

**THE SLEEP MOTIF AND FATALISM IN
THOMAS HARDY'S MAJOR NOVELS**

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PREFACE

In disagreement with the critics who have called Thomas Hardy a fatalist, this thesis contends that the protagonists in his major novels are not helpless victims of Fate. They all have at least one area of culpability--their refusal to face reality. A symbolic motif hitherto unnoticed by critics reinforces this contention. The sleep motif, formed by moments of dreaming and corresponding twilight, shows that the characters allow events to happen through a lack of awareness or unconsidered choice. The motif is particularly strong in Tess of the d'Urbervilles, but appears as well in The Mayor of Casterbridge, Jude the Obscure, and The Return of the Native.

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Thomas Hardy's characters live in a difficult world, for they often find themselves caught between powerful natural impulses and contradictory social laws that must be heeded if they are to survive. The protagonist finds his dilemma more distressing than do the mediocre characters in Hardy's novels, partially because his acute consciousness discerns perplexities in life that the common folk ignore. In addition, the protagonist chooses higher goals, so that finally the gulf existing between his aspirations and his limited chances of success under such conditions is hopelessly wide; unable to reconcile his dreams with the hard realities of life, he often blames a malignant universe as the rustic chorus echoes "'tis Fate!"

Fatalism is basically a world view in which man is powerless to control his destiny, in which consequences have no relationship to action. Many critics have labeled Hardy as a fatalist, among them Albert Pettigrew Elliott, Ernest Brennecke, and David Lord Cecil. Albert Elliott, in his book devoted to Hardy's fatalism, defines fatalism as "...that view of life which insists that all action everywhere is controlled by the nature of things or by a power superior to things. It grants the existence of Fate..., "¹ whose instrument is chance, over which the character has no control. To Elliott, Hardy's

central theme is Fate. Brennecke also describes Hardy as a fatalist, since to him Hardy's characters are driven by irresistible motives or by a type of Schopenhauerian will, making individual action futile.² To David Lord Cecil Hardy is also a fatalist; however, he feels that Hardy's characters are helpless before external circumstance.³ Harvey Curtis Webster, in his book On a Darkling Plain, agrees with Cecil and Brennecke to the extent that in Hardy's novels men's lives are controlled from within and without by unexplainable forces as well as by predictable urges. However, he hesitates to classify Hardy as a fatalist because he finds it difficult to tell whether Hardy is using chance metaphorically or literally.⁴

Certainly there does seem to be, even in the most tragic of Hardy's major novels, a disproportion between the characters' flaws or sins and the evils they suffer. The disparity is particularly strong in Tess, who is represented as a pure woman. To say, however, that the hero is the helpless victim of circumstance, as Tess might appear to be, is to lessen the tragic effect and indeed to make the hero pathetic instead of tragic. In his definition of tragedy, quoted in The Life of Thomas Hardy, Hardy allows the victim a choice of action, so that he is not helpless before the general situation: "A Plot, or Tragedy, should arise from a gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions, by reason of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said passions, prejudices, and ambitions."⁵

Hardy is implying that the outcome of events is not unavoidable, and yet the circumstances leading to disaster are produced by normal human desire, rather than by some great error or weakness. One critic, J. O. Bailey, does maintain that the characters who often call themselves victims actually invite retribution because they have violated natural or man-made laws. To Bailey, Hardy should not be labeled a fatalist.⁶ However, Bailey does not acknowledge that the actions were often taken under almost unbearable pressures so that the punishment seems unduly severe. The most reasonable explanation of Hardy's viewpoint is that by Roy Morrell in his book Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way. Morrell recognizes that the dilemmas faced by Hardy's characters make effective action difficult; however, he believes that the characters are responsible to a degree for their fate because they have human intelligence as distinguished from the animal world around them. They must, without fail, use that intelligence to face the contingencies of their actions. Morrell contends that those who fail are guilty of thinking life to be easier than it is and therefore drifting along in a condition of non-choice and placid acceptance. Because they prefer maintaining illusions about life rather than recognizing its worst possibilities, they delay taking steps which could change the course of things. Morrell believes that Hardy most condemns the dreamer. The "inevitable," Morrell insists, is partly under human control, so that Fate is not the propelling force.⁷

