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Social Influences on the Female in the Novels of Thomas Hardy

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A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of English
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Master of Arts in English

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by
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ABSTRACT

Social Influences on the Female in the Novels of Thomas Hardy

by

Jessica D. Notgrass

Many female characters in Thomas Hardy's novels clearly illustrate one of the Victorian stereotypes of women: the proper, submissive housewife or the rebellious, independent dreamer. Hardy does not demonstrate how women should be but rather how society pressures women to conform to the accepted image. Hardy progresses from subtly criticizing society, as seen in The Return of the Native and The Woodlanders, to overtly condemning gender roles and marriage in Tess of the d'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure. The characters of Thomasin, Mrs. Yeobright, and Grace Melbury illustrate those who submit to society's expectations; and Eustacia Vye, Felice Charmond, Tess Durbyfield, Sue Bridehead, and Arabella Donn illustrate the stereotypical seductress. Hardy's female characters seem to experience especially harsh or condemning circumstances due to the social expectations placed upon them. These unpleasant events earn readers' sympathy and work to subvert the traditional limiting views of women.

CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT 2

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION 4
2. THREE FIGURES ON THE HEATH: THE WOMEN OF THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE 7
3. LITTLE HINTOCK'S HAREM: THE WOMEN OF THE WOODLANDERS 22
4. THE PURE WOMAN: THE TEMPTRESS OF TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES 33
5. A TWISTED WEB: LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN JUDE THE OBSCURE 44
6. CONCLUSION 56

NOTES 58
WORKS CITED 59
VITA 61

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Feminist literary theory often criticizes authors who catalog women as submissive, angelic housewives or rebellious, independent dreamers. In the stereotypical male-dominated world, society values the dependent and compliant woman, as revered in Coventry Patmore's "The Angel in the House," and shuns the autonomous and adventurous one. As Rosemarie Morgan explains:

> With the advent of adulthood and a fully awakened sexual consciousness, every exploratory move towards self-discovery, self-realisation and sexual understanding [by the female], meets with obstruction in a male-dominated world intent upon highranking the docile woman over the daring, the meek over the assertive, the compliant over the self-determining, the submissive over the dynamic. (58)

Because such views of women limit the development of individualism and respect for females, feminist critics scorn writers who seem to reinforce these views.

Unfortunately for Thomas Hardy, many of his novels' female characters clearly illustrate one of these stereotypes, but Hardy does not demonstrate how women should be but rather how society forms such images of women and pressures them to conform to the proper angelic image. Those who follow accepted roles for women achieve approval from society, while those who follow their own course are ostracized or scorned. Hardy also blurs these stereotypical roles as each novel progresses, showing the improbability that a woman accurately and precisely fits into a simple category. As Elizabeth Langland explains, "Thomas Hardy's representations of women, by and large, exceed the simple stereotypes scholars initially identified as characteristic images of women" (32). This progression as well as Hardy's frequent ambiguity both attract and repel feminist critics. As Judith Mitchell argues, "feminist critics seem undecided whether to accept Hardy with distaste or to reject him with reluctance" (172).

This dilemma with Hardy's characterization exists not only in modern readers and critics but with his contemporaries who struggled with it as well. Langland hints that Hardy's works stirred the social waters of gender roles: "Hardy engaged profound social dislocations in ways that disturbed the stability to gender classifications" (32). Margaret R. Higonnet further

explains: "In an age when political, social, and literary challenges were being counted to traditional gender roles, Hardy tested and subverted constraining gender definitions to an unusual extent. He certainly would not have wanted to privilege women over men or men over women in the analysis of systems of social representation" (3). His placing of the sexes in new roles and his focus on the repercussions of the old ways gradually surface throughout the collection of his novels.

While the majority of characters who naturally follow society's approved role for women are minor characters in Hardy's novels or uninvolved emotionally with the reader, the female characters who do not naturally or easily conform win the reader's sympathy through their restlessness, confusion, or suffering. The progression of Hardy's works from subtly influencing society to overtly condemning gender roles and marriage reveals his strong motivation to change the Victorian society's opinion of women.

In <u>The Return of the Native</u> Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright both illustrate the submissive and motherly female ideal, but both play relatively minor roles in the novel, and readers remain emotionally distanced from them. On the other hand, Eustacia Vye rebels against the traditional view of women and revels in romantic dreams of Paris and passion. Just as she mesmerizes the heathfolk as the witch of the neighborhood, so she entrances and convinces readers that she is a victim of enduring the pressures to conform to mistaken views of women. When she realizes she cannot escape her disastrous marriage or experience the excitement available away from the heath, she suddenly dies, illustrating the futility of becoming someone other than one's true self.

<u>The Woodlanders</u> deals primarily with the struggle of Grace Melbury to develop her perfect housewife image at the expense of Winterbourne, the man her father had originally chosen for her to marry. Because she surrenders to social expectations and influences from her father, her happiness deteriorates, and she is filled with regret. Felice Charmond likewise fulfills the stereotypical seductress role that eventually leads to her own death and creates emotions within the reader contrary to those expected by the typical Victorian society.

In <u>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</u> the woman's struggle between the expected role and the real self is evident. Tess struggles with being viewed as pure and conforming, but her past and her compulsion to support her family interfere with achieving this image. Throughout the novel, the reader sympathizes with Tess and her seemingly uncontrollable struggle to live a successful and self-fulfilling life while dealing with her past and its repercussions within society.

Jude the Obscure is perhaps the strongest example of Hardy's demonstration of the struggle of women to establish their identities. Arabella, Jude's first wife, believes marriage will fulfill her, but when she realizes Jude does not satisfy her, she discards him and the angelic housewife image. Throughout the novel she continues searching for her identity by aligning herself with men. Sue Bridehead also struggles with identity and attempts to define herself as Philotson's wife but realizes this flaw after the repeated repulsive responses to her husband's advances and instead clings to Jude, her true desire. During their years together, they are happy and satisfied except when society interferes and attempts to redefine who they are and who they should be as an unmarried couple. Eventually, Sue succumbs to the pressure and leaves Jude to return to her original husband and the torture of their marriage. Although the stereotypes are not as clearly illustrated in these women, the pressure and interference from society are stronger than in any other of Hardy's novels.

Hardy's texts suggest to his readers that people need to live out the desires of their hearts instead of feeling obligated to conform to pressures from society. Each time a female character deviates from her original plan or true desire, disaster or pain results. While many of Hardy's characters (male and female) suffer through emotional dilemmas, the female characters seem to experience especially harsh or condemning circumstances as a result of the social expectations placed upon them. These unpleasant events earn readers' sympathy and work to break down the traditional and limiting views of women.

CHAPTER 2

THREE FIGURES ON THE HEATH: THE WOMEN OF THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

First published in 1878, Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native showcases a wild passionate woman searching for fulfillment in the dreary surroundings of Egdon Heath, where the inhabitants are steeped in the older traditional ways of life. The main character, Eustacia Vye, illustrates the stereotypical restless and dissatisfied female seeking adventure and excitement outside the expected and accepted means for a woman. By contrast, the other two female characters, Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright, foil Eustacia by demonstrating the appropriate actions of a woman and further illuminate Eustacia's recklessness. Even in this early novel, Hardy toys with his readers by employing these stereotypes of women, while eliciting sympathy for Eustacia's unconventional and desperate attempts to find satisfaction in life and downplaying the loyal and submissive women into minor and seemingly insignificant roles.

Hardy introduces Thomasin early in the novel as the quiet whimper in the back of the reddleman's van and further describes her as a "quiet ladylike little body," showing from the onset Thomasin's femininity and helplessness that continues throughout the novel (Return 29). Hardy describes Thomasin as gentle, feminine, and at times helpless, and her physical description embodies these personality traits. Emphasizing her long hair, Hardy says, "The sun, where it could catch it, made a mirror of Thomasin's hair, which she always wore braided." In a quaint and innocent childlike way, she braids her hair according to the day's importance: three strands for normal days, four for Sundays, five for special holidays, and seven strands on her wedding day (Hardy, Return 163). Another feminine quality of Thomasin is her voice. Caitlin Lowrey believes "Thomasin's voice and mannerisms are birdlike." When she is speaking with her cousin Clym, Hardy says she possesses a "sweet voice . . . which came to a sufferer like fresh air into a Black Hole" (Return 310). Thomasin also holds a certain radiance that seems to display her outer beauty as well as her inner charm. After the death of her husband and cousin's wife, Hardy writes: "Could Thomasin's mournfulness now and Eustacia's serenity during life have been reduced to common measure, they would have touched the same mark nearly. But Thomasin's former brightness made shadow of that which in a somber atmosphere was light itself" (Return 380). Because she possesses such a strong feminine glow that spreads to those around her, the deaths of

her close relatives seem more mournful due to the lack of this radiance. Certainly, Hardy uses Thomasin's physical characteristics to display her gentle "womanly" qualities.

Thomasin's arrival from Anglebury, alone and unmarried, further stirs the action of the novel and creates a clear view of her passivity. As Joseph Warren Beach states, "It takes nothing more than the return of Thomasin from town unwed to set going the whole series of dialogues which make up the substance of the first book" (91). Within these first eleven chapters of Book One, Thomasin reveals her true purpose for marrying: it is not for love but for her family's reputation. She admits to her engaged Wildeve, "no, I can live without you. It is Aunt I think of. She is so proud, and thinks so much of her family respectability, that she will be cut down with mortification if this story should get abroad before–it is done. My cousin Clym, too, will be much wounded" (Hardy, Return 50). As Gayla R. Steel explains, "Thomasin, like Grace in *The Woodlanders*, marries because of social pressures, intensified by Yeobright's stuffy attitude toward the gossip about her. She is the innocent Hardy maiden who goes off to be married and returns still unwed" (55). Thomasin continues to express her concern for her family in the return of Clym from Paris, and she resolves to try to hide the shame from him:

> Now hearken to me . . . Tell him nothing. If he finds out that I am not worthy to be his cousin, let him. But, since he loved me once, we will not pain him by telling him my trouble too soon. The air is full of the story, I know; but gossips will not dare to speak of it to him for the first few days. His closeness to me is the very thing that will hinder the tale from reaching him early. If I am not made safe from sneers in a week or two I will tell him myself. (Hardy, Return 119)

On her wedding day, Thomasin is still "anxious to correct any wrong impression" to her aunt (Hardy, Return 163). She does not want Mrs. Yeobright to think ill of her or her future husband, and the reader is aware of Thomasin's uncertainly in her decision to marry. As she is leaving Mrs. Yeobright's home to meet Wildeve, she turns back to see if her aunt has called to her one last time. The two embrace again, and Thomasin tries to tell her aunt something, but resorts to a stuttered "I—I am—." Hardy says she is "quelling her grief" as she turns and walks on (Return 164). Leary of her impending marriage, Thomasin continues anyway to protect her family's reputation. Her total submission to the will of others and lack of self-concern demonstrate the angelic qualities valued in women during the period.

Thomasin also begins to realize her true feelings toward love and views herself as an example to others, hopefully thinking that some good will come from her pain. She says: "I am a warning to others, just as thieves and drunkards and gamblers are" (Hardy, Return 117). When she decides to follow through with the wedding before her cousin arrives home, she resolutely admits, "I am a practical woman now. I don't believe in hearts at all . . . I am not a blind woman to insist that he is perfect. I did think so, but I don't now. But I know my course" (Hardy, Return 161-2). In a seeming show of realization and practicality, "Thomasin here shows a stoic resiliency not usually associated with Hardy's heroines" (Jekel 93). Nevertheless, her decision to marry Wildeve in order to avoid controversy and appease her family demonstrates the submissive characteristic found in the angelic housewife. Even after Mrs. Yeobright's death, the pressure to conform to society's expectations and protect the family name influences Thomasin. She desires to marry Diggory because "He has been kinder to me than anybody else, and has helped me in many ways," but Clym reminds her of Mrs. Yeobright's poor opinion of Diggory. Instead of defending her emotions and rationale for clinging to Diggory, she confesses, "O no—I don't want to be rebellious in that way . . . I had no business to think of him – I ought to have thought of my family. What dreadfully bad impulses there are in me!" (Hardy, Return 394). Thomasin interprets her passionate desire to be with Diggory as evil simply because her aunt would have disapproved. Only after Clym eventually urges her to do as she wishes does she follow her heart and marry Diggory (Hardy, Return 395).[1]

Thomasin further fulfills the stereotype when she reveals her helplessness in keeping her husband at home (and apparently away from Eustacia). Although Wildeve is clearly avoiding his wife and venturing out with other women, Thomasin remains loyal and simply hints to Diggory of her struggle: "Husbands will play the truant, you know. I wish you could tell me of some secret plan that would help me to keep him home at my will in the evenings" (Hardy, Return 268). Herbert B. Grimsditch explains Thomasin's role more accurately: "She is clearly aware, after her marriage, that all is not over between Wildeve and Eustacia, but the part she plays is not one of indignation or recrimination but of gentle forbearance and absorption in the business of her home" (60). Her vulnerability and desire to appease others again surfaces when her husband and Eustacia are beginning their escape. She comes to Clym and confesses that she knew of the lovers' meetings but failed to reveal them at risk of soiling her husband's reputation: "I did not like to tell you when you called, and so make you think ill of him" (Hardy, Return

359). Only when her own marriage and that of her cousin are at risk will Thomasin reveal the problem of infidelity in her marriage and risk her image of the proper housewife. This continual desire to keep up appearances and remain loyal until the end earns her acceptance by the heathfolk but only a minor role in the novel.

