edited by (Cambridge, 1971), p. 42.

⁵² Plato, *The Republic*, Book VII, Trans. Benjamin Jowett, 360 B. C. E.



The Great Seal of the United States from the reverse of a one dollar bill.⁵³

In this belief, transcendence does not come from something outside the world but from inside, within man's soul. We can establish here a parallelism with Hardy's "Immanent Will" but for the author the Will is not something that belongs to the human being. It is a part of Nature and as such a part of every man, but there is no way to get control of it. It is a blind and powerful force that controls everything that exists. As opposed to the truncated pyramid of the Great Seal of the United States, the pattern in Hardy's writing does not accept the "All Seeing Eye" which would be conscious and thus able to act on man with good or evil intentions. In the Wessex world, there is not such force, and there is neither evil nor good.

Nevertheless, we can still interpret the triangular relationships in the two novels as truncated pyramids. Elfride and Tess, as they are given a rough time by the blind force of the Immanent Will, chose to erect the man they passionately love as a new godlike figure. A decision which dooms them even more. The doomed triangular relationships they experience are each composed of two different relationships. The first one is a mistake out of naivety which will have a great and undesirable impact on the second one. The latter will consist in the worshipping of a man and the consequences will be tragic: "She tried to pray to God, but it was her husband who really had her supplication. Her idolatry of this man was such that she herself almost feared it to be ill-omened."⁵⁴ The first relationship, whether or not it is a positive

⁵³ <http://www.greatdreams.com/eye/eye.htm>

⁵⁴ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 188.

lesson, is a first step on the path of experience. Whereas the second relationship is a desperate and vain attempt to seek innocence again. Indeed, a structure worthy of Blake's *Innocence and Experience* can be found in Hardy's way to depict love relationships.

A Pair of Blue Eyes can be considered as an autobiographical novel because of the similarities between Thomas Hardy and the twofold masculine figure Stephen-Knight, and between Emma Lavinia Guifford – the first wife of Hardy – and Elfride Swancourt. But what is far more interesting is the story of the triangular relationship that occurs between the country girl and two men who appear in Hardy's narration as the two faces of the same coin: a young man who tries hard to climb the social ladder and a Londoner reviewer. But if Elfride enters willingly her first naïve relationship, it is Tess's ingenuous nature and the bad intentions of a lustful man that force her into her undesired first relationship.

Tess's triangular relationship is even more cursed and tragic. Her first lover was undesired but took advantage of her lack of experience and education in the field of love, and pushes her to her fall. Her true love arrives second, and too late as he was unable to notice her at the beginning in Marlott. It is an unfair trick of Time that she will suffer until she dies and which is well summarized by the narrator at the beginning:

In the ill-judged execution of the well-judged plan of things the call seldom produces the comer, the man to love rarely coincides with the hour for loving. Nature does not often say 'See!' to her poor creature at a time when seeing can lead to happy doing; or cry 'Here!' to a body's cry of 'Where?' till the hide-and-seek has become an irksome, outworn game.⁵⁵

The Immanent Will is at work and human beings are let in their helplessness, with no hope of a divine justice intervention to sustain them throughout the obstacles. The narrator insists also here on the lost bound between man and Nature: they are not able to communicate to each other. Man's cry of distress is suspended in the air; the only response he can get is a complete vacuity.

So Tess met the wrong man in the first place. Cynically enough, she will discover by her own death that there is no possible salvation because no way exists to quit the triangular relationship for the three persons involved are interdependent. Tess declares at the end of the novel:

⁵⁵ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 35.

“I have killed him! [...] I owed it to you, and to myself, Angel. I feared long ago [...] that I might do it some day for the trap he set for me in my simple youth, and his wrong to you through me [*my italics*]. He has come between us and ruined us, and now he can never do it any more⁵⁶.”

The reader paradoxically expects some relief for Tess after her bloody murder, thinking that once the dangerous threat had been annihilated, the two lovers would be able to recover a state of Edenic happiness. Unfortunately, the “Diabolic Spirit” (as opposed to “Holy Spirit”) Alec d’Urbervilles displayed from the very beginning had pervaded the whole triangle as we can see in “through me:” Angel Clare finds himself touched by Alec’s malice even though they had never met. Eventually, Tess will be punished by society for her crime. As Millgate remarkably points: “Hardy’s original twist . . . was to resolve the primary pattern [the truncated triangular relationship] and then bring on Death as a fourth suitor.”⁵⁷

2. Women Worshipping their Lovers as Gods

a. The Idolatry of the Lover

According to J. Hillis Miller, “When God seems dead, man turns to his fellows in a different way.”⁵⁸ Indeed, the triangle is turned upside down and the angles replaced by human beings. The Christian notion of Love becomes the love of a woman for her lover and her complete devotion to him. She concentrates her life on attaining the possession of the ‘well-beloved’ and makes him the new centre of her world, her new God. For Thomas Hardy, love

[...] means finding someone who appears to radiate life and energy around him, establishing a measure of the worth of all things. If I can possess the person I love, then I can, without guilt, escape the world of flat desolation in which I began. But I must [...] wait until the loved one willingly returns my love, so closing the distance between us.⁵⁹

We see above all women worshipping their lovers in the two novels but the opposite is equally true when the men still think that they are pure and innocent creatures of nature. The traditional path for women at this period was to leave the tutelage of the father for the tutelage of a husband. This rule applies particularly for

⁵⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 338.

⁵⁷ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 72.

⁵⁸ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 75.

⁵⁹ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire, ibid.*, p. 74.

Tess who comes from a very modest background and as such has no chance of survival by herself. The men are freer than their match but Angel's and Knight's existences were dull and flavourless before they met their "well-beloved:"

A moment before the lover had been living in inner emptiness, surrounded by people without interest for him. Now in an instant he has been filled with a delightful excitement which changes his whole inner life, occupies it entirely with the swarming hopes and visions generated by his desire, as though he had been touched by a God. He now has a new self and a goal for that self. The loved one has the creative power of a deity. She creates the self of the lover and gives that self a new order. Before, he has only a latent existence. Now he is oriented in longing toward the person he loves and organizes his whole life toward trying to possess her.⁶⁰

For both the man and the woman, the possession of their lover raises the hope to achieve self-fulfilment, to make something out of their vain existence for the time allotted to them among the living. Yet, self-fulfilment comes at a hard price: doom.

The shift of the relationship into a truncated pyramid is due to two reasons. In the first place, the disappearance of God in this age of doubt let a void to fill. Thus, the women fill it with their lover. With the triangle turned upside down, there is still a sense of sacred. The problem is that it is misplaced. The sacred is now a passionate worshipping and an adamant idolatry of the lover.

The heroines' displacement of faith from God to their lover is not voluntary, not even conscious at the beginning: "She tried to pray to God, but it was her husband who really had her supplication. Her idolatry of this man was such that she herself almost feared it to be ill-omened."⁶¹ They are in a kind of trance in the presence of the man they love, they are attracted to them as magnets, driven by the Immanent Will who 'stirs and urges everything.'⁶² When Tess is "entranced by the sound of [Angel's] music and his physical presence,"⁶³ she cannot help it, it is an impulse. We can see in this example the explanation of the fact that the Immanent Will is external to living beings but also part of them.

Moreover, once they come into their presence their world is revolved and all the religious attributes and lexicon is given to the God-lover. First, being in a close

⁶⁰ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 131.

⁶¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 188.

⁶² 'The Convergence of the Twain' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 278-279.

⁶³ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 78.

perimeter to them is like entering a place of cult: “Elfride was at once exultant and abashed: coming into his presence had upon her the effect of entering a cathedral.”⁶⁴ As a consequence, the heroines turn to their God-men to receive absolution from their past sins, they hope this one true love can transcend everything and bring compassion into their world. “Tess’s prospect of receiving absolution from the man-god she loves”⁶⁵ underlines her will to be a ‘pure woman’ again in the eyes of society. Part of the worshipping is also the complete devotion. Nothing but Tess’s incommensurable love for Angel turns him into a God: “she loved him so passionately, and he was so godlike in her eyes; and being, though untrained, instinctively refined, her nature cried for his tutelary guidance.”⁶⁶ In exchange for her enduring and eternal faith, she simply wants him to pave the way towards Paradise, to help her escape her death-in-life state in the human world. As inexperienced girls in the world, Elfride and Tess eventually set their men-Gods on a pedestal so he can guide and master them from above.

b. Master-Slave Relationship

Millgate argues that Tess is “caught between the contrasted personalities of the two men – both superior to her in class, wealth, and education – who dominate her life.”⁶⁷ She certainly is dominated by these two men in the triangular relationship as they are both superior to her in “class, wealth and education.” But their domination over her have very different natures. Alec forces knowledge upon her in a violent manner and takes advantage of his position to be a predator with a prey. Very early, during their second encounter he blackmails her with her life driving carelessly. Despite of all her strength and pride, Tess – fearing for her life – eventually surrenders and lets him give her “the kiss of mastery.”⁶⁸ But the animalistic villain is not done playing with his doll, and Alec finally commits the irreparable when he steals away Tess’s innocence and purity. He forces her to sin and thus condemn her to a death-in-life existence. As in Blake, we can see at this moment the shift of the maiden from innocence to experience. Because he was the first one, Alec is in a way the owner (if

⁶⁴ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 174.

⁶⁵ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 89.

⁶⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 159.

⁶⁷ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 275.

⁶⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 46.

we stay in the master-slave lexicon) of Tess's purity and it gives him a claim on her he will never forget in his pursuit of Tess: "Remember, my lady, I was your master once! I will be your master again. If you are any man's wife you are mine!"⁶⁹

Angel's mastery over Tess is completely different. It is paternalistic; he educates her to elevate her as much as possible to his intellectual position. The Man-God shapes Tess as if she was in clay. He makes her at his image, that is to say he gives her the same intellectual features, an identical way of thinking and deciphering the world: "His influence over her had been so marked that she had caught his manner and habits, his speech and phrases, his likings and his aversions."⁷⁰ On the other hand, there is also a negative aspect in Angel's mastery because as Alec noticed, Tess's "mind is enslaved to his."⁷¹ But we will see that in this novel which can be considered as a *Bildungsroman*,⁷² Tess, especially when Angel abandons her, acquires an empirical knowledge on her own through her suffering and is able to criticize the injustice and mercilessness of her Man-God.

Elfride's triangular relationship with Stephen and Knight is not balanced in the same way as Tess's. First, Stephen is a young and innocent man as unexperienced as she is. As the late Felix Jethaway, they fill Elfride with a feeling of superiority because she is superior to them in "class, wealth, and education." Stephen flatters the narcissistic ego of the young woman with his compliments, his admiration and his complete devotion, consequently she becomes a Queen or Goddess figure: "A rapid red again filled her cheeks, and she looked at him meditatively. What a proud moment it was for Elfride then! She was ruling a heart with absolute despotism for the first time in her life."⁷³ Nevertheless, this position of Queen is not satisfactory on a long-term basis for Hardy's heroines. The excitement of flattery soon fades away, while the excitement of being allowed to be in the presence of a superior man, a god-man, is an eternal blessing. We can see this shift expressed in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*: "it was

⁶⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 291.

⁷⁰ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 179.

⁷¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 284.

⁷² The *Bildungsroman* is a German novel genre which appeared in the eighteenth century. It usually consists in following the evolution of a protagonist's education towards his adulthood.

⁷³ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 58.

infinitely more to be even the slave of the greater than the queen of the less.”⁷⁴ But to be a slave, even willingly, means to be crushed at several occasions during the educational process. We talked about Elfride’s narcissistic ego and the boredom of compliments after a while, but there is another aspect to this kind of personality: once she is in love with her absolutely perfect master, she cannot help trying to receive compliments from him. But the road is very steep and she stammers a lot at the beginning. Elfride’s ego is metaphorically whipped by Knight’s indifference (at first) to women’s external beauty when she asks him about his preferences on this subject. First she asks him about the ideal age of a woman, then the ideal colour of the hair and he answers the opposite of her own features. Desperate, the maiden is stuck in a game she cannot win. She is very confused and her feelings are very mixed because through Knight crushing her she respects him even more.

Elfride was thoroughly vexed. She could not but be struck with the honesty of his opinions, and the worst of it was, that the more they went against her, the more she respected them. And now, like a reckless gambler, she hazarded her last and best treasure. Her eyes: they were her all now.

‘What coloured eyes do you like best, Mr. Knight?’ she said slowly.

‘Honestly, or as a compliment?’

‘Of course honestly; I don’t want anybody’s compliment!’

And yet Elfride knew otherwise: that a compliment or word of approval from that man then would have been like a well to a famished Arab.

‘I prefer hazel,’ he said serenely.

She had played and lost again.⁷⁵

We will see that chess games have a very important symbolic value in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. Here Elfride plays until the ultimate checkmate. The disapproval of her eponym blue eyes by her God-man is the last stroke that paradoxically turns her definitively into the slave-worshipper. It is interesting at this point to change our perspective and look at this master-slave relationship from the point of view of one of the male characters: Knight.

The men are conscious about the complete devotion they provoked in the women’s hearts. This higher intellectual status (also social in the case of Angel) generates some pressure and a great responsibility, especially if all the knowledge they possess is theoretical. Therefore, Knight or “the musing unpractical student felt the

⁷⁴ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 220.

⁷⁵ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 178.

immense responsibility he was taking upon himself by becoming the protector and guide of such a trusting creature.”⁷⁶ They also maintain the master-slave order being condescending with women, giving them pet names such as “little bird.”⁷⁷ The devotion of the woman is such that it turns the pet names into performative speech and women into actual pets: “Elfride, docile as ever, had hardly moved a step, for he had said, *Remain.*”⁷⁸ [*My italics*]

Eventually, if we go back to the women’s perspective we can see the limits, or better put, the tragic irony of such a devotion towards the intelligence of their partners. It will not be possible to hide their sin for long, they will be pushed to the confession before their God-men discover the ‘treachery:’

That her throbbing, self-confounding, indiscreet heart should have to defend itself unaided against the keen scrutiny and logical power which Knight, now that his suspicions were awakened, would sooner or later be sure to exercise against her, was her misfortune.⁷⁹

If Knight’s raising suspicions push him to force Elfride to confess, she is also – as Tess – overwhelmed by all the ill-omens around her. The displacement of faith and the creation of the God-man in a truncated pyramid is the Original Sin of the relationship, the First ill-omen is the first link in the unstoppable chain of *Fatum*.

3. Consequences of the Truncated Pyramidal Relationship

a. The *Fatum*: a Play of Chance and Threats

At this stage of the analysis, it is interesting to define *Fatum* in Thomas Hardy’s fiction. If we take the word as it is used in Greek tragedies, it means that the hero is doomed from his very birth and fated to commit some atrocious acts or die in a gruesome manner. This doom is imposed either by an external force – some malign or vengeful God – or by an internal force, the “internal passions” of the characters, their very nature. *Fatum* for Thomas Hardy is a psychological process. God definitively left

⁷⁶ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 294.

⁷⁷ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 294.

⁷⁸ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 337.

⁷⁹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 306.

the Wessex world and an Immanent blind Will took his place. We will attempt to separate the unconscious Will from the conscious Fate.

Fatum is omnipresent in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

The various forms of dramatic irony which structure the fiction derive from this incomplete inherence of man in his milieu. Each action a man performs enters into a complex stream of natural and social events. This means that what he does often has a result out of tune with its intention.⁸⁰

“In the ill-judged execution of the well-judged plan of things,”⁸¹ the will moving each character from inside have to struggle with the great Immanent Will. Moreover, we can find *Fatum* in its etymological meaning. *Fatum* comes from the Latin verb *fari* which means ‘say’ or ‘predict:’ “Tess was now carried along upon the wings of the hours, without the sense of a will. The word had been given; the number of the day written down.”⁸² In this sentence, “the word had been given” and because the day of Tess’s wedding had been decided, fixed in time, it is a performative speech.

The fate of the characters is determined in their nature. There is no exterior force pulling the strings of the human-puppets. Though, every living being is the tortured leaf blown away in the wind of the Immanent Will which pushes them and moves through them without any concern for their well-being, hopes and aspirations.

The dissociation between the Will and Fate occurs because the heroines are not ready to accept the gloominess of a world ruled by an Unconscious Force. They still need to think that a cruel external force is playing with them. They are partly right, the Immanent Will is unconscious and will not interfere in their favour, yet not in their disfavour either. They cannot deal with their guilt and thus create a reassuring external force.

This force they invent could be interpreted as the Greek goddess of Fate – Ananke – daughter of Cronos the God of Time. This interpretation will help us to deal later with the treatment of Time in the novel and the poems. But here, it fits perfectly well with the notion of *hybris* at the core of their guilt. The two heroines worship a

⁸⁰ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 77.

⁸¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 35.

⁸² Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 178.

man instead of a God because they cannot acknowledge and accept the blowing void at the origins of everything that exists.

“Ananke” is the embodiment of their guilt, born from a certain part of their unconsciousness “she” brings into consciousness a net of fated omens and repetitions. Their nature (part of the Great Will “that urges and stirs everything) drive them to make some decisions and mistakes which will have necessary consequences. J. H. Miller says that Hardy’s heroines are “deluded puppets of an alienating force,”⁸³ yet the only reason they are deluded is because they are not conscious that the part of the great Will which is in them (their decisions and choices driven by their nature) is the only responsible for *Fatum*.

b. Reasons for *Fatum*

The fact that women worship their lovers creates a new line of destiny alongside the blind Immanent Will. Indeed, this tragic first sin is the first stone building their tragic destiny: *Fatum*. According to Mauriac, *fatum* means “un destin qui ne serait pas aveugle, terriblement attentif au contraire à la perte des âmes réprouvées dès avant leur naissance.”⁸⁴ The force which governs the universe of Thomas Hardy is indeed condemning living beings before they are even born, nevertheless this force *is* blind for in his view: “neither Chance or purpose governs the universe, but Necessity.”⁸⁵ A tragic event calls another one, and such until the end. It is not due to the sadistic and playful personality of a God but to a mere relation from cause to consequence.

The conversation between Tess and her little brother Abraham is very relevant.

“Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess?”

“Yes.”

“All like ours?”

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

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

“A blighted one.”

“’Tis very unlucky that we didn’t pitch on a sound one, when there were so many more of ’em!”⁸⁶

⁸³ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 237.

⁸⁴ Mauriac, *La Vie de Jean Racine* (Paris, 1928), p. 137.

⁸⁵ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 137.

⁸⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 25.

Tess, with the innocent and pure knowledge of a country girl is aware of the ways the world works. She knows humankind is cursed because moved by an unconscious force without goodness or compassion, but she has to deal with it, and make the best of it. On this blighted star they live on, the threat of tragic events is permanently hovering above their heads like a Damocles sword. And her theory sardonically proves to be true not long after she pronounced it on the cart when, as she innocently falls asleep, the shaft of the cart kills the horse right through his heart. Hardy often uses the distance and closeness in time to underline the tragic irony of *fatum*, then

The comely young woman whom he first placed before us, only one day earlier, wearing the white dress of innocence at a village festival, he now, with shocking abruptness and vividness, baptizes in blood, exposing her helplessness before death and her inability to undo her role in causing death.⁸⁷

The death of the horse Prince represents the first time of Tess being “splashed from face to skirt with the crimson drops”⁸⁸ but it is only the start of a series of gruesome events. It plunges her family into a helpless destitute state and she is driven by her guilt to claim kin with the d’Urbervilles and meet Alec who is responsible for another scene of blood shed as he violently steals her virginity from her.

Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order. One may, indeed, admit the possibility of a retribution lurking in the present catastrophe. Doubtless some of Tess d’Urberville’s mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time. But though to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children may be a morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature; and it therefore does not mend the matter.⁸⁹

By this ignominious act, Alec forces himself into the triangular relationship. “He has come between us and ruin us”⁹⁰ Tess said to justify her murdering Alec. Yet this time, this confession does not make Angel abandon her, even if Tess is responsible for it and the consequences are far more terrible. It would have been very hypocritical

⁸⁷ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 34.

⁸⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 26.

⁸⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 65.

⁹⁰ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 338.

to leave her at this moment as he had himself suggested to her (before abandoning her to a miserable life) the idea of murder to remove, erase this man “between [them]”:

How can we live together while that man lives? — he being your husband in nature, and not I. If he were dead it might be different. . . . Besides, that’s not all the difficulty; it lies in another consideration — one bearing upon the future of other people than ourselves. Think of years to come, and children being born to us, and this past matter getting known — for it must get known. There is not an uttermost part of the earth but somebody comes from it or goes to it from elsewhere. Well, think of wretches of our flesh and blood growing up under a taunt which they will gradually get to feel the full force of with their expanding years. What an awakening for them! What a prospect! *Can you honestly say ‘Remain’ after contemplating this contingency? Don’t you think we had better endure the ills we have than fly to others?*⁹¹ [my italics]

Not only he implicitly suggested that Alec’s death would be the only possible remedy to their problem, but on top of that he forbade Tess to have descendants as he believed that the sins of the mother will befall on the offspring. He proposes a solution to cut clean the chain of “contingency”, to stop *fatum* from putting other tragic events on their way. But human beings are not able to stop the Immanent Will stirring and urging everything. Facing such an unfair series of regrettable events, Hardy’s characters cannot help but look around them, hoping to find a prime Cause. But Immanent Will and *fatum* are invisible forces. In *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, Knight concludes Elfride’s confession on “There’s a blight upon us, or me, or you,”⁹² and in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* Marian attempts to comfort Tess in her misery: “You’ve no faults, deary; that I’m sure of. And he’s none. So it must be something outside ye both.”⁹³ They are both universal truths which argue in this sense.

c. The Chosen One

Tess is “selected” among the others from the very beginning because of her peerless beauty: “’twas a thousand pities that it should have happened to she, of all others. But ’tis always the comeliest! The plain ones be as safe as churches.”⁹⁴ If she would have been more plain-looking, she would certainly have been spared by *Fatum*. Yet, her glowing but tragic beauty is part of her nature and she is too much involved

⁹¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 213.

⁹² Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 318.

⁹³ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 248.

⁹⁴ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 80.

in her life and with her will to escape. According to J.H. Miller it is what puts her in danger.

Fatum is to be taken distinctively from the blind and unconscious Immanent Will. They are both obeying the rules of Necessity but Fatum is its personification. We can see “her” in “the hands of Fate:”

They were simple and innocent girls on whom the unhappiness of unrequited love had fallen; they had deserved better at the hands of Fate. She had deserved worse — yet she was the chosen one. It was wicked of her to take all without paying. She would pay to the uttermost farthing; she would tell, there and then. This final determination she came to when she looked into the fire, he holding her hand.⁹⁵

Tess’s unconsciousness has created an embodied fate alongside the unconscious and unforeseeable line of the Immanent Will. This personified figure of Fate is born out of the guilt of the character. Tess and Elfride feel that they are not worthy of their lovers, thus they apply to themselves this ‘superstitious’ rule: the greater the happiness, the greater the despair. In other words, the more they have to enjoy, the more they have to lose. Tess will have to pay the debt for her moment of happiness with Angel. In the partnership between the Immanent Will and “Ananke” in Thomas Hardy’s fiction, we can consider that the Immanent Will pushes the two lovers towards each other, driven by an impulse. Tess was driven to him, entranced by his music and “He was driven towards her by every heave of his pulse.”⁹⁶ Ananke’s intervention consists in setting consciously an organized series of related ill-omens and accidents in Tess’s life, “build up like a tidal wave about to sweep her away.”⁹⁷

In spite of this apparent helplessness and the unfair necessary circumstances paving her way, Tess still have the courage to go on, to hope and most of all to refuse to surrender to Alec, even if it would have ‘saved’ her in the regard of social life washing her sin away with marital life:

“I have said so, often. It is true. I have never really and truly loved you, and I think I never can.” She added mournfully, “Perhaps, of all things, a lie on this thing would do the most good to me now; but I have honour enough left, little as ’tis, not to tell that lie. If I did love you I may have the best o’ causes for letting you know it. But I don’t.”⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 196.

⁹⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹⁷ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 279.

⁹⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 69.

She is aware of the dreary path she will have to walk because of her pride, nevertheless she *chooses* to fight back with her pride – the only thing left to her – the Fatum acting on her.

d. (Ill-)omens and Phenomenology

It is primordial to study how the hands of this embodied fate, of this Ananke displays “life’s little ironies” in both Tess’s and Elfride’s existences. Hardy’s observation of nature is so accurate and its depiction so powerful that he invented his own philosophical phenomenology. The definitions we can find in the history of philosophy – Kant’s, Hegel’s, Husserl’s – are very different. For Hardy, phenomenology is an ontological question which raises several issues. A phenomenon is an appearance, then it is difficult to distinguish reality from its phenomenological manifestation. Secondly, human beings can only perceive reality through these manifestations subjectively constituted by their consciousness. There is one reality but each individual perceives only a biased part influenced by his subjectivity.

Furthermore, ill-omens are part of Wessex’s phenomenology, itself part of the subjectivity of each character. When Tess or Elfride meet ill-omens on their way, it is only because the world they live in is their idea and the consciousness of their sin is overwhelming and mirrored at every corner of their subjective world.

The starting-point of Schopenhauer philosophy is the Kantian principle that man has no objective knowledge of the real nature of the empirical world, but that it is present in his mind only as a phenomenon of consciousness, determined and limited by the necessary forms of all intellectual processes: time, space, and causality. The recognition of the fact that ‘the world is my idea’ . . . what he knows is not the sun and the earth, but only the eye that sees the sun, and the hand that touches the earth.⁹⁹

As with Leibniz’s monades, reality is a composition of an infinity of mirrors. Each individual sees one object through only one mirror, one particular light: his subjectivity limited by “time, space and causality.” The universe exists only as long as a living being lives: “The universe itself only came into being for Tess on the particular day in the particular year in which she was born.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy’s Universe: A Study of a Poet’s Mind* (London, 1924), p. 18.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 135.

Tess's individual and subjective perception of the world is linked with her innermost feelings. Her consciousness of the bad events she experienced, her guilt because she is a sinner are imprinted in the landscape surrounding her, at every step she takes. On top of that, her embodied Ananke triggers memories from her past experience and symbolical objects from her landscape and let them interplay together within Tess's consciousness.