Morrell believes that the theme of reality is present to a degree

in all of Hardy's novels, but that it is particularly evident in Tess of the d'Urbervilles, where Hardy weaves the theme into the very fabric of the novel.⁸ Morrell bases his criticism on an examination of the total novel, citing occasional incident and image to illustrate his viewpoint, but he uses very little description of motif to reinforce his arguments. As Dorothy Van Ghent observes, it is through symbol and motif that Hardy's "philosophical vision has the unassailable truth of living form."⁹ One motif in particular would have strengthened Morrell's thesis that the characters are often blameable for not accepting life as it is. That motif is one formed by incidents occurring during sleep and dreaming, as well as by corresponding images of twilight and dawn. These times of clouded judgement are contrasted to waking moments or light imagery. The motif, hereafter called the sleep motif, forms an over-all pattern in Tess of the d'Urbervilles, but occurs to some degree in The Mayor of Casterbridge, Jude the Obscure, and The Return of the Native. An examination of all of these major novels in terms of the motif will reinforce Morrell's view that the characters are responsible for their destinies, at least because they prefer to dwell in illusion instead of facing reality. Through his artistic medium of the sleep motif, Hardy presents man's dilemma, in which an increased sensitivity in characters of higher expectations makes the disparity between what is and what ought to be painfully apparent. When they face reality, the characters often receive warnings and in most cases have chances for effective action--were they to carry their intelligent resolves through

consistently they might survive.

In The Mayor of Casterbridge plot is clearly tied to character and gives form to the novel, so that there is not the abstract strengthening of plot through motif that we find in the other major novels. Michael Henchard has stature in his defiance of events until, at last faced with the effects of his sins, he stoically maintains, "But my punishment is not greater than I can bear!"¹⁰ His initial act of selling his wife is a crime demanding punishment, yet it is not that alone which brings about his downfall. The pride that gives him stature also prevents him from admitting that he sold his wife--the very information that would cause enough stir to help him locate her. Because he later re-marries Susan without revealing to Casterbridge their past relationship, the admission is post-poned to a time when he is already in disfavor and the town is less forgiving than it might have been. Henchard suffers as well from excessive emotion; he vacillates from gloomy fits and violent temper to love and warm-hearted cordiality. Emotion blinds his judgement at times so that he often mistrusts intentions, particularly Farfrae's, and acts precipitately rather than in clear judgement. As Robert Kiely points out in his article on The Mayor of Casterbridge, "...Henchard flails foolishly and mightily at imaginary enemies."¹¹ Henchard applies his harsh judgement to himself as well, inflicting worse punishment than others would have given.

Although Henchard's tragedy can be clearly explained by his past crime and by his excesses, he is like Hardy's other protagonists in his

refusal at times to face reality. It is usually in twilight times that Hardy's characters allow themselves to persist in self-delusion. Henchard approaches the fair with his wife and child in the evening. The fair itself symbolizes an escape from economic realities to momentary pleasure. As Henchard laces his furmity with rum and the dark outside increases, he fabricates the illusion that his wife is the cause of their privation. It is obvious that he is not fated to sell his wife, for he has time to reconsider his action. Attention turns in the midst of his auction to a trapped swallow and the subject changes; Henchard, however, doggedly reminds the men of his offer and the auction resumes. The next morning he awakes to full sunshine and a sick awareness of the reality of his situation. Although Henchard recalls Susan's repeated warnings that she would one day allow him to sell her if he continued his threats, he blames her for the disgraceful situation. Years later, as he meets with Susan to discuss their remarriage, he holds the mistaken belief that he can make full reparation without suffering personally for his deed. Their meeting is at dusk in the old Roman amphitheatre, where happy trysts seldom take place. Henchard and Susan agree to conceal the past from Elizabeth-Jane, a deception that hereafter affects his relationship with his "daughter." Whereas the truth perhaps would furnish the basis for a new relationship, dishonesty evokes further deception until Henchard finally finds himself rejected by Elizabeth-Jane.

In Jude, as in The Mayor, Hardy uses less reinforcement through

image and external detail than in the other two novels, so that the novel's structure is derived strongly from plot. Here the human plight seems most hopeless, as the intensely conscious Jude and Sue come in sharp conflict with society's demands for conformity. The frustrations man feels when his aspirations are vastly different from the obtainable are intensified in Jude's struggles, first to achieve entrée into Christminster's colleges, then to enter the clergy, and finally at least to live on a sublime level of feeling with Sue. Because he has higher aspirations than most men, his weaknesses affect him more strongly.

Although Jude's surroundings are hostile, he finds adjustment to them particularly difficult. James F. Scott, in accordance with Morrell's thesis, points out that Jude tends to convert realities into illusions, ignoring the insights he could have received.¹² As long as Jude and Sue hold to their ideal world the sordid real world confronts them in acute contrast and makes happiness impossible. Jude's early views of Christminster, that center of learning, occur in the half-light of evening and are more like a mirage with rose tints and glimmering windows. He persists in his idea of Christminster when at twilight he first walks her streets, so that "when he passed objects out of harmony with its general expression he allowed his eyes to slip over them as if he did not see them."¹³ He recalls praise of the city by one of the sons of the university but forgets that the same venerable later mourns Christminster as "the home of lost causes"(p. 84). By morning Jude has a momentary recognition of the "defective real" aspect of Christminster's buildings

and pragmatically decides to seek employment repairing those crumbling façades. He will not disperse his earlier illusions of the city, however, and later returns to it with Sue and the children as a last hope.