Mrs. Yeobright, Thomasin's aunt and guardian, likewise exhibits an extreme sensitivity to the pressures and approval of society and attempts to protect her feminine image at all costs. As Shirley A. Stave explains:

> Although she herself is a woman, she accepts cultural (i.e., patriarchal) definitions of gender, and allows herself and other women to be limited and defined by men, as she reveals when Tamsin and Wildeve's marriage cannot take place because of a legalistic technicality; Mrs. Yeobright considers the matter 'disgraceful' and Tamsin 'ruined.' Similarly, she considers Eustacia's freedom in roaming about unchaperoned scandalous. She accepts the patriarchal good girl/bad girl duality and, in the typical 'blame the victim' mentality that such a duality fosters, faults Eustacia for being attacked by Susan Nunsuch. (61)

Mrs. Yeobright's pride for her family name and her own reputation lead her to forbid the banns between Thomasin and Wildeve and later remove her refusal for fear of scandal. When she explains the situation to Clym, she refuses to admit any fault or controversy and instead calls the botched marriage a "misfortune" (Hardy, <u>Return</u> 165). She further confesses that the hurried attempt at a second wedding "has been done for the best" and that she has "been ashamed to look anybody in the face" (Hardy, <u>Return</u> 165, 166). Her worry about herself and society's opinion of her seem to override any genuine concern for Thomasin or her future.

Her desire for approval and fear of scorn continue to dominate her personality when Clym reveals his plans to stay on the heath. As he tells her of his noble desire "to do some worthy thing before I die" and become "a schoolmaster to the poor and ignorant, to teach them what nobody else will," she balks and attempts to make him feel guilty. "After all the trouble that has been taken to give you a start, and when there is nothing to do but to keep straight on towards affluence, you say you will be a poor man's schoolmaster. Your fancies will be your ruin, Clym." Even though her son is confident and desirous to do some good for the surrounding heathfolk, Mrs. Yeobright focuses solely on the social and financial ramifications of her son's decisions: "I hadn't the least idea that you meant to go backward in the world by your own free

choice" (Hardy, Return 179). The social standing of her son's occupation is the sole determiner of her approval; his happiness and personal fulfillment mean nothing to her. In a last attempt to convince her son of her opinion, she states, "It is right that there should be schoolmasters, and missionaries, and all such men . . . But it is right, too, that I should try to lift you out of this life into something richer, and that you should not come back again, and be as if I had not tried at all" (Hardy, Return 182). She reveals her fear that society will believe she has failed to raise her son out of the desolate and unfruitful life on the heath and therefore regard her as a failure. When Mrs. Yeobright discovers her son performing the menial task of cutting furze for a living, she immediately begins "planning a dozen hasty schemes for at once preserving him and Eustacia from this mode of life" (Hardy, Return 278). Because Mrs. Yeobright is "some degrees higher of rank than her neighbours, the peasantry," she feels it is necessary to uphold her social status and that of her son by a spotless reputation and avoidance of menial people and tasks (Johnson 43). Her self-centeredness and anxiety about social condemnation move her to action more so than her son's needs.

Mrs. Yeobright's determination to defend her reputation and conform to society's expectations is again demonstrated in her reaction to Eustacia Vye and Clym's attraction to her. Without even meeting Eustacia, Mrs. Yeobright assumes the worst and believes the actions of Susan Nunsuch's pricking Eustacia in church to be warranted: "Good girls don't get treated as witches even on Egdon" (Hardy, Return 183). Because Eustacia frequently walks the heath, Mrs. Yeobright assumes "She is lazy and dissatisfied," unattractive characteristics for the possible spouse of her son. Revealing her obsession with society's materialistic views, she comments, "Don't suppose she has any money. She hasn't a farthing" (Hardy, Return 196). Dismissing any notion of marrying for love or passion, Mrs. Yeobright again focuses solely on social status: "I hate the thought of any son of mine marrying badly! I wish I had never lived to see this; it is too much for me—it is more than I dreamt!" (Hardy, Return 207). Stave explains her reaction as an inability to "comprehend a healthy sexuality in others" (61). Because Mrs. Yeobright fulfills the stereotype of the submissive housewife who will conform to society's wishes, she shuns those women who do not conform and instead exhibit any type of passionate emotion that she cannot comprehend.

After Clym's marriage and subsequent move from his mother's home, Mrs. Yeobright loses all sense of purpose for her life, demonstrating the uselessness of dependent women without men. Describing her depression, Hardy explains:

> No sooner had Yeobright gone from his mother's house than her face changed its rigid aspect for one of blank despair. After a while she wept, and her tears brought some relief. During the rest of the day she did nothing but walk up and down the garden path in a state bordering on stupefaction. Night came, and with it but little rest. (Return 214)

When Thomasin attempts to comfort her, she admits her sole purpose: "How can he bear to grieve me so, when I have lived only for him through all these years?" (Hardy, Return 216). She further reveals her dependence on others and appeals for pity:

> Some widows can guard against the wounds their children give them by turning their hearts to another husband and beginning life again. But I always was a poor, weak, one-idea'd creature—I had not the compass of heart nor the enterprise for that. Just as forlorn and stupefied as I was when my husband's spirit flew away I have sat ever since—never attempting to mend matters at all. (Hardy, Return 217)

Hardy shows the impending failure of women who rely solely on men for satisfaction, and although Mrs. Yeobright begs for pity, the author gives her little.

Eustacia Vye is the dominant female character of the novel and the one considered to be the restless and passionate dreamer who dismisses the opinions of society. She is mysterious by nature and seems to have some interaction with virtually every other character in the novel. She is first portrayed as the "lonesome dark-eyed creature" by a man on the heath and later described in romantic detail by the narrator (Hardy, Return 56): "She was in person full-limbed and somewhat heavy, without ruddiness, as without pallor; and soft to the touch as a cloud. To see her hair was to fancy that a whole winter did not contain darkness enough to form its shadow—it closed over her forehead like nightfall extinguishing the western glow." While her hair is dark, she has "pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries" that seem to glow and radiate a light (Hardy, Return 72). Hardy later labels them as "deep stormy eyes" (Return 152). Her outward appearance represents a mixture of the pure and evil passions inside her. As Rosemarie Morgan illustrates, "Clym's perception of Eustacia is circumscribed by a host of assumptions that range around the polarized stereotypes of Goddess and Whore; but Hardy's own perspective, even

while invoking visions of Goddesses, emphasizes Eustacia's painfully isolated, nullified existence" (81). Her seemingly contradictory descriptions continue to further her ambiguity of character. Her lips are full and beautiful, yet the corners of her mouth are spear-like, evidently showing the power of her words and kisses. Eustacia is identified as a "tiger-beetle, which when observed in dull situations, seems to be of the quietest neutral colour, but under a full illumination blazes with dazzling splendour," again showing her mysterious and even volatile nature (Hardy, Return 96).

As the novel progresses, Eustacia's face becomes a reflection of tragedy. As Wildeve leaves her home, he sees her "pale, tragic face watching him drive away" (Hardy, Return 314). When Clym, Diggory, and Charley stare at her lifeless body, Hardy says she "eclipsed all her living phases. Pallor did not include all the quality of her complexion, which seemed more than whiteness; it was almost light . . . Her black hair was looser now than either of them had ever see it before, and surrounded her brow like a forest" (Return 375-6). Even in death, her beauty in a mixture of light and dark mesmerizes those around her. Pamela Jekel seems to justify Eustacia's death in relation to her appearance: "Eustacia's beauty is all in her skin, her eyes, her hair like flame, her voice, her body—in short, all things which will pass. It is almost better that she destroy herself rather than live past her beauty's end" (95). As Lionel Johnson states, she is obviously a "lonely, passionate, and hungering spirit, in a marvelous form" (194-5).

In contrast to Thomasin's gentle and comforting physical traits, Eustacia possesses dramatic, eye-catching beauty that also accurately reflects her character. She is radically independent and relies on the aid of men only to meet her own physical desires. "Where Thomasin enacts the exemplary, dutiful, submissive, forbearing wife, Eustacia burns with 'smouldering rebelliousness'" (Morgan 59). As Shanta Dutta explains:

> Eustacia is always isolated and alienated from the heath-people and, almost hating her fellow-creatures, she is never shown as being of any use to anyone. But she constantly uses other people, exploiting their romantic weakness for her, in order to further her narrow personal ends. She uses Johnny to tend her bonfire, which is a lover's signal to Wildeve; she is not above trading on her physical charms and using Charley to gain a role in the mummers' play in order to catch a glimpse of Clym; she sees Clym not so much as a human being but as a key to unlock the glittering world of Paris; and although her pride is deeply mortified, she agrees to

> use Wildeve's services in fleeing from Egdon when her marriage finally breaks down. (44)

Stave further illustrates Eustacia's contrast with Thomasin: "[Eustacia's] strength and courage are epic in a time when societal stereotypes insisted women be frail and weak. We are told she has never once in her life been ill, an odd circumstance in a time when femininity was virtually equated with illness" (52). While not simply physical and stereotypical opposites, Jekel claims "Eustacia is, of course, Thomasin's emotional opposite. Together, the two women reflect Hardy's attitudes toward love and marriage" (94). As Thomasin is loyal and eternally hopeful of the success and fidelity of her marriage, Eustacia quickly realizes the tragedy evolving in her own and longs for escape. Grimsditch believes Hardy's description of Eustacia is purposely elaborate and intense: "The method employed in describing her shows that she is intended to be taken very seriously, as a study of strong but abnormal personality, and by no means a mere vulgar butterfly, pining for frivolity at any cost" (56). The strength of her character and Hardy's descriptions of her reveal the depth of her personality and in turn the struggle of women with similar traits to live fully.

Eustacia demonstrates a self-assured and confident nature, in stark contrast to Thomasin's helplessness and Mrs. Yeobright's self pity. Like her mother-in-law, Eustacia is strong-willed and determined, but unlike Mrs. Yeobright, Eustacia easily controls others and dismisses the views of society. When her grandfather chastises her for having a bonfire and wasting the firewood, she tells him her purpose "in a way which told at once that she was absolute queen here" (Hardy, Return 64). She does not apologize or admit any fault but instead tells her grandfather to go to bed, as a mother might to her child. She commands Johnny Nunsuch to feed her bonfire as a "little slave . . . galvanized into moving and speaking by the wayward Eustacia's will" (Hardy, Return 65). Wildeve responds to Eustacia's signal fire, and at his arrival she mocks him:

> I merely lit that fire because I was dull, and thought I would get a little excitement by calling you up and triumphing over you as the Witch of Endor called up Samuel. I determined you should come; and you have come! I have shown my power. A mile and half hither, and a mile and half back again to your home—three miles in the dark for me. Have I not shown my power? (Hardy, Return 70)

Her persuasive influence over Wildeve has only begun as she manipulates him to postpone his wedding until she decides whether or not she wants him as her lover. As Jennifer Gribble

describes, "Eustacia's fire expresses the passionate self-assertiveness that will rekindle out of the ashes of her relationship with Wildeve" (240). After her display of power, she disguises herself as a man to steal a glimpse of another possible lover, showing the confidence she has in herself to break such social boundaries. As Lowrey asserts, "She rebels, even scandalously cross-dressing to see with her own eyes the object of her affections." Eustacia clearly possesses only self-regard and follows her own path confidently without regard to the opinions of others.

Eustacia also reveals her prideful self-assertion during her argument with Mrs. Yeobright as she defends her reputation and attempts to open her mother-in-law's eyes to her own opinion. Eustacia's accusations divulge the pride and audacity within her: "How can you dare to speak to me like that?" and "If you had treated me honourably you would have had [Clym] still . . . You have brought yourself to folly; you have caused a division which can never be healed!" (Hardy, Return 246-247). She is overly harsh and critical of her mother-in-law and clearly disregards any attempt to make amends or impress her husband's mother. She focuses solely on the assumed accusations and is unable to see the woman's true cause for questioning. Likewise, Mrs. Yeobright takes offense, and the two never reconcile.

Although Eustacia cares little about the opinions of others and her acceptance within society, she does long for a better life outside the heath. In response to this desire, when she hears Clym singing as he is cutting furze, she realizes that he is content with their life on the heath, and this revelation devastates her: "It was bitterly plain to Eustacia that he did not care much about social failure; and the proud fair woman bowed her head and wept in sick despair at thought of the blasting effect upon her own life of that mood and condition in him" (Hardy, Return 255). Instead of feeling joy for the contentment of her husband during his blindness, she only considers the effect on herself, and she openly reveals her self-consuming pride.

The second dominant trait of Eustacia is her disregard for the beauty of the Egdon Heath and its people. "Egdon was her Hades," Hardy writes to show Eustacia's open hatred for the area (Return 73). She did not understand her surroundings, and so did not revel in them, but instead she fought against them, attempting to flee toward a more adventurous and exciting life. As Morgan explains, "Eustacia . . . is very much a prisoner in her world which she roams restlessly, night and day, yearning for freedom, action, passion – a yearning manifest in the burning fires she sets by night as beacons of her desire" (59). As Hardy explains: "The subtle beauties of the heath were lost to Eustacia; she only caught its vapours. An environment which

would have made a contented woman a poet, a suffering woman a devotee, a pious woman a psalmist, even a giddy woman thoughtful, made a rebellious woman saturnine" (Return 76). To Diggory Venn, Eustacia confesses that "[t]here is a sort of beauty in the scenery . . . but it is a jail to me" (Hardy, Return 98). She is blind to the possibilities of adventure around her and instead dreams only of escape. Beach agrees that Eustacia is "stifled and starved on Egdon Heath, [can] find no outlet in life for her abounding and rebellious energy" (82). She is oblivious to the possible happiness and contentment she could find in the heath; instead it is her "cross," her "shame," and her "death," and she feels "like one banished" (Hardy, Return 91, 74). She honestly and openly expresses her disregard for the people living around her when Clym asks if she would be willing to join him in teaching the heath-dwellers. She replies: "I don't quite feel anxious to. I have not much love for my fellow-creature. Sometimes I quite hate them" (Hardy, Return 190). Beach believes this to be the entire focus of the novel: "The story as a whole is a continuous record of Eustacia's vain attempt to escape the limitation of Egdon through the means of love" (95). He explains further that even though Eustacia sees nothing in common with the heath and its people, she is actually much in tune with it:

> It is her lonely life, for one thing, that has given her that dignity and freedom from vulgarity that adds beauty to the force of her emotions. And however much she may long for gaiety and a largeness of opportunity not afforded by the life of seclusion, there is an artistic congruity between her environment and her dark and unconventional passions, her savage independence of mind. (103)

Ironically, Eustacia spends her days on the heath in a constant struggle to leave and free herself, and yet she dies there and will never be able to leave. "It will be the eternal irony of this poetic figure that no reader will ever be able to dissociate her from the lonely and gloomy setting from which she made her desperate vain attempt to escape" (Beach 103). The power of society's disdain for the passionate and courageous woman limits her opportunities and forces the unfulfilled woman to die in her unpleasant surroundings.