At times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her till 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. The midnight airs and gusts, moaning amongst the tightly-wrapped buds and bark of the winter twigs, were formulae of bitter reproach. A wet day was the expression of irremediable grief at her weakness in the mind of some vague ethical being whom she could not class definitely as the God of her childhood, and could not comprehend as any other. . . . This encompassment of her own characterization, based on shreds of convention, peopled by phantoms and voices antipathetic to her, was a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy . . . she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence.¹⁰¹

What Hardy calls "her whimsical fancy" is her consciousness, this subjective mixing of memories and experiences. It is important to remember that "the world is only a psychological phenomenon," that is why in his fiction the weather, the beauty or ugliness of the landscape is always linked with the mood, the present experiment of fear, misery or happiness of the heroine. We can see these 'phenomenon[a]' appear when Elfride's mind is disturbed by the visiting again of a place of courtship with her former lover with her new and God-like one. Added to this unsightly visit, she has to suffer the haunting presence of Mrs Jethaway, an even more vivid and melodramatic embodiment of Fate. The weather takes the colour of her change of mind, as if with a derisive intention it grows gloomier and creates a suffocating atmosphere:

Elfride's disturbance of mind was such that her light spirits of the foregoing four and twenty hours had entirely deserted her. The weather too had grown more gloomy, for though the showers of the morning had ceased, the sky was covered more closely than ever with dense leaden clouds.¹⁰²

e. Life's Little Ironies

At the very beginning of 'Phase the Fifth' in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* called 'The Woman Pays,' a dreadful change occurs. Tess has just finished confessing her

¹⁰¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), pp. 75-76.

¹⁰² Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 288.

sin to Angel. This time it is far deeper than the change of weather provoked by her mood.

the complexion even of external things seemed to suffer transmutation as her announcement progressed. The fire in the grate looked impish — demoniacally funny, as if it did not care in the least about her strait. The fender grinned idly, as if it too did not care. The light from the water-bottle was merely engaged in a chromatic problem. All material objects around announced their irresponsibility with terrible iteration. And yet nothing had changed since the moments when he had been kissing her; or rather, nothing in the substance of things. But the essence of things had changed.¹⁰³

The elements (fire and water) are suffering a “transmutation.” They do not reflect her mood but the essence of the very situation, her passion with Angel turning to ashes with the confession. The devilish lexicon shows that something is broken in the worshipping, and announces that her God-man will become her torturer. Nothing had changed “in the substance of things. But the essence of things had changed.” The fire is still a fire, the fender and the water-bottle have the same substance that is to say they remain exactly the same but they are perceived as different in the context. Nevertheless, we can find here an interference of the Immanent Will. As Brennecke says: “Probably the object (that is, all the objects, the entire objective world) is what I am; its essence is analogous to mine; the ultimate principle of the nature of all other beings is exactly what I find to be the ultimate principle of my own nature: Will.”¹⁰⁴ By their passionate love and until the confession, Tess and Angel used to make one. The essence of their love changes her to him and split them apart. A shadow has been cast in the previously bright room but their inner natures remain the same. The only problem is that Angel was mistaken about Tess, she does not fit into the myth he framed her in.

Human nature cannot change, and Alec also applies to the rule. The most outstanding ill-omen occurs in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* when the heroine meets an apparently transmuted Alec preaching in front of a crowd. He forces her to swear on a satanic stone calling it a “Holy Cross.”¹⁰⁵ She surrenders as she hopes to escape him. But soon after she learns from a local man the real symbolism of this stone:

¹⁰³ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 199.

¹⁰⁴ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind* (London, 1924), p. 27.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 272.

Tis a thing of ill-omen, Miss. It was put up in wuld times by the relations of a malefactor who was tortured there by nailing his hand to a post and afterwards hung. The bones lie underneath. They say he sold his soul to the devil, and that he walks at times.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, “far from being the remnant of a holy cross, the monument is what remains of a stone post erected by relatives of a criminal, a man who made a bargain with Satan, a man the authorities tortured by nailing his hand to the post then hanged and buried on the spot.”¹⁰⁷ The fact that she prayed on it will have the same impious and disastrous effects as her worshipping a man as a God. Maybe it is one of the action that will push her to become a murderess herself.

The peasant himself admits “tis a thing of ill-omen.” That means that ill-omens are part of a superstitious tradition, a folklore especially among peasantry. They are part of a collective experience and consciousness: the knowledge of them is transmitted through tales in the oral tradition. Recurring experiences of past persons meeting these ill-omens created a net of universal truths. The cock crowing in the afternoon of Tess and Angel’s wedding is considered as a very ill-omen. The assembly is thoroughly embarrassed by its presence because they are all aware of the belief that an afternoon crow . . . heralded impending sickness or death.”¹⁰⁸ Angel will *indeed* be very sick in Brazil and Tess will meet a tragic death. Once more, ill-omens do no lie.

But ill-omens are not the only signs dotted on the road by Ananke-the-consciousness. Her favourite game is to reiterate the same events or the same places so as to betray the triangular relationship to the second lover. Ananke’s actions are intertwined with the guilt of Tess and Elfride. Paradoxically in an unconscious way, they push themselves to the confession. A shade is cast in their happiness, the weather turns dark and the objects gloomy. Desperately and unconsciously, they repeat the same actions with their lovers. In the gap between the two different men she digs a place to breathe and prepare for the confession.

Finally, again in the field of repetitions, it is also possible to experiment déjà-vu or an impression of premonition, the impression that the present event will have a twin-event in the future. When Elfride almost falls from the Endelstow tower, she

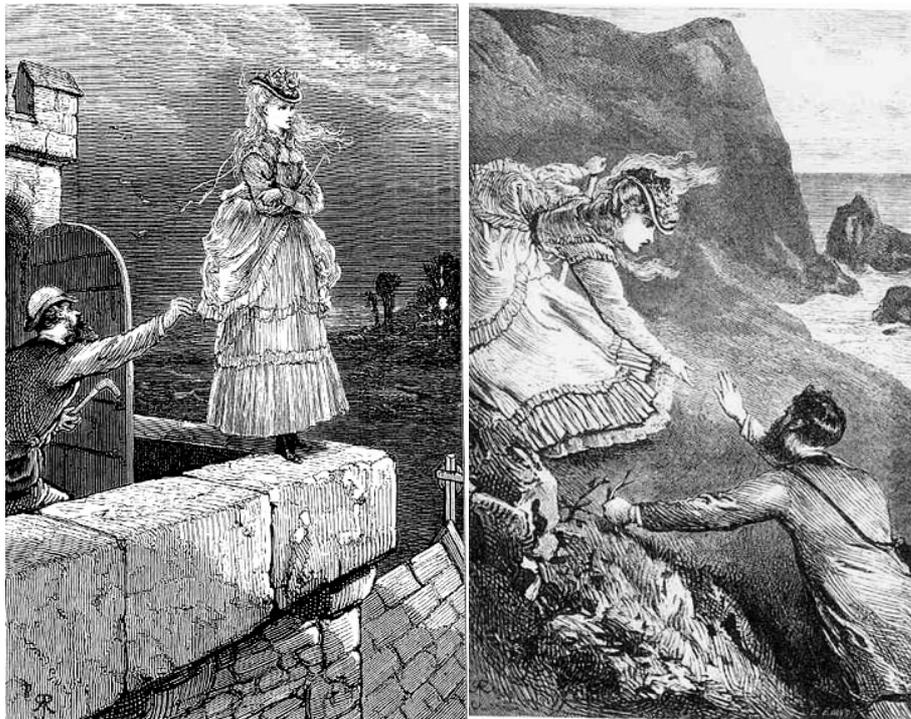
¹⁰⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 274.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 58.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 264.

becomes a kind of seer for an instant. She knows that it will occur again. And she's right, "something similar to that scene is again to be common to [them] both."¹⁰⁹ Except that the position will be reversed and not on the same spot. She will fall and as Knight will save her he will put himself in a very dangerous situation, hanging on a cliff at the door of Death.

On the two following engravings, the two falls in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* are mirrored. Destiny seems to be a looking-glass as the characters exchange their sides and the direction of the arm is reversed. On the first image, Knight tries to help from below an imprudent and sulky Elfride. On the other picture, there is more to lose for the two lovers and we can actually see picturized Knight's fall towards the verge of the precipice (death)



'Elfride's freak on Endelstow Tower' and 'Elfride's attempt to help Knight'

'You are familiar of course, as everybody is, with those strange sensations we sometimes have, that our life for the moment exists in duplicate.'

'That we have lived through that moment?'

'Or shall again. Well, I felt on the tower that something similar to that scene is again to be common to us both.'¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 166.

¹¹⁰ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 166.

4. Men: the Same and the Other

Repetition is one of the main features of the two novels. It can concern places, objects, actions, events, and most of the time they are related in a symbolical way such as only the heroine or the reader, sharing the experience of the past, can decipher. Millgate thinks that these parallelisms between tragic events are “sometimes garishly melodramatic”¹¹¹ and it is quite easy to see his point as Hardy is very much interested into life’s little ironies. Obviously, the melodramatic impression is part of fiction. Hardy never pretended to be a realistic. He is more an impressionist, painting little dots on his canvas that make sense with each other. He has “a method of constantly recalling crucial moments of the action in such a way as to keep those moments alive in the reader’s mind.”¹¹²

Casagrande’s theory in *Tess: Unorthodox Beauty* is that Alec’s violation of Tess is the “reenactment of the collision on the road to Casterbridge:”

In both instances Tess is less than fully alert when on the brink of an event full of consequence for her future. And in both cases she is brought to consciousness by a trespass of violent penetration – by the thrust of the mail cart’s pointed shaft into the breast of Prince, by Alec’s forcing himself on her.¹¹³

Hardy’s heroines feels when the symbolism of an action repeats itself and they even try to prevent it: “Elfride had still too lively a sense of the past to enjoy the idea of imitating to the letter peculiar actions she had lately gone through with another lover and other hopes,”¹¹⁴ but she cannot help it because Ananke is the one pulling the strings of ill-omens, life’s little ironies and catastrophes.

Repetition is the main curse within the truncated triangular relationship. After the reenactment of events, there is also the return to the same places, especially the same places of courtship. These places keep memories alive, they mirror them to the heroine who is overwhelmed by her guilt. Elfride has to visit again with Knight the

¹¹¹ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 68.

¹¹² Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist, ibid.*, p. 279.

¹¹³ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 52.

¹¹⁴ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 308.

places of her unavoidable love with Stephen and the experience reveals to be very painful: “they all entered the town, which smiled as sunny a smile upon Elfride as it had done between one and two years earlier, when she had entered it at precisely the same hour as the bride-elect of Stephen Smith.”¹¹⁵ Later, Knight will drag her in the fierce natural landscape where he plans to force her confession, knowing that this place will awaken in her past memories and guilt: “Let us go to the cliffs again, Elfride’ . . . That place was worse than gloomy, it was a perpetual reproach to her.”¹¹⁶

Dazzled by this confession about Stephen, Elfride ‘unwittingly’ confesses also about the first lover: “She unwittingly brings Knight to her trysting places with Smith – one of them also the tomb of Jethway.”¹¹⁷ Knight’s reaction shows the morbid scheme of the triangle-shaped relationship which adds in Elfride’s case a fourth angle: “What, a lover in the tomb and a lover on it?”¹¹⁸ Forced to the conclusion that she is a helpless victim of repetition, Elfride cannot help thinking that “some fatality must be hanging over her head”¹¹⁹ and indeed all of those are Ananke’s work.

Moreover, repetition also appears in men’s insistence or harassment, in both cases it tests the capacity of the heroine to resist or her easiness to surrender. On the one hand, Angel repeats his marriage proposal several times to Tess while the latter is fighting with her sin and her guilt and tries as hard as she can to refuse until she surrenders because of her passionate love for her God-man. On the other hand, Alec insistently asks for a kiss until she surrenders coldly because he had threatened her life with the mad race on the cart.

Finally, the chess games in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* represent a repetition at the core of the triangular relationship. Elfride plays the same game with her two different lovers. The outcome of the game reveals the actual position of the lovers in the couple. When she is playing with Stephen who is not familiar with chess game and plays awkwardly as a beginner, she let him win on purpose in a compassionate and perhaps a little bit condescending attitude as the “queen of the less” she is for him:

The game proceeded. Elfride played by rote; Stephen by thought. It was the cruellest thing to checkmate him after so much labour, she considered. What was she dishonest enough

¹¹⁵ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 296.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 307.

¹¹⁷ Peter Casagrande, *Unity in Hardy's Novels: Repetitive Symmetries* (Lawrence, 1982), p. 92.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 318.

¹¹⁹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 308.

to do in her compassion? To let him checkmate her. A second game followed; and being herself absolutely indifferent as to the result (her playing was above the average among women, and she knew it), she allowed him to give checkmate again. A final game, in which she adopted the Muzio gambit as her opening, was terminated by Elfride's victory at the twelfth move.¹²⁰

On the opposite, her game with Knight has a completely different nature. All the techniques she was proud to display with Stephen cannot help her against the cold intellectual who makes her suffer checkmate after checkmate and begins to turn her into "the slave of the greater."¹²¹ She finds herself completely powerless facing her heartless "enemy"¹²² and the following night she studies hard to challenge her opponent the day after. But after a very long and tense game, she ends 'checkmated' again. The omniscient narrator establishes the parallelism when the heroine, a fair player, suffers the checkmates: "Elfride, the difference between your condition of mind now, and when she purposely made blunders that Stephen Smith might win!"¹²³

a. Similarities between the Male Characters

Before Elfride "has come between [them] and ruin [them],"¹²⁴ Stephen and Knight were friends in an unbalanced master-disciple relationship. This strong friendship connecting the two lovers, as opposed to Angel and Alec who never meet, makes the confession of the triangular relationship even more deceitful. They both lose Elfride, but they also lose their friend. A double loss that makes them utterly alone. Only at the very end, when they learn about Elfride's death, they join in their common grief. They became a "we" again in the syntax: "Stephen and Knight — as if animated by one soul."¹²⁵ and also "And dead. Denied us both."¹²⁶ As the woman they loved is dead, they have no more reason to fight each other. They both mourn as past lovers coming too late.

¹²⁰ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 53.

¹²¹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 220.

¹²² Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 168.

¹²³ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 169.

¹²⁴ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 338.

¹²⁵ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 375.

¹²⁶ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 375.

An interesting point is that they kept the role they had in their friendship – Knight as the master and Stephen as the disciple – in their love relationship with Elfride. A sad view for Stephen when he discreetly watch the new couple from behind:

A strange concomitant of his misery was the singularity of its form. That his rival should be Knight, whom once upon a time he had adored as a man is very rarely adored by another in modern times, and whom he loved now, added deprecation to sorrow, and cynicism to both. Henry Knight, whose praises he had so frequently trumpeted in her ears, of whom she had actually been jealous, lest she herself should be lessened in Stephen's love on account of him, had probably won her the more easily by reason of those very praises which he had only ceased to utter by her command. She had ruled him like a queen in that matter, as in all others. Stephen could tell by her manner, brief as had been his observation of it, and by her words, few as they were, that her position was far different with Knight. That she looked up at and adored her new lover from below his pedestal, was even more perceptible than that she had smiled down upon Stephen from a height above him.¹²⁷



‘A Scene in the Belvedere’

On the one hand, Stephen feels betrayed by “his old friend and once-beloved exemplar,”¹²⁸ on the other hand Knight, arrogant as ever, is amazed and rather

¹²⁷ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006) p. 243.

¹²⁸ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 353.

disappointed when he finds out that his ‘rival’ is nothing more but “a mere disciple.”¹²⁹ “the rival — only Stephen! There was an anti-climax of absurdity.”¹³⁰ It would be easy to think that the unbalanced friendship between the two men signifies a clear-cut gap between the well-read master and the young lad listening to his lessons with a devoted admiration.

However, the lovers’ triangular relationship in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* are the Other but also the Same. Thomas Hardy is an anti-manicheist, his characters have nothing to do with the Victorian stock characters; they are far more complex. If Knight has an indisputable intellectual superiority, it contrasts a lot with “his agonized indecision and incompetence in the everyday business of life”¹³¹ as it is noticed by Millgate and as we can see in the almost burlesque scene of Knight’s purchase of earrings for Elfride. If Stephen is not able to ride a horse properly or to play chess with talent, he is far less awkward as a lover than his master is. He can bring love in an everyday life perspective whereas Knight’s “intellectual struggle between an established dedication to the intellectual life and a late-emerging and perhaps ambiguous sexuality is strongly brought out.”¹³² The man in his thirties never kissed a woman before Elfride. Driven by his ideals and theories, he was saving himself all this time for a girl as inexperienced as himself. Therefore, “Knight, as a lover, was more single-minded and far simpler than his friend Stephen, who in other capacities was shallow beside him.”¹³³

Stephen used to be the one imitating his master, trying to speak and think in the same way. But in which concerns love, Knight unconsciously takes the role of the imitator. According to René Girard whose study of Shakespeare’s *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (probably written between 1589 and 1593) echoes our study of the triangular relationships: “l’expérience traumatique du *double bind* mimétique, à la découverte simultanée par [Stephen] et par [Knight] du fait qu’au message habituel de l’amitié : *imite-moi* vient mystérieusement se superposer un: *ne m’imite pas* qui se réclame, lui aussi, de l’amitié.”¹³⁴ The intellectual imitation was encouraged by their unbalanced

¹²⁹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 353.

¹³⁰ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 361.

¹³¹ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 69.

¹³² Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist*, *ibid.*, p. 69.

¹³³ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 278.

¹³⁴ René Girard, *Shakespeare : Les Feux de l’envie* (Paris, 1990), p. 26.

relationship, but the imitation in love, the « convergence perpétuelle »¹³⁵ vers « un objet qu'ils ne peuvent ni ne souhaitent partager »¹³⁶ turns the two friends into rivals. Girard also underlines « la troublante proximité, voire l'identité, de l'amitié mimétique et de la haine mimétique »,¹³⁷ but the proximity is not so disconcerting if we consider than once the “selfishness of love and the cruelty of jealousy”¹³⁸ enter the long-lasting friendship, it is burnt to ashes in a second.

In the passage we have seen about Stephen watching from behind the trees the new couple, he notices the irony of the situation as he had himself introduced her to his ideal image of his master. “Henry Knight, whose praises he had so frequently trumpeted in her ears”¹³⁹ has become her new lover and her master, and Stephen is the “entremetteur involontaire”¹⁴⁰ who pushes them together. Angel is also an “entremetteur involontaire” but in a far less obvious manner. Alec had completely changed his life to become a preacher but when he meets Tess and she displays such a well-built and logical discourse he turns back to sin again and his animalistic passion for her is reawaken. After their encounter which was painful for Tess who was struggling with him to defend her absent husband body and soul, Alec – renewed as the sinner he was – is smirking: “That clever fellow little thought that, by telling her those things, he might be paving my way back to her!”¹⁴¹

b. Angel as an Unexpected Villain

Hardy's anti-manicheanistic characterization is even more relevant in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Inch by inch, he destroys the rules of Victorian fiction. Tess and Elfride are no Victorian dolls and most of all Alec and Angel are not clear-cut Good or Villain.

Alec would be a perfect Victorian villain if Angel were a perfect Victorian hero. Alec describes himself as a villain:

¹³⁵ René Girard, *Shakespeare : Les Feux de l'envie* (Paris, 1990), p. 19.

¹³⁶ René Girard, *Shakespeare : Les Feux de l'envie*, *ibid.*, p. 19.

¹³⁷ René Girard, *Shakespeare : Les Feux de l'envie*, *ibid.*, p. 30.

¹³⁸ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 365.

¹³⁹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 243.

¹⁴⁰ René Girard, *Shakespeare : Les Feux de l'envie* (Paris, 1990), p. 23.

¹⁴¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 284.

“I suppose I am a bad fellow — a damn bad fellow. I was born bad, and I have lived bad, and I shall die bad in all probability. But, upon my lost soul, I won’t be bad towards you again, Tess. And if certain circumstances should arise — you understand — in which you are in the least need, the least difficulty, send me one line, and you shall have by return whatever you require. . . . But all letters will be forwarded.”¹⁴²

He knows he is a bad person, he knows that it is in its nature and that his will acts according to it. But on the other hand, even though he committed a dreadful crime on Tess, he offers her a kind devotion and a promise of help and support. He displays some material goodness towards Tess to save her family from the ruin. His nice intentions towards her certainly hide the gloomier intention to make her his mistress. But on the other hand, he offers protection as a husband while her actual husband fled at the opposite of the world and abandoned her to her fate. There is no black and white discrepancy between the two men, there is good in the Bad, and bad in the Good; and their similarities prove that even Angel can be a fair villain.

Tess is madly and religiously in love with Angel despite of all the suffering he is inflicting upon her. But she hates Alec, the man who made her the less worthy woman to Angel. The irony is that Alec wants to protect her from her absent husband, wondering how he is able to abandon such a fine creature of Nature. He hurt her but he loves her while Angel is not sure if he still love her but is not going to hurt her even more:

“What! And leave you to that tyrant? I can see in his face what a churl he is.”

“He won’t hurt me. HE’S not in love with me. I can leave at Lady-Day.”

“Well, I have no right but to obey, I suppose. But — well, goodbye!”

Her defender, whom she dreaded more than her assailant.¹⁴³

Tess has to choose between a man she despises but who would protect her and her family or a man she loves but who despises her, between the “coarse animalism of Alec” or the “sterile intellectualism of Angel” which are in the eyes of Millgate “alike inhumane, life-denying, destructive of the individual.”¹⁴⁴ Moreover, her precarious social status make the decision even more difficult.

A few parallelisms can be drawn between the two men and their behaviour. For instance we can see one as on the one hand Alec begs Tess to be his partner in a

¹⁴² Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 68.

¹⁴³ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 279.

¹⁴⁴ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 278.

missionary enterprise while on the other hand Angel makes a blank proposal to Izz Huett to come with him in Brazil. They are both in equal in villainy, both taking advantage of women's weaknesses to master them. Another key moment shows that Angel is as able as Alec to display an inappropriate and condescending behaviour towards lower-class women. Indeed, during the dance in Marlott's field he approached the group of maidens "gallantly," that is, flirtatiously and patronizingly, and in the manner of Alec d'Urberville he asks archly, "Where are your partners, my dears?"¹⁴⁵ (compare Alec's remark to Tess, "What – my beauty – You here so late?" at the dance at Chase-borough shortly before he rapes her) . . . It is unlikely that he would have approached a group of women of his own or of a superior class in such a manner. Angels acts like a client at a brothel, choosing his partner, satisfying his need, regretting he had not enjoyed a different pattern, then hurrying off."¹⁴⁶ Drawing this comparison, Casagrande raises the curtain on Hardy's intention to put in the light the behaviour of high-class men.

But Hardy also like to play with the intellect of these well-educated men. He shows that no matter the extent of Knight's theoretical knowledge, he was underneath his "mere disciple" in love issues. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy reveals the monstrosity behind the Victorian mind and how his prejudices and preconceived ideas can be highly destructive. Angel is thus painted as a traitor and a hypocrite. As Knight, he is very good in theory and awkward and lost in practice. Moreover, there is a gap between the ideas he claims and how he actually acts:

Do I realize solemnly enough how utterly and irretrievably this little womanly thing is the creature of my good or bad faith and fortune? I think not. I think I could not, unless I were a woman myself. What I am in worldly estate, she is. What I become, she must become. What I cannot be, she cannot be. And shall I ever neglect her, or hurt her, or even forget to consider her? God forbid such a crime!¹⁴⁷

This strong resolution is sadly ironic because it is made just before Tess's confession and his decision to abandon her. He is actually committing the crime he reproved a few minutes or hours before.

¹⁴⁵ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 85.

¹⁴⁶ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty, ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), pp. 191-192.

His Christian name has to be distrusted; once more it is part of Hardy's play with life's little ironies. If Angel is an angel, Hardy makes him fall from his pedestal as a Lucifer. Even Tess, when she is out of strength by all the suffering she had to go through, recognizes his cruelty in an agonizing cry.

O why have you treated me so monstrously, Angel! I do not deserve it. I have thought it all over carefully, and I can never, never forgive you! You know that I did not intend to wrong you — why have you so wronged me? You are cruel, cruel indeed! I will try to forget you. It is all injustice I have received at your hands!¹⁴⁸

Millgate concludes on this point: "If Alec sacrifices Tess to his lust, Angel sacrifices her to his theory of womanly purity. The one obeys a natural law, the other a social law, and Hardy has no hesitation in assigning to the latter the greater blame."¹⁴⁹ Angel calls for "charity" just before Tess's confession but proves unable to act in a charitable way. His humanity fails him.

c. Play Second at Everything

We have studied in depths both men of both of the triangular relationships as the Other and the Same. Yet, the worst part for them is not exactly to discover a rival in the experience of a woman they thought to be pure and virginal, but to discover that they play second, that they are not the first man, not the Adam conquering his Eve. Even though Angel confessed an affair with a woman older than he was based on lust, the poor Tess feels relieved when she hears his confession, thinking "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." (John 8:3-7) and preparing to tell him her own shameful experience. Yet, Angel is unable to accept the sole idea that someone else is in possession of Tess's purity and virginity. He does not seem to consider that he entered willingly his love affair whereas Tess was abused by a man with sinful intentions. In these men's mind, purity is like a good they want to possess. They want a brand new one and not a second-hand. As dreadful as it is to put it in such bold terms, the issue at stake when they finally acknowledge that the woman they love was someone else's before, is that they are not pioneers.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 313.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 276.

Their reaction to this discovery are expressed differently. Stephen, feels melancholy and some regret: “He thought of the night when he had sat thereon with Elfride as his companion, and well remembered his regret that she had received, even unwillingly, earlier homage than his own;”¹⁵⁰ but he accepts to be with Elfride knowing her past suitor. Knight learns that the former suitor is his friend and when he is struggling with all his theories he learns that there was the young Felix Jethaway before him and he cannot deal with it so he leaves.

Knight is a man who finds himself second-hand at everything, first because he is a reviewer arguing on writers’ actual creative work. His work is laid on something already existent and he is not able to write something new, something ‘pure’ himself. As the vicar – Elfride’s father – says: “You see, critics go on writing, and are never corrected or argued with, and therefore are never improved.”¹⁵¹ But when Knight realizes that is he is second-hand in love, he bursts into a cry of despair: “What a poor mortal I am to play second fiddle in everything and to be deluded by fibs!”¹⁵²

5. The Initial Problem of the Virginal Myth

In Thomas Hardy’s notes we can find an interesting quote from Proust’s *A l’Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* (1919):

Peu de personnes comprennent le caractère purement subjectif du phénomène qu’est l’amour, et la sorte de création que c’est d’une personne supplémentaire, distincte de celle qui porte le même nom dans le monde, et dont la plupart des éléments sont tirés de nous-mêmes.¹⁵³

Indeed, love generates creation. We have previously seen that the God-man the woman worships shapes her as if she was made out of clay. Knight educates Elfride whose main preoccupation is to please Knight and to appear witty to him. Tess’s mind is “enslaved” by Angel’s. In this process of creation, “la plupart des éléments sont tirés de nous-mêmes” which means that men’s subjective idea of the perfect woman plays

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 235.

