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"THE QUICKER CRIPPLE AT BETHESDA":

HARDY'S PARABLES OF DARWINIAN ENTANGLEMENT,

ELECTION AND SELECTION

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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For Gregory

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

CHARLES DARWIN

Voyage	The Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle Round the World (1839)
Origin	On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life (1859)
Descent	The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex (1871)
Autobiography	Charles Darwin's Autobiography (1881)

THOMAS HARDY

DR	Desperate Remedies (1871)
UGT	Under the Greenwood Tree(1872)
PBE	A Pair of Blue Eyes (1873)
FFMC	Far from the Madding Crowd(1874)
HE	The Hand of Ethelberta (1876)
RN	The Return of the Native (1878)
TM	The Trumpet-Major (1880)
AL	A Laodicean (1881)
TT	Two on a Tower (1882)
MC	The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886)
TW	The Woodlanders (1887)
Tess	Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891)
Jude	Jude the Obscure (1896)
WB	The Well-Beloved (1897)
Dynasts	The Dynasts (1903)
CP	Complete Poems (1976)
Ser.	Serialization Dates (Beginning and Ending)
Pub.	Book Publication Date

NOTE: All publication dates referenced are taken from Michael Millgate's Thomas Hardy, His Career as a Novelist

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY: DARWIN'S DAMASCUS AND THE SHAKEN FOUNDATIONS OF ESSENTIALISM

The pervasiveness of the canons of population biology in contemporary thought and culture tends to obscure the historical novelty of a viewpoint radically at odds with centuries-old orthodoxies--heretofore widely accepted doctrines of science and philosophy persisting throughout the last century, and surviving well into our own time. In fact, generally abandoned theologico-scientific views prevalent during the nineteenth century still thrive among biblical literalists, as exemplified by the current revival of "scientific" creationism.

Throughout this chapter and the chapters which follow, I attempt to explore ways in which Charles Darwin and Thomas Hardy expanded the parameters, while blurring the boundaries, of disparate modes of discourse--one scientific, one literary. I endeavor to demonstrate their diverse redactions of an age's transition from the traditions of an essentialist view of the world toward the view which came to dominate in the century that followed theirs, a perception of biological life Ernst Mayr and other architects of the modern evolutionary synthesis have labeled "population thinking." While this phrase

appears nowhere in Darwin or Hardy, I have sought to demonstrate ways in which both writers may be read as prognosticators--if not progenitors-- of the attitudes and assumptions underlying the populationist mindset.

I also aim at demonstrating differing responses to this wide-ranging philosophical transition represented in Darwin and Hardy. Reading Darwin's major work in chronological sequence, one derives the impression of a developing mind, gradually unloading the cumbersome baggage of essentialist thought with a sense of release and assurance. Contrapuntally, in Hardy, one often senses a pronounced ambivalence; the transition seems to carry an implication of cosmic trade-off. There is a wistful yearning in Hardy, a longing that suggests irrecoverable loss, like a mourning for departed spirits and spirituality, reaching its apogee in his regret-laden eulogies for Emma Hardy in the 1913 poems dedicated to her memory. Other ghosts haunt Hardy, as well. His century's incursive scientific rigor and attendant philosophical upheaval, like the awkwardly makeshift telegraphic cabling inserted into an ancient arrow-slot in the Stancy Castle of A Laodicean, intrude with a forward-thrusting dynamic modernity, but with an accompanying sense of departed grandeur and regrettable compromise.

Spanning the physical and psychological landscape of Hardy's Wessex, usurped and invalidated traditions, suggestive of defunct essentialist typologies, furnish a melancholy backdrop. Against these desiccated ruins, natural and man-made, Hardy's narrators evoke the personality of a new-age protagonist,

one who will perhaps embody and characterize the future--the world-weary Laodicean.

In my reading of the Darwinian aspects of the works of Thomas Hardy, I undertake an explication of Hardy's literary style and world view, demonstrating ways in which his work registers his assimilation of--as well as his ambivalence toward--his age's soul-wrenching transition from an earlier essentialist mindset toward a revolutionary and alien point of view. That Hardy's literary productions had an appreciable affinity with the science of his time was evident to his contemporaries. In The Art of Thomas Hardy, the first book-length criticism of Hardy's work (pub. 1894), Lionel Johnson alludes to Hardy's Darwinism and suggests his anticipation of the populationist mindset in a reference to Hardy's characterization of human life: ". . . [For Hardy] natural science is the true history, and man is but a natural product" (96).

Properly contextualizing Hardy's Darwinism requires the placement of Darwin's major writings within the framework of Darwin's predecessors and contemporaries, scientific teachers and writers whose theories and observations generally recurred to an essentialist model. In One Long Argument: Charles Darwin and the Genesis of Modern Evolutionary Thought, Professor Mayr summarizes the history of essentialism in Western thought:

> Essentialism had dominated Western thinking for more than 2000 years, going back to the geometric thinking of the

> Pythagoreans. . . . all the variable phenomena of nature, according to this thinking, are a reflection of a limited number of constant and sharply delimited eide or essences. Essentialism, as a definite philosophy, is usually credited to Plato. . . . Plato's cave allegory of the world is well known: What we see of the phenomena of the world corresponds to the shadows of the real objects cast on the cave wall by a fire. We can never see the real essences. Variation is the manifestation of imperfect reflections of the underlying constant essences. (41-2)

Mayr emphasizes Darwin's pivotal role in the transition from the bedrock of essentialist thought in Western culture toward the evolving canons of the populationist viewpoint:

> It was Darwin's genius to see that this uniqueness of each individual is not limited to the human species but is equally true for every sexually reproducing species of animal and plant. Indeed, the discovery of the importance of the individual became the cornerstone of Darwin's theory of natural selection. It eventually resulted in the replacement of essentialism by population thinking, which emphasized the uniqueness of the individual and the critical role of individuality in evolution. (42)

In Chapter Two of Darwin's Dangerous Idea, Daniel Dennett offers a

similar analysis of the historical and philosophical significance of taxonomic classification in the development of Western thought:

> Aristotle had developed his theory of essences as an improvement on Plato's theory of Ideas, according to which every earthly thing is a sort of imperfect copy or reflection of an ideal exemplar or Form that existed timelessly in the Platonic realm of Ideas, reigned over by God. . . . What geometers thought about, and proved theorems about, for instance, were the Forms of the circle and the triangle. Since there were also Forms for the eagle and the elephant, a deductive science of nature was also worth a try. But just as no earthly circle, no matter how carefully drawn with a compass, or thrown on a potter's wheel, could actually be one of the perfect circles of Euclidean geometry, so no actual eagle could perfectly manifest the essence of eaglehood, though every eagle strove to do so. Everything that existed had a divine specification, which captured its essence. The taxonomy of living things Darwin inherited was thus itself a direct descendant, via Aristotle, of Plato's essentialism. (36)

Examples of essentialist doctrine abound among nineteenth-century popularizers of science, writers such as William Paley, Philip Henry Gosse, Hugh Miller, William Whewell, and David Brewster, among others. The

scientist as "natural theologian" notably interrupts the cataloguing of scientific data, pausing at intervals to elicit a sense of wonder, evocative of the underlying "essence" ineluctably perceivable beneath the surfaces presented to the senses by the God-created medium of nature . The style of these once-popular guides to the natural sciences resembles that of sacred texts or hymnals, often explicitly reflective of the Old Testament Book of Psalms. Descriptions of observable phenomena take on the tone of spiritual meditations. In his widely-read Natural Theology, a work holding foundational significance for Darwin during his Cambridge years,[1] William Paley summarizes the natural theologian's reverent posture in one of his concluding admonitions:

> The world from thenceforth becomes a temple, and life itself one continued action of adoration. The change is not less than this, that whereas formerly God was seldom in our thoughts, we

---

[1] In his Autobiography, Darwin cites William Paley's work as a major influence on his early academic training:

> In order to pass the B.A. examination, it was also necessary to get up Paley's Evidences of Christianity, and his Moral Philosophy. This was done in a thorough manner, and I am convinced that I could have written out the whole of the Evidences with perfect correctness, but not of course in the clear language of Paley. The logic of this book and, as I may add, of his Natural Theology, gave me as much delight as did Euclid. The careful study of these works, without attempting to learn any part by rote, was the only part of the academical course which, as I then felt and as I still believe, was of the least use to me in the education of my mind. (27)

> can now scarcely look upon any thing without perceiving its relation to him. (395)

This telling passage, characteristic of much "scientific" writing popular in England and America throughout the nineteenth century, effectively defines the essentialist (or typological) posture, the notion that the palpable world available to human intelligence through the imperfect gateway of the physical senses obscures--but potentially illuminates to the transcendentally attuned--a more significant spiritual world. This sense of the natural world's function as a soul-elevating, awe-inspiring medium pervades the writing of a great many respected and highly credible nineteenth-century scientists, whose allegiance to empirical methodology is made to harmonize with established canons of Scripture and Christian tradition. Paley, the archangel of natural theology, imposes as a cardinal rule of scientific observation that "we can scarcely look on any thing without perceiving its relation to [God]" (395). The essentialist mindset values the motivating impulse toward scientific observation--the inherent curiosity that drives an observer to "look on any thing"--in terms of observable phenomena's potential for illuminating one's perception of a deeper, fuller revelation of underlying structures and specifications--an essential reality of which the observed "thing" is merely a pallid reflection.

That Paley's predisposition toward essentialism persisted among his successors well beyond the publication of the first edition of Natural Theology in 1802 is evidenced among the many scientific writers whose popularity

peaked during the 1840s and 1850s (and whose work Thomas Huxley was later to excoriate, particularly in Science and the Christian Tradition).[2] Examples of the typological frame of mind are discernable in many passages of the Paleyan apostle Hugh Miller's Footprints of the Creator, a book that went through seventeen editions before the end of the century (far exceeding Lyell's Principles in popularity).[3] In contrast to Darwin's later challenging of speciational boundaries, Hugh Miller describes the determiners of speciation as if they possessed some inherent typological basis independent of observable speciational markers. It is as if classificatory designations derive from foreordained patterns or models, of which each individual is merely an imperfect copy:

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[2] Hardy always claimed to be an extensive reader of Huxley. This claim finds support in Hardyan passages that strike one as manifestly Huxleyan in tone, a topic I attempt to exploit in Chapter Five. A typical example of Huxley's abhorrence of unexamined pious assumptions is the following quote from Science and Christian Tradition :

> My memory, unfortunately, carries me back to the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, when the evangelical flood had a little abated and the tops of certain mountains were soon to appear, . . . but when nevertheless, bibliolatry was rampant; when church and chapel alike proclaimed, as the oracles of God, the crude assumptions of the worst informed and, in natural sequence, the most presumptuously bigoted, of all theological schools. (21)

[3] In Genesis and Geology, Charles Coulston Gillispie compares the popularity of Hugh Miller's treatises with Lyell's Principles:

> Each of Lyell's editions ran to about two thousand. By the end of the century, however, Miller's Testimony of the Rocks had sold forty-two thousand copies, his Footprints of the Creator had been through seventeen editions, and his Old Red Sandstone twenty. (172)

> In the classification of the naturalist . . . all species range round some central generic idea; all genera round some central idea, to which we give the name of order; all orders round some central idea of class; all classes round some central idea of division; and all divisions round the interior central idea which constitutes a kingdom. (63)

In Darwin and His Critics: The Reception of Darwin's Theory of Evolution by the Scientific Community, David L. Hull devotes an introductory chapter to a detailed discussion of "Essences." Like Mayr and Dennett, Hull recognizes population thinking's challenge to essentialism as the defining fissure marking the boundary of a scientific and intellectual revolution:

> Geometric figures were the chief examples of natural kinds in essentialist philosophies from Plato and Aristotle to Whewell and Mill. Species of plants and animals were the second most popular examples. When the diversity of the organic world was only very poorly known, organic species seemed to be as distinct as those of geometry. By the time of Darwin, however, biologists had been forced to recognize that they were not quite so distinct. In fact, the scandalous state of taxonomy was one of the chief arguments used by Darwin against the doctrine of the permanence of species. . . . For essentialists, such difficulties and disagreements were only technical problems to

> be overcome by more careful examination of the data. There had to be diagnostic characters. For Darwin no such characters existed for species extended in time. (71)

Darwin's abandonment of the essentialist predisposition of contemporaries and predecessors is apparent whenever he describes the process of natural selection. For example, in Chapter Eleven of his Origin, he evokes a world of competing individuals and competing populations. Observable phenomena occur in a context that is devoid of either teleological or essentialist implications:

> I believe . . . in no law of necessary development. As the variability of each species is an independent property, and will be taken advantage of by natural selection, only so far as it profits the individual in its complex struggle for life, so the degree of modification in different species will be no uniform quantity. (348)

While Darwin's discrediting "necessary development" may appear innocuous, this rejection radically overturns centuries of teleologically-grounded essentialist doctrine. The substitution of a "complex struggle for life" turned inside out Paley's purposive assurances that a complexity of apparent design suggested a providential Designer--that there could be no intricately operating watch without an infinitely transcendent Watchmaker. The shift in the scientific observer's orientation toward the world around him

was seismic in scope, resembling the youthful Darwin's encounter with a severe earthquake during the fourth year of his travels in South America. In a diary entry dated February 20, 1835, included in his published Voyage, Darwin describes having the earth move beneath his feet as a profoundly unsettling experience, forever dispelling the commonplace notion of "solid" ground:

> A bad earthquake at once destroys our oldest associations: the earth, the very emblem of solidity, has moved beneath our feet like a thin crust over fluid; --one second of time has created in the mind a strange idea of insecurity, which hours of reflection would not have produced. (260)

The conceptualization of the earth's surface moving "like a thin crust over fluid" was congruent with Darwin's reading Lyell's Principles of Geology in installments during the period of the Beagle's voyage. Lyell's work focuses on geological fluidity and the permutations of terrestrial formations, as a recurring motif. The existence of fossilized molluscs on mountain peaks and the remains of land animals beneath the oceans is explicable in terms of the globe's inherent plasticity. Lyell envisages the earth's visible surface as an undulating layer of crust floating over a seething mass of molten, primordial magma, an image at odds with traditional notions of permanence and fixity.

There can be little doubt that Lyell's work enhanced Darwin's appreciation of the principle of geological plasticity, an appreciation

irrevocably punctuated by Darwin's first experience of a serious earthquake. The intellectual appreciation of geological impermanence was no match for the profound psychological and emotional effect of feeling the earth move beneath his feet. Like the defining experience of an errant Saul of Tarsus dismounted from horse and heresy, Darwin's "bad earthquake" experience apparently produced an earthquake of the mind. It was more than twenty years after the Beagle's voyage that Darwin published his Origin. But it is apparent that the initial earthquake experience carried with it some significance that remained with Darwin throughout his life. Like Saul of Tarsus, Darwin's course was permanently altered. The reassuring essentialist footing of his pious Cambridge mentors would never be regained.

A great deal has been written about how much poetry and prose of the Victorian Period registers the after-shocks of the Darwinian revolution and the ferment that preceded it. That Thomas Hardy acknowledged the role of Darwin's Origin in shaping many aspects of his work and his way of viewing the world is a commonplace, well documented by his major biographers. In The Life of Thomas Hardy, (ostensibly compiled and edited by Florence Emily Hardy, but generally considered to be largely Hardy's autobiography written in the third person), we learn of Hardy's attendance at Darwin's funeral on April 26, 1882:

> During his stay in London [Hardy] attended, on April 26, the funeral of Darwin in Westminster Abbey. As a young man he

had been among the earliest acclaimers of The Origin of Species. (153)

Significant among recent expositors of Hardyan Darwinism are Gillian Beer, George Levine and James Krasner. Each of these critics has made worthwhile contributions to our understanding of Darwinian aspects of Hardy's narrative style and fictive imagination. My own examination of Hardy's absorption of Darwinian principles differs from theirs in my more detailed focus on the essentialist/populationist dichotomy. I have attempted to explore ways in which Darwin's tangled bank of competing populations finds analogistic parallels in Hardy's Wessex, an entangled milieu comprised of warring individuals and classes of individuals, much resembling the world of Darwin's Origin. While trying to avoid the pitfalls of excessive Zeitgeist-mongering, I have taken the position that Hardy's work provides a keen register of the emotional anxiety and intellectual ferment surrounding the Darwinian revolution, and that one of the most fruitful sources of investigation into this phenomenon is the surviving primary texts themselves.

This is not a study of archivably discoverable "influences." Explorations of extant notebooks, markings in Hardy's Bible and Prayerbook, and extensive studies of Hardy's correspondence are worthwhile endeavors. I have avoided this approach for two reasons: (1) it is well known that Hardy destroyed a library-full of personal notes and papers before his death, and (2) everything we know about Hardy suggests that, like many another literary

figure, he could be less than completely reliable when delineating details of his own intellectual history. Surviving biographical data provide sufficient evidence of Hardy's extensive exposure to the cultural and psychological reverberations of Darwinism among the intellectual community of his time. Hardy's close association with Edward Clodd, the author of numerous Darwinian studies,[4] for example, or his lifelong personal friendship with Edmund Gosse, whose rebellion against his father's fierce loyalty to the principles of natural theology is well documented in Father and Son, provide ample evidence of Hardy's exposure to late Victorian Darwinism. The major premise of this study is that Hardy's own take on the Darwinian revolution is embedded in his literary productions themselves.

Nor is this study an exploitation of secondary sources. While reading and exploring the extensive body of critical works devoted to Hardy's narrative fiction and poetry and the reading of standard biographies has been a necessary component of this project, this is not a compendium of Darwinian

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[4] In The Second Mrs. Hardy, Robert Gittings and Jo Manton discuss the close relationship between Hardy and Clodd:

> On 5 July 1909, Hardy had a long talk with a friend of almost twenty years' standing, his fellow-rationalist Edward Clodd. Clodd was the same age as Hardy, the son of chapel-going parents in Aldeburgh who had hoped to make him a Baptist minister. Instead he became a self-made businessman and secretary to a bank. In his spare time Clodd wrote a number of Darwinian studies, which put him on Emma Hardy's personal black list of bad influences on her husband. (47)

tidbits culled from the many distinguished critical or biographical works available.

A widely-recognized contemporary breakthrough in Darwin studies is Gillian Beer's Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Fiction, which proffers an explicitly Darwinian reading of several major Victorian novelists, Hardy among them. She presents Hardy's work as uniquely responsive to the scale and scope of evolutionary theory within the context of being human:

> The two major emotional and creative problems which evolutionary theory forced on Hardy were to find a scale for the human, and a place for the human within the natural order. Like Darwin, an ambiguous anthropomorphism pervades his writing--an anthropomorphism which paradoxically denies human centrality and gives the human a fugitive and secondary role in his system of reference but not in his system of values. (252)

While Beer's work has contributed significantly to my appreciation of Hardy's Darwinian sensibilities, my own explications of Hardyan Darwinism differ in several important details. My reading of Hardy's fictive milieu, the world we inhabit when we read his novels and poetry, focuses on perceivable affinities between Hardy's human protagonists and primordial forces which surround them and control their destinies. This departs somewhat from Beer's

interpretation of Hardy's Darwinism, which suggests that Hardy privileges human life over other forms of life--an interpretation more congruent with the book of Genesis and essentialist tradition than with the book of Darwin and the emerging canons of population thinking. Beer's study restricts itself to the novels; for a poetic quote illustrating Darwinian "sense of plenitude" (241), Beer resorts to a quote from a work much admired by Hardy, Whitman's "Song of Myself" (cf. 241).

Beer views Hardy's response to Darwin as an attempt to "find a scale for the human," but she does not deal extensively with the tendency in Hardy to challenge the dichotomy separating human life from animal life--or the dichotomy separating human life from the other natural phenomena that comprise the environment in which life thrives or perishes. Jude's identification with the corn-eating rooks and his aversion to a routine pig-slaughtering (reflective of Hardy's own animal-rights activism)[5] provide examples of the associative affinities between individuals and populations, human and animal. Much of the irony of Hardy's vision derives from a sense of horrific isolation juxtaposed against an inescapable identification that crosses multiple boundaries--those once unbridgeable essentialist dichotomies:

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[5] Robert Gittings and Jo Manton provide an extensive and interesting catalogue of differences between the first and second Mrs. Hardys. One of their few similarities, one that they shared with Hardy, was a dedication to animal rights: "A love and sympathy for defenceless animals was certainly one of the bonds between [Florence Dugdale] and Hardy, as it had been between him and Emma" (52).

human/animal, male/female, person/place, past/present, master/servant, secular/profane. Eustacia Vye's affinity for the wildness of Egdon Heath suggests identification with--and, at the same time, isolation from--the entangled web of nature. In my own attempts at offering a Darwinian exegesis of key passages in Hardy's work, I have taken the notions of entangled populations and the crossing of speciational, biological, class and sexual boundaries in a direction that represents a significant departure from Beer's emphasis on the uniqueness of human consciousness and the diminished scale of human experience juxtaposed against geologic time and space.

George Levine's Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science and Victorian Fiction finds numerous analogistic parallels between revolutionary developments in novelistic form and the Darwinian revolution. In reference to Hardy's novels, he emphasizes the role of happenstance in the plot structures:

> Hardy's exploitation of the conventions of coincidence and happenstance to increase not diminish the protagonists' suffering is one entirely legitimate inference from the Darwinian scheme. (250)

Like Beer, Levine restricts his discussion to Hardy's novels. His study is preoccupied with narrative form and the role of the narrator:

> Hardy's narrator works like the post-Darwinian scientist. He needs to achieve the fullest possible distance from his subjects compatible with the closest possible scrutiny of them. (233)

James Krasner shares Levine's fascination with Darwinian resonances to be encountered in the narrative stance in Hardy. In The Entangled Eye: Visual Perception and the Representation of Nature in Post-Darwinian Narrative, Hardy's "narrative eye" is discussed in terms of the contradictory nature of his artistic vision:

> . . . I wish to demonstrate that Hardy's narrative eye, which selects and simplifies the landscape, is at once lyrical and deterministic; its nativistic selection of visual forms limits nature even as it perceives plenitude. At the same time, the very limitations that make his narrative vision tragic allow for a focusing in on, and thus a subjective recentering of, humanity in the natural landscape. (75)

Krasner deals with both visual resolution and irresolution in Hardy. Krasner implies that it is for his entangled vision, the ambiguities of his perceptions, that we find Hardy most compelling.

My own interpretative treatment of Hardy's work differs from that of Beer, Levine and Krasner primarily in my more explicit focus on ways in which Hardy's fictive imagination reflects the anti-essentialist dynamics of population biology--a concept I believe to be a centripetal, unifying principle informing all of Hardy's major poems, The Dynasts and the novels. My methodology is a close reading of selected passages representing the full range of Hardy's work, from the less critically acclaimed early novels through the

more mature fiction and poetry, including Hardy's career-crowning ultimate statement on warring populations--The Dynasts. It is ultimately the works themselves that attest most explicitly to Hardy's absorption of Darwinian principles. If we knew nothing of Hardy's close personal friendships and philosophical affinities with Darwinian "converts" such as Edmund Gosse, Leslie Stephen, Elizabeth Thackeray, and Edward Clodd, or if we lacked Hardy's explicit statements about the significance of Huxley and Darwin upon his life and work, we would still have the works themselves--cryptogrammic Darwinian parables.

Of all Darwinian metaphors, entanglement is probably the most pervasive and memorable. At the end of the last chapter of his Origin--in a concluding hymn to competitive populations reminiscent of a Paleyan paean--Charles Darwin introduces the image of an entangled bank:

> It is interesting to contemplate a tangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent upon each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. (373)

The entanglement motif surfaces embryonically in Darwin's earlier work, The Voyage of the Beagle (first published in 1839, twenty years before

the Origin appeared). Throughout his Voyage, the fledgling naturalist supplements his ongoing absorption of the work of Lyell, Lamarck and Cuvier, among others, with his first-hand observations of the interactive relationship between landscape and life forms. In a number of passages, the youthful Darwin expresses his wonder at nature's indiscriminate commingling of the geologically archival with the vibrantly active life around him (an increasingly pervasive trope that harbingers Darwin's later development of the entanglement metaphor in his Origin)--essentialism is the doctrine of clear, uncrossable delineations; whereas, population biology continually overwhelms and subverts lines of separation.

Darwin's evocation of a "tangled bank," perhaps more than any other image, illustrates the fundamental disparity between the essentialist, static creation myths of Genesis and the dynamism of Darwin's book of origins. Read within the context of Western Christian tradition, Genesis is the archetypal book of demarcations and dispensations; its central doctrine is one of fixity--"the living creature after his kind" (1.24); "male and female created he them" (1.27); "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it" (2.16-17). Darwin's conception of struggling populations repudiates all received canons of fixity.

In Chapter Two of the Origin, Darwin discredits the whole notion of predeterminate speciation: "The term species thus comes to be a mere useless

abstraction, implying and assuming a separate act of creation" (43). For Darwin, who rejects traditional conceptions of divinely-appointed speciational demarcations, every individual's ancestral biological history is entangled in a primal web of interdependency and inter-relationship. Any designation of "kind" is an arbitrary classification, indicative of little else than the classifier's point of view: "And thus, the forms of life throughout the universe become divided into groups subordinate to groups" (Origin 50).