The most elaborate of Eustacia's qualities is her romanticized and passionate view of life and love. Labeled as "a romanticizing adolescent dreamer, living in a fantasy world of which she is the heroine" (Sumner 103), Eustacia "had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess"; but unfortunately, those romanticizing passions combine to create unrealistic expectations (Hardy, Return 71). Her view of love and romance is an idealized one: "To be loved

to madness—such was her great desire. Love was to her the one cordial which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than for any particular lover." Her philosophy explains why she so easily casts off Wildeve and picks him up again: she desired the "cordial" to remove her loneliness (Hardy, Return 75). J. Hillis Miller explains:

> Eustacia has felt that she has loved Wildeve directly for himself. She has believed that the glory and the dream he radiates are evidence of powers in him, his numinous glow making him so different from other people as to be almost like a god in his superiority. Now through her rival's indifference she discovers in a moment that her love has gone by way of that rival. The divine radiance which seems intrinsic to Wildeve is a subjective mirage cast on Eustacia's vision of him by the fact that Thomasin loves him. (161)

Eustacia enjoys playing the game of love when the rivalry is intense and her boredom is set aside for a time, but when the rivalry fades, the game is no longer interesting. She is never concerned with her reputation or the thoughts of others; she only wants that deep passion and excitement that she believes love can bring her. The narrator states:

> Fidelity in love for fidelity's sake had less attraction for her than for most women; fidelity because of love's grip had much. A blaze of love, and extinction, was better than a lantern glimmer of the same which should last long years. . . [She] concluded that love was but a doleful joy. Yet she desired it, as one in a desert would be thankful for brackish water. (Hardy, Return 75)

While she desires the idea of love and all its pleasures, Eustacia simply enjoys playing games with the heart of Wildeve. She seems to know that he cannot fulfill her desire for deeply passionate love; nonetheless, she cannot let him go for lack of a better substitute. Miller explains: "Eustacia ceases to love the man who is not loved by others and loves him again when he becomes desirable to another person. Her relation to Wildeve is mediated by way of his relation to Thomasin. When Eustacia has Wildeve to herself she soon tires of him; but as soon as he turns from her to Thomasin he becomes desirable again" (159). She does not seem to see her own idealized fantasy of love and the mistakes that her blind ideas will initiate. When Eustacia first observes Clym at the mummers' play, she believes she loves him already. Hardy states, "She had loved him partly because he was exceptional in this sense, partly because she had determined to love him, chiefly

because she was in desperate need of loving somebody after wearying of Wildeve" (Return 147). In Eustacia's mind, the search for another passionate love must continue in order for her to seek the "blaze of love" she desires so intently (75).

Eustacia not only holds a romanticized view of love, but also entertains an idealistic view of the world outside of Egdon Heath. Because she feels so trapped and isolated on the heath, she believes the worlds of Budmouth, Paris, and even America hold the promise of excitement and perfection. Beach says that Eustacia is "a woman of rich and stormy passions, pent up in a lonely place, and longing for the larger and livelier movement of the great world" (80). Eustacia asks, "But do I desire unreasonably much in wanting what is called life—music, poetry, passion, war, and all the beating and pulsing that are going on in the great arteries of the world? That was the shape of my youthful dream" (Hardy, Return 283). Johnson says that Eustacia "was a dreamer of great dreams, and in love with the imageries of an heroic life" (194). He adds that "Eustacia is beautiful, fitful, imperious, discontented, and inexperienced; she hates the great lonely heath, and makes an ideal of Budmouth" (43). Because she is so enamored with the possibilities of the outside world, Eustacia is immediately infatuated with Clym Yeobright and the fact that he is returning from Paris. She sees him as a means of escape from the "cruel taskmaster" of the heath (Hardy, Return 190). Miller explains: "Clym Yeobright . . . is desirable to Eustacia Vye because of his association with Paris, that distant place which . . . seems to promise her the rich life for which she longs. Eustacia's love for Clym is directed not toward him, but toward what he seems to stand for or to promise her." Since Clym represents the romance of Paris in Eustacia's eyes, she is instantly attracted to his name. "Eustacia falls in love with Clym before she even sees him, falls in love because he promises access to that celestial place, Paris" (Miller 129). The combination of her idealized concept of love and her romanticized view of the world create a recipe for tragedy.

A third area of romanticized ideals for Eustacia is her marriage with Clym. Not only does she automatically assume that he will rescue her from the heath, but she also believes that their ambitions and goals in life are the same. Hardy insinuates the impending conflict as follows: "Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath, and translate them into loves, and you have the heart of Clym" (Return 178). Clym asks Eustacia to marry him, but the focus is not on love or devotion, but on the conflict of their goals:

> "If you'll agree [to go back to Paris,] I'll give my promise, without making you wait a minute longer . . ."

> "I have vowed not to go back, Eustacia . . . Will you marry me?"
>
> "I cannot tell."
>
> "Now—never mind Paris; it is no better than other spots. Promise, sweet!"
>
> "You will never adhere to your education plan, I am quite sure; and then it will be all right for me; and so I promise to be yours for ever and ever." (Hardy, Return 202)

Throughout the dialogue, the reader sees the clash between Eustacia and Clym and the misconceptions of both; unfortunately, they are blind to themselves. Laura Green sees the discord as one between the "social restlessness of Eustacia" and the "reforming intellectual zeal of Clym" (524). The clash of purpose is evident to the reader but not to the couple. As Stave explains: "Eustacia and Clym marry for reasons that guarantee failure. Clym assumes marriage will relieve him of the distress of passion and will provide him a helpmate in his mission to educate the Egdon folk. Eustacia marries because her boredom is great and her choices are limited . . . in the isolated world of the heath, she has no other suitors" (60). The two young lovers seek different objects to fill their voids: "The young woman comes unconsciously to love the being who is destined to occupy the void within her soul, while Clym goes forth to find the companion who should become the help-meet he seeks in his projects of study and instruction" (D'Exideuil 73-74). Eustacia does not believe there is a conflict but senses Clym's apprehension and later confesses: "Though I should like Paris, I love you for yourself alone. To be your wife and live in Paris would be heaven to me; but I would rather live with you in a hermitage here than not be yours at all. It is gain to me either way, and very great gain. There's my too candid confession" (Hardy, Return 203). Although she seemingly admits this to Clym in an attempt to reassure him of her love, she quickly becomes restless and tired of the routine of their continued life on the heath.

She becomes dissatisfied when Clym's eyesight fails and he must resort to cutting furze for a living. She tells him, "But it is so dreadful—a furze cutter! And you a man who have lived about the world, and speak French, and German, and who are fit for what is so much better than this" (Hardy, Return 258). When she no longer sees her husband as the aristocratic man able to take her away from the heath and fulfill her yearning for adventure, he loses value in her sight. Shortly after, she meets Wildeve at the nearby village celebration and submits to his request for a dance, opening the door to the rekindling of old passions and the squelching of the new. She later signals

him to make the carriage ready to take her away from the heath and her life with Clym in a last attempt to find passionate adventure. He seems her only means of escape from boredom and admittance to excitement. Because she is such an impassioned and independent woman, she does not feel tied to Clym through the bonds of marriage. She can freely leave him and his bonds and seek adventure elsewhere.

Unfortunately, Eustacia's plan of escape deteriorates. Whether she slips and falls from the slippery bridge or jumps to escape her continual struggle for satisfaction is unclear, but her demise is final. As Morgan claims, "She is prevented from coming into being in a world that denies autonomy, identity, purpose, and power to women" (82). Because the traditional ways of society cannot accept her passionate being, she feels forced to escape. Again, whether her death was accidental or self-inflicted, her desire for escape is clear. Jekel shows this internal struggle of the tragic heroine:

> Filled with great longings, Eustacia is a fine example of a woman who is unable to sort out her needs from her desire and who is driven to a world of fantasy and finally to destruction. Hardy has here caught with much intensity that edge of moral confusion which tangles so many, but especially women who must balance their own needs with the needs (and repressions) of others. (99)

Her death at the end piques sympathy with readers and forces them to realize the vain struggle of those passionate few to feel fulfilled and accepted in the strict culture of their time. Hardy does not condemn Eustacia's actions but instead presents her as victimized by her society and hopelessly trapped in an unloving and indifferent environment.

The three women in Hardy's The Return of the Native are all related to one another, either by blood or through marriage, but the three are radically different from each other. Thomasin possesses mostly gentle, feminine qualities and displays these in her quiet, optimistic, selfless personality, stereotypical of the angelic figure. In contrast, both Mrs. Yeobright and Eustacia are confident, outspoken women who are not opposed to speaking out against others, including each other. But while Mrs. Yeobright focuses mostly on the views of others and the shame they may bring her, Eustacia concentrates solely on her idealistic dreams and desires and the means to achieve them. By diversifying the females in the novel, Thomas Hardy creates a wonderful blend of realism and drama that is immortalized with the classics of literature. It created little shock

when first published, as his later novels would, yet still hints at the unfair pressure placed upon women in his time.

CHAPTER 3

LITTLE HINTOCK'S HAREM: THE WOMEN OF THE WOODLANDERS

In 1887 Thomas Hardy published The Woodlanders and began a stronger pursuit toward demeaning the social stereotypes placed upon women. While his novel The Mayor of Casterbridge published the previous year illustrates the penalty of viewing women as a commodity to be bought and sold, The Woodlanders continues this theme more subtly but further demonstrates the pain females endure when pressured to conform to the expectations of society. Hardy still seems to satisfy the desires of his readers by preserving marriage and creating a satisfactory ending, but the repercussions of the tragic events still linger in the characters' lives.

Grace Melbury, the main female character of the novel, receives the most social pressure from men and struggles most often with pleasing others. Her father frequently refers to her as an investment or a commodity when he contemplates her arranged marriage to the common laborer Giles Winterbourne. He sees his daughter as a way to right past wrongs between himself and Giles's father. Because Melbury wooed and married the lover of Giles's father and therefore made his later marriage "a half-hearted business," Melbury feels he should offer his only daughter to Giles as recompense. He debates with his wife, "But since I have educated her so well, and so long, and so far above the level of the daughters hereabout, it is *wasting her* to give her to a man of no higher standing than he" (Hardy, Woodlanders 15). Mrs. Melbury encourages him that the marriage is not a "sacrifice" of Grace but rather a pure emotional union because "He is in love with her and he's honest and upright" (Hardy, Woodlanders 16). Regardless of his wife's prodding and his desire to make amends, he still believes he is letting his daughter "throw herself away upon him" (Hardy, Woodlanders 27).

When Grace returns from school, she is not immediately attracted to Giles but tries to "make the best of everything, and to wink at deficiencies in Winterborne's way of living" (Hardy, Woodlanders 56). Although she is submissive to her father's wishes for marriage, he is not so sure the arrangement is the best for her. Like Mrs. Yeobright, he concerns himself with what his child will eventually become and how that image will reflect upon himself rather than the joy or contentment the child has in life. As he grumbles, "I *know* Grace will gradually sink down to our level again, and catch our manners and way of speaking, and feel a drowsy content

in being Giles's wife. But I can't bear the thought of dragging down to that old level as promising a piece of maidenhood as ever lived—fit to ornament a palace wi', that I've taken so much trouble to lift up" (Hardy, Woodlanders 62). He focuses on his hard work being lost, just as Mrs. Yeobright sees only her own social standing deteriorating in Clym's choice of work and spouse. Because of his pressure to create the best situation for himself and his daughter, Grace begins to feel "more and more uneasy at being the social hope of the family" (Hardy, Woodlanders 66). After being spoken to harshly by a foxhunter, her father claims it was his lowly status that prompted the rude exchange and realizes that "whatever a young woman's niceness, she stands for nothing alone." From that he decisively claims that Grace "shall marry well" (Hardy, Woodlanders 67). Melbury again refers to his daughter in terms of goods when he attempts to educate her in matters of finance. She notices his expenses for her education and comments, "I, too, cost a good deal, like the horses and wagons and corn." In response, Melbury callously replies that she'll "yield a better return"; Grace is appalled, but her father simply looks "her proudly up and down," as if surveying his purchase (Hardy, Woodlanders 68). Her place as her father's possession is clear.

Grace follows her father's advice and parts ways with Giles in order to separate herself from the low prospects of his offer of marriage. Stave defends her actions by stating that Grace "is a typical English country girl who has been educated out of her class and whose concerns and motivations . . . are appropriate to one of her age and circumstance" (71). Even though she is heavy-hearted and teary after her parting with Giles, she is still rather unemotional and unaffected. As Henry Charles Duffin justifies, "her emotions are set at a low temperature" similar to Hardy's Sue Bridehead and Bathsheba Everdene (232). When Giles loses rights to his house and Grace sees the pitiful poem scrawled on his wall, she begins to feel compassion for him and tells her father that she would like to keep the engagement with Giles. Her father responds sharply and then tells her that Giles has withdrawn his consideration for marriage. When Grace is moved with emotion and attempts to act upon it, she is quickly squelched, demonstrating her father's opinion on the futility of emotions when contemplating marriage. After Grace's marriage to the young doctor, Edred Fitzpiers, she notices Giles from her hotel window and realizes that "the pressure of events had dissipated the dreams of their early youth," not Grace herself (Hardy, Woodlanders 135). Her father's influence over her and the family's reliance on social advancement play key roles in guiding Grace's future.