¹⁵¹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 151.

¹⁵² Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 312.

¹⁵³ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 248.

an important part. Therefore, love is also the “transmigration of the ideal beloved one”¹⁵⁴ (1 March 1897) and Stephen, Knight, and Angel all fancy “a pure woman.”

The irony is that they wallows in their naivety thinking that the woman they love is herself a naïve “fresh and virginal daughter of Nature.”¹⁵⁵ Angel is a proud master and owner of a beautiful untouched flower: “My Tess has, no doubt, almost as many experiences as that wild convolvulus out there on the garden hedge, that opened itself this morning for the first time.”¹⁵⁶ He is absolutely delighted by the supposed inexperience of his mate. As a parallel, Elfride is in the eyes of Knight another flower blooming innocently in her edenic garden:

To think that I should have discovered such an unseen flower down there in the West — to whom a man is as much as a multitude to some women, and a trip down the English Channel like a voyage round the world!¹⁵⁷

On top of thinking that Elfride is a sort of little bird in her golden cage completely unaware of the world and for whom seeing a man in her garden is a huge event, Knight with amusement and a condescension thinks that she is so unused to the words of courtship that she cannot even understand the difference between a ‘lover’ and an ‘admirer’:

For she might have had a lover, and never have cared in the least for him. She might have used the word improperly, and meant ‘admirer’ all the time. Of course she had been admired; and one man might have made his admiration more prominent than that of the rest — a very natural case.¹⁵⁸

They are so blinded by their ideal that they are not able to cope with reality, Knight at this point categorically refuses to accept Elfride confession about a former lover. He forces her into the frame he forged for her. Men are even ready to do everything, even denial in order to preserve this “touch of rarity”¹⁵⁹ they worship so much.

But despite their lovers’ wishes, Elfride and Tess had experimented the Blakean shift from Innocence to Experience. The first one because of her narcissism,

¹⁵⁴ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928*, *ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 106.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁵⁷ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 293.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 299.

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 110.

and the latter because she was the unfortunate victim of Fate-Ananke who put her on the path of a man with dangerous animalistic impulses.

The moment the curtain is raised on the 'reality' of the heroines, their lovers are split between a still working attraction and a new-born repulsion: "I HATE the fact that you have been caressed before"¹⁶⁰ says Knight to Elfride. The cold logical man also hates the fact that his ideal overpowered the real, his fantasy his reason.

The greatest distress Tess has to face when Angel abandons her is to realize that he is not able to love her for herself as he was in love with an idea of her. The woman whose love has "hardly a touch of earth"¹⁶¹ is mortified when she realizes that Angel is severely uncompromising:

I thought, Angel, that you loved me — me, my very self! If it is I you do love, O how can it be that you look and speak so? It frightens me! Having begun to love you, I love you for ever — in all changes, in all disgraces, because you are yourself. I ask no more. Then how can you, O my own husband, stop loving me?¹⁶²

Angel pretends that Tess is two different women. He cannot accept that the virginal myth he built her with is a lie. Tess is extremely disappointed about his attempt to turn her into a Victorian doll, and defends herself fiercely with this rhetorical question: "Am I such a — mere characterless toy — as to have no attraction in me, apart from — freshness?"¹⁶³

As Millgate concludes: "Neither Stephen nor Knight, in fact, wants Elfride for herself . . . Each seeks an adjunct to his own personality: Stephen a queen, Knight a maiden of spotless purity."¹⁶⁴ Lord Luxellian and paradoxically Alec are the only men wanting the heroines "in a direct and unequivocally sexual way."¹⁶⁵

Because "Angel Clare cannot see beauty in Tess's defects, cannot embrace the tragic, and because he sees only ugliness in her sexual impurity, he rejects her humanity, and thus her furious struggle to overcome her inescapable defects."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 311.

¹⁶¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 193.

¹⁶² Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 200.

¹⁶³ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 321.

¹⁶⁴ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 76.

¹⁶⁵ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist*, *ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁶⁶ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 47.

Angel's impossibility to forgive turns into cruelty as Tess is forced to go back to struggle utterly alone with an even more destitute life.

"I love you, but . . ." – such is the rhetoric of one for whom beauty dwells only where perfection lives."¹⁶⁷ Elfride and Tess dreaded the moment of confession because they knew the risks, because they were afraid to see disappointment or despise in the eyes of their God-man. But they could not have imagined that the shock of their lover will be due to a fake virginal myth they framed them in. Anyway, the confession endangers the perfect and balanced happiness they build with their lover.

6. The Confession: a Tragic Dilemma

Elfride had committed herself with two men, eloping for an aborted marriage with the second one, before she met and fell in love with Knight:

The elopement was now a spectre worse than the first, and, like the Spirit in Glenfinlas, it waxed taller with every attempt to lay it. Her natural honesty invited her to confide in Knight, and trust to his generosity for forgiveness: she knew also that as mere policy it would be better to tell him early if he was to be told at all. The longer her concealment the more difficult would be the revelation. But she put it off.¹⁶⁸

The 'mere policy' she is referring to corresponds, put blankly, to 'the sooner, the better.' Unfortunately, the fear that her past adventures will be discovered entertains her guilt which pushes her to be as devoted and disciplined to her God-man as possible. Kneeling at his feet with guilt and looking up at him in hope of "his generosity for forgiveness," she puts her fate in his hands and loves him incommensurably more for that.

As we have seen with Tess listening with delight to Angel's confession, the confession of the lover on his sins help to give courage to the heroine for her own confession. But this trick fails with Elfride who is faced by a 'two and thirty experienced mind' but a 'two and thirty' inexperienced boy:

The belief which had been her sheet-anchor in hoping for forgiveness had proved false. This account of the exceptional nature of his experience, a matter which would have set her

¹⁶⁷ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty*, (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 107.

¹⁶⁸ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), pp. 254-255.

rejoicing two years ago, chilled her now like a frost. . . .’ The man of two and thirty with the experienced mind warmed all over with a boy’s ingenuous shame as he made the confession.¹⁶⁹

Religiousness and superstition are also attached to the confession. Knight discovers a fair part of the truth before Elfride’s confession paradoxically through the grave of Felix Jethaway when the moonlight shine on it and from the past Mrs Jethaway who takes her revenge in her last letter, attached to a supplying and thus guilty note Elfride left for her: “The dead woman’s letter had a virtue in the accident of its juncture far beyond any it intrinsically exhibited. Circumstance lent to evil words a ring of pitiless justice echoing from the grave.”¹⁷⁰ On her side, Elfride who is not aware that Knight plans to trick her into a confession and who still feels overwhelmed about his revelation concerning his ideal of the virginal myth, expresses the paradoxical statement: “Honesty would be damnation then.”¹⁷¹ Once she is faced by her lover’s ideals, she knows she does not correspond to it.

Thereafter, the tragic dilemma of the confession appears with some weaknesses in language when Elfride and Tess try to refuse the ‘honour’ to be loved by these men so much worthy than they are.

‘Not Elfie to you, Mr. Knight. Oh, because I shall want them. There, I am silly, I know, to say that! But I have a reason for not taking them — now.’ She kept in the last word for a moment, intending to imply that her refusal was finite, but somehow the word slipped out, and undid all the rest.¹⁷²

Elfride had struggled a lot to attract Knight’s attention and now that he is madly in love with her she is stricken by a new blow of guilt and tries to push him back. But the sweetness of this love she hoped for long and the earrings which serve her narcissism overpower her honesty.

[...] Though Tess kept repeating to herself, “I can never be his wife,” the words were vain. A proof of her weakness lay in the very utterance of what calm strength would not have taken the trouble to formulate. Every sound of his voice beginning on the old subject stirred her with a terrifying bliss, and she coveted the recantation she feared.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 291.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 331.

¹⁷¹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 336.

¹⁷² Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 194.

¹⁷³ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 159.

Tess's endurance is put to the test. Angel is repeatedly asking her to marry him. She cannot indefinitely refuse without giving an explanation – a confession – at one point. She surrenders saying 'yes,' choosing to bet on their passionate love.

Eventually, language can be blunder and then force the confession as when Knight attempts to kiss Elfride by the river:

'Ah, we must be careful! I lost the other earring doing like this.'
No sooner did she realise the significant words than a troubled look passed across her face, and she shut her lips as if to keep them back.¹⁷⁴

Stephen indeed had "done the same" by the cliff and had lost Elfride's earring during the process.

7. Distance and Desire

The confession in both *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* always occurs after the moment of possession, the climax of love between the two lovers. It first generates estrangement because the lover does not recognize anymore the woman he possesses. Secondly, it digs a physical and spatial gap between the two lovers. We will see in this final part the different steps of the "distance and desire" (J. Hillis Miller) dance: from estrangement and displacement, to the failure of the relationship and regret.

To J. Hillis Miller, the ascending movement of falling *into* love presupposes soon after the moment of possession falling *out of* love.

a. From Displacement to Estrangement

"Love frequently dies of time alone — much more frequently of displacement. With Elfride Swancourt, a powerful reason why the displacement should be successful

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 280.

was that the new-comer was a greater man than the first.”¹⁷⁵ Stephen’s ‘displacement’ was noble. He wanted to make himself a position in India in order to come back worthy of Elfride and be able to marry her. Their secret correspondence began with romantic stereotypes and the constant longing to meet again the other. Then Elfride left her comfortable nest and was introduced to London society, she acquires new experiences exponentially and comes to the conclusion that her love for Stephen was childish, Millgate rightly calls it “her girlish infatuation for Stephen.”¹⁷⁶ Stephen’s displacement gave her time to evolve and to meet “a greater man than the first.”

If love does die with distance, J. H. Miller’s ambiguous assertion is also true: “With contact love dies.”¹⁷⁷ He quotes Proust who is very relevant for our analysis: « Le désir s’élève, se satisfait, disparaît – et c’est tout. Ainsi la jeune fille qu’on épouse n’est pas celle dont on est tombé amoureux. »¹⁷⁸ But in the case of Angel and Tess, desire disappears before it can be satisfied as the confession split them apart. For J. H. Miller, Hardy’s characters are desperately longing for a Godlike-figure which could give order and meaning to themselves and to their world. When they fall in love they think they have found in the loved one a power of this sort. Their disillusion when they obtain possession of what they have so intensely desired is a sort of negative religious experience. Desire is perpetually frustrated in Thomas Hardy’s fiction and poetry. If they succeed to possess, they are doomed to be disappointed over and over, either by their failure to obtain the women they love or by the discovery that they does not have what they want when they possess them:

When I possess a woman I love the distance between us disappears. I then stand in the same place as she, in that spot which has seemed the spiritual center of the world, with a magic power to transfigure everything, myself included. As soon as I reach this place, the ordering radiance my lady has shed on the world vanishes in an instant. I find myself back in a universe infinitely wide in space and time, a universe I view again with detached objectivity. No field of force orients this desolate expanse as to high and low, great or small, good or bad. Now I can see clearly that the world is a chaotic mass of objects and people driven in random motion by the impulses of a blind energy working within them.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 252.

¹⁷⁶ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 74.

¹⁷⁷ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist*, *ibid.*, p. 176.

¹⁷⁸ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 177. [Miller’s translation: “Desire appears, satisfies itself, disappears – and that’s all. Thus the girl one marries is not the girl with whom one falls in love”].

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire*, *ibid.*, p. 180.

b. Distance because of Another Man Interfering in the Relationship

Thereafter, the more obvious reason for separation is because there is another man in the middle of the triangular relationship. As if in a tragic play, the two lovers cannot fulfil their love with this rival figure in the middle. This third figure is usually the first lover, a living reminder of Tess's sin and Elfride's elopement. In a fairy tale, he would be a dragon or an immense wall covered in thorns. Alec is also similar to the snake disturbing Adam and Eve's peace in Eden. He takes advantage of the missing husband to claim his spot:

I came Tess, to say that I don't like you to be working like this, and I have come on purpose for you. You say you have a husband who is not I. Well, perhaps you have; but I've never seen him, and you've not told me his name; and altogether he seems rather a mythological personage. However, even if you have one, I think I am nearer to you than he is. I, at any rate, try to help you out of trouble, but he does not, bless his invisible face!¹⁸⁰

He plays on his closeness to her as opposed to the far distance of the "mythological personage" her husband is to make his point. Even though Tess does not surrender yet, she begins to feel that there is no escape to her situation. Her happiness with Angel seems to have been nothing but a dream and she is not sure her husband will ever come back. Compassionating with their friend's hardship, Liz and Mariann send Angel a message of distress which underlies his cruelty and implies that he has to come and rescue her before it is too late:

HONOUR'D SIR— Look to your Wife if you do love her as much as she do love you. For she is sore put to by an Enemy in the shape of a Friend. Sir, there is one near her who ought to be Away. A woman should not be try'd beyond her Strength, and continual dropping will wear away a Stone — ay, more — a Diamond. FROM TWO WELL-WISHERS.¹⁸¹

But Hardy's heroines are destined "to be failed by all the men on whom [they depend]."¹⁸² When the lovers change their mind and come back, it is too late. Elfride had married a suitable man to please her family and apologize to them for her past misbehaviour, and she dies out of grief. When Stephen and Knight finally meet her, she had "shut her bright blue eyes for ever. . . . 'Come away,' he said, in a broken voice.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 290.

¹⁸¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 321.

¹⁸² Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 75.

‘We have no right to be there. Another stands before us — nearer to her than we!’¹⁸³
She is dead and Lord Luxellian is the mourner.

Death has the paradoxical power to renew love. As it puts an infinite distance between lover and beloved, it raises love to a measureless intensity of longing. Just as Thomas Hardy, after years of estrangement with his wife Emma, he realizes how much he loved her when she dies and writes poem after poem about her to recall their happiness and fix it in time.

Geographical distance also have the capacity to create love. The corporeal absence of the woman generates a phenomenon of sublimation in the memory of the lover. Thus, “Stephen fell in love with Elfride by looking at her: Knight by ceasing to do so.”¹⁸⁴ and “Not till they were parted, and she had become sublimated in his memory, could he be said to have even attentively regarded her.”¹⁸⁵ Men fall in love with an idea of the woman, the virginal myth is their fantasy. The reality and fleshiness of the woman is defective, it does not worth Stephen’s sketching Elfride as a saint or Angel’s contemplating Tess’s beauty in peasantry’s bucolic tasks from a distance.

Yet, a happy and enduring love is only possible if Hardy’s characters accept the fact that the persons they love are fallible human beings, if they match their aspirations and ideas with reality. Only Tess seems to be higher than these human defects, her love is pure and staunch. She has indeed the power of “a love that can transcends even the divine love.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 380.

¹⁸⁴ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 189.

¹⁸⁶ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 73.

II. A Parodic Christian Pattern

Tess's love "can transcend even the divine love,"¹⁸⁷ women worship their lovers as Gods and these men idealize the heroines as part of the virginal myth. In the two novels, as well as in some of the poems, we can find a parodic Christian pattern. 'Parodic' is to be understood etymologically speaking as the ode along the ode. It is not a caricature, but an ironic or subversive imitation of an existing model. We will see in Thomas Hardy's work a pattern similar to Dante's *Divine Comedy*¹⁸⁸ but coloured by the modern pilgrimage due to the loss of faith contemporary to his period. Unlike Dante, we will not do a linear journey. Paradise, Purgatory and Hell are dotted in an impressionistic way in the novels and poems, it is not a clear-cut progressive path from one place to another, but an impossible struggle to obtain and then maintain happiness.

1. Eden and Happiness

When Tess and Angel fall in love in Talboothays, as readers we forget that we are reading a tragic novel and surprisingly find ourselves in a pastoral. The weather is sunny and the peasants lead a quiet life according to the rhythm of nature. Tess had just left Hell and Alec's unforgivable act towards her, in comparison "the new air was clear, bracing, ethereal"¹⁸⁹ and open to new possibilities. She is more cheerful and hopeful and meets again the good-looking young man from Marlott's field and this time he notices her back. This Edenic place gives them "a feeling of isolation, as if they were Adam and Eve."¹⁹⁰ Tess feels obviously guilty about her sin but proves unable to confess. Their love is so passionate and pure that she cannot resolve to spoil it.

¹⁸⁷ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 73.

¹⁸⁸ Dante Alighieri's epic poem presents a pilgrim's journey through the different circles of Hell, Purgatory until he reaches Paradise and his beloved Beatrice.

¹⁸⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 90.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 115.

Unfortunately, Angel's training comes to an end and he has to plan his future. At this turning point, he urges Tess to marry him. The lie cannot be hidden longer because of the social pressure of marriage. She knows she has no choice but to confess, she knew from the beginning that this great happiness will finish. We can see a symbolical exit from Eden when Angel's makes a gloomy comparison between Tess and a snake: "She was yawning, and he saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake's."¹⁹¹

We can wonder at this stage why in this tragic novel is Tess able to experiment happiness? The answer is as paradoxical as it is simple. If 'Ananke' allowed her to know a great love it was only part of the plan. The greater the happiness, the greater the suffering when it burns to ashes. And Tess superstitiously anticipated the end: "All this good fortune may be scourged out of me afterwards by a lot of ill. That's how Heaven mostly does."¹⁹² If Tess keeps talking about 'Heaven' – a still very general term – she thinks that it is a malevolent force punishing its poor creatures. The verb 'scourged out' she uses is very violent, it expresses an idea of atrocious pain she will have to endure. We have seen that Tess is courageous to resist Alec for pride, but she is also courageous here to be prepared to suffering and still live every second of her forbidden love. Because of all the suffering she has to go through, Tess is a saint. Her love transcends the divine love, and she can endure extreme suffering.

We can establish a parallelism with Knight's discovery of Stephen's drawings: "All the feminine saints had one type of feature. . . . That profile — how well Knight knew that profile!"¹⁹³ Stephen has drawn saints with the features of his beloved woman, Elfride. If she does not exactly fit the role for a saint because of her narcissism and sometimes loose decisions, she risked her life to save Knight: "He was saved, and by Elfride."¹⁹⁴ The narrator uses the free indirect speech to give more impact to this sentence with several potential implications. Knight had a moment of being on the cliff, he was literally on the verge of death, hanging to life with all his strength while he was confronted with Nature's immenseness and in comparison with his own littleness. The sentence sounds very formal with its binary rhythm so it is possible to

¹⁹¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 148.

¹⁹² Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁹³ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 355.

¹⁹⁴ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 220.

find in it a symbolical redemption. The intellectual realizes how vain his theories are and that he has to improve his knowledge of every-day life. Moreover, no God came to his rescue, but the young woman he loves.

2. Shaking their Fist at their Creator

A doubt is raised about God's existence. If a transcendent power exists what is it doing? Why does it inflict such horrors on men? Or why does not he come to their rescue?

Tess's disbelief in God comes gradually and in the end, at a climax of suffering and injustice, she shakes her fist at her creator, as in Gosse famous question: "What has Providence done to Mr. Hardy that he should rise up in the arable land of Wessex and shake his fist at his Creator?"¹⁹⁵ She lays the emphasis on the nonsense of Christian religion, especially on the absurdity of its rules: "The greater the sinner the greater the saint; it was not necessary to dive far into Christian history to discover that. . . . He who had wrought her undoing was now on the side of the Spirit, while she remained unregenerate."¹⁹⁶ Alec who sinned deflowering her is giving a chance of redemption, while his victim cannot even be forgiven by her husband. She shows Alec his hypocrisy shaking her fist at him:

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!¹⁹⁷

Hardy's inspiration for this passage certainly comes from his own experience as an observer of the Victorian mores. Tess faced in her experience a pastor refusing to baptize her bastard child for social conventions so she "ordains herself a man of the cloth, a parson, an adult man invested – by herself and not by a bishop – with the power

¹⁹⁵ Edmund Gosse in a review of *Jude the Obscure*.

¹⁹⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 268.

¹⁹⁷ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 271.

to baptize. The purity she cannot offer Angel she confers on her son.”¹⁹⁸ The verdict of the efficiency of this baptism is to be found in her brothers and sisters who witness the scene, impressed and overwhelmed by their sister, they look at her with fascination and reverence: “She did not look like Sissy to them now, but as a being large, towering, and awful – a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common.”¹⁹⁹

3. The Disappearance of God and the Loss of Faith

The first Tess shakes only echoes the void. The Victorian Era was a time of progress, and its worst discovery was the disappearance of God. If he had ever existed, he is not here anymore. He abandons his creatures to “Time the Cynic”²⁰⁰ and the laws of Necessity, as if out of boredom. The poem ‘The Bedridden Peasant to an Unknowing God’²⁰¹ shows a peasant addressing an “Unknowing God” who is not conscious of the pain his departure inflicted on humankind:

But Thou, Lord, giv'st us men our clay
In helpless bondage thus
To Time and Chance, and seem'st straightway
To think no more of us! (ll. 9-12)

Little by little, human beings awake to the terrible truth. ‘The Church-Builder’²⁰² realizes that all his efforts were vain. There is no God left to appreciate his gifts, and neither to listen to his prayers.

My gift to God seems futile, quite;
The world moves as erstwhile;
And powerful wrong on feeble right
Tramples in olden style.
My faith burns down,
I see no crown (ll. 50-55)

¹⁹⁸ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 73.

¹⁹⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 84.

²⁰⁰ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 253.

²⁰¹ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 110.

²⁰² Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems, ibid.*, pp. 153-155.

Men's faith "burns down" but they have to keep living and try to make the best of the ashes. They bury them in 'The Graveyard of Dead Creeds,'²⁰³ trying to find another way to build a new fire, to make life tolerable again.

'Out of us cometh an heir, that shall disclose
New promise!' cried they. 'And the caustic cup

'We ignorantly upheld to men, be filled
With draughts more pure than those we ever distilled,
That shall make tolerable to sentient seers
The melancholy marching of the years.' (ll.12-16)

With the enjambment at the end of the stanza on "caustic cup," Hardy plays with the typography of the poem to create an actual draught filling the cup. Moreover, the spectres of "deceased Catholicos" (ll. 5-6) awaken from their grave with a new idea, a "new promise"; a new lie. They try to help men enduring life making them drink false hopes out of the "caustic cup" during the Mass. Hardy is very sardonic towards these lies: "It is so easy nowadays to call any force above or under the sky by the name of 'God' – and so pass as orthodox cheaply, and fill the pocket!"²⁰⁴ (15 August 1897) He understands but reproves humans' need to "fill the pocket" or the "caustic cup" by all means with a form of transcendence.

Commenting this poem, Zietlow says: "History may be moving toward humane fulfilment, it may be deteriorating into hopelessness, or it may be plodding on in endless, monotonous defeat and suffering."²⁰⁵ His last supposition seems to be the most probable: "the melancholy marching of the years" (l.16) will be an endless succession of lies and grief at the discovery. But in the Victorian Era, human beings stop this nonsensical wandering and definitively kill their God.

4. God is a Man-Made Invention

"A "madman" in one of Friedrich Nietzsche's books²⁰⁶ famously declares, "God is dead! . . . We are all his murderers." A generation of writers – stunned by that

²⁰³ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems*, (London, 2006), p. 673.

²⁰⁴ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 72.

²⁰⁵ Paul Zietlow, *Moments of Vision: The Poetry of Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 125.

²⁰⁶ In Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* (1882).

assertion – then tried to grapple with its terrifying implications.”²⁰⁷ Indeed, “the death or disappearance of God left humanity without an agent capable of releasing it from guilt.” And left unanswered his “agonized questions about solace and redemption.”²⁰⁸

Man became the madman at the moment he was overwhelmed by consciousness. More precisely, when he realized that he had to suffer consciousness while the world was ruled by an unconscious and immanent Will. “God is killed by the attainment of that all-embracing vision which makes man a seer.”²⁰⁹ God used to be a fake reassurance against uncertainty and anxiety, but the seer cannot tell himself lies.

'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? (ll. 21-24) . . .

'And, tricked by our own early dream
And need of solace, we grew self-deceived,²¹⁰ (ll. 29-30)

Religion and the God at his summit are man-made. Christopher Lane quotes Feuerbach and Freud on this matter:

Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity* (1841), the powerful philosophical treatise which argues that God is a projection of humanity’s need for recognition, forgiveness, and love. ‘Religion is human nature reflected, mirrored in itself,’ Feuerbach maintained, and thus ‘God is the mirror of man.’ In short, religion is man-made.²¹¹

Thereafter, according to Freud, religion is “a man-made response to spiritual and anthropological needs.”²¹²

For Hardy, the only way to live a pleasant and happy life is to abandon the search for meaning and sign in a transcendent force. Man has to be aware of death, and embrace it as Tess does in Stonehenge when the moment comes. It is the only way for man to defy mortality.

²⁰⁷ Christopher Lane, *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty* (New Haven, 2012), p. 136.

²⁰⁸ Christopher Lane, *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty*, *ibid.*, p. 137.

²⁰⁹ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 19.

²¹⁰ ‘God’s Funeral’ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 297-299.

²¹¹ Christopher Lane, *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty* (New Haven, 2012), p. 120.

²¹² Christopher Lane, *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty*, *ibid.*, p. 160.

Eventually, man's misery is not to be found in a metaphysical void. "Hardy insisted on the human causes for Tess's loss of happiness, and particularly upon the Durbeyfields' 'reckless acquiescence in chance' (XXXVII) and their willingness to blame 'nater', 'God' or accident for any mishap. . . ." ²¹³

5. The Belief in Determinism

Determinism permits to dismiss bad events or accidents and put them under 'nater' or 'God's' responsibility. Similarly, when a happy event occurs, one has to be grateful to Providence. If they do not pray directly a God, they superstitiously beg Fortune to be clement with them. When a positive event happens, it feels like winning at a lottery: "I tried her fate in the *Fortune-Teller*, and it brought out that very thing! . . . You should ha' seen how pretty she looked today; her skin is as sumple as a duchess's." ²¹⁴ Tess's mother is excited by the prediction she finds about her daughter in the '*Fortune-Teller*' which proves to be true in the present. But when she says "it brought out that very thing!" it is rather ambiguous. It shows that fortune-telling is a very vague and treacherous activity and that anything can "fill the pocket" and be "that very thing." The connection she makes between the predication and the actual event is part of the human concern to explain all things, to trace back and forth the string the Parcae (or Fates) are weaving for them. Her use of the word 'duchess' to describe Tess's beauty is also far from being innocent as they had just discovered aristocratic relatives. The lexicon is part of the false prediction.