In 1863, Charles Lyell, a lifelong friend and mentor of Darwin, published The Antiquity of Man in response to the sensation created by the Origin's publication in 1859. Throughout this work Lyell reiterates the notion, implicit in his earlier three-volume Principles of Geology, that present-day observable geological and biological phenomena are by nature derivative, not primordial--an anti-essentialist posture anathema to the still-prevalent theodicy of the natural theologians. Essentialist dogma is struck a serious blow in a world where the strata comprising mountain peaks contain mollusks from prior ages, relics of their submergence beneath oceans, and every sea floor retains remnants of its existence as a pinnacle. Like Darwin, Lyell inundates his reader with evidences that all aspects of one's present environment comprise a reliquary in which past events and past life forms are embedded. In Chapter Twenty-Three, entitled "Origin and Development of Languages and Species Compared," Lyell draws an analogy between the development of languages and the development of species. Once the

battlements of essentialism have begun to crumble, no vestiges of its former dominance remain safe:

> Having thus established the preliminary fact, that none of the tongues now spoken were in existence ten centuries ago, and that the ancient languages have passed through many a transitional dialect before they settled into the forms now in use, the philologist might bring forward proofs of the great numbers both of lost and living forms of speech. (358)

Lyell's distinguishing between dialects and languages is analogous to Darwin's explanation of the difference between varieties and species. There are living and extinct "populations" of languages. Linguistic demarcations are arbitrary. The boundary that separates a "dialect" from a "tongue" is blurred; "dead" languages inhabit "living" languages. Hence, linguistic entanglement becomes a metaphor for speciational indeterminacy. This anti-essentialist model of endlessly interactive criss-crossing of continuously developing varieties and forms (linguistic, speciational) is diametrically opposed to the biblical model of history, in which all primordial forms originate as the result of defining, epoch-inaugurating events initiated by divine fiat.

(In the book of Genesis, God is responsible for the inception of linguistic variety, profusion and confusion, imposed when he destroys the tower of Babel, 11:1-9--an act as cataclysmic as dividing the sea from the land in a providence-directed universe bearing little resemblance to the

Lyellian/Darwinian universe in which sea and land vie for ascendancy, recurrently overwhelming one another, like the ebb and flow of linguistic permutation, in an endless state of flux.)

The populationist model of biological forms, applied by Lyell to linguistic variety, would come to suggest other populational varieties--those of culture, ideology, religion, social systems, and even, as I attempt to demonstrate in Chapter Three, sexual identification.

The philosophical ramifications of Darwin's abandonment of essentialist principles for the populationist model are evidenced by the number of influential writers foundational to nineteenth-century thought who openly acknowledged their debt to Darwin's work. In The Tangled Bank, Darwin, Marx, Frazer and Freud as Imaginative Writers, Stanley Edgar Hyman exploits the Darwinian entanglement motif, viewing it as seminal in the development of the literary imaginations of three other major nineteenth-century thinkers. Acknowledging Darwin's Origin as a profound influence, Marx fashions images that suggest the plasticity of the social order. Modeled after biological evolution, dialectical materialism emerges as a kind of process of natural selection within the context of evolving social orders. Likewise, Frazer postulates a form of evolutionary anthropology, one in which the functional cultural usages of earlier stages survive as "fossils" in rituals of later periods. The past is embedded in the present, as in the geological model. In lieu of imperishable divine truth, we are presented with religious and

cultural populations, whose existence is subject to the pressures of conflictive struggle and threats of extinction, and whose recorded history is embedded in fossilized remains, detectable in surviving rituals and symbols. Freudian models of the human psyche are, likewise, models illustrative of the entanglement principle.

Archaic humanity lurks beneath a deceptively placid surface, the exterior "crust" of which is only occasionally disturbed by reminders of atavistic savagery--analogous to volcanic/seismic disturbances of the earth's surface that belie an illusion of permanence and fixity. Analogous to the fossil records discoverable in geological strata are the stages of human sexual development which, according to Freud, are psychic "fossils" of archaic human life, comprising the available record of the race's psychic history.[6]

Hyman's relating Darwin's entanglement imagery to comparable imagery in the works of Marx, Frazer and Freud enhances our appreciation of the breadth and scope of the Darwinian revolution. Orthodox theologians, from Paley and Whewell on through the present day, have recognized that such a radical notion of plasticity of all organizations--

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[6] This concept is elaborated upon brilliantly by one of Sigmund Freud's most famous pupils (and antagonists), C. J. Jung, in Modern Man in Search of a Soul, published in 1933. At the beginning of Chapter Seven, entitled "Archaic Man," he makes a clear statement that encapsulates the book's primary thesis: " . . . every civilized human being, whatever his conscious development, is still an archaic man at the deeper levels of his psyche" (126). This kind of statement is typical of a twentieth-century writer and philosopher who takes for granted the obsolescence of essentialist assumptions.

physical, social, moral, psychological and spiritual--comprises a serious threat to invocations of immutability. (It is, therefore, not surprising that any perceived threat to a rigidly-defined sexual dichotomy is abhorred by contemporary Christian fundamentalists, a subject I explore more fully in Chapter Three.) The barriers imposed by typological thinking--those boundary lines which purport to differentiate human from animal, sacred from profane, spirit from flesh--are illusory.

By implication, the taxonomic distinctions imposed by traditionalist canons of literary form were challenged by the anti-essentialist explosion. During the nineteenth-century, novels and poems written in the "dramatic monologue" tradition come to resemble more and more the modern "case study." Meanwhile, science begins to appropriate the alchemies of fiction. James Krasner blurs the distinction between scientist and storyteller:

> For Malthus and Lyell . . . [t]he scientist's task is to create stories that can explain the past and the present, and perhaps predict the future. (69)

Krasner deals with Darwin's Voyage, Origin, and Descent as works of the literary imagination. He describes Darwin's narrative pose as of an individual observer; the effect is like the imaginative superimposition of images from the extinct, primordial past over the lens of the present. Darwin's technique as plot-spinner is employed in the creation of "stories" that explain--that help to render comprehensible on a human scale--the empirically

discoverable world:

> Darwin is successful in portraying evolutionary process visually . . . if his reader comes to see all times and all places as present. (69)

Thomas Hardy's major literary productions are considered by many critics--from Lionel Johnson to Gillian Beer--to be much allied in tenor and tone with the spirit and mood of nineteenth century science. In the spirit of generic boundary crossing, the novels and poems may be read as one continuously recursive tale of Darwinian struggle and entanglement--a kind of synoptic gospels of evolutionary process. Using the Darwinian technique of imagined superimposition, the narrators of the tragicomic Wessex stories merge the entangled meanderings of each protagonist into a single meta-fiction--one that resembles, in Krasner's terms, that scientific drive to "explain the past and present, and perhaps predict the future" (69).

The habit of mind which interprets events in terms of systematic unravelling or ameliorative (or even degenerative) accretion corresponds analogistically and historically with the evolution of novelistic form. My own interpretation of Hardy's narrative posture exploits its relation to the populationist model and its mind-wrenching disjunction from the comforts of a reverential essentialism. Hardy's novels, in particular, considered as a single metafiction, provide a defining example of the style and mood that characterizes post-Darwinian narrative precisely because the historical

development of evolutionary theory corresponds so closely with the historical development of the genre whose unparalleled achievements belong to the nineteenth century. There is, perhaps, a recognizable correspondence between novelistic form (with its adaptability toward elaboration and explication in terms of the everyday and commonplace) and what came to be the post-Darwinian view of the world.

During the nineteenth century evolutionary theory was commonly known as "the development hypothesis," a concept popularized anonymously by Robert Chambers, while concurrently refuted and vilified by William Whewell, Hugh Miller, Philip Henry Gosse and a legion of orthodox clergymen.[7] If, with its popular ascendancy in the minds of the reading public, science provided newly sacrilized texts, Victorian novelists such as Butler, Eliot and Hardy supplied homilies in which "development" might be viewed as the pervasive theme. It is almost as if the novel--a genre which fostered the flowering of gradual, incremental plot development from multiple viewpoints--provided a highly adaptable analogical vehicle for registering, in humanistic terms, the impact of the development hypothesis on novelistically

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[7] An example of the kinds of objections raised against "development" as a concept is the following quote from Philip Henry Gosse's Omphalos: "I demand also, in opposition to the development hypothesis, the perpetuity of specific characters, from the moment when the respective creatures were called into being, till they cease to be" (111). "The development hypothesis" was well-known and widely discussed prior to Darwin; it is important to note that this statement by Gosse was first published in 1857, two years before Darwin published his Origin.

particularized individuals. The novel rescued individual significance from the dwarfing scale and scope of geologic imponderables. Like the proto-cinematic canvasses of many nineteenth-century paintings, the sprawling polyphony of the Victorian novel suggested a reordered consciousness of primordial history--one that rejected Paley's cosmic symmetry along with Dorthea Brooke's essentialist "toybox history of the world" (Middlemarch, 3).

Nineteenth-century developments in the visual arts provide an apt parallel to the development of narrative fiction. The motif of an isolated individual irrevocably diminished by an unimaginable expanse of geologic time and seemingly limitless profusion of competing life forms recurs in much of the visual art of the period--both American and European. This was the golden age of the larger-than-life canvass, often depicting a solitary individual diminished by a dominating landscape.

In contrast to the essentialist/classical theme of degraded or usurped nobility, which finds its Judeo-Christian corollary in the story of Adamic devolution, the ever-expanding cosmological model provided by the natural sciences seemed to require a scaling down of traditional tragic plot paradigms to accommodate the ever-diminishing role of human significance. The miniaturized tragedy of being human, time- and circumstance-bound, dominated the novels of Hardy, Butler and Eliot. In Middlemarch, Eliot epitomizes the plight of the commonplace protagonist, exemplified by Dorthea Brooke, as "the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the

meanness of opportunity" (3). A grandeur of spirit tethered and choked by delimiting circumstances characterizes the tragic history of Hardy's Eustacia Vye in Return of the Native. Driven to suicidal despair, she inveighs against the mean and trivializing circumscription imposed by bleak and impoverished prospects:

> '. . . How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! . . . I do not deserve my lot!' she cried in a frenzy of bitter revolt. 'O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!' (RN 421)

Paradoxically, viewing an individual life as a "case study" or as a scientific "specimen" had the dual effect of trivializing and, at the same time, elevating individual significance. This was one of the ironies of Darwinian theory and population thinking's subsequent supplantation of the typological paradigm. While, on the one hand, Darwinism seemed to diminish the dignity of the isolated individual, denying that divine affiliation implied by the Platonic cave-shadow metaphor and the "image-of-God" connectivity imposed by Genesis, it, at the same time, enhanced the significance of the individual, defining a new conception of individual significance in the scheme of

"development." The inviolate and unique individual entity, modeled by forces in operation throughout imponderable geological ages and by the agency of natural selection is not a replicated, shadowy copy of some other-worldly ideal, but, rather, the embodiment of a unique, thoroughly and definitively individual ancestral history. The Darwinian individual contains multitudes (in Whitman's phrase[8]), comprised of conglomerate elements both male and female, savage and savant, human and animal. Whether described in terms of tragedy or triumph, the mixed, amalgamated, hermaphroditic individual is no mere copy; s/he is her/himself alone!

Revolutionary conceptions of human life and primordial history demanded new textual evocations of the human predicament and its signification. The emergence of new "texts"--scientific and otherwise--replacing ancient, immutable verities is a theme that Peter Brooks develops at length in Reading for the Plot. Professor Brooks, in his explication of the history of plot development up through its apotheosis in the Victorian novel, suggests a relationship between the development of narrative form in Western

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[8] Hardy's admiration of Whitman is well documented. Hardy may have detected hints of Darwinism in Whitman's poetry. In particular, sections of Whitman's "Song of Myself" lend themselves to a Darwinian reading:

> And as to you life, I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,
> No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.
> . . .
> Do I contradict myself?
> Very well then. . . . I contradict myself;
> I am large. . . . I contain multitudes.
> (Whitman, Poetry and Prose 86-7)

literature and the progressive emergence of a secularized world view, which came to dominate:

> The emergence of narrative plot as a dominant mode of ordering and explanation may belong to the larger process of secularization, dating from the Renaissance and gathering force during the Enlightenment, which marks a falling-away from those revealed plots--the Chosen people, Redemption, the Second Coming--that appeared to subsume transitory human time to the timeless. (6)

The construct of a "revealed plot" suggests an essentialist universe of fixed or static forms, immutable in their ideal state; the "narrative plot" of realistic fiction, irrevocably adulterated by circumstance and particularization, suggests irremediable entanglement. That a reassuring sense of divinely-ordained fixity undergirds traditional "revelation" is delineated in M. H. Abrams' Natural Supernaturalism. He summarizes the "plot structure" of biblical theodicy, developing this basic analogical relationship with traditional secular plot structures in Western literature. Professor Abrams lists five characteristics of biblical history:

> 1) Biblical history is finite, . . . 2) [it] constitutes a sharply defined plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end, . . . 3) [t]he plot of history has a hidden author who is also its director and the guarantor of things to come, . . . 4) . . . the line of

> change in Christian history is . . . right-angled: the key events are abrupt, cataclysmic, and make drastic, even an absolute, difference, . . . 5) [and the] Biblical scheme is symmetrical. (35-37)

Abrams' miniaturization of biblical eschatology provides an interesting contrastive parallel with the plot structures of many Victorian novels, particularly those of the late Victorian period. The "hidden author" in much late Victorian fiction, the shaper of nuances of plot development, takes on an impersonal character, the climactic build-up toward cataclysmic, plot-resolving consummation (sexual or otherwise), is often anti-climactic, and the apparent symmetry--paired couplings, synchronous homologies--is undermined by an unresolved open-endedness; hence, the novel's conclusion is often inconclusive.

Professor Brooks sums up this shift in plot structure, which dissipates traditional expectations of cataclysmic denouement:

> Our most sophisticated literature understands endings to be artificial, arbitrary, minor rather than major chords, casual and textual rather than cosmic and definitive. Yet they take place: if there is no spectacular denouement, no distribution of awards and punishments, no tie-up, through marriages and deaths, of all the characters' lives, there is a textual finis--we have no more pages to read. (314)

Ernst Mayr makes a similar observation in his description of the demise of philosophical "finalism"--the death knell of which he attributes to Darwin's irrevocable tampering with firmly entrenched traditions that supported the notion of "ultimate" and inevitable plot resolution. In the biblical scheme, a kind of driving force underlay the seeming random events of history. Darwin challenged and ultimately overturned comforting constructs of historical and biological purposiveness:

> From the days of the earliest philosophers it was widely believed that the world must have a purpose because, as Aristotle had said, "Nature does nothing in vain," and neither, a Christian would say, does God . . . . The development of an organism from the fertilized egg to the adult stage was frequently cited, from Aristotle on, as an illustration of this striving toward a goal. . . . Those who adhered to this view have been designated teleologists, or "finalists." (Mayr 50-51)

While retaining some element of the apocalyptic tone infusing those "ordained" structures which Professor Brooks calls "revealed plots" and which Professor Mayr calls "a belief in cosmic teleology," Hardy upends the purposive plot structures of biblical eschatology, effectively substituting natural selection for divine election. It is interesting to review each of Abrams' succinctly delineated characteristics of apocalyptic presuppositions in relation to Hardy's reconfiguration or, in some instances, inversion of these

assumptions:

(1) Abrams begins by pointing out that "biblical history is finite" (35). This contrasts sharply with the infinitely entangled Darwinian world of Hardy's fiction, in which the history of human and animal life appears open-ended and fraught with unresolvable ambiguities. Jude Fawley's peering through a mist dimly discerning the outlines of inaccessible Christminster, the fog-bound heath in Return of the Native with its infinite criss-crossing trajectories of human life, the unpredictable vicissitudes of grain pricing to which the vicissitudes of human life are linked in The Mayor of Casterbridge, the random irrationality of Gabriel Oak's suicidal sheep (like Gadarene swine plunging toward meaningless oblivion) in Far from the Madding Crowd, and the metronomic chattering of the River Froom in Tess--all these along with many other examples which might be adduced, suggest a resistance to finalistic plot closure--a negation of definitive plot resolution in the traditional, consummative sense.

(2) Abrams' second characteristic of the biblical/traditional plot paradigm is closely related to the first. Biblical history "constitutes a sharply defined plot with a beginning, a middle and an end" (35). In the scheme of orthodox Christian dogma, with which both Darwin and Hardy were thoroughly familiar, Christ is Alpha and Omega. The essentialist, typological nature of the biblical scheme renders all narrative history Christological at its foundation.

Hardyan Darwinism unravels the "sharply defined plot" model, connotative of essential good or essential evil. Hardy's Wessex is the antithesis--an entangled world, enmeshed in unresolved primordial struggle toward an ill-defined destiny. In a Hardy novel, the narrative voice suggests that the meta-plot machinery underlying a novel's particularized plot has been set in motion long before the opening chapter, and that this inexorable process will continue long after the final word has been set down.

Gillian Beer, in describing Darwinism's effect upon narrative realism, characterizes this radical departure from the traditional narcissism that privileges the here and now, as a theory that offers no consoling dignification of the present:

> It is a theory which does not privilege the present, which sees it as a moving instant in an endless process of change. (Darwin's Plots 13)

(3) Abrams' description of "a hidden author" who is "the guarantor of things to come" (36) finds its antithesis in the Darwinian/Hardyan plot paradigm, as well. In his essay entitled "On the Origin of Species and Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory," Phillip Barrish sums up this shift from omniscient authorial authority to the shifting sands of indeterminacy--linguistic, political, biological, psychoanalytic:

> The central lesson Darwin's theory teaches, a "lesson" still resisted in many United States school districts, is that in the

> position previously assigned to a deity there actually functions a means dependent on random variation. Where God was, accumulating variation is. (Victorian Studies, 1991, 439-40)

In the same essay, Professor Barrish refers to this "means" as "the agency of anonymous effects" (432). Throughout his essay he delineates the "important political and intellectual problem" of conceptualizing this "agency," a problem whose roots he traces back to Darwin and whose resonances he discerns in the contemporary literary theories of Derrida and de Man, among others.

In the world of Hardy's Wessex, happenstance or "the chance of things" (PBE 363), a kind of "agency of anonymous effects," functions in the place of Abrams' traditional "hidden author." Happenstance or, in Ernst Mayr's characterization, "stochastic process" (186) is a coldly impersonal substitute for a "[G]uarantor of things to come." There is, in fact, no guarantee that the noblest or most worthy individual or species will emerge triumphant from Darwin's entangled bank. Anthrocentric notions of "worth" or "nobility" are themselves alien to the populationist paradigm.

(4) Abrams' fourth characteristic of biblical/traditional plot structure marks another point of departure undertaken in Hardy's Darwinian parables. Abrams observes that "the key events (in the biblical schemata) are abrupt, cataclysmic, and make a drastic, even an absolute, difference" (37). As Lyellian gradualism came to supplant Cuvier's biblically-compatible

catastrophism, a new sense of the human race's position in relation to the physical world began to take shape. The whole of biblical history had been suffused with authorial intervention. (Christ appears at the consummation of all time, deux ex machina. The apocalyptic denouement in the Book of Revelation allows for no unfinished cosmic business.)

This conception of human history differs markedly from the anticlimactic irresolution typical of Hardyan/Darwinian plot entanglement. The frustrated protagonist may dream of interventionist salvation but, in fact, the great redeeming event that justifies the plot's entangled ganglia of events is withheld. Marty South yearns for a love that is winter-born, chilled and annihilated at its inception (hence the name of her elusive and remote Giles Winterbourne). Tess dreams of a pure love (she uses the New Testament Greek term, agape, an unselfish state of emotional and intellectual grace beyond Angel Clare's limited capacity). Paula Power cares enough for George Somerset to marry him, but she wishes he were a DeStancy. Jude Fawley, like the autodidact who created him, will never be granted the elusive University degree; it is a chimera like the ethereal Christminster of his dreams, whose stone-cold indifference mocks the warmth and splendor of Jude's imagined celestial habitat.

Gillian Beer describes this sense of loss, not only of conventional notions of Paradise, but of the notion of redeeming events in human history that in a pre-Darwinian, purposive universe infused random occurrences with a

sense of transcendent signification:

> Evolutionary theory implied a new myth of the past: instead of the garden at the beginning, there was the sea and the swamp. Instead of man, emptiness--or the empire of mollusks. There was no way back to a previous paradise: the primordial was comfortless. Instead of fixed and perfect species, it showed forms in flux, and the earth in constant motion, drawing continents apart. This consciousness of the fluent, of the physical world as endless onward process, extended to an often pained awareness of human beings as slight elements within unstoppable motion and transformation. (127)

(5) Reviewing Abrams' last defining characteristic of biblical narrative history suggests yet another fracture separating Hardy's Darwinian parables from the traditional parables and typologies of Judeo-Christian Scripture. Abrams reminds us that the "Biblical scheme is symmetrical" (37). In the biblical economy, nothing is wasted. Omniscience and omnipotence do not allow for spillage--for the profligacy of nature's hyperfecundity and selective improvidence. In the divine economy, Satan, representative of clearly-defined, "essential" evil, functions as a malevolent but necessary character foil, against which divine righteousness is measured.

This juxtaposition is repeated typologically throughout the Bible. There can be no Abel offering a more acceptable sacrifice without an envious Cain

lurking in the shadows, no intrepid David without a cowardly, braggart Golliath, no Lazarus without Dives--the uncompromising balance is always maintained.

Hardyan Darwinism eschews tidy symmetry. Darwin struggles--unconvincingly in my opinion--to justify nature's prodigal hyperfecundity, referring to "fortuitous destruction" (235) in his Origin (one is tempted to ask, "Fortuitous for whom?"). This sanguine glossing over of the horrors of brutally abrupt extinction lacks the justifying cosmic balancing act undertaken by Scripture, an arena in which all wrongs are made right. In the teleological scheme, all individuals--as all species under the control of a God-directed nature--play a vital and irreplaceable role. Even damnation is infused with a kind of transcendental significance--the damned are necessary to the divine symmetry.

In contrast, perdition equals oblivion in Darwin's universe. The "lost" are not those who have forfeited salvation in any traditional sense; lost individuals or species "suffer extinction," disappearing into a meaningless void of irrelevancy. Gillian Beer describes this state of being/non-being in her chapter on "Darwinian Myths":

> In any transferred reading of evolutionary theory in human terms individualism is set under a new and almost intolerable tension by Darwin's emphasis on variability. All deviation, each individual, is potentially valuable as bearing the possibility

> of mutation and change. Yet many must founder and be squandered, leaving no mark or consequence. (127)

The nexus of Hardyan Darwinism is the focus on the "many [who] must founder and be squandered, leaving no mark nor consequence." These "squandered" variants, doomed to inconsequentiality, populate the world of Hardy's fiction. In formalistic terms, Hardy's Wessex is the sujet, Darwin's universe the fabula.

One striking parallel among these plot paradigms--the all-encompassing, time-transcendent plot paradigm of biblical history (articulated so succinctly by Abrams), Darwin's sweepingly pervasive plot structure and Hardy's recurrently tragic plot paradigm--is the reiterative nature of each. Like the Bible, which recurrently tells one essential story in many guises, the totality of Darwin's major works delineates one basic plot, with kaleidoscopic changes in costume and climate. Likewise, Hardy's novels and narrative poems follow an essentially reiterative pattern. The emergence in Hardy of one skeletal plot, discernable beneath the external trappings of time and circumstance but recursive in its primal elements, suggests a Darwin-like pursuit of one primordial plot structure, the principles of which lie beneath surface appearances. This tendency resonates with Krasner's well-founded observation about Darwin--that he " . . . is successful in portraying the evolutionary process visually . . . if his reader comes to see all times and all places as present" (69). In a sense, Hardy's recurrences create for the reader

a narrative milieu in which past and present converge; the reader is made to "see all times and all places as present." In poems such as Hardy's "Aquae Sulis" and "The Leveled Churchyard," the past--sometimes ancient, sometimes recent--intrudes upon the present. The title "Aquae Sulis" itself suggests that the past muddies and muddles the present. The first two stanzas create the mood of intrusion and dislocation, in which the fixtures and trappings of a bygone era attempt to overwhelm and encumber the present:

> The chimes called midnight, just at interlune,
> And the daytime parle on the Roman investigations
> Was shut to silence, save for the husky tune
> The bubbling waters played near the excavations.
>
> And a warm air came up from underground,
> And the flutter of a filmy shape unsepulchred,
> That collected itself, and waited, and looked around:
> Nothing was seen, but utterances could be heard.
> (CP 376)

The belief systems and civilizations of the present are built upon the eviscerated relics of the past, a past which occasionally threatens to usurp and undermine the supplanters who have desecrated its sacred groves and sanctuaries.

Darwin's anecdotal "vignettes" --the wasp and the spider, the coral reef

and the ocean in the Voyage and the branching out of a primordial Tree of Life, the magnificent struggle occurring on his entangled bank in the Origin--each reiterates a primal tale of universal "contest," a recurring story of entanglement and multiple usurpations. Like Hardy, Darwin, the scientific myth-maker and storyteller, recurrently reconstructs the scenery and recasts the protagonists, who then act out the same bare-bones plot of successive supplantations and counter-usurpations.