Throughout the entire courting and engagement between Grace and Fitzpiers, Grace is uncomfortable and awkward. She tries to voice her concerns, slow the relationship, and eventually end the engagement, but her father and Fitzpiers control her in such a way that she submissively follows their will. When the two first meet, Grace is "disturbed rather than attracted by him" (Hardy, <u>Woodlanders</u> 101). And when Fitzpiers asks permission of Melbury to court Grace, she feels outside the agreement as her father encourages her to "make it all smooth for him." Because he is well educated and higher socially, Melbury urges Grace to embrace his advancements in the hope of her marrying well. Grace asks if her father will at least wait to welcome the doctor until after she decides if he is right for her and Melbury replies in the affirmative but adds, "But you see what a good thing it will be . . . You will be restored to the society you've been taken away from" (Hardy, <u>Woodlanders</u> 120). Grace's emotional comfort and desires are secondary in importance when compared to her and her family's possibility for advancement within society.

This struggle within Grace and the pressures of her father are again evident in Fitzpiers's first calling. At the urging of her mother to escort him to the door, Grace is "stealthily" kissed and pulls away "hardly knowing how things had advanced to this." Hardy describes the parting scene: "Fitzpiers drove off kissing his hand to her, and waving it to Melbury, who was visible through the window. Her father returned the surgeon's action with a great flourish of his own hand, and a satisfied smile" (Hardy, <u>Woodlanders</u> 124). The men clearly have control of the situation and Grace's wishes hold little sway. As Stave explains, "Grace wants to be a dutiful daughter, but to do so means she must internalize her own desires and silence her voice" (76). Her attempt to fulfill the angelic expectations of her society and family forces her to ignore her true feelings and instincts.

Grace again submits to the will of the men in her life after she sees Suke Damson leaving Fitzpiers's home early in the morning and suspects her fiancé's unfaithfulness. When she tells her father that she wants to break off the engagement, "incensed" he responds with "Well—make fools of us all; make us laughing-stocks; break it off; have your own way!" (Hardy, <u>Woodlanders</u> 128), giving her an obvious intention to feel guilty. He has little sympathy for the reason or for the pain this will cause her; he cares only for his own reputation. When Fitzpiers guesses the reason for Grace's uneasiness, he creatively lies, and "ever anxious to please," she accepts his reason for the scantily clad woman in his home (129). As Robert Kiely explains:

> When she observes him from her window in the dim light of early morning bidding farewell to Suke Damson in her nightdress, she seems too ready to accept Fitzpiers's invented explanation that Suke had come to him with a toothache. Grace takes refuge in a narrative convention, a compromise, which saves her from the humiliation (and clarity) of expressing her suspicion and jealousy. (195)

Grace's tendency to want to please everyone continues Hardy's social commentary on the pressures of women to conform to the ideal.

Shortly after Grace and Fitzpiers are married, Felice Charmond intrudes upon the young couple's marriage. She and Fitzpiers realize they had met before, but their relationship ended prematurely and both had wondered what would have become if events had only played in their favor. This nostalgia lingering between them begins a passionate love affair and eventually leads to Fitzpiers's abandonment of the practical and simple Grace for the adventurous and higher-classed Felice. The two women represent the two stereotypes of the Victorian era in that Grace is the loyal and submissive wife while Felice is the seductive, restless dreamer. Grace, displaying both her subdued emotions and her angelic qualities, raises little fuss over the brewing affair, and Hardy states that she "was amazed at the mildness of the anger which the suspicion engendered in her: she was but little excited, and her jealousy was languid even to death" (Woodlanders 154). When she fully realizes the state of the relationship between her husband and his lover, she urges Giles to tell her what he knows, but then corrects herself and calmly states, "But no—I won't hear it. Let the subject cease. And as you are my friend say nothing to my father" (Hardy, Woodlanders 157). She quickly shows her level-headedness and like Thomasin, chooses not to make the situation any more public than it has already become.

When Grace discovers further faults in her husband, she continues her reserved reactions and begins to demonstrate feelings of the inconsequentiality of sexual encounters. She questions Suke as to the state of her recently pulled tooth and realizes her husband's lie about the woman's presence in his home. Hardy reveals that upon this revelation of her husband's character, "Grace was almost startled to find how little she suffered from that jealous excitement which is conventionally attributed to all wives in such circumstances" (Hardy, Woodlanders 158). She begins to become more independent and resolvedly states, "If he does not love me I will not love him!" And Hardy adds that "though these were mere words it was a somewhat formidable thing for Fitzpiers that her heart was approximating to a state in which it might be possible to carry

them out" (Woodlanders 159). When Fitzpiers falls from his horse, his two lovers, Felice and Suke, rush in to discover the patient's status, and Grace realizes that the two women love her husband more than she. As Stave accounts:

> Faced with the knowledge of her husband's affairs, Grace appears truly noble – and truly unconventional—for the first time in the novel. In her refusal to condemn either Felice or Suke for her sexual involvement with Fitzpiers, Grace reveals her understanding of the triviality of such sexual indulgence and the absurdity of the convention that would allow her to berate and scorn the other women. Recognizing the great love that both women feel for her husband, Grace feels not jealousy but rather pity for these objects of her husband's selfishness. (90)

While her shunning of the necessity for sexual purity seems to play against the angelic role, Grace nonetheless remains merciful, humble, and loyal. She realizes that the three women are "wives all" to the same selfish man (Hardy, Woodlanders 196).

As the passion between Felice and Fitzpiers grows and the feelings between Grace and her husband subside, Grace begins to realize her true desires for Giles Winterborne. Hardy states:

> She had made a discovery; one which, to a girl of her nature was almost appalling. She had looked into her heart, and found that her early interest in Giles Winterborne had become revitalized into growth by her widening perceptions of what was great and little in life. . . . honesty, goodness, manliness, tenderness, devotion, for her only existed in their purity now in the breasts of unvarnished men; and here was one who had manifested such towards her from his youth up. (Woodlanders 166).

Without the intimacy of her husband and while hiding the true state of affairs from her father, Grace learns to think and feel independently of the men in her life. She even boldly affirms to her father that she wishes to be no better than the common folk "[b]ecause cultivation has only brought [her] inconveniences and troubles" (Hardy, Woodlanders 168). When she relies solely on herself, she sees her genuine feelings; but unfortunately, her marriage to Fitzpiers has virtually ended all chance of a renewed courtship and relationship with Giles.

Grace begins to confront matters with honesty and openness when she meets Felice in the forest and encourages her rival to follow her heart. Grace sees at once that Felice deeply loves her husband and tells her, "I guess from your manner that you love him desperately; and I don't hate you as I did before . . . O I do pity you, more than I despise you. For *you* will suffer most!" She even goes on to give her permission for the two to continue their liaison: "You may go on loving him if you like—I don't mind at all. You'll find it, let me tell you, a bitterer business for yourself than for me in the end. He'll get tired of you soon, as tired as can be—you don't know him so well as I—and then you may wish you had never seen him!" (Hardy, Woodlanders 180). Grace continues to demonstrate her honesty in admitting she does not believe that Felice will refuse to see her husband anymore as she has promised to do and labels her husband "the plaything of a finished coquette" (Hardy, Woodlanders 181). Her pride and independence seem to surface when she is not surrounded by her influential men.

Once Grace's father realizes the true state of his daughter's marriage, he begins to intervene. He approaches Felice and urges her to end her trifling with his son-in-law and then further investigates the legalities of divorce for his daughter. As Melbury's involvement increases, Grace's independence again diminishes. He advises her "to begin to encourage Winterborne, lest she should lose him altogether," and Grace dutifully follows through with his plan. Although she now feels more strongly for Giles, she still has reservations about his rustic lifestyle and the appropriateness of beginning such a relationship without dissolving her own marriage first. Still, she faithfully obeys her father and allows Giles to kiss her before the acceptance of the divorce is final. The debate within her radiates as she begins frantically to sob: "Oh, why does not my father come home and explain . . . and let me know clearly what I am! It is too trying, this, to ask me to—and then to leave me so long in so vague a state that I do not know what to do, and perhaps do wrong!" (Hardy, Woodlanders 219). As Stave expounds, "Although she never questions [Giles's] goodness or his worth, she is continually, to her own frustration, offended by his crudeness, by the forms of his outward behavior. Even when she teases him into kissing her passionately, it is she who breaks away from the embrace and bursts into tears, seeming concerned about whether it is permissible to love him" (91). Grace is unmistakably in a moral dilemma and has so long relied upon her father for guidance, that she cannot find peace within herself. Once again, Grace's instincts prove correct as the divorce is not approved and Grace must remain a forsaken wife.

When Fitzpiers relays his desire to return to Grace and renew their marriage, Melbury is cautious yet willing. He urges his daughter to accept her husband in the hopes of living "in a genteel and seemly style" (Hardy, Woodlanders 222). Again, Grace is leery and attempts to assert herself by declaring "O I won't, I won't see him," but her father's persuasion to try to accept the unlawful man meets a submissive agreement of "O yes, I will, I will" (Hardy, Woodlanders 223). As her approaching husband's voice reaches her window though, Grace is overcome with dread and escapes the house unnoticed to find refuge away from the overbearing men. She clings to Giles and asserts "Appearance is no matter, when the reality is right. I have said to myself I can trust you" (Hardy, Woodlanders 226). Yet in a seeming contradiction when they reach Giles's home, Grace stays inside alone while Giles sleeps outside in order to avoid any questionable appearances. Kiely describes the quixotic scene: "While the woman is enclosed in a domestic frame, housebound and suffocated, the man languishes out of doors, romantically expiring from exposure to the elements. The woman's isolation is secure and selfish, the man's is risky, generous and heroic" (197). Hardy uses this scene to shift sympathy from Grace onto Giles and to prove that even when Grace allows herself to follow her heart, she still succumbs to society's guidelines for appropriate female behavior.

Upon Giles's death, precipitated by his exposure to the elements, Grace mourns his passing but also deals with the guilt of her participation in his death. As Duffin explains, "Her affection for Giles, uncomprehending as it was, was the one deep feeling of her life, and when that was withdrawn she underwent an obvious degeneration. She was not badly broken up by Giles's death, and her desire to be rid of the responsibility for it is only too characteristic" (232). Once Fitzpiers assures her that Giles would have died regardless of her actions, she can then begin to open her heart to her husband once again. She admits that her "heart is in the grave with Giles" and she only feels "lovelessness" for Fitzpiers, yet she still allows him to visit her in the hope of renewing their love (Hardy, Woodlanders 256). Grace is finally compelled to accept her husband after reading the marriage service in her prayer book. Hardy relates:

> Reading it slowly through she became quite appalled at her recent offhandedness, when she rediscovered what awfully solemn promises she had made him at Hintock chancel steps not so very long ago. She became lost in long ponderings on how far a person's conscience might be bound by vows made without at the time a full recognition of their force. That particular sentence, beginning, "Whom

> God hath joined together," was a staggerer for a gentle woman of strong devotional sentiment. She wondered whether God really did join them together. (Woodlanders 267)

Here Hardy imparts both a social commentary on the ignorance of young couples upon marriage and a reflection of Grace's susceptibility to pressures from social guidelines. Her contemplation of separating from the intentions of God convicts her, and she subsequently meets her husband and reunites with him that evening. Hardy here closes out her character by demonstrating for the final time her innate "common-sense that takes the line of least resistance" (Duffin 232).

Hardy also uses the character of Felice Charmond to encourage sympathy for the passionate seductress stereotyped by Victorian society. In her shunning of the traditions of marriage and her complete relinquishment to her emotions, Felice is a disciple of Eustacia and a precursor to Tess Durbeyfield and Sue Bridehead. Her first appearance in the novel is in reference to her desire for Marty South's hair. As Marty assumes, "She wants my curls to get another lover with; though if stories are true she's broke the heart of many a noble gentleman already" (Hardy, Woodlanders 12). Shanta Dutta comments on the first impression of Felice:

> We first hear of Mrs. Charmond when the barber comes to Little Hintock to persuade Marty to sell her hair. With an arrogance born of wealth and social position, Mrs. Charmond thinks that she can buy all the good and valuable things of life. No longer in her prime, her vanity makes her stoop to borrowed glory. She wears her false hair deliberately to ensnare the hearts of susceptible young men (like Dr. Fitzpiers) in a way that makes her not much superior to Arabella, who uses the same artifice to entrap Jude. (80)

Hardy is quick to show that although Felice may flout conventional ways, she is warm-hearted and lovable. When she stops her carriage and offers Marty a ride, the author describes her: "Inside the carriage a pair of deep eyes looked from a ripely-handsome face, and though behind those deep eyes was a mind of unfathomed mysteries, beneath them there beat a heart capable of quick extempore warmth—a heart which could indeed be passionately and imprudently warm on certain occasions" (Hardy, Woodlanders 31). Hardy further develops her restlessness as she admits, "I am the most inactive woman when I am here . . . I think sometimes I was born to live and do nothing, nothing, nothing but float about, as we do sometimes in dreams" (Woodlanders 46). After she confesses to Fitzpiers that she has not outgrown her girlhood passions, she reveals

how she came to Hintock and how she longs for escape: “A man brought me. Women are always carried about like corks upon the waves of masculine desires. . . . . I hope I have not alarmed you; but Hintock has the curious effect of bottling up the emotions till one can no longer hold them; I am often obliged to fly away and discharge my sentiments somewhere, or I should die outright” (Hardy, Woodlanders 144). She becomes almost helpless and seems to assume some qualities of the ideal housewife, yet she possesses such a strong sense of independence and confidence that her role as the passionate dreamer is unconquerable.