Another form of determinism is to be found in Mr Clare, Angel's father, a very religious man who believes that a good conduct generates a good and happy life. "His creed of determinism was such that it almost amounted to a vice, and quite amounted, on its negative side, to a renunciative philosophy which had cousinship with that of Schopenhauer and Leopardi." ²¹⁵ He lives a very ascetic and tidy life, following the rhythm of the Christian liturgy. Ironically enough, Angel uses his father belief in determinism to persuade him to accept Tess: choosing his vocabulary very carefully

²¹³ Roy Morrell, *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way* (Kuala Lumpur, 1965), p. 41.

²¹⁴ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 21.

²¹⁵ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 138.

“He said that fate or Providence had thrown in his way a woman.”²¹⁶ Once more, the free indirect speech reveals to the reader the subterfuge.

Determinism can be used to make up for one’s past misdeeds, to prove oneself through false predictions that there is an inherent logic, or to trick a determinist. However, in the end the belief in determinism is nothing but a veil hiding a dreadful truth.

Man’s misery lies in himself, in his very nature as we have seen with the Modern *Fatum*. Therefore,

This is the excellent foppery of the world that when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behavior—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars, as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and traitors by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence, and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting-on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star!²¹⁷ (Act I, Scene 2, ll. 111-124)

Hardy denies the existence of Providence. With the Immanent Will in charge, no superior Being or Force will interfere and change the course of things for us. The ones believing in determinism are weak. They let things drift because they do not want to be responsible for their acts.

Human beings are ‘determined’ by their own nature. “As the action of man is irresistibly determined by his character and the motives operating upon it, no real change is possible for him, and nothing of what theologians have termed conversion or regeneration has any place in the system of Schopenhauer.”²¹⁸ Our heroines are driven by their passions for their man-God and their guilt as they are lying to them. The dreadful repetitions which occur throughout the novels are objects of their subjectivity. Hardy let the reader see through their eyes, through their subjectivity how their environment and the objects surrounding them are invested with this similar subjective energy. They are ‘determined’ because they are too much involved in the world, to such an extent that they extend their subjectivity to their entire experience. There is a potential influence of knowledge upon their action coming from

²¹⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 143.

²¹⁷ William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (New York, 2008), p.17.

²¹⁸ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy’s Universe: A Study of a Poet’s Mind* (London, 1924), p. 91.

superstition, tradition or a repeated experience; but the essential nature and character is unchangeable. As Brennecke puts it:

remorse is only an indication of improved knowledge, and never a symptom of a changed will. Man can never regret what he has willed, but only what he has done; for completer knowledge may teach him that he was led by false conceptions, and committed deeds that were not in conformity with his essential nature. Thus remorse springs not from a change of will, but from a change of knowledge.²¹⁹

6. Hell

The inexperience of Tess, or what could be called her 'lack of knowledge' is what pushes her in the nets of the "whoremaster man," Alec as a figure of Pluto.

A parodic Christian pattern worthy of Dante is rooted in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. However, the path from the Edenic garden, through Hell and Purgatory is far from being linear. It is more a curvy maze-road going back and forth, ascending and descending into a deconstructed and hazardous wandering.

If Hardy considerably modifies the original pattern, he also presents Hell as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, more particularly as in the myth of the rapt of Proserpina (Persephone for the Greeks) by Pluto (Hades) (Book V). The myth happens in Sicily, the island which covers the threatening giant Typhoeus who has Etna on his head and shakes the earth in an attempt to free himself. Pluto fears that the enterprise will succeed and let the daylight enter his world and terrorize the shades bellow. Thus, he goes on a visit in Sicily to verify that the giant has no chance of escape. Meanwhile, Venus takes advantage of his being out of the underworld to curse him to love in order to extend her kingdom which is already on lands and seas. Ambitious, she also thwarts Ceres's daughter plan to remain a virgin turning her into her uncle Pluto's target. Proserpina is described playing and gathering flowers in a sort of Edenic garden, filling her basket and bosom with them.

Then the actual rapt scene is described very vividly in two translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* line "usque adeo est properatus amor"²²⁰ (Book V, l. 396):

²¹⁹ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind* (London, 1924), pp.92-93.

²²⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1st volume, trans. Frank Justus Miller (London, 1960), p. 264.

“almost in one act did Pluto see and love and carry her away: so precipitate was his love”²²¹ and:

As if at once glance, Death
Had caught her up, delighted at his choice,
Had ravished her, so quick was his desire²²²



Bernini, *The Abduction of Proserpina* (1621-1622)²²³

Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) transformed the myth and this peculiar passage into a sculpture in 1621-1622 for Scipion Borghese. He represented very well the “Rapt of Proserpina” by all the movements, the lines and the dichotomy between the two characters. On the left, there is Hades, represented with his crown, his three-headed dog Cerberus behind and his sceptre which had realistically fallen on the ground during the struggle. The first striking feature is the contrast between the musculature of Pluto whose legs are firmly standing on the ground with a good balance

²²¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1st volume, trans. Frank Justus Miller (London, 1960), p. 265.

²²² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Horace Gregory (New York, 1958), p. 151.

²²³ Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Rapt of Proserpina*, 1621-1622, marble, 225 cm, Villa Borghese, Roma.

and the womanly roundness of Proserpina raised in the air. She struggles fiercely turning her body from her kidnapper and trying to distance herself from him by pushing his head away with her hand.

Unfortunately, the grasp of Pluto on his victim is very firm as we can see his hands imprinted and sinking in Proserpina's flesh. In the myth, Proserpina tries to resist: she tears her tunic apart and loses her flowers with grief during the process. Ceres is desperate to see her daughter again. She makes a bargain with Jupiter: she can have her daughter back only if no food from the Tartarus lands touches the lips of her daughter. Unfortunately, Proserpina eats seven seeds of a fruit. As a consequence, she will have to stay half of the year with her husband and the rest with her mother.

A lot of parallelisms can be established between the myth and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. First of all, Tess's and Proserpina's virginal aspects are very similar. They are pure products of nature and their innocence and inexperience are part of their charm. Moreover, for both of them purity is their drama. And Alec's observation of Tess could be comparable to Pluto looking at Proserpina for the first time:

He watched her pretty and unconscious munching through the skeins of smoke that pervaded the tent, and Tess Durbeyfield did not divine, as she innocently looked down at the roses in her bosom, that there behind the blue narcotic haze was potentially the "tragic mischief" of her drama — one who stood fair to be the blood-red ray in the spectrum of her young life. She had an attribute which amounted to a disadvantage just now; and it was this that caused Alec d'Urberville's eyes to rivet themselves upon her. It was a luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was.²²⁴

Alec is both the figure of Pluto and of the Christian Evil as he appears twice in a very dramatic way, behind the smoke and the flames as a demonic figure. In the passage above, he is a predator looking at his innocent prey with lust. Hardy uses an interesting adverb in "Tess Durbeyfield did not divine . . . that there behind the blue narcotic haze was *potentially* [my italics] the 'tragic mischief' of her drama." It confirms that human will coexists with the great Immanent Will. Humans are driven from one catastrophe to the other because of their inner passions and the choices they make, and because of their resulting mistakes. Tess's reluctance to claim kin with the d'Urbervilles disappeared with her guilt for the death of the horse Prince. Then, when she finally meets the d'Urbervilles it is unfortunately the son; on top of that as an inexperienced girl she proves unable to decipher his bad intentions towards her.

²²⁴ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), pp. 34-35.

Another similarity she shares with Proserpina is the picking of the flowers. But if the goddess gathers them by herself in her basket and bosom, Alec is the one covering Tess in flowers while the latter timidly tries to push him away until “a thorn of the rose remaining in her breast accidentally pricked her chin.”²²⁵ Tess finds herself covered in roses as a sort of mock-goddess of nature and also a mock bride. This one thorn in addition to the strawberries Alec forces into her basket and her mouth are similar to Proserpina eating Pluto’s fruit seeds and doomed to stay with him. Moreover, this thorn which could be a fairy-tale leitmotiv almost literally instils the sin in Tess’s blood. The entire scene of their first meeting is full of ill-omens which foreshadow the disaster of her marriage with Angel and the fact that she will stay until the end the “property,” the “legitimate wife” of Alec-Pluto. He will never cease to hunt her down, recalling her that he was “[her] master once”²²⁶ and haunting her as a demonic figure as if this first and unique thorn was a bargain with the devil:

The fire flared up, and she beheld the face of d’Urberville. The unexpectedness of his presence, the grotesqueness of his appearance in a gathered smockfrock, such as was now worn only by the most old-fashioned of the labourers, had a ghastly comicality that chilled her as to its bearing. D’Urberville emitted a low long laugh.²²⁷

Again, the apparition of Alec behind smoke is very theatrical, it is quite similar to the Middle-Ages ‘morality play’²²⁸ where he would have impersonated the devil. Eventually, after she decides to accept the proposition of the d’Urbervilles on her second visit, Alec fetches her in his cart and his mad race is worthy of Pluto and his horses, especially because the way down to the d’Urbervilles’ place looks like a catabasis: “Thus they reached the verge of an incline down which the road stretched in a long straight descent of nearly a mile.”²²⁹ At this point, because Tess made this decision it is as if the earth was closing above her head as in the myth. She doomed herself to the underworld and more explicitly to a life comparable to this mad race where death is risked at each curve of the road.

²²⁵ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 36.

²²⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 291.

²²⁷ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 306.

²²⁸ Morality plays or Moralities are part of the popular Medieval drama of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. They consisted in actors performing abstract values such as vices and virtues in the streets. The aim was to enforce a moral lesson to the audience.

²²⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 44.

“The close proximity of the Shadow of Death”²³⁰ is omnipresent in Hardy’s world. The imminent mortality of human existence is a hovering presence above their heads. None of the “impressionable peasant” and the “pachydermatous king”²³¹ are spared. No matter how great a love or a beauty, every additional day in life is a step closer to the grave:

For Thou, to make my fall more great,
Didst lift me up on high, ...
My days, just hastening to their end,
Are like an evening shade;
My beauty doth, like wither’s grass,
With waning lustre fade.²³²

Elfride quotes Psalm 102 which is suggestive of the way in which each of the three main characters is in some sense elevated by love only to suffer a fall. These lines also foreshadow Elfride’s impending death. One of the things Elfride dreads the most is to imagine her beauty fades, but she knows she cannot stop the process.

Besides, the poem ‘Heiress and Architect’²³³ is probably one of the most cynical from Thomas Hardy. As in ‘The Convergence of the Twain’²³⁴ it is a poem about vanity. A wealthy young lady hires an architect to build a place worthy of a fairy-tale. But the stern architect makes her face her vanity and she little by little lowers her negotiations. When she asks him for a little chamber “Of reds and purples, for a Paradise / Wherein my Love may greet me,” (ll.39-40) the answer of the architect is harsh and pitiless:

An hour will come when sight of such sweet nook
Would bring a bitterness too sharp to brook,
When brighter eyes have won away his look;
For you will fade. (ll.45-48)

Finally, the architect final piece of advice is self-entombment: “To wit: Give space (since life ends unawares) / To hale a coffined corpse adown the stairs; / For you will die.” (ll.58-60). The death knell at the end of the poem recalls human beings that life is just a passage, a preparation towards death. The only way to deal with this

²³⁰ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 163.

²³¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 135.

²³² Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 261.

²³³ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 66-68.

²³⁴ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems, ibid.*, pp. 278-279.

impending end is to accept a death-in-life existence in which every deed digs the grave a little more.

7. Death in Life

Indeed, a man is not born free. Each person is ushered into the world in a certain spot in space and time. He has certain ancestors and he finds himself with a certain role to play in his family, on the stage of world history. Each man finds himself at the center of a receding series of contexts which locate and defines him. This imprisonment is all the more painful for being so intangible.

In Hardy's period, after they discover that no benevolent God will come to save them and redeem them for their sins, humans find themselves "living in a world which [does] not want them."²³⁵ Birth is not a creation at the image of a God but a mere contingency, only a gratuitous peripetia in the Immanent Will incessant erring. The example of Tess's child Sorrow is very striking. The baby is a living reminder of her sin and his perspective of life is shortened by his very early death:

So passed away Sorrow the Undesired — that intrusive creature, that bastard gift of shameless Nature who respects not the social law; a waif to whom eternal Time had been a matter of days merely, who knew not that such things as years and centuries ever were; to whom the cottage interior was the universe, the week's weather climate, new-born babyhood human existence, and the instinct to suck human knowledge.²³⁶

The question raised is: is it worth it to live? Life with the consciousness of an imminent death is men's ontological suffering. Then, no wonder Tess repeated twice the same wish in the novel: "I wish I had never been born — there or anywhere else!"²³⁷ and with even more emphasis later "O, I sometimes wish I had never been born!"²³⁸

After being born, the second most painful part of this death-in-life existence is to be left alone while the loved ones are away or dead. Hardy uses the Psalm 142:4 to open his poem 'In Tenebris II':²³⁹ "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there

²³⁵ *Jude the Obscure* quoted in Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 3.

²³⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 85.

²³⁷ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 67.

²³⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 167.

²³⁹ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 151.

was no man that would know me; . . . no man cared for my soul.” ‘The Dead Man Walking’²⁴⁰ epitomizes this suffering. He does not fit the present and because of his melancholy he is withdrawn from it. He lost the ones he loves, everyone who gave a sense of relevance to his existence: “my friend, my kinsfolk” (l.25) as well as his “Love's heart” (l.29). Then, he focuses his attention on the ghosts of the past. The effaced speaker sees things from the distant perspective of death:

They hail me as one living,
But don't they know
That I have died of late years,
Untombed although?

I am but a shape that stands here,
A pulseless mould,
A pale past picture, screening
Ashes gone cold.

Not at a minute's warning,
Not in a loud hour,
For me ceased Time's enchantments
In hall and bower. (ll. 1-12)

...
And if when I died fully
I cannot say,
And changed into the corpse-thing
I am to-day,

Yet is it that, though whiling
The time somehow
In walking, talking, smiling,
I live not now. (ll. 33-40)

The fact to be still alive on his own is similar to be buried alive. He is looking forward his own death, his liberation. His purgatory quest is to live as a “corpse-thing” among the livings among whom “no man care for [his] soul.”

8. Purgatory

Even though the deeds of the Immanent Will are unconscious the characters as well as the readers cannot help seeing some sort of Godlike punishments that push

²⁴⁰ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 195-196.

human beings in the Purgatory. We are now about to study the reasons the characters are “punished” and how we can establish a parallelism between the Christian Purgatory with the absent-minded Will.

a. Punishment for Beauty and Narcissism

First of all, our heroines are punished for their beauty. Tess’s first sin is to be a temptress physically: “Hardy, as radical ironist, makes Tess’s beauty part and parcel of her suffering, as if the beauty that is in and about her cannot manifest itself except in the company of what tortures her.”²⁴¹ Her beauty urged Alec’s animalistic impulses and made Angel fell in love with the image of her. The latter will indeed need a long time to love Tess for herself, behind the myth of the virginal beauty. Casagrande adds that “Tess’s beautiful face, her potential material salvation, is the source of her ruin.”²⁴² Indeed, if Angel would have elected her in Marlott’s field she would have known material salvation without all the suffering she had been through. But she was not noticed in time this day, as if her own beauty was independently hiding or revealing itself to mock her. Tess is innocently unaware of her beauty but she will learn at her expenses how it can put her in danger and she will try to conceal it as on her arrival at Flintcombe-Ash.

She reached Chalk-Newton, and breakfasted at an inn, where several young men were troublesomely complimentary to her good looks. Somehow she felt hopeful, for was it not possible that her husband also might say these same things to her even yet? She was bound to take care of herself on the chance of it, and keep off these casual lovers. To this end Tess resolved to run no further risks from her appearance. As soon as she got out of the village she entered a thicket and took from her basket one of the oldest field-gowns, which she had never put on even at the dairy — never since she had worked among the stubble at Marlott. She also, by a felicitous thought, took a handkerchief from her bundle and tied it round her face under her bonnet, covering her chin and half her cheeks and temples, as if she were suffering from toothache. Then with her little scissors, by the aid of a pocket looking-glass, she mercilessly nipped her eyebrows off, and thus insured against aggressive admiration she went on her uneven way.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 14.

²⁴² Peter Casagrande, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles: Unorthodox Beauty*, *ibid.*, p. 66.

²⁴³ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 245.



Michelangelo da Caravaggio, *Narcissus*²⁴⁴

On the other hand, Elfride is conscious of her beauty and is not insensible to flattery. She is a woman figure of Narcissus and she even reproduces the myth by contemplating her reflection in the river with Knight's earrings: "Below their seat the thread of water paused to spread out into a smooth small pool. Knight supported her whilst she knelt down and leant over it. 'I can see myself. Really, try as religiously as I will, I cannot help admiring my appearance in them.'"²⁴⁵ According to René Girard, narcissism corresponds to the Elizabethan notion of *self-love*. His study of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is very relevant as a parallel can be established with *A Pair of Blue Eyes*: « Phébé [Elfride] se sert de Silvius [Stephen] comme d'un miroir trompeur : elle imite le désir qu'il a pour elle et se voit sous le même jour et sous un angle aussi flatteur que lui la voit. »²⁴⁶ As a result, Elfride is even more enslaved to her beauty than Stephen. Paradoxically enough, she finds himself contaminated by his desire. The only concurrent that can threaten self-love is indifference. Indeed, if Elfride makes Knight her master and God-man it is because of the first complete absence of flattery on his side and his indifference to her charms. He resists her beauty and by

²⁴⁴ Michelangelo da Carravaggio, *Narcissus*, 1597-1599, oil on canvas, 110 cm x 92 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Roma.

²⁴⁵ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 279.

²⁴⁶ René Girard, *Shakespeare : Les Feux de l'envie* (Paris, 1990), p. 125.

such an action becomes a new intriguing model, far more seductive than she is. His indifference-repulsion creates attraction on Elfride's part:

Afin de se perpétuer, l'amour de soi (ou désir de soi) a besoin de subjuguier tous les désirs exposés à son charme [...] Tout désir qui reste de marbre [Knight's] et refuse de se joindre au culte unanime menace l'existence même de ce culte. L'idole du moment [...] voit dans le désir réfractaire un modèle plus séduisant qu'elle-même, un amour de soi plus fort, une autonomie invulnérable.²⁴⁷

Nonetheless, as Girard underlines it, a mimetic fragility is at the core of narcissism. This obsession in the reflection of one's beauty in the eyes of others makes one extremely dependent on the others' opinions. If this beauty was to fail, it would mean damnation. A Narcissus's greatest and constant subject of anxiety is to see his beauty fade away.

'Does not such a luxuriant head of hair exhaust itself and get thin as the years go on from eighteen to eight-and-twenty?' he asked at length.

Elfride's troubles sat upon her face as well as in her heart. Perhaps to a woman it is almost as dreadful to think of losing her beauty as of losing her reputation.²⁴⁸

The cold observer and scientific Knight is innocently brings out the inevitable to Elfride: growing old and losing the fullness and freshness of youth. He does not notice the ontological tumult he provokes in the maiden. Hardy proves again sarcastic in the last sentence of the passage in an apparently misogynistic observation. But we know from *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, that the greatest doom is not to lose one's good looks but to lose her reputation because she is 'good-looking.'

To conclude on beauty and narcissism in the two novels, we can again establish a parallelism with another version of the myth of Proserpina where Pluto – helped by a plot with Jupiter and Terra (Gaia in Ancient Greek) – present to her a beautiful field of narcissus. The moment she picks one, the earth splits and she falls in the underworld.

b. Punished for Misplaced Idolatry

Secondly, our heroines are punished for their misplaced idolatry towards the God-men. Because the loved one replaces God, he can also become the 'Great Punisher.' When their sin is revealed, the heroines bent in front of their lovers and are

²⁴⁷ René Girard, *Shakespeare : Les Feux de l'envie* (Paris, 1990), p. 128.

²⁴⁸ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 275.

ready to accept every punishment with a “mood of long-suffering,”²⁴⁹ except for the insufferable one: ‘displacement.’

‘I am afraid that if — you lose sight of me — something dark will happen, and we shall not meet again. Harry, if I am not good enough to be your wife, I wish I could be your servant and live with you, and not be sent away never to see you again. I don’t mind what it is except that!’²⁵⁰

The loss of faith in the nineteenth century was a traumatic experience worthy of ‘The Dead Man Walking.’ Without God, man is a wandering soul living a pointless and death-in-life existence until death. The heroines are scared by this prospect in the not-so-far distance. The sunrises of their God-men are the only source of life in their existences. Thus, the abandonment of their God-men signs their death warrant. Tess puts her destiny in the hands of her lover, but while she is still bowing before him she raises her head for the first time and asks him for mercy: “I agree to the conditions, Angel; because you know best what my punishment ought to be; only — only — don’t make it more than I can bear!”²⁵¹ But Angel is a sort of villain as we have seen in the first part of this dissertation. Tess’s plea anticipates the letter of her two friends to her merciless God-man:

HONOUR’D SIR— Look to your Wife if you do love her as much as she do love you. For she is sore put to by an Enemy in the shape of a Friend. Sir, there is one near her who ought to be Away. A woman should not be try’d beyond her Strength, and continual dropping will wear away a Stone — ay, more — a Diamond. FROM TWO WELL-WISHERS.²⁵²

Eventually, because the Immanent Will “stirs and urges everything,” our heroines are also plainly enough punished by circumstances. “Whatever [their] sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should [they] have been punished so persistently?”²⁵³ Tess remains ‘A Pure Woman’ from the virginal maiden dancing in the field to the woman sacrificed at Stonehenge. What happens in the middle, her tragic loss of virginity for example, are not sins but results of her lack of knowledge. As part of the Immanent Will, human will is uncontrollable as Elfride’s lovers realize after her death: “Since we don’t know half the reasons that made her do

²⁴⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 222.

²⁵⁰ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 339.

²⁵¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 222.

²⁵² Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 321.

²⁵³ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 313.

as she did, Stephen, how can we say, even now, that she was not pure and true in heart?”²⁵⁴

9. The Modern Pilgrimage: Life as a Purgatory

Nonetheless, the possession of this true and pure heart does not prevent the heroines from struggling on “a long and stony highway which [they] had to tread, without aid, and with little sympathy.”²⁵⁵ This sentence is an ontological truth as human beings are pushed back and forth in a restless turmoil of fatal ‘inadvertences’ on a very difficult path. After the loss of God or of the God-man life is nothing but a purgatory. This Dante-like purgatory could also be called a modern pilgrimage through death-in-life. To live is to be doomed to err. Indeed, we cannot help observing “Tess’s geographical wanderings across the face of Wessex, flying like a hunted animal from one refuge to another almost always less satisfactory and safe.”²⁵⁶ We have already discussed the ‘catabasic’ movement when Alec-Pluto was driving her to the d’Urbervilles’ domain. She will suffer a lot to escape the underworld and the place of her sin as the prepositional verb shows: “she would have to *climb over* [my italics] to reach her birthplace”²⁵⁷ but even though she succeeds to return to those past happy settings, there is no restoration of her innocence.

Millgate quotes Irving Howe who compares *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* with John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. According to the latter, *Tess*’s structure is “that of a journey in which each place of rest becomes a test for the soul and the function of plot is largely to serve as an agency for transporting the central figure from one point to another.”²⁵⁸ Besides, “Tess’s tragedy is that her pilgrimage has no possible goal.”²⁵⁹ As she progresses painfully through her modern pilgrimage, she has to keep moving to flee from danger while she awaits the end of her lover’s punishment. In addition, her sardonic beauty is her cross to bear all the way.

²⁵⁴ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 376.

²⁵⁵ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 74.

²⁵⁶ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 268.

²⁵⁷ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 66.

²⁵⁸ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 272.

²⁵⁹ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist*, *ibid.*, p. 273.

Furthermore, Hardy proposes a nightmarish modern pilgrimage in his poem 'The Masked face' where a universal 'I' finds himself in a vertiginous and Kafkaian transitory place between life and death.

I found me in a great surging space,
At either end a door,
And I said: "What is this giddy place,
With no firm-fixéd floor,
That I knew not of before?"
"It is Life," said a mask-clad face.

I asked: "But how do I come here,
Who never wished to come;
Can the light and air be made more clear,
The floor more quiet some,
And the doors set wide? They numb
Fast-locked, and fill with fear."

The mask put on a bleak smile then,
And said, "O vassal-wight,
There once complained a goosequill pen
To the scribe of the Infinite
Of the words it had to write
Because they were past its ken."

The poem ends on the sardonic smile of the masked face which seems to be left floating in the air as the Cheshire Cat's in *Alice's in Wonderland*. This place is completely nonsensical and there is no right answer for its riddles. Doors are moving by themselves in a fearsome manner and a 'goosequill pen' "complained . . . to the scribe of the Infinite of the words it had to write because they were past its ken." There is no way to obtain answers from the Unconscious Immanent Will which seems to be a dumb giant walking on earth and crushing everything on its way.

—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.²⁶⁰ (ll. 11-14)

Human beings are "locked in that Universe taciturn and drear"²⁶¹ (ll. 13-14) without any chance of escape. Dazzled by the mysteries of existence, they keep wonder about its origins and workings: "This hobble of being alive is rather serious, don't you

²⁶⁰ 'Hap' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 5.

²⁶¹ 'In Vision I Roamed' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 5.

think so?”²⁶² At first, we can think that Hardy created a very gloomy world doomed from its roots. Nonetheless, behind the veil of despair is the hope that one can make something out of his life, fulfil himself even temporarily through love for instance. If Hardy is sarcastic on the verge of sardonic, he also scatters his work with hints of optimism. If man’s control on his painful existence is relative, “nobody’s life is altogether a failure.”²⁶³

According to Brennecke’s comparison of Hardy with Schopenhauer: “As the action of man is irresistibly determined by his character and the motives operating upon it, no real change is possible for him, and nothing of what theologians have termed conversion or regeneration has any place in the system of Schopenhauer.”²⁶⁴ Because man is stirred and urged by the Immanent Will, there can be an influence of knowledge upon action but the essential nature and character is unchangeable. Man is ‘determined’ by his own nature. If fate there is, it is to be found in his unchangeable character.