Hardy's treatment of the entanglement motif is often mordantly ironic. For example, at the beginning of chapter Ten of The Mayor of Casterbridge (ser. Jan - May, 1886; pub. May, 1886), he introduces his own entanglement metaphor, describing a kind of grim musical chairs occurring in Michael Henchard's anteroom. In a novel filled with the usual Hardyan misdirection, misunderstanding and happenstances--a milieu in which being at the right/wrong place at the right/wrong time determines everything--a job applicant, whose promised position Donald FarFrae has usurped, rudely shoves aside Elizabeth Jane:

> While she [Elizabeth-Jane] still sat under the Scotchman's eyes a man came up to the door, reaching it as Henchard opened the door of the inner office to admit Elizabeth. The newcomer stepped forward like the quicker cripple at Bethesda, and entered in her stead. (62)

The usurping "cripple" (all of Hardy's characters are incapacitated in

some way) vying for Michael Henchard's favor is linked thematically with another allusion to Bethesda in one of Hardy's earlier novels, A Pair of Blue Eyes (ser. Sept, 1872 - July, 1873; pub. May, 1873). Near the novel's shattering conclusion, the priggish, tradition-bound geologist, Henry Knight, makes the painful discovery that his status as a suitor ranks him as a competitor in a sordid (by Victorian standards) and over-subscribed arena. The dynamics of population biology are suggested by the ruthless rituals of competitive courting. For Henry Knight the pool of Bethesda, a biblical "type" of purity and wholeness, is over-populated and, hence, polluted:

> It was his belief in the absolute newness of blandishment to Elfride which had constituted her primary charm. He began to think it was as hard to be earliest in a woman's heart as it was to be first in the Pool of Bethesda. (363)

By identifying the combatants of Casterbridge and the competing suitors of Elfride Swancourt with the vying cure-seekers of the fourth Gospel (John 5.1-9), Hardy emphasizes the antiquity of a recurrently conflictive plot paradigm. The ill-equipped keep destroying one another in competitive pursuit of a state of wholeness, the attainment of which is as elusive as itinerant angel wings troubling the surface of a stagnant pool.

CHAPTER TWO

ENTANGLEMENT AND USURPATION: CONFLICTIVE IMAGES OF VICTOR AND VANQUISHED--OF SUPPLANTER AND SUPPLANTED

In the early chapters of Balzac's La Peau de Chagrin, the fevered imagination of a suicidal young man transforms an eccentric antiquarian's shop into a grotesque phantasmagoria of primordial life's accreted, fossilized remains. Paleontological phantoms assault Raphael de Valentin's inflamed senses, inducing vertigo and disorientation.

Balzac's narrator solicits empathic identification:

> Vous êtes-vous jamais lancé dans l'mmensité de l'espace, en lisant les oeuvres géologiques de M. Cuvier? Avez-vous jamais ainsi plané sur l'abîme sans bornes du passé, comme soutenu par la main d'un enchanteur? . . . . M. Cuvier n'est-il pas le plus grand poète de notre siècle? (42)

Like Darwin and Hardy, Balzac registers his age's engagement with its discovery of an almost unfathomable primordial past embedded in the newly-unveiled geological record. The above-referenced passage suggests two recurrently identifying characteristics of nineteenth-century narrative realism: (1) the trivialization of individual human lives juxtaposed against the unimaginable landscape of the geological record--a limitless freeze-frame of

imponderably entangled living and extinct life forms--and (2) an accompanying transgression of traditional speciational and generic boundaries--the effective inauguration of a "scientific" poetic voice equal to the expanding parameters of science. The usurpation motif, suggested by the successive biological and geological upheavals recorded in geologic strata, is mirrored in the social and cultural usurpations that constitute human affairs; Balzac harbingers the nineteenth-century scientist's supplanting, while appropriating, the antique alchemies of the storyteller/magician. (Baron Cuvier becomes "le plus grand poète de notre siècle.") The age of the "scientific" storyteller is heralded.

Stories of usurpation and struggle for ascendancy are as old as the oldest surviving myths. A traditional usurpation story with typological significance is the story of the Ur-supplanter, the biblical Jacob.[9] The events and daily minutiae of Jacob's life, true to their "essentialist" character, are freighted with implications that transcend the everyday barriers of time and circumstance. Jacob's supplanting his brother Esau has presumed historical consequences, reaching beyond the personal destinies of the particularized individuals who act out the biblical drama. Stories of this kind--in their surviving form (engrafted onto our Western culture)--embody the essentialist mindset described by Ernst Mayr and Daniel Dennett. The epic scope of the struggle between Jacob and Esau is emphasized in the description of their

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[9] And [Esau] said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. (Gen. 27.36)

predestinarian, pre-natal conflict in Rebekah's womb:

> And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. (Gen. 25.22-3)

This struggle described in Genesis differs in kind from the struggles depicted in Darwin and Hardy. The phrase "two manner of people" suggests the typological doctrine of "kinds," of pre-determinate speciational fixity. In the economy of biblical history, the outcome of the struggle is fore-ordained. And, in the biblical scheme, the ordinary is always infused with transcendent significance. Jacob's usurpation of Esau's birthright and blessing is not merely a commonplace story of domestic feuding, nor is the homological conflict between Rachel and Leah a simple tale of sexual attraction, deception and jealousy. From an essentialist perspective, these seemingly commonplace events possess an epic dimension. The fate of nations and, ultimately, the spiritual redemption of the human race are inextricably intertwined with seemingly commonplace events.

This typological frame of mind is also detectable in non-biblical literature, of which many examples could be cited. A central character or characters frequently make an appearance as the embodiment of some virtue or

vice. Without doing violence to his psychological complexity, it is fair to say that Shakespeare's usurping Duke of Gloucester in King Richard the Third is portrayed in language whose sweep and power renders him a "type," though his character is identifiably human. In the opening soliloquy, Gloucester's announcing "I am determined to prove a villain" (I,i,30) suggests predestinarian determinism, as if his being "rudely stamp'd" (I,i,8) constituted an irreversible typological branding. In a manner perhaps more obvious than some other examples that might be adduced, Richard embodies an "essentially" malignant nature. Similarly, in a characteristic example taken from the Greek drama, the primordial usurper of Sophocles, Oedipus, laments a crime whose dim remembrance haunts his race and progeny: "Where shall the dim track of this old crime be found?" (Oedipus the King, 80). The circumstances of Oedipus' birth and the drama he is destined to act out is fraught with typological significance. The world of Oedipus is not the modern world of excusable crimes or moral relativism. The primordial crimes of incest and parricide are larger than any individual enactment. Their stamp is indelible, the penalty inexorable.[10]

In Darwin and the Novelists, George Levine places Jane Austen squarely within the essentialist tradition:

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[10] Illustrations of biblical and/or classical "types" from the canons of Western literature could have been chosen from any of a variety of sources. I selected from the Bible, Sophocles and Shakespeare, in part, because of Hardy's well-documented familiarity with all three.

> Calling things by their right names is the central moral (and aesthetic) project of Austen's fictions; the characters who earn her respect are those who can define even the most difficult "things"--like feelings--who can find the language to represent them fairly. The character who consistently demonstrates this capacity most effectively is the narrator. (61)

Austen's characters are not typological in the biblical, Shakespearean or Sophoclean sense, but they are, nonetheless, clearly defined in terms of social and moral status, which impacts their social and amatory "suitability." In Austen's world, social distinctions, like speciational barriers, are considered natural, and, to a degree, immutable. Their violation threatens an ordered existence. Levine associates Austen's fictional world with the ordered world of Paley, Whewell, and the scientific school of the natural theologians that preceded the Darwinian revolution:

> . . . Austen's realism (consonant with the world described in natural theology), resists the consequences of the later realism (consonant with Darwin's antiteleogical vision) in which the moral and material are severed. (82)

It is the abandonment of traditional, typologically-based expectations of plot development, a pervasive sense of thwarted denouement, that gives much of Hardy's fiction its unique "edge"--and its generally-acknowledged watershed status in the development of narrative realism. The gospel of Wessex is the

antithesis of both drawing-room and biblical/classical parables replete with typological significance. The narratives of Wessex life record the actions of warring individuals and populations, devoid of transcendental significance beyond their individual uniqueness in time and space.

The dynamic of what came to be known as population thinking (to use Professor Mayr's terminology) drives much of the plot machinery in Hardy, with the notion of competing populations expanded beyond the human. Like Darwin, Hardy implies associative interrelationships among life forms, and suggests contiguity between the inanimate and the animate worlds, as well. Hardy's narrative stance and associative connections inherent in his language tend to locate observable phenomena within the populationist model. The most isolated denizen of Hardy's Wessex is never "far from the madding crowd"--the madding crowd of competitors for love, filial affection, social recognition, and economic survival. In the world of Hardy's fictive imagination, competing populations include varietal populations of trees, whose strivings are metonymically linked with the cross-purposive strivings of the inhabitants of Little Hintock (in The Woodlanders), competing populations of liturgical functionaries (in Under the Greenwood Tree), competing ecclesiastical populations (in A Laodicean), competing social populations (in The Hand of Ethelberta), and competing populations of suitors in most of the novels and narrative poems. The conclusion of the poetic epic The Dynasts trivializes the great tyranical, warrior "types" of world history, emphasizing the pettiness of

their status when viewed from a cosmic perspective. They are mocked and trivialized as just another striving population:

> Such men as thou, who wade across the world
> To make an epoch, bless, confuse, appal,
> Are in the elemental ages' chart
> Like meanest insects on obscurest leaves. (701)

In Chapter Two of his Journal, Darwin describes his close observation, while anchored in Rio de Janeiro, of two insects locked in life-and-death struggle. The implied theme--one which will be replayed and explicated in Darwin's later works--is the universality of conflict, in all locations and climates, and among all species:

> I was much interested one day by watching a deadly contest between a Pepsis and a large spider of the genus Lycosa. (29-30)

The wasp engages in repeated assaults upon its "victim," pursuing "as regular a hunt as ever hound did after fox" (30). Later in the paragraph Darwin describes the combatants as "tyrant and prey" (30).

Toward the end of this early chapter in his Journal, Darwin recalls similar behavior observed among British spiders and wasps. Apparently the varieties found in England are no less bellicose than their distant South American cousins. It seems apparent that during his first year on board the Beagle (1832), the twenty-three-year-old naturalist began to view war as an

appropriate metaphor for vital principles operative in the natural world. In Darwin, Marx, Wagner, Critique of a Heritage, Jacques Barzin describes war as the recurrent metaphor of the nineteenth century: "War became the symbol, the image, the inducement, the reason, and the language of all human doings on the planet" (100).

A similar description of warring organisms operative on a microscopic level occurs in Chapter Twenty-two of Darwin's Journal. Five years have elapsed since recording his observations on the combative behavior between a wasp and spider in Rio de Janeiro. Darwin is still referring to interactive relationships found in nature in terms of combat, this time in reference to the inanimate world. The contestants are the powerful ocean waters locked in combat with unrelenting, non-submissive coral formations. The interactive forces of coral and ocean are described in terms of a military campaign:

> The ocean throwing its waters over the broad reef appears an invincible, all-powerful enemy; yet we see it resisted, and even conquered, by means which at first seem most weak and inefficient. (398)

Throughout much of his Journal, the often-exuberant young naturalist, poeticizing in the manner of Paley and other scientific writers of the age, registers his awe of the empirically observable world. Earlier in the paragraph describing the battle between ocean and reef on Keeling Island, he refers, in typical fashion, to his aesthetic appreciation of the scene before him:

> I can hardly explain the reason, but there is to my mind much grandeur in the view of the outer shores of these lagoon-islands. (398)

Throughout much of Darwin's work, though the content is increasingly anti-essentialist, the tone remains oracular and the cadences quasi-biblical, owing much to the style and character of the natural theologians who were Darwin's mentors, men of faith like Paley and Sedgwick. In his Journal, as in the Origin and Descent, Darwin finds no marring inconsistency, when comprehending the harsh milieu inhabited by Nature's embattled productions and the inherent physical beauty of life encountered by the impartial observer--the sufficiently distanced narrator. The death and destruction of individual life forms sacrificed for the creation of magnificent structures and scenes of "grandeur," while often appalling to Hardy's narrators, are justified by their ultimate "grandeur" in Darwin.

In the case of the "contest" between coral and ocean, the war between competing forces is fought at a microscopic, incrementally accumulative level. The symmetry which the human eye perceives is the end result. But the process itself is replete with individual conflictive fierceness, millions of tiny deaths--attended by rampant destruction and catastropic upheaval. Darwin's evocation of the process relies on metaphors of battle--the story gets told in terms of defeat and victory, destruction and reconstruction. The mood and tone suggest an epic conflict:

> Yet these low, insignificant coral-islets stand and are victorious: for here another power, as an antagonist, takes part in the contest. The organic forces separate the atoms of carbonate of lime, one by one, from the foaming breakers, and unite them into a symmetrical structure. Let the hurricane tear up its thousand huge fragments; yet what will that tell against the accumulated labor of myriads of architects at work night and day, month after month? (398)

In the place of essentialism's divine Architect, we have the emergence of nature's embattled populations, "myriads of architects," each individually insignificant, but monumentally effective in the mass. Darwin's descriptions of insect battles and the conflictive strivings of microscopic life forms provide an interesting contrastive parallel with the previously-quoted passage from Hardy's Dynasts. Hardy trivializes epic warfare, employing language that suggests insect squashing, while Darwin portrays the struggles of tiny organisms in terms of heroic epic. Each writer is attuned to the same phenomenon--the universal principle of battle--but the modes of description are remarkably divergent.

Darwin's tendency to characterize natural processes in terms of battle imagery, appearing embryonically in his Voyage, is expanded in subsequent works. In the Origin, the description of incrementally developmental process as warfare is more explicit and pervasive. Chapter Three of the Origin,

entitled "The Struggle for Existence," describes the interrelationship of all life forms in terms of conflict. The war between varieties of a single species almost equals in severity inter-species conflict:

> In the case of varieties of the same species, the struggle will generally be almost equally severe, and we sometimes see the contest soon decided: for instance, if several varieties of wheat be sown together, and the mixed seed be resown, some of the varieties which best suit the soil or climate, or are naturally more fertile, will beat the others and so yield more seed, and will consequently in a few years supplant the other varieties. (60)

The severity of the "struggle" of one population against all the others--in this case varieties of wheat--the reference to the process as a "contest" in which one variety "will beat the others" and "supplant the other varieties," suggests that human warfare is metonymically connected with a natural, even beneficent, process. The concomitant suggestion is that human history's long record of tribal warfare, in which each "variety" of the same species strives to "beat the others" and "supplant the other varieties" is acceptable--even beneficial, justified by its long-term consequences, and by the symmetry of its productions outside the realm of a single life cycle.

Darwin's use of the language of conflict is tamer in his description of the process analogous to natural selection which he labels "sexual selection."

In Chapter Four of his Origin, Darwin delineates this process:

> The result is not death to the unsuccessful competitor, but few or no offspring. Sexual selection is, therefore, less rigorous than natural selection. (69)

The process of sexual selection is combative. The individual or variety that does not propagate is an "unsuccessful competitor." The Darwinian plot paradigm permits only winners and losers, victors and vanquished, conquerors and conquered. There is no escaping the contest. Non-participation equals defeat--reproductive irrelevance is the result, even if immediate death is averted.

Darwin's acceptance of the "benefits" of the great principle of warfare among life forms, inter- and intra-species, is demonstrated in his explanation of the role of diversification:

> . . . the more diversified the descendants from any one species become in structure, constitution and habits, by so much will they be better enabled to seize on many and widely diversified places in the polity of nature, and so be enabled to increase in numbers. (84)

Diversification produces fiercer battles; the harsher the competitive battlefield becomes, the more qualified and finely-honed is the supplanting warrior whom that ruthlessly impartial agency known as "natural selection" chooses for survivorship. (While Darwin persisted in celebrating this process,

Victorian novelists like Hardy, Butler and Eliot came to deplore its horrific underside--the requisite residue of pain, torture and death.)

In Chapter Seven of his Descent, Darwin describes the effect of intra-species competition in comparison with the human race's interactive relationship with hostile environments. Darwin points out that human beings find ways of dealing with extreme cold and extreme heat, as well as with the ferocity of wild animals. The greatest threat to any race or "sub-race" of human creatures comes from the perennial state of warfare between members of the single species known as the human race:

> Extinction follows chiefly from the competition of tribe with tribe, and race with race. . . . the contest is soon settled by war, slaughter, cannibalism, slavery, and absorption. (542-3)

The phrase "the contest is soon settled" reflects a characteristic Darwinian attitude toward the competitive process whereby one population is eliminated and another allowed to prevail. For Darwin, the process, though brutal, is justified by its successes--its production of stronger, more adaptive populations--tribes, races, or species. The suffering is, perhaps, regrettable, but in no sense is it tragic. It is only through competition, usurpation and extinction that the less adaptable tribe or sub-species is supplanted by a more adaptive population.

Darwin's acceptance of inevitable warfare is based on his conviction that this perpetual state is necessary for the "improvement" of species, and that

the battles which must be fought are quickly settled. At the close of Chapter Three of the Origin, Darwin offers an insight to his underlying optimism:

> When we reflect on this struggle, we may console ourselves with the full belief, that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply. (62)

Like Darwin, Hardy treats the ancient classical themes of warfare and usurpation as natural and inevitable. However, in Hardy's world, the outcome is of dubious benefit. It is often the ignoble individual or population that prevails. As in Darwin's tales of usurpation and counter-usurpation, the victory is always tentative, never absolute or definitive.

The motif of striving and usurping individuals and populations surfaces in Hardy's earliest work. Hardy's unpublished Poor Man and the Lady is, on one level, a story of competing social classes, a theme a socially-insecure stonemason's son would never abandon. Cannibalized fragments of the first novel survive in Hardy's first critical success, Under the Greenwood Tree (pub. 1872). In UGT, we first encounter the Mellstock Choir, an evocation that was to preoccupy Hardy in later poetry. At first glance, the novel has all the appearances of a popular love story, with a conventional love triangle, requisite complications, and a comedic happy ending.

On the surface, UGT does not appear to evoke Darwinian images of warring populations or individuals. Grace Melbury and Dick Dewey are

hardly cast in the traditional mold of tragic victims or conquerors, Darwinian or otherwise. However, as in much of Hardy's later fiction, a non-human "character" helps drive the dynamics of the plot. Suggestive of the anti-essentialist, populationist model, Hardy's doomed, non-adaptive Mellstock Choir may be viewed as the novel's protagonist.

The opening paragraph sets a tone that suggests primordial struggle; tree populations, like human populations, have their own individual characters:

> To dwellers in a wood almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature. (39)

The tragedy of the Mellstock Choir's usurpation and consignment to irrelevancy is embedded in this opening sentence. Species of trees are like societal and cultural species. In Sophoclean terms, the trees resemble a Greek chorus, introducing a tragic subtext. (The "voices" of trees will be heard in other novels, particularly in The Woodlanders. In Far from the Madding Crowd, Hardy equates the voices of trees with the songs of a choir: " . . . the trees on the left wailed or chaunted to each other in the regular antiphonies of a cathedral choir" [7].)

Species differentiate themselves individually, thrive and, ultimately, die. The unique quality of each tree population's "voice" links the varieties of nature with the varieties of social institutions. The Mellstock Choir has a unique voice; usurping social institutions and ecclesiastical rituals will overpower and silence this voice, but replication of this extinct species will be

impossible. Hardy's lamentation for extinguished voices, a theme inaugurated in Under the Greenwood Tree, recurs throughout his work as a dominant theme.

In his 1896 preface to UGT, Hardy (writing twenty-four years after the novel's initial publication, and at the end of his novel-writing career) clearly focuses on the plight of the Mellstock Choir, as a major preoccupation:

> One is inclined to regret the displacement of these ecclesiastical bandsmen by an isolated organist . . . and despite certain advantages in point of control and accomplishment which were, no doubt, secured . . . the change has tended to stultify the professed aims of the clergy, its direct result being to curtail and extinguish the interest of parishioners in church doings. (33)

"Displacement" and "extinguish" --expressions evoking the Darwinian lexicon--are used in a context acknowledging that all evolutionary processes are not ameliorative. Ironically, this displacement/usurpation has produced an unintended effect--the process of extinguishing one variant form (of music, in this case) brings about unanticipated residual extinctions (rustic piety and community spirit, for example).

In the novels opening paragraph, the strivings within the woodlands, nature's open battleground, prefigure the conflicts inherent within the battlefields of social interaction:

> . . . the holly whistles as it battles with itself; the ash hisses

amid its quiverings. (39)

In Chapter Three, entitled "Christmas Morning," another kind of hissing is heard--the ironic hiss of Mr. Spinks of the Mellstock Choir:

> 'Really, I think we useless ones had better march out of church, fiddles and all' said Mr. Spinks, with a laugh which, to a stranger, would have sounded mild and real. Only the initiated body of men he addressed could understand the horrible bitterness of irony that lurked under the quiet words 'useless ones,' and the ghastliness of the laughter apparently so natural. (73)

It is a touch of Hardyan irony that the choir's enemy, the pompous Parson Maybold, loses in the contest for love to a choir member, Dick Dewey. Typically, Dewey's amatory usurpation is undermined, however, by the provisional quality of his winning Fancy Day as his wife.

Ostensibly, the callow youth (dewey in every possible sense) usurps the role of the more sophisticated (long past the dewey stage) suitor--an implied triumph for the deposed choir. But, in the novel's last sentence, Hardy's narrator suggests that the seemingly ingenuous bride will always have a divided mind regarding her husband's conquest. Like Paula Power in A Laodicean, who can't help wishing her lover were an aristocrat, Fancy Dewey's thoughts drift off to dream of "a secret she would never tell" (226). The roles of victor and vanquished are interchanged, with inversions and

multiple variations, throughout the novel. There is no telos-driven denouement, no transcendent consummation. In a Hardyan/Darwinian universe, victory is tentative and, finally, illusory.

Hardy's recurrent preoccupation with usurpation and supplantation as the natural order of life, biological and social, is reflected in his 1895 preface to A Pair of Blue Eyes. He alludes to correspondences between the man-made architectural features adorning social institutions and the flinty surfaces evoked by the rugged terrain of the natural environment. Characteristically, he deplores the "new and improved" architectural "restorations," another kind of usurpation, in a passage that suggests his displeasure with the "improved" church music that supplanted the Mellstock Choir. He contextualizes his tale of a conventional love triangle within the framework of misguided church renovation. A story of unrequited love foiled through multiple conflicts, role reversals and usurpations unfolds against a natural landscape and a social landscape which mirror the competitive strivings characterizing the battleground of sexual selection and competing wills:

> The following chapters were written at a time when the craze for indiscriminate church-restoration had just reached the remotest nooks of western England, where the wild and tragic features of the coast had long combined in perfect harmony with the crude Gothic Art of the ecclesiastical buildings scattered along it, throwing into extraordinary discord all architectural

> attempts at newness there. To restore the grey carcasses of a mediaevalism whose spirit had fled, seemed a not less incongruous act than to set about renovating the adjoining crags themselves.
>
> Hence it happened that an imaginary history of three human hearts, whose emotions were not without correspondence with these material circumstances, found in the ordinary incidents of such church-renovations a fitting frame for its presentation. (v)

The natural features of the coastline are equated with the antique features of human institutions, as the natural strivings propelled by human emotions are associatively connected with the competing forces of the natural world.

With Far from the Madding Crowd (ser. Jan - Dec, 1874; pub. Nov, 1874), Hardy's first major popular as well as critical success, we encounter another "crowd" of competing suitors. The allusion to Gray's Elegy seems ironic, in that Hardy's evocation of bucolic life offers no peaceful respite from murderous competition. Reminiscent of Malthusian/Darwinian hyperfecundity, Hardy's Wessex is perennially overcrowded. For all their isolation from the world of urban malaise, the fields and woodlands groan with competitive strife, reflective of the crowded arena of all human interaction--social, sexual and economic. It is a milieu in which the conquering supplanter garners a

hollow victory, often through the intervention of mindless alterations of circumstance. Victory is always provisional, and the vanquished suffer extinction--or consignment to the limbo of irrelevancy. The crowding motif, which takes many forms, is detectable in all of Hardy's novels, its epitaph discoverable in the pathetic Malthusian suicide note scrawled in Father's Time's frail hand: "Done because we are too menny" (Jude 354).

The love triangle--or, in some cases, quadrangle--gets played out in multiple variations in Hardy, and always within a context that precludes a conventional happy ending. Even when Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba Everdene are finally united at the conclusion of FFMC, their toilsome sojourn toward this union has marred any hope of pure joy. Their union results from a mature compromise, an accommodation to a murderous ganglia of interwoven circumstances-- a wearisome constellation of events permitting the destruction of Sergeant Troy and ruination of Farmer Boldwood, along with the deaths of the woefully wronged Fanny Robin and her innocent baby.