Hardy further portrays Felice as a woman caught up in her internal passions and unable to cope with the seeming contradiction between her emotions and the structure of her society. As she wrestles with the decision to continue to see her lover, she cries aloud, “Oh why were we given hungry hearts and wild desires if we have to live in a world like this?” (Hardy, Woodlanders 149). She seems in torment and further clarifies her dilemma:

> Then, when my emotions have exhausted themselves, I become full of fears, till I think I shall die for very fear. The terrible insistencies of society—how severe they are, and cold, and inexorable—ghastly towards those who are made of wax and not of stone. Oh I am afraid of them; a stab for this error, and a stab for that—correctives and regulations pretendedly framed that society may tend to perfection—an end which I don’t care for in the least. Yet for this all I do care for has to be stunted and starved. (Hardy, Woodlanders 150).

She blatantly blames society for all her pain, believing that if she could live as she pleased, life would be fulfilling and worthwhile. This continual battle earns her sympathy and evolves her from a simple temptress into a complex woman. As Dutta explains:

> She is not a creature as dark as hell, any more than Marty is as white as the driven snow. Through very subtle touches, the character of Mrs. Charmond is humanized till she becomes more a victim caught in the toils of her own passionate nature than a conventional seductress without either conscience or compassion. (79)

Felice obviously illustrates the typical thoughts and desires of the dreamer, yet Hardy paints her as a genuine and almost helpless creature fighting against her passions.

During her relationship with Fitzpiers, Felice again demonstrates the clash between her social conscience and her heartfelt desires. She shuns Fitzpiers’s advances: “Ah—none of that—

none of that—I cannot coquet with you! . . . Don't suppose I consent to for one moment. Our poor brief youthful hour of lovemaking was too long ago to bear continuing now. It is as well that we should understand each other on that point before we go further" (Hardy, Woodlanders 146). Yet immediately after this resolute statement, she begins to fantasize about what might have occurred between them had they not been separated, showing the battle between her heart and her head. When Felice orders Fitzpiers not to return, she then "became as heavy as lead—just as she had been before he arrived. Her whole being seemed to dissolve in a sad powerlessness to do anything, and the sense of it made her lips tremulous and her closed eyes wet" (Hardy, Woodlanders 150). She attempts to speak what she knows to be right and acceptable but feels what is burning within her to be the true and desirable action. This conflict rises steadily until she confesses to Grace, "I *cannot* give him up, until he chooses to give up me" (Hardy, Woodlanders 183). Her complete submission to her emotions causes her to chase Fitzpiers after the two quarrel, but instead of a reconciliation, Felice meets a past scorned lover and he murders her. This shocking turn of events haunts the reader and increases the pathos for Felice. As Dutta articulates:

> When we are told that she met her death while traveling in search of Fitzpiers, in the vain hope of effecting a reconciliation, the tide of compassion for her sweeps aside moral fences regarding the legality (or otherwise) of the relationship. Our pity for her is reinforced by the delicate hint – Victorian prudery did not allow Hardy to be more explicit – that Felice was pregnant at the time when Fitzpiers so callously abandoned her. (85)

Thus through her continual tug-of-war, she falls victim to her overriding emotions and illustrates Hardy's feelings of the brutality of social constructs and their effect upon the female.

In writing The Woodlanders Hardy has noticeably strengthened his contempt for the role that society plays in shaping stereotypes and condemning those that do not conform. While in The Return of the Native the stereotypes are clear and the social influence is evident, there is little room for doubt that Hardy has infiltrated this later novel with a deeper sympathy for the women and a greater contempt for the social pressures placed upon them. Grace is the feeble woman, completely submissive to the desires of the men in her life. While she struggles with following her own path as opposed to the one offered to her by men, she gives in easily to their demands and appeases their wants. Felice likewise struggles with her wishes and society's

demands, but she falls victim to society by ignoring their guidance. Whereas “Grace is suspended somewhere between Giles and Fitzpiers, between her birth and her training” and requires the guidance of men to live (Jekel 148-9), Felice falls clearly on the side of passion and independence and endures society’s contempt as a result.

CHAPTER 4

THE PURE WOMAN: THE TEMPTRESS OF TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

In 1891 Thomas Hardy published Tess of the d'Urbervilles and shocked Victorian readers with the novel's sexual themes and pessimistic outlook. Felice Charmond of The Woodlanders is a relatively minor character who is condemned by society yet pitied by Hardy, but Tess of the d'Urbervilles turns this character type into a major female heroine. While Victorians would have considered Tess immoral and whorish, Hardy paints her as a pure and innocent victim of selfish men and snobbish society. Throughout the novel, Tess never loses the reader's pathos or admiration, and her lawful execution reaches tragic proportions.

Tess is endowed with noble and upright characteristics which make it nearly impossible for readers to dislike her. She possesses a strong feminine beauty that attracts the notice of many. Robert B. Heilman even claims, "Hardy goes out of his way to establish the beauty and womanliness of Tess" (Introduction xi). Early in the novel, Hardy describes her beauty mixed with innocence: "Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still. As she walked along to-day, for all her bouncing handsome womanliness, you could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks, or her ninth sparkle from her eyes; and even her fifth would flit over the curves of her mouth now and then" (Tess 9). She frequently attracts the notice of passers-by who "would wonder if they would ever see her again" (Hardy, Tess 10), demonstrating her unique beauty and allure. This positive introduction to the novel's heroine immediately shifts attention and admiration to the leading woman.

Hardy also endears Tess to his readers by giving her admirable personality traits. Her first words in the novel are in defense of her drunken father, who has decided to ride home in a carriage to flaunt his newfound heritage. She tells her fellow classmates, "Look here; I won't walk another inch with you, if you say any jokes about him!" (Hardy, Tess 9). Resolute and loyal, she refuses to allow others to criticize her family or her name. Tess again earns approval as she demonstrates her love for her siblings, showing her "deputy-maternal attitude" in caring for the six younger children (Hardy, Tess 18). After the family horse is accidentally killed and Tess goes to claim kin with the neighboring d'Urberville family, she is uncomfortable at Alec d'Urberville's advances and does not want to return to accept the offered position. As her family is pressuring her to agree, she meekly replies, "It is for you to decide. I killed the old horse, and

I suppose I ought to do something to get ye a new one" (Hardy, Tess 41-2). This acceptance of guilt, submission to her family's wishes, and resolution to their decision illustrates her respectable personality.

After Tess is abandoned by Angel, she again feels the burden of her family responsibility and worries about how to best meet their needs. Angel has given Tess fifty pounds to support her during their separation, and she dutifully gives her family half as "a slight return for the trouble and humiliation she had brought upon them in years past" (Hardy, Tess 255). Later, when Angel again sends her thirty pounds, she sends twenty to her family to pay for a new roof, leaving her with little to survive on and eventually requiring her to work for wages. This caring attitude for her family extends further when Alec approaches her with an offer of help. If she will come and live with him as his mistress, he will financially support her siblings and her recently widowed mother. Although she is repulsed by Alec's advances, she eventually succumbs to his wishes and leaves with him. Janis P. Stout believes the novel "excuses her second sexual fall, her deliberate selling of herself to Alec, and provides the ultimate demonstration of Tess's courage and generosity, hence the injustice of merely labeling her a fallen woman" (242). Even as her life is nearing its end, Tess still demonstrates her love for her family. She urges her returned husband, "Angel, if anything happens to me, will you watch over 'Liza-Lu for my sake? . . . She is so good and simple and pure. O, Angel—I wish you would marry her if you lose me, as you will do shortly. O, if you would!" (Hardy, Tess 386). Her devotion and complete disregard for self in respect to her family reinforces her likable and honorable character.

Tess continues to display a selfless attitude in other areas of her life as well. When her baby Sorrow is about to die, she cries out, "O merciful God, have pity; have pity upon my poor baby! . . . Heap as much anger as you want to upon me, and welcome; but pity the child!" (Hardy, Tess 92). Nobly, she is willing to experience the wrath of God in exchange for the child's life, revealing a deep love for the child and a pure selflessness. Later in the novel when Angel Clare admires Tess, she attempts to refocus his affection onto the other milkmaids in order to save Angel from falling in love with her, an impure and tainted woman. Trying to "obscure her own wretched charms," she points out their graces and abilities to Angel. Hardy reveals Tess's inner struggle to squelch her own desires and redirect Angel's: "Self-sacrificing as her mood might be Tess could not well go further and cry, 'Marry one of them, if you really do want

a dairywoman and not a lady; and don't think of marrying me!'" (Hardy, Tess 138). When Tess awakes to find the bleeding and dying pheasants, she again displays her selfless attitude by lamenting that the birds have suffered more than she: "Poor darlings—to suppose myself the most miserable being on earth in the sight o' such misery as yours! . . . And not a twinge of bodily pain about me! I be not mangled, and I be not bleeding, and I have two hands to feed and clothe me" (Hardy, Tess 274). Although Tess has been used and abandoned by men, is completely poor, and must now work in a wretched business, she sees her pain as minimal when compared to the suffering of other creatures.

This unselfish attitude resurfaces in Tess's attempt to defend Angel for leaving her shortly after their marriage. When Tess has emptied her purse and needs to find work, she refrains from returning to Talbothay's Dairy, even though she knows they would welcome her back. For fear of soiling her husband's reputation, she seeks employment in a region far from her home, Angel's family, and Talbothay's. When Marian questions the awkward situation of their marriage, Tess faithfully defends her husband's actions as "quite fair." She tells her, "Wives are unhappy sometimes; from no fault of their husbands—from their own." She readily protects Angel's selfish actions and places the blame for her own situation on herself. She further tells Marian, "remember—nothing about *him*, if I get the place. I don't wish to bring his name down to the dirt" (Hardy, Tess 278). Further demonstrating her loyalty, she refrains from telling her parents the entire truth of her separation for fear they will think harshly of Angel. Hardy tells the reader, "That night she wrote to inform her parents of her new address, in case a letter should arrive at Marlott from her husband. But she did not tell them of the sorriness of her situation: it might have brought reproach upon him" (Tess 279). When Alec finds Tess and tries to convince her to leave with him, he accuses Angel of neglecting Tess. She defiantly retorts, "Don't speak against him—he is absent! . . . Treat him honorably—he has never wronged you! O leave his wife before any scandal spreads that may do harm to his honest name!" (Hardy, Tess 317). Such clearly honorable actions lead Grimsditch to claim, "Tess possesses an unselfish and conscientious mind, pure motives and strength of character" (33). These redeeming qualities endear her to the reader and earn her the status of a heroine.

Another positive aspect of Tess's character is her strong sense of self-respect, as she refuses to succumb to despair and fosters an enduring spirit despite her hardships. As Jekel explains, "Tess still believes in herself and takes joy from her life without using others, no matter

what her scrape" (161). When Tess first runs from Alec and his predatory advances, he quickly follows after her and propositions her with wealth and position. "I am ready to pay to the uttermost farthing. You know you need not work in the fields or the dairies again. You know you may clothe yourself with the best, instead of in the bald plain way you have lately affected, as if you couldn't get a ribbon more than you earn." Tess rejects Alec's offer of riches for her body: "I have said I will not take anything more from you, and I will not—I cannot! I *should* be your creature to go on doing that, and I won't!" (Hardy, Tess 75). As Morgan explains, "Alec may have appropriated her body but her spirit remains self-governing and unyielding" (95). Alec even implies he will help her if she should discover herself pregnant, but she never even informs him of her situation until years later after the child's death. Pamela Jekel explains Tess's radical reasoning: "When she leaves Alec, rather than be coerced by pregnancy into an unwanted marriage, she independently pursues an 'imminently modern' idea. Against all tradition and maternal advice, she refuses to become the chattel or slave of her seducer" (165). Her mother realizes Tess's strong sense of moral character and admits, "And yet th'st not got him to marry 'ee! . . . Any woman would have done it but you, after that!" (Hardy, Tess 79). Grimsditch explains her mother's reaction: "To her [mother], Tess is a girl who has been maladroit in her love-affairs instead of scheming to turn them to her own and her family's material profit" (32). After the birth and death of her child, Hardy describes Tess's strength of character: "She became what would have been called a fine creature; her aspect was fair and arresting; her soul that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize" (Tess 97). This strong sense of self and integrity is another positive aspect that persuades the reader to adore the heroine.

Tess continues to display this self-regard in her interactions with Angel Clare. She cannot follow her mother's advice and keep her past a secret from her lover; she must reveal who she truly is. As Jekel argues, "Tess realizes that her confession may kill Angel, and she will surely lose his love. Though she does not want to lose him, her moral demons and her strong hopes drive her to confess" (166). This compulsion to confess her past plagues Tess throughout the couple's courtship, and she tries on several occasions to profess her unworthiness and repel Angel's affection. On one occasion she switches the secret of her past with the secret of her family heritage and tells Angel of her family's association with the d'Urberville line. Angel seizes this opportunity to call her by this ancestral title and adds other mythological names into

the mix. As Hardy relates, "He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names half teasingly, which she did not like because she did not understand them" (Tess 129). Morgan unites these images of Tess as the confident and independent woman:

> The woman who usurps the male minister's role, who utters her own form of baptism, gives powerful voice to her longing to govern, to control her own existence. There are also echoes of this will to self-determination and self-renewal in her repudiation of her dark ancestry. But a closer parallel may be found in her insistence, to Angel, upon use of her baptismal name. Repudiating pseudonymity, she quietly asserts her own identity when Angel would condense her to a type. . . . she seeks at once to 'cleanse' him of his illusive vision of her and to resist his appropriation, by renaming, of her person. (103)

Although she loves Angel deeply, Tess must protect her dignity and self-regard in his presence, demonstrating her strong sense of moral obligation and righteous intentions that convince the reader to admire her.