Jude's views of Arabella and Sue are ideal at first; the latter illusion persists until the end of their relationship when he finally realizes Sue isn't worthy of his love. When he first meets Arabella, he sees what she is "...with his intellectual eye, just for a short fleeting while, as by the light of a falling lamp ..." (p. 46). However, "for his own soothing he kept up a factitious belief in her" (p. 61). Jude fails to heed these warnings of insight as he fails to accept that of Bibliolli College: "I venture to think that you will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in your own sphere and sticking to your trade than by adopting any other course" (p. 120). Similarly, repeated warnings from Sue and his aunt that he shouldn't love Sue because of their kinship, his marriage, and their family background do not effectively deter him from pursuing the relationship.

Sue believed, when her intellect was sharp, that the world resembled a melody composed in a dream: "...it was wonderfully excellent to the half-aroused intelligence, but hopelessly absurd at the full waking;...the first cause worked automatically like a somnambulist, and not reflectively like a sage" (p. 337). Only in a distracted mental state does she call that "first cause" a persecutor. At the outset, Sue and Jude as sensitive beings aren't well-suited to the indifferent world, but they are both culpable in failing to approach life realistically,

conforming to social mores when necessary or at least being prudent not to openly offend those existing laws.

In The Return of the Native man's struggle is not so much between the external forces of natural law and social pressures as with himself, as his longings for an ideal existence contrast sharply with things as they are. Clym and Eustacia surpass the rustics in passion and hope: the first presentation of Eustacia is as a pinnacle of the heath but distinguished from it by her mobility. We see all characters in relationship to the heath, which symbolizes an indifferent nature and life as it does exist in its limited prospects. It is Eustacia, Clym, and Wildeve who do not accept it: Eustacia and Wildeve reject its sombre and neutral beauty, and Clym wishes to change the conditions of life on it. In contrast, Thomasin and Diggory Venn are as natural to it as a pair of heathcroppers.

Poetics are strong in The Return, since in fact much of the tragic effect derives from image, and the reader sees the sleep-light motif emerging clearly here. Eustacia is languorous with heavy eyelids, a nocturnal creature, and she allows herself to be almost consumed by a longing for her ideal Paris or Budmouth that doesn't even exist. She dreams of being loved to madness. In Clym she mistakenly sees a chance for escape from the heath to Paris. Her first view of him is at twilight and their first encounter at night as she looks at him through the ribboned visor of a mummer. Their early declarations of love are by eclipsed moonlight that highlights Clym's face so that it appears to

be shaped in gold. To Eustacia, those gold lights mean that Clym should be doing something better than dwelling on a heath, yet they both realize then that Clym will not return to Paris and that Eustacia will not be happy as a "good homespun wife."¹⁴ In the extravagant dream which follows her first news of Clym, Eustacia mistakenly interprets the knight, whose vizor is closed, to be that diamond merchant from Paris. Clym, in fact, perceives at times that she loves him "... rather as a visitant from a gay world to which she rightly belonged than as a man with a purpose"(p. 228). Although he loves her real beauty, he is under the illusion that she will be content as the wife of a schoolmaster. In a direct statement Hardy describes the literal effects of night on consciousness. When disillusioned with Clym's goals after his blindness, Eustacia seeks temporary happiness by walking to a May eve dance, where she meets and dances with Wildeve:

The pale ray of evening lent fascination to the experience. There is a certain degree and tone of light which tends to disturb the equilibrium of the senses, and to promote dangerously the tenderer moods; added to movement it drives the emotions to rankness, the reason becoming sleepy and unperceiving in inverse proportion"(p. 296)

Eustacia erroneously blames a malignant force for placing her on a heath ignorant of her beauty, for then allowing her to marry one who will not after all be her means of escape from it, and for finally causing bitter estrangement between her and her husband. Her situation as a passionate beautiful creature isolated from a life she thinks she deserves is a difficult one, but it is her inattention to reality which forms the

basis of her troubles. As Ian Gregor points out, the illumination provided by fire is misleading: she and Wildeve have always summoned each other by the artificial light of fire and lantern and their final tryst is a result of a false signal--a fire she has not ordered.¹⁵ However, Eustacia does possess insight, for, "whenever a flash of reason darted like an electric light upon her lover . . . and showed his imperfections, she shivered thus. But it was over in a second, and she loved on"(p. 73). She continues to fill up the "spare hours of her existence by idealizing Wildeve for want of a better object"(p. 80). Although her early conversations with Clym show his clear intentions of remaining on the heath and never returning to Paris, she deludes herself by thinking she can change that resolve once married to him. The final break between Clym and Eustacia could perhaps be mended would Eustacia admit a responsibility in Mrs. Yeobright's death, "yet, instead of blaming herself for the issue she laid the fault upon the shoulders of some indistinct, colossal Prince of the World, who had framed her situation and ruled her lot"(p. 339). Hardy does not seem to be in sympathy with Eustacia's attack upon a superior being whom she produces for her convenience.