Once again, the equation of human striving with the crushing weight of nature's hyperfecundity resonates throughout FFMC. The arrival of Spring, traditionally a subject for rhapsodic rejoicing, is described in terms that suggest threatening tumescence and the fiercely competitive battlefield of sexual selection--themes which undergird the novel's principle plot structure:

> The vegetable world begins to move and swell and the saps to rise, till the completest silence of lone gardens and trackless

> plantations, where everything seems helpless and still after the bond and slavery of frost, there are bustlings, strainings, united thrusts, and pulls-all-together, in comparison with which the powerful tugs of cranes and pulleys in a noisy city are but pigmy efforts. (108)

Clearly, the farmers and sheep-herders of Wessex have not escaped the madding crowd. Gabriel Oak's crazed flock plunging toward a meaningless oblivion, like the Gadarene Swine, suggests another maddened crowd--the crowd of suitors plunging toward their own destruction over Bathsheba's beauty. Nor do the "rewards" of competition in the arena of sexual selection offer any consolation to the much-pursued lady farmer:

> The sadness of Fanny Robin's fate did not make Bathsheba's glorious, although she was the Esther to this poor Vashti, and their fates might be supposed to stand in some respects as contrasts to each other. (265)

The motif of sexual "crowding" pervades The Return of the Native (ser. Jan - Dec, 1878; pub. Nov, 1878), another novel in which Darwinian hyperfecundity mirrors the strivings and yearnings of the human population. The randomness of "dry feather-headed reeds" growing along the stream that borders Egdon Heath suggests both phallic tumescence and competitive eroticism:

> Their presence was denoted by sounds as of a congregation praying humbly, produced by their rubbing against each other in the slow wind. (93)

Clym Yeobright, the returning native, hopes to escape the vulgarity and harshness of urban life by returning to the earth-bound existence of a rural environment. But the native soil proves to offer its own natural form of oppression and ennui:

> There was something in its oppressive horizontality which too much reminded him of the arena of life; it gave him a sense of bare equality with, and no superiority to, a single living thing under the sun. (267)

Near the shattering conclusion of the novel, Mrs. Yeobright--like Eustacia Vye, a competitor vying for her son's affection--is mocked by the incursive voice of nature's rampant hyperfecundity. The madding crowd of insects among the furze suggests the impartiality of the natural world, in which sexual competition among human beings is allocated no special significance:

> . . . the intermittent husky notes of the male grasshoppers from every tuft of furze were enough to show that amid the prostration of the larger animal species an unseen insect world was busy in all the fulness of life. (351)

The populous crowd motif surfaces as a predominant theme in The Woodlanders (ser. May, 1886 - April, 1887; pub. Mar, 1887), another bucolic

tale whose rustic setting belies the underlying tension and strife encountered in a Darwinian universe. The by-now familiar Hardyan love triangle/quadrangle with its multiple cross-purposive complications is set against a woodsy backdrop whose arboreal denizens are engaged in their own life and death struggles. The audible groaning of the trees functions as a kind of horrific Greek chorus, reminding us that competitive striving is the natural state. In a poem written in 1887 and intended as a companion piece to The Woodlanders, Hardy reiterates Clym Yeobright's dilemma: attempted escapes from urban life offer no respite from the natural order, which is brutal, unforgiving and inhospitable toward the weak or ill-adapted. The third and fourth stanzas of "In a Wood" summarize this theme:

Heart-halt and spirit lame,
City-opprest,
Unto this wood I came
As to a nest;
Dreaming that sylvan peace
Offered the harrowed ease -
Nature a soft release
From men's unrest.
But, having entered in,
Great growths and small
Show them to men akin -

Combatants all!

Sycamore shoulders oak,

Bines the slim sapling yoke,

Ivy-spun halters choke

Elms stout and tall. (CP 64)

Darwin's evocation of entanglement, whether of warring populations or of usurpations and counter-usurpations of geological forms, always suggest symmetry and the possibility of viewing the process from an heroically distancing perspective. Hardy's evocations of entangled lives and entangled populations, whether of warring suitors or warring social classes, is exemplified by the meaningless chatter of nature's commentators in FFMC:

> Nothing disturbed the stillness of the cottage save the chatter of a knot of sparrows on the eaves; one might fancy scandal and rumour to be no less the staple topic of these little coteries on roofs than of those under them. (22)

Hardy's narrator appears to equate the plot complications of FFMC with the entangled plot complications produced by natural law. A "knot" of sparrows suggests Darwinian entanglement, but without Darwin's sanguine assurances. Darwin depicts a beautiful natural tapestry in his summary chapter at the conclusion of his Origin. Hardy, on the other hand, suggests that all of the interactive entanglements of human and non-human life comprise an entangled knot, with no meaning beyond mindless "chatter." The inverse of

natural theology's claim that all nature bespeaks transcendent truth, Hardy's natural world babbles mindlessly, the equivalent of the half-truths and misrepresentations of town gossips and malicious chatterboxes.

In Hardy's later novels, the usurpation motif becomes even more explicit than in his earlier work. Hardy's tenth published novel, The Mayor of Casterbridge (ser. Jan - May, 1886; pub. May, 1886), deals with a supplanter who is ultimately supplanted, finally losing all vestiges of his manhood and his identity in the process. In the novel's most horrific scene, after forfeiting his fortune, his position, his love and his daughter, Michael Henchard encounters his "drowned" effigy. His disgraced public image has finally usurped his own being:

> In the circular current imparted by the central flow the form was brought forward, till it passed under his eyes; and then he perceived with a sense of horror that it was himself. Not a man somewhat resembling him, but one in all respects his counterpart, his actual double, was floating as if dead in Ten Hatches Hole. (290)

The horror of this realization is that one's own corpse, and/or the grotesque characterizations and distortions of one's life imposed by one's successors, ultimately usurps the individual's living presence. Henchard's final encounter with Elizabeth-Jane is described in terms of usurpation and eclipse. Throughout the novel, the struggle for ascendancy is portrayed as a

kind of bizarre, cosmic musical chairs. Entangled circumstances and the forces of an indifferent Nature determine who will prevail, whether in matters of amatory, social or economic prosperity. Donald Farfrae usurps Michael Henchard's position as mayor of Casterbridge; Newson, the sailor who bought Susan Henchard at the beginning of the novel, returns and usurps Michael Henchard's role as father:

> By degrees Henchard became aware that the measure was trod by some one who out-Farfraed Farfrae in saltatory intenseness. This was strange, and it was stranger to find that the eclipsing personage was Elizabeth-Jane's partner. . . . That happy face--Henchard's complete discomfiture lay in it. It was Newson's, who had indeed come and supplanted him. (318)

The abandonment of conventional anchors of fixity for a pervasive sense of fluidity recurs thematically throughout Hardy. It is as if Darwinian plasticity, applicable in Darwin's work to speciational, and sometimes sexual, ambiguities, is adopted by Hardy's narrators as a principle applicable to the social, economic and amatory status of individual competitors, perennially embroiled in a contest where the rules themselves are in a state of flux. In MC everything is seasonal. Grain production and quality is linked to the physical environment, but the social status of Casterbridge's competitors is linked to the vagaries and vicissitudes of grain production. Hegemonic dominance is seasonal. The usurper triumphs for a season, and then is

ultimately usurped.

The entanglement motif, a metaphor for gloriously burgeoning and improving life processes in Darwin's Origin, devolves toward a metaphor for choking and competitive crowding in Hardy, the sense of strangulation increasing in some of his later work. In MC Elizabeth-Jane's entangled family relationships play a usurping role. Heredity itself is described in terms of entanglement and struggle. In one of Hardy's later poems, "The Pedigree," he describes this sense of incursive hereditary oppression, as if one's own physical and mental composition were itself an intrusive force, strangling and binding the individual will. In this sense, the past usurps and overwhelms the present:

> So, scanning my sire-sown tree,
> And the hieroglyps of this spouse tied to that,
> With offspring mapped below in lineage,
> Till the tangles troubled me,
> The branches seemed to twist into a seared and cynic face
> Which winked and tokened towards the window like a Mage
> Enchanting me to gaze again thereat. (CP 460)

Usurpation and the entanglements of heredity are underlying themes in Tess of the d'Urberville's (ser. July - Dec, 1891; pub. Nov, 1891). Hardy's portraiture of striving and entanglement, at once horrific and impersonal, contrasts sharply with Darwin's celebration in his evocation of the tree of life,

an image borrowed from Genesis:

> As buds give rise by growth to fresh buds, and these, if vigorous, branch out and overtop on all sides many a feebler branch, so by generation I believe it has been with the great Tree of Life, which fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its ever-branching and beautiful ramifications. (87)

For Darwin, the usurpation--strangulation and elimination--of "many a feebler branch" is a necessary part of the ameliorative process. The extinction of individual lives or populations, whether plant or animal, is trivialized. The annihilated forms sacrificed to the process carpet the earth in verdant splendor.

In contrast with Darwin's celebratory paean, the tangles prove troublesome in Hardy's poem "The Pedigree" and in Tess. Like Darwin's "broken branches," Tess's ancestors are characterized by Angel Clare as a "spent force" (423). In contrast with Darwin's evocation of organic continuity intertwining the past with the present, Hardy emphasizes the coldness of separation: " . . . oblivion would fall upon [Tess's] hereditary link with the marble monuments and leaded skeletons at Kingsbere" (423). In Hardy, usurping Time gobbles history, whether speciational history or individual family history, with the voracity of a threshing machine, the buzzing red glutton described in the nightmarish harvest scene that occurs near the novel's end.

In Darwin's evocation of a Tree of Life, usurped and estinguished life forms comprise a foundational platform for superior, ascendant forms. The entangled carpet is an organic part of a life-perpetuating whole. Hardy's description of a rapacious, steam-powered threshing machine suggests a more brutal metaphor for usurpation and the natural selection process:

> But the unthreshed sheaves remaining untouched seemed countless still, notwithstanding the enormous numbers that had been gulped down by the insatiable swallower, fed by the man and Tess, through whose two young hands the greater part of them had passed. And the immense stack of straw where in the morning there had been nothing, appeared as the faeces of the same buzzing red glutton. (413)

Hardy links brutal and mechanistic process with the natural environment and natural process elsewhere in Tess. The ruined maiden walks at night under "steely stars" (427). Instead of warmth, daylight brings the sun's "wrathful shine" (413), metallic, penetrating and "coppery."

In The Woodlanders, Hardy equates the strivings of Little Hintock's human inhabitants with the competitive struggle for existence in which the living trees are engaged. These descriptive passages provide an interesting contrast with Darwin's image of a life-giving tree, whose broken branches produce a complex and elegant garment, clothing the earth's surface. Hardy's trees creak like poorly-designed machinery. The antithesis of Paleyan

cosmology, Hardy's is a world in which nothing really fits together as it should. The life forms within the wood do not blend together, as in some cooperative paradise envisioned by a natural theologian. Instead, Hardy presents nature as a competitive battleground, bereft of comfort and awkward in its compositions. Marty South hears the wailing laments of nature, reflective of her own yearning for Giles Winterbourne and precursors of the entangled strivings that will guarantee her a lifetime of erotic frustration and pain:

> A lingering wind brought to her ear the creaking sound of two overcrowded branches in the neighbouring wood, which were rubbing each other into wounds, and other vocalized sorrows of the trees, together with the screech of owls, and the fluttering tumble of some awkward woodpigeon ill-balanced on its roosting bough. (54)

All pairings are "ill-balanced" in Hardy. Amatory usurpation and counter-usurpation drives much of the plot mechanism of the intricately entangled partner switchings in Jude the Obscure (ser. Dec, 1894 - Nov, 1895; pub. Nov, 1895). Arabella Donn, Mr. Phillotson, Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead might be characterized as "overcrowded branches" frequently in the position of "rubbing each other into wounds."

Jude's comprehension of the ugliness of the struggle comes early, when he is punished for feeding the rooks:

> Jude leaped out of arm's reach, and walked along the trackway weeping--not from the pain, though that was keen enough; not from the perception of the flaw in the terrestrial scheme, by which what was good for God's birds was bad for God's gardener; but with the awful sense that he had wholly disgraced himself before he had been a year in the parish, and hence might be a burden to his great-aunt for life. (17)

Jude soon learns that his vision of a better life in Christminster may be utterly unobtainable. Viewing the world through the plaited interstices of his farmboy hat, he begins to sense that an interwoven entanglement of circumstances, pre-dating his birth, have already defined his destiny to a degree that he finds almost intolerable:

> He pulled his straw hat over his face, and peered through the interstices of the plaiting at the white brightness, vaguely reflecting. Growing up brought responsibilities, he found. Events did not rhyme quite as he had thought. Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony. . . . All around you there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it. (19)

The "glaring, garish, rattling" noisy something is reminiscent of the

buzzing red glutton in Tess. Once again Hardy's narrator is describing natural surroundings in terms evocative of creaking, clanking machinery, a motif prevalent throughout the novels.

Jude finds the competitive character of life processes all around him jarringly unpleasant. Cosmic plot machinery clanks and grinds along, placing one group of individuals or species in opposition to another, like spokes or cogs in some mega-machinery, cross-purposively grinding and annihilating individual wills and appetites along the way. The needs of "God's gardener" and "God's birds" are in conflict, like the competing branches of God's trees in The Woodlanders, or the mutually destructive competing suitors who populate many of Hardy's novels and narrative poems.

In Hardy's mature fiction, we encounter protagonists that suggest Ernst Mayr's characterization of the abandonment of essentialism and the rise of population thinking--a phenomenon he associates with the Darwinian emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual (cf. 42). In the antique typological model, major characters, no matter how psychologically valid their portraiture, are usually understood to represent, to some degree, an abstract idea or quality. Thus, the youthful Jacob represents opportunism and envy, while Esau represents irresolution and sloth. (The story of their adventures and misadventures furnishes a representative paradigm. A recurrent biblical motif is providential elevation of the weaker/lesser individual and his/her usurpation of someone with favored status.) In a similar vein, we know that Oedipus

represents some quality of mind or being, however teasingly difficult to define (perhaps the suppressed psychological guilt of archaic humanity). Richard III, however authentically portrayed, represents the core essence of primordial envy and malevolence. Even Jane Austen's characters are representative of various social classes, or personality types.

In contrast to these traditional essentialist representations, Hardy departs radically from this model, most notably in his mature work. Tess and Jude represent only themselves. Both Tess and Jude find they are reluctant participants in a battle with their surroundings almost from the beginning; every encounter with their social milieu and/or the natural environment emphasizes their lonely isolation as individuals. The theme of usurpation as a kind of universal principle active within the framework of the plot becomes highly personalized in the narrative histories of both Tess and Jude. In each of these novels, the human will and destiny of the main protagonist is usurped by oppressive relics of the past, such as genealogical history and unwanted inheritances of social position and encumbrances. Whether seduced or raped, Tess is betrayed by her own physical body, which conceives Sorrow the Undesired. Likewise, Jude is betrayed by his own sexual awakening, which usurps and embattles his intellectual and spiritual self. Tess and Jude are embattled from within and without. The concept of the "madding crowd" of competitors seeking to envelope one's body and mind is expanded to include a madding crowd of emotions, of internalized conflicts, along with a madding

crowd of ancestral ghosts that threaten to usurp and obviate the noble and inviolate selfhood of both Jude and Tess. Each shares a misguided vision of an unadulterated passion. Tess, Hardy's "pure woman," dreams of an ideal state of physical and spiritual love, which she describes in biblical terms--the transcendent agape of the New Testament. Jude is tormented by the illusion of an unattainable transcendent life of the mind. Both dream of a non-existent paradisiacal milieu in which boundaries of grace are clearly drawn, which makes them unfit for the entangled, competitive imbroglio that usurps their ambitions and defines their destinies.

CHAPTER THREE

ENTANGLED GENDERS: PLASTICITY, INDETERMINACY AND CONSTRUCTS OF SEXUALITY IN HARDY AND DARWIN

At the conclusion of George Bernard Shaw's Back to Methuselah, the primordial hermaphrodite, Lilith, rejoices in a quasi-Scriptural hymn to the ameliorative achievements of the two sexes, evidenced after many aeons of time:

> They have redeemed themselves from their vileness, and turned away from their sins. Best of all, they are still not satisfied: the impulse I gave them in that day when I sundered myself in twain and launched Man and Woman on the earth still urges them. (299)

The natural theologians of Darwin's day subscribed to a teleological view of sex and sexuality consistent with their essentialist doctrine of speciational immutability. The gender dimorphism of Genesis ("male and female created he them" 1.27) suggested that every individual born of human parents would be irrefutably classifiable in terms of one of two polar opposites. In Chapter Fifteen of Natural Theology, William Paley cites the distinguishing differences between the sexes as an irrefutable argument for divinely-ordained design:

> But relation perhaps is never so striking, as when it subsists, not between different parts of the same thing, but between different things. The relation between a lock and key is more obvious, than it is between different parts of the lock. A bow was designed for an arrow, and an arrow for a bow; and the design is more evident for their being separate implements.
>
> Nor do the works of the Deity want this clearest species of relation. The sexes are manifestly made for each other. (191)

The "lock and key" analogy to male and female genitalia, while far from original with Paley, is characteristic of the typological frame of mind. Paley's is a world in which everything fits--or is supposed to fit--according to the patterns conceived by divine Mind. Males and females are constituted as if modeled after some cosmic blueprint, each crafted separately and individually. The divine template leaves little allowance for blurring of sexual boundaries, an interesting contrast with the world of Hardy's fictive imagination in which sexual compatibility, physiological and psychological "fit," seldom occurs.

Gender differentiation is far from perfectly realized in Hardy. In A Pair of Blue Eyes, we learn from the narrator that Henry Knight "was not shaped by Nature for a marrying man" (366), an oblique reference to possible physical and/or psychological inadequacy. Elfride Swancourt is unaccountably

jealous of the relationship between Stephen Smith and Henry Knight:

> 'I don't care how good he is; I don't want to know him, because he comes between me and you. You think of him night and day, ever so much more than of anybody else; and when you are thinking of him, I am shut out of your mind.' (72)

In Two on a Tower, blond and radiant Swithin St. Cleve is described in terms that suggest androgyny:

> . . . His features were sufficiently straight in the contours to correct the beholder's first impression that the head was the head of a girl. (9)

Lady Constantine is dark and mysterious, while the youth who fascinates her is blond and "pretty":

> . . . Her hair was black as midnight, her eyes had no less deep a shade, and her complexion showed the richness demanded as a support to these decided features. . . . she continued to look at the pretty face before her . . . (9)

In her essay, "Narrative, Gender, and Power in Far from the Madding Crowd," Linda M. Shires describes the process of "gender blurring" in the characterization of both Bathsheba Everdene and Gabriel Oak in Far from the Madding Crowd. Shires recognizes their characterizations as departing radically from the traditionalist/essentialist model:

> . . . But gender essences for men and women do not exist.

> Members of each sex bear traits opposite to those by which hegemonic culture would define them (ed. Margaret R. Higonnet, The Sense of Sex, Feminist Perspectives on Hardy. (53)

In Jude, Sue Bridehead jumps out of a second-story window to avoid physical intimacy with Mr. Phillotson. Nor is her sexual relationship with Jude, whom she loves spiritually if not always carnally, without its problems and inconsistencies: "Jude felt much depressed; she seemed to get further and further away from him with her strange ways and curious unconsciousness of gender" (157). The complexity of the relationship between Jude and Sue suggests a spiritualized, quasi-Platonic love undermined by an ambivalence toward physical intimacy. This is clearly not the world of the natural theologian where the sexes are formed, physically and psychologically, for compatible and perfect relationships, "manifestly made for each other."

In contrast with the typological construct of rigidly differentiated sexualities and sexual roles, as the nineteenth century progressed, the developing sciences of embryology and comparative anatomy offered more and more evidence that each individual begins life as a hermaphrodite, and, consequently, embodies both physical and psychological characteristics of both sexes throughout life. The typological construct of an unadulterated individual being who is"all-man" or "all-woman" was, therefore, challenged by observable phenomena. Essentialist dogma could not hold if the constructs of

sexuality proved to be a fiction, having no correspondence with observable populations of individuals possessing varying degrees of male and female qualities and traits.

With characteristic imaginative genius for harmonizing the claims of Scripture with the findings of science, distinguished scientific scholars such as William Whewell and David Brewster resisted any hint of blurred lines of demarcation--speciational or sexual. There was a great deal at stake. Like the biblical literalists of our own age, nineteenth-century defenders of divine revelation recognized that allowance for classificatory ambiguities, whether constructs of gender or species, undermines the authoritative purposiveness inherent in the doctrine postulating a Paleyan Designer engaged in creating forms modeled after an other-worldly, perfect design.

Ineluctably opposed to the natural theologians' enterprise, the Darwinian/ populationist model is as detrimental to traditional notions of gender typologies as to notions of speciational fixity. In dealing with issues of sexuality and sex determination, the Darwinian revolution implied an upheaval of the traditional constructs of gender differentiation. Inherent in the Darwinian model of sexual classification, as with the model of species determination, is the notion that the lines of demarcation distinguishing males from females--as well as those separating both sexes from hermaphrodites--are not as pronounced or definitive as is commonly supposed.

In Chapter Six of his Descent, Darwin suggests that the affinities which

unite all existing and extinct species are analogous to the affinities that unite the sexes:

> There is one other point deserving a fuller notice. It has long been known that in the vertebrate kingdom one sex bears rudiments of various accessory parts, appertaining to the reproductive system, which properly belong to the opposite sex; and it has now been ascertained that at a very early embryonic period both sexes possess true male and female glands. Hence some remote progenitor of the whole vertebrate kingdom appears to have been hermaphrodite or androgynous. (525)

Darwin goes on to point out that among human beings and other mammals "the males possess rudiments of a uterus with the adjacent passage, in their vesiculae prostaticae" (525), a fact difficult to explain according to the creationist/essentialist model. (We can only speculate that Victorian prudery prevented Darwin from adducing the equally anatomically obvious example of the female's possession of a rudimentary penis in the form of the clitoris.)

Among other anatomical obsessions shared by a number of scientific writers of the period was the existence of rudimentary breasts found on human males and other vertebrates of the mammalian class. In a universe designed and ordered by an omniscient and omnipotent deity, what purpose could be assigned to these embarrassingly useless features? In Of the Plurality of Worlds, the astronomer William Whewell draws an analogy between the

barren surfaces of presumptively lifeless planets in the solar system and the non-nutritive breasts of human males:

> [The planets Mars and Jupiter] look like the terrestrial breasts of Nature: but are they really nursing breasts? . . . Or are they mere images of such breasts? male teats, dry of all nutritive power? (341)

The supposed analogous relationship between barren planets and non-functional "male teats" reveals much about the typological mindset, and also suggests the foundational significance of well-defined sex-role constructs within the canons of essentialist doctrine. The notion of sexual ambiguity--any hint of bisexuality, gender-transcendence or pansexuality--suggests ambiguity of design and purpose to the Christian Platonist, as Saint Paul and a long line of his evangelical successors have long recognized.[11] The attempt to reconcile the typological mindset with anatomical features of the human body produced such treatises as Philip Gosse's elaborate exploration of the subject of Adam's navel, a work that purports to explain the logical necessity of believing that Adam was created complete as a sexually-developed adult, with a navel indicative of a birth that never occurred, and with a "thoroughly

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[11] St. Paul reserves his most opprobrious language for those who dare to violate traditional sexual boundaries: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another . . . they which commit such things are worthy of death . . . " (Rom.1.27-32).

ossified skeleton" (Omphalos 294). Eventually, the proponents of nipple-and-belly-button theology generated more ridicule than allegiance, as their arguments became less and less compatible with the models of plasticity proffered by Darwin, Lyell and their adherents. The plasticity of all organic structures (demonstrable in the observable plasticity of human anatomy), analogous to the principle of plasticity undergirding Lyell's theory of the earth, became a kind of theoretical linchpin suggesting the plasticity of all organizations, both natural and philosophical.