10. Apotheosis

In spite of the difference between Tess’s “instinctual paganism,” Alec’s “crude amorality,” and Angel’s “cold agnosticism,”²⁶⁵ they are all asking themselves the same question: “Whence comes Solace?”²⁶⁶ (l.1) We have seen that they try different ways to obtain redemption for their sins through other characters but we have concluded that it fails. If we take into account their death-in-life existence, solace can only be when the sufferings of life have been annihilated, thus when they die: “She kept her face partially away from Knight and Stephen, and set her eyes upon the sky visible outside, as if her salvation depended upon quickly reaching it.”²⁶⁷ Caught between two fires, Elfride would prefer to die rather than facing this painful situation

²⁶² Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 109.

²⁶³ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, (London, 2006), p. 185.

²⁶⁴ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy’s Universe: A Study of a Poet’s Mind* (London, 1924), p. 91.

²⁶⁵ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 270.

²⁶⁶ ‘On a Fine Morning’ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p.114.

²⁶⁷ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 261.

of her two lovers in the same place. She is intensely looking at the sky, wishing to elevate and disappear in its immensity.

Even though apotheosis is supposed to presuppose the existence of God(s) as the deceased person is elevated to the rank of a saint or God, in our modern perspective there is no such thing. Nevertheless, we can still see ascending movements across Hardy's work and even the sublimation of some chosen ones in death through memory. Furthermore, because they live in a world deprived of a godlike figure, men created Gods or at least saints at their image.

In his sleep-walking dream after Tess's confession, Angel carries the faithful Tess into the empty stone coffin of an abbot and reaches "a new phase, wherein he fancied she had risen as a spirit, and was leading him to Heaven."²⁶⁸ Tess is indeed a "pure woman" victim of this merciless world. Her lover is looking for his own salvation through her purity but she cannot help him as he abandons her. However, Angel's dream is not her only anticipated 'apotheosis,' her first one occurred when she was baptizing her son Sorrow before he died:

The ecstasy of faith almost apotheosized her; it set upon her face a glowing irradiation, and brought a red spot into the middle of each cheek; while the miniature candle-flame inverted in her eye-pupils shone like a diamond. The children gazed up at her with more and more reverence, and no longer had a will for questioning. She did not look like Sissy to them now, but as a being large, towering, and awful — a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common.²⁶⁹

As we have seen, this scene was at first an odd mystic moment, but quickly it was overwhelmed by grandeur and a sacred dimension. She indeed offers salvation to her undesired son. The fact that Hardy uses the free indirect speech in the last sentence is very interesting, indeed the scene is seen through the innocent eyes of the children who are deeply amazed and fascinated by their "Sissy" who turn in one instant into this "large, towering, and awful — a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common." Apotheosis in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* seems to be a treat from the compassionate author when his heroine reaches a climax of suffering. When Tess is sentenced to death, she paradoxically feels relieved. All her suffering will finally come to an end.

²⁶⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 219.

²⁶⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 84.

Her apotheosis is split into two distinct moments: first with the natural law of Stonehenge and then with the human law on the public spot where she is hanged. In the latter, Hardy was inspired by the real story of Marta Brown whose hanging he assisted as a young boy.²⁷⁰ In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, a veil of decency is thrown on the heroine's execution. It is seen from afar by "two gazers" who know that Tess had been executed by the stroke of the hour and the black flag following it: "Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess."²⁷¹

Religion used to bring comfort and reassurance because death was seen "not as an end but as a continuation, even as a prelude to something better."²⁷² It is thus rather surprising to observe Hardy's characters, whether in his novels or in his poems, accepting death with open arms even though they do not have faith anymore. Schopenhauer is known to be a great pessimist and a lot of Hardy's detractors think he is too. But Schopenhauer's conception of death we can find in Hardy's writing is actually rather positive. As we will see, if it is not the continuation it is the welcome end of a life of suffering.

As way of conclusion of this second part, we can find this relief in death in 'Friends Beyond:'²⁷³

"We have triumphed: this achievement turns the bane to antidote,
Unsuccesses to success,
Many thought-worn eyes and morrows to a morrow free of thought.

"No more need we corn and clothing, feel of old terrestrial stress;
Chill detraction stirs no sigh;
Fear of death has even bygone us: death gave all that we possess." (ll.12-17)

²⁷⁰ Elizabeth Marta Brown was the last woman to be executed publicly in Dorchester on August 9 1856. She was accused to have murdered her second husband. Innocent or guilty, the mystery is still alive. Hardy who assisted the execution was very impressed and will fictionalize the young woman in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* final execution. Public execution were relatively rare in the nineteenth century, and they will eventually be abolished in 1868.

²⁷¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 384. Aeschylus was known as the "Father of Tragedy." Born in 525 BC he fundamentally developed Ancient Greek tragedy. Aeschylus' plays focused on individual will and the influence of divine power over mortals. Thus, we can establish a parallelism with our study of Will and Fate in Hardy's work.

²⁷² Christopher Lane, *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty* (New Haven, 2012), p. 130.

²⁷³ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 52-53.

III. 'Time the Cynic'

1. The Age of Doubt and Darwinism

Thomas Hardy lived in an era of drastic changes: the 'Age of Doubt.' The new civilization was waking up on the absence of God and the lie of a secular knowledge about the universe and its place in it. All these changes caused a climate of pessimism we can see in Hardy's writing.

Late Victorian era results in a general mood of loss with the rising science and the breakdown of faith. Henry Van Dyke considers his time in *Gospel for an Age of Doubt* (1896) and realizes that "it is one of those periods of human history in which the sudden expansion of knowledge and the breaking-up of ancient moulds of thought have produced a profound and widespread feeling of uncertainty in regard to the subject of religion."²⁷⁴

In the second part of this dissertation, we have seen that mankind came into the consciousness that God is a man-made invention. And when knowledge began to expand with a great velocity, the comforting lie was no longer acceptable. As put in 'God's Funeral'²⁷⁵ even the more fervent believers have to surrender in the end:

And by contagious throbs of thought
Or latent knowledge that within me lay
And had already stirred me, I was wrought
To consciousness of sorrow even as they. (ll. 5-8)

Alongside this dreadful discovery came the evolutionist theory towards which men turned gratefully. If they were left without transcendence, at least they could have hope in an ideal of progress. Yet the frenzy of this new belief to rely on soon faded when they realized its implications. The evolutionary theory, and Darwin especially, assumes that men's attempts to mould their life by their will and aspiration are obliterated by the far greater and out of reach cosmic process.

²⁷⁴ Christopher Lane, *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty* (New Haven, 2012), p. 141.

²⁷⁵ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 297-299.

A tension between the human will and the ‘enormous machine of the universe’²⁷⁶ is at stake. Ebbatson poignantly quotes both Mill’s words in *On Liberty* and D. F. Strauss *The Old Faith and the New* (1873). Mill argues that: “Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.”²⁷⁷ Indeed, we have previously assumed that even though the Immanent Will was controlling everything that *is* in the world, a piece of this great Will is present in every human being who is moved by his passions and temper and is able to learn through his mistakes, even though he cannot change his nature. This human will is certainly part of the Great Will, it would be a mistake to assume any sort of independence. But it is important to remember that under the general influence of the Immanent Will, human beings *acting through it* have some space for individual small acts of self-assertion. On the other hand, Strauss presents man as a palpitating ‘helpless creature’ waiting to be devoured by the horrific jaws of the ‘enormous machine of the universe:’

In the enormous machine of the universe, amid the incessant whirl and hiss of its jagged iron wheels, amid the deafening crash of its ponderous stamps and hammers, in the midst of this whole terrific commotion, man, a helpless and defenceless creature, finds himself placed, not secure for a moment that on an impudent motion a wheel may not seize and rend him, or a hammer crush him to powder.²⁷⁸

Darwin’s theory is closer to Strauss’s dreadful machine. He attempts to fight the idea of a will as a force for change using a potent vocabulary of fitness, struggle, and survival.

Far from having the comforting effects of religion, the Darwinian theory brings even more questions and fears than the void made by the departure – or ‘murder’ in Nietzschean terms – of God. “For if uniform changes were visible everywhere, including in the extinction of species, what – other than biblical insistence – made us exempt from the transmutations affecting almost everything else on Earth? The faithful argued passionately that God had singled us out, giving us temporary dominion over the planet.”²⁷⁹ Yet the latter’s arguments are vain. Men who used to believe they were

²⁷⁶ Roger Ebbatson, *The Evolutionary Self: Hardy, Forster, Lawrence* (Brighton, 1982), p. xv.

²⁷⁷ Roger Ebbatson, *The Evolutionary Self: Hardy, Forster, Lawrence, ibid.*, p. xv.

²⁷⁸ Roger Ebbatson, *The Evolutionary Self: Hardy, Forster, Lawrence, ibid.*, p. xv.

²⁷⁹ Christopher Lane, *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty* (New Haven, 2012), p. 49.

created by God at his image to rule the other creatures, have no choice but to realize that humankind is an unplanned accident on earth, a mere strata of evolution that can be extinct at any moment if Nature decides that man is unfit or unadaptable.

As a consequence, the Darwinian theory represented a double blow: “It suggested that man was not fully equipped to understand the history of life on earth and that he might not be central to that history.”²⁸⁰

a. The Problem of Consciousness

The main ontological issue brought by the evolutionary theory is

The fact that man, a being endowed with an unlimited capacity for consciousness and suffering, is made to live out his life in a universe ruled by an unconscious and indifferent Will, lies at the base of all of Hardy’s so-called pessimism, and results in the essential tragedy of human existence.²⁸¹

Man’s happiness seems impossible from the moment he is conscious of his littleness and of the fragile relativity of his will on his own existence. Indeed, Hardy underlines that “the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions . . . It may be questioned if Nature, or what we call nature . . . did not exceed her mission. This planet does not supply the materials for happiness to higher existences.”²⁸² (7 April 1889) Furthermore, the fact to know about our helplessness makes us “wonder if Man's consciousness / Was a mistake of God's”²⁸³ (ll. 7-8) or Nature’s if we enter the Darwinian theory. Consciousness becomes a source of tragic emotion. As Hardy wrote: “We [human beings] have reached a degree of intelligence which Nature never contemplated when framing her laws, and for which she consequently has provided no adequate satisfactions.”²⁸⁴ (17 November 1883)

²⁸⁰ Guillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 19.

²⁸¹ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind* (London, 1924), p. 135.

²⁸² Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 285-286.

²⁸³ ‘I Travel as a Phantom Now’ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 418.

²⁸⁴ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 216.

The clash between man's logic and nature has always been and will always be won by Nature. Especially if we consider men's short existences as opposed to Nature's ever-lasting geological time.

b. Darwin and Geological Time

Darwin lays the emphasis on this vain battle:

How fleeting are the wishes and efforts of man! How short his time! And consequently how poor will his products be, compared with those accumulated by nature during whole geological periods. Can we wonder, then, that nature's productions should be far "truer" in character than man's productions; that they should be infinitely better adapted to the most complex conditions of life, and should plainly bear the stamp of far higher workmanship?"²⁸⁵

Nature takes her own course and it is impossible for man to follow it because his time is limited and he cannot affect nature. "To insects the twelvemonth has been an epoch, to leaves a life, to tweeting birds a generation, to man a year"²⁸⁶ (End of December 1865) but nature existed before all her species and her time cannot be counted. Thus,

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.²⁸⁷

Human existence is vain and represents nothing in comparison with the infinite Time of nature. It is hard to imagine what the world would be like if man were not in it, it would be like to be dead. Likewise, it is almost impossible to conceive the immensity of time because "with centuries and millennia as hopelessly inadequate measurements, the intervals of space involved become so sublime that the mind can find no reasonable scale for them."²⁸⁸ The idea of vast stretches of time is hard to envisage and drive us to dreamlike guesses about "primaeval date, wherein Druidical mistletoe was still found on aged oaks, and where enormous yew trees, not planted by

²⁸⁵ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (Oxford, 2008), p. 81.

²⁸⁶ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 72.

²⁸⁷ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 80.

²⁸⁸ Christopher Lane, *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty* (New Haven, 2012), p. 48.

the hand of man, grew as they had grown when they were pollarded for bows.”²⁸⁹ But when we really face them it is a traumatic and dizzy experience as when Knight, hanging on a cliff for his life, is “forced to participate actively in the Darwinian drama”²⁹⁰ in this existential moment of littleness. His face literally on the cliff he takes a close observation of its different strata and notices that “The immense lapses of time each formation represented had known nothing of the dignity of man.”²⁹¹

Furthermore, while Knight clings on the cliff, on a string between life and death, his whole life flashes before his eyes. The fact that he is helplessly dangling off a cliff serves as a strong reminder of man's insignificance in relation to the cosmos: the natural world is something far greater than the human.

he could only look sternly at Nature's treacherous attempt to put an end to him, and strive to thwart her [...] Grimness was in every feature, and to its very bowels the inimical shape was desolation. By one of those familiar conjunctions in which the inanimate world baits the mind of man when he pauses in moments of suspense, opposite Knight's eyes was an imbedded fossil, standing forth in low relief from the rock. It was a creature with eyes.²⁹²

This passage also lays the emphasis on Nature's harshness and indifference to man. Confronted to the fossil of an ancient creature, Knight is faced with his mortality. Nature appears grotesque and unflinching. She persists in his torture, as Knight remains gazing at the fossilized creature, contemplating his imminent death. As a result, Knight is forced to recognize his own insignificance as he will never be able to grasp the meaning of life with the short time allotted to him to experience it.

2. Distortion of the Laws of Time

a. Nature Timelessness against Human Mortality

Another interesting aspect raised by the ‘cliff-hanger scene’ is the distortion of the laws of Time which becomes even more subjective in intense moments of life.

²⁸⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 31.

²⁹⁰ Roger Ebbatson, *The Evolutionary Self: Hardy, Forster, Lawrence* (Brighton, 1982), p. 36.

²⁹¹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), pp. 212-213.

²⁹² Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 213.

Here Knight experiences a dilatation of time. His experience is so painful physically and mentally that he thinks he was on the cliff for longer than he actually was:

Knight had over-estimated the strength of his hands. They were getting weak already. 'She will never come again; she has been gone ten minutes,' he said to himself. This mistake arose from the unusual compression of his experiences just now: she had really been gone but three.²⁹³

On the other hand, a second, and in this case a single glance can be so meaningful that it can be turned into an entire period. In the following passage, Elfride had silently and awkwardly confessed her sin to her former lover presenting herself in the company of the new one. Their last glance carries an entire conversation full of reproach, pain and guilt.

Her old lover still looked on at the performance as he leant over the gate a dozen yards off. Once in the saddle, and having a firm grip of the reins, she turned her head as if by a resistless fascination, and for the first time since that memorable parting on the moor outside St. Launce's after the passionate attempt at marriage with him, Elfride looked in the face of the young man she first had loved. He was the youth who had called her his inseparable wife many a time, and whom she had even addressed as her husband. Their eyes met. Measurement of life should be proportioned rather to the intensity of the experience than to its actual length. Their glance, but a moment chronologically, was a season in their history. To Elfride the intense agony of reproach in Stephen's eye was a nail piercing her heart with a deadliness no words can describe. With a spasmodic effort she withdrew her eyes, urged on the horse, and in the chaos of perturbed memories was oblivious of any presence beside her. The deed of deception was complete. . . . She pressed a hand to her eyes, as if to blot out the image of Stephen.²⁹⁴

In a way, Elfride is an anti-Orpheus as she turns her eyes voluntarily "as if by a restless fascination" and then tries to erase Stephen, the living embodiment of her sins, from her retina and by extension from her life.

b. 'Time the Cynic' Pulling the Strings of Man's Will.

But sadly Elfride fails to take into account that 'what she wants' has no value for 'Time the Cynic', a manifestation of the Immanent Will pulling the strings of events and arranging them in an order which is not convenient at all for Hardy's characters: "Perhaps there is nothing more hardening to the tone of young minds than thus to discover how their dearest and strongest wishes become gradually attuned by Time the Cynic to the very note of some selfish policy which in earlier days they

²⁹³ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 216.

²⁹⁴ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 265.

despised.”²⁹⁵ Elfride regrets her elopement with Stephen and Tess that Angel did not invite *her* to dance when she was still a virginal maiden of nature.

Elfride is driven quite hysterical by the repetition of the same events with her two lovers we have seen in the first part. In which concern Tess and Angel, they try to defy ‘Time the Cynic’ by hiding themselves in a shelter and living as much as they can their marriage in the small amount of days they have. They could have lived it fully if Angel’s decision to abandon Tess had not generated a series of peripetia among which the murder of Alec by Tess is the climax. Similar to two children with their “temporary and unforefending”²⁹⁶ plan, they live a transitory moment of happiness veiled by the threat of the ‘inexorable;’ Justice coming after Tess:

The gloomy intervening time seemed to sink into chaos, over which the present and prior times closed as if it never had been. Whenever he suggested that they should leave their shelter, and go forwards towards Southampton or London, she showed a strange unwillingness to move. Why should we put an end to all that’s sweet and lovely!” she deprecated. “What must come will come.” And, looking through the shutter-chink: “All is trouble outside there; inside here content. He peeped out also. It was quite true; within was affection, union, error forgiven: outside was the inexorable.”²⁹⁷

c. Stopping Time in the Pilgrimage on the Places of Courtship

Even though Justice eventually catches up with Tess, these peculiar moments of ecstasy in love we can find across Hardy’s novels and poems are often successful in their attempt to ‘stop time’ even temporarily. When they met in the peaceful Talbothays Tess and Angel created a paradisiacal pastoral where every moment of their days was felt as a blessing. But their perfect happiness was interrupted by the set date of their wedding, the departure and the following confession by Tess.

Secondly, it seems sometimes possible to trick time using the following generations. Tess makes Angel promise to take care of her little sister ‘Liza-Lu when she will be gone. Coincidentally or not, this young maiden is an improved replica of Tess. She is a sort of Tess before the Original Sin, a true Eve. Similarly to the moment she performed a baptism for her child, Tess is persuaded that if Angel accepts Liza-Lu it will obliterate her own life and his pain about it: “She has all the best of me without

²⁹⁵ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 253.

²⁹⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 340.

²⁹⁷ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 343.

the bad of me; and if she were to become yours it would almost seem as if death had not divided us. . . . Well, I have said it. I won't mention it again."²⁹⁸ An echo of this rather unconventional demand can be found in 'Her Death and After'²⁹⁹ where a tearful lover lies to his dead lover's husband claiming to be the father of their little girl he wants to save from her brutal life. The answer of the father: "Pray take her, to right a wrong" (l.125) – echoes Tess's wish that Angel would have dance with her when she was still pure. By her prayer to him, she allows him to right his wrong and take her sister while she is still innocent.

Eventually, the leitmotif of the pilgrimage to the places of courtship in Hardy's poems brings some light, some optimism alongside the evolutionary theory. Indeed, Hardy claims that one minute of a pure love is stronger and more powerful than all the Time of the world in 'At Castle Boterel':³⁰⁰

It filled but a minute. But was there ever
 A time of such quality, since or before,
 In that hill's story ? To one mind never,
 Though it has been climbed, foot-swift, foot-sore,
 By thousands more.

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 ;
 But what they record in colour and cast
 Is—that we two passed. (ll. 16-25)

After Emma's loss, Hardy suffered a lot from this feeling of helplessness towards 'Time the Cynic' as he fell in love with Emma again once she was dead. But he finds a way to take his revenge, to have some control, distorting the rules of Time. Indeed, as Shakespeare said in his Sonnet 65: "in black ink my love may still shine bright."³⁰¹ Similarly, Hardy succeeds in his poetry to fix in timelessness his love for Emma and to give her immortality even if Time has taken her away in death. He is able through his writing to make a poem about one minute lapse and make it superior in terms of importance to the geological history. In "At Castle Boterel", he revisits Cornwall after Emma's death, the place where he met her for the first time. And he falls in love again. He sees the ghost of Emma and himself forty years before. In this poem, the sensuality of the descriptions and the use of the present make the memory

²⁹⁸ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 346.

²⁹⁹ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 33-36.

³⁰⁰ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems, ibid.*, pp. 319-320.

³⁰¹ William Shakespeare, *The Sonnets* (Cambridge, 1966), p.35.

alive. There is an interplay of past and present. Hardy wants to crystallise the place as the place which witnessed the birth of their love. He wants to recall the happy moments of courtship, before their terrible marriage. Among all the generations who rambled in this place, this very moment of happiness was the most important, the most beautiful. Even if Time has taken the two lovers away, Hardy is able to re-experience this one minute of happiness and love, one minute which becomes eternal thanks to poetry.

Thus, Hardy's adhesion to the evolutionary theory is far from being absolute. It indisputably inspired him when he created the Immanent Will and 'Time the Cynic' but it is only an addition to his own theories and these are not as pessimistic as his detractors thought. Man has to face his littleness comparing to the immensity of Time. For Darwin, Nature's spots remain as mute and indifferent as they were before human history began. Yet "an object of mark raised or made by a man on a scene," Hardy believed, "is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious Nature. Hence mists, and mountains are unimportant beside the wear on a threshold, or the print of a hand."³⁰²

3. Desperate Attempts to Control Time

a. Appointments

Humankind does not accept its helplessness. Man has a paradoxical posture as he is on the one hand the one who triggers chaos from a constant progress that destroys Nature, and on the other hand a mere strata in evolution, a victim in a futile struggle with cosmos.

Therefore, man attempts at once to limit the damage he is himself the cause and to have any kind of control over cosmos. In *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, we can find different attempts to put order in situations of trouble through the futile action of naming a time. The characters try to protect themselves by making accurate appointments but it fails. For instance, Stephen and Elfride had planned a romantic appointment but Time between the plan of the appointment and

³⁰² Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 116.

the date itself has decided to put Elfride in the arms of Knight, the appointment takes place in a moment of guilt as she does not dare to put an end to her first love and is involved in a second she does not want to lose for anything: “The hour of appointment came, and with it a crisis; and with the crisis a collapse.”³⁰³ The stroke of the 'hour of appointment' is an epiphany, at this very moment she makes her mind: she chooses to love Knight. On the opposite, Stephen who is right on time at the rendezvous suffers the delay and knows by it that something unexpected happened:

Stephen knew there could be no mistake about the time or place, and no difficulty about keeping the engagement. He waited yet longer, passing from impatience into a mood which failed to take any account of the lapse of time. He was awakened from his reverie by Castle Boterel clock.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, TEN .

One little fall of the hammer in addition to the number it had been sharp pleasure to hear, and what a difference to him!³⁰⁴

An accurate hour whether it can be a time of epiphany, can conversely be a time of revelation. That is the reason why Elfride asks Knight to force her confession at an hour of his choice. She needs to cling to this false mastery of time, of cosmos to fortify herself, to force herself to truth and avoid the temptation lies and cowardice are: “Name a time, will you, and bind me to it? I want you to name an hour, because I am weak, and may otherwise try to get out of it.”³⁰⁵ Likewise, Tess asks the same thing from Angel:

“I’ll give you my reasons tomorrow — next week.”

“Say on Sunday?”

“Yes, on Sunday.”³⁰⁶

But this appointment will be forgotten and Tess will try to reveal the truth through shy allusions and understatements but they will have no effect on Angel, amused as he is by this virginal and inexperienced maiden who has nothing to confess in his opinion.

Eventually, inevitable ‘appointments’ can hover about the sinner’s head as Mrs Jethaway promising Elfride to reveal the truth to her lover to take her revenge on her. The waiting of the fall of the Damocles sword is dreadful and plunges Elfride into a

³⁰³ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 254.

³⁰⁴ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 235.

³⁰⁵ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 266.

³⁰⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 155.

neurotic paranoia. Mrs. Jethaway told her “My time will come³⁰⁷” followed by an even more enigmatic “Not now”³⁰⁸ before she disappears from Elfride’s view.

b. Clocks

Clocks and hours are human inventions to have a feeling of mastering something in the cosmos. But sometimes, Time itself seems to take control of the objects, of its synecdoche, breaking it in order to cynically announce a ‘problem.’ Indeed, when Stephen comes back from India eager to see his beloved Elfride on their romantic appointment, his father said to him: “The clock stopped this morning”³⁰⁹ which is proleptic of the missed because ‘too late’ reunion with his love. In *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, the broken clock is a reflection of the broken home as the father or source of income is dead, the entire family is thrown away from their house: “the matron having in her lap, to prevent injury to its works, the head of the clock, which, at any exceptional lurch of the waggon, struck one, or one-and-a-half, in hurt tones.”³¹⁰ The mad wanderings of the needles epitomize the wandering of the family who is homeless with an uncertain future.

Moreover, ‘Time the Cynic’ can turn man into his creation (the clock), for instance when Stephen is waiting for Elfride who is not to come, his heart's beats are comparable with the strokes of a clock: “he went inside the doorway, sat down upon the stone bench, and waited with a beating heart.”³¹¹

Clocks have to be distrusted. Man’s attempt at being the Creator is both conceited and vain. With the Immanent Will in charge, “time is out of joint”³¹² (Act 1, scene 5, l. 186) and its control is out of reach for its preys.

4. Sufferings Imposed on Man by ‘Time the Cynic’

³⁰⁷ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 273.

³⁰⁸ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 274.

³⁰⁹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 225.

³¹⁰ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 316.

³¹¹ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 234.

³¹² William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (London, 2006), p. 227.

a. “Too-lateness”

Time is out of joint and human beings are locked up into the time of action, the present. That is to say they cannot foresee the future and are seized in the constant irony of their tragic fate: things are always 'too late' or 'too early' and they can just feel melancholy about what might have been if they were *in* time.

First of all we are going to study the leitmotiv of too-lateness running through Hardy's life and work. To begin with, the autobiographical poem 'Everything Comes'³¹³ relates to how Hardy planted trees around Max Gate to protect it from curious gazes and cold wind. Unfortunately, the poem ends with his wife's feeble agonizing voice: "But--I'm dying; and for me / 'Tis too late,' she said." (ll. 20-21).