Man, who is pictured in the beginning and end of the novel in contrast to the indifferent heath and its creatures, is an intelligence with all capabilities of winning in life. One with a highly developed consciousness such as Clym will find his situation more difficult. His dream is to instruct the heath-dwellers on "morally unimpeachable

subjects"(p. 463) and to improve their existence through knowledge. The natives desire material rather than spiritual relief, however. Even Eustacia sees Clym's goal as unrealistic as she compares him to Paul: "... the worst of it is that though Paul was excellent as a man in the Bible he would hardly have done in real life"(p. 320). Clym's blindness is more than physical, and, because he refuses to look at conditions as they are, his preaching is only half-successful. Eustacia lives in illusion and rejects what could be a moderately satisfying life as symbolized by the heath for the ideal existence she dreams to be over the channel. When at last she cannot reconcile herself to life on the heath but can not leave it either without going as Wildeve's mistress, she chooses to die. In death, Eustacia's complexion is "almost light"(p. 429). "Eternal rigidity had seized upon it /her mouth/ in a momentary transition between fervor and resignation"(p. 429). Ironically, the dream that could have served as warning remains to her only a pleasant fantasy, for the knight with whom she has danced is Wildeve rather than Clym and their meeting beneath the pool is death. It remains for Thomasin and Diggory Venn, with their limited expectations, to live content on the heath at the moderate level of happiness it symbolizes. There is a basis for hope, for, in the words of Harvey Curtis Webster, "those who accept the inevitable are at least not unhappy and it is possible that efforts to change things will succeed eventually."¹⁶

One sees man's dilemma in its most poignant crisis in Tess of

the d'Urbervilles. Hardy presents Tess as a pure woman and indeed the reader gains a sympathy with Tess that he has not felt for Eustacia Vye, Sue Bridehead, Clym Yeobright, Michael Henchard, or Jude Fawley. The basic theme of the novel is the conflict man faces between following natural impulse and applying nature's rules to life or living in accord with social laws which are often out of harmony with those of nature.

For Tess the conflict is especially painful. Her mother rationalizes the most serious problems by applying natural laws: "'Tis nater, after all, and what do please God."¹⁷ Tess is tempted to accept those laws at times as an easy solution:

Between the mother, with her fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folk-lore, dialect and orally transmitted ballads, and the daughter, with her trained National teachings and Standard knowledge under an infinitely Revised Code, there was a gap of two hundred years as ordinarily understood. When they were together the Jacobean and Victorian ages were juxtaposed. (p. 24)

Tess not only possesses a sensitivity and fineness of honor that her family does not comprehend, but because of her schooling applies a new set of morals to her life. The standards of Victorian society are particularly important to her because those standards are embraced by Angel and his family. Tess has to face the difficult realization that a balance between natural impulse and social law is necessary for existence in this world, even though she recognizes at moments of clearest reason that condemnation under society's strict rules does not necessarily indict her

natural purity.

The sleep-motif emerges clearly in Tess, forming an over-all pattern in the novel that in part explains Tess's defeat. The most obvious episodes involving sleep in the novel do seem to reinforce a view of her as a helpless victim--particularly at night, when the characters appear closest to natural impulse and oblivious to social law. William R. Herman labels her as a passive heroine in the episode in which Prince is killed, in her rape at the hands of Alec, in her final submission to him because of severe economic difficulty, and in her capture at Stonehenge as she sleeps.¹⁸ Admittedly, Tess is helpless in The Chase and is there because of her need to escape another danger, so that Hardy later says that she is caught like a bird in a springe. The aura at Tantridge is one of debased sensuality, where the peasants dancing amid peat and hay seem to form a sort of "vegeto-human pollen," "...the indistinctness shaping them to satyrs clasping nymphs"(p. 77). Tess is forced by fatigue and actual physical danger from the incensed Car Darch to ride with Alec, who is himself very sensual. The imagery here suggests that Tess is to be viewed as a trapped animal, for Alec makes her a nest in dead leaves beneath the roosting birds while he searches for the road that they both have missed in the fog. It is true that Tess is raped by Alec, yet nothing compels her to remain several weeks after. She later returns to Alec at Kingsbere because she has no resources or lodgings for her family and no prospects of employment. She despairs of ever seeing Angel's forgiveness and feels a strong sense

of guilt that her family has lost their home partly because of her tainted presence. Finally, Tess is helpless before her captors at Stonehenge. At these times the pressures upon her do seem unbearable. However, can one say in the fatalistic manner of Marlott folk, "It was to be"(p. 91)?