Meanwhile, the natural theologians held steadfastly to their doctrine of rigid definitions and demarcations. A few pages past his reconciliation of phenomena anatomical and astronomical, Whewell explicitly links his doctrine of planets and pectorals with Platonic idealism:

> The mode in which Plato expressed the doctrine which we are here urging was, that there were in the Divine Mind, before or during the work of creation, certain archetypal Ideas, certain exemplars or patterns of the world and its parts, according to which the work was performed. (372)

Darwin's treatment of the mysteries of underdeveloped breasts in the male provides yet another example of his progressive abandonment of the canons of essentialist tradition. Like Whewell, Darwin finds the phenomenon provocative, and in need of explanation:

> The possession by male mammals of functionally imperfect

> mammary organs is, in some respects, especially curious. (Descent 525)

Characteristically, Darwin links humankind with primordial ancestors in his offering an explanation that suggests a closer relationship to hermaphroditism than traditional gender typologies admit. The "imperfect mammary organs" of men may, in fact, be anatomical fossils, relics of androgynous ancestors whose sex roles did not necessarily conform to the norms of modern human society and culture. Darwin points out that the nurturing role is not at all the exclusive lot of females in nature, and suggests that among primordial human ancestors lactation may have occurred in both sexes:

> It may be suggested . . . that long after the progenitors of the whole mammalian class had ceased to be androgynous, both sexes yielded milk, and thus nourished their young. (526)

In the first chapter of his Descent, Darwin makes reference to man's hermaphrodite heritage:

> Rudiments, however, may occur in one sex of those parts which are normally present in the other sex; and such rudiments, as we shall hereafter see, have often originated in a way distinct from those here referred to. (401)

In the following chapter, entitled "The Development of Man from Some Lower Form," Darwin once again strikes the keynote of plasticity--the

malleable nature of life itself in all of its various forms, with human morphology not excepted:

> There can, however, be no doubt that changed conditions induce an almost indefinite amount of fluctuating variability, by which the whole organization is rendered in some degree plastic. (417)

The notion of an analogous relationship between speciational and sexual plasticity is encountered, embryonically, in Darwin's "Notes and Sketches, 1837-1844" edited by Sir Francis Darwin and published as part of his father's Autobiography. One entry, which Sir Francis offers as "of miscellaneous interest," is perhaps of greater interest than either Charles Darwin or his son could immediately perceive, in that it seems to contain the kernel of Darwin's later linkage of sexual and speciational morphology with what came to be the populationist model of sexual and speciational determinants:

> When one sees nipple on man's breast, one does not say some use, but sex not having been determined--so with useless wings under elytra of beetles--born from beetles with wings, and modified--if simple creation merely, would have been born without them. (123)

The anti-essentialist view of sex and sexual differentiation is encountered, in Chapter Two of Darwin's Origin. The essentialist dichotomization of the sexes is alien to the Darwinian model of sexuality, which allows for multiple sexual classifications:

> Individuals of the same species often present, as is known to every one, great differences of structure, independently of variation, as in the two sexes of various animals, in the two or three castes of sterile females or workers amongst insects, and in the immature and larval states of many of the lower animals. There are, also, cases of dimorphism and trimorphism, both with animals and plants. (40)

While gender-transcendence in relation to human life has scarcely dared speak its name until recent decades, the current trend toward reexamination of sex roles and rigidly-defined norms of sexuality owes much to Darwin's illumination and demystification of the principle of androgyny. Gender-transcendence in Hardy has still not been fully appreciated, nor has the relationship between his view of sexuality and that of Darwin been fully exploited by critics. Close readings of passages dealing with sexual identification in both Darwin and Hardy reveal interesting parallels. The recurrent motif of plasticity--the plasticity of all observable forces and phenomena in the natural world, but, more specifically, the plasticity of all organic life--extends to descriptions of sex and sexuality. Rigid typological demarcation is alien to the universes envisaged by Hardy and Darwin, whether the subject is the geological foundations of the earth, the biological foundations of life, or the typological foundations of sexuality. Implicit in Darwin and Hardy is the notion of individual sexualities, or of sexual "populations" of

individuals who exist independent of foreordained typologically constrictive models.

In her introduction to The Sense of Sex, Feminist Perspectives on Hardy, Margaret R. Higonnet explores the theme of gender-transcendence in Hardy:

> He shows how the binary opposites of masculinity and femininity blur when embodied in the individual. He makes us aware how we naturalize and universalize through the language of the body social institutions and differences. While we may be forced to read through classification schemes, he insists simultaneously that all labels that "ticket" a person, especially the most common ones of gender and class, are false. (4)

The blurred "binary opposites of masculinity and femininity" are perceivable in many of Hardy's most memorable characters. The theme of androgyny and/or sexual ambiguity seems less openly apparent in Hardy's later, more mature work, while in the earlier stages of his evolution as a novelist, this theme often surfaces in more readily-recognizable form. Close readings of passages dealing with character delineation, particularly in the earlier works, disclose a tendency to people his fictive world with individuals who are, to some recognizable degree, gender-transcendent. Hardy's novels suggest that gender transcendence is more deeply submerged; his sexually ambiguous characters are portrayed with greater subtlety in the later works,

those characterized by Michael Millgate as Hardy's greatest achievements in the genre. (Millgate classifies the novels from The Mayor of Casterbridge [pub. 1886] onward as Hardy's fullest realizations of the form.[12]) Hardy's softening the portraiture of gender-transcendent characters in his more technically sophisticated, later novels may be attributable to the omnipresent specter of Mrs. Grundy as well as refinement of his creative artistry in developing more psychologically complex characterizations. Whether or not one accepts Millgate's chronological classification of Hardy's achievements in the development of the form, the almost-playful inversion and subversion of traditional canons of gender identity in some of the early novels seems to open up all of Hardy's work to closer scrutiny for traces of gender bending.

The roots of Hardyan portraiture of sexual ambiguity can be detected in his first published novel, Desperate Remedies (pub. Mar, 1871). Edward Springrove's physiognomy is an important focus in the early pages. In fact, Cytherea Graye's obsession with his appearance prior to her first encounter with the young man sets the stage for the narrator's description of her initial impressions:

> He was rather above her brother's height. Although the upper

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[12] In Career, Michael Millgate cites MC as a kind of artistic turning point in Hardy's development as a novelist: "The semi-romances of the early 1880s were now left sternly behind; the idea of Wessex, hitherto only vaguely perceived, became clear and concrete; and Hardy emerged in The Mayor of Casterbridge as a conscious artist with an altogether richer conception of the novel form and a firmer grasp of its techniques" (222). The specific novels Millgate classifies as embodying more conscious artistry are MC, TW, Tess, Jude, and WB.

> part of his face and head was handsomely formed, and bounded by lines of sufficiently masculine regularity, his brows were somewhat too softly arched and finely pencilled for one of his sex . . . (30)

We may justifiably attach some significance to Hardy's first "handsome hero" in his first published novel being introduced as a near-perfect young man whose appearance suggests that he is a composite of both masculine and feminine characteristics. From a purely physiological standpoint, this reminds us of Darwin's recognition of the fact that "[r]udiments . . . may occur in one sex of those parts which are normally present in the other sex" (Descent 525). While both Cytherea Graye and Cytherea Aldcliffe are described as attractively handsome, the novel's great beauty is a male, described in detail by a sexually ambiguous narrator who seems equally appreciative of physical pulchritude in both sexes. The physical attractiveness of the mysterious and sinister Aeneas Manston suggests a teasingly androgynous blend of masculine and feminine characteristics:

> He was an extremely handsome man, well-formed . . . . The most striking point in his appearance was the wonderful, almost preternatural, clearness of his complexion. There was not a blemish or speck of any kind to mar the smoothness of its surface or the beauty of its hue. . . . Eyes and forehead both would have expressed keenness of intellect too severely to be

> pleasing, had their force not been counteracted by the lines and tone of the lips. These were full and luscious to a surprising degree, possessing a womanlike softness of curve, and a ruby redness . . . . (150)

"Full and luscious" lips--a notably rare quality for any male character in English literature--suggests Manston's status as a kind of homme fatal. It is partly Manston's blend of masculine and feminine features that makes him so disturbingly attractive, and at the same time sinister, in the mind of Cytherea Graye:

> He had faced the window, looking fixedly at the sky with his dark strong eyes. She seemed compelled to do as she was bidden, and looked in the too-delicately beautiful face. (154)

Cytherea Aldcliffe, like Edward Springrove and Aeneas Manston, is introduced to the reader in terms that suggest androgyny:

> There was a severity about the lower outlines of the face which gave a masculine cast to this portion of her countenance. Womanly weakness was nowhere visible save in one part--the curve of her forehead and brows; there it was clear and emphatic. (59)

In the paragraph preceding this description of Miss Aldcliffe, Hardy's narrator describes the meeting of the elder and younger Cythereas as if the two women were blending into a single personality, a description which seems to

prefigure the strange metamorphoses in The Well Beloved (ser. Oct - Dec, 1892; pub Mar, 1897). The women are described in a passage that seems almost a poetic evocation of morphological plasticity, laced with a hint of auto-erotic, narcissistic sensuality, as if the women are mesmerized by the mysterious alchemy of their own mirror images:

> Both the women showed off themselves to advantage as they walked forward in the orange light; and each showed too in her face that she had been struck with her companion's appearance. The warm tint added to Cytherea's face a voluptuousness which youth and a simple life had not yet allowed to express itself there ordinarily; whilst in the elder lady's face it reduced the customary expression, which might have been called sternness, if not harshness, to grandeur, and warmed her decaying complexion with much of the youthful richness it plainly had once possessed. (59)

The motif of sex-role reversal, which recurs throughout Hardy's novels and poems, makes an early appearance in Desperate Remedies. Cytherea Aldclyffe is placed in the role traditionally played by a male suitor, as she attempts to seduce Cytherea Graye into physical intimacy and the renunciation of all rivals. The issue of whether or not the narrator is describing a lesbian encounter is, in my opinion, less significant that the notion of gender-transcendence. The essentialist-driven obsession with classificatory labels

(lesbian, homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, asexual, bachelor-girl, etc.) is itself suspect within the context of a Hardyan/Darwinian universe in which all traditional notions of demarcation are effectively canceled. Hence, it is impossible to determine where motherly love ends and eroticism begins since the participants themselves are exploring the boundaries (in the relationship between the two Cythereas); where friendship ceases and homoerotic attraction begins (as with the intense feelings generated between Henry Knight and Stephen Smith, whose mutual affection is transfigured by their subsequent rivalry over Elfride Swancourt); or where gender identity begins and ends (particularly in the case of Jude and Sue).

Whatever motivations we ascribe to Miss Aldclyffe in Desperate Remedies, her aggressive behavior toward Cytherea Graye places her among Hardy's long procession of characters who defy gender stereotyping:

> Miss Aldclyffe removed her arms from Cytherea's neck. 'Tis now with you as it is always with all girls,' she said, in jealous and gloomy accents. 'You are not, after all, the innocent I took you for. No. no.' She then changed her tone with fitful rapidity. 'Cytherea, try to love me more than you love him--do. I love you more sincerely than any man can. . . and I--an old fool--have been sipping at your mouth as if it were honey, because I fancied no wasting lover knew the spot . . . ' (93-4)

In addition to the direct references to personality traits and tendencies toward androgyny in many of the characters, there is also detectable in DR a pervasive sense of unsolved mystery throughout the novel. On the surface, this is naturally attributable to Hardy's following the generic format of the "sensation novel" of the period. It is possible, however, to read the fact that each of the major characters seems continually bedeviled and controlled by one or more deep and shameful "secrets," as suggestive of unmentionable sexual secrets. Miss Aldclyffe and Aeneas Manston dread "discovery" throughout the novel, as, to a lesser degree, do Cytherea Graye and Edward Springrove.

In the opening passages, when Ambrose Graye asks the young Cytherea Aldclyffe to be his wife, she is horrified at the proposal:

> She seemed like one just awakened. 'Ah--we must part now!' she faltered, in a voice of anguish. 'I will write to you.' She loosened her hand and rushed away.
>
> In a wild fever Graye went home and watched for the next morning. Who shall express his misery and wonder when a note containing these words was put into his hand?
>
> 'Good-bye; good-bye for ever. As recognized lovers something divides us eternally. Forgive me--I should have told you before; but your love was sweet! Never mention me' (3)

Ostensibly it is Miss Aldclyffe's having given birth to an illegitimate child that forces this first of many desperate remedies. However, the

mysterious declaration that "something divides us eternally," and Miss Aldclyffe's bizarre disappearance suggest other, darker levels of deception and ambivalence. Admittedly, this is neither a necessary nor even a likely interpretation of the first Cytherea's motivation for abandoning her innocent lover. But the language of the narrative, nonetheless, invites a certain level of speculative latitude regarding the complexity of Cytherea's motivations. Cytherea Aldclyffe is, in many regards, the model for more fully developed characterizations of sexual ambiguity and irresolution in Hardy's more mature work.

In Desperate Remedies Hardy created a kind of plot template, which he continued to recast and remould throughout his literary career, but from which he never completely departed. The sexuality in later novels became less explicit, as Hardy responded to criticism of some of the novel's lurid features. In The First Mrs. Thomas Hardy , Denys Kay-Robinson records Hardy's reaction to negative criticism:

> . . . Too late he saw that the lesbian scene and other 'daring' aspects of the book damned it at the outset as a candidate for family reading and therefore for the libraries. (64)

It is apparent from Denys Kay-Robinson and other biographers that Hardy, who was inordinately sensitive to criticism of any kind, was forced to bowderlize his work, or at least to resort to innuendo and suggestion when dealing with extra-marital sex or same-sex relationships with a cryptically

erotic cast.

Hardy leaves open multiple avenues of possible bisexuality in Desperate Remedies. It is not outside the realm of possibility that Cytherea Graye must continue to submit to Miss Aldclyffe's caresses (verbal and/or physical) because of her social position and economic dependence. Likewise, Edward Springrove, though sexually attracted to Cytherea, has also known strong attractions to other men (again, whether physical, spiritual, or both is left for the reader to decide). That conventional distinctions separating homosexual from heterosexual impulses are as bogus as other essentialist-driven demarcations is obliquely suggested by a number of Hardy's narrators. Whether the attraction Miss Aldclyffe feels for Cytherea is sexual or if Edward Springrove's emotional and intellectual attraction to other men has a sexual component depends on the degree of sexual plasticity one chooses to apply to the characters described:

> An impressionable heart had for years--perhaps as many as six or seven years--been distracting him, by unconsciously setting itself to yearn for somebody wanting, he scarcely knew whom. Echoes of himself, though rarely, he now and then found. Sometimes they were men, sometimes women, his cousin Adelaide being one of these; for in spite of a fashion which pervades the whole community at the present day--the habit of exclaiming that woman is not undeveloped man, but

> diverse, the fact remains that, after all, women are Mankind, and that in many of the sentiments of life the difference of sex is but a difference of degree. (201)

This curious passage suggests a level of sexual relativism often detectable beneath the surface in many of Hardy's characterizations. This relativism is perhaps never fully developed in Hardy's later fiction due to the prevailing specter of Mrs. Grundy and the pressure to produce fiction suitable for serialization in "family magazines" such as Leslie Stephen's Cornhill. Glimpses of sexual ambiguity and androgyny occur in Hardy's later work, but in less explicit realizations than in his earlier work.

Paula Power, a sexual as well as a theological Laodicean (in the novel A Laodicean), is a character who might well have written Cytherea Aldclyffe's tragic lines "something divides us eternally" to any one or all of her lovers, including her female "lover," Charlotte De Stancy. Paula never submits fully to either her deceased father's Baptist faith, nor to her final choice from among her suitors, the young architectural Laodicean, George Somerset. Paula's relationship with Charlotte De Stancy cannot be called explicitly sexual, but her affection for the young woman places her in the role of a suitor. George Somerset overhears the local inn's landlord describing the relationship between Charlotte and Paula:

> . . . they are more like lovers than girl and girl. Miss Power is looked up to by little De Stancy as if she were a god-

> a'mighty, and Miss Power lets her love her to her heart's content. But whether Miss Power loves back again I can't say, for she's as deep as the North Star. (51)

When Somerset observes Paula's hesitation on the brink of the baptismal pool, he senses her ambivalent state of mind, an indecisiveness that is not explicitly sexual, but which might take on a sexual cast when considered in the context of other kinds of ambivalences presented in the novel:

> . . . enough was shown to assure Somerset that she had had some experience of things far removed from her present circumscribed horizon, and could live, and was even at that moment living a clandestine, stealthy inner life which had very little to do with her present outward one. (17)

The reference to "things far removed from her present circumscribed horizon" and "a clandestine, stealthy inner life" suggest an illicit secretiveness disproportionate to the description of a mere lapse in evangelical enthusiasm. Once again, although the novel's denouement furnishes an antiseptically heterosexualized overlay sufficient to appease, perhaps even deceive, Mrs. Grundy and her serial-consuming hordes, there is perceivable in Paula's character a hint of sexual, as well as ecclesiastical, license--a noncommittal openness to experimentation and a resistance to rigidly-structured role assignment. Admittedly, these oblique implications of sexual ambiguity are not developed to the point of controlling the central plot of the novel. Still,

the language employed seems deliberately to open up a wide range of sexual options, both within and beyond the novel's narrative scope.

Charlotte De Stancy, Paula Power's live-in companion, is described in terms that suggest degeneracy of type, with a reference to "confusion" consistent with the novel's thematic presentation of many levels of confusion--artistic, theological, and, in my opinion, sexual:

> But it was not the De Stancy face with all its original specialities: it was, so to speak, a defective reprint of that face: for the nose tried hard to turn up and deal utter confusion to the family shape. (29)

Somerset's first encounter with Miss De Stancy explores the relationship between Paula and her young protegee. There is a hint of clandestine secretiveness:

> Somerset was looking at the homely affectionate face of the little speaker. "You are her good friend, I am sure," he remarked.
>
> She looked into the distant air with tacit admission of the impeachment. "So would you be if you knew her," she said; and a blush slowly rose to her cheek, as if the person spoken of had been a lover rather than a friend. (35)

A few paragraphs beyond this description of the relationship between the two women, George Somerset refers to Paula Power as "a mixed young

lady" (37), ostensibly referring to her catholicity of tastes, but also suggesting the wide range of ways in which Paula might be considered a person of "mixed" character and emotions.

The narrator's early descriptions of George Somerset suggest that the young architect himself shares with Aeneas Manston some peculiar traces of androgyny:

> . . . Of beard he had but small show, though he was as innocent as a Nazarite of the use of the razor; but he possessed a moustache all-sufficient to hide the subtleties of his mouth, which could thus be tremulous at tender moments without provoking inconvenient criticism. (8-9)

Somerset's name suggests the end of a season, the demise of summer--in particular the summer of architectural exuberance, a period whose brightness and glory can only be perceived through a retrospective haze. The sharply defined architectural lines of the Gothic cathedrals and the spirit that created them are now faded, corrupted and hopelessly compromised. Archetypal definition and form has degenerated into an indistinguishable morass of conflictive, blurred and adulterated compromises. Defects of definition in the realms of architecture and faith seems to be reflected in the physical and psychological characteristics of the human populations of modern times. And blurred lines of sexual definition are reflective of abandoned typological models, remnants of a nobler age, whether authentic or imagined.

The revealing scene in which William Dare effectively "seduces" Captain De Stancy by allowing him to see Paula Power performing physical exercise is a study in sexual ambiguity. Dare, who is himself sexually ambiguous in his preternatural boyishness, arranges for De Stancy to see Miss Power when she will appear most attractive--when she dresses in athletic clothing for her workout in a gymnasium. Dare describes the advantage of seeing her exercising in the gym:

> Because when she is there she wears such a pretty boy's costume, and is so charming in her movements, that you think she is a lovely youth and not a girl at all. (169)

Captain De Stancy's seeing Paula in the gymnasium has a profound effect:

> The sight of Paula in the gymnasium, which the judicious Dare had so carefully planned, led up to and heightened by subtle accessories, operated on De Stancy's surprised soul with a promptness almost magical. (178)

It is apparent from this passage that Paula's boyishness arouses more than Captain De Stancy's "surprised soul." The "promptness almost magical" suggests sexual awakening of a kind that De Stancy wishes to quell. The bold and brash William Dare is sexually sophisticated enough to comprehend the complexities of human sexuality, and to use them to his own reprehensible ends.

Earlier in the novel Dare "seduces" Somerset's architectural competitor, the less-talented mediocrity, Mr. Havill, into stealing a copy of Somerset's architectural plans, getting him drunk and then making the illicit offer to invade Somerset's apartment. Havill and Dare have dinner, get drunk and are forced to share a double bed because the inn where they are staying is crowded. Hardy sets the scene for this seduction in terms that allow the reader to decide whether or not Dare's Mephistophelian temptation of Havill includes sexual seduction:

> The same evening Havill asked Dare to dine with him. He was just at this time living en garcon, his wife and children being away on a visit. After dinner they sat on till their faces were rather flushed. . . .
>
> Havill who had not drunk enough to affect his reasoning, held up his glass to the light and said, "I never can quite make out what you are, or what your age is. Are you sixteen, one-and-twenty, or twenty-seven? . . .
>
> . . . If Mr. Dare would give up his room, and share a double-bedded room with Mr. Havill, the thing could be done, but not otherwise.
>
> To this the two companions agreed, and presently went upstairs with as gentlemanly a walk and vertical a candle as they could exhibit under the circumstances. (141-3)

The language of this encounter at the very end of Book Two, Chapter Two, with its suggestive "vertical candle" and "double-bedded room," along with the circumstance of Mrs. Havill and the children being conveniently absent, at least hints at the possibility of Dare's seduction extending to a physical level.

At the beginning of Chapter Three, the narrative skips to Havill's contemplating the sleeping Dare at two o'clock in the morning:

> . . . He lay on his back, his arms thrown out; and his well-curved youthful form looked like an unpedestaled Dionysus in the colourless lunar rays. (144)

Within the context of the novel, William Dare suggests adulterations of many kinds. He is irrevocably "mixed," a kind of evil, distorted mirror-image of the Laodicean protagonists Paula Power and George Somerset. An "unpedestaled Dionysus," he suggests the evil seductiveness of Aeneas Manston in DR. Dare's physical attractiveness is a corruption of the Greek ideal, a parodistic copy like the offensive concatenation of architectural styles so despised by the narrator. The narrator explicitly links degraded ancestry with degraded and dilapidated architecture:

> Charlotte was concerned to see her brother's face, and withdrew from the window that he might not question her further. De Stancey went into the hall, and on to the gallery, where Dare was standing as still as a caryatid. (207)

Dare's ability to manipulate the plot is based in large part upon the mixed loyalties of the major characters he seeks to control. His "mixed" sexuality is subtly suggested by the narrator's referring to him as a "boy-man" (322), and by his constant pandering. As a classical caryatid, he supports the crumbling, patchwork Laodicean architecture of the plot.

Paula Power's noncommittal theological meanderings seem to suggest complex and confused sexuality, as well. While visiting Amiens, Captain De Stancy and Paula observe the casual irreverence of worshipers in the cathedral anxious to remove flower pots placed in front an honored saint. De Stancy derides Paula's cynicism:

> "I perceive you are a harsh Puritan."
>
> "No, Captain De Stancy! Why will you speak so? I am far too much otherwise. I have grown to be so much of your way of thinking, that I accuse myself, and am accused by others, of being worldly, and half-and-half, and other dreadful things--though it isn't that at all." (355)

Ostensibly, Paula's "half-and-half" status refers to her theological compromises. Still, frequently embedded in descriptions of Paula's multiple dilemmas is the suggestion of compromised sexuality, as well. The implication that Paula is "half-and-half, and other dreadful things" is certainly applicable to her half-hearted responses to her various suitors, and perhaps to

her sexual identity, as well.

Gender-transcendence is apparent to a remarkable degree in Jude the Obscure. The character exhibiting the most aggressive toughness (i.e., masculinity) in the novel is Arabella Donn. With all of her limitations, she is the one character who demonstrates resilience and the kind of hard-headed practicality so often admired in traditionally constructed masculine heros. In fact, she introduces herself to the virginal and demure young dreamer by assaulting him with the disembodied penis of a slaughtered pig. Throughout much of their relationship the penis-wielding Arabella appears as a dominant force, while Jude is frequently portrayed as compliant and passive. At the end of the novel, Arabella prevails and survives while Jude surrenders to despair and death.

Jude and Sue, on the other hand, seem in many ways to function as mirror-images of one another, defying norms of sexual identity. In "Becoming a Man in Jude the Obscure," Elizabeth Langland suggests that the exploding of gender stereotypes is a major value in the novel:

> Part of the novel's brilliance derives from Hardy's ability to represent Jude's battle with the class and gender self-constructions his culture offers him. His embattlement gives the novel its richness and generates its tragic denouement. (The Sense of Sex 32)

Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead are, in many respects, two of Hardy's

most androgynous creations. A pervasive anxiety in response to the demands of traditional sex-role constructs characterize Jude and Sue equally, as Michael Millgate has pointed out in Career:

> In her immaturity, her combination of a tendency to flirt with a basic fear of sexuality, Sue--as Robert B. Heilman has demonstrated--is a recognizable and not especially uncommon type: as Hardy insisted in writing to Gosse, the sexual instinct in her is "healthy as far as it goes, but unusually weak and fastidious." Her intellectual "paganism," what makes her specifically of her time, serves to exacerbate her fundamental tendencies by providing her with a series of rational, or at least rationalised, justifications for acting as she perhaps must--converting her instinctive actions into elements in a programme. Hardy seems to have been at some pains to indicate the extent to which in earlier years she has been starved both emotionally and intellectually by her lack of formal education and the absence of a secure family environment. Precisely the same could be said of Jude, of course, and this is one of the ways in which it appears from an early stage that he and Sue have more than their courtship in common. (321)

In the scene where Sue explains her repugnance at having to submit sexually to Richard Phillotson, the anguish consists in great part from her

inability to adapt to the sex role imposed upon her:

> "But it is not as you think!--there is nothing wrong except my own wickedness, I suppose you'd call it--a repugnance on my part, for a reason I cannot disclose, and what would not be admitted as one by the world in general! . . . What tortures me so much is the necessity of being responsive to this man whenever he wishes, good as he is morally--the dreadful contract to feel in a particular way in a matter whose essence is its voluntariness!" (224)

For both Jude and Sue, the constructs imposed by society are intolerably incompatible with their own implacable and frustrated cravings for fulfillment and transcendence. Expectations imposed by sex-role identification, like those imposed by genealogical status and demarcations of social class, militate against their own inviolate sense of being. For Hardy's gender-transcendent protagonists, all classificatory designations are illusory. They inhabit a Hardyan/Darwinian milieu in which there are no types or species, only unique, separate and struggling individuals.