Then, in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* "It is too late"³¹⁴ is also the dreadful sentence uttered by Tess when Angel comes back to her after all her misfortunes. Morell recalls us that Angel is a villain because of his inability to be merciful with Tess. Yet the case of Angel coming "too late" is far from being surprising as human beings are not always well-aware of the pressure of time passing:

Angel is not free from blame on this score; he too fails to see any threat in the pressure of time, any danger in postponement: when, after his hesitation, he pushes on with his plans to go to Brazil without seeing Tess again, it is with the thought that 'he could always come back to her'; and it never occurs to him that circumstances might have changed in the meantime. Angel's first entry into the story is significant: he leaves something undone; he looks back, sees Tess, 'the pretty maiden with whom he had not danced', gazing after him. And although 'he felt he had acted stupidly', he hurried on after his brothers. One recalls Angel's negligence, too, in not writing to Tess. 'Too Late Beloved', Hardy's first title for the book, clearly refers to these failures of Angel's.³¹⁵

Put together, the titles "Too Late Beloved" and "A Pure Woman" that Hardy finally adopted reveal the entire plot of the novel. It is the story of a truly pure woman whose lover (Angel) was too late to acknowledge her purity.

Similarly, the same kind of fate happens for Stephen and Knight who, at the same time, want to forgive Elfride and propose her. But once more it is too late, and here even far too late as Elfride is dead, in a coffin in the same train as them. On top of that, the narration is extremely sardonic because of the choice of day on which they

³¹³ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 468.

³¹⁴ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 332.

³¹⁵ Roy Morrell, *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way* (Kuala Lumpur, 1965), p. 32.

discover that their common “sweetheart” is dead: “It chanced to be the eve of St Valentine's – that bishop of blessed memory to youthful lovers.”³¹⁶

b. “Too-earliness”

On the other hand, the leitmotif of ‘too-earliness’ has to be taken into account in a parallel to ‘too-lateness.’ The myth of Orpheus is absolutely central to this explanation. If we can guess some traces of it in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, it is even more striking in Hardy’s life.

In the novel, the possible connection with the myth is very subtle. We can imagine that before Elfride's death, Hardy scatters some proleptic hints to the tragic end of the novel. Indeed, the two relationships end with a sad ultimate eye contact. Furthermore, when the two friends will go back by train to Endelstown, it will be too late, Elfride will be dead forever. She had turned to Stephen in a last glance “as if by a resistless fascination”³¹⁷ before moving her eyes from him and following her new lover. And in which concerns Knight, he looks at her for the last time in complete despair as her father brought her back to their house (Hell): “Knight's eyes followed her, the last moment begetting in him a frantic hope that she would turn her head. She passed on, and never looked back.”³¹⁸ Here the father could be a figure of Pluto, taking back Eurydice as Orpheus/Knight did not honour his promise: for Orpheus to not turn to her until they both reach the top of the climb, for Knight to marry Elfride and make her an honest woman.

Yet it will be the death of Emma Lavinia Guifford, Hardy’s first wife, which will be the real rewriting of the myth of Orpheus. In his experience of loss, Hardy is the one who suffers the most from ‘Time the Cynic.’ He becomes aware of his love for Emma after her death, after the terrible last years of estrangement of their marriage. In a way, he is an Orpheus who turn to Eurydice too late. Orpheus embodies to the perfection the cynicism of time as he acts a few seconds too early which causes the (second) loss of Eurydice. The irony is that he accomplished the quiet impossible deed

³¹⁶ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 367.

³¹⁷ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 265.

³¹⁸ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *ibid.*, p. 340.

to descend into the underworld, but as he was followed by his beloved one to the surface he turns one second too early and sees her return to Hell.

His personal common ground with the hero of the myth is his poetry: it allows him to call his wife in his elegies. Moreover, even though Hardy does not go exactly to the underworld after Emma's death, he does metaphorically with a quest to find back his love in the net of their memories. In this intimate elegies, he wants to experiment his guilt towards the wife he had abandoned; he wants to atone for the estrangement of their marriage. As he shapes her in his writing, he creates a personalised catabasis to revive her.



Jean-Camille Corot, *Orpheus leading Eurydice from the Underworld* (1861)³¹⁹

³¹⁹ Jean-Baptiste Corot, *Orpheus leading Eurydice from the Underworld*, 1861. (Oil on canvas, 112 cm x 137 cm, Museum of the Fine Arts, Houston)

After his wife's death, Orpheus sings so sadly that the gods lead him to the underworld, where his weepy music persuades Hades, the god of the dead, to let Eurydice follow him back to the surface. The catch is that Hades forbids Orpheus to look back at his wife during their trek to the surface. As Orpheus nears the world of the living, his worry overcomes him and he turns around—only to see Eurydice fade back to Hades forever. Hades, poignantly enough, is Greek for “unseen,” which is exactly what Hardy fears will become of Emma – an Eurydice ghost-like figure – if he turns around. We can see it in ‘The Shadow on the Stone.’³²⁰ Orpheus had his lyre, Hardy has his lyrics. As an artist, Orpheus could have the shade of Eurydice, but as a man he could only lose her. And it is because Hardy knows the sad truth of Orpheus that he is unwilling to turn his head. He is wise enough to leave his memories to a realm that can never disappoint only because it can never be satisfying:

Yet I wanted to look and see
That nobody stood at the back of me ;
But I thought once more : 'Nay, I'll not unvision
A shape which, somehow, there may be.'
So I went on softly from the glade,
And left her behind me throwing her shade,
As she were indeed an apparition –
My head unturned lest my dream should fade. (ll. 20-27)

In his grief, his only comfort is his power of imagination. Here he used the pagan image of the Druid stone to set a particular atmosphere. He lays the emphasis on his love for nature and myths. Through the prism of imagination, we can see how easily the work of nature can seem like the work of people; just as the shadow made by some branches can seem like the shadow made by a disappeared wife. What's more, some traditions hold that Druid stones have magical powers, so it makes sense that this stone brings the supernatural to mind, or at least the suspension of disbelief. When he says at the beginning of the third stanza: “Yet I wanted to look and see / That nobody stood at the back of me;” Hardy has an impulse to confirm his sad understanding that ghosts are not real: a distinctly Modern urge to dispel sentiment in favour of substance. Yet, what keeps Hardy from turning around is also that same suspicion that he would find himself alone. He knows the truth but he cannot bear to confront his wife absence with his eyes: better a trick of light than a grief laid bare as that white, brooding stone. He has to struggle with a tension between reason and imagination, between what his

³²⁰ ‘The Shadow On the Stone’ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 489-490.

eyes would see and the image his mind creates. 'The Shadow on the Stone' represents an impasse between modern sensibilities and the wishful thinking of grief.

Even though he can just shape a fugitive shadow, it is very precious to him and he wants to hold to it. In a way, Hardy is a successful Orpheus. He does not let his Eurydice-memory fade away in keeping his "head unturned". In spite of the fact Emma is unreachable in the physical world, he is still able to give her a shape through his imagination recognizing "a well-known head and shoulders" (l.7) in a shade, to offer her an eternity through poetry.

Hardy does not propose us a gothic universe filled with gloomy and terrifying ghosts. His phantoms are whether the haunting figure of the beloved one following him or the re-enactment of past memories. They are comforting visions who remind him of happy moments and keep him company. That is the reason why Hardy is doing a pilgrimage on the places of courtship with Emma. His second wife notices with bitterness: "He seemed like a ghost revisiting scenes of a long-dead past."³²¹ (August 1927)

But Hardy knows that he cannot rely too much on them as they are unstable and fading.

A second close look at 'At Castle Boterel'³²² will allow us to begin our study of Thomas Hardy's ghosts or visions:

And to me, though Time's unflinching rigour,
In mindless rote, has ruled from sight
The substance now, one phantom figure
Remains on the slope, as when that night
Saw us alight.

I look and see it there, shrinking, shrinking,
I look back at it amid the rain
For the very last time; for my sand is sinking,
And I shall traverse old love's domain
Never again. (ll. 26-35)

Ghosts are shapes marking the spots he visited with Emma, as if the happy time of courtship never ended, as if they never left these places. Nonetheless, these shapes are "shrinking" and Hardy is well-aware that his time, his sand in his personal hour-

³²¹ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 257.

³²² Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 319-320.

glass is “sinking.” He is addicted to the fact of being haunted, carried by his memories he tries to re-enact his past happiness pursuing the ghost of Emma: “Through the years, through the dead scenes I have tracked you”³²³ (l. 10). In ‘The Voice’ he is not sure whether he hears the “woman much missed” (l. 1) or the wind and desperately tries to see her. Thomas Hardy is resigned, he suffers from a grief that can live only in his imagination, and to which the world is indifferent. He wants to shout his cry of distress to the entire world, to make every human being on earth conscious of his loss. While Orpheus was listened by the Gods, Hardy's grief can only live in his imagination and the world is indifferent to it. In his poem ‘Places’³²⁴ he begins each stanza with “Nobody” laying the emphasis on his loneliness: “Nobody says,” “Nobody thinks,” “Nobody calls to mind.”

Hardy goes as far as to give a voice to his deceased wife in ‘The Haunter’³²⁵ where he shows the impossibility to communicate between the world of the living and the world of the dead but assumes at the same time that a communication actually exists, even though they are not able to hear each other. He is reassured at the idea that she is hovering somewhere, haunting him. In the poem ‘In the Mind’s Eye’ he confesses that what he sees is an illusion: “Ah; 'tis but her phantom / Borne within my brain!” (ll. 7-8) yet this illusion is indispensable as “Never once do I, Dear, / Wish thy ghost away” (ll. 15-16).

Eventually, even though this ghostly visions are comforting as reminders of happy times, they are also very painful as they remind Hardy about what he had lost. In the end, the haunted-addict cannot help but regret “When you were all aglow, / And not the thin ghost that I now frailly follow!”³²⁶ (ll. 23-24)

c. Regret

Regret becomes a very diverse palette under Hardy’s quill. We have seen the importance of repetitions in the triangular relationships and their fated threat for the characters. But repetitions when noticed can also generate regret:

³²³ ‘After a Journey’ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 317-318.

³²⁴ ‘Places’ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems*, *ibid.*, pp. 320-321.

³²⁵ ‘The Haunter’ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems*, *ibid.*, p. 314.

³²⁶ ‘After a Journey’ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems*, *ibid.*, pp. 317-318.

The sight of Tess on the altar at Stonehenge looks back to Alec on the d'Urbervilles tomb and beyond that to Angel laying Tess in the abbot's tomb. Angel finding Tess in her dressing-gown at Sandbourne recalls the time, equally rich in sexual overtones, when he returned to Talbothays to meet her descending fresh from sleep. The recollection twists the knife of regret, of what might have been.³²⁷

Then, regret more frequently occurs when the lovers realize 'too late' the devotion of the women. Here, Hardy seems to take his revenge on the patronizing lovers of his pure heroines and is very ironic: "Perhaps it was human and correctly natural that Knight never once thought whether he did not owe her a little sacrifice for her unchary devotion in saving his life."³²⁸ We have seen that Angel – despite of his Christian name – is a potential villain, and Hardy proves in this passage that Knight is inhuman and the opposite of the very formal phrase "correctly natural" towards Elfride. Men are cruelly punished for their unfairness and mercilessness.

Finally, regret comes with the awkward feeling of missed opportunities. For instance, the dance scene in Marlott which is referred to several times throughout the novel. At the moment of departure, Angel suddenly realizes the beauty of Tess and regrets he had not elected her:

He wished that he had asked her; he wished that he had inquired her name. She was so modest, so expressive, she had looked so soft in her thin white gown that he felt he had acted stupidly. However, it could not be helped, and turning, and bending himself to a rapid walk, he dismissed the subject from his mind.³²⁹

But if the young maiden will always remember this moment with emotion, it will not be striking enough for Angel's mind. In a way, it can be considered as a pre-abandonment of the poor Tess who will later reproach Angel this past missed opportunity: "Why didn't you stay and love me when I— was sixteen; living with my little sisters and brothers, and you danced on the green? O, why didn't you, why didn't you!" she said, impetuously clasping her hands."³³⁰

Likewise, in 'Her Death and After'³³¹ an agonizing woman regrets her behaviour towards a kind lover and wish to "insert a deed back in Time:" (l. 42)

But I treated you ill. I was punished. Farewell!
—Truth shall I tell?
Would the child were yours and mine! (ll. 38-40)

³²⁷ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 279.

³²⁸ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, 2006), p. 342.

³²⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 13.

³³⁰ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p.172.

³³¹ 'Her Death and After' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 33-36.

Too-lateness or too-earliness, the ghosts and regrets are different ways to teach us that the past is gone and irretrievable. The only way to deal with this irreducibility is to keep memory alive.

5. Oblivion and Memory

We have seen the vanity of human existence comparing to the infinite geological time and come to the conclusion that Nature is not the least affected by the death or disappearance of her species, even less of an individual. If human beings reconcile themselves to the indifference of nature, their greatest fear is to be forgotten by men.

In ‘Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?’ the speaker is a buried woman who feel some scratching on the ground above her head and wonders with delight who is paying her a visit. She proceeds by elimination as her mysterious visitor answers her. It is not her lover who just got married, nor her relatives, nor her enemy, but her little dog. She is moved and raises “A dog’s fidelity” (l. 32) above that of “human kind” (l. 31). But the poem ends on a sardonic note as the dog reveals he was just passing to bury a bone and forgot that she was buried on this spot. Similarly, the caring lover in ‘Her Death and After’ is the only one to visit her tomb as “the Town forgot her and her nook, / And her husband took / Another Love to his home.” (ll. 58-60).

Oblivion after death is the new ontological fear. Since there is no salvation in death and no Heaven afterwards, the only consolation is to be remembered by the living ones. If Nature does not feel concerned by the livings pacing up and down on the surface of Earth, it is neither concern by their death: “Mary’s birthday. She came into the world . . . and went out . . . and the world is just the same . . . not a ripple on the surface left”³³² (23 December 1924) wrote Hardy about his sister.

The only way to have a sort of existence after death is to remain in the memories of the living ones as in ‘Her Immortality.’

³³² Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 245.

UPON a noon I pilgrimed through
A pasture, mile by mile,
Unto the place where I last saw
My dead Love's living smile. (ll. 1-4)

...

It seemed as if my body pressed
The very ground she trod.
I lay, and thought; and in a trance
She came and stood me by-- (ll. 7-10)

...

"You draw me, and I come to you,
My faithful one," (ll. 13-14)

...

Who prized me most I did not know
Till I passed down from sight." (ll. 23-24)

...

"Think, I am but a Shade!
"A Shade but in its mindful ones
Has immortality;
By living, me you keep alive,
By dying you slay me. (ll. 32-36)

But it can be difficult and even painful for the living to remember. In 'A Dream or No' Hardy questions the reality of his memories with Emma. His nostalgia carries him back to the places of their courtship. But they seem blurry and nebulous, as if they were not memories but dreams:

But nought of that maid from Saint-Juliot I see;
Can she ever have been here,
And shed her life's sheen here,
The woman I thought a long housemate with me? (ll. 17-20)

Hardy experiments some difficulties to reunite his "housemate" he was estranged with in the last years of their marriage and the "maid from Saint-Juliot" he fell in love with. Indeed, Hardy "looks back to a past that fades as his distance in time from it increases."³³³ Furthermore,

Death – indifferent, inevitable – seems to have robbed the romance of its reality. . . . Death may expose the illusion of meaning, or life may really consummate itself in an experience so glorious that it endures as long as the mind has the power to re-envision it. Reality may be blank and meaning mere projection, or Hardy's dreams may be his magical grip on the significant actuality of past experience.³³⁴

³³³ Paul Zietlow, *Moments of Vision: The Poetry of Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 187.

³³⁴ Paul Zietlow, *Moments of Vision: The Poetry of Thomas Hardy*, *ibid.*, p. 187.

Brennecke underlines Hardy's "deep-seated longing to escape from the world of fact and experience."³³⁵ Oppressed by the limitations of time and space, he can only venture through poetry. It allows him to create a shelter to fix eternally his beloved woman of St Juliot:

Time touches her not,
But she still rides gaily
In his rapt thought
On that shagged and shaly
Atlantic spot,
And as when first eyed
Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide.³³⁶ (ll. 30-36)

6. Success to Control Time

Hardy is a time-torn man unfit for this epoch of drastic changes. He longs for a past that is not existing anymore to the detriment of his present-time. Indeed, "the real existence of man is only in the present, whose unchecked flight into the past is a constant transition into death, a constant dying."³³⁷ With his "Poems of 1912-1913" about Emma, his grief and regrets, he enters the elegiac tradition. Yet he transforms it in his very personal way, bringing with him his modernity and iconoclastic writing. The first very different feature is that he grieves because his love is renewed with his wife's death. Once more, distance and desire seem to torture the lover. Now that she is no longer here, he loves her passionately. This tragic 'too-lateness' brings a great sense of guilt. Hardy's elegies are harsher than his predecessor's. Even though he uses the traditional elements of elegy (the cycle of seasons, flowers on a grave, similar themes) he distorts them with his cynicism. In the almost parodic formality of 'Without Ceremony',³³⁸ he suggests bluntly that Emma's sudden death was simply a form of bad manners:

It was your way, my dear,
To be gone without a word

³³⁵ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind* (London, 1924), p. 18.

³³⁶ 'The Phantom Horsewoman' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 321-322.

³³⁷ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind* (London, 1924), p. 129.

³³⁸ 'Without Ceremony' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 312.

When callers, friends, or kin
Had left, and I hastened in
To rejoin you, as I inferred.

And when you'd a mind to career
Off anywhere - say to town -
You were all on a sudden gone
Before I had thought thereon,
Or noticed your trunks were down.

So, now that you disappear
For ever in that swift style,
Your meaning seems to me
Just as it used to be:
'Good-bye is not worth while!'

Yet behind the sharp statement and accusation that she did not say goodbye, Hardy reproaches himself to have been absent, to have come too late. What appeared to be so sudden to him was in fact the logical result of a long period of estrangement between them that killed her slowly.

Furthermore, the hugely varied meters and techniques Hardy uses contrast with the measured and solemn stanzas of the Elegiac tradition. In 'The Voice',³³⁹ we can see great sonic effects, from its echoing triple-rhymes in the first stanza:

“Woman much missed, how you call to me, *call to me* [mine],
Saying that now you are not as you were
When you had changed from the one who was *all to me* [mine],
But as at first, when our day was fair” (ll. 1-4)

to the broken metre of the final stanza with an enjambment, making the poem's collapse into doubt :

Thus I; faltering forward,
Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,
And the woman calling. [mine] (ll. 13-16)

To expend such poetic labours on the dead is not a matter of tribute or self-display; rather it implies a sense of form close to that of modernist poetry, in which what is described or expressed dictates the mode of expression. The poet's restless dealing with loss and landscape and his sense of inadequacy of all formal constructions

³³⁹ 'The Voice' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 315.

offer a unique honest image of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries poet struggling with his own grief and remorse.

But the elegiac period of the time-torn man came to an end as he realized that there were mistakes to avoid when living:

First, one could be *too much* concerned about time, and so miss present happiness in regretting the past or worrying about the future . . . Or, second, one could be concerned with time *too little*: losing the ‘gleam’ of the present equally unhappily, by letting it slip by unheeded, while one is ‘looking away.’³⁴⁰

Then, other mistakes he experienced himself are to be ‘too early’ or ‘too late’ because one is indeed thinking too much or too little about the present. Tess is very concerned about time, she even succeed for some time to block her past and do not let it have an influence on her present, avoiding the feelings of “doubt, fear, moodiness, care, shame” to destroy her present. She obtains some delay:

keeping back the gloomy spectres that would persist in their attempts to touch her — doubt, fear, moodiness, care, shame. She knew that they were waiting like wolves just outside the circumscribing light, but she had long spells of power to keep them in hungry subjection there.³⁴¹

But she knows that her misfortune is looming in the future and will stroke her at one point of the running lines of events of her life. She takes an interesting account of the events that occurs in her life and wonder what day she is going through each year is the day of her death.

She philosophically noted dates as they came past in the revolution of the year; the disastrous night of her undoing at Trantridge with its dark background of The Chase; also the dates of the baby’s birth and death; also her own birthday; and every other day individualized by incidents in which she had taken some share. She suddenly thought one afternoon, when looking in the glass at her fairness, that there was yet another date, of greater importance to her than those; that of her own death, when all these charms would had disappeared; a day which lay sly and unseen among all the other days of the year, giving no sign or sound when she annually passed over it; but not the less surely there. When was it? Why did she not feel the chill of each yearly encounter with such a cold relation? She had Jeremy Taylor’s thought that some time in the future those who had known her would say: ‘It is the —th, the day that poor Tess Durbeyfield died’; and there would be nothing singular to their minds in the statement. Of that day, doomed to be her terminus in time through all the ages, she did not know the place in month, week, season or year.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Roy Morrell, *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way* (Kuala Lumpur, 1965), p. 31.

³⁴¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 171.

³⁴² Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 87.

But her fear will turn into acceptance of death in the end. As death means the end of her troubles and the obliteration of her pains she eagerly greets it.

7. Acceptance of Death

According to Brennecke, “the unsatisfied wishes, the frustrated efforts, the hopes unmercifully crushed by fate, the unfortunate errors of the whole life, with the ever higher rising tide of suffering and despair, and grim death waiting at the end, are the elements of the most fearful tragedy.”³⁴³ But if we consider death from the perspective of Schopenhauer the brevity of life is after all the best quality life possesses. A suicidal passivity is at the core of the acceptance of death. But most of all, “the alienating omnipotence of the Immanent Will”³⁴⁴ does not follow the dead. In death, human beings escape from the weight of life: consciousness and time passing are no longer things to worry about. Death is not to be feared for Schopenhauer: “For while we are, death is not; and when death is, we are not.”³⁴⁵

An ironic contrast is to be found in some of Hardy’s poems: an earnest and always unsuccessful striving of the living on the one hand, and a gay detachment of the dead on the other hand. The dead speak with a new freedom and a complete omniscience (without the human painful subjects of consciousness) which raise them at the level of the narrator or poet. To die is to embrace with clarity the whole universe at once in an anonymous awareness.

Hardy values greatly this complete omniscience, and the only way he can find it is by flirting with the boundaries of the dead:

I have attempted many modes [of finding it]. For my part, if there is any way of getting a melancholy satisfaction out of life it lies in dying, so to speak, before one is out of the flesh; by which I mean putting on the manners of ghosts, wandering in their haunts, and taking their views of surrounding things. To think of life as passing away is a sadness; to think of it as past is at least tolerable. Hence even when I enter into a room to pay a simple morning call I have unconsciously the habit of regarding the scene as if I were a spectre not solid enough to

³⁴³ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy’s Universe: A Study of a Poet’s Mind* (London, 1924), p. 131.

³⁴⁴ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy’s Universe: A Study of a Poet’s Mind*, *ibid.*, p. 221.

³⁴⁵ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy’s Universe: A Study of a Poet’s Mind*, *ibid.*, p. 135.

influence my environment; only fit to behold and say, as another spectre said: 'peace be unto you!'³⁴⁶

³⁴⁶ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 275.

CONCLUSION

*“In his poetry, Hardy sometimes pictures himself as a devitalized remnant of a man, wrung dry of feeling, yet he also presents himself as a keen-eyed observer, compassionately alert to life in all its manifestations. Although he was struck by a sense of the futility of vision and aspiration, he nevertheless continued to dream and hope in the face of thwarting circumstance and destructive time.”³⁴⁷ (Paul Zietlow, *Moments of Vision: The Poetry of Thomas Hardy*)*

Life and Fiction

Thomas Hardy's *in medias res* personal experience is the main component of his fiction. As his great existential despair is to face the absence of deity, the fictional Wessex world he creates enacts the malaise of his time: a world in which man is confronted with his helplessness in front of an indifferent Will which encompasses his and as such control each one of his deeds. In a universe ruled by the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest, those who cannot fit both the natural and the social world are doomed to die.

The place of his personal experience in his work is striking. Numerous bridges are built between his life and his fiction and in both we can see how great an observer he is.

Virginia Woolf, a visitor to Max Gate, paid tribute to Hardy's enduring power as a writer: “Thus it is no mere transcript of life at a certain time and place that Hardy has given us. It is a vision of the world and of man's lot as they revealed themselves to a powerful imagination, a profound and poetic genius, a gentle and humane soul.”³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Paul Zietlow, *Moments of Vision: The Poetry of Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. vii-viii.

³⁴⁸ Virginia Woolf, “The Novels of Thomas Hardy” (1928) in R. P. Draper, *Hardy, The Tragic Novels, A Selection of Critical Essays* (London, 1991).

Schopenhauer's and Hardy's Limited Human Will as Part of the Immanent Will

Throughout our study, we came across both the terms of human will and Immanent Will. It is thus necessary to explain with further details Schopenhauer's theory which inspired Hardy.

In Schopenhauer's interpretation, the world has no existence of its own because it is revealed to us through our senses and as a consequence is an illusion. Likewise time and space have no existence outside human mind and perception. Each phenomenon refers directly to a thing-in-itself: the Will to Live (*Wille zum Leben*). For Schopenhauer, there is a world because there is a Will to Live. Another way to understand his theory is to see that this will represents the human basic desire to live, and because there is desire there are illusions, nevertheless we would not be able to see the world without these illusions. Moreover, this will is not conscious nor deliberate but is at the origins of each phenomenon.

We had assumed before that the human will is relative as it is a part of the great Will "that urges and stirs everything." By their deeds and decisions, human beings enter the wind of History and are blown away from one point to the other until they die. Nonetheless, the 'human will' is still central to understand the lives of these tragic characters. Indeed, "The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay, not among things done, but among things willed."³⁴⁹ Tess's will is to fulfil her divine love for Angel while Alec's will is to make Tess his property to fulfil his lust.

As we have seen, it is almost impossible and extremely painful to fulfill one's desires and will. For both Schopenhauer and Hardy, man's will is always an instrument of impersonal forces working through him. In other words, the power of each man is nothing but the embodiment of a tiny part of the vast energy of the Immanent Will. In 'He Wonders about himself'³⁵⁰ we can see that man gradually awakens to his ontological fated condition:

No use hoping, or feeling vexed,
Tugged by a force above or under

³⁴⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 298.

³⁵⁰ Poem found on <http://www.poetrycat.com/thomas-hardy/he-wonders-about-himself> (May 28th, 2016, 9:42 p.m.)

Like some fantocine, much I wonder
What I shall find me doing next!

Shall I be rushing where bright eyes be?
Shall I be suffering sorrows seven?
Shall I be watching the stars of heaven,
Thinking one of them looks like thee?

Part is mine of the general Will,
Cannot my share in the sum of sources
Bend a digit the poise of forces,
And a fair desire fulfil?