Tess finds herself in vulnerable positions because of her inattention to reality. As John Holloway contends, Tess's flaw is an inherited dreaminess which temporarily removes her from the blighted planet on which she must live, as well as a futile desire to separate body from soul. He correctly relates sleep in the novel to a failure to exist in her environment.¹⁹ Tess describes her ability to separate herself from the real situation through dreaming to dairyman Crick, saying, "I do know that our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive" (p. 154). It is perhaps under this illusion that she remains at Alec's for the few weeks following her rape; after her final return to Alec, Tess no longer regards her body as her own, letting it drift "in a direction dissociated from its living will"(p. 484). In thinking during moments of self-delusion that she can solve the problem of natural instinct versus social restraint by separating mind from body or by reacting aimlessly, Tess brings about her death. The Durbeyfield family is characterized by dreaminess and the news of their distinguished d'Urberville "grand and noble skillentons," recognized by Parson Tringham as a useless piece of information, sends the family drifting into dreams of claiming family connection and, with the name, receiving money and respect. Tess's mother comes from a "long family of waiters on Providence"(p. 41),

and, since it seems that Providence will aid here, the parents forget about their immediate economic need. A benevolent power doesn't provide, however, and, because her drunken father is in no condition to take the beehives to Casterbridge, Tess is forced by her sense of responsibility to the children to take them. The world is "dumbly somnolent" (p. 32) and Tess and Abraham drowsy. Tess muses over her knightly ancestry, and, as her thoughts become more and more extravagant, she blames a blighted world for the fact that her father is shiftless and her mother over-burdened with children. When visions of d'Urberville nobility close her eyes, the pointed shaft of an on-coming mail-cart kills Prince, the family's only horse. The dreaming state, with its avoidance of true life and aspirations to nobility, allows Prince to be killed. It places upon Tess's shoulders the burden of guilt that later drives her to her vulnerable position at Alec's home.

If moments of sleep characterize affinity to nature and dreaminess an avoidance of reality, waking moments often symbolize awareness of the harsh realities of life. When the pointed shaft of the mail cart pierces Prince's chest, Tess awakes to the bright light of a lantern in her face and to the realization that she has lost the one means of support her family has. After her rape and brief sojourn with Alec, she "awakes" to the reality of her situation and returns home in the morning light, only to meet society's disapprobation in garish letters: "Thy, Damnation, Slumbereth, Not" (p. 101). Later, having been in terror by night as to her baby's unbaptized soul, she desperately administers baptism her-

self to save him from Hell; at dawn, however, Tess's fears are relieved by the common-sense realization that a Providence not recognizing his baptism, so near to the real thing, does not have a heaven worth valuing.

As in the preceding novels, Hardy uses twilight as an objective correlative of self-delusion, when life appears easier than it is in reality or when fancies cloud the judgement. It is a time when "...the atmosphere itself forms a prospect without aid from more solid objects..."(p. 76) and man can manufacture his own reality. After her return to Marlott Tess is so torn between the censure of social law and the realization that she is pure in the eyes of nature that she finds twilight the only time of day she can bear to venture out:

She knew how to hit to a hair's-breadth that moment of evening when the light and darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraint of day and the suspense of night neutralize each other, leaving absolute mental liberty. It is then that the plight of being alive becomes attenuated to its least possible dimensions.(p. 108)

However, Tess experiences a false sense of ease in twilight, and, as the darkness increases, she mistakenly imagines herself at odds with the natural environment as well, as "a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence"(p. 108).

Tess's relationship with Angel Clare grows during the half-light hours of dawn and twilight and is founded mainly on illusion. She approaches Talbothay's with the conscious intention of marrying no man because of her past, but a natural desire toward self-delight grows as

she approaches the profusely fertile dairy: "Her hopes mingled with the sunshine in an ideal photosphere which surrounded her"(p. 133). According to Hardy, "the irresistible, universal, automatic tendency to find sweet pleasure somewhere, which pervades all life, from the meanest to the highest, had at length mastered Tess"(p. 134), so that it is only natural for her to fall in love with Angel. One evening, at the time when her feelings for Angel are yet embryonic, she finds that his harp playing, in which the instrument and the skill are actually of mediocre quality, can for her raise dreams and drive horrid fancies away; she is conscious in these evening hours with Angel "of neither time nor space"(p. 158), and the exaltation that she has described to dairyman Crick from making her soul go outside of her body at will comes now without any effort of her own. Angel is godlike in her eyes and she at first regards him as an intelligence more than a man. To Angel's first notice, Tess is only a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature, but, as they meet in the "twilight of the morning"(p. 166) when they feel themselves to be the only ones in the world, "she was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman--a whole sex condensed into one typical form"(p. 167). After her revelation, he admits it is not she he has loved but another woman in her shape, an ideally pure and natural country maiden whom he could shape into a polished and educated woman acceptable to his family.