CHAPTER FOUR

ENTANGLED LANDSCAPES AND LIVES: PLACE AS PROTAGONIST/ANTAGONIST IN HARDY AND DARWIN

In Science and Education, Thomas Huxley defines the relationship between human life and the physical environment in terms antithetical to the Paleyan notion of suitability and purposiveness:

> The notions of the beginning and the end of the world entertained by our forefathers are no longer credible. It is very certain that the earth is not the chief body in the material universe, and that the world is not subordinated to man's use. (133)

In contrast to the Huxleyan viewpoint, the essentialist perception of the physical environment's role in human affairs is exemplified by the role played by physical surroundings in the Bible. Paradise is created by God as an ideal habitat suitable for humankind:

> And the Lord God planted a garden eastward of Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. (Gen. 2.8)

The concept of a perfect physical environment, uniquely adapted and prepared for individuals designated as God's elect, runs like a unifying thread throughout Scripture. For God's chosen among the ancient Hebrews it was the elusive land of Canaan. At his crucifixion, Christ promised the repentant

thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23.43), an evocation of Edenic splendor and perfect repose. The apocalyptic promises to the faithful found in the Book of Revelation include the description of an ideal place designed for habitation--a heavenly home specifically created to accommodate the elect:

> And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. (Rev. 21.10)

Jude Fawley's mist-enshrouded vision of a Bunyanesque Celestial City resembles the time-honored essentialist evocation; that the agency of his first awakening slap is a disembodied pig's penis suggests metonymically the incursion of Malthusian/Darwinian hyperfecundity upon the Platonic dreamer's consciousness. The wanderings suggested in the chapter titles of Jude imply a restlessness for an unrealizable repose--an uncluttered, blissful environment, the closest attainable approximation of which is the grave--the only peace available to Jude Fawley.

The concept of an ideal, yet palpable milieu designed and designated for the human race--or at least designed for those individuals who bring their lives and aspirations into conformity with the divine plan--pervades the writing of the natural theologians. In the 1840s and 1850s a controversy arose

concerning whether the known planets in the Solar System were inhabited.[13] William Whewell, in Of the Plurality of Worlds, argues against planetary habitation, contending that the Creator had designed the earth specifically for human life:

> The Earth is really the domestic hearth of this Solar System; adjusted between the hot and fiery haze on one side, the cold and watery vapour on the other. (320)

According to Whewell, planets and stars are comprised of residual raw materials enlisted by the Creator to form an environment suitable for human life. Their sole purpose is to impress humankind with the grandeur and divine craftsmanship implicit in the Creator's design. For Whewell stellar nebulae and planetary phenomena are " . . . the gems of the robe of Night, the flowers of the celestial fields" (364). In a purposive universe, the raw materials that comprise the physical environment have no meaningful existence independent of their usefulness to the divine Artisan:

> The planets and the stars are the lumps which have flown from the potter's wheel of the Great Worker. (365)

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[13] In Genesis and Geology, Charles Coulston Gillispie describes the controversy:

> In the 1840's and 1850's there was a minor flurry as to whether other planets might be populated, a question which had lain dormant since the early eighteenth century. . . . The discussion produced a large and rather redundant literature, the character of which may be indicated by a brief consideration of the contributions of William Whewell and Sir David Brewster, who led the opposing sides. (205)

In More Worlds than One, David Brewster, a distinguished scientist and respected teacher of astronomy at Edinburgh, argues vehemently against Whewell's position regarding extra-terrestrial life. Like Whewell, his argument is teleologically based. Brewster asks his reader to imagine aeons of geological upheaval as the work of divine providence, preparatory to the appearance of human life on earth. Primordial magma, through the process of extrusion and crystallization, assumes the shape of granite stones useful as building materials. Primordial forests of almost unimaginable antiquity perished in order to create fossilized residues useful to human beings, who would develop the skill to burn these fossilized substances for heat and light. Precious metals were similarly formed, exclusively for the uses that human intelligence would assign at a much later period. David Brewster's explanation of man's late arrival on the planet is congruent with the prevailing teleology of his time. He is particularly adept at adjusting the discoveries of science to the strictures of essentialist doctrine. The events of geologic history are described in terms that suggest a sculpting process, the work of a divine Creator/Architect:

> The house of the child of civilization was not ready for his reception. The stones that were to build and roof it, had not quitted their native beds. The coal that was to light and heat it, was either green in the forest, or blackening in the storehouse of the deep. The iron that was to defend him from external

> violence, lay buried in the ground; and the rich materials of civilization, the gold, the silver, and the gems, even if they were ready, had not been cast within his reach, from the hollow of the Creator's hand. (48)

Brewster finds the notion of purposelessness so discordant with his theologico-scientific predilections that he cannot imagine lifeless extra-terrestrial planets in the Solar System. Since earth was specifically created for human life, it is inconceivable that a much vaster planet, like Jupiter, could exist without some providential raison d'etre :

> The diameter of Jupiter being 87,000 miles, and that of the earth 7926, the relative size or bulk of the two planets will be proportional to the squares of these numbers. Hence the size or bulk of Jupiter is 1200 times greater than that of the Earth, and this alone is a proof that it must have been made for some grand and useful purpose. (57)

For Brewster, the conception of a planet devoid of life-nurturing "purpose" is at variance with the underpinnings of religious faith. He interprets the latest telescopic observations of Mars in terms that suggest an environment hospitable to life: "Continents and oceans, and green savannas, have been observed upon Mars" (77).

Natural theology holds sacred the whole catalogue of observable phenomena, enlisting every newly-recorded shred of minutiae in the service of

ever strengthening faith. David Brewster celebrates the expansion of our knowledge of the physical universe because, for him, this kind of knowledge brings us closer to knowledge of the divine:

> Truths physical have an origin as divine as truths religious. . . Science ever has been, and ever must be the safeguard of religion. The grandeur of her truths may transcend our failing reason, but those who cherish and lean upon truths equally grand, but certainly more incomprehensible, ought to see in the marvels of the material world the best defence and illustration of the mysteries of their faith. (126)

Whewell's conception of the earth as a "domestic hearth" and Brewster's evocation of "the house of the child of civilization" suggest a terrestrial environment designed and created for the living creatures inhabiting that environment--the human inhabitants being the most significant inheritors of a world created for their use and enjoyment. The essentialist model suggests that the observable phenomena of the environment represent a patterning after some invisible ideal.

Darwin's anti-essentialist, dysteleological conception of the physical environment's significance resembles that of the natural theologians in its emphasis on the importance of physical conditions. The difference is that David Brewster and William Whewell envisage physical conditions and an environment shaped for human life and other forms of life, while Darwin

envisages life forms--including the forms and varieties of human life--shaped by physical conditions and the environment.

In Chapter Twelve of the Origin, entitled "Geographical Distribution," Darwin explores the role of geography and land formations in the modification of life forms. According to Darwin, inheritance and common ancestry have a more powerful influence on development than climate or physical conditions. Yet the physical environment plays its role in the migratory process, which in turn, acts as a determiner of biological similarities and dissimilarities. In a Darwinian universe, barriers separating place from place determine accidental morphological variations, as in the famous example of uniquely developed life forms and varieties found on the Galapagos Islands. Once again, the notion of organic plasticity opposes the canons of essentialism.

For Darwin, physical barriers play a role in sculpting the visible differences in the forms of life discoverable in various regions of the planet:

> . . . barriers of any kind, or obstacles to free migration, are related in a close and important manner to the differences between the productions of various regions. . . . We see the same fact in the great difference between the inhabitants of Australia, Africa, and South America under the same latitude: for these countries are almost as much isolated from each other as possible. (345)

In Chapter Three, "The Struggle for Existence," Darwin discusses the

role of climate in determining which individuals and which varieties survive:

> The action of climate seems at first sight to be quite independent of the struggle for existence; but in so far as climate chiefly acts in reducing food, it brings on the most severe struggle between the individuals, whether of the same or of distinct species, which subsist on the same kind of food. (121)

In his discussion of the principle of natural selection (in Chapter Four), Darwin discusses the role of the physical environment, or "physical conditions of life" (130), as one of the important determiners of survival. The relationship of the individual to a physical environment that may be favorable or unfavorable, and the individual's relationship to other individuals, whether in competition for food or sex, determines candidacy for survival and the survival of progeny. Once again, Darwin uses the analogy of selectivity under control of domestic breeders:

> Let it be borne in mind in what an endless number of strange peculiarities our domestic productions, and, in a lesser degree, those under nature, vary; and how strong the hereditary tendency is. Under domestication, it may be truly said that the whole organisation becomes in some degree plastic. Let it be borne in mind how infinitely complex and close-fitting are the mutual relations of all organic beings to each other and to their physical conditions of life. (130)

Darwin's description of the natural selection process sounds almost as if he were describing the plot structure and character of a Hardy novel or narrative poem. We can scarcely describe the motivational drives or reactive responses of Hardy's major characters without giving thought to "how infinitely complex and close-fitting are the mutual relations . . . to each other and to their physical conditions of life." The selection process is beyond the control of the individual--it is the collaborative function of social, biological and physical conditions.

Physical locale plays an active role in most of Hardy's narrative fiction. The personality of place often takes on a quasi-menacing aspect, as if the location itself threatened the survival or well-being of the protagonist. It is as if these frequently quaint and bizarre sites suggest Darwin's "physical conditions of life," playing a role in the natural selection and sexual selection process--processes often portending doom in Hardy.

Endowed with the personality of a major character in Desperate Remedies, Knapwater House and Environs seem to dominate the destinies of those who succumb to their malevolent influence. While it may be argued that Hardy's portraiture of the ancient ruin owes more to Gothic tradition than to Darwin, it is interesting to note that the descriptions equate its strange evocative power with nature, and that the dread associated with the house suggests the incursion of the past upon the present--a Darwinian theme frequently appropriated by Hardy:

> The direction in which she (Cytherea) had to go would take her close by the old manor-house. The air was perfectly still, and between each low rumble of the thunder behind she could hear the roar of the waterfall before her, and the creak of the engine among the bushes hard by it. Hurrying on, with a growing dread of the gloom and the approaching storm, she drew near the Old House, now rising before her against the dark foliage and sky in tones of strange whiteness. (148)

The portraiture of a natural environment oblivious to the anxieties and concerns of human life, a recurrent motif in Hardy, is exemplified in the narrator's personification of a river as obtuse and uncaring:

> "The river flowed on as quietly and obtusely as ever, and the minnows gathered again in their favourite spot as if they had never been disturbed." (DR 285)

Later in the novel Desperate Remedies, the horror of the Cliff without a Name in A Pair of Blue Eyes is prefigured:

> On the Monday after Springrove's visit, Owen had walked to the top of a hill in the neighborhood of Tolchurch--a wild hill that had no name, beside a barren down where it never looked like summer. (333)

Perhaps nowhere in Hardy is the personality of place more evident than in the description of the Cliff without a Name in A Pair of Blue Eyes. A

precursor of Egdon Heath, the ruins of Casterbridge, and Stonehenge, among other chillingly hostile sites, the cliff presents a natural visage horrific in its stark, implacable ruthlessness. Elfride Swancourt describes the Cliff in anthropomorphic terms: 'I cannot bear to look as that cliff,' said Elfride. "It has a horrid personality and makes me shudder' (244).

Hardy's evocation of the Cliff without a Name is the antithesis of Whewell's or Brewster's conception of a world made for man. The Cliff suggests a Darwinian evocation of the natural world--a starkly blank, slatelike mirror, indifferent to the struggles of human and animal life written upon and embedded within its implacable surface. Through a foolish accident, the geologist Henry Knight finds himself suspended between life and death, hanging from the side of a cliff with the angry, primordial sea below waiting to swallow him into oblivion.

He confronts the primordial world, which he has known intellectually, with a knowledge that is suddenly personalized and horrifyingly immediate:

> He reclined hand in hand with the world in its infancy. Not a blade, not an insect, which spoke of the present, was between him and the past. The inveterate antagonism of these black precipices to all strugglers for life is in no way more forcibly suggested than by the paucity of tufts of grass, lichens, or confervae on their outermost ledges. (251)

The Cliff without a Name proves to be a great equalizer of all forms of

life. Henry Knight comes to recognize his status within the hierarchy of successive life forms that have evolved through the aeons, as he confronts a pair of flinty blue eyes staring at him from a prehistoric past, almost incomprehensibly remote in time:

> By one of those familiar conjunctions of things wherewith the inanimate world baits the mind of man when he pauses in moments of suspense, opposite Knight's eyes was an imbedded fossil, standing forth in low relief from the rock. It was one of the early crustaceans called Trilobites. Separated by millions of years in their lives, Knight and this underling seemed to have met in their deaths. (252)

As the narrative description of Knight's predicament progresses, the character of the Cliff, representative of a cruelly capricious natural environment, takes on a sinister character. Nature begins to toy with Knight, assuming the role of dominatrix. ("In her unfriendly moments there seems a feline fun in her tricks . . . . " [254]). The inhospitable physical environment takes control, and the struggling individual can only submit, no longer acting but being acted upon:

> New tortures followed. The rain increased, and persecuted him with an exceptional persistency which he was moved to believe owed its cause to the fact that he was in such a wretched state already. . . . . It rained upwards instead of down. . . .

> Each drop was virtually a shaft, and it pierced him to his skin . . . . he was drenched, except in two places. These were on the top of his shoulders and on the crown of his hat.
>
> . . . It was a cosmic agency, active, lashing, eager for conquest: determination; not an insensate standing in the way. (254-5)

Knight's torture at the hands of malevolent Nature is described in terms that suggest rape and castration. He is "pierced." Every drop of rain assaults him like a "shaft." He is Nature's "conquest." Knight hears the voice of the wind "rising and falling as it mauled and thrust him hard or softly" (256). Before the end of the novel each character is pelleted in some manner. Knight is saved from oblivion by a rope fashioned from Elfride Swancourt's entangled skirts, surviving his ordeal only to endure other forms of torture, binding and entanglement.

In contrast to Darwin's overriding optimism, Hardy's portrayal of nature's entangled tapestry takes on a sinister, threatening tone. Web imagery abounds in Victorian fiction, but in Hardy the motif of fiendishly knotted entanglement is often associated with a kind of sexual and psychological strangulation, paralysis and, in most of his work, eventual death for one or more characters. Henry Knight is rescued from entanglement with the primordial world on the side of the Cliff without a Name by a life-saving entangled rope constructed of Elfride's knotted and intertwined undergarments;

hence, he is saved from one form of entanglement only to be ensnared by a more menacing web of interactive circumstances. It is as if the interconnective, cross-purposive threads of human will and desire offer one form of escape only to impose social and sexual strangulation and, ultimately, mocking impotence.

Egdon Heath in Return of the Native bears a close kinship to Knight's tormentor, the Cliff without a Name. Hardy's narrator introduces the Heath at the beginning of the novel, as if describing a major character:

> The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half an hour to evening; it could in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking dread. (53)

This opening passage warns forebodingly of the seemingly desolate location's active personality. Not only does Egdon Heath possess a "face" and a "complexion" capable of sudden alteration, but also the physical backdrop of the novel is destined to play an aggressive role suggested by active verbs. The Heath may elect to "retard . . . sadden . . .anticipate . . . intensify."

In a sense, Egdon Heath mocks the essentialist myth of a special place prepared for the needs and longings of humankind. Hardy's evocation of the natural environment is a far cry from Whewell's conception of a warming

hearth, prepared by God for his crowning creation:

> Civilization was its (the Heath's) enemy; and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress . . .In its venerable one coat lay a certain vein of satire on human vanity in clothes. (56)

The Heath's attitude toward human inhabitants is satirical. Like the rugged face of the Cliff without a Name, its features are unresponsive to human aspirations and struggles.

Through a bizarre constellation of circumstances, the implacable Heath ultimately participates in the death of Clym Yeobright's mother. The forces of nature bring about Mrs. Yeobright's death on the Heath:

> Mrs. Yeobright's exertions, physical and emotional, had well-nigh prostrated her; but she continued to creep along in short stages with long breaks between. The sun had now got far to the west of south and stood directly in her face, like some merciless incendiary, brand in hand, waiting to consume her. (351)

Like Henry Knight impaled against the rugged surface of the merciless cliff, Mrs. Yeobright's plight is described in terms that suggest malicious torture. It is as if the Gothic horror of an earlier period has come out of the attics and closets to invade the rocks, woods and fields. It is the juxtaposition of human concerns against the backdrop of geologic history that produces the

nightmare of realization in Hardy. The strugglings of human life are not so much mocked as they are contextualized into an oblivion of insignificance.

Upon learning of Mrs. Yeobright's death, Clym's anguish is trivialized by the maddeningly placid aspect that the Heath wears in the face of human anguish and suffering:

> . . . there was only the imperturbable countenance of the heath, which, having defied the cataclysmal onsets of centuries, reduced to insignificance by its seamed and antique features the wildest turmoil of a single man. (388)

The "imperturbable countenance" of the Heath finds an analogue in the nameless voids visible from Swithin St. Cleve's observatory in Two on a Tower. Horrifying in their vastness and opacity, they are described by the fledgling astronomer as monstrosities:

> The imaginary picture of the sky as the concavity of a dome whose base extends from horizon to horizon of our earth is grand, simply grand, and I wish I had never got beyond looking at it in that way. But the actual sky is a horror. . . . Impersonal monsters, namely, Immensities. Until a person has thought out the stars and their interspaces he has hardly learnt that there are things much more terrible than monsters of shape, namely, monsters of magnitude without known shape. Such monsters are the voids and waste places of the sky. (33-4)

The view of the sky as a cozy canopy barely beyond the grasp of the earth's human inhabitants is the traditional, typological view of the heavens, a domain fashioned to evoke a sense of reverential awe among human observers. This point of view is expressed in the natural theology of the Psalmist: "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19.1). William Paley's Natural Theology envisages a universe in which all of creation is designed to fit the contextual parameters of human life and human perceptions: "Throughout the universe there is a wonderful proportioning of one thing to another" (208).

In Hardy's universe the vastness of sidereal, inter-galactic space, like the vastness of geologic time, is viewed in terms of an implacable horror, nightmarish in its unimaginable scale--unlike Paley's evocation, completely out-of-proportion to the scope of human life. Throughout the novel Two on a Tower, the impenetrable reaches of the physical universe itself seem to function as an unfeeling and monstrous personality, a mindless entity malevolent and deliberately indifferent to human emotions and aspirations. Lady Constantine's tremulous longings for the handsome young astronomer to whom she has become a benefactor are mocked by the monstrous sky that so fascinates and horrifies both of them:

> Ten days passed without a sight of him; ten blurred and dreary days, during which the whole landscape dripped like a mop; the park trees swabbed the gravel from the drive, while the sky was a zinc-coloured archivault of immovable cloud. (67)

Later in the novel, we discover Viviette Constantine waiting at the top of the tower/observatory, the site of her clandestine trysts with her lover. The language of Hardy's narrator suggests that Lady Constantine is suspended between the abyss of stellar space and the abyss of geologic history--two equally imponderable monsters of magnitude:

> . . . overhead the windy sky looked down with a strange and disguised face, the three or four stars that alone were visible being so dissociated by clouds that she knew not which they were.
>
> Under any other circumstances Lady Constantine might have felt a nameless fear in thus sitting aloft on a lonely column, with a forest groaning under her feet, and palaeolithic dead men feeding its roots. (108)

The vastness of Time and Space, personified as witnesses which both mock and trivialize tormented and bedeviled protagonists, is a recurrent theme in Hardy. Lady Constantine does not share Swithin St. Cleve's nor the narrator's keen awareness of the insignificance of the novel's dramatis personae in relation to the unfathomable backdrop against which their petty drama is to be played out. The two lovers are literally and figuratively suspended on a tower, held aloft above two gaping precipices whose ultimate reaches are unknown and unknowable.

The ruined Roman Amphitheater of Casterbridge offers another

example of a place evocative of the vast stretches of time separating the present from the antique past. The gulf of separation is suggested by the indifference the residents of Casterbridge feel toward their Roman predecessors:

> They had lived so long ago, their time was so unlike the present, their hopes and motives were so widely removed from ours, that between them and the living there seemed to stretch a gulf too wide for even a spirit to pass. (66)

The spirits of the long-dead seem irretrievably lost, yet the personality of the physical location itself overwhelms and haunts the living:

> Melancholy, impressive, lonely, yet accessible from every part of the town, the historic circle was the frequent spot for appointments of a furtive kind. . . .
>
> Some boys had latterly tried to impart gaiety to the ruin by using the central arena as a cricket ground. But the game usually languished for the aforesaid reason--the dismal privacy which the earthen circle enforced, shutting out every appreciative passer's vision, every commendatory remark from outsiders--everything, except the sky; and to play at games in such circumstances was like acting to an empty house. (67)

It is not the spirits of the past which haunt and infect the present. Rather, it is the imponderable, hollow oblivion evoked from ancient sites and

ruins that so disquiets those confronted with the impenetrable silences of these antique monuments. Hardy evokes this sense of the vastness of oblivion in his poem "The To-Be-Forgotten," in which he describes the biblical "second death," not in terms of a literal hell, but in terms of the abyss of the no-longer remembered. The sixth stanza describes this descent into oblivion:

> 'But what has been will be--
> First memory, then oblivion's swallowing sea;
> Like men foregone, shall we merge into those
> Whose story no one knows. (CP 144)

Perhaps the most poignant encounter between a protagonist and the active personality of a physical environment is the arrival of Tess at the scene of her final apotheosis and acceptance of her destiny. On a moonless night, Angel and Tess grope through the stone-cold maze that comprises the gigantic sidereal clock known as Stonehenge:

> Feeling sideways they encountered another tower-like pillar, square and uncompromising as the first; beyond it another and another. The place was all doors and pillars, some connected above by continuous architraves. (484)

Unlike Henry Knight suspended above the Cliff without a Name, Tess surrenders to extinction, welcoming the oblivion which her identification with the primordial world represents. She is perhaps the only character in Hardy's world whose dream of penetrating the opaque surfaces separating the archaic

past from the living present finds some mystical realization. Her atavistic identification with the nobility of a primordial past long dissolved into oblivion is suggested in the novel's penultimate scene, when she is arrested for murder:

> 'Let her finish her sleep!' he implored in a whisper of the men as they gathered round.
>
> When they saw where she lay, which they had not done till then, they showed no objection, and stood watching her, as still as the pillars around. He went to the stone and bent over her, holding one poor little hand; her breathing now was quick and small, like that of a lesser creature than a woman. (486-7)

Tess's Sophoclean acceptance unites her with the irrecoverable nobility of her lineage. At the novel's conclusion her identification with her Norman forebears is complete, as is her reversion to the quiet serenity of her primordial ancestry--her identification with a primordial ancestor, "a lesser creature than a woman," takes her out of her time and situation. Seduced by the hum of Stonehenge, Tess the time-traveler is able momentarily to transcend the meanness of place and circumstance.

Jude Fawley dreams of a perfect environment, free from the grubbiness of cornfields and quarrelsome relatives:

> He ascended the ladder to have one more look at the point the men had designated, and perched himself on the highest rung, overlying the tiles. . . .

> It was Christminster, unquestionably; either directly seen, or miraged in the peculiar atmosphere.
>
> The spectator gazed on and on till the windows and vanes lost their shine, going out almost suddenly like extinguished candles. The vague city became veiled in mist. Turning to the west, he saw that the sun had disappeared. The foreground of the scene had grown funereally dark, and near objects put on the hues and shapes of chimaeras. (22-3)

Jude's mist-enshrouded vision of residence in a paradisiacal Celestial City is perhaps Hardy's ultimate evocation of an environment indifferent to the struggles and aspirations of its inhabitants. This parodistic treatment of the human quest for perfect repose in a divinely-appointed environment, a kind of satirically inverted Pilgrim's Progress,[14] is the antithesis of Paleyan essentialism. Jude's Celestial City is chimerical, "vague" and "veiled in mist." The actual Christminister remains cold and inaccessible, as hostile as the bucolic environment from which Jude longs to escape.

Jude's world is the antithesis of the world of the natural theologian. For William Paley, the physical environment attests to the beneficence of the Creator:

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[14] The influence of Bunyun's allegory on Hardy's life and work has been explored by Michael Millgate, who notes in Thomas Hardy, A Biography : " . . . at the age of ten [Hardy] was frightened by a picture of Apollyon in a copy of The Pilgrim's Progress."

> . . . how close is the suitableness of the earth and sea to their several inhabitants; and of these inhabitants to the places of their appointed residence?
>
> Take the earth as it is; and consider the correspondency of the powers of its inhabitants with the properties and conditions of the soil which they tread. Take the inhabitants as they are; and consider the substances which the earth yields for their use. They can scratch its surface, and its surface supplies all which they want. This is the length of their faculties; and such is the constitution of the globe, and their own, that this is sufficient for all their occasions. (Natural Theology 209)

Contradictive to Paley's sanguine assurances, Jude Fawley and Tess Derbyfield scratch the surface of the earth, and its surface supplies all which they do not want. Jude finds "suitableness" in neither the bucolic, "natural" environment of Marygreen nor in the walled-in, socially stratified structures of Christminster. For the typologically-indoctrinated natural theologian, compatibility with the environment, like sexual compatibility, is manifestly available to those who perceive the conditions of life within the context of divine specification. In the world of Hardy's narrative realism, Paleyan "suitableness" is never achieved, and is, in fact, unachievable.

CHAPTER FIVE

ENTANGLEMENT OF HIGH AND LOW: CONFLICTS OF DOCTRINE AND CULTURE

There is no biographical or archival evidence that either Darwin or Hardy viewed themselves as cultural or social reformers. For a variety of reasons, Darwin settled into the life of a reclusive aristocrat at the end of his five-year stint aboard H.M.S. Beagle, while Hardy eternally aspired to the ranks of aristocracy, always pretending a more distinguished lineage than he had and persistently pursuing the social whirl of London's elite during "the season," an effort that yielded both commercial and social success.