Hardy also manipulates the reader to sympathize with Tess because he presents her as a victim in so many ways. In her family life, she is forced to take on the parental role when her own parents need to be brought back home after staying too long at the local pub, and her parents clearly state that the hope of social advancement rides solely on Tess's ability to marry well. As Stout explains:

> She is seen, as she will continue to be seen throughout the novel, as being caught up in overwhelming forces, and is the victim of her father's shiftlessness and both parent's false hopes even before she becomes the victim of Alec D'Urberville's stratagems. She is a victim, too, of her own good nature, her readiness to sympathize with her family's plight and to go along with their foolish schemes for betterment, and indeed a victim of her own body's early maturation, before she has had a chance to develop for herself the wariness that her mother fails to provide her. (239)

Tess's victimization at the hands of Alec is obvious because he takes advantage of the innocent and naïve girl lodging away from her parents. He approaches Tess at an opportune time and appears as her knight errant, rescuing her from near punches of the other women workers. He then purposely loses his way and places Tess in a vulnerable situation away from any possible

interruption to his sexual advances. After Tess's flight from Alec and her child's birth, Hardy proclaims: "It was a thousand pities, indeed; it was impossible for even an enemy to feel otherwise on looking at Tess as she sat there, with her flower-like mouth and large tender eyes . . . an almost standard woman, but for the slight incautiousness of character inherited from her race" (Tess 89). When Angel feels he must leave Tess after her confession, the rejected wife again appears wronged. Angel had previously confessed a similar past sexual experience, so the pair appear to be nearly equal in their indiscretions; unfortunately, Angel does not see it that way and forces Tess to return to her parents. Stout says, "Seeing that her offense is no worse than his and assuming that that fact will be equally evident to him, she is confident he will receive her confession, as she has received his, with forbearance. Instead, he blatantly invokes the double standard" (242). Her attempt to be honest with her husband results in dismissal, and she is again fulfilling the role of victim. As Heilman comments,

> [Hardy] does not center the story on Angel, the potential tragic hero, but on Tess, whom he pities deeply because she is ill treated by Alec and Angel, by Farmer Groby, by the timing of events, by weather and the job situation, by accidents and a death, by distance and legal facts, by a host of afflictions that it would take much good luck to survive. (Introduction xi)

The victimization of Tess evokes pity and in turn incites the reader's sympathy for Tess's pain.

Society's judgmental attitude toward shaping the character of women is clearly evident in this novel. Hardy continually comments on how Tess's life would be different if society did not have its prejudices and opinions about sexual encounters, and he makes a clear distinction between social laws and natural laws. After Tess returns to her parents, the narrator reveals her thoughts:

> . . . a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason. It was they that were out of harmony with the actual world, not she. Walking among the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism she was quite in accord. She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law

> known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly. (Hardy, Tess 84)

Her conventional training forces her to see herself as guilty of a crime, yet as Hardy states, "there was no difference" between Tess and the innocent because she broke no law of nature (Tess 84). Hardy again criticizes the prudishness of society in regard to sexual acts, revealing Tess's thoughts as she works in the fields:

> Alone in a desert island would she have been wretched at what had happened to her? Not greatly. If she could have been but just created, to discover herself as a spouseless mother, with no experience of life except as the parent of a nameless child, would the position have caused her to despair? No, she would have taken it calmly, and found pleasures therein. Most of the misery had been generated by her conventional aspect, and not by her innate sensations. (Tess 89-90)

Tess's opinion of herself after her encounter with Alec and the child's birth has changed, and she now sees herself through the eyes of society. She feels she is at fault and has committed some great crime, although Hardy never condemns her but rather enforces that these views are unsubstantiated and false.

The haughtiness of society appears again through the family of Angel Clare. The dairyman's apprentice thinks rationally about a spouse and asks himself, "Would not a farmer want a wife, and should a farmer's wife be a drawing-room wax-figure, or a woman who understood farming?" (Hardy, Tess 152). He ignores the prospects of marrying a woman of high social standing and instead focuses specifically upon Tess: "He loved her; ought he to marry her? Dared he to marry her? What would his mother and his brother say? What would he himself say a couple of years after the event?" (Hardy, Tess 153). Angel is concerned with the opinions of his family and asks for their advice. When he asks his father what type of woman he should marry, his father answers idealistically, "A truly Christian woman, who will be a help and a comfort to you in your goings-out and your comings-in. Beyond that, it really matters little" (Hardy, Tess 159). When Angel presses him further about his needs for a woman knowledgeable of farm life as opposed to one with "ecclesiastical accomplishments," his father alters his view to fit the woman he has intended for Angel and says that the spirituality of the woman should be primary, above any "knowledge of a farmer's wife's duties" (Hardy, Tess 160). His father's agenda to make a match with the approved family and avoid a demeaning

marriage is obvious. Angel realizes, “that, single-minded and self-sacrificing as his parents were, there yet existed certain latent prejudices of theirs, as middle-class people, which it would require some tact to overcome” (Hardy, Tess 161-2). He further contemplates Tess’s social status and recognizes “how much less was the intrinsic difference between the good and wise woman of one social stratum and the good and wise woman of another social stratum, than between the good and bad, the wise and the foolish, of the same stratum or class” (Hardy, Tess 162). Angel is a radical thinker for a middle-class Victorian, and by aligning this man with Tess, Hardy shows he accepts Angel’s views and scorns those of his parents.

Tess experiences these snobbish views of Angel’s family herself when she attempts to visit the family one Sunday afternoon. On the brothers’ approach, she overhears them discussing her husband: “Ah! poor Angel, poor Angel! I never see that nice girl without more and more regretting his precipitancy in throwing himself away upon a dairymaid, or whatever she may be. It is a queer business, apparently” (Hardy, Tess 294). Knowing the brothers’ opinions, Tess begins to lose confidence in approaching her in-laws’ home and assumes the whole family holds such judgmental views. Instead of visiting, Tess “grieved for the beloved man whose conventional standard of judgment had caused her all these latter sorrows; and she went her way without knowing that the greatest misfortune of her life was this feminine loss of courage at the last and critical moment through her estimating her father-in-law by his sons” (Hardy, Tess 296). Hardy relates that the Clares would have accepted Tess out of charity and sympathy for her near hopeless case, but this claim leaves the reader to assume they may not have accepted her merely as Angel’s wife.

Hardy continues this social commentary during Angel Clare’s emotional and intellectual conflict about Tess’s confession. When Tess attempts to offer Angel several different ways of escape from their debauched marriage, he scoffs at her suggestions, claiming that she does not “in the least understand the quality of the mishap. It would be viewed in the light of a joke by nine-tenths of the world if it were known” (Hardy, Tess 229). His attention to social opinion surfaces once his infatuation with Tess subsides. He feels he can no longer be proud of her beauty or her practical abilities now that he knows she has been with another man. Later when he is in Brazil and seeks the counsel of a trusted companion, he is reminded of his former philosophy to shun conventional mores. The narrator reveals his friend’s opinion:

> To his cosmopolitan mind such deviations from the social norm, so immense to domesticity, were no more than are the irregularities of vale and mountain-chain to the whole terrestrial curve. He viewed the matter in quite a different light from Angel; thought that what Tess had been was of no importance beside what she would be, and plainly told Clare that he was wrong in coming away from her. (Hardy, Tess 334-5)

Angel then realizes his hypocrisy and vows to find Tess on his return to England. Hardy includes Angel's lapses in judgment to show the negative pressures of society but also the hope of recovering from false indoctrination. Although Angel feels social anxiety, the reason for his discontent is the community's view of Tess and her past, demonstrating the repercussions for women who do not conform to the accepted stereotype of the female.

This same societal disapproval surfaces within Tess when she feels she is unworthy to be loved by such a man as Angel. After Dairyman Crick's story of the man forced to marry the woman he had seduced, Tess leaves the scene and feels "wretched—O so wretched" (Hardy, Tess 133). As she tries to persuade Angel to admire the other dairymaids instead of herself, she admits that it was to "obscure her own wretched charms" (Hardy, Tess 138). She sees herself as an evil, uncontrollable lure for men and attempts to dissuade Angel and others away from her, as displayed in her shaving of her eyebrows and disguising of her face. Tess sees society's perception of her as follows: "And the thorny crown of this sad conception was that she whom he really did prefer in a cursory way to the rest, she who knew herself to be more impassioned in nature, cleverer, more beautiful than they, was in the eyes of propriety far less worthy of him than the homelier ones whom he ignored" (Hardy, Tess 145). Hardy here expounds on society's fallacy that a celibate past ranks above all other virtues in a woman; and although Tess possesses more passion, more intellect, and more beauty, she is less worthy due to her previous sexual encounter. When Angel presses her for the reason why she rejects his offer of marriage, Tess claims, "I am not good enough—not worthy enough." Angel attempts to clarify, "How? Not fine lady enough?" To which Tess confesses, "Yes—something like that . . . Your friends would scorn me" (Hardy, Tess 171). She believes that the unworthiness she feels about herself will be evident to other members of society as well. When Tess finally collapses under his incessant requests of marriage, Angel educates her by stating, "Society is hopelessly snobbish, and this fact of your extraction may make an appreciable difference to its acceptance of you as my wife"

(Hardy, Tess 187). Although Angel agrees to marry her regardless of her unknown offenses, Tess still feels haunted by her past. "A spiritual forgetfulness co-existed with an intellectual remembrance. She walked in brightness, but she knew that in the background those shapes of darkness were always spread. They might be receding, or they might be approaching, one or the other, a little every day." When Tess again exclaims that she is not worthy of Angel, he calms her by stating, "I won't have you speak like it, dear Tess! Distinction does not consist in the facile use of a contemptible set of conventions, but in being numbered among those who are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report—as you are, my Tess" (Hardy, Tess 192). Although society and Tess herself do not believe she fulfills these descriptions, Hardy creates her in such a way as to illustrate these virtues within her and thus demonstrate the inability of Victorian society to appreciate a person's true worth.

The novel begins to reach tragic proportions when Tess collapses from the second round of sexual advances from Alec d'Urberville, her overwhelming conviction to help her family, and a loss of hope for Angel's return. As a result of society's unjust condemnation, Tess returns with Alec to live as his mistress in exchange for his financial support for her mother and siblings. Alec takes advantage of Tess's weaknesses and persuades her: "Come to this cottage of mine. We'll get up a regular colony of fowls, and your mother can attend to them excellently; and the children can go to school. . . I owed you something for the past, you know" (Hardy, Tess 349). As her hope for the reunion with Angel decays, Tess rationalizes, "the facts had not changed: there was no event to alter his opinion," and the downward spiral begins. She tells her mother "in stony hopelessness" that Angel will "never, never come." Referring to Alec, Tess recalls, "It was not her husband, she had said. Yet a consciousness that in a physical sense this man alone was her husband seemed to weigh on her more and more" (Hardy, Tess 352). She succumbs to the Victorian principle that a woman's sexual conduct demonstrates possession and she therefore rightfully belongs to Alec rather than to Angel. When Angel returns and discovers Tess's arrangement with Alec, she rants to her lover:

> And you had used your cruel persuasion upon me . . . you did not stop using it—no—you did not stop! My little sisters and brothers and my mother's needs—they were the things you moved my by . . . and you said my husband would never come back—never; and you taunted me, and said what a simpleton I was to

> expect him! . . . And at last I believed you and gave way! . . . And then he came back! (Hardy, Tess 373)

Realizing Alec's deception and her own folly leads Tess to murder Alec and return to Angel for a short period before her capture and subsequent execution. This act of desperation is condemned by society, but Hardy's creation of Tess as such a loveable and endearing character and his creation of Alec as the conniving and deceitful seducer leads the reader to view her actions as a frantic means of escape. Only when Alec is dead can Tess truly be Angel's wife. Tess's breakdown at the hands of Alec and the prudish views of her community lead the reader to condemn them rather than the innocent victim of circumstance.

Hardy's creation of Tess Durbyfield is a blatant condemnation of his culture's traditional denunciation of sexual encounters. Tess is such an amiable and loveable character that the reader views her actions as acceptable. As Jekel relates, "He creates a powerful sympathy and reader identification with Tess and her situations and thereby questions social morality and her fate at the hands of that morality. In doing so, Hardy turns allegory to social polemic" (158). Hardy twists the Victorian view of good and evil and attempts to reveal the hypocrisy and shallowness of such beliefs. Stout explains further: "At every opportunity, [Hardy] turns conventional vice to virtue. In the process, he challenges the idea of the double standard, both offering a vindication of Tess's motives and, like Hawthorne [in The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance], exposing the injustice of the resulting penalties" (243). The endearing descriptions of Tess make this novel Hardy's most emotional appeal to abandon social convention. As Duffin asserts, "Whatever else we call her, Tess remains the most lovable of Hardy's heroines. All women adore her, and some men. What she might have made of life, what life might have made of her, had circumstances and Clare been kind, is beyond dreaming" (221). Although Tess of the d'Urbervilles is Hardy's strongest demonstration of the stereotypical fallen woman and his most obvious condemnation of society's intolerance so far, his condoning of the ways of nature and his disdain for the ways of tradition is yet to flourish.

CHAPTER 5

A TWISTED WEB: LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN JUDE THE OBSCURE

Thomas Hardy constructs a twisted web involving four characters in six marriages in his last novel Jude the Obscure. The controversial actions and philosophies of his female characters in this novel created such an outcry among readers that Hardy gave up novel writing forever. Both Arabella Donn and Sue Bridehead shun traditional views of marriage as a lifelong commitment, but Arabella follows her physical desires and lust for excitement, while Sue is led by her conscience and social pressures.

Arabella is Hardy's stereotypical sexual adventurer, but she crudely masquerades as a woman attempting to appease society's accepted view of women. She is driven by her sexual impulses and, like Eustacia Vye, frequently aligns herself with men for her own enjoyment and fulfillment. From her first introduction onward, she is "a complete and substantial female animal –no more, no less" (Hardy, Jude 43). Hardy inundates the meetings between Jude and Arabella with images of physical lust and desire in order to show the reader that their relationship is purely sexual. In fact, Arabella first attracts Jude's attention by hitting him in the head with a pig's penis:

> On a sudden something smacked him sharply in the ear, and he became aware that a soft cold substance had been flung at him and had fallen at his feet. A glance told him what it was—a piece of flesh, the characteristic part of a barrow-pig, which the country-men used for greasing their boots, as it was useless for any other purpose. (Hardy, Jude 42)

This highly sexualized encounter likewise slaps the reader in the face with the woman's true intentions with Jude. Arabella repeatedly creates dimples in her cheeks and eagerly flirts with Jude as a means of enticing him. Heilman explains, "The ordinary coquette may tease and chill by plan, invite and hold off deliberately, heighten desire by displaying readiness and simulating retreat . . . This is what Arabella offers with great crudity in the beginning" ("Hardy's" 314). Because Jude has been ignorant of women and the world of love, he "is an easy victim" for Arabella's temptations (Webster 118). He blindly falls into her sexual trap believing that she is pure and honorable, but really she is simply out to catch a husband to satisfy her physical lusts. Beach states that "the whole setting of her home, the scene of wooing, is sordid in the extreme, a

type of the purely animal love" (222). Arabella's intentions are far from innocent and Jude is soon seduced.