In contrast to Friedrich Nietzsche 'will-to-power',³⁵¹ "Hardy's fundamental spiritual movement is the exact opposite of Nietzsche's will to power. It is the will not to will, the will to remain quietly watching on the sidelines."³⁵² For Hardy the more powerfully a man wills or desires, the more surely he becomes the puppet of an all-shaping energy, and the quicker he encompasses his own destruction. As soon as he engages himself in life he joins a vast streaming movement urging him on toward death and the failure of his desires. Thus, in the modern collision between the individual and the general, the best solution to escape the violence of the world is to refuse any involvement in the world as in the poem 'Childhood Among the Ferns' where the speaker succeeds to remain away from the world and ask himself:

'Why should I have to grow to man's estate,
And this afar-noised World perambulate?'³⁵³

Detachment from the World: a Solution.

As J. Hillis Miller pointed it in *Distance and Desire*,³⁵⁴ Hardy is characterized by his refusal of involvement and there is a conflict in his fiction between close and accurate descriptions and very broad ones. Furthermore, he shows that Hardy in his poetry presents no physical aim but a way to escape from the dangers of direct involvement in life, seeing life without being seen and reporting on that seeing. In his poems, our author displays a double vision which brings a great sense of irony: first in

³⁵¹ To Nietzsche, the 'will-to-power' is the main driving force in human beings and pushes them to reach the highest possible situation in life. It is a self-overcoming and supposes that man can take control of his own destiny.

³⁵² Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 6.

³⁵³ 'Childhood Among the Ferns' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 801.

³⁵⁴ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970).

the surimposition of the engaged (or involved) view and the detached (or wide view), secondly in the juxtaposition of a past event (when the speaker was happily engaged in life) and of his present detachment (when he has lost this happiness and looks back in retrospective meditation of the past).

When man is engaged in life, he is blind to everything but what lies immediately before his eyes. Conversely, the detachment of the stressful consciousness of the world gives an opportunity to see reality as it is. Only from a distance patterns are visible: each individual life has to be seen in the context of the whole cloth of which it is only a part.

Detachment implies passivity, secrecy, self-effacement, reticence, and the refusal of emotions and of their temptations. But this refusal of involvement can go even further. Indeed, another idea is recurrent throughout his novels and poems: the idea that in such a world the better thing to happen is never to be born as Tess wishes several times, for example in this cry of despair after her Fall : “I wish I had never been born – there or anywhere else!”³⁵⁵ That’s why the positions of Hardy and of his narrators and speakers are interesting. They can be considered as ‘ghost-seer[s]’ – outside the curse of the Immanent Will and outside the passage of Time – who are able to place the characters knowing from the beginning what they were and what they will be and let them move in this deterministic pattern. It is striking that the fatalism and helplessness Hardy feels in the real world is transposed in the fictional pattern of his work. At first sight, he appears as a pessimist but we are going to see that detachment is more part of the survival code in our “blighted”³⁵⁶ universe.

Thomas Hardy: a Pessimist?

Hardy’s long career spanned the Victorian and the modern eras. He described himself in “In Tenebris II” as a poet “who holds that if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst”³⁵⁷ (l. 14) and during his long life he lived through too many upheavals and wars to have become optimistic with age. According to Jean

³⁵⁵ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 67.

³⁵⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, *ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁵⁷ ‘In Tenebris II’ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 151.

Brooks in “The Poetic Structure” (1971), Hardy’s irony is part of the overwhelming pessimism:

Hardy’s ironic mode is the reverse face of his compassion. The pattern of what is runs in tension with the pattern of what ought to be according to human values. Mismatings, mistimings and undesired substitutions for an intended effect point to the ‘if only’ structure of Hardeian irony.³⁵⁸

For instance, we can wonder what would have happened to Tess “if only” she had not been “doomed to be seen and coveted that day by the wrong man.”³⁵⁹ Thomas Hardy presents the play of life, both tragic and comic, in a definite province of Wessex where his characters are “Time’s Laughingstock,”³⁶⁰ victims of ‘too-lateness’ and ‘too-earliness.’ But for Lionel Johnson in “The Characteristics of Hardy’s Art” (1894),³⁶¹ Hardy “sends out his characters to that forlorn hope, life: forlorn but not lost, and promising at least the noblest of defeats.” Hardy and even Schopenhauer are not heartless pessimists but they really feel pity and compassion for mankind. On the first hand, Schopenhauer agrees with Buddhism that admit that life is suffering. He proposes two solutions to renounce the Will to Live: suicide is the first one, the other alternative is pity. Pity is a form of compassion for everything that lives and suffers. As a result, there is a new conception of moral.

On the other hand, Hardy is not a pessimist but a meliorist: he believes in the betterment of man and that the human condition can be redefined and improved by a common human set of efforts. His work represents “one plea against ‘man’s inhumanity to man,’ to woman – and to the lower animals.”³⁶² Indeed, Tess is not the victim of a supernatural power but of man-made circumstances.

We are about to see that in Thomas Hardy’s hope in human beings and hope in the awakening of the Immanent Will that “A pale yet positive gleam low down behind.”³⁶³ (l. 60)

³⁵⁸ Jean Brooks, “The Poetic Structure” (1971) in R. P. Draper, *Hardy, The Tragic Novels, A Selection of Critical Essays* (London, 1991).

³⁵⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (London, 2006), p. 35.

³⁶⁰ Title of one of his collection of poems: “Time’s Laughingstock and Other Verses.”

³⁶¹ Lionel Johnson, “The Characteristics of Hardy’s Art” (1894) in R. P. Draper, *Hardy, The Tragic Novels, A Selection of Critical Essays* (London, 1991).

³⁶² William Archer, *Real Conversations in Ernest Brennecke, Thomas Hardy’s Universe: A Study of a Poet’s Mind* (London, 1924), p. 149.

³⁶³ ‘God’s Funeral’ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 297-299.

Hope in Human Beings

Even though he does not pretend to be a philosopher, Hardy proposes a kind of system in which mankind would be able to improve its ontological helplessness. First, he positions himself in opposition to Nietzsche because “He forgets that the universe is an imperfect machine, and that to do good with an ill-working instrument requires endless adjustments and compromises”³⁶⁴ (February 1914). Man must not imitate nature because “she is blind and not a judge of her actions, [...] she is an automaton.”³⁶⁵ Therefore, man has to seek a way he can adjust both in nature and society without denying his individuality.

Thomas Hardy believes in man even if he cannot believe in God. To Zietlow: “Clearly, he sees that the moral significance of the disappearance of God is a heightened necessity for human compassion.”³⁶⁶ Human beings need to stop looking for excuses in Fate and begging for redemption when they act badly. They have to feel responsible for their deeds and stop hiding behind a transcendence. Moreover, man has to accept the modernist assertion that there is nothing clearly defined to replace God; the idea that there is a final external truth is disintegrated. As Hardy put it, “the Scheme of Things is, indeed, incomprehensible; and there I suppose we must leave it – perhaps for the best. Knowledge might be terrible.”³⁶⁷

Then, it is important to remember that “Hardy is not protesting against man’s helplessness in the hands of Fate, but against his putting himself, by foolish and irresponsible actions, into such a helpless position.”³⁶⁸

Despite its ostensible unconsciousness, Hardy’s universe operates in such a way that man does become its center, its measuring device . . . like every ‘real tragedy, however tremendous it may be, an affirmation of faith in life, a declaration that even if God is not in his Heaven, then at least Man is in his world.’³⁶⁹

³⁶⁴ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 160.

³⁶⁵ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928*, *ibid.*, p. 98.

³⁶⁶ Paul Zietlow, *Moments of Vision: The Poetry of Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 10.

³⁶⁷ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 218.

³⁶⁸ Roy Morrell, *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way* (Kuala Lumpur, 1965), p. 127.

³⁶⁹ Dale Kramer, *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 16.

For Harold Child, “If [Hardy] sees the littleness, he also sees the greatness. Watching from infinity, he sees human life as futile and trivial. Down in the stress and the turmoil, looking out from the very heart of some farmer or milkmaid, he shows human life heroically grand.”³⁷⁰

In short, one is, according to Hardy, powerless to change the workings of Fate, but those things that are contrived by man — social laws and convention, for example — and which work against him can be changed by man. Man is not hopelessly doomed.

Hope in the Awakening of the Immanent Will

Florence Emily Hardy, our author’s second wife and biographer found what she calls herself an unexplained reference in her husband notebooks: “He, she, had blundered; but not as the Prime Cause had blundered. He, she, had sinned; but not as the Prime Cause had sinned. He, she, was ashamed and sorry; but not as the Prime Cause would be ashamed if it knew.” (December 10. . . .)³⁷¹ Though puzzling without its context, this quote is very interesting. First in the syntax itself as it opposes a human being – a “he, she” – to the Prime Cause (ambiguous name for the Immanent Will as the existence of the latter presupposes that there is no Prime cause). Secondly, because it prefigures Hardy’s hope in the awakening to consciousness of the Immanent Will we can see in the following poems.

In ‘The Blow,’³⁷² Hardy assumes again that there is no God blowing on man to drive him from one point to another but an unconscious Immanent Will which “may” come to consciousness at some point in the future and regret his harsh treatment of Earth’s species.

Time's finger should have stretched to show
No aimful author's was the blow
That swept us prone,
But the Immanent Doer's That doth not know,

Which in some age unguessed of us
May lift Its blinding incubus,

³⁷⁰ Harold Child, *Thomas Hardy* (London, Nisbet & Co., 1916) quoted by Joseph Hillis Miller in *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 21.

³⁷¹ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 282.

³⁷² ‘The Blow’ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 439.

And see, and own:
"It grieves me I did thus and thus!" (ll. 21-28)

Then in 'God's Education,'³⁷³ a man educates the Immanent Will from his inferior position of "[his] poor mortal kind" and makes 'It' realize his cruelty.

Said I: "We call that cruelty -
We, your poor mortal kind."
He mused. "The thought is new to me.
Forsooth, though I men's master be,
Theirs is the teaching mind!" (ll. 16-20)

Eventually, when the Immanent Will becomes a Conscious God worth worshipping it can be too late as it is shown in 'By the Earth's Corpse'³⁷⁴ which describes a Waste Land.

Written indelibly
On my eternal mind
Are all the wrongs endured
By Earth's poor patient kind,
Which my too oft unconscious hand
Let enter undesigned. (ll. 17-22)

...
So at this last, when flesh
And herb but fossils be,
And, all extinct, their piteous dust
Revolves obliviously,
That I made Earth, and life, and man,
It still repenteth me!" (ll. 27-32)

To conclude on Hardy's usually assumed pessimism, in Brennecke's words in order to understand our author we have to focus on "that touch of melioristic optimism at the end that we shall find to be the redeeming feature of his otherwise hopeless world."³⁷⁵

³⁷³ 'God's Education' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 252.

³⁷⁴ 'By the Earth Corpse' in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 111.

³⁷⁵ Ernest Brennecke, *Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind* (London, 1924), p. 50.

The 'Posthumous' Hardy

Regarded as the most outstanding writer of his time, Thomas Hardy was frequently visited at Max Gate by writers, artists and politicians. His guests included James Barrie, Robert Louis Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling, A. E. Housman, Siegfried Sassoon, H. G. Wells, Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden, George Bernard Shaw, Virginia Woolf, and many others. He was a model for them and a significant influence on the next generation of poets (Frost, Auden, Dylan Thomas, and Philip Larkin). Virginia Woolf paid a great tribute to him after his death, laying the emphasis on both the great artist and the humble man Thomas Hardy was:

When we say that the death of Thomas Hardy leaves English fiction without a leader, we mean that there is no other writer whose supremacy would be generally accepted, none to whom it seems so fitting and natural to pay homage. Nobody of course claimed it less. The unworldly and simple old man would have been painfully embarrassed by the rhetoric that flourishes on such occasions as this. Yet it is no less than the truth to say that while he lived there was one novelist at all events who made the art of fiction seem an honourable calling; while Hardy lived there was no excuse for thinking meanly of the art he practised. Nor was this solely the result of his peculiar genius. Something of it sprang from his character in its modesty and integrity, from his life, lived simply down in Dorsetshire without self-seeking or self-advertisement. For both reasons, because of his genius and because of the dignity with which his gift was used, it was impossible not to honour him as an artist and to feel respect and affection for the man.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁶ Virginia Woolf, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy" (1928) in R. P. Draper, *Hardy, The Tragic Novels, A Selection of Critical Essays* (London, 1991).

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Photographs

Front cover: Thomas Hardy

<http://www.moderntv.co.uk/productions/the-heart-of-thomas-hardy/>

May 5th, 2016, 6:12 p.m.

Max Gate where Thomas and Emma Hardy settled in 1885

Photograph from Andrew Butler for *The Telegraph*.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/expatpicturegalleries/6545913/Could-you-live-in-this-English-pile.html?image=10>

May 5th, 2016, 6:06 p.m.

Paintings

COROT, Jean-Baptiste, *Orpheus leading Eurydice from the Underworld*, 1861. (Oil on canvas, 112 cm x 137 cm, Museum of the Fine Arts, Houston)

Source: http://www.latein-pagina.de/ovid/ovid_m10.htm

November 11th, 2014, 5:08 p.m.

CARRAVAGGIO, Michelangelo da, *Narcissus*, 1597-1599, oil on canvas, 110 cm x 92 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Roma.

Source: <http://www.galleryintell.com/artex/narcissus-by-caravaggio/>

March 4th, 2016, 10:29 a.m.

Sculpture

BERNINI, Gian Lorenzo, *The Rapt of Proserpina*, 1621-1622, marble, 225 cm, Villa Borghese, Roma.

Source: <http://buzznews.it/galleria-borghese-a-roma-3-opere-imperdibili-28544/>

February 16th, 2016, 8:37 a.m.

ANNEX: SELECTED POEMS

*God's Funeral*³⁷⁷ (1908-1910)

I
I saw a slowly-stepping train --
Lined on the brows, scoop-eyed and bent and hoar --
Following in files across a twilit plain
A strange and mystic form the foremost bore.

II
**And by contagious throbs of thought
Or latent knowledge that within me lay
And had already stirred me, I was wrought
To consciousness of sorrow even as they.**

III
The fore-borne shape, to my blurred eyes,
At first seemed man-like, and anon to change
To an amorphous cloud of marvellous size,
At times endowed with wings of glorious range.

IV
And this phantasmal variousness
Ever possessed it as they drew along:
Yet throughout all it symbolled none the less
Potency vast and loving-kindness strong.

V
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: --

VI
**'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?**

VII
'Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
We gave him justice as the ages rolled,
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,
And longsuffering, and mercies manifold.

VIII
**'And, tricked by our own early dream
And need of solace, we grew self-deceived,**

³⁷⁷ From "Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 297.

Our making soon our maker did we deem,
And what we had imagined we believed,

IX

'Till, in Time's stayless stealthy swing,
Uncompromising rude reality
Mangled the Monarch of our fashioning,
Who quavered, sank; and now has ceased to be.

X

'So, toward our myth's oblivion,
Darkling, and languid-lipped, we creep and grope
Sadlier than those who wept in Babylon,
Whose Zion was a still abiding hope.

XI

'How sweet it was in years far hied
To start the wheels of day with trustful prayer,
To lie down liegely at the eventide
And feel a blest assurance he was there!

XII

'And who or what shall fill his place?
Whither will wanderers turn distracted eyes
For some fixed star to stimulate their pace
Towards the goal of their enterprise?'...

XIII

Some in the background then I saw,
Sweet women, youths, men, all incredulous,
Who chimed as one: 'This is figure is of straw,
This requiem mockery! Still he lives to us!'

XIV

I could not prop their faith: and yet
Many I had known: with all I sympathized;
And though struck speechless, I did not forget
That what was mourned for, I, too, once had prized.

XV

Still, how to bear such loss I deemed
The insistent question for each animate mind,
And gazing, to my growing sight there seemed
A pale yet positive gleam low down behind,

XVI

Whereof, to lift the general night,
A certain few who stood aloof had said,
'See you upon the horizon that small light --
Swelling somewhat?' Each mourner shook his head.

XVII

And they composed a crowd of whom
Some were right good, and many nigh the best....

Thus dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom
Mechanically I followed with the rest.

*Heiress and Architect*³⁷⁸ (1867)

SHE sought the Studios, beckoning to her side
An arch-designer, for she planned to build.
He was of wise contrivance, deeply skilled
In every intervolve of high and wide--
Well fit to be her guide.

"Whatever it be,"
Responded he,
With cold, clear voice, and cold, clear view,
"In true accord with prudent fashionings
For such vicissitudes as living brings,
And thwarting not the law of stable things,
That will I do."

"Shape me," she said, "high walls with tracery
And open ogive-work, that scent and hue
Of buds, and travelling bees, may come in through,
The note of birds, and singings of the sea,
For these are much to me."

"An idle whim!"
Broke forth from him
Whom nought could warm to gallantries:
"Cede all these buds and birds, the zephyr's call,
And scents, and hues, and things that falter all,
And choose as best the close and surly wall,
For winter's freeze."

"Then frame," she cried, "wide fronts of crystal glass,
That I may show my laughter and my light--
Light like the sun's by day, the stars' by night--
Till rival heart-queens, envying, wail, 'Alas,
Her glory!' as they pass."

"O maid misled!"
He sternly said,
Whose facile foresight pierced her dire;
"Where shall abide the soul when, sick of glee,
It shrinks, and hides, and prays no eye may see?
Those house them best who house for secrecy,
For you will tire."

"A little chamber, then, with swan and dove
Ranged thickly, and engrailed with rare device
Of reds and purples, for a Paradise
Wherein my Love may greet me, I my Love,

³⁷⁸ From "Wessex Poems and Other Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 66-68.

When he shall know thereof?"

"This, too, is ill,"
He answered still,
The man who swayed her like a shade.
"An hour will come when sight of such sweet nook
Would bring a bitterness too sharp to brook,
When brighter eyes have won away his look;
For you will fade."

Then said she faintly: "O, contrive some way--
Some narrow winding turret, quite mine own,
To reach a loft where I may grieve alone!
It is a slight thing; hence do not, I pray,
This last dear fancy slay!"

"Such winding ways
Fit not your days,"
Said he, the man of measuring eye;
"I must even fashion as my rule declares,
To wit: Give space (since life ends unawares)
To hale a coffined corpse adown the stairs;
For you will die."

*The Graveyard of Dead Creeds*³⁷⁹

I lit upon the graveyard of dead creeds
In wistful wanderings through old wastes of thought,
Where bristled fennish fungi, fruiting nought,
Amid the sepulchres begirt with weeds,

Which stone by stone recorded sanct, deceased
Catholicons that had, in centuries flown,
Physicked created man through his long groan,
Ere they went under, all their potence ceased.

When in a breath-while, lo, their spectres rose
Like wakened winds that autumn summons up: –
'Out of us cometh an heir, that shall disclose
New promise!' cried they. 'And the caustic cup

**'We ignorantly upheld to men, be filled
With draughts more pure than those we ever distilled,
That shall make tolerable to sentient seers
The melancholy marching of the years.'**

*At Castle Boterel*³⁸⁰(1913)

As I drive to the junction of lane and highway,

³⁷⁹ From "Human Shows, Far Phantasies, Songs and Trifles" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 673.

³⁸⁰ From "Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 319-320.

And the drizzle bedrenches the waggonette,
I look behind at the fading byway,
And see on its slope, now glistening wet,
Distinctly yet

Myself and a girlish form benighted
In dry March weather. We climb the road
Beside a chaise. We had just alighted
To ease the sturdy pony's load
When he sighed and slowed.

What we did as we climbed, and what we talked of
Matters not much, nor to what it led, -
Something that life will not be balked of
Without rude reason till hope is dead,
And feeling fled.

It filled but a minute. But was there ever
A time of such quality, since or before,
In that hill's story? To one mind never,
Though it has been climbed, foot-swift, foot-sore,
By thousands more.

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;
But what they record in colour and cast
Is - that we two passed.

And to me, though Time's unflinching rigour,
In mindless rote, has ruled from sight
The substance now, one phantom figure
Remains on the slope, as when that night
Saw us alight.

I look and see it there, shrinking, shrinking,
I look back at it amid the rain
For the very last time; for my sand is sinking,
And I shall traverse old love's domain
Never again.

*The Phantom Horsewoman*³⁸¹(1913)

Queer are the ways of a man I know:
He comes and stands
In a careworn craze,
And looks at the sands
And in the seaward haze
With moveless hands
And face and gaze,
Then turns to go...

³⁸¹ From "Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 321-322.

And what does he see when he gazes so?

They say he sees as an instant thing
More clear than today,
A sweet soft scene
That once was in play
By that briny green;
Yes, notes always
Warm, real, and keen,
What his back years bring-
A phantom of his own figuring.

Of this vision of his they might say more:
Not only there
Does he see this sight,
But everywhere
In his brain-day, night,
As if on the air
It were drawn rose bright-
Yea, far from that shore
Does he carry this vision of heretofore:

A ghost-girl-rider. And though, toil-tried,
He withers daily,
**Time touches her not,
But she still rides gaily
In his rapt thought
On that shagged and shaly
Atlantic spot,
And as when first eyed
Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide.**

*The Convergence of the Twain*³⁸² (1912)

(Lines on the loss of the "Titanic")

I
In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II
Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,
Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III
Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls-grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

³⁸² From "Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 278-279.

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V

**Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" . . .**

VI

**Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything**

VII

**Prepared a sinister mate
For her - so gaily great -
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.**

VIII

**And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.**

IX

Alien they seemed to be:
**No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,**

X

Or sign that they were bent
by paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event,

30

XI

**Till the Spinner of the Years
Said "Now!" And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.**

*In Tenebris II*³⁸³ (1895-1896)

Considerabam ad dexteram, et videbam; et non erat qui cognosceret me... Non est qui requirat animam meam." – Psalm 141.

["I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me;...no man cared for my soul."]

WHEN the clouds' swoln bosoms echo back the shouts of the many and strong
That things are all as they best may be, save a few to be right ere long,
And my eyes have not the vision in them to discern what to these is so clear,
The blot seems straightway in me alone; one better he were not here.

³⁸³ From "Poems of the Past and the Present" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 151.

The stout upstanders say, All's well with us; rulers have nought to rue!
And what the potent say so oft, can it fail to be somewhat true?
Breezily go they, breezily come; their dust smokes around their career,
Till I think I am one born out of due time, who has no calling here.

Their dawns bring lusty joys, it seems; their evenings all that is sweet;
Our times are blessed times, they cry: Life shapes it as is most meet,
And nothing is much the matter; there are many smiles to a tear;
Then what is the matter is I, I say. Why should such a one be here?...

Let him in whose ears the low-voiced Best is killed by the clash of the First,
Who holds that if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst,
Who feels that delight is a delicate growth cramped by crookedness, custom and fear,
Get him up and be gone as one shaped awry; he disturbs the order here.

*Everything Comes*³⁸⁴

"The house is bleak and cold
Built so new for me!
All the winds upon the world
Search it through for me;
No screening trees abound,
And the curious eyes around
Keep on view for me."
"My Love, I am planting trees
As a screen for you
Both from winds, and eyes that tease
And peer in for you.
Only wait till they have grown,
No such bower will be known
As I mean for you."
"Then I will bear it, Love,
And will wait," she said.
- So, with years, there grew a grove.
"Skill how great!" she said.
"As you wished, Dear?"--"Yes, I see!

**But--I'm dying; and for me
'Tis too late," she said.**

*Hap*³⁸⁵(1866)

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I

³⁸⁴ in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. P.468 "moments of vision and miscellaneous verses"

³⁸⁵ From "Wessex Poems and Other Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 5.

Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

*Ah, Are You Digging On My Grave?*³⁸⁶

"Ah, are you digging on my grave
My loved one? -- planting rue?"
-- "No, yesterday he went to wed
One of the brightest wealth has bred.
'It cannot hurt her now,' he said,
"That I should not be true."

"Then who is digging on my grave?
My nearest dearest kin?"
-- "Ah, no; they sit and think, 'What use!
What good will planting flowers produce?
No tendance of her mound can loose
Her spirit from Death's gin.' "

"But some one digs upon my grave?
My enemy? -- prodding sly?"
-- "Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,
She thought you no more worth her hate,
And cares not where you lie."

"Then, who is digging on my grave?
Say -- since I have not guessed!"
-- "O it is I, my mistress dear,
Your little dog, who still lives near,
And much I hope my movements here
Have not disturbed your rest?"

"Ah yes! *You* dig upon my grave . . .
Why flashed it not on me
That one true heart was left behind!
What feeling do we ever find
To equal among human kind
A dog's fidelity!"

"Mistress, I dug upon your grave
To bury a bone, in case
I should be hungry near this spot
When passing on my daily trot.
I am sorry, but I quite forgot
It was your resting-place."

³⁸⁶From "Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 300-301.

*Her Death and After*³⁸⁷

'Twas a death-bed summons, and forth I went
By the way of the Western Wall, so drear
On that winter night, and sought a gate--
The home, by Fate,
Of one I had long held dear.

And there, as I paused by her tenement,
And the trees shed on me their rime and hoar,
I thought of the man who had left her lone--
Him who made her his own
When I loved her, long before.

The rooms within had the piteous shine
The home-things wear which the housewife miss;
From the stairway floated the rise and fall
Of an infant's call,
Whose birth had brought her to this.

Her life was the price she would pay for that whine--
For a child by the man she did not love.
"But let that rest forever," I said,
And bent my tread
To the chamber up above.

She took my hand in her thin white own,
And smiled her thanks--though nigh too weak--
And made them a sign to leave us there;
Then faltered, ere
She could bring herself to speak.

"'Twas to see you before I go--he'll condone
Such a natural thing now my time's not much--
When Death is so near it hustles hence
All passioned sense
Between woman and man as such!

"My husband is absent. As heretofore
The City detains him. But, in truth,
He has not been kind.... I will speak no blame,
But--the child is lame;
O, I pray she may reach his ruth!

"Forgive past days--I can say no more--
Maybe if we'd wedded you'd now repine!...
But I treated you ill. I was punished. Farewell!
--Truth shall I tell?
Would the child were yours and mine!

³⁸⁷ From "Wessex Poems and Other Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 33-36.

"As a wife I was true. But, such my unease
That, could I insert a deed back in Time,
I'd make her yours, to secure your care;
And the scandal bear,
And the penalty for the crime!"

--When I had left, and the swinging trees
Rang above me, as lauding her candid say,
Another was I. Her words were enough:
Came smooth, came rough,
I felt I could live my day.

Next night she died; and her obsequies
In the Field of Tombs, by the Via renowned,
Had her husband's heed. His tendance spent,
I often went
And pondered by her mound.

All that year and the next year whiled,
And I still went thitherward in the gloam;
But the Town forgot her and her nook,
And her husband took
Another Love to his home.