Hardy remained nominally an Anglican all of his life, a posture laden with social as well as theological implications. In his introductory "Apology" appended to "Late Lyrics and Earlier" published in 1922, the octogenarian Hardy offers a definition of poetry and religion that suggests a poeticized evocation of Darwin's recurrent theme of plasticity--a plasticity applicable to all organized structures, whether biological, theological, or sociological:

> In any event poetry, pure literature in general, religion--I include religion, in its essential and undogmatic sense, because poetry and religion often touch each other, or rather modulate into each other; are, indeed, often but different names for the same thing--these, I say, the visible signs of mental and

> emotional life, must like all other things keep moving, becoming; even though at present, when belief in witches of Endor is displacing the Darwinian theory and 'the truth that shall make you free', men's minds appear, as above noted, to be moving backwards rather than on. . . .
>
> It may indeed be a forlorn hope, a mere dream, that of an alliance between religion, which must be retained unless the world is to perish, and complete rationality, which must come, unless also the world is to perish, by means of the interfusing effect of poetry . . . (CP 561-2)

Hardy's declaration that poetry and religion "modulate into each other" suggests that the Darwinian concept of varieties and species (and, as I have attempted to demonstrate in Chapter Three, even constructs of sexuality) which overlap one another is applicable to aesthetic and philosophical "varieties and species" which are fundamentally contiguous. In his Descent, Darwin once again applies his pervasive principle of contiguity and plasticity to the various races of humankind:

> But the most weighty of all the arguments against treating the races of man as distinct species, is that they graduate into each other, independently in many cases, as far as we can judge, of their having intercrossed. (536)

In opposition to the traditional, essentialist mindset, both Darwin and

Hardy represent the classification process as an illusory enterprise. Races, social classes and religious denominations are artificially imposed constructs, having no "essential" validity outside of the arbitrarily-established classificatory systems which have created them. This viewpoint departs radically from the essentialist view of social and cultural distinctions, which, like the view toward speciational fixity, tends traditionally to consider privilege and position matters natural and inherent. In Darwin and the Novelists, George Levine contrasts Darwinian principles with the essentialist social equilibrium that plays such a significant role in the novels of Jane Austen:

> Darwin grew up in Austen's world, but however much he needed and used what he learned from natural theology, his theory became a deliberate inversion of it. (84)

Darwin's cabin-mate and companion aboard H.M.S. Beagle, Captain FitzRoy, argued vehemently against Darwin's anti-slavery sentiments. For FitzRoy, the existence of social hierarchies and institutions were as immutable as the hierarchies and boundaries of speciational classification. For many nineteenth-century natural theologians, the analogistic parallels between social classes and taxonomic classes of plants and animals were sacrosanct. All orders, social as well as speciational, were manifestly created by divine fiat. In Darwin on Man, A Psychological Study of Scientific Creativity, Howard E. Gruber describes Captain FitzRoy's account of the Beagle's voyage and the

religiously zealous young captain's adherence to biblical literalism:

> In his book FitzRoy touched on many of the issues that Darwin thought about, used some of the same evidence, and proposed some of the same ideas. But he wove it all together in an entirely different argument. He wrote two concluding chapters, one "on the origin and migration of the human race," and the other on the "Deluge." He defended an absolutely literal interpretation of the Bible: creation in six twenty-four-hour days, one and only one Creation, the Flood and the Ark, and the subsequent dispersal of the survivors to repopulate the earth after the waters had subsided. . . .
>
> To account for the evidence of extinction, he believed that not all kinds had gotten into the Ark. (131)

Darwin's diatribes against slavery in his Voyage are one major feature distinguishing his account of the Beagle's journey from the journals kept by Captain FitzRoy. The issue of slavery was, in fact, a constant source of contention between the two young men:

> On slavery Charles never wavered. During the Beagle voyage he had an intense quarrel with Captain FitzRoy, who believed that some slaves they had seen in Brazil were as happy as they professed to be when asked by their master. . . .
>
> Darwin often described the sufferings of slaves as he had

> witnessed them in South America. Some of his feeling was expressed in the 1839 edition of his Journal of the Beagle voyage, although this was a government document and still under FitzRoy's supervision. (Gruber 67)

Darwin's condemnation of slavery as practiced in South America ranks his Voyage within the tradition of anti-slave literature of the period. A poignant example of Darwin's condemnation of the institution and early indications of Darwinian relativism are clearly discernable in his April 8th, 1832, entry, which gives an account of a Brazilian slave woman's heroism:

> . . . We arrived by midday at Ithacaia; this small village is situated on a plain, and round the central house are the huts of the negroes. . . . As it was growing dark we passed under one of the massive, bare and steep hills of granite which are so common in this country. This spot is notorious from having been, for a long time, the residence of some runaway slaves, who, by cultivating a little ground near the top, contrived to eke out a subsistence. At length they were discovered, and a party of soldiers being sent, the whole were seized with the exception of one old woman, who, sooner than again be led into slavery, dashed herself to pieces from the summit of the mountain. In a Roman matron this would have been called the noble love of freedom: in a poor negress it is mere brutal obstinacy. (16)

Darwin views the classificatory distinctions which prize European traditions of "high" culture and nobility while denigrating the "low" cultural values of slaves and savages as purely artificial and arbitrary. For many adherents of natural theology, such as Captain FitzRoy, distinctions of high and low were substantive, if not divinely appointed. The contrast in attitudes between Darwin and FitzRoy are worthy of further study. The mindset which embraced the tenets of natural theology was, at its core, sympathetic with the notion of a natural social order.

Interesting parallels to FitzRoy's sanguine acceptance of social stratification are discernable in the writings of Hugh Miller. In his scientific studies designed for spiritual as well as intellectual nurture, intended for consumption by a growing working class readership, Hugh Miller encourages his readers to improve their minds without dreaming of improving their social stations. In The Old Red Sandstone (a book which enjoyed immense popularity from its original publication in 1851 through the remainder of the century), Miller devotes an opening paragraph to the merits of accepting one's social station in life. The clear implication is that social fixity, like preordained, immutable geological and biological stasis, is divinely ordained. To tamper with the "natural" order is to invite chaos, perhaps even to blaspheme:

> My advice to young working-men, desirous of bettering their circumstances, and adding to the amount of their

> enjoyment, is a very simple one. Do not seek happiness in what is misnamed pleasure; seek it rather in what is termed study. . . . You will gain nothing by attending Chartist meetings. . . . upper and lower classes there must be, so long as the world lasts; and there is only one way in which your jealousy of them can be well directed. Do not let them get ahead of you in intelligence. It would be alike unwise and unjust to attempt casting them down to your own level, and no class would suffer more in the attempt than yourselves; for you would only be clearing the way, at an immense expense of blood, and under a tremendous pressure of misery, for another and perhaps worse aristocracy, with some second Cromwell or Napoleon at their head. (1-2)

This remarkable level of social condescension in a book enthusiastically acclaimed by working-class readers attests to a prevalent climate of religious and social conservatism difficult to imagine in our own time. The essentialist conception of a fixed hierarchy of biological life, ordained and implemented by the hand of the Creator, found its analogistic parallel in the class hierarchies of a rigidly stratified society. The natural theologian views the social world much as he views the palpable world of nature. What one witnesses at present is what has been created, modeled after a divinely-ordained type. For Miller, the fact that upper and lower classes exist, and

seem always to have existed, means that their existence is inevitable. Minor shifts in an individual's social status may occasionally occur, but demarcations separating class from class are fixed and divinely ordered.

In a later discussion of the fossils discovered in England's Old Red Sandstone strata, Hugh Miller expresses the typological mindset that informs all of his work. According to Miller's natural theology, the now-extinct fish of the Silurian Period, which ended approximately 400 million years ago (a geological epoch abundant with fish but prior to the appearance in the geological record of amphibians, reptiles or even insects) conform in every way to the foreordained "type" conceived in the divine mind of the Creator. A doctrine of typological fixity applies equally to natural and social phenomena in the God-ordained structures envisaged in Miller's world view. Miller explains this as he describes the relationship between the individual fish of today and its primordial ancestor, an argument opposed to the quasi-blasphemous development hypothesis:

> The individual fish, just as it begins to exist, presents the identical appearances which were exhibited by the order when the order began to exist. Is there nothing wonderful in analogies such as these--analogies that point through the embryos of the present time to the womb of Nature, big with its multitudinous forms of being? Are they charged with no such nice evidence as a Butler would delight to contemplate,

> regarding that unique style of Deity, if I may so express myself, which runs through all his works, whether we consider him as God of Nature, or Author of Revelation? In this style of type and symbol did He reveal himself of old to his chosen people; in this style of allegory and parable did He again address himself to them, when he sojourned among them on earth. (231)

At first glance, there may seem to be little relation between Hugh Miller's disquisition on fish fossils compared with the embryology of living species of fish and his advice to young working-class readers to accept the social demarcations imposed by the British class system. Closer scrutiny reveals that Miller is evoking a world in which all "orders" are divinely fixed. The discussion of the immutability of social class distinctions--"upper and lower classes there will always be" (2)--and of the fish's "identical appearances which were exhibited by the order when the order began to exist" (231) suggests that these foreordained "types"--social classes and speciational types--have a time-transcendent existence independent of their individual representations. Each species, like each social class, is patterned after an "order"--an order as eternal and immutable as the Creator and Author of all order, concord and harmonious existence.

Characteristically, Hardy discredits the canons of social class privilege at every turn. In Hardy, Darwinian relativism and the recurrent theme of Darwinian plasticity, "an almost infinite amount of fluctuating variability, by

which the whole organization is rendered to some degree plastic" (Descent 417), is applied to social classes and social organizations, emphasizing the organic plasticity of institutions once considered fixed and immutable, if not divinely ordained. In a society in which social status and ecclesiastical affiliation are closely linked, adherents of divisive doctrines which separate Church from Chapel are reduced, in Hardy, to another "madding crowd"--this time a crowd of competing ecclesiastical populations.

Early in Desperate Remedies, Hardy introduces the theme of social relativism. When Cytherea Aldclyffe visits her solicitor at Lincoln's Inn Fields in London, the formidable mistress of Knapwater House is reduced to a provincial curiosity in the eyes of the urbane lawyer, Mr. Nyttleton:

> Social definitions are all made relatively: an absolute datum is only imagined. The small gentry about Knapwater seemed unpractised to Miss Aldclyffe, Miss Aldclyffe herself seemed unpractised to Mr. Nyttleton's experienced old eyes. (119)

Undercutting social pretensions is a recurrent theme in Under the Greenwood Tree. Throughout this work Hardy satirizes the absurd rigidity that often attends classificatory designations, whose apparent immutability is an illusion shared by those who accept such classifications. Hardy's rustic commentators tend to engage in casual conversation laced with unintended irony--irony that is generally aimed at the absurdity of competing social

customs and priorities dimly understood by the commentators themselves. Parson Maybold's introduction of organ music to replace the Mellstock Choir is ostensibly a step toward greater sophistication in the conduct of the church service, a kind of social and ecclesiastical upgrading meant to raise the level of respectability associated with church attendance in Mellstock parish. When the "singing boys" arrive at the tranter's house on Christmas Eve, they introduce the subject of the relative merits of various instruments used in divine service. Mail introduces the subject of the choir's accursed enemy--the dreaded church organ that threatens their dissolution as a viable social and ecclesiastical institution:

> . . . I've been thinking we must be almost the last left in the county of the old string players? Barrel-organs, and the things next door to 'em that you blow wi' your foot, have come in terribly of late years' (58).

Another choir member takes up the theme:

> 'Time was--long and merry ago now! -- when not one of the varmits was to be heard of; but it served some of the quires right. They should have stuck to strings as we did, and kept out clarinets, and done away with serpents. If you'd thrive in musical religion, stick to strings, says I.'
>
> 'Strings be safe soul-lifters, as far as that do go,' said Mr. Spinks. (58)

The discussion of the relative merits of clarinets, violins and organs as appropriate accompaniments to religious worship is wonderfully ridiculous. The fervour with which this topic is discussed by the "singing boys" parodies the religious controversies that divide social and intellectual classes. The ire with which a choir member refers to a barrel organ, or harmonium, as a "varmit". The "serpent," a kind of wind instrument, is another kind of varmit. Competing modes of worship are, once again, treated as if they were competing biological populations.

In Far from the Madding Crowd, the rustic commentator Cainy Ball explains his compromise solution to the ecclesiastical factionalism of the day. He hedges his spiritual bets by attending two kinds of services:

> 'And there's two religions going on in the nation now--High Church and High Chapel. And, thinks I, I'll play fair; so I went to High Church in the morning, and High Chapel in the afternoon.' (201)

Like the members of the Mellstock Choir, Cainy Ball focuses on the exterior trappings of religiosity, with no sense at all of a transcendent spirituality that would render exterior trappings meaningless. Hardy's obsession with the artifacts and empty receptacles of faith, such as those sold by Sue Bridehead in Jude, reflects a world from which vital, active faith has virtually vanished. Quarreling over empty relics has become the enterprise of established religion and established social orders. Social status and the

exterior surfaces of once-vital faiths and creeds are practically all that remain. The relics are desiccated and fossilized, absurd parodies of their former vitality.

Predestinarian theology gets lampooned by the rustics in Return of the Native. Granfer Cantle and Humphrey are discussing the merits of church attendance versus the merits of sleeping in on Sundays:

> 'I ha'nt been these three years,' said Humphrey; 'for I'm so dead sleepy of a Sunday; and 'tis so terrible far to get there; and when you do get there 'tis such a mortal poor chance that you'll be chose for up above, when so many bain't, that I bide at home and don't go at all.' (71)

Humphrey's commentary suggests that he hasn't been elected to high social status by the accident of birth, and, therefore, it is unlikely that he has been elected to salvation either. Divine election, like natural selection, is so much a matter of happenstance that any individual attempt to influence the process is doomed to futility.

Social orders and ecclesiastical hierarchies are usually presented parodistically in Hardy. Clergy are seldom depicted in a way that would allow us to take them, or their concerns, seriously. In A Pair of Blue Eyes, the issue of church restoration, a metaphor for restoration of antique social hierarchies, is treated with humor:

> The vicar explained things as he went on: 'The fact is,

> Mr. Smith, I didn't want this bother of church restoration at all, but it was necessary to do something in self-defence, on account of those d____ dissenters: I use the word in the scriptural meaning, of course, not as an expletive.' (27)

The fact that Elfride Swancourt writes her father's sermons for him, and the clergyman's inordinate concern with matters of social class make it difficult to take him seriously as a spiritual leader.

Similarly, in Two on A Tower, we are presented with the Right Reverend Cuthbert Helmsdale, D.D., within a context that makes him slightly ridiculous:

> When the Bishop had arrived, and gone into the chancel, and blown his nose, the congregation were sufficiently impressed by his presence to leave off looking at one another. (157)

The satirization of clerical pomposity and the absurdities of doctrinal controversy reaches its apex in Tess. The local vicar's refusal to allow the burial of Sorrow the Undesired on sacred ground provides a harsh commentary on the brutality of a social and ecclesiastical hierarchy that has lost all connection with the principles of Christian compassion and mercy. Sorrow's position in the social hierarchy is irrelevant to Tess, who embodies natural instincts more sacred than the trappings of effete religiosity:

> The baby's offence against society in coming into the

> world was forgotten by the girl-mother; her soul's desire was to continue that offence by preserving the life of the child. However, it soon grew clear that the hour of emancipation for that little prisoner of the flesh was to arrive earlier than her worst misgivings had conjectured. And when she had discovered this she was plunged into a misery which transcended that of the child's simple loss. Her baby had not been baptized. (143)

Forced to baptize her own child, since her father refuses to allow a member of the clergy in the house to witness her disgrace, Tess achieves a level of nobility and grace that inspires awe in her younger siblings watching the impromptu ceremony:

> . . . her high enthusiasm having a transfiguring effect upon the face which had been her undoing, showing it as a thing of immaculate beauty, with a touch of dignity which was almost regal. (144-5)

For a transcendent moment, Tess becomes the Queen of Heaven. She is beatified by the very squalid circumstances that have brought about this sacrament, born of necessity:

> . . . The ecstasy of faith almost apotheosized her; it set upon her face a glowing irradiation, and brought a red spot into the middle of each cheek; while the miniature candle-flame inverted

in her eye-pupils shone like a diamond. (145)

After Sorrow's death, Tess begs the vicar to allow her illegitimate child to be buried on sacred ground. The response represents one of Hardy's most brutally sardonic portrayals of clerical cynicism:

> Having the natural feelings of a tradesman at finding that a job he should have been called in for had been unskillfully botched by his customers among themselves, he was disposed to say no. (147)

Most of the clergy in Hardy's work are presented as tradesmen and lackeys, the most notable exception being Mr. Woodwell in A Laodicean. When George Somerset engages Mr. Woodwell in sophistic argument for the sake of his own amusement, Paula Power scolds him, defending the devout Baptist's peity and commitment to charitable works:

> "Yes. He is single-mindedness itself. He gives away nearly all he has to the poor. He works among the sick, carrying them necessaries with his own hands. He teaches the ignorant men and lads of the village when he ought to be resting at home, till he is absolutely prostrate from exhaustion, and then he sits up at night writing encouraging letters to those poor people who formerly belonged to his congregation in the village, and have now gone away. He always offends ladies, because he can't help speaking the truth as he believes it; but he hasn't

offended me!" (63)

The iron-willed commitment of Mr. Woodwell is anachronistic. A more typical example of religiosity in Hardy is the character of Mercy Chant in Tess, whose name suggests piety devoid of human feeling:

> . . . On his way back [Angel Clare] encountered Miss Mercy Chant by the church, from whose walls she seemed to be a sort of emanation. She was carrying an armful of Bibles for her class, and such was her view of life that events which produced heartache in others wrought beatific smiles upon her--an enviable result, although, in the opinion of Angel, it was obtained by a curiously unnatural sacrifice of humanity to mysticism. (339)

In effect, Hardy applies Darwin's challenge to the essentialist doctrine of "kinds" and "species" to all classificatory systems, including religious and social-class hierarchies, denominations and schisms. In the universe of Hardy's Wessex, the "morphology" of ecclesiastical structures, belief systems and class determiners is as vulnerable to development, supplantation and extinction as any other naturally-occurring phenomena. The application of Darwinian relativism to religious and social factions relegates religious schisms and social classes to the same status as biological species and sub-species. All are derivative, their archaic ancestry being lost within the imponderable reaches of an almost unimaginable antiquity.

In Chapter Fourteen of the Origin, entitled "Mutual Affinities of Organic Beings: Morphology: Embryology: Rudimentary Organs," Darwin compares the pedigrees of existing life forms with the pedigrees of modern languages, a comparison also found in Lyell's Antiquity of Man, which I have cited above in my Introductory Chapter. The archaic languages are lost, but their characteristics may be deeply embedded in the extant representations still in use:

> It may be worth while to illustrate this view of classification, by taking the case of languages. If we possessed a perfect pedigree of mankind, a genealogical arrangement of the races of man would afford the best classification of the various languages now spoken throughout the world; and if all extinct languages, and all intermediate and slowly changing dialects, were to be included, such an arrangement would be the only possible one. Yet it might be that some ancient languages had altered very little and had given rise to few new languages, whilst others had altered much owing to the spreading, isolation, and state of civilisation of the several co-descended races, and had thus given rise to many new dialects and languages. (324)

Clinging to a steady rock of orthodoxy becomes increasingly untenable in an environment whose composition is fundamentally plastic; in fact discovering the plasticity of rock formations and all other components of the

earth's surface might be viewed as the informing metaphor for the plasticity of all organic existence and for the social and cultural institutions that regulate human life. This model reverses the Platonic cave allegory; Darwinian "descent" suggests that our only access to the primordial world comes from our imaginative reconstruction of archaic forms. Currently extant varieties and species, whether of languages, institutions or belief systems, offer our only access to the primordial. In the world of Hardyan/Darwinian narrative realism, the present becomes the only meaningful reality. The antique template, subject to unending reconfiguration and reshaping processes, fades into a shadowy ghostliness, dimly perceived and only comprehensible in the language and definitions of a surviving population of descendants.

CHAPTER SIX

BATTLE FATIGUE: HARDY'S EVOCATION OF A LAODICEAN AGE--THE LEGACY OF DARWINIAN RELATIVISM

Hardy's evocation of the Laodicean character is derived from the biblical Book of Revelation. In his writings to the seven churches of Asia, John the Divine delivers his severest rebuke to the church of Laodicea, whose noncommittal lukewarmness is less tolerable to God than open contempt:

> I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
>
> So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. (Rev. 3.15-6)

The unifying theme of Laodicean lukewarmness is detectable throughout much of Hardy. Gabriel Oak, whose name suggests both steadfastness and apocalypse, is introduced as a Laodicean in the opening chapter of Far from the Madding Crowd. In practical matters Gabriel is steady and secure. Spiritually and philosophically, he inhabits a kind of no-man's-land:

> His Christian name was Gabriel, and on working days he was a young man of sound judgment, easy motions, proper dress, and general good character. On Sundays he was a man

> of misty views, rather, given to postponing, and hampered by himself to occupy morally that vast middle space of Laodicean neutrality which lay between the Communion people of the parish and the drunken section . . . (1)

It is Oak's compromising neutrality, being "neither cold nor hot," that allows him to persevere. Characters exhibiting extremes of hot and cold turns of emotion destroy themselves in the face of adverse circumstances that arise within the economy of the novel. Laodicean neutrality survives.

In Return of the Native, Clym Yeobright's physiognomy is described in terms that suggest a prototypical model of Laodicean lukewarmness; he is the man of the future, world-weary and devoid of the fiery purposiveness that inspirited his ancestors:

> In Clym Yeobright's face could be dimly seen the typical countenance of the future. . . . The view of life as a thing to be put up with, replacing that zest for existence which was so intense in early civilizations, must ultimately enter so thoroughly into the constitution of the advanced races that its facial expression will become accepted as a new artistic departure. (225)

The aesthetic of boredom, which achieves a fuller realization in the works of Wilde and Shaw, is prefigured in Hardy's Clym Yeobright. The intense "zest for existence" which Hardy's narrator attributes to a more

vigorous period in the history of the human race, suggests a time when typological molds and states of being were more firmly cast, when the physiological casts of unadulterated sexual identity, nobility and purposiveness had not been worn down by the incursions of philosophical relativism, a "madding" cacophony of creeds and modes of being. Hardy's narrator describes the eroding influence of this transition:

> That old-fashioned revelling in the general situation grows less and less possible as we uncover the defects of natural laws, and see the quandary that man is in by their operation. (225)

In terms of Hardy's registering his age's philosophical transition from typological to population thinking, Clym embodies the repudiation of any possibility of greatness or glory. The typological frame of mind evokes images of sharply hewn lines and firmly sculpted demarcations, whether natural, architectural, theological or philosophical. The patterns and styles of earlier times were reflective of the immutable principles which once prevailed unquestioned. There is the implication in Hardy that concepts of immutability were, likewise, stamped upon the features of the human form. In contrast, the lines of Clym's face are not drawn after the antique model inspired by imagined models of perfection. His experience of the diamond trade in Paris has educated him to the horrors of modern relativism. There is a dis-spiriting sameness in everything. For the urbanized and educated individual, the antique typological foundations of greatness and purposiveness have been

undermined. The return of the native to his native environment will only complete the cycle of his disillusionment. Clym Yeobright attempts to explain the emptiness of his pursuits in the world of business to the rustics of Egdon Heath:

> 'Well, as my views changed my course became very depressing. I found that I was trying to be like people who had hardly anything in common with myself. I was endeavouring to put off one sort of life for another sort of life, which was not better than the life I had known before. It was simply different.'
>
> 'True; a sight different,' said Fairway.
>
> 'Yes, Paris must be a taking place,' said Humphrey. 'Grand shop-winders, trumpets, and drums; and here be we out of doors in all winds and weathers--'
>
> 'But you mistake me,' pleaded Clym. 'All this was very depressing. But not so depressing as something I next perceived--that my business was the idlest, vainest, most effeminate business that ever a man could be put to. (227)

The blurring of boundaries between "one sort of life" and "another sort of life" has robbed Clym of the resolve and sense of purpose that inspired his original dream of fulfillment beyond the stultifying horizontality of Egdon Heath. Clym has discovered the boredom-producing, horrifying sameness of

everything--the malaise of modern relativism. The diamond industry is, to him "the idlest, vainest, most effeminate" enterprise imaginable. It has, in fact, emasculated him. The harbinger of a new race of individuals bearing the stamp of lackluster modernity, he is desperate to return to the imagined nobility of a world in which lines of purpose and commitment are clearly drawn--the antique world of immutable typologies and classifications of meaning and purpose:

> . . . That decided me: I would give it up and try to follow some rational occupation among the people I knew best, and to whom I could be of most use. (229)

This attempt at a return to some imagined world of primordial innocence and nobility of purpose, suggestive of Hardy's nostalgic yearning for a spiritually invigorated past, whether real or imagined, is doomed to failure. The cacophonous voices of a "madding crowd" of competing populations, once perceived, cannot be silenced. Darwinian plasticity and indeterminacy proliferates metaphorically into areas other than biology. The philosophical model of geological and biological plasticity annihilates notions of immutability. A return to the doctrines of essentialism is impossible, once the character of the coveted "essence" is exposed as an illusory fraud.