Once the courting begins, Arabella follows the advice of her friends, a clear sign of social pressures, and ensnares Jude in a sexual trap. She then claims that she is pregnant to compel him to marry her. Although Arabella claims she truly thought she was expecting a child, Beach asserts, "She set out deliberately to catch a man by sexual incitements, and to cheat him into marrying her by false representation" (223). Because she knows Jude is "honourable and serious-minded," she feels confident he will adhere to social expectations and marry her (Hardy, Jude 54). He does follow through with his responsibility and soon realizes that Arabella is shallow and purely sexual, but he attempts to focus on the hope of their union. Hardy tells the reader, "For his own soothing he kept up a factitious belief in her. His idea of her was the thing of most consequence, not Arabella herself, he sometimes said laconically" (Jude 61). He seems to be trying to hide the true state of affairs from himself, as well as from those around him.

When Arabella reveals her "mistake" in believing she was pregnant and consequently requiring Jude to marry her, she treats the mishap nonchalantly. Jude, on the other hand, sees the matter as a serious threat to his goals: "Those women friends of yours gave you bad advice. If they hadn't or you hadn't taken it, we should at this moment have been free from a bond which, not to mince matters, galls both of us devilishly. It may be very sad, but it is true." Arabella replies that women have a right to perform in such a way, as long as they realize the risk associated with such an act, meaning social ostracizing and loss of reputation. Jude focuses solely on the "lifelong penalty," though and can only see his future dashed by the animal-like passions of one dishonest woman (Hardy, Jude 71).

Hardy continues to play on the sexuality and entrapment of the couple in frequent references to Samson and Delilah. When the two lovers enter an inn on the return from a courtship walk, a picture of the Biblical pair hangs on the wall to foreshadow the couple's future. After Jude and Arabella quarrel and Jude attempts to commit suicide by jumping on the frozen pond, Jude again stops at the inn and notices the picture. This time the resemblance of the pair to his own marriage strikes him, and he drinks "briskly for an hour or more" (Hardy, Jude 75). Just as Delilah trapped Samson under false pretenses, so Arabella has ensnared her man, too blinded by infatuation to realize the woman's selfish motives. Hardy reveals Arabella's selfish attempts to raise her status through the premature marriage: "she had gained a husband; that was the

thing—a husband with a lot of earning power in him for buying her frocks and hats" (Jude 62). The naïve Jude only realizes what he has done and whom he has married after the nuptials are complete. Even after Arabella's second capture of Jude in Christminster, Hardy plays on the symbolism again and states that Jude was Arabella's "shorn Samson" (Jude 373), a clear reference to her manipulative and deceptive powers.

Hardy is also quick to demonstrate the lack of emotional intimacy between Jude and Arabella in their marriage, showing that sexual attraction is the primary motive. Jude is shocked when Arabella detaches a hairpiece and then explains that she bought it during her barmaid days in Aldbrickham, another unknown to the new husband. As Steel explains, "Jude soon discovers Arabella has tricked him by professing false pregnancy, false hair, false dimples, and counterfeit innocence in order to entrap him. The barmaid daughter of a pig farmer is a seasoned survivor, ready to indulge her hearty appetites" (117). Early in their marriage, Jude is forced to regard his wife "with a feeling of sickness" when thinking of her unknown past:

> for all he knew, many unsophisticated girls would and did go to towns and remain there for years without losing their simplicity of life and embellishments. Others, alas, had an instinct towards artificiality in their very blood, and became adepts in counterfeiting at the first glimpse of it. However, perhaps there was no great sin in a woman adding to her hair, and he resolved to think no more of it. (Hardy, Jude 63)

Trying to remain hopeful, Jude realizes that Arabella has paraded herself as the epitome of the pure housewife but is only a sexual temptress in disguise.

The couple's opposing personalities again become evident in the pig-killing scene when Jude chooses to kill the pig quickly and mercifully, but Arabella is concerned only with profit and making her blackpot from the pig's slow-draining blood. When Jude exclaims, "It is a hateful business!" at the bleeding of the pig, Arabella simply states, "Pigs must be killed." Jude focuses on the animal's pain, while Arabella sees only profit. At the end of the pig's struggling and Jude's merciful attempt to slaughter it, the relieved husband states, "Thank God! . . . He's dead." To which Arabella disdainfully replies, "What's God got to do with such a messy job as a pig-killing, I should like to know! . . . Poor folks must live" (Hardy, Jude 69). Clearly, Jude and Arabella have different views on the value and purpose of life, and their marriage suffers the consequences.

Hardy also displays the inevitable disappointment of their marriage when Jude realizes that his dreams of higher learning must be delayed by their marriage. Norman Page believes Arabella "has drawn Jude [in] and caused him to abandon the straight line he was pursuing" (139). Jude tells her that their marriage "is a complete smashing up of my plans—I mean my plans before I knew you, my dear" (Hardy, Jude 61). The situation Jude is unknowingly forced into will "effectually silence his aspirations for a while" (Webster 184). This initial acknowledgement will breed contempt between the couple until Arabella disdainfully throws Jude's books to the floor after smearing the covers with her pig-greased hands. At this point Jude accepts the true state of their matrimony: "Their lives were ruined, he thought; ruined by the fundamental error of their matrimonial union: that of having based a permanent contract on a temporary feeling which had no necessary connection with affinities that alone render a lifelong comradeship tolerable" (Hardy, Jude 73). Jude is relieved of his daily struggles with Arabella when she decides to go with her parents to Australia. Her parting letter to him states, "That she had gone tired of him . . . He was such a slow old coach, and she did not care for the sort of life he led. There was no prospect of his ever bettering himself or her" (Hardy, Jude 75). As Jekel points out, Arabella "consistently chooses the option that will give her 'a better life'—more security, material riches, or status" (199). Arabella's final jab during this first marriage comes with Jude's discovery of his photo among the items her family has sold before their departure. Hardy relays Jude's sense of closure:

> The utter death of every tender sentiment in his wife, as brought home to him by this mute and undersigned evidence of her sale of his portrait and gift, was the conclusive little stroke required to demolish all sentiment in him. He paid the shilling, took the photograph away with him, and burnt it, frame and all, when he reached his lodging. (Hardy, Jude 77)

This unemotional parting destroys all remaining sympathy for Arabella and consequently turns the reader against her. Later in the novel when Jude's aunt is dying, Arabella volunteers to return with Jude to see her. Hardy tells us that Jude realized "There was something particularly uncongenial in the idea of Arabella, who had no more sympathy than a tigress with his relations or him, coming to the bedside of his dying aunt, and meeting Sue" (Hardy, Jude 183). Even after their separation and Arabella's sham marriage to Cartlett, she has little respect for dignity or

honesty. Although her drives and desires are similar to Eustacia's, Arabella's crude nature and apparent lack of tact repulse the reader.

Arabella also shows a lack of sensitivity in her treatment of her son. She reveals Jude's paternity via letter and announces that he must take their son because her parents no longer want him; leaving Jude little choice in the matter, the boy arrives the very next day. Her selfish motives are clear in her letter: "I would have him with me here in a moment, but he is not old enough to be of any use in the bar, nor will be for years and years and naturally Cartlett might think him in the way." As Sue pitifully sympathizes, "The poor child seems to be wanted by nobody!" (Hardy, Jude 270). The lack of love manifests itself in the personality of the child: he is quiet, melancholy, and unaffectionate. When the boy later kills the couple's children and then commits suicide, Arabella shows no remorse or guilt for her son's death. As Dutta explains, "It is no wonder that this intensely lonely, unloved, and unwanted child commits suicide, and yet his death seems to leave Arabella with no perceptible signs of guilt or remorse" (122). She is truly a selfish woman and cares little for the suffering or well-being of others.

When Arabella and Jude remarry, the same purpose and emotionless interactions exist. Arabella is lonely after the death of her second husband and is still physically attracted to Jude. She begins to play with Jude's emotions in relation to Sue's recent departure and remarriage and tells him, "[Sue] felt [Phillotson] was her only husband, and that she belonged to nobody else in the sight of God A'mighty while he lived. Perhaps another woman feels the same about herself, too! . . . I feel exactly the same as she!" (Hardy, Jude 368). When Arabella gets Jude drunk and preys on his emotional vulnerability, he falls for the same trap he had previously and returns to his first wife. Arabella has conjured a similar plan to profit from Jude's honor, and he feels obligated to marry the woman he has lived with for the past four days, even though he was drunk or unconscious for most of the time. As Arthur Mizener explains, "Jude, partly because of a kind of stunned indifference (he takes to drink), and partly because of Arabella's predatory sexuality, returns to his first wife" (412). To illustrate the lack of change from their previous marriage, Hardy describes the landlord's impression of the couple when he overhears Arabella "one night haranguing Jude in rattling terms, and ultimately flinging a shoe at his head, he recognized the note of genuine wedlock" (Hardy, Jude 380). Undoubtedly, the second marriage differs little from the first.

Even when Jude is about to die, Arabella is searching for her next romance, thinking "Weak women must provide for a rainy day. And if my poor fellow upstairs do go off—as I suppose he will soon—it's well to keep chances open. And I can't pick and choose now as I could when I was younger. And one must take the old if one can't get the young" (Hardy, Jude 396). Her selfish neglect for her dying husband causes any remaining admiration from the reader to disappear. Dutta clearly condemns her heartlessness:

> The case against Arabella is not that she successfully exploits her sexuality . . . but that she flouts, without regret, every norm of common human decency. Her treatment of her son and of the dying Jude are equally callous and show that, more than Ethelberta, it is Arabella who has succeeded in completely cutting out her heart. (122)

Although Arabella is a sexually-driven female, she pretends to be the angelic ideal, which earns her Hardy's disdain.

The second female character in Jude the Obscure, Sue Bridehead, likewise goes against the morality of the time regarding marriage, but unlike Arabella, Sue struggles with her role as a woman. She first attempts to conform to the accepted role of housewife in her marriage to Richard Phillotson but realizes her charlatan ways and decides to live with her heart's love, Jude. When the pressure from society becomes too much and her children are dead, Sue succumbs to her feelings of guilt and returns to her original marital arrangement. Hardy's strongest comment on the impracticability of marriage lies within this one character, and "it is in this novel that Hardy voices his strongest pro-feminist position through Sue" (Dutta 126).

Sue shows her lack of desire to fulfill the angelic stereotype from the very beginning. Jude first sees her as fairly independent, working at a small shop engraving signs. As Jude's aunt remarks, "Sue's father . . . had gone back to London, but the girl remained at Christminster. To make her still more objectionable she was an artist or designer of some sort in what was called an ecclesiastical warehouse, which was a perfect seed-bed of idolatry, and she was no doubt abandoned to mummeries on that account" (Hardy, Jude 90). Her apparent lack of parental guidance is evident in her early craving for separation and freedom. Stave believes that "Sue's strong desire for independence is one of her most appealing characteristics," especially when contrasted to Arabella's dependency on men. Stave also asserts that "She is typically direct, honest, and straightforward" (140), showing her lack of fear in offending others or

breaking social norms. Unlike Arabella, Sue does not possess a strong sense of passion. She is extremely sensitive to others' emotions but lacks a strong romantic longing for men. As Steel claims, Sue "is frigid and brittle" (118), avoiding sexual contact as much as possible. Jekel attempts to clarify Sue's sexual reservations: "She is feminine but not an overtly sexual female. She has little sense of real self-worth or pride, yet she has a strong sense of vanity" (182). Intellectually, Sue is the stereotypical dreamer. She treasures learning and purchases two naked statues of Greek gods that she then must hide to avoid embarrassment and chastisement, and she questions the traditional doctrines of the church and calls her statues her "patron-saints" (Hardy, Jude 106). She is certainly unconventional in terms of the Victorian woman, but the ambiguity and innocence within her character draws readers closer to her than to Arabella.

Sue's marriage to Phillotson also reveals much about her character and her struggle against following her heart and conforming to tradition. Sue decides to marry Phillotson shortly after Jude confesses his previous marriage to Arabella, leading the reader to believe she chooses Phillotson as a second choice or simply out of jealously for Jude's secret past. Unlike Jude's marriage to Arabella, this marriage is not based on physical attraction or lust but instead on personal gain and convenience. Sue's primary rationale for their engagement involves mutual employment and money: "I have promised—that I will marry him when I come out of the training-school two years hence, and have got my certificate; his plan being that we shall then take a large double school in the great town—he the boys' and I the girls'—as married school-teachers often do, and make a good income between us" (Hardy, Jude 134). Neither she nor Phillotson ever mention love or physical attraction in their motives for marrying, perhaps displaying the Greek word phileo meaning brotherly love, as evident in Phillotson's name. At Sue's parting from her husband, she admits: "It is a curious thing that directly I have begun to regard you as not my husband, but as my teacher, I like you. I won't be so affected as to say I love you, because you know I don't, except as a friend. But you do seem that to me!" (Hardy, Jude 232). Phillotson also realizes the fault with his marriage:

> She was a pupil-teacher under me, as you, know, and I took advantage of her inexperience, and toled her out for walks, and got her to agree to a long engagement before she well knew her own mind. Afterwards she saw somebody else, but she blindly fulfilled her engagement. (Hardy, Jude 227)

As John Kucich explains, "Sue's eventual marriage to Phillotson is mediated by her conventional sense of her social obligations" (231). She does not heed her emotional impulses, but instead follows through with what she sees as required of her. Twice before the wedding Jude confesses his belief that Sue does not understand what marriage really is, but he keeps his thoughts to himself, thinking he would only be speaking from his own lustful desire for her (Hardy, Jude 169, 172). William R. Goetz thinks that "What Sue . . . had failed to see was the paradox that the conventionally defined act of marriage can be validated only through the physical, 'raw' or noninstitutional act of sex" (197). She sees only the mutual companionship and social advancement the relationship offers and disregards the physical consummation of the marriage. Clearly, the pair has no emotional ties to one another but simply enters into the marriage for comfort and social advancement.