During these times of half-light and clouded judgement, Tess begins to feel that her past perhaps won't matter to one who really loves her.

She finds herself drifting into a desire for acquiescent non-choice. Hardy describes the pattern followed by their relationship during these hot summer months, when the atmosphere is like an opiate, in his poetic rendering of dawn and evening:

The gray half-tones of daybreak are not the gray half-tones of the day's close, though the degree of their shade may be the same. In the twilight of the morning light seems active, darkness passive; in the twilight of evening it is the darkness which is active and crescent, and the light which is the drowsy reverse. (p. 166)

It is largely at their dawn meetings that Tess is able to reject Angel and at evening that she considers marriage and finally accepts his proposal; at evening as the dark is growing, in juxtaposition with the news that she will no longer be needed at Talbothay's and will perhaps face physical privation, she decides on the date of marriage. Her natural impulses are foremost:

Every see-saw of her breath, every wave of her blood, every pulse singing in her ears, was a voice that joined with nature in revolt against her scrupulousness. Reckless, inconsiderate acceptance of him; to close with him at the altar, revealing nothing, and chancing discovery; to snatch ripe pleasure before the iron teeth of pain could have time to shut upon her. (p. 228)

It could be argued at this point that Tess is influenced by her "twilight" environment to conceal her past and thus capture happiness while it is within reach. However, twilight and dark seem rather to be functioning again as an objective correlative of Tess's inclinations. She marries Angel under an illusion that the past can be completely erased--an

illusion that she herself has encouraged. In giving in to the natural desire for happiness she ignores the likely effects her deceit will have.

Although Angel was raised under urban, Victorian teachings, he begins to think the peasant ways at Talbothay's charming and finds himself throwing off the constrictions of the society he was raised in. He is governed by conscious restraint during his waking hours, but in moments associated with sleep, his impulse is toward nature: he first proposes on a July mid-afternoon when Tess has just awakened, at the "...moment when a woman's soul is more incarnate than at any other time; when the most spiritual beauty bespeaks itself flesh; and sex takes the outward place in the presentation"(p. 217). Angel's unconscious thoughts reveal themselves in sleep first when he dreams of Tess's insultor and fights for her honor and later, after her confession, as he carries Tess in his sleep to a tomb, muttering "My poor, poor Tess-- my dearest, darling Tess! So sweet, so good, so true"(p. 316). John Holloway correctly interprets the sleep-walking episode as an expression of alienation from the society that Angel consciously accepts. He dreams Tess has arisen and is in her spiritual purity leading him to heaven.²⁰ To Holloway, then, sleep in this instance allows Angel to be more receptive to natural law, which does not condemn Tess. Angel does accept her innocence in sleep but in the light of reason appalls Tess with a determination that she has only slightly noticed before their marriage--"the will to subdue the grosser to the subtler emotion, the substance to the conception, the flesh to the spirit"(p. 313). His love, in

fact, "had been more inclined to the imaginative and the ethereal"(p. 246), and at this stage in his development it can not tolerate a flaw in his loved-one. Morrell recognizes the irony of Angel's rejection of Tess: "A fragment of a dream about 'purity' has been lost; a sweet and loving wife--and, in essence, a pure one--has been gained; and Angel is so little in touch with reality that, until much later, he does not realize this."²¹ As Morrell is saying, Angel is so concerned that his romantic ideal has been lost that he cannot recognize the real treasure he has acquired.

The remainder of the novel is the story of Tess's suffering under the demands of Angel's rigid morality. Because Tess blindly believes that Angel's judgement is faultless, she acquiesces completely in his condemnation of her past. Occasional flashes of reason show her that his sentence is unfair, but she makes no move to defend herself. At several points she even wishes for death: Hardy objectifies her state of mind in one scene in which she seeks shelter from a man insinuating her past with Alec. Her sleep in the copse to which she has fled is disturbed by pheasants, which she finds in the morning to be dying of hunter's wounds. As she becomes aware of their real suffering by morning light, "she was ashamed of herself for her gloom of the night, based on nothing more tangible than a sense of condemnation under an arbitrary law of society which had no foundation in Nature"(p. 355). Applying this condemnation to herself again, however, Tess will not allow herself to ask Angel's parents for money as he has requested, so

that she is forced by economic need to work under the most trying physical conditions. She does make one effort to apply to the Clares for help, imagining as she travels in the pre-dawn hours that she will win the heart of Angel's mother and enlist her aid; by daylight her confidence decreases as she remembers the reality of her situation and she leaves without speaking to them.