At the end of RN, Clym Yeobright, true to his Laodicean character, is discovered expounding a Laodicean doctrine:

> Yeobright had, in fact, found his vocation in the career of an

> itinerant open-air preacher and lecturer on morally unimpeachable subjects; and from this day he laboured incessantly in that office . . . He left alone creeds and systems of philosophy, finding enough and more than enough to occupy his tongue in the opinions and actions common to all good men. (474)

Hardy's characterization of the Laodicean frame of mind is probably most explicitly delineated, if not most fully realized, in the novel bearing the title A Laodicean. Although Paula Power is generally considered to be the Laodicean of the title, owing to her obviously symbolic reluctance to submit to baptism by immersion, George Somerset's pervasive ambivalence and lack of direction throughout qualifies him as Paula's equal in Laodicean neutrality. In the opening passages of the novel, Hardy's narrator suggests that modern indifference to architectural styles reflects a broader malaise reflected in a general modern indecisiveness. It is as if the architectural landscape of England is reflective of a world in which the spirit is gone, but the spiritual patina remains.

In the opening paragraph of A Laodicean, Hardy's narrator introduces the subject of ecclesiastical architecture as a metaphor for spiritual and philosophical uncertainty. George Somerset, a young and reasonably gifted young architect, is in the process of sketching the architectural features of the doorway and facade of a village church:

> The sun blazed down and down, till it was within half an hour of its setting; but the sketcher still lingered at his occupation of measuring and copying the chevroned doorway--a bold and quaint example of a transitional style of architecture, which formed the tower entrance to an English village church. The graveyard being quite open on its western side, the tweed-clad figure of the young man, and the tall mass of antique masonry which rose above him to a battlemented parapet, were fired to a great brightness by the uninterrupted solar rays, that crossed the neighbouring mead like a warp of gold threads, in whose mazes groups of equally lustrous gnats danced and wailed incessantly. (7)

The opening passage suggests that George Somerset is not so much charmed as bedeviled by the cacophony of architectural styles discoverable in the country churches of Wessex. The pastiche of English Gothic, overlayed with Renaissance, Jacobean and Queen-Anne styles represent to the young architect an aesthetically repellant "madding crowd" of cross-purposive styles and competing visionary trajectories. The "mazes" created by the late afternoon sunlight suggest the maze of architectural styles that continually assault the young man's field of vision and his consciousness. Somerset's state of mind is reflected in the phrase: "groups of equally lustrous gnats danced and wailed incessantly" (7). The "warp of gold threads" (7) and the dancing

and wailing gnats, reminiscent of the "chattering knot of sparrows" on the eves in FFMC, relates this passage to the warp and woof motif that recurs in much of Hardy. The weaving imagery usually connotes cross-purposive trajectories of human wills and desires, as well as competing philosophies and ambitions. Instead of firm and towering architectural images connotative of order and stability, the setting sun plays upon the competing, intersecting lines of ancient masonry, accompanied by nature's Greek chorus evoking images of chaotic and meaningless dancing and wailing. In the mind of George Somerset, the architectural lines dance and wail in meaningless profusion and confusion, mutually cancelling one another and producing in the modern architect's soul a deadening Laodicean neutrality. After extensive study of all prevalent architectural styles, he bears witness to the dissolution of their once-vital relevancy: ". . . he concluded that all styles were extinct, and with them all architecture as a living art" (9). The extinction of "styles" suggests the abandonment of the antique concept of Platonic forms, the dissolution of all typological constructs. The doctrine of immutable "kinds" proclaimed in Genesis and appropriated by the natural theologians to support the doctrine of the immutability of species finds an analogistic parallel in the aesthetic doctrines of architectural styles and periods. Like speciational models, the models of architectural style are defunct. The modern Laodicean, by embracing all of them, offers allegiance to none. Michael Millgate relates this negation of all styles to what he considers Hardy's own irresolution and lack

of commitment, both philosophical, political and social:

> . . . But Hardy seems also to have been touched by the heroine's Laodiceanism. Paula's toying with ideas may reflect, like Somerset's aesthetic flirtations, the prevalent eclecticism of the day, but it also suggests a profound shrinking from acts of choice and of decision, a willingness to rest in the placidity of irresolution . . . (Career 181)

While this type of biographical speculation is interesting, and not without relevance in terms of Hardy's well-known reticence and seeming lack of passion in his private and public life, it is important to look beyond the writer's personal predilections toward a deeper level of interpretation of the Laodicean frame of mind. In his portraiture of the Laodicean, Hardy epitomizes his age's abandonment of tattered idealogies and typologies, capturing the mood of neutrality that he predicts will shape and define future generations. The dissolution of passion is the underlying theme of one of his early poems, "Neutral Tones," written in 1867:

> We stood by a pond that winter day,
> And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
> And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;
> They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.
> Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
> Over tedious riddles of years ago;

And some words played between us to and fro
On which lost the more by our love.
The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing . . .
Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.
(CP 12)

While ostensibly a poem describing the dissolution of amorous passion, this may also be read as an early evocation of the Laodicean character. The gray leaves on the "starving sod" suggest that the observers inhabit a world that can no longer nurture them, spiritually or erotically. The leaves have fallen, and so have the couple standing by the pond. Like the sun, they are "chidden of God," denied the paradisiacal bliss of former times. The "tedious riddles of years ago" in line six suggests Laodicean boredom with doctrines and creeds that have lost their meaning. The "keen lessons that love deceives" in the last stanza suggests infidelity and duplicity on the part of either or both of the former lovers, but it also suggests the possibility of philosophical and aesthetic disappointments of the kind experienced by George Somerset and

Jude Fawley. The discarded and desiccated "leaves" surrounding the pond are like the lifeless and rejected leaves of an architect's sketchpad or a poet's notebook, they frame a vacant mirrored surface reflective of Laodicean ambivalence and deadening ennui.

Laodicean ennui characterizes Hardy's young architect in AL, whose sketches of defunct and desecrated architectural styles cling to his consciousness in the manner of sticky "grayish leaves." Like Clym Yeobright, George Somerset is the harbinger of a future "type," whose physical features suggest a uniquely modern sensibility, both benumbed by the past and, at the same time, historically disconnected:

> A youthfulness about the mobile features, a mature forehead--though not exactly what the world has been familiar with in past ages--is now growing common; and with the advance of juvenile introspection it probably must grow commoner still. Briefly, he had more of the beauty--if beauty it ought to be called--of the future human type than of the past; but not so much as to make him other than a nice young man. (AL 8)

The Laodicean character of Paula Power is made explicit by her halting on the brink of the baptismal pool, by her indecision in choosing a lover, and by the suggestions of sexual ambiguity implied by her name, her character and her relationship with Charlotte De Stancy. Visiting a cathedral in Amiens in the company of Captain De Stancy, Paula responds in horror to the suggestion

that she is a Puritan at heart.

Paula's "half-and-half" (355) status, unable to release herself from the constraints of propriety, yet ambivalent in her affections, sexual and otherwise, affects her affiliations of class and religion. She is even a Laodicean in her aesthetic commitments. Her final choice to marry George Somerset at the novel's end suggests that she will live the rest of her life in a state of Laodicean neutrality. She is compelled to choose only one of her suitors, but, in her mind she will always remain where we first discover her at the novel's beginning. For the Laodicean the prospect of total immersion threatens the comfort and safety of placid neutrality; Paula will always remain on the brink. In spite of her acceptance of George Somerset, she tells him at the novel's conclusion: "I wish my castle wasn't burnt; and I wish you were a De Stancy!"

The castle itself is a Laodicean. Like George Somerset and Paula Power it languishes in a half-and-half state:

> The road next wound round a clump of underwood beside which lay heaps of faggots for burning, and then there appeared against the sky the walls and towers of a castle, half ruin, half residence, standing on an eminence hard by. (22)

Living with the effete and eviscerated ruins of the past is a recurrent theme pervasive in Hardy's poetry. Hardy's own relation to the past suggests simultaneous attraction and repulsion, a kind of Laodicean lukewarmness that

both reveres and repudiates. This ambivalence is reflected in "Old Furniture," a poem in which the patina of age suggests the patina of ancient creeds and commitments, of world views deeply ingrained whose polished surfaces are at once attractive and impenetrable to the modern observer:

I know not how it may be with others
  Who sit amid relics of householdry
That date from the days of their mothers' mothers,
  But well I know how it is with me
    Continually.

I see the hands of the generations
  That owned each shiny familiar thing
In play on its knobs and indentations,
  And with its ancient fashioning
  Still dallying:

Hands behind hands, growing paler and paler,
  As in a mirror a candle-flame
Shows images of itself each frailer
  As it recedes, though the eye may frame
    Its shape the same. . . . (CP 485)

The old furniture has been handed down from generations past (the play

on the word "hands" suggestive of Hardy's mother Jemima Hand and her pretensions to aristocracy). Like the theological and philosophical furniture inherited from earlier generations, there is a beauty and charm to be admired in the patina that has been added to the original grain, the result of endless polishing by "hands upon hands, growing paler and paler."

A detached fascination with surfaces is a preoccupation of the Laodicean frame of mind in Hardy, particularly as delineated in the novel A Laodicean, although this attitude is detectable in other works as well. The opacity of surfaces that separate the present from the past is suggested in Hardy's description of the Cliff without a Name, for example, as well as in his description of Tess's encounter with the hard stone surfaces representative of her bygone ancestry passed into an oblivion beyond mortal reach. Jude's experiencing the stone-cold surfaces of Christminster's impenetrable walls is another example of the opacity of a historical perspective that is comfortless, the polished surfaces of an inaccessible past provide cold reflections of our present isolation. For the modern Laodicean, surface and substance merge, or become so hopelessly entangled as to be indistinguishable.

Entanglement of surface and substance became a recurrent theme among the late Victorians. One telling example is Oscar Wilde's Picture of Dorian Gray (pub. 1891)--a tale of entangled sexual and class identities, reflected in multiple confusions of surface and substance. Hardy's Well-Beloved (ser. Oct. - Dec., 1892; pub. Mar. 1897), a tale whose protagonist,

Jocelyn Pierston, bears some striking resemblances to Wilde's Dorian Gray and his alter-egos Basil Hallward and Henry Wotton, is similarly fraught with bizarre interplays of surface and substance.

Pre-Darwinian scientific writing, like pre-Darwinian non-scientific literature, lent importance to the traditional boundaries, accepted notions of clear lines of demarcation separating surface from substance, the material world from the spiritual world. The craggy substantialities of English Gothic architecture were the surface appearances reflective of an underlying spirituality. William Whewell's conception of the universe, for example, suggests that the world accessible to our senses exists for the purpose of heightening our transcendental perception of a more meaningful world of underlying essences. For the natural theologians, the distinction between surface and substance was paramount.

Entanglement is the antithesis of visual and philosophical resolution. The surface/substance dichotomy is by no means unraveled in a final philosophical denouement in Hardy. Though the populationist paradigm aptly describes the narrative stance of the "scientific" Hardy, a full appreciation of his complex vision cannot ignore a haunting fascination with illusion--with the lure of surfaces, and, particularly in his poetry, with a deep sense of loss associated with departed spirits and spirituality. In Hardy, the anti-essentialist and essentialist postures are ultimately entangled within a knot of narrative contradiction left for the individual reader to unravel.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AFTERWARD: MORPHOLOGY AND NARRATOLOGY --THE SCULPTOR RE-SCULPTED

In the preceding chapters, I have frequently alluded to the relentless drive in Darwin and Hardy to shape or reconfigure metaphors and images adequate to their re-ordering of the essentialist world view--their literary and philosophical heritage. The sacrificing of traditional typologies and defunct classificatory distinctions in the service of an uncompromising rationalism is reflected in Hardy's oft-quoted phrase from one of his later poems: "If way to the better there be, it exacts a full look at the worst" (CP, "In Tenebris II" 168). This pursuit of a "full look" suggests the negation of Platonic/Aristotelian notions of dual or parallel universes, one visible and one invisible. Both Darwin and Hardy register an awareness that their evolving perceptions of life and life processes are at odds with many of the antique assumptions embedded in the very literary and scientific generic structures they exploited.

In Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language, Umberto Eco summarizes a discussion of "the metaphoric nexus" and the limitations of language with this epigram: "If it is metaphor that founds language, it is impossible to speak of metaphor unless metaphorically" (88). This is another

way of saying that all language is approximative, a notion recurrently implied throughout Darwin and Hardy. An explanatory paragraph related to the constrictions imposed by language, which does not appear in the original 1859 edition of the Origin but which he added to the sixth edition of 1872, is Darwin's acknowledgement of the limits of metaphorical descriptions:

> Several writers have misapprehended or objected to the term Natural Selection. Some have even imagined that natural selection induces variability, whereas it implies only the preservation of such variations as arise and are beneficial to the being under its conditions of life. . . . In the literal sense of the word, no doubt, natural selection is a false term; but who ever objected to chemists speaking of the elective affinities of the various elements? . . . Every one knows what is meant and is implied by such metaphorical expressions; and they are almost necessary for brevity. (64)

Darwin's frustration with the limitations of language as a vehicle for expressing his comprehension of the world is also suggested by his life-long obsession with revision. He considered his Descent an addendum to his Origin, and always viewed both volumes as fragmentary prefaces to a larger, more compendious production, whose scope and encyclopedic scale we can only try to imagine.

The restless casting about for metaphors and images adequate to their

creative visions in both Darwin and Hardy may be attributable to their sense of the metaphorizing process being, to some degree, the hereditary descendant of essentialist traditions. Eco maintains that any metaphoric representation is by definition distancing and inadequate--a distorted reflection, like a Platonic cave-shadow. By definition, a metaphor imperfectly represents some concept or entity that transcends the metaphor itself. Hence the metaphoric construct "natural selection" comprises Darwin's representation of a process that is merely like or something like the selective process undertaken by breeders of domestic animals (a comparison he introduces in Chapter One of the Origin, in which he draws an analogy between "artificial selection" and "natural selection"). The phrase "natural selection" is successful in that it enlivens the imagination, suggesting images of selective breeding. But the phrase itself, like all metaphors, is irremediably flawed--evocative, but imperfect.

There are four major Darwinian metaphors generally acknowledged and critiqued by scholars: (1) the anthropomorphic metaphor of natural selection as an operating principle resembling principles practiced by breeders of domestic animals; (2) the metaphor of human warfare, anthropomorphically linked to "competing" forces operative in the natural environment; (3) the branching tree of life, evoking images of the organic bond uniting all forms of life; and, finally, (4) the entangled bank of the Origin's concluding chapter, an image that suggests struggle and strife, but which also evokes images of "endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful" (374). Another metaphor which

subtly infiltrated the Darwinian canon, evolving from his earliest journal entries and becoming more explicitly detectable in his mature work is the implied metaphor of sculpture, or of sculpting processes. In particular, Darwin's choice of language in the opening chapter of the Origin suggests that domestic breeders are like sculptors, as if the raw materials of biological life were a kind of artistic medium: "Breeders habitually speak of an animal's organisation as something plastic, which they can model almost as they please" (30). Throughout my discussion of the Darwinian/Hardyan transition from the bedrock of essentialist principles toward the emerging canons of population thinking, I have attempted to demonstrate ways in which the principle of Darwinian plasticity is interpretatively registered in the world of Hardy's fictive milieu. The competing populations of Hardy's Wessex sculpt, consciously and unconsciously, the forms and conditions of success and failure--amatory, social or economic, a theme I have developed extensively in Chapter Two. The varieties and forms of sexuality (morphological and psychological plasticity applied to sex-role definition) is a Darwinian/Hardyan preoccupation I have attempted to exploit in Chapter Three. Demonstrating ways in which physical landscape and the properties of nature "sculpt" the psychological shapes and destinies of human lives has been the dominating theme of Chapter Four, and in Chapter Five I have attempted to apply the Darwinian/Hardyan principle of organic plasticity to human society and the vagaries of social organization. Finally, in Chapter Six, I have sought to

develop the theme of Laodicean neutrality as a representation of Hardy's ambivalent response to Darwinian relativism; Laodicean ennui characterizes a world in which all structures are viewed as fundamentally plastic, awaiting the modeling tools of time, circumstance and inevitable variablity.

Although Darwin's allusions to sculpting process and the media of sculpture are often oblique, his work is undeniably preoccupied with the evocative power of shapes and forms, and with their analogical relationships. The interactive processes of time and the organicity/plasticity of elemental structures of the animate and inanimate worlds--structures geological, biological, sexual, psychological and linguistic--are frequently described in terms that suggest sculpture and the transmutation of forms. Darwin's most explicit development of the theme of morphological plasticity occurs in the penultimate chapter of the Origin, a disquisition on "Mutual Affinities of Organic Beings: Morphology: Embryology: Rudimentary Organs." The term "morphology" itself suggests a shaping or sculpting process--consistent with population dynamics, a form or being that is derivative, not the replication or shadow of a primordial essence. The word was a recent coinage when it found its way into the Darwinian lexicon. The Oxford English Dictionary, defining "morphology" broadly as "the science of form" (OED Compact Edition, 1852), lists an early quote dated 1830. According to the OED, Asa Gray traced the term back to Goethe in his 1880 edition of Structural Botany: "The term Morphology was introduced into science by Goethe, at least as

early as the year 1817." Presciently broadening the concept of morphology, Darwin anticipates the application of this term to philological studies,[15] which, according to the OED, occurs late in the word's semantic history--the earliest quotation offered by the OED relating to linguistic morphology, "the branch of grammar which is concerned with the form of words," is 1869.[16] In Origins, a Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English, Eric Partridge relates the element "morph-" to a Greek term traceable to the Greek deity Morpheus, "the shaper of dreams" (416). This etymological connection resonates with Darwin's recurrent preoccupation with shaping processes brought about by geological forces relentlessly re-forming the planet, as well as the unending castings and re-castings of natural selection.

Inherent in the Darwinian notion of morphological plasticity is the merging of seemingly contradictory conceptualizations. Darwin celebrates the profusion of populations of individuals, each separate and unique, yet connected associatively by a flawed classificatory system that always reverts to conceptions of "type" "kind" or "essence." This contradictory dichotomy informs much of Hardy's fiction and poetry, as well, perhaps reaching its

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[15] In Chapter Fourteen of the Origin, Darwin explicitly relates biological classifications and affinities with the classifications and affinities of languages: "It may be worth while to illustrate this view of classification, by taking the case of languages" (324). Lyell draws a similar analogy in his Antiquity of Man (cf. 358).

[16] The term "morphology" occurs in Families of Speech, by Frederic W. Ferrar, published in 1869: "By the morphology of a language we mean the general laws of its grammatical structure" (OED 1852).

culminative realization in The Well-Beloved. This much-revised work--Hardy's last novel to be published in book form--traces the bizarre history of a successful and celebrated sculptor who, like Wilde's Dorian Gray, is described by his creator in terms that deliberately confuse life and art. Jocelyn Pierston struggles to reconcile Platonic evocations of an unattainable "type" with the imperfect structures and forms of the palpable world. Near the novel's end he begins to value the world of concrete substances and shapes over the world of imagined essences:

> . . . Once the individual had been nothing more to him than the temporary abiding-place of the typical or ideal; now his heart showed its bent to be a growing fidelity to the specimen, with all her pathetic flaws of detail; which flaws, so far from sending him further, increased his tenderness. This maturer feeling, if finer and higher, was less convenient than the old. Ardours of passion could be felt as in youth without the recuperative intervals which had accompanied evanescence. (143)

Sculpting process functions as a unifying and controlling metaphor throughout the narrative structure of Hardy's Well-Beloved. Jocelyn Pierston creates sculptures of the mind as well as physically palpable sculptures, chiseling and shaping phantoms created from the flesh-and-blood replications of the unattainable Avice. This process is reflective of primordial forces

sculpting and shaping the familiar Hardyan landscape. This associative connection links the will and desire of the novel's sculptor-protagonist with the active "personality" of nature's sculpting elements from the opening sentence of the preface:

> The peninsula carved by Time out of a single stone, whereon most of the following scenes are laid, was for centuries immemorial the home of a curious and well-nigh distinct people, cherishing strange beliefs and singular customs, now for the most part obsolescent. (3)

After a lifetime of pursuing an unattainable ideal, Hardy's world-weary returning native and philosophical Laodicean, the sixty-year-old Pierston, perceives the sculpting forces of time reflected in the human enterprise of chiseling the antique quarries of his youth. Permutations of place and personality are incremental--almost imperceptible--but time chisels on:

> The general change, nevertheless, was small. The silent ships came and went from the wharf, the chisels clinked in the quarries; file after file of whitey-brown horses, in strings of eight or ten, painfully draffed down the hill the square blocks of stone on the antediluvian wooden wheels just as usual. The lightship winked every night from the quicksands to the Beal Lantern, and the Beal Lantern glared through its eyeglass on the ship. The canine gnawing audible on the Pebble-bank had been

> repeated ever since at each tide, but the pebbles remained undevoured. (139)

Jocelyn Pierston is, like Morpheus, a shaper of dreams. In the tradition of some of Hardy's most memorable characterizations--the storyteller Ethelberta Petherwin, the architects Stephen Smith and George Somerset, the geologist Henry Knight, and the stonemason Jude Fawley--this shaper of forms is himself shaped by the physical landscape that is so intimately intertwined with his destiny. Returning to the rocky coast whose crevices are etched into his life and work, the sculptor is described in terms that suggest a broader sculpting process operating in the physical environment:

> . . . But one figure had never been seen on the Channel rock in the interval, the form of Pierston the sculptor, whose first use of the chisel that rock had instigated. (139)

Throughout The Well-Beloved, Hardy equates physical "form," an evocation that suggests Darwinian plasticity, with forms of the imagination and the forming processes of the natural world. Reference to "the form of Pierston the sculptor" suggests the shaping process that has formed Pierston's art and psyche. The creator of forms is himself the product of natural forces whose unrelenting molding and modeling is characterized as "canine gnawing audible on the Pebble-bank." There is a chilling impersonality associated with this process, reminiscent of descriptions of the natural environment in Desperate Remedies, Tess and Jude that suggest metallic coldness and the

mindless machinery of natural processes, or Henry Knight's impalement and torture on the Cliff without a Name in A Pair of Blue Eyes. Pierston's life in art is derived from his use of the chisel, while his destiny has also been chiseled by relentless time and circumstance. Hardy's descriptive language suggests that the character of the chiseler of rocks has been chiseled by the rocks and quarries that provide the material substance of his art. His career and destiny have been "instigated" by the Channel rock. As in so much of Hardy's narrative fiction, the environment is active; human life is acted upon.

In the preceding chapters, I have offered numerous examples of the essentialist mindset, particularly as realized in the works of the natural theologians whose admonitions and other-worldly evocations were widely read and revered throughout the nineteenth century. In a perfectly-conceived world, emanating from a divine mind and will, structural forms, no matter how degraded, are modeled after predeterminate designs, essentially whole and finished in the mind of the Creator and transcendent image-Maker. In the Hardyan/Darwinian world of competing forces and warring populations, whose "canine gnawing" chisels out individual forms--human and animal, animate and inanimate--there is no unadulterated type or model. It is only the profusion of individual variation that permits the selection process--whether artificial selection undertaken by human breeders or the natural selection which occurs as circumstances of the environment change over time.

At the end of The Well-Beloved, Jocelyn Pierston relinquishes his

Platonic dream of the ideal Avice and settles into a life of Laodicean placidity with a woman his own age--the practical and devoted Marcia Bencomb. The abandonment of his dream of typological perfection comes at a fearful price--artistic and, presumably, sexual impotence (he relinquishes his chisel along with his sensual nature). Pierston's abandonment of his well-beloved suggests a kind of Hardyan renunciation of typological constructs, an ambivalent and regret-laden ave atque vale to the comforting reassurances of essentialism. Jocelyn Pierston's insistence that Marcia Bencomb, the woman he finally marries, appear to him in broad daylight without the benefits of age- and corruption-negating cosmetics suggests an almost parodistic reminder of Hardy's "full look at the worst."

The universe evoked by Darwin and Hardy suggests open-ended malleability and morphological plasticity as defining characteristics of the sensible world, an implied abandonment of traditional typologies, fixed and immutable. Darwin celebrates process. In his Descent, he describes the role of variability in relation to development, once again invoking the plasticity motif: ". . . There can, however, be no doubt that changed conditions induce an almost indefinite amount of fluctuating variability, by which the whole organization is rendered in some degree plastic" (417). This viewpoint represents a radical departure from essentialist cosmological models such as Plato's cave allegory of the world or the Edenic biblical model, which views all extant life forms as degenerated replicas of primeval perfection. In effect,

the doctrine of variable populations and unfettered horizons of development is an inversion of the Platonic and biblical models--the ideal realm is usurped by "a growing fidelity to the specimen" (WB 143). Shaped by imponderable aeons, circumstances and accumulated variability, the inviolate individual is neither faithful nor unfaithful to a pre-ordained type or model, but is, rather, an uncompromisingly faithful representation of unrelenting natural processes, which have collaboratively determined each unique specimen's exquisitely-chiseled form and being.

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