The interactions between Phillotson and Sue are similar to Jude and Arabella's in that their communication is shallow, yet Sue develops a repulsion toward her husband and their marriage, whereas Arabella seems simply to grow tired and annoyed with hers. Hardy describes Phillotson as one who "seemed not to notice, to be surrounded by a mist which prevented his seeing the emotions of others" (Jude 174). Unfortunately, Sue begins to demonstrate her repugnance so blatantly that Phillotson can be oblivious no longer. At one point, Sue sleeps in the small closet under the staircase in order to avoid sleeping in the same bed with him. Seeing the closet in the morning, Phillotson replies: "What must a woman's aversion be when it is stronger than her fear of spiders!" (Hardy, Jude 219). Describing this uncomfortable situation, Morgan states, "Making constant appeals to Phillotson's better nature, carefully avoiding raising the emotional temperature beyond a manageable level, she lives in daily dread of the absolute authority he has over her" (125). Although he does not understand the reason for Sue's abhorrence of him, Phillotson cannot deny its existence when she jumps from her bedroom window to escape his misunderstood sexual advances. Harvey Curtis Webster states that "physical and intellectual incompatibility makes her marriage with Phillotson impossible" (185)—so much so that she would rather risk death than be with him. When considering his wife's circumstances, Phillotson seems hurt, yet amazingly compassionate. He seeks counsel from his friend Gillingham and decides to release Sue from the bond of marriage. He confesses: "My wretched state is that I've a wife I love, who not only does not love me, but—but—Well, I won't say. I know her feeling! I should prefer hatred from her!" (Hardy, Jude 227). When

Phillotson and Sue finally discuss her leaving, it is through note-writing delivered to the recipient by a student, demonstrating their clear lack of any emotional ties that would enable them to communicate freely with one another.

When Sue returns to Phillotson after years of living with Jude, the second marriage carries on the same characteristics as the first. Sue is still repulsed by her husband, but she now feels she must force herself to adapt and try to submit more eagerly: "I don't love him—I must, must, own it, in deepest remorse! But I shall try to learn to love him by obeying him" (Hardy, Jude 355). But Sue never learns to tolerate her husband as Mrs. Edlin shows in her description of Sue's appearance after her remarriage: "Tired and miserable, poor heart. Years and years older than when you saw her last. Quite a staid, worn woman now. 'Tis the man—she can't stomach un, even now!" (Hardy, Jude 402). Sue sees her second marriage to Phillotson as a penance she must do for her previous sin of leaving him and living with Jude. Heilman explains: "Sue violently and excessively blames herself and pronounces on herself a life sentence of the severest mortification that she can imagine" ("Hardy's" 316). That life sentence is a return to the torture of her traditional Victorian marriage. Likewise James R. Kincaid asserts, "For Sue, there are no grandly expiring days or nights, just a humiliating surrender to Phillotson's punishments, which she . . . believes are deserved" (146). When Sue first glimpses the marriage license for her and Phillotson, "[h]er look was that of the condemned criminal who catches sight of his coffin" (Hardy, Jude 359). Stave describes the couple's consummation: "Quaking with terror and almost unable to keep herself from crying out or flinching, Sue, like a good Victorian, performs her marital duty. It is impossible to label this act lovemaking, yet any more enthusiasm on Sue's part would have branded her as lewd in the eyes of many Victorians" (138). Just as the first marriage was for comfort and advancement, this marriage is to purify Sue's guilty heart and restore Phillotson's reputation; little has changed between the first marriage and the second.

While the union between Jude and Sue is the most genuine, it is the one despised by society. The couple never lawfully marries because they believe the vows to love forever cannot be spoken honestly. Instead they choose to live together as lovers and avoid eternal obligation to one another. When Arabella returns to ask her former husband for help, Sue concedes to marry Jude, but when he agrees to disregard his former spouse, Sue's feelings of entrapment resurface, and she convinces Jude to wait (Hardy, Jude 263-8). Twice the couple leaves home to perform the wedding vows, and twice they return unwed. Morgan explains Sue's rationale for avoiding

marriage: "Victorian marriage codes are an anachronism to Sue. The notion strikes her as outrageous that a married woman should still be regarded as a man's property, or that sexual relationships should still require institutionalization in a modern society pioneering in its radical quarters the dissolution of rigid role demarcations and sexual inequality" (112). Although Sue voices her disdain for being perceived as property, she also fears perjury and dishonesty. She urges Jude: "It is awful if you think we have found ourselves not strong enough for it [lifelong commitment], and knowing this, are proposing to perjure ourselves" (Hardy, Jude 282). In order to avoid this, Jude and Sue mislead others and have them believe that they are married, but their honesty prevails over trying to please. Sue avoids the legal act of marriage to circumvent loss of independence and, ironically, her sense of integrity. As Morgan clarifies:

> With its contractual emphasis placed solely upon terms, the terms most profitable to the bond-holder, in contrast to the simple exchange of promissory oaths under the old practice of betrothal and simple church ceremonial, matrimony has become, in Sue's eyes, less a mutual undertaking than the legitimization of a "sordid business" granting one individual authority and power over another. (126)

To persuade Sue of their legitimate union, Jude labels their relationship as a natural marriage: "But surely we are man and wife, if ever two people were in this world? Nature's own marriage it is, unquestionably!" (Hardy, Jude 345). Goetz says that "What Jude and Sue consider they have done is to enter into a 'natural' marriage, just as binding on them as a civil one would be but with less potential for cruelty" (206). Without the legal procedure of marriage, the couple is free to go on loving each other with no fear of broken vows or waning passion. Even without the formal wedding, the couple still exhibits a marriage-like bond.

The bond between Jude and Sue rests primarily on their remarkable similarities. As early as chapter two, Hardy informs the reader that both are "crazy for books," and their intellectual zeal is obvious (Jude 17). They are also both sensitive to the suffering of animals as they both awaken one night to the sound of a rabbit's cry and both desire to put the animal out of its pain. Sue again echoes Jude's sympathy for the birds in the farmer's field when she frees her pet doves from the butcher's cage. Phillotson also realizes the similarities between the two: "I have been struck with these two facts; the extraordinary sympathy, or similarity, between the pair. He is her cousin, which perhaps accounts for some of it. They seem to be one person split in two!" (Hardy, Jude 228). Their compatibility lends itself to deep passion, and the scenes of greatest

emotion in the novel always involve this couple and contrast with the crude sensuality of Arabella and the forced compassion between Sue and Phillotson. Upon Sue's parting with Jude after a visit to his aunt's, "They had quickly run back, and met, and embracing most unpremeditatedly, kissed close and long. When they parted for good it was with flushed cheeks on her side, and a beating heart on his" (Hardy, Jude 214). Hardy makes a strong point that this couple is the only one in the novel with genuine love for one another.

The interactions of this couple are also starkly different from those of their previous marriage partners. Although they often argue with one another, frequently on the topic of marriage, it is always truthful and respectful. After one such discussion of getting married, Sue and Jude display this playful honesty:

> "I don't think I like you to-day so well as I did, Jude!"
>
> "Don't you? Why?"
>
> "Oh, well—you are not nice—too sermony. Though I suppose I am so bad and worthless that I deserve the utmost rigour of lecturing!"
>
> "No, you are not bad. You are a dear. But as slippery as an eel when I want to get a confession from you."
>
> "Oh yes I am bad, and obstinate, and all sorts! It is no use pretending I am not! People who are good don't want scolding as I do." (Hardy, Jude 257)

Although the couple often agree on the topic of marriage, this is also the main area that causes problems in their relationship. Webster believes that "If [not marrying] slightly helps their personal relationship, it makes their relationship to society more difficult" (185), and it is the struggle with the views of the world around them that eventually ruins their relationship.

Jude and Sue part after the deaths of their two children and the suicide of Arabella's son Father Time. Sue feels responsible for the loss because she asserted to Father Time that the world is "trouble, adversity, and suffering" and they would soon have another child to care for without the means to do so (Hardy, Jude 327). When Father Time mutters, "If we children was gone ther'd be no trouble at all," Sue simply states, "Don't think that, dear . . . But go to sleep!" (Hardy, Jude 329). Upon their deaths, Sue cries to Jude, "Oh, my comrade, our perfect union—our two-in-oneness—is now stained with blood!" (Hardy, Jude 333). She sees this tragedy as God's judgment upon their immorality and can now only regard herself as Phillotson's wife despite the fact they are divorced. As Penelope Vigar explains, "Sue, in finding the necessary

order by obeying what she considers to be the will of 'God', ultimately destroys the natural harmony which Jude imagined he had found in his relationship with her" (210). Even after Sue returns to Phillotson, she clearly still harbors a deep longing for Jude, showing the true desires of her heart and the ideal union of the two. As Arabella states about her rival after Jude's death, "She may swear that [she has found peace] on her knees to the holy cross upon her necklace till she's hoarse, but it won't be true! . . . She's never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she's as he is now!" (Hardy, Jude 403). Hardy's disapproval of Sue's return is evident in her inability to adapt to traditional marriage, and her attempt to become a more acceptable woman in the eyes of society could be why Jude earns the sympathy in the closing chapters instead of the leading woman.

Love and marriage are naturally assumed to coincide in Victorian England, but Hardy teaches his readers that this is not always the case. A couple such as Jude and Sue may genuinely love each other but not marry, while some couples fall into the marriage contract on different terms, as the other combinations demonstrate. While the legal marriages of Jude to Arabella and Phillotson to Sue are legitimate in the eyes of the law and society, they are shallow and even torturous. On the other hand, Jude's "natural" marriage to Sue is based on mutual attraction and intimacy yet shunned by the world around them. Although clearly speaking out against the traditional sanctions of marriage, Hardy also demonstrates the ludicrous nature of defining women by their appearances and the faults of society in shunning or accepting women on the basis of their matrimonial status. Whereas Arabella often appears as a conventional woman by attempting to marry well and remain honorable, she is actually heartless and crude, driven only by sexual instincts. Sue, on the other hand, remains honest to herself and her emotions until the pressures of society weigh too heavily on her. Because Hardy portrays Sue as both the independent woman struggling to fit into society's mold and the victim of society's harsh requirements of women, Jude the Obscure is Hardy's strongest statement against the stereotyping of women and the illogical and impractical expectations placed upon them.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Written over the span of seventeen years, Hardy's four novels The Return of the Native, The Woodlanders, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, and Jude the Obscure represent an ever-increasing growth of disdain and frustration with the Victorian formulaic views of women and their sexuality. While he begins by demonstrating the stereotypes in Eustacia Vye, Thomasin, and Mrs. Yeobright and empathizing with the struggles of the unaccepted woman, in The Woodlanders Hardy attacks those who interfere in the lives and desires of women. In the character of Tess, he demonstrates the value of all women, regardless of their sexual histories, and demonizes the traditional bigotry exhibited toward those with tainted pasts. Illustrating the idiocy of adhering to formal rules of marriage and demonstrating the pain women must endure when society interferes with their heartfelt aspirations, Jude the Obscure ends Hardy's attempt to convict his culture through his novels. Such progression proves Hardy's growing frustration with his contemporaries and his desire to improve the condition of women in his time.

Hardy uses the "angel in the house" stereotype in creating Thomasin, Mrs. Yeobright, and Grace Melbury to show the helplessness and melancholy associated with conformity to accepted roles. While these women are not punished harshly or shunned by the narrator, they are not overwhelmingly praised nor does the reader sympathize with their plights. These characters effectively demonstrate that while such women do experience little condemnation by society, they lead ordinary and often unhappy or unfruitful lives.

Hardy also uses the passionate temptress stereotype to show the clash between passionate fulfillment and social interference. These women, exemplified in Eustacia, Felice, Tess, and Sue, are capable of finding satisfaction, but not when society interferes and ruins their dreams. The role of the dreamer, typified by intense sexuality, independence, and quest for adventure, is often squelched by the customary acceptance of the restrained and subtly feminine angel. In these four characters traditional sexuality is disregarded, and heartfelt passion leads their drives. When pressure from society intensifies or men interfere, these creatures become unsettled and dissatisfied. They are entirely at the whim and will of their culture and therefore experience restlessness and insecurity. In all cases, Hardy empathizes with these women and presents them as victims of their time.

Hardy clearly criticizes society's intervention in women's lives and attempts to show the pain that results from such intrusion. Eustacia, Felice, and Tess die as a direct consequence of actions by those who do not understand them or fail to sympathize with them. In all cases Hardy blames society for the characters' dissatisfaction and tragedy, and the women are free from any blame. As Jane Thomas asserts, "Hardy recognized women's physical, mental and emotional susceptibility to convention, and their consequent capitulation in the face of apparently overwhelming social pressures" (48). By demonstrating the suffering of women and personalizing the vague and abstract stereotypes of Victorian society, Hardy has shown the need for change and unprejudiced thinking among his culture. His controversial and possibly convicting novels earned him temporary contempt among his fellow men but lifelong fame and appreciation by future readers.

NOTES

[1] Although Thomasin's decision to succumb to passion seems to negate her angelic stereotype, Hardy added this last scene and marriage reluctantly due to pressure from readers to create a peaceful resolution. Thomasin was originally destined to live a widow's life similar to that of Mrs. Yeobright.

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