At Flintcomb-Ash, Tess again uses her "unassisted power of dreaming"(p. 365) to remove her spirit from its surroundings and make conditions bearable. She is particularly susceptible to Alec's entreaties at this time because of the hardships she faces, but it is only in moments of utmost physical fatigue that she mistakenly admits that his intentions might be kind. His strongest appeal is directed to her sense of responsibility for her family; it is to this appeal and to the growing conviction that she physically belongs to him that she succumbs. When Angel finally returns with a new moral perspective and an intention to forgive his wife, he finds that she is again Alec's mistress. As he calls on her in the early morning light, nothing can shelter them from the reality that Tess no longer regards her body as her own. She has lived under this illusion for weeks. In the frenzy of realizing her mistake, she tries ineffectively to expiate her crime to Angel by killing Alec; she later tells Angel, "It came to me as a shining light that I should get you back that way"(p. 492). Angel and Tess both alienate themselves from society as they flee aimlessly like two helpless children, and for a few days they do dwell in an illusion of happiness, isolated from the real

world of time and social law. As dawn breaks at Stonehenge, Tess, recognizing that flight is futile, offers herself to her captors. In doing so she finally faces life's difficulties honestly and realizes that the brief ideal happiness that she and Angel have known could not have lasted, for living long in isolation and at such a level of feeling is not possible.

Although life does present difficult problems for Tess and Angel, so that Tess seems fated to die by virtue of her ancestry and its history of murder, repeated warnings of life's difficulties and chances for right action have occurred. Tess does not have the conviction of her own insights. She blames her mother that she was yet an innocent child when sent to Alec's home, yet she was not oblivious to the dangers of her position. She had at first instinctively disliked and mistrusted Alec and, delaying her answer to him for a week, had tried to find other employment. Her attempts, however, had been only half-hearted. She was finally persuaded to smother her misgivings and go to the d'Urberville estate only upon recognizing her family plight and blaming herself for it. Because Tess realizes that a "morally upright" husband will probably condemn her past, her resolve not to marry is honorable and realistic; yet, she does not persist in it. At Talbothay's she is twice warned of society's attitude toward "fallen women" when tales of Jack Dollop and his treatment of a milkmaid are recounted; her early recognition of Angel as one who has passed through Marlott on the day of the May-walking reminds her that her past does remain. Like Michael

Henchard, however, Tess unrealistically wants to believe that the past can be erased. She is in error for thinking that she can escape reality by removing her mind to more pleasant worlds. When she describes her theory to the dairyman, his knife and fork seem to form a gallows. Although some critics have cited this as foreshadowing her death, Morrell seems to have the most perceptive interpretation. He points out that the symbol is rather a warning of the possibilities if Tess continues to dwell in this illusion.²² She has warnings that she might someday kill Alec, not only when she is told of the d'Urberville carriage and the murder it hid, but especially when she hits Alec with her glove in a moment of desperation and draws blood. Later, she tells Angel she knew at that moment she might kill Alec someday. As in the other novels, chance seems to intervene at moments, but in most cases, the characters allow it to stifle their good intentions and make no further attempt at their determined course. Tess does just that when her one misplaced letter of confession fails to reach Angel. She has determined much earlier to tell him but weakly allows Angel to interrupt her efforts. Her memory of Guinevere's robe serves to remind her that she must tell him before the marriage, but again she is easily dissuaded from speaking.

Although circumstances seem to work against Hardy's characters at times, they do have opportunities to make something of those conditions. As Morrell states, the characters are defined in terms of what they do with the chances they have.²³ Not only do they have choice, but

they may also later reverse previous decisions. Tess loses another opportunity to change her course when she fails to tell Angel of his sleep-walking, sacrificing what she realizes to be his true feelings to his conscious moral sense; the reflection that "...he had instinctively manifested a fondness for her of which his common sense did not approve; that his inclination had compromised his dignity when reason slept, again deterred her"(p. 320). It is a fine sense of honor that prevents her from speaking, coupled with a too-ready acquiescence in her lover's inflexible judgement. They both realize that parting, perhaps permanently, is an error but do not relent. Clare, meeting Izz Huet later and learning of the intensity of Tess's love, has the impulse to turn back but blindly continues on his set course. Tess's dilemma is worsened as she faces physical privation, but she refuses through an excess of pride and sub-servient accommodation to Angel's judgement upon her to write him the letter that might bring him home. Should she swallow that pride and go to the Clares for help, she would not be vulnerable to Alec's pleas. Tess's pride enables her to scorn Alec's mean offers as long as they apply only to her own need and thus gives her stature; however, it is also "a symptom of that reckless acquiescence in chance so apparent in the whole d'Urberville family"(p. 325). Furthermore, she does not have the strength of her own convictions so will not carry through consistently with her course of action; she takes everything as her just deserts and will not even be her own advocate. Although her sense of responsibility to her family is admirable, it is self-sacrifice

to them that places her in such vulnerable positions. Her stature, however, is built of these qualities, and Hardy does not appear to condemn Tess for them. They are at best vaguely defined flaws and are not sufficient alone to account for her tragedy.