And the rumor flew that the lame lone child
Whom she wished for its safety child of mine,
Was treated ill when offspring came
Of the new-made dame,
And marked a more vigorous line.

A smarter grief within me wrought
Than even at loss of her so dear;
Dead the being whose soul my soul suffused,
Her child ill-used,
I helpless to interfere!

One eve as I stood at my spot of thought
In the white-stoned Garth, brooding thus her wrong,
Her husband neared; and to shun his view
By her hallowed mew
I went from the tombs among

To the Cirque of the Gladiators which faced--
That haggard mark of Imperial Rome,
Whose Pagan echoes mock the chime
Of our Christian time:
It was void, and I inward clomb.

Scarce had night the sun's gold touch displaced
From the vast Rotund and the neighboring dead
When her husband followed; bowed; half-passed,
With lip upcast;
Then, halting, sullenly said:

"It is noised that you visit my first wife's tomb.

Now, I gave her an honored name to bear
While living, when dead. So I've claim to ask
By what right you task
My patience by vigiling there?

"There's decency even in death, I assume;
Preserve it, sir, and keep away;
For the mother of my first-born you
Show mind undue!
--Sir, I've nothing more to say."

A desperate stroke discerned I then--
God pardon--or pardon not--the lie;
She had sighed that she wished (lest the child should pine
Of slights) 'twere mine,
So I said: "But the father I.

"That you thought it yours is the way of men;
But I won her troth long ere your day:
You learnt how, in dying, she summoned me?
'Twas in fealty.
--Sir, I've nothing more to say,

"Save that, if you'll hand me my little maid,
I'll take her, and rear her, and spare you toil.
Think it more than a friendly act none can;
I'm a lonely man,
While you've a large pot to boil.

"If not, and you'll put it to ball or blade--
To-night, to-morrow night, anywhen--
I'll meet you here.... But think of it,
And in season fit
Let me hear from you again."

--Well, I went away, hoping; but nought I heard
Of my stroke for the child, till there greeted me
A little voice that one day came
To my window-frame
And babbled innocently:

"My father who's not my own, sends word
I'm to stay here, sir, where I belong!"
Next a writing came: "Since the child was the fruit
Of your passions brute,
Pray take her, to right a wrong."

And I did. And I gave the child my love,
And the child loved me, and estranged us none.
But compunctions loomed; for I'd harmed the dead
By what I'd said
For the good of the living one.

--Yet though, God wot, I am sinner enough,
And unworthy the woman who drew me so,

Perhaps this wrong for her darling's good
She forgives, or would,
If only she could know!

*The Blow*³⁸⁸

That no man schemed it is my hope -
Yea, that it fell by will and scope
Of That Which some enthrone,
And for whose meaning myriads grope.

For I would not that of my kind
There should, of his unbiassed mind,
Have been one known
Who such a stroke could have designed;

Since it would augur works and ways
Below the lowest that man assays
To have hurled that stone
Into the sunshine of our days!

And if it prove that no man did,
And that the Inscrutable, the Hid,
Was cause alone
Of this foul crash our lives amid,

I'll go in due time, and forget
In some deep graveyard's oubliette
The thing whereof I groan,
And cease from troubling; thankful yet

**Time's finger should have stretched to show
No aimful author's was the blow
That swept us prone,
But the Immanent Doer's That doth not know,**

**Which in some age unguessed of us
May lift Its blinding incubus,
And see, and own:
"It grieves me I did thus and thus!"**

*The Ruined Maid*³⁸⁹ (1866)

"O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?
And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?"-
"O didn't you know I'd been ruined?" said she.

- "You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;
And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers three!"-

³⁸⁸ From "Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 439.

³⁸⁹ From "Poems of the Past and the Present" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 142.

"Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined," said she.

- "At home in the barton you said 'thee' and 'thou,'
And 'thik oon' and 'theäs oon' and 't'other'; but now
Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compan-ny!"-
"Some polish is gained with one's ruin," said she.

- "Your hands were like paws then, you face blue and bleak
But now I'm bewitched by your delicate cheek,
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!"-
"We never do work when we're ruined," said she.

- "You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,
And you'd sigh, and you'd sock; but **at present you seem**
To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!"-
"True. One's pretty lively when ruined," said she.

- "I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town"-
"My dear - raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she.

*A Dream or No*³⁹⁰(1913)

Why go to Saint-Juliot? What's Juliot to me?
I've been but made fancy
By some necromancy
That much of my life claims the spot as its key.

Yes. I have had dreams of that place in the West,
And a maiden abiding
Thereat as in hiding;
Fair-eyed and white-shouldered, broad-browed and brown-tressed.

And of how, coastward bound on a night long ago,
There lonely I found her,
The sea-birds around her,
And other than nigh things uncaring to know.

So sweet her life there (in my thought has it seemed)
That quickly she drew me
To take her unto me,
And lodge her long years with me. Such have I dreamed.

But nought of that maid from Saint-Juliot I see;
Can she ever have been here,
And shed her life's sheen here,
The woman I thought a long housemate with me?

Does there even a place like Saint-Juliot exist?
Or a Vallency Valley

³⁹⁰ From "Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 316-317.

With stream and leafed alley,
Or Beeny, or Bos with its flounce flinging mist?

*The Dead Man Walking*³⁹¹

**They hail me as one living,
But don't they know
That I have died of late years,
Untombed although?**

**I am but a shape that stands here,
A pulseless mould,
A pale past picture, screening
Ashes gone cold.**

**Not at a minute's warning,
Not in a loud hour,
For me ceased Time's enchantments
In hall and bower.**

There was no tragic transit,
No catch of breath,
When silent seasons inched me
On to this death ...

**-- A Troubadour-youth I rambled
With Life for lyre,
The beats of being raging
In me like fire.**

But when I practised eyeing
The goal of men,
It iced me, and I perished
A little then.

When passed my **friend**, my **kinsfolk**,
Through the Last Door,
And left me standing bleakly,
I died yet more;

And when my **Love's heart** kindled
In hate of me,
Wherefore I knew not, died I
One more degree.

**And if when I died fully
I cannot say,
And changed into the corpse-thing
I am to-day,**

Yet is it that, though whiling

³⁹¹ From "Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 195-196.

**The time somehow
In walking, talking, smiling,
I live not now.**

*In the Mind's Eye*³⁹²

That was once her casement,
And the taper nigh,
Shining from within there,
Beckoned, "Here am I!"

Now, as then, I see her
Moving at the pane;
**Ah; 'tis but her phantom
Borne within my brain! -**

**Foremost in my vision
Everywhere goes she;
Change dissolves the landscapes,
She abides with me.**

Shape so sweet and shy, Dear,
Who can say thee nay?
**Never once do I, Dear,
Wish thy ghost away.**

*Friends Beyond*³⁹³

WILLIAM Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer Ledlow late at plough,
Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,
And the Squire, and Lady Susan, lie in Mellstock churchyard now!

"Gone," I call them, gone for good, that group of local hearts and
heads;
Yet at mothy curfew-tide,
And at midnight when the noon-heat breathes it back from walls and
leads,

They've a way of whispering to me--fellow-wight who yet abide--
In the muted, measured note
Of a ripple under archways, or a lone cave's stillicide:

**"We have triumphed: this achievement turns the bane to antidote,
Unsuccesses to success,
Many thought-worn eyes and morrows to a morrow free of thought.**

**"No more need we corn and clothing, feel of old terrestrial stress;
Chill detraction stirs no sigh;
Fear of death has even bygone us: death gave all that we possess."**

³⁹² From "Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 203.

³⁹³ From "Wessex Poems and Other Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 52-53.

W. D.--"Ye mid burn the wold bass-viol that I set such vallie by."
Squire.--"You may hold the manse in fee,
You may wed my spouse, my children's memory of me may decry."

Lady.--"You may have my rich brocades, my laces; take each household
key;
Ransack coffer, desk, bureau;
Quiz the few poor treasures hid there, con the letters kept by me."

Far.--"Ye mid zell my favorite heifer, ye mid let the charlock grow,
Foul the grinterns, give up thrift."
Wife.--"If ye break my best blue china, children, I sha'n't care or
ho."

All--"We've no wish to hear the tidings, how the people's fortunes
shift;
What your daily doings are;
Who are wedded, born, divided; if your lives beat slow or swift.

"Curious not the least are we if our intents you make or mar,
If you quire to our old tune,
If the City stage still passes, if the weirs still roar afar."

Thus, with very gods' composure, freed those crosses late and soon
Which, in life, the Trine allow
(Why, none witteth), and ignoring all that haps beneath the moon,

William Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer Ledlow late at plough,
Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,
And the Squire, and Lady Susan, murmur mildly to me now.

*On a Fine Morning*³⁹⁴(1899)

Whence comes Solace?--Not from seeing
What is doing, suffering, being,
Not from noting Life's conditions,
Nor from heeding Time's monitions;
 But in cleaving to the Dream,
 And in gazing at the gleam
 Whereby gray things golden seem.

II

Thus do I this heyday, holding
Shadows but as lights unfolding,
As no specious show this moment
With its irised embowment;
 But as nothing other than
 Part of a benignant plan;
 Proof that earth was made for man.

³⁹⁴ From "Poems of the Past and the Present" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 114.

*Her Immortality*³⁹⁵

**UPON a noon I pilgrimed through
A pasture, mile by mile,
Unto the place where I last saw
My dead Love's living smile.**

And sorrowing I lay me down
Upon the heated sod:
**It seemed as if my body pressed
The very ground she trod.**

**I lay, and thought; and in a trance
She came and stood me by--**
The same, even to the marvellous ray
That used to light her eye.

**"You draw me, and I come to you,
My faithful one,"** she said,
In voice that had the moving tone
It bore in maidenhead.

She said: "'Tis seven years since I died:
Few now remember me;
My husband clasps another bride;
My children mothers she.

My brethren, sisters, and my friends
Care not to meet my sprite:
**Who prized me most I did not know
Till I passed down from sight."**

I said: "My days are lonely here;
I need thy smile alway:
I'll use this night my ball or blade,
And join thee ere the day."

A tremor stirred her tender lips,
Which parted to dissuade:
"That cannot be, O friend," she cried;
"Think, I am but a Shade!

**"A Shade but in its mindful ones
Has immortality;
By living, me you keep alive,
By dying you slay me.**

"In you resides my single power
Of sweet continuance here;
On your fidelity I count
Through many a coming year."

³⁹⁵ From "Wessex Poems and Other Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 47-49.

--I started through me at her plight,
So suddenly confessed:
Dismissing late distaste for life,
I craved its bleak unrest.

"I will not die, my One of all!--
To lengthen out thy days
I'll guard me from minutest harms
That may invest my ways!"

She smiled and went. Since then she comes
Oft when her birth-moon climbs,
Or at the seasons' ingresses
Or anniversary times;

But grows my grief. When I surcease,
Through whom alone lives she,
Ceases my Love, her words, her ways,
Never again to be!

*Transformations*³⁹⁶

Portion of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew,
Bosomed here at its foot:
This branch may be his wife,
A ruddy human life
Now turned to a green shoot.

These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,
Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I often tried to know
May be entering this rose.

**So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and veins abound
In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they were!**

*The Masked Face*³⁹⁷

**I found me in a great surging space,
At either end a door,
And I said: "What is this giddy place,**

³⁹⁶ From "Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 432-433.

³⁹⁷ From "Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 481.

**With no firm-fixed floor,
That I knew not of before?"
"It is Life," said a mask-clad face.**

**I asked: "But how do I come here,
Who never wished to come;
Can the light and air be made more clear,
The floor more quiet some,
And the doors set wide? They numb
Fast-locked, and fill with fear."**

**The mask put on a bleak smile then,
And said, "O vassal-wight,
There once complained a goosequill pen
To the scribe of the Infinite
Of the words it had to write
Because they were past its ken."**

*After a Journey*³⁹⁸

I come to interview a Voiceless ghost;
Whither, O whither will its whim now draw me?
Up the cliff, down, till I'm lonely, lost,
And the unseen waters' soliloquies awe me.
Where you will next be there's no knowing,
Facing round about me everywhere,
With your nut-coloured hair,
And gray eyes, and rose-flush coming and going.

**Yes: I have re-entered your olden haunts at last;
Through the years, through the dead scenes I have tracked you;
What have you now found to say of our past -
Viewed across the dark space wherein I have lacked you?
Summer gave us sweets, but autumn wrought division?
Things were not lastly as firstly well
With us twain, you tell?
But all's closed now, despite Time's derision.**

**I see what you are doing: you are leading me on
To the spots we knew when we haunted here together,
The waterfall, above which the mist-bow shone
At the then fair hour in the then fair weather,
And the cave just under, with a voice still so hollow
That it seems to call out to me from forty years ago,
When you were all aglow,
And not the thin ghost that I now frailly follow!**

Ignorant of what there is flitting here to see,
The waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily,
Soon you will have, Dear, to vanish from me,
For the stars close their shutters and the dawn whitens hazily.

³⁹⁸ From "Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 317-318.

Trust me, I mind not, though Life lours,
The bringing of me here; nay, bring me here again!
I am just the same as when
Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers.

*The Shadow on the Stone*³⁹⁹ (1913-1916)

I went by the Druid stone
That broods in the garden white and lone,
And I stopped and looked at the **shifting shadows**
That at some moments fall thereon
From the tree hard by with a rhythmic swing,
And they shaped in my imagining
To the shade that a well-known head and shoulders
Threw there when she was gardening.

I thought her behind my back,
Yea, her I long had learned to lack,
And I said: 'I am sure you are standing behind me,
Though how do you get into this old track?'
And there was no sound but the fall of a leaf
As a sad response; and to keep down grief
I would not turn my head to discover
That there was nothing in my belief.

Yet I wanted to look and see
That nobody stood at the back of me;
But I thought once more: 'Nay, I'll not unvision
A shape which, somehow, there may be.'
So I went on softly from the glade,
And left her behind me throwing her shade,
As she were indeed an apparition—
My head unturned lest my dream should fade.

*The Bedridden Peasant to an Unknowing God*⁴⁰⁰

Much wonder I--here long low-laid -
That this dead wall should be
Betwixt the Maker and the made,
Between Thyself and me!

For, say one puts a child to nurse,
He eyes it now and then
To know if better 'tis, or worse,
And if it mourn, and when.

But Thou, Lord, giv'st us men our clay
In helpless bondage thus

³⁹⁹ From "Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 489-490.

⁴⁰⁰ From "Poems of the Past and the Present" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 110.

**To Time and Chance, and seem'st straightway
To think no more of us!**

That some disaster cleft Thy scheme
And tore us wide apart,
So that no cry can cross, I deem;
For Thou art mild of heart,

And would'st not shape and shut us in
Where voice can not be heard:
'Tis plain Thou meant'st that we should win
Thy succour by a word.

Might but Thy sense flash down the skies
Like man's from clime to clime,
Thou would'st not let me agonize
Through my remaining time;

But, seeing how much Thy creatures bear -
Lame, starved, or maimed, or blind -
Thou'dst heal the ills with quickest care
Of me and all my kind.

Then, since Thou mak'st not these things be,
But these things dost not know,
I'll praise Thee as were shown to me
The mercies Thou would'st show!

***By the Earth's Corpse*⁴⁰¹**

I

"O Lord, why grieve'st Thou? -
Since Life has ceased to be
Upon this globe, now cold
As lunar land and sea,
And humankind, and fowl, and fur
Are gone eternally,
All is the same to Thee as ere
They knew mortality."

II

"O Time," replied the Lord,
"Thou read'st me ill, I ween;
Were all THE SAME, I should not grieve
At that late earthly scene,
Now blestly past--though planned by me
With interest close and keen! -
Nay, nay: things now are NOT the same
As they have earlier been.

III

"Written indelibly

⁴⁰¹ From "Poems of the Past and the Present" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 111.

**On my eternal mind
Are all the wrongs endured
By Earth's poor patient kind,
Which my too oft unconscious hand
Let enter undesigned.**

No god can cancel deeds foredone,
Or thy old coils unwind!

IV

"As when, in Noe's days,
I whelmed the plains with sea,
**So at this last, when flesh
And herb but fossils be,
And, all extinct, their piteous dust
Revolves obliviously,
That I made Earth, and life, and man,
It still repenteth me!"**

*God's Education*⁴⁰²

I saw him steal the light away
That haunted in her eye:
It went so gently none could say
More than that it was there one day
And missing by-and-by.

I watched her longer, and he stole
Her lily tincts and rose;
All her young sprightliness of soul
Next fell beneath his cold control,
And disappeared like those.

I asked: "Why do you serve her so?
Do you, for some glad day,
Hoard these her sweets--?" He said, "O no,
They charm not me; I bid Time throw
Them carelessly away."

Said I: "**We call that cruelty -
We, your poor mortal kind.**"
He mused. "**The thought is new to me.
Forsooth, though I men's master be,
Theirs is the teaching mind!"**

*Nature's Questioning*⁴⁰³

WHEN I look forth at dawning, pool,
Field, flock, and lonely tree,
All seem to look at me

⁴⁰² From "Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 252.

⁴⁰³ From "Wessex Poems and Other Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 58.

Like chastened children sitting silent in a school;

Their faces dulled, constrained, and worn,
As though the master's ways
Through the long teaching days
Their first terrestrial zest had chilled and overborne.

And on them stirs, in lippings mere
(As if once clear in call,
But now scarce breathed at all)--
"We wonder, ever wonder, why we find us here!

"Has some Vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?

"Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains?...
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

"Or is it that some high Plan betides,
As yet not understood,
Of Evil stormed by Good,
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achievement strides?"

Thus things around. No answerer I...
Meanwhile the winds, and rains,
And Earth's old glooms and pains
Are still the same, and gladdest Life Death neighbors nigh.

*The Church-Builder*⁴⁰⁴

I
The church flings forth a battled shade
Over the moon-blanced sward;
The church; my gift; whereto I paid
My all in hand and hoard:
Lavished my gains
With stintless pains
To glorify the Lord.

II
I squared the broad foundations in
Of ashlarred masonry;
I moulded mullions thick and thin,
Hewed fillet and ogee;
I circleted
Each sculptured head
With nimb and canopy.

⁴⁰⁴ From "Poems of the Past and the Present" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), pp. 153-155.

III

I called in many a craftsman
To fix emblazoned glass,
To figure Cross and Sepulchre
On dossal, boss, and brass.
My gold all spent,
My jewels went
To gem the cups of Mass.

IV

I borrowed deep to carve the screen
And raise the ivoried Rood;
I parted with my small demesne
To make my owings good.
Heir-looms unpriced
I sacrificed,
Until debt-free I stood.

V

So closed the task. "Deathless the Creed
Here substantiated!" said my soul:
"I heard me bidden to this deed,
And straight obeyed the call.
Illume this fane,
That not in vain
I build it, Lord of all!"

VI

But, as it chanced me, then and there
Did dire misfortunes burst;
My home went waste for lack of care,
My sons rebelled and curst;
Till I confessed
That aims the best
Were looking like the worst.

VII

Enkindled by my votive work
No burning faith I find;
The deeper thinkers sneer and smirk,
And give my toil no mind;
From nod and wink
I read they think
That I am fool and blind.

VIII

**My gift to God seems futile, quite;
The world moves as erstwhile;
And powerful wrong on feeble right
Tramples in olden style.
My faith burns down,
I see no crown;
But Cares, and Grievs, and Guile.**

IX

So now, the remedy? Yea, this:
I gently swing the door
Here, of my fane—no soul to wis -
And cross the patterned floor
To the rood-screen
That stands between
The nave and inner chore.

X

The rich red windows dim the moon,
But little light need I;
I mount the prie-dieu, lately hewn
From woods of rarest dye;
Then from below
My garment, so,
I draw this cord, and tie

XI

One end thereof around the beam
Midway 'twixt Cross and truss:
I noose the nethermost extreme,
And in ten seconds thus
I journey hence -
To that land whence
No rumour reaches us.

XII

Well: Here at morn they'll light on one
Dangling in mockery
Of what he spent his substance on
Blindly and uselessly! . . .

"He might," they'll say,
"Have built, some way.
A cheaper gallows-tree!"

*The Haunter*⁴⁰⁵

He does not think that I haunt here nightly:
How shall I let him know
That whither his fancy sets him wandering
I, too, alertly go? -
**Hover and hover a few feet from him
Just as I used to do,
But cannot answer his words addressed me -
Only listen thereto!**

When I could answer he did not say them:

⁴⁰⁵ From "Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 314.

When I could let him know
How I would like to join in his journeys
Seldom he wished to go.
Now that he goes and wants me with him
More than he used to do,
Never he sees my faithful phantom
Though he speaks thereto.

**Yes, I accompany him to places
Only dreamers know,**
Where the shy hares show their faces,
Where the night rooks go;
Into old aisles where the past is all to him,
Close as his shade can do,
Always lacking the power to call to him,
Near as I reach thereto!

**What a good haunter I am, O tell him,
Quickly make him know**
If he but sigh since my loss befell him
Straight to his side I go.
And if it be that at night I am stronger,
Go, too, by day I do:
Please, then, keep him in gloom no longer,
Even ghosts tend thereto!

*In Vision I Roamed*⁴⁰⁶ (1866)

IN vision I roamed the flashing Firmament,
So fierce in blazon that the Night waxed wan,
As though with an awed sense of such ostent;
And as I thought my spirit ranged on and on

In footless traverse through ghastr heights of sky,
To the last chambers of the monstrous Dome,
Where stars the brightest here to darkness die:
Then, any spot on our own Earth seemed Home!

And the sick grief that you were far away
Grew pleasant thankfulness that you were near,
Who might have been, set on some outstep sphere,
Less than a Want to me, as day by day
**I lived unaware, uncaring all that lay
Locked in that Universe taciturn and drear.**

*The Voice*⁴⁰⁷ (1912)

⁴⁰⁶ From "Wessex Poems and Other Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 5.

⁴⁰⁷ From "Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 315.

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,
Saying that now you are not as you were
When you had changed from the one who was all to me,
But as at first, when our day was fair.

Can it be you that I hear? **Let me view you,** then,
Standing as when I drew near to the town
Where you would wait for me: yes, as I knew you then,
Even to the original air-blue gown!

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness
Travelling across the wet mead to me here,
You being ever dissolved to wan wistlessness,
Heard no more again far or near?

Thus I; faltering forward,
Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,
And the woman calling.

*I Travel as a Phantom Now*⁴⁰⁸ (1915)

I travel as a phantom now,
For people do not wish to see
In flesh and blood so bare a bough
As Nature makes of me.

And thus I visit bodiless
Strange gloomy households often at odds,
And wonder if Man's consciousness
Was a mistake of God's.

And next I meet you, and I pause,
And think that if mistake it were,
As some have said, O then it was
One that I well can bear!

*Childhood among the Ferns*⁴⁰⁹

I sat one sprinkling day upon the lea,
Where tall-stemmed ferns spread out luxuriantly,
And nothing but those tall ferns sheltered me.

The rain gained strength, and damped each lopping frond,
Ran down their stalks beside me and beyond,
And shaped slow-creeping rivulets as I conned,

With pride, my spray-roofed house. And though anon

⁴⁰⁸ From "Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 418.

⁴⁰⁹ From "Winter Words in Various Moods and Meters" in Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems* (London, 2006), p. 801.

Some drops pierced its green rafters, I sat on,
Making pretence I was not rained upon.

The sun then burst, and brought forth a sweet breath
From the limp ferns as they dried underneath:
I said: 'I could live on here thus till death;'

And queried in the green rays as I sate:
**'Why should I have to grow to man's estate,
And this afar-noised World perambulate?'**

*He Wonders About Himself*⁴¹⁰ (1893)

**No use hoping, or feeling vexed,
Tugged by a force above or under
Like some fantocine, much I wonder
What I shall find me doing next!**

**Shall I be rushing where bright eyes be?
Shall I be suffering sorrows seven?
Shall I be watching the stars of heaven,
Thinking one of them looks like thee?**

**Part is mine of the general Will,
Cannot my share in the sum of sources
Bend a digit the poise of forces,
And a fair desire fulfil?**

⁴¹⁰ Poem found on <http://www.poetrycat.com/thomas-hardy/he-wonders-about-himself>
(May 28th, 2016, 9:42 p.m.)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this Master dissertation is to study in Thomas Hardy's work the main existential issue of the 20th century: man submitted to the Immanent Will of Nature parallel to the discovery of the absence of transcendence. The project will focus on the notions of *Fatum*, short existence, ill-omens spread on the characters' paths and doom. These notions will help to understand how the characters and Hardy himself in his poems are tortured in a cosmos where Nature blindly stirs the strings and cut them in the manner of the *Parcae*. This study will especially rely on *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and a selection from *The Collected Poems* which epitomize the best the notion of Immanent Will. Eventually, by analyzing these different themes in Thomas Hardy's work, the project will also lay the emphasis on Hardy as a transitional author who straddles the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries and wonder: "What has providence done to Mr Hardy that he should rise up in the arable land of Wessex and shake his fist at his Creator?"⁴¹¹

L'objet de ce mémoire est d'étudier dans l'œuvre de Thomas Hardy l'interrogation existentielle principale du 20^e siècle : l'homme soumis à la *Volonté Immanente* [mine] de la Nature et la découverte parallèle de l'absence de transcendance. Le projet portera sur les notions de *fatum*, d'existence *finie*, des mauvais présages semés sur le chemin des personnages et sur le destin tragique. Ces notions permettront de comprendre comment les personnages et Hardy lui-même dans ses poèmes sont torturés dans un cosmos où la Nature tire les ficelles à l'aveugle et les coupe à la manière des Parques. Cette étude s'appuiera particulièrement sur *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* et *The Collected Poems* qui sont les plus représentatifs de la notion d'*Immanent Will*. Enfin, à travers l'analyse de ces différents thèmes dans l'œuvre de Thomas Hardy, le projet insistera également sur l'auteur transitionnel qu'est Hardy qui a chevauché le dix-neuvième et le vingtième siècle, et tentera de comprendre : « Qu'est-ce que la Providence a bien pu faire à M. Hardy pour qu'il puisse se dresser sur les terres cultivables du Wessex et secouer son poing en direction de son Créateur? »⁴¹²

Key words

Thomas Hardy	Fatum	Transitional author
Immanent Will	Ill-omens	Nature

⁴¹¹ Edmund Gosse, "Review of *Jude the Obscure*", *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*, New York, Barnes and Noble, 1970, 262-270.

⁴¹² *Translation is mine*