Hardy's protagonists, including Tess, who seems to be the least culpable of crime, are not helpless victims in the hands of circumstance, although they do at times blame fate for their tragedies. Hardy himself seems to attack a malignant being in the conclusion of Tess: "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess"(p. 508). Roy Morrell contends that the sentence is ironic since Tess is not the victim of a god but of man. He paraphrases Hardy's statement thus: "Some people may still suppose, like Aeschylus, that fate can be blamed for Tess's disaster." To Morrell the book, although describing human weakness, calls for a greater degree of effort and courage from man.²⁴ Morrell's interpretation seems valid, for the characters who blame fate are either the folk whose superstitions Hardy often satirizes or those characters such as Sue and Eustacia with whom we are not entirely in sympathy. In the sleep motif one can see that the characters, particularly Tess and Eustacia, are at fault for not accepting the hard realities of existence: they do not use those realities as raw material from which to build a productive, though only moderately satisfying, life. Instead, they prefer to dwell in illusion and to drift easily in non-choice. By expecting too much from life they invite disaster. As several critics have noted,

it is the Elizabeth-Janes, Farfraes, Thomasins, and perhaps Liza-Lus who are able through their modest expectations to obtain a quiet enjoyment of life.²⁵ Modern man, with his heightened consciousness, senses the greater disproportion between desires and achievements, but he must always use that consciousness fully to be aware of contingencies. As Brennecke concludes, Tess and Jude particularly contain a hope for a gradual improvement in life through the efforts of enlightened man, so that the laws of mankind will conform more closely to the laws of nature.²⁶

Critics often accused Hardy of being a pessimist. He did not fully agree, but qualified their charges by his own definition:

Pessimism (or rather what is called such) is, in brief, playing the sure game. You cannot lose at it; you may gain. It is the only view of life in which you can never be disappointed. Having reckoned what to do in the worst possible circumstances, when better arise, as they may, life becomes child's play.²⁷

His philosophy was a mellorism based on recognition of the worst possibilities. Hardy could not only "...bear the world as it is, but [could] love it well enough to draw it faithfully."²⁸ It is this approach to life that he expects of his characters. To persist in illusion is fatal. In making the best of one's limited chances is hope, for, to Hardy, "there is enough poetry in what is left in life, after all the false romance has been abstracted, to make a sweet pattern."²⁹

END-NOTES

- ¹Fatalism in the Works of Thomas Hardy (New York, 1935), p. 31.
- ²Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind (New York, 1966).
- ³Hardy the Novelist: An Essay in Criticism, 2nd ed. (London, 1954).
- ⁴Chicago, 1941, p. 133.
- ⁵Florence Emily Hardy (New York, 1962), p. 120. The underlining is mine.
- ⁶"Hardy's Visions of the Self," Studies in Philology, LVI (1959), 99.
- ⁷Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, 1965.
- ⁸Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way, p. 107.
- ⁹"On Tess of the d'Urbervilles," The English Novel: Form and Function (New York, 1953), p. 197.
- ¹⁰The Mayor of Casterbridge, Washington Square Press Edition (New York, 1956), p. 310.
- ¹¹"Vision and Viewpoint in The Mayor of Casterbridge," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXIII (1968), 194.
- ¹²"Spectacle and Symbol in Thomas Hardy's Fiction," Philological Quarterly, XLIV (1965), 535.
- ¹³Jude the Obscure, Signet Classic edition (New York, 1961), p. 81. Subsequent quotations from Jude the Obscure are from this edition and are cited in the text.
- ¹⁴The Return of the Native, Washington Square Press edition (New York, 1955), p. 226. Subsequent quotations from The Return are from this edition and are cited in the text.

15 "What Kind of Fiction Did Hardy Write?" Essays in Criticism, XV (1966), 298.

16 On a Darkling Plain, p. 124.

17 Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Modern Library Edition (New York, 1951), p. 104. Subsequent quotations from Tess are from this edition and are cited in the text.

18 "Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles," The Explicator, XVIII (December 1959), item 16.

19 "Hardy's Major Fiction" in Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Albert J. Guerard (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1963), p. 55.

20 Ibid., p. 57.

21 Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way, p. 108.

22 Ibid., pp. 17-18.

23 Ibid., pp. 12, 55.

24 Ibid., pp. 39-40.

25 Critics expressing this viewpoint are Roy Morrell, p. 11; Richard Beckman, "A Character Typology for Hardy's Novels," ELH, XXX (1963), 87; and Donald Davidson, "The Traditional Basis of Thomas Hardy's Fiction," Southern Review, VI (1940), 176.

26 Thomas Hardy's Universe, p. 147.

27 Quoted by Florence Emily Hardy, Life, p. 311.

28 Quoted by Evelyn Hardy, Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography (London, 1954), p. 331.

29 Quoted by Florence Emily Hardy, Life, p. 114.

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